



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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# Women in parliament in 2018

## The year in review



Record number of women elected in 2018 and growing diversity in the US Congress © Saul Loeb/AFP

Elections in 2018 consolidated many of the gains in women's parliamentary representation witnessed around the world in recent years. The global share of women in parliament continued to rise, albeit slowly. It improved slightly on recent rates of change and on aggregate trends over the last decade.

Parliaments in the Americas built on prior gains to become the first region to achieve a "critical mass" average of more than 30 per cent women across both chambers of parliament. The number of chambers surpassing this goal overall grew to 76 in 2018. 24 of those chambers showcase a 40 per cent representation or more.

While the majority of chambers renewed in 2018 have experienced an increase in the percentage of women members, no region was immune to setbacks. Countries that saw sizeable decreases include Slovenia (-11.2 points), Eswatini (Upper chamber, -10 points) and Cambodia (Lower chamber, -5.1 points). The small size of some parliaments explains some of

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The share of women in national parliaments increased nearly a percentage point, growing from 23.4 per cent in 2017 to 24.3 per cent in 2018 (+0.9 points).
- This rate of change exceeded the +0.1 percentage-point increase seen in 2017. It also slightly improved on trends over the last decade, which averaged just under 0.6 percentage points each year. In 2008, women occupied 18.3 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide.
- The 50 countries<sup>1</sup> which held elections in 2018 elected on average 25.8 per cent women MPs. This is less than the 27.1 per cent women elected in the 37 countries which held elections in 2017.
- The Americas continued to outpace other regions in terms of electing more women. In 2018, it was the first region to achieve a "critical mass" of 30 per cent women, on average, in both single/lower and upper chambers.
- The most impressive gain in women's representation occurred in Djibouti (+15.4 points) and in the upper chambers of Antigua-and-Barbuda (+19.6 points) and Mexico (+16.4 points). There were also some large gains in states with small parliaments, like Grenada and Monaco.
- Electoral systems also had an impact on women's representation, with the average share of women elected being notably higher in proportional and mixed systems (26.5%) than in majoritarian systems (20%).

<sup>1</sup> Information is available for 49 countries pending results of elections to the lower chamber of Afghanistan.

# HIGHLIGHTS

- As in the past, countries with legislated gender quotas elected significantly more women to parliament than their non-quota counterparts. In single and lower chambers, the difference amounted to 7 percentage points (25.6% compared to 18.6%). In upper chambers, the gap was of 17 percentage points (33.2% versus 16.2%).
- Among parliamentary chambers worldwide, women now account for at least 30 per cent of membership in 76 parliamentary chambers (compared to 67 in 2017), with the percentage reaching 40 per cent or more in 24 of those parliamentary chambers. At the same time, the number of chambers with less than 10 per cent women dropped to the lowest level ever (33 compared to 39 in 2017).
- In some regions, diversity in women's representation was more remarkable in 2018, with younger and more ethnically diverse cohorts of women entering parliament in countries like the United States and Brazil.
- In 2018, violence against women in politics caught further global and national attention, alongside growing awareness of sexual harassment in parliamentary settings.

the dramatic jumps seen in 2018 in terms of percentage. However in many cases, the strong presence of women can be attributed to the application of various types of gender quota. Countries that did not apply quotas in 2018 average 18.6 per cent women's representation in single and lower chambers (16 countries) and 16.2 per cent in upper chambers (10 countries). By contrast, those that applied 30 per cent legislated quotas (or higher) elected on average 27.7 per cent women in single and lower chambers (13 countries) and 36.1 per cent to upper chambers (6 countries). Setting gender parity as the objective (50 per cent) has been even more effective, leading to 29.3 per cent in single and lower chambers (4 countries) and 47.1 per cent women in upper chambers (2 countries) in 2018.

Elections in 2018 also brought greater focus to the importance of electing a more diverse group of women to parliament, for example along lines of ethnicity, age, social background and sexual orientation. Global attention to violence against women in politics increased, together with awareness and actions to combat sexual harassment in parliaments.

## Regional trends

### The Americas: consolidating gender parity

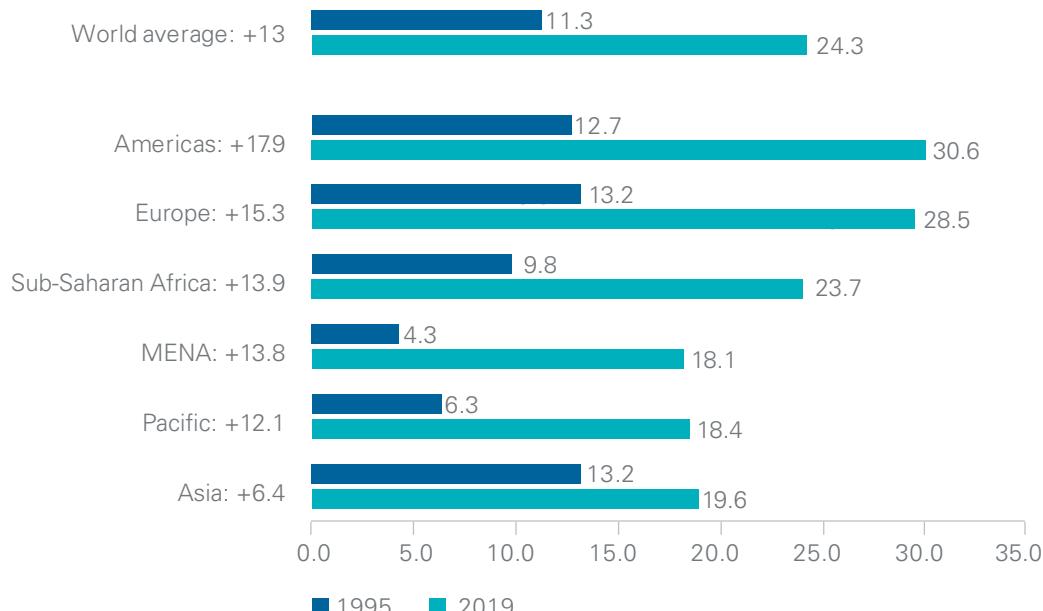
The Americas continued to lead in terms of both regional averages of women in parliament and the rate of change observed following elections in 2018. Women now account for 30.6 per cent throughout the region's parliaments. In 2018, the proportion of women elected in single and lower chambers was 34 per cent. In upper chambers, women won 29.4 per cent of seats up for renewal in 2018.

Among single and lower chambers of parliament, the greatest improvements in women's parliamentary representation occurred in Grenada (+13.3 points), Costa Rica (+12.3 points) and Mexico (+5.8 points). The advances in Grenada can be explained, at least in part, by the small size of its parliament. Prior to the elections, 5 women and 10 men sat in parliament (33.3% women). After the elections, the gender balance shifted to seven women and eight men (46.7% women).

The gains in Costa Rica and Mexico stem from gender parity reforms, a growing trend across the Americas, especially in Latin America. In 2009, the electoral law was reformed in Costa

Figure 1

### World and regional averages of women in parliaments, 1995 and 1 January 2019



For the current composition of IPU's regional groupings, see: [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm).

Rica to require gender parity, as well as the alternation of women's and men's names on party lists (building on a 40 per cent quota introduced in 1996). However, the share of women in parliament fell from 38.6 per cent to 33.3 per cent (-5.3 points) when the law was first applied in 2014. This was because political parties tended to place men at the top of their lists, which distorted parity of outcomes when an odd number of candidates was elected. In response, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal resolved in 2016 that parity should not only be applied "vertically" (down party lists), but also "horizontally" (on party lists across districts). As a result of equal numbers of women and men topping the party lists, the share of women parliamentarians increased from 33.3 per cent in 2014 to 45.6 per cent in 2018.

The 2018 elections were the second in Mexico to feature a gender parity requirement, applicable to both the lower and upper houses. In light of the country's mixed electoral system, the 2014 electoral code makes two stipulations. For elections to the lower chamber, parties must alternate between men and women on their lists in the proportional representation component (200 seats). In the single-member district majoritarian component (300 seats), they must nominate equal numbers of women and men and may not place women exclusively in districts where the party received the lowest number of votes in the preceding election. In 2015, the National Electoral Institute found that parties continued to favour male candidates in winning districts, with women winning 42.4 per cent of the seats. Parties applied more equitable nomination patterns in the single-member districts in 2018, raising the total share of women to 48.2 per cent. (The corresponding figure for the upper house was 49.2%, a 16.4 points increase).

Other countries in the Americas experienced setbacks, although these were relatively minor compared to prior electoral results. The share of women parliamentarians in Colombia dropped from 19.9 per cent to 18.1 per cent (-1.8 points). A closer look reveals that the total number of women fell by only two between 2014 and 2018, while the number of men increased slightly when five new seats were

added to parliament. In El Salvador the proportion of women fell from 32.1 per cent to 31 per cent (-1.1 points), due to one fewer woman being elected in 2018 compared to 2015. The relative consistency across these election results stems from the presence of a 30 per cent gender quota, enacted in 2013. Together, these minor setbacks indicate broader continuities with past election results, rather than major losses.

Among upper chambers, the biggest gains emerged among the Caribbean countries of Antigua and Barbuda (+19.6 points), Grenada (+15.4 points), and Barbados (+9.5 points). All three countries have relatively small parliamentary chambers of between 13 and 21 members. The gains in Antigua and Barbuda are nonetheless striking, as the 2018 elections reversed the gender balance of power: a chamber of 10 men and 5 women (33.3% women) became a chamber of 8 men and 9 women (52.9% women). Although all of these seats are filled by appointment, four distinct offices are involved in making these appointments (the Governor General, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and Barbuda Council). All four included women among their nominees, demonstrating the importance of cultivating political will across sectors to ensure greater gender equality.

Paraguay was the upper chamber that decreased the most in terms of women's representation in the region, dropping from 20 per cent to 17.8 per cent (-2.2 points). Similar to the pattern observed for lower chambers, this was because one fewer woman was elected as compared to 2013 – suggesting broader patterns of stability over time, rather than a negative trend.

### **Asia and the Pacific: stability and new engagements**

In 2018, parliaments across Asia followed the Americas over their progress in women's representation, with gains in the 2018 elections surpassing the region's average of 19.6 per cent women members of parliament. The share of women winning seats in single and lower chambers in the Asian region was of 23.3 per cent and their share of seats won in upper chambers was of 17.2 per cent. For both



Valeria Gonzalez, 19, votes for the first time in San Jose, Costa Rica. ©Carlos Gonzalez/AFP



Candidates election posters in Suva (Fiji). © Peter Parks/AFP

chambers combined, women won 22.7 per cent of seats in 2018. In the Pacific, only Fiji held elections in 2018, with 19.6 per cent of seats going to women, above the regional average of 18.4 per cent.

The most notable progress among single and lower chambers in Asia-Pacific occurred in Bhutan (+8.5 points) and Fiji (+3.6 points). In Bhutan, the proportion of women parliamentarians increased from 6.4 per cent to a record-high 14.9 per cent in 2018. In 2013, 11 women ran for parliament but only four were successful. By contrast, in 2018, 10 women stood as candidates and 7 were elected.

In Fiji, the share of women parliamentarians grew from 16 per cent (8 out of 50 members) to 19.6 per cent (10 out of 51 members). The primary motor appears to be a growth in the number of women contesting parliamentary seats. Whereas 44 women stood as candidates in 2014 (18% of candidates), 56 women ran in 2018 (24% of candidates). The appointment of the first female Speaker of the Parliament, Jiko Luveni, in 2014 (who passed away suddenly in December 2018) may have also contributed. She served as a role model and encouraged more women to become engaged in political life.

Turkmenistan experienced a slight decrease in women's representation, falling from 26.4 per cent in 2013 to 24.8 per cent in 2018 (-1.6 points). This translates to two less women elected. While the country has a first-past-the-post electoral system, its politics has been dominated by the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan since independence

in 1991. Together with members of the trade union and youth organizations, the party's Women's Union is among the interest groups that the party seeks to include among its deputies in parliament. As such, despite this small drop, the country has seen a relatively stable share of women in parliament over time. The election of another female parliamentary speaker, Gülsat Mämmedowa, was a clear sign of continuity in women's prominent role in the political life in the country.

All upper chambers in Asia saw increases in the share of women parliamentarians, due to either one more (Pakistan) or two more (Bhutan) women winning seats compared to previous renewals. In India, elections to the upper chamber resulted in the number of women remaining the same but the total number of seats filled being reduced. These changes translate into very minor increases in percentage terms in Pakistan (+1 point) and India (+0.3 points). However, in Bhutan the impact was more dramatic, doubling the percentage of women from 8 per cent to 16 per cent (+8 points).

### **Europe: advances and erosions**

Countries in Europe overall made progress in 2018, attaining a regional average of 28.5 per cent. Throughout the region, the proportion of women winning seats in 2018 was 28.7 per cent. Upper chambers saw slightly greater increases, with 31.4 per cent women gaining seats, as compared to 28.2 per cent in lower and single houses. These broader trends, however, mask dramatic variations across the region in terms of both progress and setbacks in women's representation.

Among lower chambers, Monaco outpaced all European countries which held elections in 2018, growing from 20.8 per cent to 33.3 per cent women parliamentarians (+12.5 points). This amounts to the election of three additional women, due to the parliament's small size (24 members).

Latvia also experienced a substantial increase in the share of women in parliament, which jumped from 19 per cent to 31 per cent (+12 points). Despite a decrease in the share of women as candidates to parliament (33% in 2014 compared to 31.8% in 2018), parties placed women higher on party lists than they had done previously. This resulted in a close correspondence between the proportions of women nominated as candidates and elected to parliament. The female Speaker, Ināra Mūrniece, was also chosen to serve a second consecutive term as Speaker.

Italy performed best among the larger European states, rising from 28.4 per cent to 35.7 per cent (+7.3 points) women parliamentarians. This improvement can be attributed to the new electoral law passed in 2017. It stipulates a 50 per cent quota and alternation on party lists in the proportional representation component and a 40 per cent quota in the majoritarian component of the country's mixed electoral system. However, some parties placed the same women on multiple lists, undermining the quota's overall impact.

Slovenia, by contrast, suffered the greatest setbacks among European countries which held elections in 2018, dropping from 35.6 per cent to 24.4 per cent (-11.2 points). In the run-up to the elections, parties' attempts to undermine the

35 per cent gender quota required interventions by both the Electoral Commission and the Supreme Court. Parties on both the left and right nominated the same women as candidates across multiple electoral districts. In another case, two parties placed the same candidate's name on both of their lists. While most of these tactics failed, they point to ongoing resistance to recruiting and promoting female candidates, despite the introduction of the gender quota as early as in 2006.

Among European upper chambers, Italy saw the greatest advances in women's representation, rising from 27 per cent to 35.3 per cent (+8.3 points). This result stems from the new gender quota. In the Czech Republic, by contrast, the share of women in the upper chamber fell from 18.8 per cent to 16 per cent (-2.8 points), due to two fewer women being elected in 2018.

### Africa: modest gains

African parliaments witnessed relatively modest progress in 2018. The regional average of women parliamentarians stood at 23.7 per cent. Women won 19.4 per cent of seats in lower and single houses and 27.5 per cent in upper houses.

Djibouti saw the most substantial gains among all countries which held elections in 2018, with the share of women in parliament rising from 10.8 per cent to 26.2 per cent (+15.4 points). Since 2002, at least 10 per cent of parliamentary seats have been reserved for women. In late 2017, the Djibouti parliament carried out a self-assessment

A Swazi woman at a polling station in Lobamba (Eswatini) © Gianluigi Guercia/AFP



exercise in partnership with the IPU that included a focus on the gender sensitivity of parliament. After the exercise, a new electoral law was adopted in early 2018 requiring that at least 25 per cent of parliamentary seats be held by women.

Single and lower chambers in Africa that lost female members are São Tomé and Príncipe (-3.6 points) and Rwanda (-2.5 points). Since 2003, Rwanda has occupied the top position in the world in terms of the percentage of women in parliament. In 2018, the proportion of women dropped slightly from 63.8 per cent to 61.3 per cent. However, this share still far exceeds the 30 per cent of seats reserved for women in the lower house, as stipulated in the 2003 Constitution.

With respect to upper chambers, Cameroon made the greatest advances, increasing from 20 per cent to 26 per cent (+6 points). Among the 70 directly elected seats, women won a record 22 seats. Women gained 4 additional seats among the 30 appointed by the president, who since the previous election has reportedly taken gender into account when making these nominations. In another notable development in Côte d'Ivoire women account for 12.1 per cent of seats in its newly created upper chamber.

Women's representation declined in upper chambers in Eswatini (-10 points) and Zimbabwe (-3.8 points). The 2005 Constitution of Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland, guarantees women's representation in both chambers of parliament. For the upper house, 5 of the 10 members elected by the lower house plus 8 of the 20 members appointed by the King must be women: a total of 13 women (43.3%). Despite this provision, and while there were 10 women senators in 2013 (33.3%), this number fell to 7 women (23.3%) in 2018.

In Zimbabwe, the 2013 Constitution stipulates that 60 of the 80 senators be elected by proportional representation. It requires not only that lists alternate between male and female candidates but also that all lists be headed by women. In 2013, this system resulted in 47.5 per cent of seats going to women in the upper chamber, a share that fell marginally to 43.8 per cent in 2018.

## Middle East and North Africa: historic gains and stagnation

Countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region experienced few gains in women's representation in 2018, attaining a regional average of 18.1 per cent. The average proportion of women elected was of 19.4 per cent in lower and single chambers, but was a mere 10.5 per cent in upper chambers. This resulted in an overall proportion of 17.5 per cent of women gaining seats in the region in the 2018 elections.

The lower chamber of Bahrain doubled its share of women parliamentarians, from 7.5 per cent to 15.0 per cent (+7.5 points). The kingdom's first elections in 2002 had not resulted in the election of any women, and in 2006 and 2010, only one woman gained a seat. The first breakthrough came in 2014, when three women entered the lower house – making the 2018 elections truly historic, with six women MPs. A further milestone was achieved in late 2018, when Fouzia Zainal became the first woman to serve as the speaker of a parliamentary chamber in the country and only the third woman in the Arab world to hold this position.

Mauritania, by contrast, saw the biggest setback in the MENA region, as women's representation fell from 25.2 per cent to 20.3 per cent (-4.9 points). In 2012, a quota system was introduced whereby 13 seats are reserved for women running on a single nationwide list and lists in constituencies with more than three seats are required to include equal numbers of women and men, listed in alternating order. The major difference across the two elections was the scope of participation. While opposition parties boycotted the 2013 elections, nearly 100 parties and almost 5,000 candidates competed for 153 seats in the National Assembly in 2018. While the gender quota ensured women's participation in parliament, high levels of party fragmentation were likely detrimental to women's electoral successes.

Other elections held in the MENA region led to relatively minor increases and decreases in the share of women in single and lower chambers, such as in Lebanon (+1.6 points) and Iraq (-0.1 points). These two countries occupy different ends of the spectrum in terms of women's parliamentary representation. Despite numerous attempts to introduce legislated quotas in Lebanon, these have not succeeded and the share of women increased in 2018 from a mere 3.1 per cent to 4.7 per cent. In Iraq, the number of women remained steady thanks to the quota in place, but as one seat was added to parliament, their share dropped slightly from 25.3 per cent to 25.2 per cent.

The only upper chamber subject to renewal in 2018 was Bahrain, where the proportion of women remained the same at 22.5 per cent.

Figure 2: Parliamentary renewals in 2018

**Progress and setbacks (in %) of women in lower and single houses of parliament renewed in 2018\***



\* Afghanistan: Results of elections to the lower chamber not available

Table 1

**Women in lower or single chambers after parliamentary renewals in 2018<sup>+</sup>**

Country	Total seats	Total women	% women	Quota
Rwanda	80	49	61.3	Yes**
Cuba	605	322	53.2	Yes *
Mexico	500	241	48.2	Yes**
Grenada	15	7	46.7	None
Sweden	349	161	46.1	Yes*
Costa Rica	57	26	45.6	Yes**
Italy	630	225	35.7	Yes**
Timor Leste	65	22	33.8	Yes**
Monaco	24	8	33.3	None
Zimbabwe	270	85	31.5	Yes**
El Salvador	84	26	31.0	Yes**
Latvia	100	31	31.0	None
Djibouti	65	17	26.2	Yes**
Iraq	329	83	25.2	Yes**
China	2975	742	24.9	Yes**
Turkmenistan	125	31	24.8	None
Slovenia	90	22	24.4	Yes**
Armenia	132	32	24.2	Yes**
United States of America	434	102	23.5	None
Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	9	21.4	Yes**
Bangladesh	350	72	20.6	Yes**
Mauritania	153	31	20.3	Yes**
Pakistan	342	69	20.2	Yes**
Barbados	30	6	20.0	None
Luxembourg	60	12	20.0	Yes*
Fiji	51	10	19.6	None
Colombia	171	31	18.1	Yes**
Gabon	134	24	17.9	None
Turkey	600	104	17.3	Yes*
Togo	91	15	16.5	Yes**
Cambodia	125	19	15.2	None
Bahrain	40	6	15.0	None
Brazil	513	77	15.0	Yes**
Paraguay	80	12	15.0	Yes**
Bhutan	47	7	14.9	None
Sao Tome and Principe	55	8	14.5	None
Malaysia	223	31	13.9	None
Sierra Leone	146	18	12.3	None
Hungary	199	23	11.6	Yes*
Antigua and Barbuda	18	2	11.1	None
Democratic Republic of the Congo	485	50	10.3	Yes**
Eswatini	69	5	7.2	Yes**
Lebanon	128	6	4.7	None

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

<sup>+</sup> Afghanistan: Results of elections to the lower chamber not available

Table 2

**Progress and setbacks of women in upper chambers after parliamentary renewals in 2018\***

Country	Total seats	Total women	% women	% point change
Antigua and Barbuda	17	9	52.9	19.6
Mexico	128	63	49.2	16.4
Grenada	13	4	30.8	15.4
Barbados	21	8	38.1	9.5
Italy	320	113	35.3	8.3
Bhutan	25	4	16.0	8.0
Cameroon	100	26	26.0	6.0
United States of America	100	25	25.0	4.0
Brazil	81	12	14.8	1.2
Pakistan	104	20	19.2	1.0
India	237	27	11.4	0.3
Bahrain	40	9	22.5	0
Cambodia	62	11	17.7	0
Algeria	132	2	6.8	-0.2
Colombia	108	22	20.4	-2.1
Paraguay	45	8	17.8	-2.2
Czech Republic	81	13	16.0	-2.8
Zimbabwe	80	35	43.8	-3.8
Eswatini	30	7	23.3	-10.0

\*For countries where comparative data is available.

## Women as parliamentary speakers

Until the late 1990s, the relatively few countries that had women serving as speakers of parliament were located in Europe or the Americas. Between 2005 and 2015, however, the share of women as presiding officers of parliament nearly doubled, rising from 8.3 per cent to 15.6 per cent. By 1 January 2019, this figure had increased to 19.7 per cent (see Figure 3), up from 17.3 per cent in 2018, surpassing the previous record of 19.1 per cent set in 2017. This includes the three female Speakers appointed for the first time in Bahrain, the Philippines and Togo. Women currently serve as parliamentary speakers in all regions of the world. In recognition of this growing global trend, since 2005 the IPU has held regular Summits of Women Speakers of Parliament to exchange ideas to advance and support the work of the global parliamentary community.

### Women Speakers of parliament as at 1 January 2019 (55/279 = 19.7%)\*

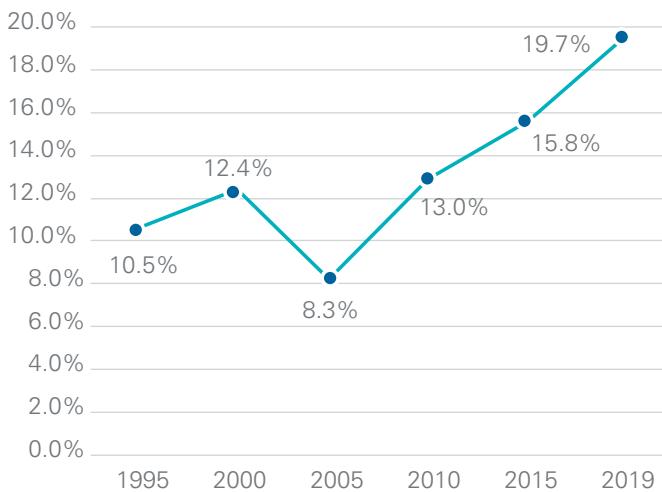
Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia (2 chambers), Finland, Gabon, the Gambia, India, Italy, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands (2 chambers), Norway, Panama, Philippines, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Serbia, South Africa (2 chambers), Spain, Suriname, Switzerland, Togo,\*\* Trinidad and Tobago (2 chambers), Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United States of America,\*\*\* Uruguay, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

\*Out of a total of 272 parliamentary chambers, 2 have 2 additional Speakers and 3 have 1 additional Speaker, for a total of 279 Speakers.

\*\* Elected Speaker as a result of the December 2018 elections. She was formally elected on 23 January 2019 by the newly elected Parliament.

\*\*\* Elected Speaker as a result of the November 2018 elections. Her formal election was held on 3 January 2019, when the newly elected Congress first convened.

Figure 3

**Progress of women Speakers, 1995–2019**

## Well-designed quotas

Electoral quotas for women have now spread to all regions of the world. Elections in more than 130 countries today are governed by some type of quota policy introduced at the state- or party-levels. Globally, the trend is moving in the direction of gender parity. In Latin America, many 30-per-cent policies originally adopted in the 1990s are being revised upwards to stipulate that party candidates should include equal numbers of women and men. In other regions, some first-time adopters are moving directly to 50-per-cent requirements.

Country-level experiences with quotas, however, have shown that not all quotas are equally effective. In most cases, simply mandating quotas, without including placement mechanisms or sanctions, has failed to result in major breakthroughs in women's parliamentary representation. Evidence from elections held in 2018 demonstrates, however, that well-designed quotas can pave the way to greater gender parity. Table 3 reveals marked differences in the average share of women elected in chambers without quotas (18.6% and 16.2% in single/lower and upper chambers respectively) compared to those that require at least 30 per cent women (27.7% and 36.1% respectively). These differences are even greater when measures stipulate gender parity (29.3% and 47.1% respectively).

Table 3

**Quotas and parliamentary election results in 2018**

	Single and lower chambers	Upper chambers
No quotas	18.6%	16.2%
All types of legislated quotas*	25.6%	33.2%
Legislated quotas* set at 30%+	27.7%	36.1%
Legislated quotas* set at 50%+	29.3%	47.1%

\*Reserved seats plus legislated candidate quotas

## Electoral systems

As in previous IPU reports, the 2018 election results confirm the long-standing observation that parliamentary chambers elected via proportional representation (PR) or mixed electoral systems tend to elect more women (26.5%) than those governed by first-past-the-post, or majoritarian, electoral systems (20%). Including appointed and other electoral systems in the analysis indicates that these parliaments elect an even greater share of women on average (27.4%). Together with the short case studies above, these patterns highlight political will as a decisive factor in shaping women's opportunities to enter parliament in increased numbers.

Figure 4

**Electoral systems and women's representation**

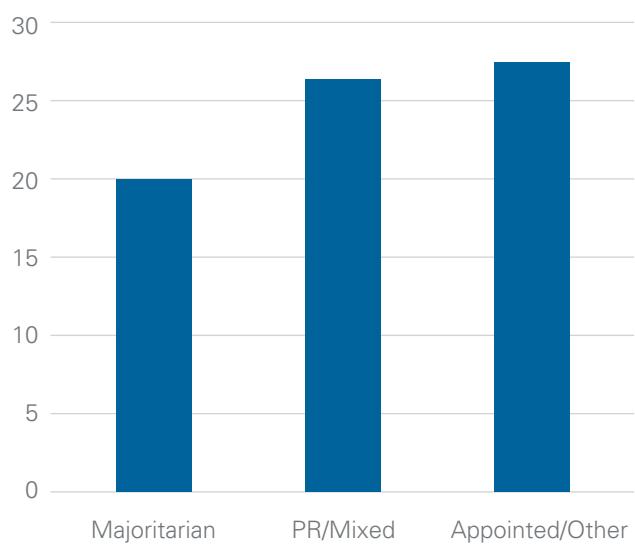


Table 4

**Candidates running for election in 2018\***

	Total No.	No. Men	No. Women	% Women	Success rate	Quota
<b>Majority Electoral system</b>						
Barbados (Lower House)	135	98	37	27.4%	16.2%	No
Bhutan (Upper House)	121	115	6	5.0%	66.7%	No
Brazil (Upper House)	358	295	63	17.6%	19.0%	No
Eswatini (Lower House)	336	285	51	15.2%	9.8%	Yes**
Grenada (Lower House)	45	31	14	31.1%	50.0%	No
Malaysia (Lower House)	686	626	60	8.7%	51.7%	No
Sierra Leone	795	695	100	12.6%	18.0%	No
<b>Mixed electoral system</b>						
Hungary	1,796	1,314	482	26.8%	4.8%	Yes*
<b>Proportional representation</b>						
Armenia	1,444	980	464	32.1%	6.9%	Yes**
Bahrain (Lower House)	292	252	40	13.7%	15.0%	No
Brazil (Lower House)	8,588	5,821	2,767	32.2%	2.8%	Yes**
Colombia (Lower House)	1,843	1,206	637	34.6%	4.9%	Yes**
Colombia (Upper House)	1,114	806	308	27.6%	7.1%	Yes**
Costa Rica	1,048	531	517	49.3%	5.0%	Yes**
El Salvador	1,164	927	237	20.4%	11.0%	Yes**
Fiji	235	179	56	23.8%	17.9%	No
Latvia	1,461	997	464	31.8%	6.7%	No
Lebanon	976	865	111	11.4%	5.4%	No
Luxembourg	547	298	249	45.5%	4.8%	Yes*
Paraguay (Lower House)	1,729	1,146	583	33.7%	2.1%	Yes**
Paraguay (Upper House)	1,305	784	521	39.9%	1.5%	No
Slovenia (Lower House)	1,636	913	723	44.2%	3.0%	Yes**
Sweden	6,301	3,560	2,741	43.5%	5.9%	Yes*
<b>Other</b>						
Cuba	605	283	322	53.2%	100.0%	Yes*

**Legend:**

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

Yes\*\* Legislated quota

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

## Diversity of women elected

Beyond these ongoing patterns, elections in 2018 point to two emerging trends with regard to women's parliamentary representation. The first is the growing attention given to diversity among the women elected to national parliaments, recognizing that women are not a monolithic group. Elections in the United States and Brazil, in particular, brought greater focus to the question of which women are able to access – or not access – parliament.

Elections in the United States were historic in terms of the inclusion of new groups of legislators. Both the lower (23.5%) and upper chambers (25%) included more women than ever before. Of these, 37 per cent were women of colour, the first two Muslim women and the first two Native American women. The 2018 election also yielded the two youngest women ever to be elected to the U.S. Congress (both aged 29) as well as five new lesbian, gay, and bisexual parliamentarians (four women). These developments have been accompanied by widening differences across the two major parties. In 1989, there were 13

Republican women and 16 Democratic women in the lower chamber. As a result of the 2018 elections, the number of Republican women remained exactly the same, 13, while the number of Democratic women had increased to 89.<sup>2</sup>

Brazil is another country where diversity among women in elections received greater attention in 2018. One factor was the assassination of Marielle Franco, an activist and local councillor in Rio de Janeiro, who was shot and killed in her car with her driver. Her murder not only led to massive protests across the country, but also inspired unprecedented numbers of black women to run for office – many of whom used her image and the slogan “Marielle presente” in their campaign materials. The result was more women elected to the lower chamber than ever before, from 9.9 per cent to 15 per cent (+5.1 points), including 13 black women (up from 10 elected in 2014).

## Violence against women in politics

2018 also called greater attention to the problem of violence against women in politics. Although the IPU and a variety of other organizations have been working on this issue for some years already, several factors aligned in 2018 to bring it to greater global prominence, which is prompting new measures nationally and regionally.

First, in October 2018, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women presented a thematic report to the UN General Assembly focusing on violence against women in politics<sup>3</sup>. The report stresses the paramount responsibility of institutions, including parliaments, political parties and election commissions, to tackle this issue through prevention, documentation, the adoption of new legal frameworks, the establishment of complaint mechanisms, *inter alia*. The IPU also launched its second report on this topic, in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

(PACE), entitled *Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe*.<sup>4</sup> The study confirmed the high prevalence of such acts and behaviour, and stressed the need for urgent action: 85.2 per cent of female MPs who took part in the study said that they had experienced psychological violence in the course of their term of office and one in four reported having suffered sexual harassment. In April 2018, Women Speakers attending the 12<sup>th</sup> Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament in Cochabamba, Bolivia, committed to addressing this issue nationally.

Second, problems with violence against women surfaced in the course of the election cycle in a number of countries. The issue of violence against politicians received particular attention in Mexico, where the murders of candidates – particularly those running for local positions – appeared in many newspaper headlines. State and civil society actors began to record these events. In Latin America, several bills were proposed to tackle the issue, most recently in Honduras in early 2018. Bolivia is the only country to date to have enacted specific legislation to address violence against women in politics.

Finally, women continued to use the #MeToo hashtag to call out sexual harassment and violence in all spheres of life, including politics, in particular in parliaments. On the one-year anniversary of the global #MeToo movement, women working in the European Parliament launched #MeTooEP to raise awareness and lobby for policy reforms. Following the publication of the joint study with the IPU, PACE launched #NotInMyParliament, a Europe-wide campaign to prompt national parliamentary action. In December, an agreement was reached in the U.S. Congress to reform the existing sexual harassment policy by eliminating mediation requirements and lengthy waiting periods, making members (and not taxpayers) responsible for paying settlements, increasing transparency by publishing reports of committee findings, and requiring regular staff surveys about workplace culture during each congressional period.

2 <https://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-us-congress-2019>

3 See the UNSRVAW report at: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/73/301](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/73/301)

4 See <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2018-10-sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-europe>.



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