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Women in parliament in 2017

The year in review



United Kingdom, 2018 ©AFP

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 few 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.
- 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.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Women won over 30 per cent of seats in 24 chambers (across 21 countries) where quotas are used, compared with just 15.4 per cent of seats in 19 chambers (across 16 countries) where no form of electoral gender quota is used.
- As at January 2018, women hold at least 30 per cent of seats in 67 chambers (both single/lower and upper houses), and less than 10 per cent in 39 chambers.
- In 2017, the #MeToo movement became a prominent force in exposing sexual harassment and predatory behaviours towards women around the world, including in parliamentary chambers.

- In a number of countries, record numbers of women candidates contested the elections. While not all of these candidates won, the attempt highlights women's own personal conviction that they have something important to contribute to the political process, and their fortitude in standing up for their political rights.
- Social norms remain key to women's political leadership. In some countries, we see widespread social acceptance around women's participation in politics, making it easier for women leaders to define new roles for themselves. For the first time in 30 years, a Prime Minister is about to become a mother, and will take maternity leave (New Zealand); and three women will collectively lead a government as the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance and Minister for Foreign Affairs (Norway).
- Quotas are becoming more accepted as a vital strategy to ensure women's inclusion, and have encouraged a "role model" effect between parties and in neighbouring countries. In Latin America, the call for parity – understood as at least 40 per cent women – has now been heeded in eight countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama). The French parity law applies to all French overseas territories, ensuring that French territories such as New Caledonia serve as role models in their own regions.
- We see the powerful impact that women can exercise globally when they raise their collective voices to say "enough". In 2017, the #MeToo movement swept across countries and continents, bringing greater awareness of deeply-engrained sexism and sexual misconduct towards women in a range of political, social and media arenas. The movement also reverberated in the highest spheres of power across political divides, with parliaments and legislatures urged to look inwards to take account of the pervasive sexualized environment that women parliamentarians, staffers and political actors are forced to contend with on a daily basis.

A look at the regions

The Americas: Forging the path towards parity

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. However, elections held in Latin America and the Caribbean yielded mixed results in terms of women's representation in elected office. Traditionally trailblazers in terms of promoting women's political empowerment, in 2017 South American countries such as Argentina, Chile and Ecuador continued to adopt and apply progressive legislation to promote women's political leadership, pushing these societies ever closer to gender parity in political life. By contrast, one of the two elections in Central America and the Caribbean – Honduras – took place against a backdrop of continuing violence, including systemic violence against women.

Argentina witnessed a 3.5 percentage-point increase in the number of women elected to the lower house, which renews half its membership every two years. Important changes to the country's legislated gender quota occurred only after the elections were held, however. In December 2017, Argentina became the eighth country in the region to legislate gender parity in political representation following a surprise vote on a stalled parity bill that ultimately passed with a large majority in both houses. As of the next Congressional elections in 2019, at least 50 per cent of all candidates must be women and electoral lists must alternate between women and men.

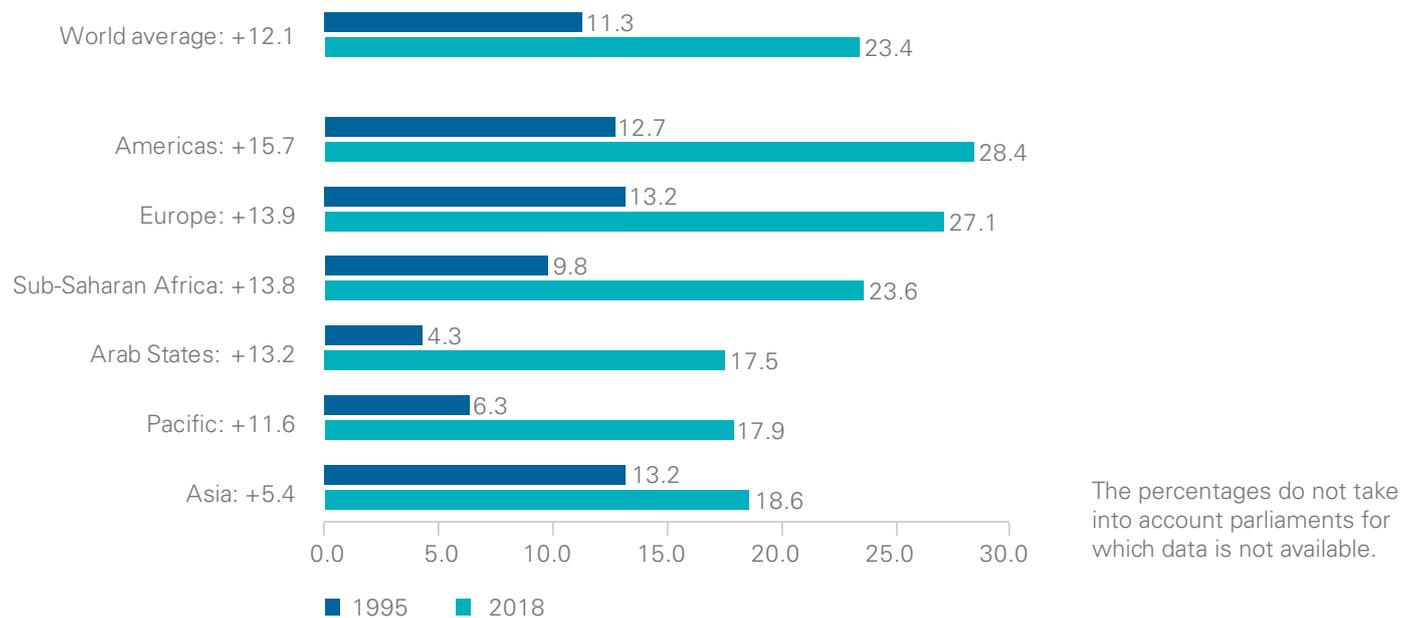
Once saddled with one of the lowest proportions of women in elected office in Latin America, Chile adopted in 2015 a "flexible parity" quota, according to which men and women each must make up at least 40 per cent of candidates. Political parties receive additional state funding for each female candidate elected, while women candidates will receive a higher rate of reimbursement for electoral costs. Preliminary results of the Chilean elections show an increase of 6.8 percentage points in the lower house, with 22.6 per cent of seats (compared to 15.8% in 2013). The November 2017 elections were the first to apply the legislated gender quota as part of a broader package of electoral reforms.

A significant setback has come, however, at the top echelon of power in the region. While

Figure 1

World and regional averages of women in parliaments, 1995 and 2018

Situation in July 1995 and January 2018, both houses combined. Regional ranking in the order of the percentage point change.



Latin America boasted the greatest number of female Heads of State of any region between 2013 and 2015 – including in Argentina and Chile – following the 2017 elections, the region will have none.

As a result of the 2017 elections, the share of women in Ecuador’s parliament still sits at 38 per cent, down only slightly from 38.7 per cent in 2013. Ecuador remains a pioneer in the region in terms of gender parity legislation; amendments to the 2009 Electoral Law established a 50 per cent gender parity quota on electoral lists and the requirement to alternate between male and female candidates on party lists.

By contrast, presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections took place in Honduras amidst a continuing backdrop of violence. With one woman murdered every fourteen hours, Honduras’ femicide epidemic prompted a civil society initiative to promote a feminist political agenda ahead of the November elections. Ultimately, the proportion of women elected to the unicameral parliament dropped 4.7 percentage points to 21.1 per cent. This is despite the fact that Honduras introduced legislated gender quotas in 2009, which require that women account for at least 40 per cent of candidates on electoral lists. Political parties which do not comply lose five per cent of their entitlement to state funding.

In the Bahamas, the number of women appointed to the upper chamber almost doubled from four to seven in 2017, an increase of 18.8 percentage points. Women currently hold the positions of both President and Vice President of the Senate. Women’s representation in the lower house, elected on a majoritarian basis, has not fared nearly as well; the already low proportion

of women in elected office decreased even further, from 13.2 per cent in 2012, to 12.8 per cent in 2017. There is some cause for cautious optimism, however; the number of women candidates fielded by political parties increased from 22 in 2012 to 28 in 2017. Several major political parties publicly committed to ratifying women’s candidacies, and a number of mainstream media articles profiled women candidates, calling attention to the issues contained in their electoral platforms.

Africa and the Arab States: Prioritising inclusive legal and policy reform

There were relatively few renewals in Africa or the Arab States in 2017 explaining the small magnitude of change for women following elections (no change in Africa with a regional average of 23.6 per cent and a slight setback for the Arab States with an average of 17.5 per cent, down 0.5 point). In both regions, however, debate focused more on legal and policy reform to advance gender equality and human rights.

Historic highs were reached in 2017 by women at all levels of government in Kenya, despite incidences of gender-based violence, and recurring political instability. Overall, women now hold almost 22 per cent of the seats in the lower house, and just over 30 per cent in the upper house. These figures include gains made by women in openly contested constituency seats in the National Assembly (22, up from 16 in 2013) and Senate seats (three out of 47). In a first, three women were elected (among 47) governors, and women also won seats at the county assemblies level. Many women who contested constituency seats were the first ever to be elected in that district; some as the first independent candidate to win that seat. In many districts, women



Kenya, 2017 ©AFP

demonstrated their electoral popularity with considerable vote gains over their rivals. Among them, young women also made their mark, with two women under the age of 27 elected for the first time. These achievements came in spite of the parliament's successive failure to ratify the 2010 constitutional provision for a 33 per cent gender quota, and in the face of what has been called "pervasive" violence against women in elections. A clear sign that women's increased political and electoral participation still lacks a level of legitimacy among certain groups in society, Kenyan women candidates reported numerous incidences and threats of violence, both against them personally and against family members and supporters.

Indirect elections in the upper houses of Lesotho and the Republic of the Congo also saw an increase in the presence of women. In Lesotho, eight women joined 24 men in the Senate (an increase of 1.6 percentage points) whose membership is composed of hereditary tribal chiefs and Senators appointed by the King. In a first, a woman also became President of the Senate of Lesotho. This was also the case in the Gambia where the Parliament elected its first female Speaker and where women's share of the parliamentary seats increased overall by almost three percentage points to 10.3 per cent.

Setbacks in Angola (down 7.3 percentage points) continued an almost 10-year trend: 37.3 per cent in 2008, 34.1 per cent in 2012, and 26.8 per cent in 2017. In the 2012 elections, a majority of parties respected the legislative quota of 30 per cent women candidates on electoral lists, with the ruling party nominating

women to 46 per cent of its list. In 2017, the cumulative effect of fewer parties running for elections, and parties nominating fewer women, led Angola to slip further down the IPU ranking.

In Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female president, concluded her tenure in office. During her presidency, a new election law was passed, calling on political parties to submit lists of candidates with no less than 30 per cent representation of each gender. In the absence of strong sanctions for non-compliance, just seven women (one fewer than in the previous elections) were elected to the lower house (a loss of over one percentage point).

In 2012, a wave of women was elected in Senegal following the passage of a law on parity (adopted in May 2010) requiring political parties to submit an alternating list of men and women candidates. While elections in 2017 still resulted in a strong voice for women in Senegal (just under 42%), the parity threshold has not yet been crossed. Commentators pointed to the "lack of uniformity" in applying the quota legislation, particularly among some religion-based rural parties.

Algeria was the only country of the Arab region¹ to renew the membership of its legislature in 2017. A pioneer in the region, Algeria has transformed its political system through successive electoral reforms, including a move to a multi-party system in 1989, and the introduction of a legislative gender quota in 2012. From 2002 to 2012, the percentage of women increased dramatically from 6.2 per cent to almost 32 per cent.

¹ Arab region includes Middle East and North African Arab countries.

Figure 2

Parliamentary renewals in 2017

Progress and setbacks of women in lower or single houses of parliament renewed in 2017



The figures show the percentage point difference between renewals in 2017 compared with the previous legislature, for countries where comparative data is available. * Preliminary results

Elections in 2017, however, resulted in a loss for women, down to 25.8 per cent. Media reported that political parties felt that they had “struggled” to find suitable women candidates to nominate.

Commentators were quick to note, however, that this was more than a question of “finding women”: political parties in Algeria remain dominated by men, with few of them actively encouraging

and promoting women in their ranks. Women also run in a challenging environment. At least five parties were required by the electoral commission to reverse their decision to display blank avatars (rather than photos) of their women candidates on electoral posters. Perhaps in response to this challenging cultural environment, the 2017 elections saw the Algerian National Front party present the country’s first all-female parliamentary electoral list, full of women academics, managers, and public administrators.



Algeria, 2017 ©AFP

In Qatar, in 2017 the Emir partially renewed the Advisory Council. Among the new members, four women were appointed for the first time in the country's history. Two Qatari women had been previously elected at the municipal council level.

While no other elections were held in the Arab States, groundbreaking gender-sensitive law reform swept through the region. In Tunisia, the Law on Eliminating Violence against Women was passed in July 2017, allowing women to seek protection from acts of violence committed by their husbands and other relatives. Legally recognising domestic abuse as a crime was unprecedented in a region where one in two women suffers domestic violence at some stage of her life. The law also includes provisions on harassment in public spaces and economic discrimination. Tunisia's role model was swiftly followed in Jordan and Lebanon where penal codes were amended, removing the possibility for rapists to avoid criminal prosecution by marrying their victims. In Egypt, women's right to inheritance was also strengthened through legislative reform.

Asia and the Pacific: Challenging strong cultural norms

2017 elections across the Asia-Pacific region continued to push the boundaries of what constitutes "appropriate" women's roles in politics. In this region, gender norms continue to work against women's entry into politics, as societies lay stronger emphasis on women's role in the unpaid, domestic sphere. 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, the campaign immediately focused on women's ability to balance political leadership with motherhood when 37-year-old Jacinda Ardern became the youngest woman to lead the Labour Party. While the elections resulted in a hung parliament, Ms. Ardern succeeded in concluding a deal that resulted in her

becoming the country's youngest (but third) female Prime Minister. These elections ushered in the highest proportion of women MPs in the country's history, just short of 39 per cent, through its mixed member proportional (MMP) system. Adding yet another crack in the glass ceiling, the new Prime Minister announced via Twitter in early 2018: "This year we'll join the many parents who wear two hats. I'll be PM & a mum while Clarke will be 'first man of fishing' & stay at home dad."

In the small island Kingdom of Tonga, reforms passed in 2010 increased the number of directly-elected seats to the Legislative Assembly from nine to 17. While women candidates had not been successful in winning one of these "people's representative" seats in a general election since those reforms, in 2017 two women were elected (an increase of almost eight percentage points). This gain is even more remarkable given the dominant cultural norms that normalize men's place in politics, and women's place in the home. As an indication of change in the public discourse, the leader of Tonga's Civil Society Forum, 'Emeline Siale 'llohahia, stressed during the election campaign that getting more women into parliament was "everyone's responsibility ... It's no longer about the status quo of doing things the same; the same thing every time."

In Japan, the question of women's political leadership was seen more as a hot political discussion point than an action point. Since his declaration in 2012 to make Japan a place where "all women can shine," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's targets for women's leadership have not been met. In Abe's Liberal Democratic Party, women made up only eight per cent of the candidates versus more than 20 per cent in some of the opposition parties.

The 2017 elections also saw striking setbacks in Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea. 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

Table 1

Women in lower or single houses after parliamentary renewals in 2017

	Country	Total seats	Total women	% women	Quota
1	Senegal	165	69	41.8%	Yes**
2	Norway	169	70	41.4%	Yes*
3	France	577	224	38.8%	Yes***
4	New Zealand	120	46	38.3%	Yes*
5	Argentina	257	98	38.1%	Yes***
6	Iceland	63	24	38.1%	Yes*
7	Ecuador	137	52	38.0%	Yes**
8	Netherlands	150	54	36.0%	None
9	Austria	183	63	34.4%	Yes*
10	Timor-Leste	65	21	32.3%	Yes**
11	United Kingdom	650	208	32.0%	Yes*
12	Germany	709	218	30.7%	Yes*
13	Albania	140	39	27.9%	Yes**
14	Angola	220	59	26.8%	Yes**
15	Algeria	462	119	25.8%	Yes**
16	Bulgaria	240	57	23.8%	None
17	Chile ¹	155	35	22.6%	Yes**
18	Lesotho	122	27	22.1%	Yes**
19	Czech Republic	200	44	22.0%	Yes*
20	Kenya	349	76	21.8%	Yes***
21	Honduras	128	27	21.1%	Yes**
22	Equatorial Guinea	100	20	20.0%	None
23	Armenia	105	18	17.1%	Yes**
24	Malta	68	10	14.7%	Yes*
25	Bahamas	39	5	12.8%	None
26	Liechtenstein	25	3	12.0%	None
27	Congo	151	17	11.3%	None
28	Gambia (The)	58	6	10.3%	None
29	Japan	465	47	10.1%	None
30	Liberia	71	7	9.9%	None
31	Brunei Darussalam	33	3	9.1%	None
32	Tonga	26	2	7.7%	None
33	Micronesia (Federated States of)	14	0	0.0%	None
34	Papua New Guinea	106	0	0.0%	None

* One or more political parties adopted a voluntary measure to increase the number of women candidates
 ** Legislated candidate quota
 *** Legislated and voluntary quotas
 1. Preliminary results

points from 38.5 per cent in 2012. The country's legislative quota (amended in 2011) requires that each political party nominate at least one woman among every three candidates on its electoral list. This closed PR system has ensured dominance in decision-making of male party leaders, particularly in determining the placement of candidates on the party list. This highlights the continuing need for gender sensitization programmes with male and female parliamentarians, and the inclusion of women at the most senior positions of political parties, and parliament.

The Parliament of Papua New Guinea (PNG) suffered its worst setback in 25 years when no women were elected in 2017. A record number of women candidates contested the elections (167 out of 3,332), including the three women incumbents, and many women ran very competitive, although ultimately unsuccessful, races. A

majoritarian electoral system, combined with stereotypes of "big man" politics and the disbursement of huge constituency funds at election time, make PNG's one of the most difficult environments for women candidates. The elections were marred by violence and concerns about the integrity of the voter registration list in some parts of the country. Discussions around fast-tracking women into politics have been controversial, following the defeat in 2012 of amendments to the Organic Law that would have enacted 22 reserved seats for women. The three women MPs actively distanced themselves from the idea of quotas during their term in office, referring to their own experience of being elected "by merit". The failure, however, of the current system in electing any women to parliament in 2017 shows that there is a great deal more work to be done by the parliament, political parties and the women's movement in promoting women's political leadership.



France, 2017 ©AFP

Europe: Gradual change yields significant gains

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, a change of +0.8 percentage point - the highest regional increase in 2017. Most countries in Europe showed modest gains, ranging between +0.4 (Malta) to +4.3 (Kazakhstan) percentage points. The region also witnessed important gains in women's representation – for example, in France – in countries where well-established special measures have gradually yielded change in both party and societal attitudes towards women's participation. However, it also experienced critical losses, such as in Iceland, pointing to the need for vigilance to ensure that increases in women's representation are sustained.

France leapt from 64th to 17th place in IPU's global ranking of women's parliamentary representation following the record-breaking results of its 2017 elections. Women now represent 38.8 per cent of the National Assembly, a 12 percentage-point increase over the previous elections, which also set a record for women's representation in France. President Emmanuel Macron's party, Republic on the Move, not only fielded gender-balanced electoral lists which yielded the highest proportion of women elected of any party at 47 per cent, but also promoted diversity by nominating half of the party's candidates from civil society. In view of the majoritarian system in place for elections to the National Assembly, the party's decision to nominate women for seats in "winnable" districts appeared to have made a significant difference in the electoral results.

France's groundbreaking parity law of 2000 requires that, for elections to the National Assembly, the difference between the number of male and female candidates on party lists cannot be more than two per cent. As a result of the law, women's representation has steadily risen. Moreover, whereas once political parties would opt to pay the fine for failing to comply with the quota requirement, the rise in the number of women candidates on party lists points to an increasing acceptance of women's participation by parties themselves. Importantly, the parity law has also proven influential in promoting women's participation in French overseas territories, including in the South Pacific, where they have become role models in their regions.

Significant progress was also achieved in Albania and Armenia, countries with historically low numbers of women in elected office. In Albania, the proportion of women elected to the unicameral parliament jumped from 17.9 to 27.9 per cent, a 10 percentage-point increase. Not all parties abided by the gender quota provision requiring a minimum of 30 per cent of both genders and representation of both genders among the first three candidates. Some parties opted to pay the fine for non-compliance in certain districts. The change is particularly striking in comparison to the previous decade, before the introduction of legislated gender quotas, when women's representation in Albania's National Assembly sat at only seven per cent.

In Armenia, all political parties contesting the elections reportedly complied with the country's electoral code, which requires that each gender represent at least 25 per cent of candidates on national lists and at least one in every integer of four candidates.

Table 2

Progress and setbacks of women in upper houses of parliament up for renewal in 2017*

Country	Total seats	Total women	% women	% point change
Bahamas	16	7	43.8	18.8
Kenya	68	21	30.9	4.4
France	348	102	29.3	4.3
Kazakhstan	47	5	10.6	4.3
Slovenia	40	4	10.0	2.5
Lesotho	31	8	25.8	1.6
Congo	71	14	19.7	0.3
Argentina	72	30	41.7	0.0

*For countries where comparative data is available.

As a result, 30 per cent of candidates were women, though only 17 per cent were ultimately elected, an increase of 6.5 percentage points compared to elections in 2012.

Modest gains in women's representation were secured in the September 2017 elections in Norway, where women now hold 41.4 per cent of seats in Parliament compared to 39.6 per cent in 2013, a small change of +1.8 percentage points. Women now hold the top three positions in Norway's coalition government, that of Prime Minister, foreign minister and finance minister.

In Austria (+1.1 points), the United Kingdom (+2.6 points), and Malta (+0.4 point) small gains were not so much interpreted as victories but rather as opportunities to highlight how much still remains to be done to achieve women's substantial representation. A record-breaking 208 women were elected to the British Parliament (32%) and women led three of the parties contesting the elections (Conservatives; Scottish National Party; Democratic Unionist Party). In addition, the Labour Party's practice of applying "all-women shortlists" (where half of all winnable seats must be contested by female candidates) allowed it to increase the representation of Labour women in parliament, from 28 per cent in 2015 to 45 per cent in 2017.

However, fewer women from the ruling Conservative Party were elected than in the previous elections (21%). Moreover, in September 2017, citing the possibility of undue "regulatory burden" on political parties, the government rejected six proposals to promote women's equal representation presented by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee. These proposals included legislating a minimum 45 per cent of women on electoral lists with sanctions for non-compliance, as well as requiring political parties to publish "candidate diversity" data. Perhaps in response to this, women Labour Party MPs declared their intention to form "a voting bloc" on a range of gender equality issues including domestic violence, gender mainstreaming of the government's industrial strategy, and women's representation in local government.

Women now make up only 14.7 per cent of the Maltese legislature (10 seats of 68), the lowest of any European Union Member State. Women secured 63 of the 183 seats (34.4%) in the Austrian general elections, an increase of 1.1 percentage

points. Immigration issues dominated electoral campaigns and the elections witnessed the victory of parties with strong conservative stances.

The indirect elections of members to the upper houses yielded small increases in women's representation in Kazakhstan (+4.3 points) and Slovenia (+2.5 points), while elections to Bulgaria's unicameral parliament resulted in an increase of 3.8 percentage points. Likewise, in elections to the lower house in the Czech Republic women's representation increased by +2.5 percentage points despite the fact that fewer women were placed in top positions on electoral lists than in the previous elections in 2013.

Gains were offset by several important losses in women's representation in the region. Iceland shed the eight percentage-point increase in women's representation secured in its 2016 parliamentary elections, recording a decrease of 9.5 percentage points in 2017. Women's representation in the Parliament (*Althingi*) now sits at 36.5 per cent, the lowest number of women MPs. Following the November elections, Katrín Jakobsdóttir emerged to become the second woman to serve as Iceland's Prime Minister.

Figure 3

Progress of women speakers, 1995 - 2018

Table 3

Candidates running for election in 2017*

	Total No.	No. Men	No. Women	% Women	Success rate	Quota
Majority Electoral system						
France (Lower House)	7 877	4 535	3 342	42.4%	6.7%	Yes***
Gambia (The)	239	218	21	8.8%	28.6%	No
Kazakhstan (Upper House)	234	187	47	20.1%	10.6%	No
Liberia	1 000	835	165	16.5%	6.7%	No
Papua New Guinea	3 332	3 165	167	5.0%	0.0%	No
Tonga	86	71	15	17.4%	13.3%	No
United Kingdom (Lower House)	3 304	2 328	973	29.4%	21.4%	Yes*
Mixed electoral system						
Bulgaria	4 678	3 469	1 209	25.8%	4.7%	No
Germany (Lower House)	4 828	3 428	1 400	29.0%	15.6%	Yes*
Lesotho (Lower House)	1 374	943	431	31.4%	6.3%	Yes**
Micronesia (Federal States of)	22	20	2	9.1%	0.0%	No
New Zealand	531	341	190	35.8%	24.2%	Yes*
Proportional representation						
Albania	2 666	1 593	1 073	40.2%	3.6%	Yes**
Algeria (Lower House)	11 315	7 679	3 636	32.1%	3.3%	Yes**
Armenia	1 558	1 090	468	30.0%	3.8%	Yes**
Chile (Lower House)	960	563	397	41.4%	8.8% ¹	Yes**
Czech Republic (Lower House)	7 524	5 370	2 145	28.5%	2.1%	Yes*
Iceland	1 244	689	555	44.6%	4.3%	Yes*
Liechtenstein	71	55	16	22.5%	6.3%	No
Netherlands (Lower House)	1 114	721	393	35.3%	13.7%	No

Legend:

Yes* One or more political parties adopted a voluntary measure to increase the number of women candidates

Yes** Legislated quota

Yes*** Legislated and voluntary quotas

Success rate: total number of women candidates divided by the total number of women elected (not shown in table).

*For countries where comparative data is available

¹ Preliminary results



European Parliament, 2017 ©AFP

While Angela Merkel retained her position as Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany for a fourth term, she now works with a Bundestag (lower house) with noticeably fewer women. Overall, the proportion of women elected to the legislature in 2017 fell by 5.7 percentage points to 30.7 per cent, the lowest level in almost 20 years. Those parties that returned the highest number of women were those that have adopted voluntary gender quotas: the Social Democratic Party, the Left, and the Greens (41.8%, 53.6%, and 60.9% of successful women candidates, respectively). Fewer than 20 per cent of the seats occupied by Merkel's Christian Democratic Union/Christian Socialist Union party, which has no gender quota, are held by women, the second lowest of the six parties now represented in the Bundestag. Likewise, the newest arrival on the parliamentary scene – the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party – and the Free Democrats (FDP) – have no gender quotas; women make up only 10.9 per cent and 23.8 per cent of their MPs, respectively.

In Liechtenstein, the proportion of women in the 25-seat single house fell from 20 per cent in 2013 to 12 per cent in 2017, a drop of eight percentage points. All three elected women are members of the ruling party; the entire parliamentary opposition currently consists of only men. There are no legislated or voluntary gender quotas in place, though the PR electoral system would lend itself well to the introduction of either. A smaller loss was also recorded in the Netherlands (-2.7 points), where women now make up 36 per cent of the lower house (*Tweede Kamer*). The 2017 elections marked the second decline in women's representation since a highpoint of 41 per cent was recorded in 2010.

#MeToo: Applicable in parliaments

The magnitude of the culture of sexual harassment and assault in politics grabbed headlines worldwide in 2017 in the wake of the #MeToo movement.

Within parliaments and legislatures, #MeToo has led not only to the downfall of prominent politicians, but has also shed light on the precarious institutional culture in which parliamentarians and staffers often work.

The Swedish Parliament held a debate about #MeToo and an open seminar on 13 December where members of parliament and two ministers read anonymous testimonies from women politicians active in different parties who have been subjected to sexual abuse. It led the Speaker of the Parliament to task the Gender Equality Group to address this issue beginning with an internal survey on the culture in parliament. It also led to initiatives within political parties, including men rallying together to do something to end sexism and sexual harassment.

As a first step to prevent further sexual misconduct from its members, the Swiss Parliament decided to experimentally mandate an independent advisory body specialized on mobbing and harassment to which parliamentarians can turn to anonymously.

Table 4

Types of quotas applied in the 2017 parliamentary renewals

A. Number of chambers renewed and types of quotas applied

Quota	Number of chambers per quota type		
	Lower/ Single House	Upper house	Total
Legislated	10	0	10
Legislated+voluntary	3	3	6
Voluntary	8	0	8
None	13	6	19

In Canada, although the House of Commons adopted a comprehensive policy on preventing and addressing sexual harassment in 2014, in January 2018 several Canadian parliamentary staffers came forward to relate in detail the deeply-entrenched sexualized culture pervading Parliament Hill. Many of the stories they referred to involved young female staffers, interns and those new to the parliamentary environment.

In October 2017 the European Parliament in Strasbourg hosted a debate on sexual harassment and measures to prevent and combat the abuse of women. Women MEPs, such as 30-year old Green member Terry Reintke, held placards that read “MeToo” and detailed their experiences of harassment and misconduct.

The President of Italy’s lower house, Laura Boldrini, held a woman-only debate in Parliament in December 2017 to highlight just how normalized sexual harassment is in Italian culture. Having heard stories of harassment, rape, and general discrimination, Boldrini closed the meeting by noting, “This chamber shows many things. The country cannot ignore us anymore.”

B. Proportion of women’s representation relative to quotas applied

Quota	Number of chambers per quota type		
	Lower/ Single House	Upper house	Total
Legislated	27.4%	0.0%	27.4%
Legislated+voluntary	33.6%	31.4%	33.0%
Voluntary	31.1%	0.0%	31.1%
None	15%	17.7%	15.4%

As identified in the 2016 IPU Issues Brief *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*, the recognition of the prevalence of systemic abuse is a first step towards a broader process of institutional change. The recognition of systemic abuse is at the core of the #MeToo movement. The IPU study also shed light on the fact that some parliaments have recently established policies against sexual harassment, which still need to be better known and improved.

In the UK, France and at the European Parliament, the #MeToo movement also contributed to highlight factors specific to parliamentary work that may foster sexual harassment, including the particular hierarchy between parliamentarians and their assistants, characterized by precarious work contracts.

It had the merit to prompt discussions in parliaments and put pressure on their leaders to raise awareness of the issue internally, provide training and confidential counselling, improve the measures in place to report incidences of sexual harassment, and apply disciplinary sanctions. The pressure is now high on parliaments to secure a respectful, safe and secure institutional culture and working environment for both women and men.



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