

Consolidated Response

# Gender Quotas in African Countries



International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics



## Introduction

Despite comprising more than 50 percent of the world's population, women continue to lack access to political leadership opportunities and resources at all levels of government. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy, but a necessary pre-condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Governance structures which do not result in the equal participation of men and women, or their equal enjoyment of benefits from state interventions are by definition neither inclusive nor democratic.

In 2007, recognizing that over the last century women's gains in the political arena have been slow and inadequate, five international organizations came together to make women's political participation their collective priority and devise a strategy that would scale-up each of the organization's efforts to foster gender equality in politics:

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)  
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)  
National Democratic Institute (NDI)  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

The International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics ([www.iKNOWPolitics.org](http://www.iKNOWPolitics.org)) is an online network, jointly supported by the five partner organizations, that aims to increase the participation and effectiveness of women in political life by utilizing a technology-enabled forum to provide access to critical resources and expertise, stimulate dialogue, create knowledge, and share experiences among women in politics.

In just three years, iKNOW Politics has become the leading website on women's political participation. Building on a library of over 5300 resources, iKNOW Politics has captured the combined experience and knowledge of its 92 global experts and 10,000 members from over 150 countries. iKNOW Politics has documented and disseminated the lessons and best practices of women as voters, candidates and elected legislators.

The following is a printed version of one of the most frequently-cited iKNOW Politics knowledge products, based on the combined input from experts and members worldwide. Please visit the iKNOW Politics website to pose a question of your own, contribute to the online discussions, browse the resource library or read additional iKNOW Politics consolidated expert responses, E-discussion summaries, interviews with women leaders, or contact iKNOW Politics at [connect@iknowpolitics.org](mailto:connect@iknowpolitics.org) to get in touch with a staff member in your region of the world. iKNOW Politics is available in **English, French, Spanish and Arabic.**

## Consolidated Response On Gender Quotas In African Countries

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*This consolidated response is based on research conducted by iKNOW Politics staff and contributions submitted by the following iKNOW Politics experts: Rumbidzai A Kandawasvika-Nhundu, Senior Programme Officer, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA); Julie Ballington, Program Specialist for Partnership between Men and Women, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU); and Drude Dahlerup, Professor of Political Science at Stockholm University.*

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### Question

What are some strategies and legislations in African countries that call for the 30% quota?

Have any of the quotas been adopted in national constitutions?

### Introduction

The implementation of gender quotas has been part of the political agenda in Africa since the early 1990s. Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, iKNOW Politics Expert and Senior Programme Officer at International IDEA, points out that

*“The “critical minority” of at least 30% is commonly considered necessary for women to have a significant impact in positions of power and decision making as conduits for democratic governance.” - (Kandawasvika-Nhundu, R. Expert Opinion. 2009)*

Many African countries have successfully implemented both voluntary and mandatory quotas in their legal systems and party platforms. Voluntary quotas are usually adopted by political parties, while mandatory quotas are legislated by governments through national constitutions, electoral codes and other election regulation laws. Currently in Africa, including in North Africa, 6 countries have constitutional quotas for elections to the National Parliament, 19 countries have voluntary party quotas, and 3 countries have reserved seat quotas. (Quota Project. 2006.) Julie Ballington, iKNOW Politics Expert and Program Specialist at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) notes that the regional average of women in parliament currently stands at 18%, which is slightly lower than the global average of 18.6%. Ms. Ballington further mentions that Africa trails the Americas (21.7%), Europe (21.2%), and Asia (18.3%) in terms of women's access to parliaments, but performs better than the Pacific (13%) and the Arab States (9.7%). (Ballington, J. Expert Opinion. 2009)

This consolidated response highlights various types of quotas adopted in African countries and provides details on the implementation of quotas under different electoral systems. The response also includes several annexes with data on quotas based on country and on quota type.

## Quotas in Different Electoral Systems

Existing electoral systems are commonly divided into proportional representation (PR), majority/plurality, and mixed representation systems. There are different forms and sub-systems that exist within the majority/plurality system, among which the First Past the Post (FPTP), Block Vote (BV), Party Block Vote (PBV), Alternative Vote (AV), and Two-Round (TR) systems are implemented most often.

### *I. Quotas in Majority/Plurality and Mixed Electoral Systems*

Research on the practical application of quotas shows that it is easier to implement quotas in countries with a proportional representation (PR) electoral system rather than in countries with majoritarian systems. According to International IDEA's database, the majority/plurality electoral systems in Africa exist in Botswana, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Gambia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sudan Swaziland, the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. (Table of Electoral Systems Worldwide. 2005) Julie Ballington points out that the average representation of women in the 22 countries using majority/plurality electoral systems stands at 15.5% compared to 27.4% in the 12 countries using proportional representation. Countries with mixed electoral systems have the lowest representation of women, at 13%. For instance, one of the participants of the iKNOW Politics E-Discussion Forum on [Gender Quotas as a Mechanism Promoting Women in Politics](#) mentioned that:

*"The mainly majoritarian electoral system in Mauritania does not facilitate women's access to electoral functions. Therefore, women candidates have to be placed at strategic points in their lists (1st or 2nd, 6th, 11th, etc..) in order to be sure to be elected. Proportional electoral systems are in general more suitable to guarantee an easier access to the legislative posts for women." – (Pellizzeri, A. Governance Programme Officer, UNDP Mauritania. Comment on iKNOW Politics. 2008)*

A successful example of quotas implemented in a majoritarian electoral system is the United Republic of Tanzania. In Tanzania, the Constitution was amended to raise the number of special seats reserved for women in the National Assembly to 30%. Additionally, the Constitution requires reserving for women two of the five seats set aside for candidates from Zanzibar, and five out of ten seats set aside for presidential appointees. According to the statistics provided by IPU, after the December 2005 elections, the National Assembly of Tanzania has 30.4% of women parliamentarians. (Women in National Parliaments: World Classification. 2008). Commenting on this achievement, IPU highlighted that as of 2005 Tanzania had the highest percentage of women ever represented in a majoritarian electoral system. (Women in Parliament in 2005: the Year in Perspective. p. 1. 2005.)

### *II. Quotas in Proportional Representation*

Implementing quotas in proportional representation systems has proven to be very successful. According to the data provided by the Quota Project, among the countries in Africa that implemented some type of quotas, 12 countries have a proportional representation system. *For more details, please see Annex IV.* Proportional representation

systems make it easier for political parties to implement quotas, especially voluntary quotas. International IDEA has found that rather than having to look for a single candidate who can appeal to a broad range of voters, parties in proportional systems are more inclined to consider candidates with ties and appeal to different groups and different sectors of society to help attract more voters to their party. Conversely, parties may be afraid to lose some of their voter base if they fail to provide some balance by nominating only men. The political costs for nominating a woman candidate would be lower in proportional representation systems because the party would have several slots from which it could find room to do so. (The Effect of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation. International IDEA.)

Some researchers argue that the best results in gender equality in politics are achieved when a legislated quota is adopted in a proportional representation system. Namibia at the local government level, for example, combines a legislated quota, a voluntary party quota and a proportional representation (PR) system which has resulted in a very impressive 43.8% of women in local government. (Kethusegile-Juru, B. Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences. p.24. 2004.) Furthermore, Colleen Lowe Morna suggests the following:

*“Short of changing to a PR system, countries with a constituency system could look at the option pursued by Tanzania of reserving seats for women via a constitutional or legislated quota to be distributed among parties on a PR basis. Mixed systems, such as the one in Tanzania, and local government in South Africa raise the possibility of the PR system becoming a way for women to enter politics and then to contest constituency elections.” - (Morna, C. p8. 2003.)*

### **Constitutional and Legislated Quotas**

According to the Quota Project, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda have constitutional quotas for National Parliaments. Among these countries, Burundi, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania call for 30 % quotas for women in Parliaments. In Burundi, the Constitution adopted in February 2005 includes Article 164 and Article 129 that envisions quotas for women in parliament and government. Article 164 calls for a 30% quota for women in parliament and, if the quota is not met, the article requires women to be included to the parliament through the cooptation process as specified in the Electoral Code of Burundi. Additionally, Article 129 of the Constitution of Burundi requires that 30 percent of ministerial positions, independent of ethnicity, be allocated to women. (Minority Protections: Executive Branch Mechanisms. p5. 2006.) Julie Ballington, iKNOW Politics Expert and Program Specialist at IPU, mentions:

*“It is important to note that most quota legislation does not originate at the level of the constitution – in fact it is usually extremely difficult and politically sensitive to amend a constitution to include a quota provision. In many other countries, quotas have been adopted by amending the electoral and political party legislation and this is usually a more expedient way of legislating quotas.” (Ballington, J. Expert Opinion. 2009.)*

Several African countries revised their electoral and party laws instead of amending their constitutions to require quotas or reserved seats for women. Out of 11 African countries that

require quotas in their election laws or codes, 6 countries have only that type of legislated quota, while the rest of the countries have both election law and constitutional quotas. This type of legislated quota is as compulsory as the constitutional quotas, with an exception that constitutional quotas are usually more difficult to remove. (Dahlerup, D. Expert Opinion. 2009.) For instance, Article 20 of the Political Parties Law in Angola mandates that political party charters include rules encouraging gender equality and requiring at least 30% representation of women. *For more information, please see Annex II.*

In some countries, even if the constitution calls for a 30% quota for women, the number of women in parliaments and decision-making positions may be higher. An excellent example of reaching over the established quota is Rwanda, where Article 9 of the Constitution commits the government of Rwanda to set aside 30% of posts in decision-making bodies to women candidates and Article 82 reserves 30% of seats to women in the Senate. (Quota Project. 2009) The introduction of the quota allowed Rwanda to have the highest number of women parliamentarians in the world with women constituting 48.8% in the Lower House and 30 % in the Senate after the 2003 elections, and with 56.3% of women parliamentarians elected in the Lower House and 34.6% in the Senate after the 2008 elections. (Women in Parliaments: World Classification. IPU)

### **Voluntary Quotas**

Voluntary quotas are quotas adopted by political parties on a voluntary basis. In many cases, quotas are first implemented by parties that have equality as a major policy focus, and then other parties follow the lead. In many cases, political parties adopt voluntary quotas under pressure from women's groups and organizations, and women members of their parties.

As shown in *Annex III*, 19 countries in Africa have political party quotas, with most parties adopting between 25%-30% voluntary quotas. The highest voluntary quota of

#### **Voluntary Party Quota: Case of the African National Congress (ANC)**

"To date, the African National Congress (ANC) is the only party in South Africa to have introduced a quota to ensure the representation of women in politics and decision-making. This system was introduced before the first general election for a democratic South Africa in 1994.

In the democratic elections of 1994, one-third of the public representatives elected by the ANC to the national and provincial legislatures were women. As a result, 25 percent of the members of the National Assembly were women. This was a great leap forward, as prior to 1994, South Africa had never had more than 4 percent representation of women in parliament. This placed South Africa among the top ten countries in the world in regard to the participation of women in parliament.

The ANC government went ahead and appointed women as ministers and deputy ministers. In parliament, women became presiding officers, advisers, whips and committee chairpersons. The 1999 elections witnessed the increasing presence of women in political decision-making. Unlike in 1994, when the ANC had to use the quota system to place women on its lists for the national and provincial legislatures, in 1999, the list for the national parliament did not have to be altered to achieve one-third representation – women were placed in every third position on the national list. Thus, the ANC list process resulted in the achievement of 33 percent representation of women. Women in South African politics became more visible."

Authored by Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini.

Derived from Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences. 2004.

[http://www.idea.int/publications/quotas\\_africa/upload/IDEA\\_no3.qxd.pdf](http://www.idea.int/publications/quotas_africa/upload/IDEA_no3.qxd.pdf)



50% was introduced by the Congress of Democrats (CoD) and South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia, and the Movement for Progress Party (MOP) in Sierra-Leone.

The success of voluntary party quotas may vary from country to country, being less effective in the countries with majority/plurality electoral systems. According to Bookie Kethusegile-Juru, the 'zebra stripe' system for the selection of candidates (alternating male and female candidates) has never translated into reality and been effectively implemented in the constituency based electoral systems in Africa. Ms. Bookie Kethusegile- Juru mentions that despite the existence of voluntary party quotas in Zimbabwe and Botswana the quotas for women have not been filled and women's representation in these countries stands very low. (Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences. p.24. 2004.) Speaking about African experiences in adopting voluntary quotas, Rumbidzai A Kandawasvika-Nhundu, iKNOW Politics Expert and Senior Programme Officer at International IDEA, indicates that:

*"Generally, there has been greater reliance on legislated or constitutional quotas rather than reliance on political party compliance or initiative. This is due to the fact that where parties have quotas they do not always abide by them."*

This illustrates that voluntary quotas depend on the strong will and commitment of the party leadership to promote women in politics. Therefore, it is crucial that women party members and women's organizations constantly work with party leaders to ensure their commitment by actively recruiting women to their party membership, seeking the nomination of women candidates in their election lists, and promoting women within their party machinery.

### **Conclusion:**

In recent years, countries in Africa have made significant progress in promoting women in politics and public life. A number of African countries have set a 30% quota for women to create a critical mass of women leaders and empower women to have a substantial impact in public life. The best results were achieved in the countries that implemented some type of quota such as voluntary or legislative or a combination of both. Some countries in Africa, such as Rwanda with 56.3% and Angola with 37.3% of women in parliament, have surpassed the 30% quota. Research shows that the success of quotas mostly depends on the type of electoral system in a country, commitment of party leaders and governments to promote women in politics, and activeness of women's movements and groups. Research shows that a proportional representation electoral system has been the most conducive to fulfilling quotas and promoting women in politics in Africa. See the annex below for more detailed country-by-country information.

## ANNEX I

### Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments

Country	Number of women elected	% women
Burundi	36 of 118	30.5%
Kenya	22 of 224	9.8%
Rwanda	45 of 80	56.3%
Somalia	21 of 269	7.8%
Tanzania, United Republic of	97 of 319	30.4%
Uganda	73 of 305	23.9%

## ANNEX II

### Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament

(Derived from the Quota Project Database – [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org))

Please note that some of the below listed countries have both Constitutional and Election Law Quotas

Country	Number of women elected	% women
Angola	82 of 220	37.3%
Burundi	36 of 118	30.5%
Djibouti	7 of 65	10.8%
Eritrea	33 of 150	22.0%
Liberia	8 of 64	12.5%
Mauritania	17 of 95	17.9%
Niger	14 of 113	12.4%
Rwanda	45 of 80	56.3%
Sudan	66 of 450	14.7%
Tanzania, United Republic of	97 of 319	30.4%
Uganda	73 of 305	23.9%

## ANNEX III

### Political Party Quotas By Country: Africa

(Derived from the Quota Project Database – [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org))

Please note that only countries with quotas are listed.

Country	Party	Quota Provision
Algeria	National Liberation Front (FLN)	In each province, 2 out of the first 5 names on a list must be women.
	Movement of Society for Peace (HMS)	The HMS aims to ensure that one-fifth of candidates at the regional level are women. In districts with small magnitudes, one of every three candidates should be a woman.
Botswana	Botswana Congress Party (BCP)	In 1999 the Botswana Congress Party introduced a 30% quota for women on electoral lists. The party has not



		always met this target.
	Botswana National Front (BNF)	In 1999 the Botswana National Front introduced a 30% quota for women on electoral lists. The party has not always met this target.
Burkina Faso	Alliance for Democracy and Federation (ADF)	In 2002 the Alliance for Democracy and Federation introduced a 25% quota for women on electoral lists. The quota will be implemented in the next election.
	Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP)	In 2002 the Congress for Democracy and Progress introduced a 25% quota for women on electoral lists. The quota will be implemented in the next election.
Cameroon	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC)	In 1996 the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement introduced a 25-30% quota for women on electoral lists.
	Social Democratic Front (SDF)	SDF has adopted a 25% quota.
Côte d'Ivoire	Ivorian Public Front (FPI)	The Ivorian Public Front has introduced a 30% quota for women on electoral lists.
Equatorial Guinea	Social Democratic Convergence (CPDS)	Social Democratic Convergence has adopted a gender quota.
Ethiopia	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front has a 30% party quota.
Kenya	Democratic Party (DP)	The Democratic Party has a policy of affirmative action that reserves one third of all seats for women (which has not always been put into practice).
Malawi	Malawi Congress Party (MCP)	The MCP aims to allocate 33 percent of the seats to women at all levels of the party structure. Additionally, according to the party Manifesto, MCP will "ensure that women occupy 30 per cent or more of all decision, policy and managerial positions in the government".
	United Democratic Front (UDF)	The UDF aims to have 25 percent of its parliamentary seats held by women, according to the party constitution.
Mali	Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA - PASJ)	ADEMA - PASJ has a 30% quota.
Morocco	The Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP)	USFP has a 20% quota for party lists.
Mozambique	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO)	Frelimo has adopted a quota system for election nomination lists and the presence of women in their party leadership. The party's policy requires that a third of the candidates (30%) should be women. In addition, the quota system was accompanied by a commitment to balance the distribution of men and women through the list.
Namibia	Congress of Democrats (CoD)	In 1999 the Congress of Democrats (CoD) introduced a 50% quota for women on electoral lists.
	South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO)	In 1997 the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) introduced a 50% quota for women on electoral lists.
Niger	National Movement for a Society in Development (MNSD-NASSARA)	Prior to multiparty elections in the 1990s, the MNSD set aside 5 seats for women through the quota system adopted by the party.
Senegal	Senegal Socialist Party (PSS)	In 1996 the Senegal Socialist Party adopted a 30% quota for women and a 20% quota for young people (under 35). Previously, the party used informal quotas at 25% for women since 1982.

	Senegalese Liberal Party (PLS)	PLS has adopted a 33% quota.
Sierra Leone	Movement for Progress Party (MOP)	The MOP has a target of 50% candidates for election.
South Africa	African National Congress (ANC)	In South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) adopted a 30% quota for women on political party lists. As a result, the representation of women increased from below 3% to 27% in one election in 1994. In the 1999 election, women were placed in every third position on the national party list. At the local level (with a mixed electoral system) the ANC has adopted a 50% quota for women on party lists.
Tunisia	Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD)	The ruling Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) party earmarked 38 of the 152 parliament seats (25%) for female candidates in the October 24 election 2004.
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)	ZANU-PF party to field 30 female candidates in 2005 parliamentary elections

## ANNEX IV

### Quotas In African Countries With The Type Of Electoral Systems

(Derived from the Quota Project Database – [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org))

*Please note that only countries with quotas are listed.*

Country	Quota Type(s)	Results election	last % of women
<b>Algeria</b> List PR	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	28 of 389	7.2%
<b>Angola</b> List PR	Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament	82 of 220	37.3%
<b>Botswana</b> FPTP	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	7 of 63	11.1%
<b>Burkina Faso</b> List PR	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	13 of 111	11.7%
<b>Burundi</b> List PR	Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments ; Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament	36 of 118	30.5%
<b>Cameroon</b> PBV	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	23 of 163	14.1%
<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b> FPTP	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	19 of 223	8.5%
<b>Djibouti</b> PBV	Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament	7 of 65	10.8%
<b>Egypt</b> TRS	Quotas existed previously or quota legislation has been proposed	9 of 454	2.0%
<b>Equatorial Guinea</b> List PR	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	18 of 100	18.0%
<b>Eritrea</b> N	Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament	33 of 150	22.0%
<b>Ethiopia</b> FPTP	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	116 of 546	21.2%
<b>Ghana</b> FPTP	Quotas existed previously or quota legislation has been proposed	25 of 230	10.9%

<b>Kenya</b> <i>FPTP</i>	Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments ; Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	22 of 224	9.8%
<b>Lesotho</b> <i>MMP</i>	Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub- National Level	28 of 119	23.5%
<b>Liberia</b> <i>N</i>	Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament	8 of 64	12.5%
<b>Malawi</b> <i>FPTP</i>	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	27 of 188	14.4%
<b>Mali</b> <i>TRS</i>	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	15 of 147	10.2%
<b>Mauritania</b> <i>TRS</i>	Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament ; Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level	17 of 95	17.9%
<b>Morocco</b> <i>List PR</i>	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	34 of 325	10.5%
<b>Mozambique</b> <i>List PR</i>	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	87 of 250	34.8%
<b>Namibia</b> <i>List PR</i>	Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level ; Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	21 of 78	26.9%
<b>Niger</b> <i>List PR</i>	Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament ; Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	14 of 113	12.4%
<b>Rwanda</b> <i>List PR</i>	Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments ; Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament ; Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level	45 of 80	56.3%
<b>Senegal</b> <i>Parallel</i>	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	33 of 150	22.0%
<b>Sierra Leone</b> <i>List PR</i>	Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level	16 of 124	12.9%
<b>Somalia</b> <i>N</i>	Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments	21 of 269	7.8%
<b>South Africa</b> <i>List PR</i>	Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level ; Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	131 of 400	32.8%
<b>Sudan</b> <i>FPTP</i>	Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament	66 of 450	14.7%
<b>Tanzania, United Republic of</b> <i>FPTP</i>	Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments ; Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament ; Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level	97 of 319	30.4%
<b>Tunisia</b> <i>Parallel</i>	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	43 of 189	22.8%
<b>Uganda</b> <i>FPTP</i>	Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments ; Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament ; Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level	73 of 305	23.9%
<b>Zimbabwe</b> <i>FPTP</i>	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	16 of 150	10.7%

## Further Reading

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