



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Women in Parliament 2017

Extending the norm – Women redefine political leadership

March 2018



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Women in parliament in 2017

The year in review



United Kingdom, 2018

Extending the norm: Women redefine political leadership in 2017

Elections may not be the full test of democracy, but they do present an opportunity for democracy to be tested. The extent to which women can register to vote, stand as candidates, cast a vote in secret, and take part at the highest levels of decision-making, all represent an indicator of an inclusive democracy. The more women participate as voters, candidates, political party leaders, and electoral administration staff, the more accepted their place in politics becomes.

2017 witnessed positive changes in the cultural and social norms that frame women's participation in elections all around the world:

- While there were fewer elections in 2017, the proportion of women taking seats in national parliaments following those elections reached an impressive 27.1 per cent;

HIGHLIGHTS

- There was hardly any change in the world average of women in national parliaments over the last year. Women accounted for 23.3 percent of MPs in 2016 and 23.4 per cent in 2017. This is partly explained by the relatively fewer elections held in 2017 compared to previous years.
- Over a longer time frame, women's share of all parliamentary seats has consistently increased by almost 0.6 percentage points per year. Women MPs represented 17.8 per cent of parliamentarians in 2007.
- Women were more successful in contesting the 2017 elections than in previous years. In 2017, women took 27.1 per cent of all seats renewed compared with 22.3 per cent in 2016 and 25 per cent in 2015, although fewer elections were held in 2017.
- Europe accounted for both the greatest gains and the greatest setbacks – in France and Albania, gains of (at least) 10 percentage points were made, while Iceland and Liechtenstein suffered setbacks of (at least) eight percentage points.
- Electoral systems continued to influence women's chances of being elected. While women continue to be elected in slightly greater numbers under proportional representation (PR) systems (27.2%) than majoritarian systems (26.7%), the value of PR systems is greater when they are combined with a legislated candidate quota.

Slow progress

- In 2017, the world average of women in parliament reached **23.4%**, up from 17.7% in 2007.
This corresponds to:
 - a 5.7 percentage point increase since 2007 and
 - a 0.1 percentage point increase since 2016.
- The minimal progress made this year can be explained, partly, by the fact that there were fewer elections in 2017 than in previous years
- Over a longer time frame, women's share of all parliamentary seats has increased on average by nearly 0.6 percentage points per year
- In 2017, women won 27.1% of the seats up for reelection as compared with 22.3% in 2016.





Highs and lows in 2017

- The number of chambers with **less than 10 per cent women MPs** has decreased to 31 lower or single houses today, compared to 34 in 2016 and 38 in 2015.
- A quarter of parliamentary chambers in the world have **at least 30 per cent women members**.
- However, only 11 lower or single houses have **more than 40 per cent women MPs** (as opposed to 12 in 2016 and 13 in 2015).
- **Three bicameral parliaments have 50 per cent** or more women MPs in one of their chambers: Rwanda, Bolivia and Belgium. This has remained unchanged for the past two years.
- **Four parliamentary** chambers have no women members at all (compared to 5 in 2016 and 8 in 2015).
- As of January 2018, 17.3% of **Speakers of parliament** are women. The proportion was 8.3% in 2005 and 19.1% in 2017.



Highlights in 2017

- **In 2017, electoral quotas** were used in 21 countries: as a result, women won more than 30% of seats in these countries, compared with only 15.4% in the 16 countries where such quotas were not applied.
- The countries with the **highest percentage of women elected in 2017** are Senegal (41.8%) and Norway (41.4%).
- Women took 27.2% of seats filled through proportional representation compared with 26.7% through majoritarian systems.
- Regional influence also matters. Good practices developed by some countries have an effect on neighboring countries. This is the case in Latin America where 8 countries now have laws that target **parity** in elective functions.
- 2017 saw the rise of the **#MeToo campaign**. Several parliaments initiated debates and actions to address sexism and harassment in politics.





Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Regional trends

Regional Trends (1995-2017)

Americas (28.4%)	Europe (27.1%)	Sub-Saharan Africa (23.6%)	Arab states (17.5%)	Asia (18.6%)	Pacific (17.9%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highest regional average - Increase of 0.3 percentage points since 2016 - Increase of 15.7 percentage points since 1995 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highest increase among all regions in 2017: +0.8 percentage points - Increase of 13.9 percentage points since 1995 - Nordic average: 41.4% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rwanda world leader with 61.3% of women in the lower house - No change to the regional average since last year - Increase of 13.8 percentage points since 1995 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lowest regional average of women MPs - Increase of 0.5 percentage points since last year - Increase of 13.2 percentage points since 1995 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lowest regional progress -Decrease of 0.7 percentage points since last year - Increase of 5.4 percentage points since 1995 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increase of 0.5 percentage points since last year - Increase of 11.6 percentage points since 1995

The Americas

- Highest regional average (28.4 per cent)
- Women's parliamentary representation in the Americas inched slightly forward in 2017 reaching 28.4 per cent (both houses combined), an increase of 0.3 percentage points compared to 2016.
- In 2017 South American countries such as Argentina, Chile and Ecuador continued to adopt and apply progressive legislation to promote women's political leadership.
- By contrast, presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections took place in Honduras amidst a continuing backdrop of violence.
- While Latin America boasted the greatest number of female Heads of State of any region between 2013 and 2015 following the 2017 elections, the region will have none.



Europe

- Europe was the region that experienced both the largest increases (France now has 38% women parliamentarians, against 25.6% in 2016) and the largest regressions (Iceland is now at 38.1%, compared to 47.6% in 2016).
- In Europe, elections in 2017 increased the region's parliamentary representation of women to 27.1 per cent, up from 26.3 per cent in 2016, the highest regional increase in 2017.
- Following France's parity law of 2000 women's representation has steadily risen. Significant progress was also achieved in Albania and Armenia, countries with historically low numbers of women in elected office.
- The Swedish Parliament held a debate about #MeToo and an open seminar in December where members of parliament read anonymous testimonies from women politicians who were subjected to sexual abuse.
- The Swiss Parliament decided to experimentally mandate an independent advisory body specialized in harassment.
- In Italy, the President of Italy's lower house, Laura Boldrini, held a woman-only debate in Parliament in December to highlight just how normalized sexual harassment is in Italian culture.



Africa

- In Africa there have been relatively few parliamentary renewals in 2017, which explains the absence of change for women in the regional average (23.6%).
- In Kenya (21.8% in the lower house and 30.9% in the upper house) historically high rates were reached in 2017 by women of all levels of government despite incidences of gender-based violence, and recurring political instability.
- Indirect elections in the upper chambers of Lesotho and the Republic of Congo have also seen an increase in the presence of women (25.8% and 19.7% respectively). In a first, a woman became President of the Senate of Lesotho.
- In the Gambia, the Parliament also elected its first female Speaker and women's share increased by almost 3 percentage points to 10.3 per cent.
- In Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female president, concluded her tenure in office.



Arab States

- In the Arab States, there has been only two parliamentary renewals in 2017, which explains the small scale of change (a slight decline with a regional average of 17.5% down from 18%).
- Algeria went from 37th to 64th in the IPU's world ranking. From 2002 to 2012, the percentage of women had increased dramatically from 6.2% to almost 32%. The 2017 elections, however, resulted in a loss for women of 6.2 percentage points. This is due, among other things, to a difficult cultural environment for women.
- In Qatar, the Emir partially renewed the Advisory Council. Among the new members, four women were appointed for the first time in the country's history.
- Elsewhere in the region, the debate has focused more on legal and policy reforms to advance gender equality and human rights.
- The Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women was adopted in Tunisia in July 2017, allowing women to protect themselves against acts of violence committed by their husbands and other family members. Legally recognizing domestic violence as a crime was unprecedented in that area. The model of Tunisia was revolutionary and was quickly followed in the region, especially in Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon where the penal codes were changed.



Asia and the Pacific

- 2017 elections across the Asia-Pacific region continued to challenge strong cultural norms.
- While Asian parliaments experienced a slight decrease in their regional average (18.6 per cent, down 0.7 points) this was balanced by the progress achieved in the Pacific (17.9 per cent, up 0.5 points).
- In New Zealand, 37-year-old Jacinda Ardern became her country's youngest female Prime Minister. She is about to become a mother, and will take maternity leave.
- Tonga saw remarkable progress. Two women were elected in 2017 (an increase of almost 8 percentage points).
- The Parliament of Papua New Guinea (PNG) suffered its worst setback in 25 years when no women were elected in 2017.
- The 2017 elections also saw striking setbacks in Timor-Leste. While women still represent over 32 per cent of the National Parliament, Timor-Leste lost its role model status as the Asia-Pacific region's highest-ranking country, down six points from 38.5 per cent in 2012.





Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Lessons learned

Factors that impact on women's access to elected positions

- **Quotas**

- The main measures used to facilitate women's access to parliament
- More often now included in electoral laws than in the past, confirming the importance of the legal framework for gender equality in politics
- Must be ambitious, detailed and include implementation mechanisms
- Trend: some countries are moving towards parity but still in many cases quotas only target a "critical mass" (30-35%)
- Quotas must be accompanied by penalties for non-compliance in order to be effective
- Do quotas have limits?



Factors that impact on women's access to elected positions

- **Electoral systems**

- Proportional or mixed systems tend to facilitate women's access to parliament
- Where quotas exist, closed lists tend to favour women's access; in the absence of quotas, open lists give women greater opportunity to compete

- **Political parties**

- Remain the main gatekeepers for women's access to parliament
- They play a fundamental role in the success or failure of women through candidacy, finance, endorsements, access to resources and leadership positions



Factors that impact on women's access to elected positions

- **Political will**
- **Cultural norms** among the electorate; importance of role models and addressing stereotypes
- **Examples of good practices.** The adoption of Laws that impact positively access of women to elected positions in one country have proved to positively influence entire regions.
- Parliament as a place where women want to be
 - Parliaments open-up to women – **gender sensitive parliaments**
- **Violence against women in politics**
 - Gender-based violence, harassment and stereotypes hinder women's participation
 - The #MeToo has given momentum in Parliament towards addressing the issue





Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Thank you