



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

Women in parliament in 2022

The year in review



Celia Xakriaba, a climate activist, is one of 4 indigenous women to be elected to the Brazilian Parliament.
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Introduction

In 2022, women's leadership in the world's parliaments continued with a slow pace of incremental growth as the world re-emerged after two years of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and losses. Women reached new milestones in parliamentary representation around the globe and the context for women's political leadership continued to expand. Gender issues and women's rights shaped voter behaviour and electoral outcomes in countries from Brazil to Hungary and from Australia to the United States of America.

Women's participation in parliament has never been as diverse and representative as it is in many countries today. Dramatic changes in technology and parliamentary operations that were introduced during the pandemic are becoming institutionalized, helping to make parliaments more modern, gender-sensitive and family-friendly workplaces. Women's leadership has also been illustrated in the response to the climate crisis. But barriers such as gender-based violence and unequal access to campaign finance maintained and deepened the gap between women and men in politics in many parts of the world.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The share of women in national parliaments stood at 26.5% on 1 January 2023, a year-on-year increase of 0.4 percentage points that continues over a decade of incremental progress but represents the slowest growth in six years.
- In the 47 countries that held elections in 2022, women took an average of 25.8% of seats up for election or appointment, a 2.3-percentage-point increase relative to the previous renewals in these countries.
- Legislated quotas continued to be a decisive factor in women's representation in all regions of the world. Chambers with legislated quotas (or a combination of legislated and voluntary party quotas) elected 30.9% women in 2022, versus 21.2% in chambers with no quotas. Parliamentary chambers with quotas experienced less volatility and greater growth in women's representation.
- The most notable gains in women's representation in elected chambers in 2022 came in Slovenia, Malta, Equatorial Guinea, Colombia and Australia. Nearly 40% of renewals in the year saw negative or no growth (24 chambers).
- The Senate of Australia was the only chamber to elect women to over 50% of seats in 2022 (56.6%). It became the highest-ranking upper house in the world in terms of women's representation and one of only five upper chambers in the world to exceed 50%. Six other countries elected women to between 40% and 50% of seats.
- The Americas remained the region with the highest representation of women, with women accounting for 30.2% of members elected to 12 chambers in 8 countries that held parliamentary renewals in 2022. Overall, as of January 2023, women accounted for 34.7% of all parliamentarians in the region, across all chambers and countries.

HIGHLIGHTS

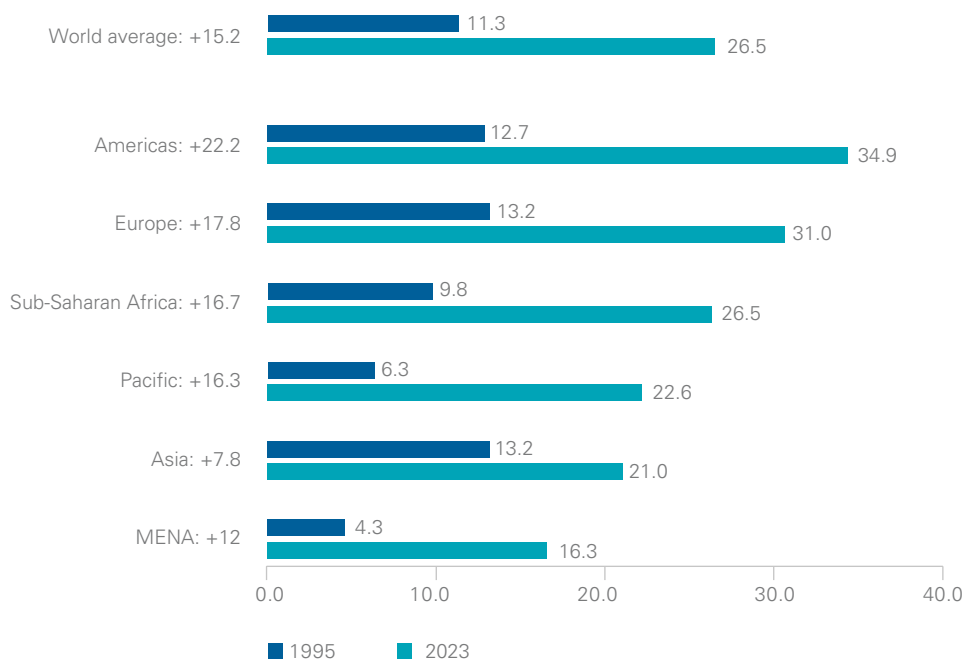
- Overall, six countries had parity (or a greater share of women than men) in their lower or single house as of 1 January 2023 (Cuba, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Rwanda and the United Arab Emirates). This is one more country than at the start of 2022, after a male MP and former Speaker in New Zealand was replaced by a woman MP.
- By the end of 2022, still less than a third of lower or single chambers in the world had reached 30% or more seats held by women. In sixty-four countries, women held 30% or more seats in their lower or single house at the end of 2022, only three more than in 2021.
- Globally, the average share of women Speakers of parliament increased to 22.7% (+0.7 points) and was notably below women's overall representation in parliament (26.5%).

The positive highlights of women's political participation in 2022 are reflected in policy impacts, diversity outcomes, increasingly gender-sensitive parliamentary workplaces, and public awareness. For the first time, not a single functioning parliament in the world has zero women members. Yet the world's parliaments remain far from parity. In 2022, women's representation progressed at its slowest rate in six years, growing a mere 0.4 percentage points to 26.5% by the end of the year. At this rate, parity will not be achieved for more than 80 years.

Forty-seven countries¹ held parliamentary elections in 2022, electing an average of 25.8% women (combined upper/lower and single-chamber parliaments), an increase of 2.3 percentage points compared with the previous elections in these countries. This gain was largely driven by strong outcomes in just a handful of countries. Eight countries saw women being elected or appointed to 40% or more of the seats in a legislative chamber in 2022, including Australia, which achieved the strongest outcome of the year (upper chamber: 56.6%). Yet, for the most part, parliamentary renewals in 2022 resulted in negative change (29% of renewals) or timid growth (26% of renewals with growth of less than 2 percentage points). In over a third of all elections held in 2022, fewer than 20% women were elected to national legislatures.

Figure 1

World and regional averages of women in parliaments, 1995 and 2023



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data for all houses combined, figures correct as of 1 July 1995 and 1 January 2023 respectively.

Around the world, regions saw varied gains and setbacks:

- The historic elections in Colombia saw the greatest gains in the Americas. While divisive elections in Brazil and the United States of America saw progress in the diversity of women elected, they registered some of the lowest results in terms of women's representation in the region.
- High-stakes elections in Angola, Kenya and Senegal all saw strong outcomes for women.
- In a historic year in the Pacific, Australia achieved record-breaking shares of women in both chambers of parliament and, for the first time ever, there is at least one woman member of parliament (MP) in each of the legislatures of all Pacific Island countries.
- Wide divides characterized outcomes in Asia in 2022: while the historically male-dominated Senate in Japan saw record numbers of women elected, India – the world's most populous democracy – remained in the lowest quartile in the world.

¹ The total of countries does not include Tunisia. Results of parliamentary elections that began in the country on 17 December 2022 and concluded on 27 January 2023 were still unavailable at the time of publication.

- There were few points of light for women's representation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2022, where women accounted for just 16.3 % on average in renewals in 2022 – the lowest average of all regions.

Regional trends

The Americas: Historic change and growing diversity

Parliamentary renewals in eight countries in the Americas in 2022 resulted in women being elected to an average of 30.2% of seats in parliament, a 2.2-percentage-point gain versus the previous elections to the same chambers. On the whole, the share of women in parliament in the Americas grew by 1.1 percentage points to an average of 34.9%, the highest in the world. The South American subregion had the highest growth rate (+1.6 percentage points) for an overall average of 30.5%. The Caribbean retained the highest average (40.2%). Women's representation in North America stood at 38.8%, driven by a parity legislature in Mexico and the appointed parity Senate in Canada, despite the United States of America electing an average of only 27% women to its two chambers.

The region saw an ongoing leftward swing in politics, with the 2022 elections in Colombia and Brazil heralding significant political change. This second "pink tide," which is placing increasing focus on environmental issues, gender and social justice, built on victories for other left-wing candidates in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, Mexico and Peru in the past five years. This political shift

transformed some parliaments in 2022, like Colombia, while the left-wing victory in the executive branch in Brazil was not reflected in parliament.

In 2022, voters in Chile rejected a proposed new progressive constitution, while Mexico saw an intensification of violence against journalists, especially women reporters. In Argentina, the female Vice-President and Senate Speaker Cristina Fernández de Kirchner narrowly escaped an assassination attempt. In Peru, President Pedro Castillo was impeached, imprisoned and replaced by former Vice-President Dina Boluarte, who became the country's first female president.²

Among single and lower chambers of parliament, the greatest improvements in women's parliamentary representation occurred in Colombia (+10.2 percentage points), Barbados (+6.7 percentage points) and Saint Kitts and Nevis (+6.3 percentage points), bringing Colombia, Barbados and St. Kitts and Nevis close to one-third women. In upper chambers in the region, the most notable gain was in Colombia (+8.3 points). Women's representation in all parliaments in the region increased or held stable, with the exception of the 16-seat upper chamber of the Parliament of Grenada, which elected two fewer women in 2022 (-15.4 percentage points). Saint Kitts and Nevis now has a record number of women (five) in its National Assembly, including one directly elected woman, three appointed women (including the Deputy Speaker, Latoya Jones) and the Speaker, Lanien Blanchette.

² aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/28/latin-americas-top-stories-of-2022.



In 2022, Colombia elected an unprecedented number of women to Parliament. Francia Marquez became the country's first Afro-Colombian Vice-President and only the second woman to hold this position. © Raul Arboleda/AFP

Costa Rica led the regional results in 2022, electing 47.4% women to its single house of parliament (+1.8 percentage points). The country's strong history of women's parliamentary representation is attributable to the design and implementation of its gender quota. Introduced in 1996, the parity quota has been amended several times. Today, the law requires 50% women candidates in winnable positions on closed party lists. On 1 January 2023, Costa Rica ranked 8th out of 187 countries worldwide for women's representation, thanks in part to the role of the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones – the electoral management body (EMB) – in overseeing compliance with the law and public campaign finance allocations.

The elections in **Colombia** were historic in several regards. The new government included Francia Márquez, the country's first Afro-Colombian vice-president and only the second woman to hold this position. Women represented 29.6% of seats elected to the upper house (+8.3 percentage points) and 28.9% to the lower house (+10.2 percentage points). This jump in women's representation in both chambers was reflected in the country's Indigenous and Afro-descendant constituencies,³ and brings Colombia close to the South American subregional average of 30.5%. The increase can be attributed to several factors. Some 1,112 women were registered as candidates and women's candidacies exceeded 40% of the total (6 percentage points more than in 2018). A feminist party also contested the 2022 elections for the very first time. Known as *Estamos Listos* ("We Are Ready"), it received over 100,000 votes and raised awareness despite limited campaign resources.⁴

Despite positive gains for women candidates in Colombia in 2022, similar rates of success did not translate to women in conflict-affected zones. Only three women won seats in the Special Transitory Constituencies for Peace (CITREP) – constituencies in territories that were marginalized during five decades of civil war and have been granted 16 extra parliamentary seats as part of the peace agreement signed in 2016. Although the goal of these special constituencies is to advance more inclusive representation in politics, and despite the fact that gender-parity lists were used, the outcome for women in these conflict-affected constituencies was well below the national average. Women, who were disproportionately affected by the conflict, currently hold 18% of these seats, well below their overall share of 28% of seats in the lower house. Although preferential voting was used, women were mostly listed in second place on candidate lists, creating a symbolic chilling effect.⁵ These CITREP seats will exist for the next two presidential terms (2022–2026 and 2026–2030), offering as yet unrealized potential for women's participation.

The elections in **Brazil** saw significant landmarks in diversity in women's representation (see separate section) but produced the weakest results overall among Latin American elections held in 2022. Although the presidential run-off saw the return of leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, pro-Bolsonaro candidates swept the National Congress, including taking a new majority in the Federal Senate (the upper chamber). More women were elected to the Chamber of Deputies (the lower chamber) than at any point in the country's history. However, Brazil remains far below the average for the region, with only 17.7% women in the Chamber of Deputies and 16% in the Federal Senate.

Since 1997, Brazilian law has stipulated a 30% minimum of the under-represented sex on party and coalition lists for federal, state and municipal elections. Parties did not start to follow this rule for national elections until 2014. Even with better implementation, outcomes for women in parliament have stagnated well below the quota target level. This may reflect the institutional design of the open list proportional representation (PR) system,⁶ as well as rapidly increasing campaign costs coupled with a widening gap between women's and men's fundraising abilities.⁷ A law requiring political parties to allocate 30% of their public electoral funds to women candidates is often abused and the resources squandered or misdirected.⁸

In the **United States of America**, women's representation in the legislature inched above its previous historic high from 2020, with women elected to 28.7% of the seats in the House of Representatives (the lower chamber, +1.3 percentage points) and 25.3% in the Senate (the upper chamber, tied with a historic high recorded in 2019–2020). More than half of the incoming female members of the House of Representatives were women of colour. This trend reflected a steady increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of women candidates and officeholders in Congress, especially in the lower chamber, in recent years.⁹ Record numbers of women were also elected to state legislatures and governorships and the first Black woman, Ketanji Brown Jackson, was appointed to the United States Supreme Court.

3 infobae.com/en/2022/03/17/the-new-colombian-congress-will-be-occupied-by-almost-30-by-women/.

4 transparenciaelectoral.org/observatoriodemujeresypolitica/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Informe-Elecciones-Colombia-2022.pdf.

5 sismamujer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Reporte-de-participacion-de-mujeres-en-la-politica-Curules-de-paz-.pdf.

6 cambridge.org/core/books/abs/party-institutionalization-and-womens-representation-in-democratic-brazil/brazils-quota-law-and-the-challenges-of-institutional-change-amidst-weak-and-gendered-institutions/238E4DFFA9D594C54C0F67E4FA4EB7A4.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.; nytimes.com/2019/04/12/world/americas/brazil-women-candidates-money.html.

9 cnn.com/2022/11/23/politics/election-2022-record-women-in-congress/index.html.

Table 1

Women in lower and single chambers after parliamentary renewals in 2022

	Country	Total seats	Total women	% women	Quota
1	Costa Rica	57	27	47.4%	Yes***
2	Sweden	349	161	46.1%	Yes*
3	Senegal	165	73	44.2%	Yes**
4	Denmark	179	78	43.6%	No
5	Slovenia	90	36	40.0%	Yes***
6	Serbia	249	96	38.6%	Yes**
7	Australia	151	58	38.4%	Yes*
8	Dominica	32	12	37.5%	No
9	France	577	215	37.3%	Yes***
10	Portugal	230	85	37.0%	Yes***
11	Angola	220	74	33.6%	Yes***
12	Nepal	275	91	33.1%	Yes**
13	Italy	400	129	32.3%	Yes***
14	Grenada	16	5	31.3%	No
15	Saint Kitts and Nevis	16	5	31.3%	No
16	Equatorial Guinea	100	31	31.0%	No
17	Latvia	100	30	30.0%	No
18	Guinea	81	24	29.6%	Yes**
19	Colombia	187	54	28.9%	Yes**
20	United States of America	432	124	28.7%	No
21	Malta	79	22	27.8%	Yes**
22	Philippines	311	85	27.3%	Yes*
23	Barbados	30	8	26.7%	No
24	Lesotho	121	32	26.4%	Yes**
25	Bulgaria	240	58	24.2%	No
26	Kenya	350	82	23.4%	Yes***
27	Israel	120	28	23.3%	Yes*
28	Bahrain	40	8	20.0%	No
29	Somalia	274	54	19.7%	Yes***
30	Brazil	513	91	17.7%	Yes***
31	Burkina Faso	71	12	16.9%	No
32	Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	7	16.7%	Yes**
33	Congo	151	22	14.6%	No
34	Sao Tome and Principe	55	8	14.5%	Yes**
35	Hungary	199	28	14.1%	Yes*
36	Malaysia	221	30	13.6%	Yes*
37	Fiji	55	6	10.9%	No
38	Nauru	19	2	10.5%	No
39	Gambia (The)	58	5	8.6%	No
40	Kuwait	64	4	6.3%	No
41	Lebanon	128	8	6.3%	No
42	Vanuatu	52	1	1.9%	No
43	Papua New Guinea	115	2	1.7%	No

Note: * indicates one or more political parties adopted a voluntary measure to increase the number of women candidates, ** indicates a legislated quota (either candidate quota or reserved seats), and *** indicates both legislated and voluntary party quotas

Table 2

Women in upper houses after parliamentary renewals in 2022

	Country	Total seats	Total women	% women	Quota system
1	Australia	76	43	56.6%	Yes*
2	Barbados	20	8	42.1%	No
3	Nepal	58	22	37.3%	Yes**
4	Italy	320	71	34.5%	Yes***
5	Kenya	68	21	30.9%	Yes***
6	Grenada	13	4	30.8%	No
7	Colombia	108	32	29.6%	Yes**
8	Philippines	24	7	29.2%	Yes*
9	Japan	245	64	25.8%	No
10	United States of America	100	25	25.3%	No
11	Bahrain	40	10	25.0%	No
12	Lesotho	32	8	24.2%	No
13	Equatorial Guinea	74	16	21.6%	Yes*
14	Czech Republic	81	15	18.5%	No
15	Slovenia	40	7	17.5%	No
16	Brazil	81	13	16.0%	Yes*
17	Jordan	65	10	15.4%	No
18	India	241	33	13.9%	No
19	Algeria	132	7	4.3%	No

Europe: Modest growth and a drift towards populism

Europe faced its greatest security threat since the Second World War when Russia invaded Ukraine in early 2022. The shockwaves of the conflict were felt in elections in the region throughout the year. Bold women leaders in neighbouring European countries departed from traditional geopolitics, with Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin and then Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson breaking with decades of military non-alignment when they applied to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Elections in France, Hungary, Italy and Sweden saw right-wing parties gain or consolidate power.¹⁰ In the United Kingdom, Liz Truss became the third woman Prime Minister and the shortest-serving holder of the office in the country's history. Amid controversies over violence against women involving several political leaders (see separate section), Yaël Braun-Pivet was elected as President of the National Assembly of France, making her the first woman to hold the position. A woman, Élisabeth Borne, became Prime Minister of France for only the second time in the country's history.

Although parliamentary renewals in Europe saw the second-highest regional average of women elected in the world in 2022 (31%), over half of the 15 legislative chambers renewed in 13 European countries saw women's representation fall or stagnate: Bosnia and Herzegovina (lower chamber:

-4.8 percentage points), Italy (lower chamber: -3.5 percentage points; upper chamber: -0.8 percentage points), Portugal (unicameral: -1.7 percentage points), France (lower chamber: -1.6 percentage points), Latvia (unicameral: -1 percentage point), Serbia (unicameral: -0.2 percentage points) and Sweden (unicameral: no change).

Overall, Europe was one of only two regions in the world where women's representation in parliament fell between 2021 and 2022, although the decline was small (-0.1 percentage points). This loss was driven by Southern Europe (-1.2 percentage points). The Nordic countries were the highest-performing subregion (45.7% women) and the only subregion to gain a full percentage point. While Central and Eastern Europe also had modest growth in 2022, these countries had the lowest average of women in parliament in Europe (25%).

Just two countries saw gains in excess of 5 percentage points: Slovenia (lower chamber: +15.6 percentage points; upper chamber: +7.5 percentage points) and Malta (+13.1 percentage points). Women's representation in the region varies broadly. Four chamber renewals in 2022 produced fewer than 20% women MPs: Hungary (14.1%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (lower chamber: 16.7%), Slovenia (upper chamber: 17.5%), and Czech Republic (upper chamber: 18.5%). At the other end of the spectrum, three parliaments elected 40% or more women members: Sweden (46.1%), Denmark (43.6%) and Slovenia (lower chamber: 40%). This was the first time that these chambers in Denmark and Slovenia had reached or exceeded the 40% threshold.

¹⁰ pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/10/06/populists-in-europe-especially-those-on-the-right-have-increased-their-vote-shares-in-recent-elections/.



Slovenia's parliamentary elections in April 2022 saw 40% of seats go to women thanks to the effective implementation of quotas.
© Jure Makovec/AFP

In **Slovenia**, women's representation in the National Assembly (the lower chamber) rebounded after a significant drop in 2018, when political parties pushed back on quota rules. The 2022 outcomes were historic for Slovenia, placing it among the highest in the region (40%). Urška Klakočar Zupančič was elected as the chamber's first woman Speaker. The country's 2022 presidential elections were also historic for electing the first female Head of State, Nataša Pirc Musar, in a surprise win for the largely ceremonial position. The National Assembly results reflect a steady but uneven impact of the legislated candidate quota. Women's representation was at 12.2% when Slovenia first introduced its quota in 2004. Newly formed parties had a positive effect by substantially increasing women's representation in 2011 and 2014 (35.6%). The 2022 elections appear to have corrected some of the implementation gaps that contributed to the large dip in 2018 (-11.2 percentage points), including EMB oversight to ensure compliance. Looking forward, the relatively low candidate quota of 35% for the open list PR system has no guarantee of ambitious or sustainable outcomes. Despite stronger implementation in 2022, some research points to continued political, institutional and cultural forms of resistance to the quota. There is still a lack of equality measures in parties and an absence of party transparency, as well as a complicated electoral system.¹¹

Malta long featured among the lowest-ranking states in Europe for women's parliamentary representation until a gender quota was finally introduced in 2022 after years of debate. The quota uses a "top-up" (or "runner up") system whereby up to 12 additional seats may be assigned by the Electoral Commission in the event that either sex does not achieve 40% of seats through direct elections. Results are tallied for the women candidates who were unsuccessful in the direct election; the women are ranked accordingly, and the extra seats are attributed to those who won the highest number of votes, even though they did not win the election outright. Each party can gain up to six seats through this formula. This new system resulted in historically high women's representation in 2022 (27.8%). However, the actual impact of the new legislation is not a straightforward gain: only four women were directly elected in 2022 (down from nine in 2018), although these outright winners attracted higher numbers of votes than women elected to previous parliaments. The remaining women-held seats were assigned under the quota system, with further seats filled through casual elections.¹²

In **Italy**, outcomes in the Chamber of Deputies (lower chamber: 32.3%) and the Senate (upper chamber: 34.5%) marked a slight retraction from historic highs at the previous elections in 2018 (35.7% and 35.3% respectively), which were the first to use revised quota rules. Giorgia Meloni became the first woman to serve as Prime Minister.

11 link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-08931-2_17.

12 karlsnotes.com/how-does-a-casual-election-work/.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Gains in key elections

In 2022, democracy in sub-Saharan Africa faced myriad challenges. Numerous elections were slated to take place in the region, as part of efforts to restart democratic processes and resume constitutional governance. Some went forward, including the completion of the 2021 election cycle in Somalia. Transitional legislatures were appointed in Burkina Faso and Guinea. Elections scheduled for 2022 were delayed for another two years in Mali and Chad. The October coup d'état in Burkina Faso, the second of 2022, was the seventh on the continent in 26 months.

Fourteen renewals in 11 sub-Saharan countries in 2022 produced an average of 24.2% women-held seats, a gain compared with previous elections held for these chambers (+2.9 percentage points). On the whole, women's representation in sub-Saharan Africa increased by 0.6 percentage points over the year, for a regional average of 26.5% women in all chambers. East Africa had the highest average (32%) but saw a slight loss overall (-0.1 percentage points). West Africa gained 2 percentage points but remained significantly behind other subregions, at 17.8% overall.

Three countries reached or surpassed 30%, including the unicameral parliaments of Senegal (44.2%) and Angola (33.6%), the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) in Equatorial Guinea (31%) and the Senate of Kenya (30.9%). Overall, elections on the subcontinent yielded static outcomes for women. Of 14 chamber renewals in 11 countries, only the appointed National Transitional Council in Guinea (+14.7 percentage points), Equatorial

Guinea's upper chamber (+6.8 percentage points), the unicameral parliament of Angola (+6.8 percentage points) and the lower chamber in Lesotho (+4.3 percentage points) saw changes of more than 4 percentage points. Renewals in four countries resulted in 10–20% of seats being held by women (the lower house in Somalia at 19.7%, the transitional parliament of Burkina Faso at 16.9%, the lower chamber in the Congo at 14.6%, and the unicameral parliament of São Tomé and Príncipe at 14.5%), and one country elected women to fewer than 10% of the seats (the Gambia at 8.6%).

Three high-stakes elections in 2022 – in Angola, Kenya and Senegal – were viewed as bellwethers for democracy on the subcontinent. The largely peaceful elections in **Kenya** marked the third time a sitting president had handed power to a successor after reaching their term limit. The elections were marked by shifting political alliances and the rise of new, broad issue-based coalitions in place of ethnic politics. The country's leading political parties abided by their zero-tolerance commitments regarding hate speech and misinformation in their ranks. This contributed to a more peaceful election, dodging the extreme violence that has marked Kenyan elections for years.

Kenyans elected more women in 2022 than ever before. Thirty women MPs were elected out of 290 seats (+7 percentage points versus 2017) and five other women MPs were nominated to represent social interest groups. This was in addition to the 47 county representative seats that are reserved for women under the Constitution. Three women senators (the same as in 2017) and seven women



The Kenyan elections saw more women elected than ever before. © Patrick Meinhardt/AFP

governors (up from three in 2017) were elected. Despite significantly less violence overall, violence against women in politics (VAWP) remained a serious concern in the 2022 elections, with reports of physical and sexual violence as well as intimidation, harassment and online abuse.¹³ Only 1,962 women (12% of candidates) stood for election. Neither the National Assembly nor the Senate reached the minimum threshold of one third of seats to be held by the least represented sex, as required by the Constitution.

For the first time since independence, the ruling party's camp in **Senegal** lost an absolute majority in parliament and will have to rely on other forces to pass legislation. This is also the first time a Senegalese president will govern without their party holding a majority. Since the introduction of a parity law in 2010, Senegal has been one of the top countries in the world for women in parliament. In 2022, it made history with the largest-ever proportion of women MPs in a West African parliament. The country ranks 3rd in Africa and 14th in the world for women's representation in parliament.

The strong representation of women in parliament is credited with achieving legislative gains in recent years, including a law allowing Senegalese women married to foreigners to pass their nationality to their children (2013) and legislation criminalizing rape (2020). However, other legislative challenges loom large, on matters ranging from equal parental rights and violence against women to education for girls and access to health.¹⁴

In **Angola**, the ruling party – the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) – consolidated its long-held grip on power but with a much-reduced majority, after important gains by the opposition party, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Esperança da Costa became the first female vice-president after contesting the election as deputy head of the MPLA list. Carolina Cerqueira was elected as the first-ever woman to lead the National Assembly of Angola. The general election also saw the first-ever female candidate for president. Progressive feminization of the MPLA in the past two decades has driven sharp increases in women's representation in parliament, following the introduction of a legislated quota by the ruling party in 2010. In 2015, the MPLA introduced a voluntary party quota of 40% for women in party bodies and management positions.

Four countries saw further declines in the number of women in parliament: Lesotho (upper chamber -0.8 percentage points), the Gambia (unicameral chamber -1.7 percentage points), Burkina Faso's transitional parliament (-2.8 percentage points), and Somalia's lower chamber (-4.7 percentage points). In **the Gambia**, despite active efforts to adopt a quota for the country's unique voting system, which

uses marbles dropped into drums rather than paper or electronic ballots, women's representation fell to just 8.6% of parliamentary seats.

In **Somalia**, elections to the House of the People (the lower house) were finally completed on 13 April 2022, after four months of polling. The 275 members of the chamber are chosen by delegates appointed by clan elders and members of civil society, who are selected by regional state officials. The MPs then vote for a president, who leads the country. Nearly 20% of seats were filled by women (19.7%). This outcome represents a 4.7-percentage-point decrease compared with the previous chamber and, for the third consecutive electoral cycle, falls short of the 30% reserved-seat quota for women outlined in the Garowe I and II Principles. There are still no enforcement mechanisms for the quota provisions contained in the Constitution.¹⁵ Implementation is negotiated with primarily male political figures and clan elders.

Burkina Faso and Guinea both appointed transitional legislatures in 2022 following military coups. In both cases, women's representation increased compared to the outcome of the last popular elections, although it remained below targets overall.

In **Burkina Faso**, 71 members were appointed to the Transitional Legislative Assembly following a September 2022 coup. The members were appointed as follows: 20 members by the Head of State, 16 by the defence and security forces, 13 by representatives of the country's regions (1 per region), 10 by civil society organizations and 12 by political parties.¹⁶ These members replaced their predecessors, who had been appointed through a similar method in March following an earlier coup. Women's representation in the second transitional legislature of 2022 dropped by 2.8 percentage points, to 16.9%. However, the share of women in both transitional assemblies was significantly higher than following the previous popular elections, held in 2020, when only 6.3% of MPs were women despite the existence of a 30% quota. Notwithstanding, the failed historic quota was not translated to the transitional body, even symbolically.

A National Transitional Council (CNT) was established in **Guinea** in February 2022, five months after a military coup that briefly dissolved the National Assembly. The CNT members were chosen by interim President and coup leader Mamady Doumbouya from lists submitted by political parties and associations. A total of 24 women were appointed (29.6%), representing the highest share of women to serve in a Guinean legislative body and the highest single increase in women's representation (+14.7 percentage points) in the region in 2022. The country's 2019 parity law has never been fully implemented.

13 [reuters.com/world/africa/women-candidates-kenyan-elections-endure-abuse-attacks-2022-08-01/](https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/women-candidates-kenyan-elections-endure-abuse-attacks-2022-08-01/); eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/EU%20EOM%20Kenya%202022%20Preliminary%20Statement%2011%20August%202022.pdf; [dw.com/en/kenyan-election-female-candidates-face-violence-abuse/a-62697361](https://www.dw.com/en/kenyan-election-female-candidates-face-violence-abuse/a-62697361).

14 [africanews.com/2022/09/11/senegal-leads-way-on-women-legislators-but-challenges-ahead/](https://www.africanews.com/2022/09/11/senegal-leads-way-on-women-legislators-but-challenges-ahead/).

15 eisa.org/pdf/som2022brief.pdf.

16 africanews.com/2022/11/11/burkina-fasos-new-transitional-legislature-takes-office/.



In 2022, Papua New Guinea saw the election of two women MPs, ending a five-year absence of women in parliament. © Andrew Kutan/AFP

Pacific: History made in Australia, small gains in critically unequal Pacific Island countries

Following by-elections in Tonga in November 2022, there is now – for the first time ever – at least one elected woman member in every Pacific parliament.¹⁷ After years of languishing at the bottom of rankings for women in parliament with all-male parliaments, both Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu elected one or more women in 2022: Rufina Peter and Kessy Sawang were elected in Papua New Guinea, while Gloria Julia King won a seat in the October snap election in Vanuatu. Meanwhile, the Senate of Australia and the House of Representatives of New Zealand both made history when they became female-majority chambers in 2022.¹⁸ Rhoda Sikilabu became the first female premier of Solomon Islands, a rare case in the Pacific region.

The Pacific saw the highest growth rate in women's representation of all regions, gaining 1.7 percentage points for an overall average of 22.6% women in parliament. Six chambers were renewed in five Pacific countries in 2022. It was a historic year for women's representation in Australia which, along with New Zealand, became the subregion, as per the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) regional groupings, with the highest average number of women in parliament (across both houses) in the world (46.4%). However, when these two countries are excluded, the average proportion of women in parliament in the Pacific Island subregion

stands at just 6.5%. As a result of losses in Fiji, the Pacific Island countries saw women's representation decline in parliamentary renewals in 2022 (-1.3 percentage points).

In **Australia**, the 2022 elections achieved several historic landmarks. Women now hold the majority of seats in the Senate (the upper chamber), at 56.6% (+7.9 percentage points). The House of Representatives (the lower house) also hit a record high, with women elected to 38.4% of seats (+7.9 percentage points). No legislated quotas exist, but several leading parties have voluntary quotas. The 2022 election reversed a 20-year decline in Australia's standing in IPU rankings of women in parliament.

More women stood for election than ever before: they represented 40% of all candidates, up from 32% in 2016 and from less than 28% in 2013.¹⁹ Shifting political landscapes played a role, as opposition women candidates won as challengers to Liberal incumbents (see separate section). The increase in women's representation was also driven by political alternatives offered by women running as independents or Green Party candidates. Notably, the share of women independent candidates shot up from 22.7% in 2019 to 65.2% in 2022.²⁰

Outside of Australia, the fate of women in parliamentary renewals in the Pacific was bleak. Papua New Guinea and Fiji, the two largest Pacific Island countries, both went to the polls in 2022. The **Papua New Guinea** general election

17 eastasiaforum.org/2023/01/03/concerns-for-pacific-democracy-but-no-crisis-yet/.

18 washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/26/new-zealand-women-parliament-gender/.

19 theconversation.com/our-new-parliament-will-have-record-numbers-of-women-will-this-finally-make-it-a-safe-place-to-work-181598.

20 tallyroom.com.au/45597.

was the most violent in the 47 years since independence: in one incident, 20 people were massacred and a further 120 injured in an election-related dispute.

Prior to the election, the Special Parliamentary Committee on Gender-Based Violence submitted its final report, which included recommendations for immediate action by the next government in respect of quotas and other measures for women's political empowerment. In particular, the Committee noted its support for the 2011 proposal to reserve 22 seats for women, and for a party candidate quota, as specified in the amended Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates.²¹

No quotas, voluntary or legislated, were applied in the July election. Two women won seats, ending the five-year run of an all-male legislature. Ten other women candidates were placed within the top five seats on their lists. Women's endorsements by political parties saw notable gains in 2022: nearly twice as many women candidates received a party endorsement in 2022 compared with 2017 (in 2022, 40.3% of 159 women candidates were endorsed, versus 22.8% of 167 women candidates in 2017). Overall, the number of women candidates declined, bucking a trend of steady growth recorded since 2007.²²

Brief optimism over recent historic gains in women's representation in **Fiji** was diminished after women's representation in parliament fell by nearly half in 2022. Women won just six seats (10.9%), compared with 10 at the previous elections.

Asia: Wide divides

Across Asia as a whole, women's representation in parliament stood at 21%, up 0.3 percentage points. This modest progress was driven by growth in South-East Asia (+1.2 percentage points) and in Central Asia (+0.2 percentage points). South Asia had the lowest levels of representation in the region (16.9%) and saw a further decline in 2022 (-0.9 percentage points).

Renewals were held for seven chambers in five countries in 2022, with women elected to an average of 25.7% of the seats in parliament (a change of less than 1 percentage point since the previous elections for these chambers). Nepal was

the only country in Asia to use a legislated quota for its 2022 parliamentary renewal and had the strongest outcome in the region in 2022. Voluntary party quotas were used during the Malaysia and Philippines elections.

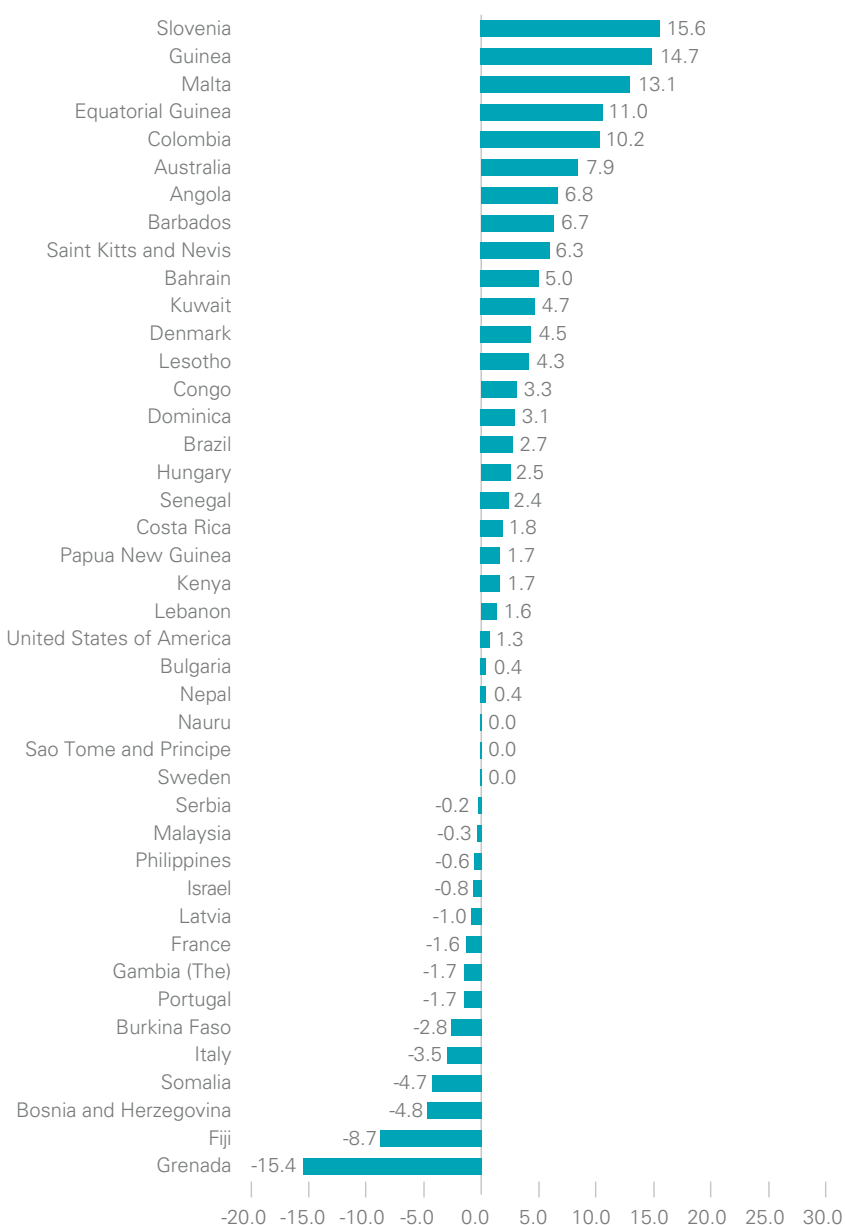
Outcomes varied widely across the region. In Nepal, women were elected to 33.1% and 37.3% of the seats in the lower and upper chambers respectively, while the lower chamber of Malaysia and the upper chamber of India saw women taking only 13% of the seats. There were no notable gains or losses in 2022: all outcomes were within a margin of less than 3 percentage points relative to previous results.

The November 2022 polls in **Nepal** were the second since the promulgation of a new constitution in 2015. Following the introduction of a 33% reserved seat quota in 2007, Nepal has elected a consistent proportion of women to both chambers

Figure 2

Parliamentary renewals in 2022

Progress and setbacks (in %) of women in lower or single houses of parliament renewed in 2022



21 devpolicy.org/women-in-the-2022-png-elections-20220822/.

22 devpolicy.org/women-candidate-numbers-up-in-png-20170615/.



The Philippines have been a leader in women's representation in South-East Asia for over a decade. In 2022, women's representation in parliament reached nearly 30%. © Chaideer Mahyuddin/AFP

of parliament. Women's success is deeply skewed between seats using PR and first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting systems. Only 9 women were elected to the 165 seats in FPTP races (5%), while 82 of the 110 PR seats were won by women (75%) in the lower chamber.²³ Women constituted just 9% of candidates for FPTP races for the lower chamber. This gender gap can be attributed to the ongoing influence of political party gatekeepers and "big man" politics, as well as to inequality in access to campaign finance.²⁴

In **India**, women accounted for just 33 of 237 members (13.9%) of the indirectly elected Council of States (the upper chamber) in 2022. The world's most populous democracy, with nearly 690 million women, India remains in the lowest quartile worldwide for women's representation. Neither the upper nor lower chambers have ever exceeded 15% women. Twenty-five years after it was first proposed, a bill to introduce quotas for the House of the People (the lower chamber) and state legislative assemblies continues to languish.²⁵ VAWP is rife in India,²⁶ including online abuse, harassment and intimidation.²⁷ According to one report, India tied for the highest proportion of violence against women protesters in recent years, with violent mobs associated with rival political parties.²⁸

Dynasty family politics dominated the presidential elections in the **Philippines**, while the legislative races produced consistent results for women in parliament (lower chamber: 27.3%; upper chamber: 29.2%). The Philippines has been a leader in women's representation in South-East Asia for over a decade. Despite strong outcomes, women's representation has plateaued at about 30% over the past 10 years. Access to campaign finance and harmful gender stereotypes are ongoing barriers to achieving parity.²⁹

Malaysia recorded the region's weakest outcome for women in parliament in 2022, with women being elected to 13.6% of the seats in the lower house at the snap general election, which resulted in the country's first hung parliament.

In **Japan**, a historic high of 25.8% women (+2.9 percentage points) were elected to the House of Councillors (the upper chamber) – where over half of the 245 seats were up for election – from a field of candidates including a record 181 women (33.2%). Thirty-five women were successful: 21 from electoral districts and 14 through PR. The outcomes of the upper house elections differed significantly from the 2021 lower house vote, when a mere 9.9% of winning candidates were women – just 1.5 percentage points more than in 1946, the year after the occupying United States authorities granted suffrage to Japanese women. This difference suggests that the revision of the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field ahead of the 2021 lower house elections was not influential. The revised act explicitly bans gender discrimination and sexual

23 en.setopati.com/political/159639_myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/fptp-election-a-road-less-traveled-by-women/.

24 myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/fptp-election-a-road-less-traveled-by-women/.

25 www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/8/25-years-india-women-reservation-bill-elected-bodies-gender.

26 iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/vawip-report.pdf.

27 time.com/5770213/india-women-politicians-twitter/.

28 msmagazine.com/2022/01/16/women-violence-politics-mexico-india-china/.

29 statements.unmeetings.org/statements/31.0070/20210324/cPWdeY15FTs/5nwa1PhFe0VVE_en.pdf.

harassment against female politicians and candidates, but the proposal for a legislated gender quota was not included.³⁰ Instead, the increase reflected an apparent attempt by political parties to honour a commitment to select similar numbers of male and female candidates³¹ and growing solidarity among women's groups and politicians.³²

In other parts of Asia, women's rights, including as they relate to political participation, severely deteriorated in 2022. In Afghanistan, the dramatic downward spiral in women's rights continued throughout the year after the Taliban takeover: violence against women spiked, there are no women in Cabinet and the Ministry of Women's Affairs has been abolished.³³ In the Islamic Republic of Iran, violent protests extended across the country in response to the case of Mahsa Amini, who died in the hands of the morality police after being arrested for "improperly" wearing her hijab.

Middle East and North Africa: Discouraging prospects

In the MENA region, seven legislative chambers in six countries were renewed in 2022. On average, women were elected to 16.3% of the seats in these chambers – the lowest in the world in the year. No MENA countries met the 2021 global average of 26.1% women in parliament, with only Bahrain and Israel reaching 20% or more. Three countries were well below 10%: Algeria (upper chamber: 4.3%), Kuwait (6.3%) and Lebanon (6.3%). No countries in the region

employed legislated quotas for parliamentary renewals in 2022. Overall, women's representation in parliament in the MENA region ended the year 0.6 percentage points lower than at end-2021, at 16.3%. It is one of only two regions in the world to see a year-over-year decrease.

In 2022, the region saw continued economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, following strong demand for oil driven by the war in Ukraine. In Libya, several proposed dates for elections fell through and the political transition remained stalled. The United Arab Emirates – the only MENA country to have achieved gender parity in parliament – continued an ongoing legal overhaul that has produced numerous advances on women's rights and equality. Meanwhile, repressive laws on guardianship, inheritance, citizenship and disobedience, and rules that curb the rights of unmarried women, are present in numerous countries in the region.

Twenty-eight women were elected to the unicameral Parliament of **Israel**, down from a record 35 in the outgoing chamber. Twice as many women were elected by opposition parties than by the ruling coalition, diminishing women's overall voice in leadership. Two parties led by prominent female politicians failed to clear the minimum vote threshold.³⁴ The previous record number of women in parliament was achieved as a result of the "Norwegian Law", which allows a number of members to resign their parliamentary seats while they hold ministerial position



Parliamentary elections in Bahrain led to 20% of seats going to women in the lower chamber, an increase from the previous 15%. © Ayman Yaqoob/Anadolu Agency via AFP

30 thediplomat.com/2021/06/can-japan-fix-the-gender-gap-in-its-politics/.

31 igs.ocha.ac.jp/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/7-Miura.pdf.

32 csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2022/0823/How-women-are-banding-together-to-change-Japanese-politics.

33 unwomen.org/en/news-stories/in-focus/2022/08/in-focus-women-in-afghanistan-one-year-after-the-taliban-takeover.

34 timesofisrael.com/a-netanyahu-led-government-would-see-sharp-drop-in-women-in-coalition/.

and be replaced by the next candidates on their faction's electoral roster.³⁵ Women's representation stands to increase in 2023 if the rule is applied.

Bahrain elected a record eight women to the Council of Representatives (the lower chamber), including many first-time lawmakers. More than 330 candidates, including a record 73 women, ran for a seat in the lower chamber,³⁶ up from 41 women candidates who ran for the same chamber in 2018.³⁷ The 2022 elections marked 20 years since women first achieved the right to stand for election in national polls. In those 2002 elections, only eight women ran and none were successful. The outgoing Council of Representatives had been led by a woman Speaker since 2018 – a first for the country's bicameral parliament. Also, 10 women were appointed to the 40-member Shura Council (the upper chamber) in 2022, where women have consistently held one quarter of the seats since 2006.

In **Algeria**, the indirectly elected Council of the Nation (the upper chamber) produced the lowest percentage of women representatives in the region in 2022, and nearly the lowest in the world. This outcome reflects the historic levels of representation in this chamber. It reinforces the dramatic setback in elections to the National People's Assembly (the lower chamber) in 2021, when women's representation dropped nearly 18 percentage points following the weakening of the quota, the change of electoral system and a deeply patriarchal campaign. The quota, which was introduced for the lower house after the 2011 "Arab Spring" uprisings, propelled Algeria to first place among Arab countries and 26th place globally in 2017 for women's political representation at both national and local levels.³⁸ The country has since plummeted to 170th place globally.

Despite a major turnover in the parliament of **Kuwait**, with 54% of incumbent candidates losing their seats, women's representation continued to fare poorly. Women, who make up 51.2% of voters, achieved the right to vote in 2005. However, parliamentary elections in 2020 led to the election of no women at all, as the only outgoing female MP, Safa al-Hashem, lost her seat. Two women were elected in 2022 and two were appointed as ministers, thereby becoming MPs.³⁹ At least 22 women, including a well-known TV personality, were among the 305 independent candidates competing for 50 elected seats.⁴⁰

Eight women were elected to the unicameral National Assembly of **Lebanon**. This was the highest number in history, but still places the country among the lowest in the

world in terms of women's representation (6.3%). Many new independent candidates emerged from civil society to compete in the polls following the 17 October Revolution of 2019,⁴¹ including four of the eight new women MPs.⁴²

Gender quotas and electoral systems

The presence of legislated gender quotas was once again decisive in 2022. Chambers with legislated quotas (or a combination of legislated quotas and voluntary party quotas) produced a significantly higher share of women than those without (30.9% versus 21.2%).

Parliaments with quotas experienced less volatility and greater growth in women's representation. Specifically, the interval of outcomes in chambers with quotas ranged from -4.8% to 15.6% (a 20-point interval), compared with -15.4% to 11% in chambers with no quotas (a 26.4-point interval). The average growth rate in women's representation in chambers with quotas was +2.9 percentage points, versus +1.7 percentage points in chambers with no quotas.

Countries with proportional representation (PR) and mixed electoral systems produced 29% women in parliament, while countries using majority/plurality systems elected 22.4% women. Appointed chambers resulted in nearly a quarter share of women (24.8%).

Electoral systems continue to influence the use of quotas. Countries using PR or mixed systems for renewals in 2022 were almost twice as likely to apply a legislated quota (or a combination of a legislated quota and a voluntary party quota) as to use no quota at all. In contrast, countries using plurality/majority systems were more than three times as likely to not use any legislated quota.

Chambers where only voluntary party quotas were applied produced an average of 28.6% women-held seats. All countries using only voluntary party quotas have had relatively stable outcomes over time, with the exception of Australia, which saw 7.9% gains in women's representation in both chambers and Equatorial Guinea, which gained 6.8% in its upper chamber. Interestingly, among renewals in 2022, voluntary party quotas were much more impactful in chambers with PR/mixed systems (31.5% women) than in chambers with plurality/majority systems (24.3%). The latter group includes Australia and Sweden.

While the choice to use a quota was influenced by the type of electoral system, the outcomes of the presence (or absence) of quotas were not impacted by the electoral system. In other words, quotas performed equally well in countries that used them, regardless of the type of

35 timesofisrael.com/likud-plans-to-expand-norwegian-law-to-increase-number-of-politicians-in-office/; timesofisrael.com/only-9-women-in-coalition-fewest-arabs-in-2-decades-a-preview-of-the-25th-knesset/.

36 france24.com/en/live-news/20221120-bahrain-elects-more-women-in-parliament-vote-without-opposition.

37 theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/12/bahrain-holds-election-without-opposition-candidates.

38 washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/women-and-politics-algeria-one-step-forward-two-steps-back.

39 These women became ex officio members after being appointed as ministers.

40 aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/29/what-you-need-to-know-about-kuwaitis-parliament-explainer.

41 reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-emboldened-opposition-goes-protest-parliament-2022-05-19/.

42 al-monitor.com/originals/2022/06/lebanon-elects-record-number-women-parliament; civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/interviews/5815-lebanon-this-election-has-brought-to-the-forefront-new-voices-speaking-about-rights.

Figure 3

Use of quotas: World and regional outcomes in 2022 renewals

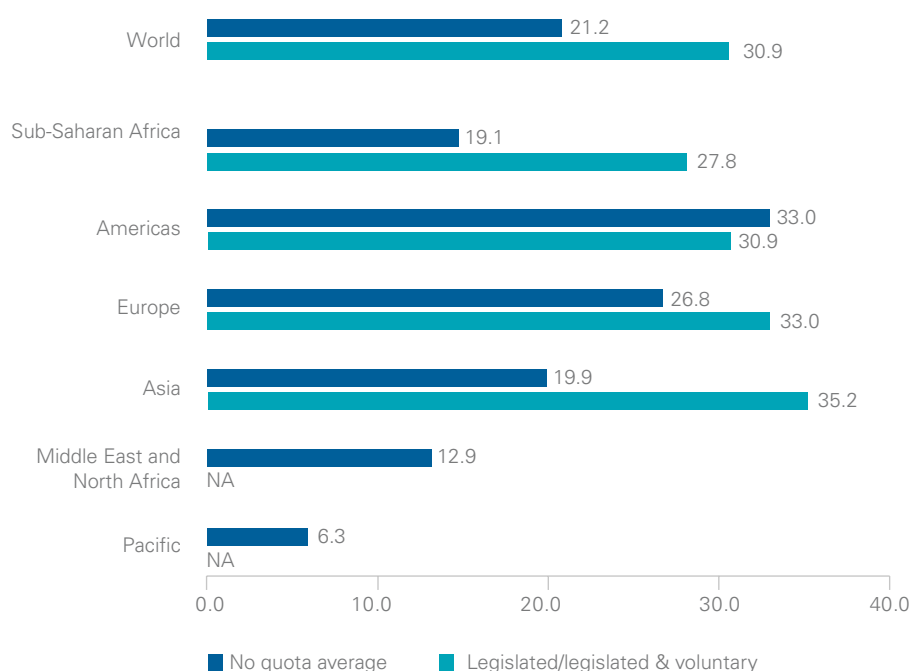
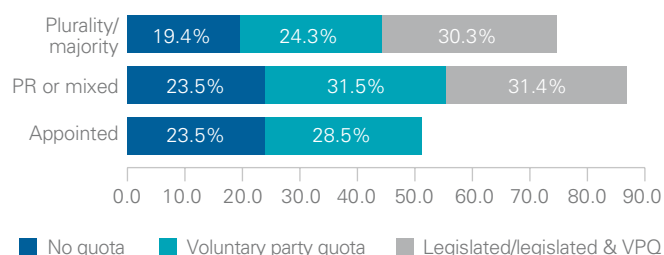


Figure 4

Use of quotas v. electoral systems in 2022 renewals



electoral system. Historically, PR/mixed systems have tended to favour the election of women relative to plurality/majority systems. But in 2022, PR/mixed systems with quotas produced 31.4% women, while plurality/majority systems with quotas resulted in a nearly identical share (30.3%). The decision not to use a quota was also equally detrimental: both PR/mixed systems and plurality/majority systems without quotas resulted in just 20% women elected.

In 2022, there were a number of landmark developments in the adoption or use of quota systems: a new quota was approved in São Tomé and Príncipe and will be used in the next elections (40% reserved seats), and progressive growth through quota reforms was observed in Costa Rica and Slovenia.

The combination of quota design and other related factors in the political landscape contributed to a mixed picture in countries such as Malta (where although more women now hold seats, fewer women were actually directly elected following the introduction of the quota).

Women in top leadership of parliament

Overall, 62 women led parliamentary chambers in 2022, just one more than in 2021. Six countries had women Speakers in both chambers: Argentina, the Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America.⁴³

Twenty-three unicameral parliaments were led by women (20%) and 39 chambers in bicameral parliaments (22.7%) were under women's leadership by the end of 2022.

Globally, upper chambers (25.6%) were more likely to be led by women than lower chambers (20.5%) and were more likely to have a woman leader than unicameral parliaments (20.4%). Parliamentary chambers in the Americas (31.5%) and Europe (30%) were most likely to be led by women by the end of 2022. Becoming the leader of parliament is overwhelmingly an advanced career achievement: over 90% of female Speakers are over the age of 45.

In 2022, 65 new Speakers were appointed or elected in chambers around the world.⁴⁴ Only 11 of them were women (16.9%), which is below the global average (22.7%). The Americas and sub-Saharan Africa tied for the most women leaders in renewed parliaments, seeing women become 4 out of 14 new Speakers in each region. The share of women parliamentary leaders elected in Europe in 2022 (13.3%) was significantly lower than the overall regional average (30%).

No country in the Asia or MENA regions appointed or elected a female Speaker in 2022. Although four Asian

⁴³ The Vice-President of the executive branch also serves as President of the Senate in both Argentina and the United States of America.

⁴⁴ This includes 3 Speakers in the lower chamber in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Following the 2022 elections, Yaël Braun-Pivet was elected as the first woman President of the French National Assembly. © Xose Bouzas/Hans Lucas via AFP

chambers (8.9%) currently have women leaders (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), it has been over five years since a woman was last appointed to lead a parliament in the region. There are currently no women parliamentary leaders in the MENA region, after Fawzia Zainal was replaced by a man as the Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain following the 2022 elections.

A number of countries saw historic achievements, with women leading parliament for the first time in 2022: Carolina Cerqueira became Speaker of the National Assembly of Angola, Yaël Braun-Pivet became President of the National Assembly of France, Brigitte Boccone-Pagès became Speaker of the National Council of Monaco, Danijela Djurović became President of the Parliament of

Figure 5

Regional average % women in parliament and average % women Speakers

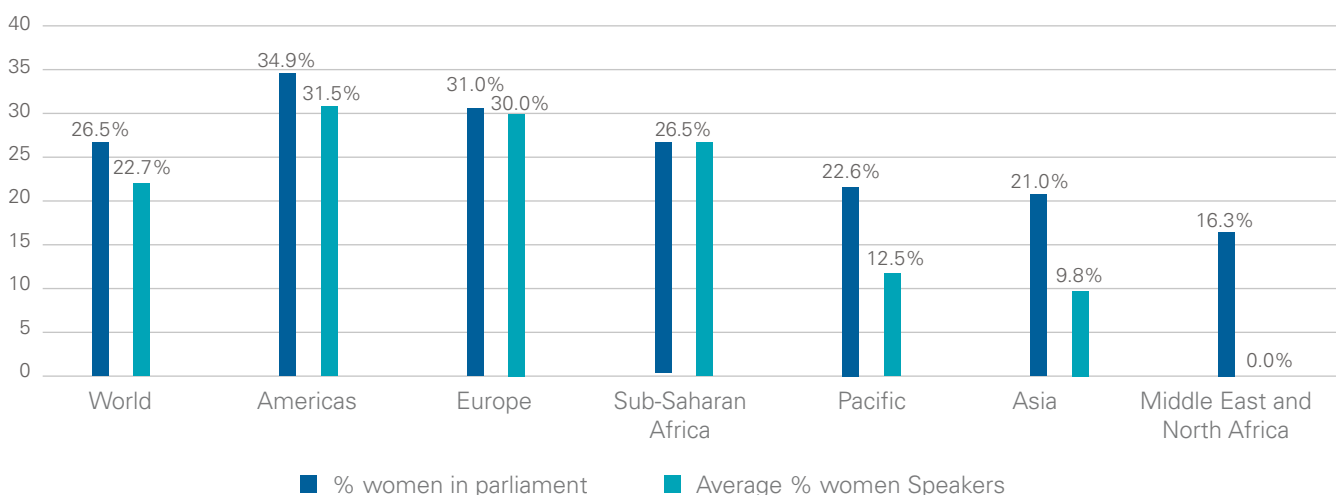


Figure 6

Proportion of women Speakers of Parliament, all chambers combined, 1995 to 2023

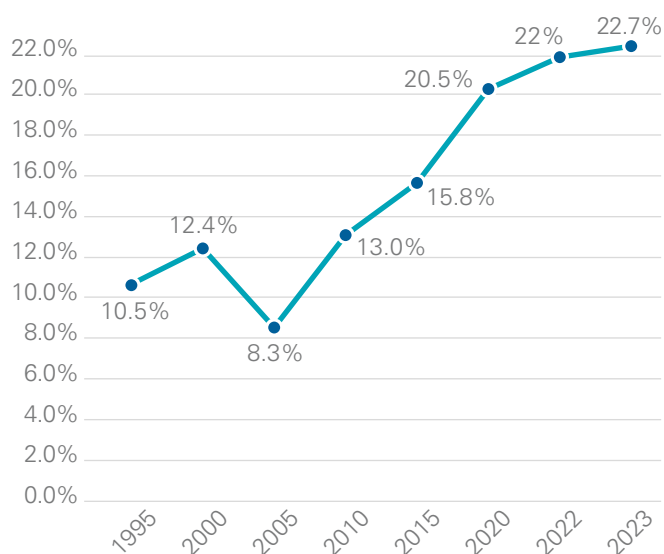


Figure 7

Sex breakdown of Speakers, by region

Global average for women Speakers is 22.7%

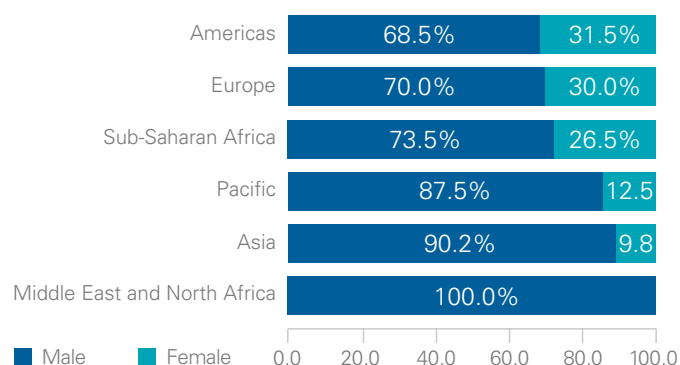
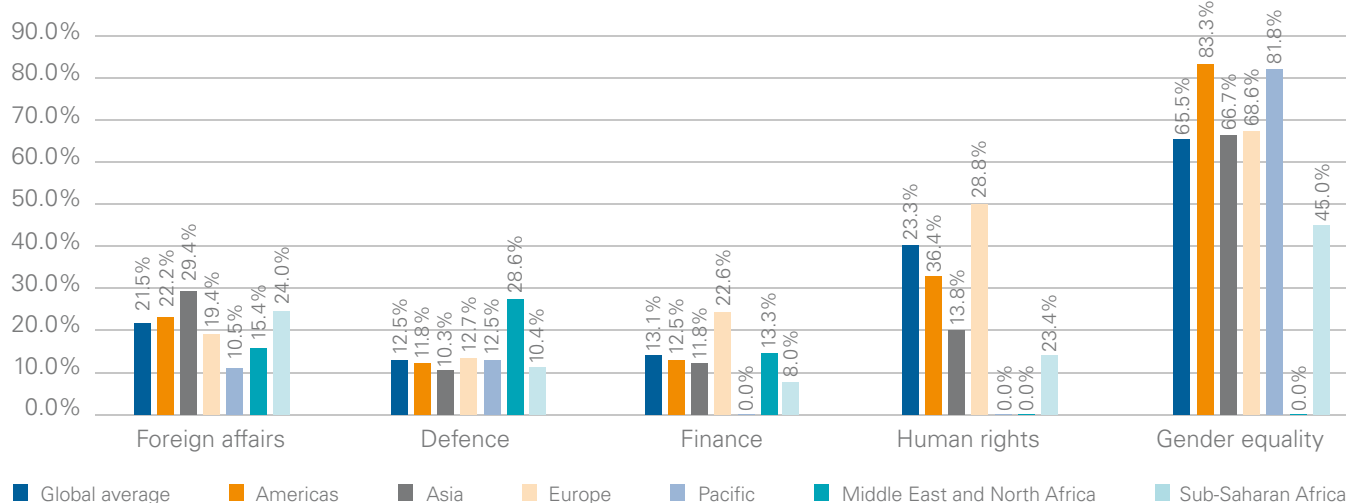


Figure 8

Global and regional proportion of women chairs of select parliamentary committees



Montenegro, Lanien Blanchette became Speaker of the National Assembly of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Urška Klakočar Zupančič became President of the National Assembly of Slovenia.

As of 1 January 2023, women occupied 250 out of 972 chair positions across the five types of parliamentary committees included in the IPU's Parline database (foreign affairs, defence, finance, human rights and gender equality). This amounts to 25.7% of committee chairs – a decrease from the 27.7% share recorded in 2021. This proportion drops to 17.4% when gender equality committee chairs are excluded – less than the proportion held by women in 2021 (18.5%). Globally, on average, women chair between 12% and 21.5% of foreign affairs, defence, and finance committees, 23.3% of human rights committees (down from 28% in 2021), and 65.9% of gender equality committees. Women only made gains within the foreign affairs portfolio, where their share of chair posts increased from 18% to 21.5% between 2021 and 2023. However, wide disparities exist across regions. Except for the Pacific where only two gender equality committees exist, sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where gender equality committees are more often chaired by men than women (22 out of 40).

Violence against women in politics

VAWP, which spans everything from misogynist speech and online sexist attacks to sexual harassment and physical assault, is part of structural tactics to dominate and silence women. This major challenge to women's political participation – and to democracy as a whole – was vividly present in 2022. In December, two Senegalese MPs were handed six-month jail terms for physically attacking a pregnant MP on the floor of the National Assembly,⁴⁵ sparking international condemnation.⁴⁶ Reports of physical and sexual violence, as well as intimidation, harassment and online abuse, marked the Kenyan elections.⁴⁷ Responses to VAWP in Kenya were equally noteworthy: efforts to enhance justice for survivors strengthened relationships between human rights defenders and the police, judiciary, investigators and health professionals, and one case was reported and investigated.⁴⁸

45 france24.com/en/africa/20230102-senegalese-mps-jailed-for-attacking-female-legislator-in-parliament.

46 ipu.org/news/statements/2022-12/ipu-statement-violence-in-senegal-parliament.

47 dw.com/en/kenyan-election-female-candidates-face-violence-abuse/a-62697361; reuters.com/world/africa/women-candidates-kenyan-elections-endure-abuse-attacks-2022-08-01/; africanews.com/2022/08/08/kenya-right-groups-warn-of-violence-against-women-during-elections/.

48 africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2022/12/kenyas-strides-towards-eradicating-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-elections.

These examples echo the findings of a joint IPU and African Parliamentary Union (APU) report published in late 2021. The study found that more than 80% of the 137 women parliamentarians surveyed from 49 countries had faced psychological violence, 40% had been sexually harassed and 23% had faced physical violence during their term of office.⁴⁹

In the United States of America, women in politics are nearly three and a half times as likely to be targeted as men.⁵⁰ In 2022, at least one female member of Congress was forced to change her sleeping location after receiving threats. In October, an armed assailant broke into the home of Nancy Pelosi, the female Speaker of the House of Representatives, and attacked her husband with a hammer after finding him home alone. He was seriously injured. Other women members of Congress related stories of being followed by armed stalkers, inundated with online death threats and having their offices vandalized. In Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the country's Vice-President and President of the Senate, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt. Women politicians across South-East Asia continued to face intense levels of harassment, abuse and threats.⁵¹

49 ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2021-11/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-africa.

50 forbes.com/sites/erinspencer1/2022/11/02/women-in-politics-have-to-deal-with-more-harassment-and-violence-a-new-database-is-tracking-those-threats/?sh=5d437e54e16c.

51 wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/womens-political-leadership-asean-region.

In December 2022, two Senegalese MPs were handed six-month jail terms for physically attacking a pregnant MP on the floor of the National Assembly. © Carmen Abd Ali/AFP



In Australia, toxic and unsafe work environments for women in parliament made major headlines before the elections.⁵² Allegations of sexual assault in parliament, increased awareness of how parliament is unsafe for women,⁵³ and attacks by political candidates on trans women⁵⁴ all contributed to driving this surge, and are pressing policy conversations in the new parliament. In a report published in November 2022, a parliamentary committee recommended that MPs and their staff – and Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces more broadly – adopt behaviour standards and codes of conduct which commit that bullying, sexual harassment, assault and discrimination will not be tolerated, condoned or ignored.⁵⁵

In Japan, sexual harassment of women in politics is identified as a factor behind women's low participation.⁵⁶ There have been reports of abuse and harassment on social media as well as accounts of harassment from male politicians, sexist heckling during debates and pressure to resign.⁵⁷ The Gender Parity Law was revised in 2021 to include a clause⁵⁸ on eliminating sexual harassment in politics.⁵⁹ The National Diet and local assemblies are now obliged to take measures to prevent sexual harassment against women candidates and representatives.

In France, women and activists working in the political arena have created an observatory of gender-based violence in politics in the context of the 2022 presidential and legislative elections.⁶⁰ The observatory questions political parties on the multiple cases of violence against women brought against MPs, asks parties to take preventive steps to protect women's rights, and demands that they be transparent about the internal mechanisms they have set up in this regard. All French political parties, with the exception of the right-wing *Rassemblement National* and *Les Républicains*, have adopted internal measures to address cases of sexism and sexual violence within their ranks,⁶¹ but their effectiveness in punishing perpetrators is called into question. The first woman Speaker of the National Assembly, Yaël Braun-Pivet, released a public account of complaints to a special unit fighting sexual harassment and other misconduct. Forty cases of inappropriate behaviour in the legislature – including sexual harassment and bullying – were registered between January 2021 and September 2022.⁶²

Intersectional identity issues also impacted VAWP in 2022. Disinformation and online abuse disproportionately hindered women of colour standing as political candidates in the United States of America.⁶³ Women lawmakers from minority groups reported being targeted by white supremacists. A Black woman representative spent over US\$ 400,000 on personal security costs during her campaign. In Brazil, trans women candidates reported receiving death threats throughout the 2022 campaign.⁶⁴ Brazil has long reported the largest annual number of anti-trans killings of any country in the world.⁶⁵ In Colombia, meanwhile, reports suggested that VAWP was influenced by intersectional issues including women candidates' class, ethnicity, and support for social and environmental rights.⁶⁶

There is an urgent need for parliaments and political parties to take this problem seriously, with internal policies against VAWP that provide an independent complaint mechanism with disciplinary sanctions. Further solutions include strong and properly enforced laws and policies against VAWP. Latin America is taking firm action on this issue: as of 2020, there were 38 State-created mechanisms to address VAWP⁶⁷ (the only subregion for which such data is available), and eight countries had adopted or proposed legislation (Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and Peru). In Colombia, proposed legislation to regulate VAWP advanced in 2022.

In accordance with its work on eliminating violence against women in parliaments and its commitment to serving as a role model and reference for national parliaments, the IPU continues to push for more parliaments to do better in becoming safe and respectful spaces for women. With the use of guidelines,⁶⁸ it supports parliaments by offering advice and practical information on how to devise and implement policies to prevent and eliminate sexism and gender-based violence in parliament. The IPU makes this an issue about the effectiveness of parliament, the image of the institution in the eyes of the public, and its capacity to achieve gender equality in society – in short, an issue of a gender-sensitive parliament.

The IPU is also pursuing its series of regional surveys on sexism and violence against women in parliaments around the world and is developing its own policy to prevent harassment and sexual harassment at IPU Assemblies and any other IPU events.

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68 ipu.org/resources/publications/reference/2019-11/guidelines-elimination-sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliament.

Gender-sensitive parliaments

In October 2022, parliamentarians from around the world adopted the Kigali Declaration *Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world* at the end of the 145th IPU Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda.⁶⁹ The Declaration recommends that parliaments implement electoral gender quotas to achieve parity in political decision-making, ensure law-making and budgeting is gender-responsive, place vulnerable populations at the centre of parliamentary action, and end gender-based discrimination and violence.

Notably, the Declaration marked the 10-year anniversary of the IPU's *Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments*.⁷⁰ IPU Member Parliaments committed to taking 10 actions in the next 10 years including measures such as adopting formal rules to establish gender balance in parliamentary leadership positions and introducing stringent policies to eliminate violence against women, sexual harassment and bullying in parliament.

Equality in Politics. The survey found that an overwhelming majority of lawmakers feel there are too few women in parliament and highlighted a low level of awareness among male politicians about women's participation in politics.⁷¹

Following the 2022 elections, the standing orders of the Parliament of Kenya now mandate gender balance on parliamentary committees. This follows a 2016 parliamentary gender self-assessment facilitated by the IPU. Earlier measures resulting from the assessment included the creation of a gender focal point.

Gender-responsive changes in parliaments were also accelerated by technological adaptations brought about by the pandemic, during which 84% of parliaments introduced new systems that were previously unplanned. These changes made the parliaments in question more flexible, more resilient in their procedures and more innovative in the way they think about the future. Today, parliaments are considering to what extent hybrid working makes parliaments more modern, gender-sensitive and family-friendly workplaces.⁷²



At the 145th IPU Assembly in Rwanda in October 2022, IPU Members marked the 10-year anniversary of the *Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments* and renewed their commitment towards its implementation. © IPU/Parliament of Rwanda

A number of measures were adopted in 2022 in this field. In the lower chamber of Japan, a survey of MPs was conducted based on the IPU's self-assessment method for evaluating the gender sensitivity of parliaments, and the results of this exercise are currently being considered by the National Diet's bicameral All-partisan Caucus for the Promotion of Gender

Above all, the pandemic prompted critical thinking about these questions. By the end of 2022, a number of parliaments worldwide were reflecting on both how to maintain the positive changes and how to mitigate the adverse impacts of the altered parliamentary workplace on

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women MPs and women voters.⁷³ Narrowing the gender digital divide and adopting new measures to eliminate already alarming trends of VAWP – which are exacerbated online – are just two of the issues that parliaments need to consider as part of their digital transformation.

The influence of gender issues on election outcomes in 2022

In 2022, gender issues dominated campaigns and largely determined voters' choices in many countries around the world. In some cases, increased awareness of discrimination, gender-based violence and other concerns helped drive strong outcomes for women in parliamentary elections. For example, in Colombia, the successful results for women in parliament came on the heels of a groundswell of public awareness and advocacy around feminist issues.⁷⁴ In 2018 and 2019, several large protests took place against femicide, gender-based violence and discrimination. Gender policy was a key issue for all leading candidates in the 2022 presidential election, with a broad range of gender platforms presented.⁷⁵

In other countries, voters chastised political parties for their performance on gender issues. In Australia, women voters disproportionately turned away from the incumbent Liberal party, citing the Coalition's handling of women in politics as a leading issue.⁷⁶ In the United States of America, a record turnout among women voters – especially young women – in the November 2022 midterm congressional elections was largely attributed to a Supreme Court decision earlier in the year overturning the constitutional right to abortion. Some 50% of American voters polled before the election (including 60% of women) said the Court's decision had made them more motivated to vote. Abortion was the leading issue of concern among women voters in exit polls.⁷⁷ The unpopular Court decision significantly slowed a predicted "red tsunami" upset by the Republican party.

Elsewhere, voters held their elected leaders more accountable for gender-related issues. In Costa Rica, gender concerns were prominent in the election campaign because of the controversy around presidential candidate Rodrigo Chaves, who was demoted at the World Bank after he was found to have sexually harassed various women while employed there.⁷⁸ Mr. Chaves ultimately won the

election, apologized to his accusers and made stamping out gender discrimination and harassment his "first political commitment."⁷⁹ His election galvanized Costa Rican feminist civil society to heighten awareness-raising and vigilance.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, gender issues were salient in the presidential contest in 2022. Notably, the campaign of the sole female presidential candidate, former Vice-President Leni Robredo, was based on a "pink revolution" platform.⁸⁰ In Hungary, a referendum on an anti-LGBTQI+ measure was held at the same time as the general election in April. Intended to cement support for President Viktor Orbán, the strategy backfired after a coordinated civil society campaign urged voters to spoil their ballots, ultimately invalidating the referendum.

Women, diversity and parliamentary elections



A record number of women of colour serve in the United States Congress elected in 2022. © Evelyn Hockstein/Pool

There were important gains for the diversity of women in parliaments worldwide in 2022.

In Brazil, a record 4,829 women who identify as Black ran in the general election (out of 26,778 candidates). This was an increase of nearly 27% relative to the 2018 election.⁸¹ The 2022 cycle saw 324 openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) candidates stand for election. Of these, 18 won, including 2 trans

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women.⁸² Seven self-declared Indigenous candidates were elected in total – five to the Chamber of Deputies and two to the Senate – including four Indigenous women.⁸³ This was the highest number in history for Brazil. The success of Black and Indigenous women candidates reflected their alliances with other social movements focused on identity, social and sexual orientation, and the fight for land rights.⁸⁴

In the United States of America, a record number of women of colour (263) stood in elections for the House of Representatives: 92 Republicans and 171 Democrats, a high for both parties.⁸⁵ A record number of women of colour serve in the new Congress (58 out of 535 across both houses). Two Asian American women serve in the Senate, but the chamber currently has no African American women members. On the House side, 27 African American women and 18 Hispanic women now serve, both up one seat from the previous historic highs set during the previous Congress. However, all 27 African American women are from one party (Democrats). Indigenous women remain under-represented: one Native American woman and one Alaska Native woman currently serve in the House. There has never been a Native American, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian woman in the Senate. The first two openly lesbian governors were elected in Massachusetts and Oregon.

India elected its second woman and first person belonging to a tribal community, Droupadi Murmu, as president in

2022. LGBTQI+ representation in Colombia tripled from two to six members of the Congress, including four lesbian women. French voters appear to be gradually cementing diversity, electing 32 candidates from minority backgrounds to the new National Assembly (5.8%), according to a France 24 count.⁸⁶

Data on diversity remains uneven or lacking. Twenty of the 38 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries do not collect data on the racial or ethnic identity of their people.

Gender and climate change

Women played a notable role in leading responses to the ongoing threat posed by climate change in 2022. Overall, greater women's representation in national parliaments is directly correlated with more stringent climate change policies⁸⁷ and more ambitious climate goals.⁸⁸ A 2022 study drawing on IPU data found that, in contexts with good governance structures, greater women's representation in parliament is associated with decreased CO2 emissions through better environmental legislation, sound environmental regulations and effective environmental enforcement.⁸⁹ Higher levels of women's parliamentary participation also increase renewable energy consumption.⁹⁰ Women's political empowerment further reduces



At COP27, Sherry Rehman, Minister of Climate Change and member of the Senate of Pakistan, was among the leaders that successfully advocated for the establishment of a fund to support poorer countries greatly impacted by climate change. © Parliament of Egypt

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vulnerability to climate change, especially in Latin America and in upper middle income, small and/or fragile countries.⁹¹

Examples abound of female climate leadership. Recent highlights include in Finland, where Prime Minister Sanna Marin committed to one of the most ambitious climate targets, legislating for net zero by 2035 and carbon negativity by 2040. In Barbados, Prime Minister Mia Mottley is aiming to phase out fossil fuels by 2030. Agnes Mulder, an MP in the Netherlands, is at the forefront of legislation to achieve a 49% reduction in the country's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 relative to 1990 levels. In Malaysia, Yeo Bee Yin, the former Minister of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change, and current MP, set ambitious renewable energy targets and published a 12-year road map for eliminating single-use plastics nationwide by 2030. The first female President of Tanzania, Samia Suluhu Hassan, has pushed for climate justice since her appointment in 2021, becoming a global spokesperson for African nations. At the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Egypt, Sherry Rehman, Minister of Climate Change and member of the Senate of Pakistan, was a very prominent advocate and part of a campaign by developing nations to establish a "loss and damage" fund to support poorer countries that are greatly impacted by climate change.⁹² One of the main outcomes of COP27 was a historic agreement to establish this fund.

Despite this leadership, women continue to be under-represented in important spaces related to environmental issues. The OECD found that, in regions likely to suffer the greatest damage from climate change, and where women are most vulnerable to environmental risk, women were least likely to hold top decision-making positions on environmental questions.⁹³ For instance, women accounted for less than 34% of country negotiating teams and only 7 of 110 Heads of State present at COP27.

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