

# Statistics on Women in National Governments Around the World

Updated December 10, 2024

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

R45483

## Introduction

Women and girls make up half of the world's population; however, in most countries, women are underrepresented in the political process at the national level. Possible causes include discriminatory laws and practices, gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care, and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women. Many experts have found that women's political participation, including representation in elected governments, contributes to the overall well-being of women and their communities.<sup>1</sup>

As this report shows, in 2024, women hold 27.0% of legislative seats around the world, an increase from 15.6% of such seats in 2004 (see **Figure 1**). As of October 1, 2024, women held 50% or more of the legislative seats in six countries: Rwanda, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, Andorra, and the United Arab Emirates (see **Table 3**).

A 2023 report noted that 66 chambers in 52 countries held elections and that women's representation increased in 32 of these chambers.<sup>2</sup> The same report describes a trend of women leaving politics altogether due to "burnout and fatigue"<sup>3</sup> and the "challenge of violence and personal attacks, which are becoming increasingly widespread and virulent with the advancement of digital tools."<sup>4</sup>

At the national executive level, 34 countries currently have a female chief of state and/or head of government who won an election or was selected by elected bodies (see **Table 6**).

This report provides a snapshot of women's political participation in national governments worldwide by compiling statistics and other information from a variety of sources, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the CIA *World Factbook*, news reports, and other sources.<sup>5</sup>

## Selected Congressional Action

Legislation has been enacted that, either directly or indirectly, addresses women's political participation around the world. For example, from FY2014 through FY2024, a provision in Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) Appropriations Acts appropriated funds for women's leadership. Most recently, the FY2024 SFOPS Appropriations Act states:

Of the funds appropriated under title III of this Act, not less than \$50,000,000 shall be made available for the Madeleine K. Albright Women's Leadership Program, as

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, see U.N. document, A/RES/66/130, *Women and Political Participation*, adopted December 19, 2011; UN Women, "In Brief: Women's Leadership and Political Participation;" U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Women's Issues, "Cross-Cutting Issues, Women's Leadership;" Aaron Reeves, Chris Brown, and Johanna Hanefeld, "Female Political Representation and the Gender Health Gap: A Cross-National Analysis of 49 European Countries," *European Journal of Public Health*, vol. 32, no. 5 (October 2022): pp. 684-689; and Niharika Rustagi and Sonia Akter, "The Impact of Women's Political Representation on Child Health Outcomes during 1990-2020: Evidence from a Global Dataset," *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 312 (November 2022).

<sup>2</sup> IPU, *Women in Parliament 2023*, March 2024, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> For information on global women's issues more broadly, see CRS In Focus IF11804, *Global Women's Issues: Background and Selected U.S. Efforts*.

established by section 7059(b) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2023 (division K of P.L. 117-328).<sup>6</sup>

Members have also enacted laws that address aspects and issues related to women's political participation. For example, the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-68), among other things, aims to increase the participation of women in conflict prevention and conflict resolution processes as a means to build more inclusive societies and to help stabilize countries and regions. The act expresses the sense of Congress that "the political participation, and leadership of women in fragile environments, particularly during democratic transitions, is critical to sustaining lasting democratic institutions."<sup>7</sup>

## Statistics on Selected Issues

### Voting Rights

The right to vote is a primary step toward involving a populace in the political decisions of a government. In many countries, voting rights were originally granted only to adult men who owned property, then were eventually expanded to include adult male citizens regardless of property ownership, then to women, and finally to other underrepresented groups. Definitions of what constituted a "citizen" may also have changed over time, as they did in the United States, and become more inclusive of minority groups and Indigenous peoples.

**Table 1** and **Table 2**, respectively, list the first and latest countries to extend the right and duty of voting to women according to the IPU. Although subnational regions (e.g., states, provinces) may have granted the right to vote earlier, the years in the tables below indicate when sex as a barrier to suffrage was removed from national elections. This does not mean that all women could vote, but that sex as a barrier to voting was removed. In the United States, for example, many women of color could not vote until the Civil Rights Act of 1965, even though women were granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1920.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> See Section 7059 of Division F of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-47).

<sup>7</sup> P.L. 115-68, Section 3, Sense of Congress. For more information, see CRS In Focus IF12346, *Women, Peace, and Security: Global Context and U.S. Policy*.

<sup>8</sup> Katherine Schaeffer, "Key Facts about Women's Suffrage around the World, a Century after U.S. Ratified 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment," Pew Research Center, October 5, 2020.

**Table 1. First Countries to Allow Women to Vote**

Year	Country/Countries
1893	New Zealand
1902	Australia*
1906	Finland
1913	Norway
1915	Denmark, Iceland*
1917	Canada*
1918	Austria, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland,* Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, United Kingdom*
1919	Belarus, Belgium,* Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden,* Ukraine
1920	Albania, Czech Republic, Iceland,** Slovak Republic, United States
1921	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Sweden**

**Source:** Compiled by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) using information from IPU, “Women’s Suffrage,” accessed November 25, 2024.

**Notes:** Some countries removed gender as a barrier to voting in stages. One asterisk (\*) indicates the first year female citizens were allowed to vote in national elections with some limitations due to gender remaining; two asterisks (\*\*) indicate when those limitations due to gender were removed. No asterisk indicates the year that gender as a barrier to voting was removed without stages. Note: female citizens in certain racial, ethnic, or economic groups may not have been able to vote due to legal barriers not due to gender.

**Table 2. Most Recent Countries to Allow Women to Vote**

Year	Country/Countries
2015	Saudi Arabia
2008	Bhutan
2006	Montenegro, United Arab Emirates
2005	Kuwait
2003	Indonesia, Qatar, Oman
2002	Bahrain

**Sources:** Compiled by CRS using information from IPU, “Compare data on parliaments,” accessed November 25, 2024; Pamela Paxton, Melanie M. Hughes, and Tiffany D. Barnes, *Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, pp. 43-44; CIA *World Factbook*’s “Suffrage” website, accessed January 5, 2023; and consultation with CRS analysts.

**Note:** Newly independent countries (e.g., Kosovo, South Sudan) would be included only if women had not been granted suffrage under the preceding country. For example, because Sudan granted women the right to vote in 1964, South Sudan is not included in this list, even though it did not gain independence until 2011.

## Legislative Representation

The following tables highlight women’s representation based in national legislatures, including data on quotas (described below). Several countries and political parties have instituted quotas to ensure that women are represented on the ballot or in the legislature, which may affect the statistics on women’s representation in national governments. Some governments also may use

quotas to ensure ethnic or religious diversity in their national legislatures (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq<sup>9</sup>).

## Gender Quotas

The *Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas* explains that “[g]ender quotas are numerical targets that stipulate the number or percentage of women that must be included in a candidate list or the number of seats to be allocated to women in a legislature. They aim to reverse discrimination in law and practice and to level the playing field for women and men in politics.”<sup>10</sup>

Three main types of gender quotas are generally recognized, and they may be used at the national or subnational level, or both:

- **Legislated candidate quotas.** These quotas are mandated through national constitutions or legislation to regulate the gender composition of the ballot.
- **Legislated “reserved seats.”** These quotas reserve a specific number or percentage of seats in the legislature for women members. The quotas are mandated through national constitutions or legislation and are implemented through special electoral procedures.
- **Party quotas (also known as voluntary party quotas).** Individual political parties may adopt these quotas through the party’s statutes and rules. Such adoption is the prerogative of each party, and some parties in a country may adopt quotas while other parties choose not to do so.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 3** lists the countries where women hold 40% or more of the total seats of the national legislative chamber body according to the IPU.

**Table 3. National Legislatures with Women Holding 40% or More of Total Seats**  
As of October 1, 2024

IPU Global Rank by % of Total Seats Held by Women <sup>a</sup>	Country	Type of Legislative System	National Level Gender Quota Codes <sup>b</sup>	Total Legislative Seats	Total Seats Held by Women	% of Total Seats Held by Women
#1	Rwanda	Bicameral	RS	106	65	61.3%
#2	Cuba	Unicameral	No Quota	470	262	55.7%
#3	Nicaragua	Unicameral	CQ	91	49	53.8%
#4	Mexico	Bicameral	CQ	628	315	50.2%
#5	Andorra	Unicameral	CQ, PQ	28	14	50.0%
#6	United Arab Emirates	Unicameral	RS	40	20	50.0%
#7	Costa Rica	Unicameral	CQ, PQ	57	28	49.1%
#8	Bolivia	Bicameral	CQ	166	80	48.2%
#9	Iceland	Unicameral	PQ	63	30	47.6%

<sup>9</sup> “Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *CIA World Factbook*, accessed on November 25, 2024 and “Iraq,” *CIA World Factbook*, accessed on November 25, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Drude Dahlerup et al., *Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, June 2014, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

IPU Global Rank by % of Total Seats Held by Women <sup>a</sup>	Country	Type of Legislative System	National Level Gender Quota Codes <sup>b</sup>	Total Legislative Seats	Total Seats Held by Women	% of Total Seats Held by Women
#10	Sweden	Unicameral	PQ	349	163	46.7%
#11	Senegal	Unicameral	CQ	165	76	46.1%
#12	Finland	Unicameral	No Quota	200	92	46.0%
#13	Monaco	Unicameral	No Quota	24	11	45.8%
#14	New Zealand	Unicameral	PQ	123	56	45.5%
#15	Denmark	Unicameral	No Quota	179	81	45.3
#16	South Africa	Bicameral	PQ	444	200	45.0%
#17	Norway	Unicameral	PQ	169	75	44.4%
#18	Australia	Bicameral	PQ	226	100	44.2%
#19	Spain	Bicameral	CQ, PQ	615	267	43.4%
#20	Mozambique	Unicameral	PQ	250	108	43.2%
#21	Argentina	Bicameral	CQ, PQ	329	142	43.2%
#22	Ecuador	Unicameral	CQ	137	59	43.1%
#23	Belgium	Bicameral	CQ	209	90	43.1%
#24	Republic of Moldova	Unicameral	CQ, PQ	98	40	40.8%

**Sources:** Compiled by CRS using data from the IPU's Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments and the Gender Quotas Database, published by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, accessed November 24, 2024.

**Notes:** The table above does not include vacancies as of October 1, 2024. A given legislature could have a greater total number of seats than those shown, if seats were vacant. Also, the countries listed here include those identified by the IPU where women hold 40% or more of the total seats in the national legislative chamber(s).

- The rankings by percentage of total seats held by women are based on the 193 countries listed in the complete IPU list of Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments. Data was available for only 185 countries. Five countries (Eritrea, Haiti, Kuwait, Niger, and Venezuela) had no values recorded and three countries (Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Sudan) were recorded as having suspended legislatures.
- Four codes indicate the type of gender quota used in the country: CQ=legislated quotas for candidates on the ballot level; RS=legal quotas for reserved seats, whether legislated or mandated by the executive branch; PQ=voluntary party quotas; Sub only=quotas at the subnational level only, as identified by the Gender Quotas Database.

**Table 4** shows the number of seats held by women in the national legislative chambers of the 19 members of the “Group of 20” (G-20), a forum for advancing international economic cooperation and coordination among certain countries.<sup>12</sup> According to the IPU, women hold 40% or more of the total seats in the national legislatures of four G-20 countries (Mexico, South Africa, Australia, and Argentina), and these countries appear in both **Table 3** and **Table 4**.

<sup>12</sup> The European Union and the African Union, which are members of the G-20, are excluded from the table as the IPU's Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments does not include international parliaments, such as the European Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament.

**Table 4. Women in National Legislatures of G-20 Countries**

As of October 1, 2024

IPU Global Rank by % of Total Seats Held by Women <sup>a</sup>	Country	Type of Legislative System	National Level Gender Quota Codes <sup>b</sup>	Total Legislative Seats	Total Seats Held by Women	% of Total Seats Held by Women
#4	Mexico	Bicameral	CQ	628	315	50.2%
#16	South Africa	Bicameral	PQ	444	200	45.0%
#18	Australia	Bicameral	PQ	226	100	44.2%
#21	Argentina	Bicameral	CQ, PQ	329	142	43.2%
#41	Canada	Bicameral	PQ	436	158	36.2%
#42	France	Bicameral	CQ, PQ	925	334	36.1%
#44	Germany	Bicameral	PQ	805	286	35.5%
#46	United Kingdom	Bicameral	PQ	1,435	491	34.2%
#50	Italy	Bicameral	CQ, PQ	605	203	33.6%
#80	United States	Bicameral	No Quota	532 <sup>c</sup>	151	28.4%
#92	China	Unicameral	RS	2,977	790	26.5%
#117	Indonesia	Unicameral	CQ	580	122	21.0%
#128	South Korea	Unicameral	CQ, PQ	300	60	20.0%
#130	Saudi Arabia	Unicameral	RS	151	30	19.9%
#131	Türkiye	Unicameral	PQ	599	119	19.9%
#139	Brazil	Bicameral	CQ, PQ	594	104	17.5%
#141	Russia	Bicameral	No Quota	619	106	17.1%
#145	Japan	Bicameral	PQ	712	116	16.3%
#152	India	Bicameral	RS	776	113	14.6%

**Sources:** Compiled by CRS using data from the IPU's Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments and the Gender Quotas Database, published by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, accessed November 24, 2024.

**Notes:** The table above does not include vacancies as of October 1, 2024. A given legislature could have a greater total number of seats than those shown, if seats were vacant. Also, this list includes the 19 member nations of the G-20 and excludes the European Union and the African Union.

- The rankings by percentage of total seats held by women are based on the 193 countries listed in the complete IPU list of Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments. Data was available for only 185 countries. Five countries (Eritrea, Haiti, Kuwait, Niger, and Venezuela) had no values recorded and three countries (Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Sudan) were recorded as having suspended legislatures.
- Four codes indicate the type of gender quota used in the country: CQ=legislated quotas for candidates on the ballot level; RS=legal quotas for reserved seats, whether legislated or mandated by the executive branch; PQ=voluntary party quotas; sub only=quotas at the subnational level only, as identified by the Gender Quotas Database.
- The total number of seats in the U.S. Congress is 535. On October 1, 2024, IPU data recorded that three seats were vacant. See CRS Report R47470, *Membership of the 118th Congress: A Profile*, by Jennifer E. Manning.

**Table 5** lists countries where women hold 10% or less of the total legislative seats according to the IPU.

**Table 5. Countries Where Women Hold 10% or Less of Total Legislative Seats**

As of October 1, 2024

IPU Global Rank by % of Total Seats Held by Women <sup>a</sup>	Country	Type of Legislative System	National Level Gender Quota Codes <sup>b</sup>	Total Legislative Seats	Total Seats Held by Women	% of Total Seats Held by Women
#165	Guinea-Bissau	Unicameral	CQ	102	10	9.8%
#167	Syria	Unicameral	No Quota	250	24	9.6%
#168	Fiji	Unicameral	No Quota	55	5	9.1%
#169	The Gambia	Unicameral	No Quota	58	5	8.6%
#170	Tonga	Unicameral	No Quota	28	2	7.1%
#171	Bhutan	Bicameral	No Quota	72	5	6.9%
#172	Palau	Bicameral	No Quota	29	2	6.9%
#173	Algeria	Bicameral	CQ, PQ	577	39	6.8%
#174	Tuvalu	Unicameral	No Quota	16	1	6.3%
#175	Lebanon	Unicameral	No Quota	128	8	6.3%
#176	Solomon Islands	Unicameral	CQ	50	3	6.0%
#177	Sri Lanka	Unicameral	Sub only	225	12	5.3%
#178	Iran	Unicameral	No Quota	290	14	4.8%
#179	Qatar	Unicameral	No Quota	45	2	4.4%
#180	Nigeria	Bicameral	No Quota	467	18	3.9%
#181	Maldives	Unicameral	Sub only	93	3	3.2%
#182	Papua New Guinea	Unicameral	RS	111	3	2.7%
#183	Vanuatu	Unicameral	Sub only	51	1	2.0%
#184	Yemen	Bicameral	No Quota	335	1	0.3%
#185	Tuvalu	Unicameral	No Quota	16	0	0.0%

**Sources:** Compiled by CRS using data from the IPU's Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments and the Gender Quotas Database, published by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, accessed September 19, 2024.

**Notes:** The table above does not include vacancies as of October 1, 2024. A given legislature could have a greater total number of seats than those shown, if seats were vacant.

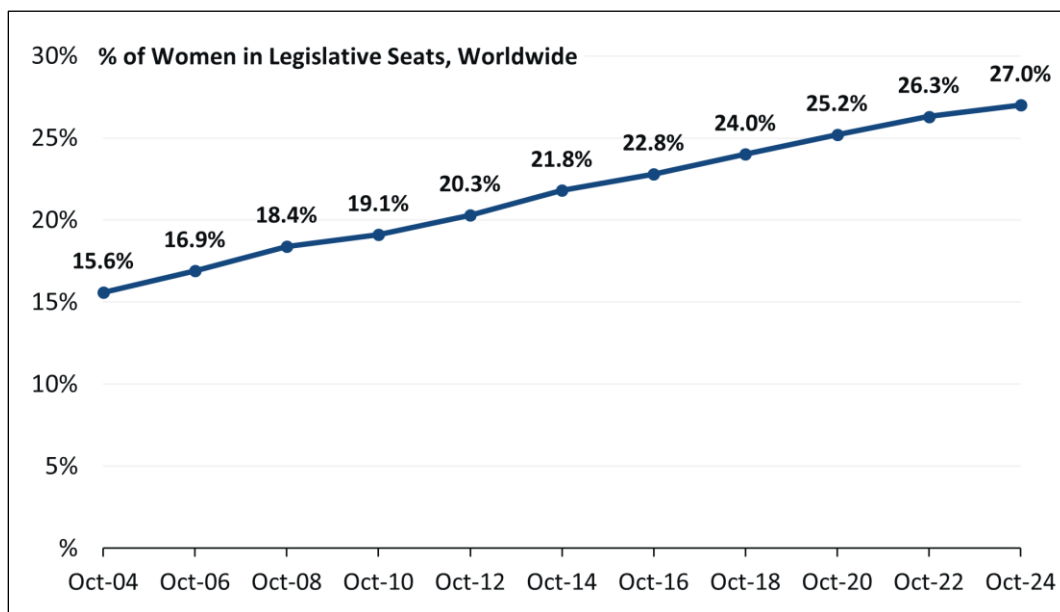
- The rankings by percentage of total seats held by women are based on the 193 countries listed in the complete IPU list of Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments. Data was available for only 185 countries. Five countries (Eritrea, Haiti, Kuwait, Niger, and Venezuela) had no values recorded and three countries (Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Sudan) were recorded as having suspended legislatures.
- Four codes indicate the type of gender quota used in the country: C=legislated quotas for candidates on the ballot level; RS=legislated quotas for reserved seats; P=voluntary party quotas; sub only=quotas at the subnational level only, as identified by the Gender Quotas Database, accessed November 24, 2024.

According to the IPU, over a 20-year period, the percentage of seats held by women in national legislatures has risen worldwide from 15.6% in October 2004 to 27.0% in October 2024 (see **Figure 1**).



**Figure 1. Worldwide Percentage of Seats Held by Women in National Legislatures**

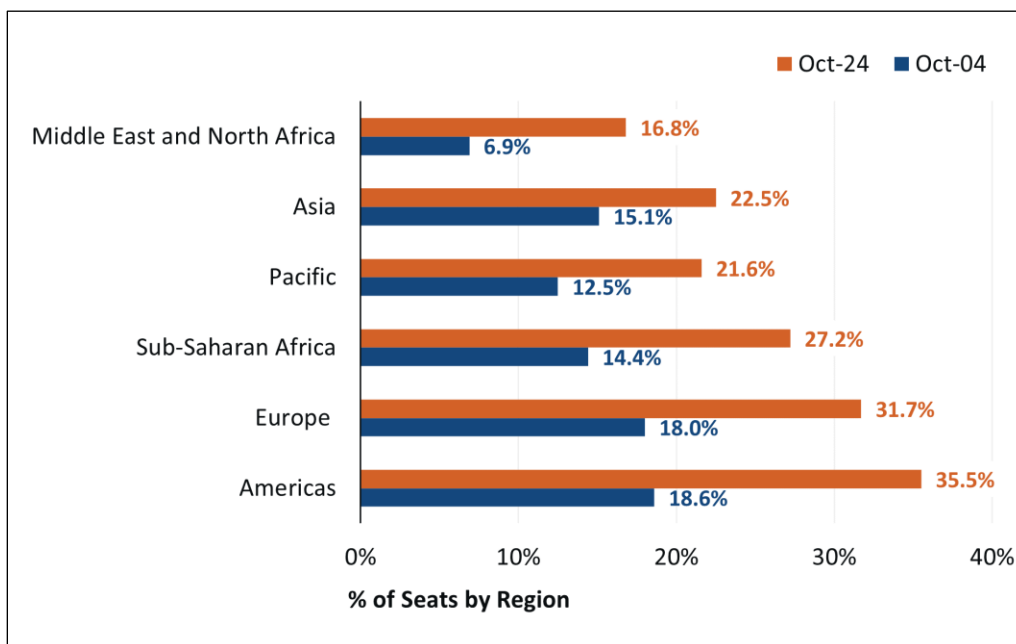
October 2004 - October 2024



**Source:** Created by CRS using data from the IPU.

According to the IPU, in October 2004, Europe and the Americas were the only regions where women held 18% or more of legislative seats at the national level as shown in **Figure 2**. In 2024, women legislators in five regions hold more than 20% of the legislative seats. The Middle East/Northern Africa is the only region with less than 20% of legislative seats held by women, although women have increased their representation since 2004 from 6.9% to 16.8%.

**Figure 2. Regional Percentages of Seats Held by Women in National Legislatures**  
October 2004 - October 2024



**Source:** Created by CRS using data from the IPU.

## Gender-Sensitive Parliaments

The IPU defines a gender-sensitive parliament as “one that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods, and work.”<sup>13</sup> IPU research focuses on ways that parliaments can “create mechanisms required to mainstream gender equality concerns throughout their legislative, oversight and administrative work.”<sup>14</sup>

In 2012 and then in 2017, the IPU published its *Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*, which includes the following action areas:

- increasing the number of women in parliament and achieving equality in participation;
- strengthening gender equality legislation and policy;
- mainstreaming gender equality throughout all parliamentary work;
- insituting or improving gender-sensitive infrastructure and parliamentary culture;
- ensuring that responsibility for gender equality is shared by all parliamentarians – men and women;
- encouraging political parties to be champions of gender equality; and
- enhancing the gender sensitivity of, and gender equality among, parliamentary staff.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Sonia Palmieri, *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice*, IPU, 2011, p. v.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. v.

<sup>15</sup> IPU, *Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*, 2017, p. 1.

In October 2022, at the end of the 145<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda, the Kigali Declaration, *Gender Equality and Gender-Sensitive Parliaments as Drivers of Change for a More Resilient and Peaceful World*, was adopted. It made the following recommendations:

- achieving parity in political decisionmaking, including by using electoral gender quotas and ensuring that other electoral quotas always have a gender parity provision;
- ensuring law-making, law-enforcement, and budgeting are gender-responsive across all policy fields;
- placing vulnerable populations at the centre of parliamentary functions of legislation, oversight, resource allocation, and representation;
- ending gender-based discrimination, violence, and other harmful practices, and ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice for all women and girls; and
- advancing equality in caring responsibilities among men and women and setting an example by undertaking 50% of the daily care work for MP's families, regardless of being male or female MPs.<sup>16</sup>

Hybrid work is being examined as a gender-sensitive mechanism. “During the pandemic, 84% of parliaments introduced new systems that were previously unplanned.”<sup>17</sup> These changes are considered “gender-responsive,” and “parliaments are considering to what extent hybrid working makes parliaments more modern, gender-sensitive and family-friendly workplaces.”<sup>18</sup> A 2024 IPU report notes that “as digital technology becomes increasingly strategic to parliaments, gender balance and gender-responsive digital initiatives are likely to become increasingly important aspects of inclusive governance.”<sup>19</sup>

Another 2024 IPU report discussed the “Women in Politics: To Stay or Not to Stay” session at the 147<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in October 2023. The panel discussion emphasized peer-to-peer support and building “more solidarity among women across party lines.”<sup>20</sup>

Various international organizations have published research and guidelines to assist parliaments in achieving gender-sensitivity.<sup>21</sup>

## Executive Representation

Voters in at least 70 countries have chosen a woman as their executive since 1960, when Sri Lanka selected Sirima Bandaranaike as the world's first female prime minister. Executives may be selected through various methods: directly elected from a ballot dedicated to the executive

---

<sup>16</sup> IPU, *Gender Equality and Gender-Sensitive Parliaments as Drivers of Change for a More Resilient and Peaceful World*, October 2022, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> IPU, *World e-Parliament Report 2022*, 2022, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> IPU, *Women in Parliament 2022*, 2023, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> IPU, *World e-Parliament Report 2024*, 2024, p. 62.

<sup>20</sup> IPU, *Women in Parliament 2023*, 2024, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> For examples not mentioned previously, see IPU, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, 2008; IPU, *Evaluating the Gender Sensitivity of Parliaments: A Self-Assessment Toolkit*, 2016; Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), *Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines: Standards and a Checklist for Parliamentary Change*, 2020; IPU, *Guidelines for the Elimination of Sexism, Harassment, and Violence against Women in Parliament*, 2019; CPA, *Gender Sensitising Parliaments: A Seven-Step Field Guide*, 2022; and “Chapter 4: Gender-Sensitive Practices in Parliaments” in OECD, *Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023*, 2023.

office; indirectly elected by the legislature; appointed, following legislative elections, as the leader of the majority political party or majority coalition; or through other means.

The term “executive” refers to persons identified as either the chief of state or head of government of a country. The CIA *World Factbook* defines the chief of state as “the titular leader of the country who represents the state at official and ceremonial functions but may not be involved with the day-to-day activities of the government.” The head of government is “the person designated to manage the executive branch of the government.” In some countries, a monarch is identified as the “chief of state,” whereas an elected official (such as the prime minister, premier, or administrator) is the “head of government.” Other countries, such as the United States, have one person, the President, filling both positions. Many countries have a “chief of state,” such as a president, and another person as “head of government,” such as a prime minister, who won their offices through different processes.<sup>22</sup>

According to 2024 analysis from the Pew Research Center, 60 United Nations member states (31%) have had a female head of government, just over one-third of the 193 member states.<sup>23</sup>

## Women Leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Table 6** lists women who are currently the chief of state and/or head of government of their country, excluding monarchs, and are listed alphabetically by country.

**Table 6. Current Women Executives**

As of December 4, 2024

Country	Name	Title	Dates in Office
Aruba	Evelyn <b>Wever-Croes</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	Nov. 17, 2017–present
Barbados	Mia <b>Mottley</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	May 25, 2018–present
Barbados	Sandra <b>Mason</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	Nov. 30, 2021–present
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Željka <b>Cvijanović</b> <sup>a</sup>	Member of the Presidency <sup>b</sup>	Nov. 16, 2022–present
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Borjana <b>Krišto</b>	Chair of the Council of Ministers <sup>c</sup>	January 25, 2023–present
Cayman Islands	Julianna <b>O'Connor-Connolly</b> <sup>d</sup>	Premier	November 15, 2023–present
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Judith <b>Suminwa Tuluka</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	May 29, 2024–present
Denmark	Mette <b>Frederiksen</b>	Prime Minister	June 27, 2019–present
Dominica	Sylvanie <b>Burton</b> <sup>e</sup>	President	October 2, 2023–present
Estonia	Kaja <b>Kallas</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	Jan. 26, 2021–present
Georgia	Salome <b>Zourabichvili</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	Dec. 16, 2018–present
Greece	Katerina <b>Sakellaropoulou</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	Mar. 13, 2020–present
Honduras	Xiomara <b>Castro de Zelaya</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	Jan. 27, 2022–present

<sup>22</sup> Drawn from CIA *World Factbook*, executive branch field listing, accessed on November 23, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Laura Clancy and Anna Jackson, “About a Third of UN Member States Have Ever Had a Woman Leader,” Pew Research Center, October 3, 2024.

Country	Name	Title	Dates in Office
India	Droupadi <b>Murmu</b> <sup>f</sup>	President	July 25, 2022–present
Italy	Giorgia <b>Meloni</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	Oct. 22, 2022–present
Kosovo	Vjosa <b>Osmani-Sadriu</b>	President	Apr. 4, 2021–present
Latvia	Evika <b>Siliņa</b>	Prime Minister	September 15, 2023–present
Lithuania	Ingrida <b>Simonyte</b>	Prime Minister	Nov. 24, 2020–present
Malta	Myriam Spiteri <b>Debono</b>	President	April 4, 2024–present
Marshall Islands	Hilda C. <b>Heine</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	January 3, 2023–present
Mexico	Claudia <b>Sheinbaum</b> Pardo <sup>a</sup>	President	October 1, 2024–present
Moldova	Maia <b>Sandu</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	Dec. 24, 2020–present
Namibia	Saara <b>Kuugongelwa-Amadhila</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	Mar. 21, 2015–present
North Macedonia	Gordana <b>Siljanovska-Davkova</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	May 12, 2024–present
Peru	Dina <b>Boluarte</b> <sup>a</sup>	President <sup>h</sup>	Dec. 7, 2022–present
Samoa	<b>Fiame</b> Naomi Mata'afa <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	May 24, 2021–present
San Marino	Francesca <b>Civerchia</b>	Captain Regent <sup>i</sup>	October 1, 2024–present
Serbia	Ana <b>Brnabić</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	June 29, 2017–present
Slovenia	Nataša <b>Pirc Musar</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	December 23, 2022–present
Sri Lanka	Harini <b>Amarasuriya</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	September 24, 2024–present
Switzerland	Viola <b>Amherd</b>	President	January 1, 2024–present
Tanzania	Samia Suluhu <b>Hassan</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	Mar. 19, 2021–present
Thailand	<b>Paetongtarn</b> Shinawatra	Prime Minister	August 18, 2024–present
Togo	Victoire Tomegah <b>Dogbe</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	Sept. 28, 2020–present
Trinidad and Tobago	Christine <b>Kangaloo</b>	President	March 20, 2023–present
Uganda	Robinah <b>Nabbanja</b> <sup>a</sup>	Prime Minister	June 21, 2021–present

**Sources:** Compiled by CRS using information from the CIA *World Factbook*, the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap 2024*, IPU's *Women in Parliament 2023*, government websites, and consultation with CRS analysts.

**Notes:** Surnames appear in bold face.

- This person is the first woman to hold this position in her country.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina has a rotating three-member presidency. Željka Cvijanović is the Serb member of the presidency. Since November 16, 2024, she has been Chairperson of the Presidency.
- The Chairman of the Council of Ministers is the head of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Julianne O'Connor-Connolly was the first woman to hold this position from December 19, 2012, through May 29, 2013. She is also the second woman to hold this position (in a nonconsecutive term) since November 15, 2023.

- e. Sylvanie Burton is the first woman and the first member of the indigenous Kalinago community to be elected President.
- f. Droupadi Murmu is the second woman and first member belonging to a tribal community to be elected President in India.
- g. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah was declared the winner of the Naimbian presidency December 4, 2024.
- h. President Boluarte took office December 7, 2022 after the Peruvian Congress removed the former president Pedro Castillo from office. She had been serving as First Vice President.
- i. San Marino has co-chiefs of state called Captains Regent. Francesca Civerchia is one of the current Captains Regent.

**Table 7** lists selected women who formerly served as the executive of their country since 2000 and are listed alphabetically by country.

**Table 7. Selected Women Who Served as Chief of State or Head of Government (Executives) from 2000-Present**

Country	Name	Title	Years in Office
Argentina	Cristina <b>Fernandez De Kirchner</b>	President	2007-2015
Austria	Brigitte <b>Bierlein</b>	Chancellor	2019-2020
Bangladesh	Khaleda <b>Zia</b>	Prime Minister	1991-1996 and 2001-2006
Brazil	Dilma <b>Rousseff</b>	President	2011-2016
Burma	<b>Aung San Suu Kyi</b>	State Counsellor	2016-2021
Chile	Michelle <b>Bachelet</b>	President	2006-2010 and 2014-2018
Croatia	Kolinda <b>Grabar-Kitarovic</b> <sup>a</sup>	President	2015-2020
Estonia	Kersti <b>Kaljulaid</b>	President	2016-2021
Equatorial Guinea	Manuela <b>Roka</b> Botey <sup>b</sup>	Prime Minister	February 1, 2023–August 17, 2024
Ethiopia	<b>Sahle-Work</b> Zewde <sup>b</sup>	President	Oct. 25, 2018–October 7, 2024
Finland	Sanna Mirella <b>Marin</b>	Prime Minister	Dec. 10, 2019–June 20, 2023
Gabon	Rose Christiane Ossouka <b>Raponda</b> <sup>c</sup>	Prime Minister	July 16, 2020–Jan. 9, 2023
Germany	Angela <b>Merkel</b>	Chancellor	2005–2021
Hungary	Katalin <b>Novak</b> <sup>b</sup>	President	May 10, 2022–February 10, 2024
Iceland	Katrin <b>Jakobsdóttir</b>	Prime Minister	Nov. 30, 2017–April 9, 2024
India	Pratibha <b>Patil</b>	President	2007-2012
Indonesia	<b>Megawati</b> Sukarnoputri	President	2001-2004
Jamaica	Portia <b>Simpson-Miller</b>	Prime Minister	2006-2007 and 2012-2016
Liberia	Ellen Johnson <b>Sirleaf</b>	President	2006-2018
Lithuania	Dalia <b>Grybauskaite</b>	President	2009-2019
Malawi	Joyce <b>Banda</b>	President	2012-2014

Country	Name	Title	Years in Office
Malta	Marie-Louise Coleiro <b>Preca</b>	President	2014-2019
Nepal	Bidhya Devi <b>Bandhari</b>	President	2015-2023
New Zealand	Helen <b>Clark</b>	Prime Minister	1999-2008
New Zealand	Jacinda <b>Ardern</b>	Prime Minister	2017-2023
Norway	Erna <b>Solberg</b>	Prime Minister	2013-2021
Panama	Mireya <b>Moscoso</b>	President	1999-2004
Philippines	Gloria Macapagal <b>Arroyo</b>	President	2001-2010
Singapore	Halimah <b>Yacob</b>	President	Sept. 14, 2017–Sept. 14, 2023
Sint Maarten	Silveria <b>Jacobs</b>	Prime Minister	Mar. 28, 2020–May 3, 2024
Slovakia	Zuzana <b>Čaputová</b> <sup>b</sup>	President	June 15, 2019–June 24, 2024
South Korea	<b>Park</b> Geun-hye	President	2013-2017
Sweden	Magdalena <b>Andersson</b> <sup>b</sup>	Prime Minister	Nov. 30, 2021–Oct. 18, 2022
Taiwan <sup>d</sup>	<b>Tsai</b> Ing-wen <sup>b</sup>	President	May 20, 2016–May 20, 2024
Thailand	Yingluck <b>Shinawatra</b>	Prime Minister	2011-2014
Trinidad and Tobago	Paula-Mae <b>Weeks</b>	President	2018-2023
Tunisia	Najla <b>Bouden</b> Romdhane	Prime Minister	2021-2023
Turks and Caicos Islands	Sharlene <b>Cartwright-Robinson</b>	Premier	2016-2021
United Kingdom	Theresa <b>May</b>	Prime Minister	2016-2019
United Kingdom	Mary Elizabeth “Liz” <b>Truss</b>	Prime Minister	September 6–October 25, 2022

**Source:** Compiled by CRS using media reports, government websites, and consultation with CRS analysts.

**Notes:** Surnames appear in bold face. Hong Kong, although not a country, had female Chief Executive named Carrie Lam from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2022.

- Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic is the first woman to be elected President of Croatia since the first multiparty elections in 1990 and independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.
- This person is the first woman to hold this position in her country.
- Rose Christiane Ossouka Raponda was the first woman to hold this position in her country. From January 9, 2020, through August 30, 2023, she served as the first female Vice President of Gabon before being removed from power by a coup.
- Taiwan officially calls itself the Republic of China (ROC). For information on the status of Taiwan, see CRS In Focus IFI0275, *Taiwan: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Susan V. Lawrence.

## Women Leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

**Table 8** identifies several female executives who held office in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with notes describing notable facts.

**Table 8. Selected Notable Women Executives from 1960 to 2000**

Executives are listed chronologically by their years in office.

Country	Name	Title	Years in Office
Sri Lanka	Sirimavo <b>Bandaranaike</b>	Prime Minister	1960-1965; 1970-1977; 1994-2000
Bandaranaike was the world's first female Prime Minister.			
India	Indira <b>Gandhi</b>	Prime Minister	1966-1977 and 1980-1984
Gandhi was assassinated while in office; she was succeeded by her son, Rajiv.			
Israel	Golda <b>Meir</b>	Prime Minister	1969-1974
Meir and her husband immigrated to then Palestine in 1921. She was a founder of the State of Israel and the fourth prime minister.			
Argentina	Isabel Martinez de <b>Perón</b>	President	1974-1976
Perón was the world's first female president when, as vice president, she succeeded her husband, President Juan Perón, upon his death.			
United Kingdom	Margaret <b>Thatcher</b>	Prime Minister	1979-1990
Thatcher became the first female prime minister in Europe and was the only British prime minister in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century to be elected to three consecutive terms.			
Iceland	Vigdís <b>Finnbogadóttir</b>	President	1980-1996
Finnbogadóttir was the first woman in the world to be elected head of state in a national election.			
Philippines	Corazon <b>Aquino</b>	President	1986-1992
Aquino restored democratic rule after the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos.			
Pakistan	Benazir <b>Bhutto</b>	Prime Minister	1988-1990 and 1993-1996
Bhutto was first female prime minister of a majority-Muslim country.			

**Source:** Compiled by CRS using news and research databases.**Note:** Surnames appear in bold face.

## Violence Against Women in Politics

Some experts and observers have found that, while any candidate or elected politician may experience violence, women politicians can be targeted because of their gender and subjected to sexist threats, sexual harassment, and violence.<sup>24</sup> Violence may occur during the registration and voting processes, while campaigning and running for office, and/or while serving in a government.<sup>25</sup> Perpetrators may include both state and non-state actors, such as members of

<sup>24</sup> An article in the *Journal of Democracy* noted that actions to threaten, intimidate, or harass women who are participating in the political process are attempts to “deter women’s electoral participation, and reinforce prevailing gender norms.” Such activities “should thus be seen as a serious threat and affront to democracy.” See Mona Lena Krook, “Violence Against Women in Politics,” *Journal of Democracy*, January 2017, p. 74-75. The Kofi Annan Foundation cited research that determined “general political violence occurred against both men and women,” but that women were “much more likely to experience sexualized forms of violence.” See Carmen Alanis, *Violence Against Women in Politics*, Kofi Annan Foundation, November 2020, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, A/73/301, *Violence against Women in Politics*, August 6, 2018, p. 9.



political parties, other parliamentarians, members of the public, media representatives, and religious or community leaders.<sup>26</sup>

Underreporting incidents of violence against women in politics makes addressing the issue particularly challenging. Information about the problem tends to be anecdotal rather than statistical, making it difficult to determine the extent and prevalence of the problem. In addition, many women may be reluctant to report violence out of the belief that doing so may limit a woman's political aspirations, and out of fear of reprisals, threats, and possible increased harassment.<sup>27</sup> According to a 2018 United Nations report, "women of color appear to be disproportionately affected, and risks are likely higher for women of marginalized communities."<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 3** indicates the prevalence of attacks of "political violence targeting women in politics" (PVTWIP). PVTWIP affects those who participate in various functions in the political process according to the Political Violence Targeting Women Research Hub from Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). Trends in **Figure 3** reflect data gathered periodically from women in 190 countries from January 2, 2021, through November 14, 2024. Globally, women *candidates for office*, whether for local, regional, or national government, experienced up to 117 PVTWIP attacks (9.8%), while female *politicians*, those women currently serving in an elected governmental position, experienced 175 PVTWIP attacks (14.7%). *Political party supporters*, such as women who campaign and actively support a political party or candidate, faced 162 PVTWIP attacks (13.6%), while women *voters* underwent 5 PVTWIP attacks (0.5%). *Government officials*, women who work in nonelected government positions, including public and civil servants, experienced up to 326 PVTWIP attacks (27.4%). *Protestors* experienced 34 PVTWIP attacks (2.9%). The largest group of women in public life, who experienced 369 PVTW attacks (31.1%), includes *activists, human rights defenders, and social leaders*.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, A/73/301, *Violence against Women in Politics*, August 6, 2018, p. 6.

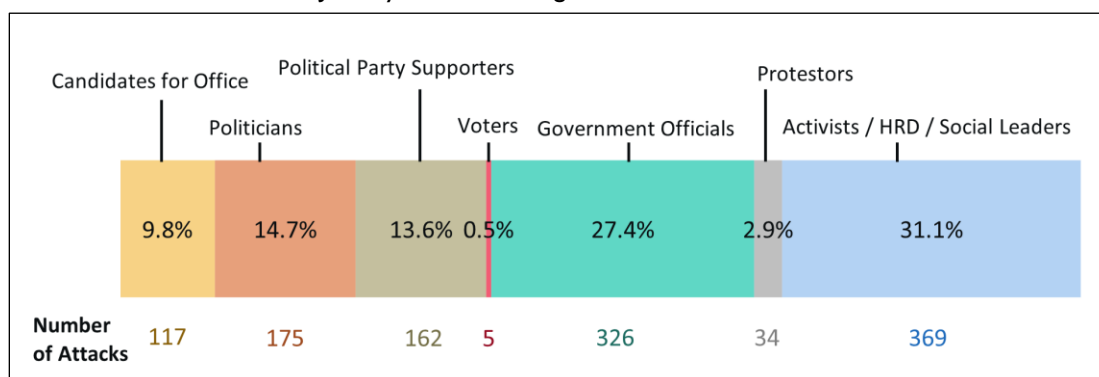
<sup>27</sup> UN Women, *Data and Violence against Women in Politics: Expert Group Meeting Report and Recommendations*, December 4-5, 2019, pp. 9-13.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations, *Violence against Women in Politics Expert Group Meeting Report and Recommendations*, New York, NY, March 8-9, 2018, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> "Political Violence Targeting Women," Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, accessed November 24, 2024.

**Figure 3. Trends in Political Violence Targeting Women in Politics, by Role in Political Process**

January 2, 2021 through November 14, 2024



**Source:** Created by CRS, based on aggregate data from “Political Violence Targeting Women,” Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), accessed November 24, 2024.

**Notes:** Data on violence targeting women in politics are restricted to acts of physical violence that take place in a public setting on women who engage in the political process. This does not include acts of bullying or intimidation, cases of domestic violence, or virtual aggressive actions.

In October 2016, the IPU published the results of a survey of 55 women legislators from 39 countries on their experiences of harassment, intimidation, or violence based on their gender.<sup>30</sup>

**Tables 9 to 12** illustrate the findings of this survey. Broadly, almost 82% of the women surveyed reported they had personally experienced psychological violence, almost 22% reported incidents of sexual violence, 25.5% reported experiencing physical violence, and almost 33% had been subjected to economic violence.

**Table 9. Prevalence of Various Forms of Violence Against Women Legislators**

2016 IPU survey of 55 women legislators from 39 countries

Type of Violence	% of Respondents Answering “Yes”	
	“Have you been subject to one or more acts of this kind of violence?”	“Have you witnessed acts of this violence committed against one or more of your female colleagues?”
<b>Psychological violence</b> (see <b>Table 10</b> for details)	81.8%	78.1%
<b>Sexual violence</b> (e.g., sexual harassment; efforts to force sexual relations inappropriate and unwanted gestures or physical contact; requests for sexual relations in exchange for material or political advantages)	21.8%	32.7%
<b>Physical violence</b> (e.g., actions that inflict or attempt to inflict bodily injury to a legislator, or to friends or members of her family)	25.5%	20.0%
<b>Economic violence</b> (e.g., denied funds and other resources that legislators are entitled to such as salary, offices, computers, staff, security; damage to or destruction of personal property)	32.7%	30.9%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians*, October 2016.

**Note:** Definitions of the various kinds of violence are included in the report.

<sup>30</sup> IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians*, October 2016. Survey participants included 18 from Africa, 15 from Europe, 10 from the Asia-Pacific region, 8 from the Americas, and 4 from Arab countries.

The 81.8% of respondents in **Table 9** who reported they had experienced psychological violence identified the manifestations of this violence in **Table 10**.

**Table 10. Psychological Violence: Prevalence of Specific Behaviors**

Behaviors described by the 81.8% of 2016 IPU survey respondents who reported they had experienced psychological violence

<b>Actions of Psychological Violence</b>	<b>% of Respondents Who Had Experienced These Actions</b>
Humiliating sexual or sexist remarks	65.5%
Images or disrespectful comments with sexual connotations about you in the traditional media	27.3%
Extremely humiliating or sexual images of you distributed through social media	41.8%
Threats of death, rape, beatings, or abduction	44.4%
Harassment (e.g. exposure to insistent and uninvited behavior, including unwanted attention, unwelcome verbal contact, or interaction that may have frightened you)	32.7%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians*, October 2016, p. 3.

**Table 11** lists several factors identified in the IPU study that may make some women legislators a likely target for gender-based intolerance.

**Table 11. Risk Factors for Women Legislators**

2016 IPU survey of 55 women legislators from 39 countries

<b>Reasons for Violence, as reported by women legislators subjected to gender-based violent acts and behavior</b>	<b>% of Survey Respondents</b>
Intention to dissuade them and other women from participating in politics	61.5%
Political rivalry	41.7%
Positions of women legislators on specific issues	60.5%

**Source:** Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians*, October 2016, p. 6.

Additional risk factors that appear to lead to violence against women in legislatures include being a member of the political minority, being under the age of 40, and belonging to a minority ethnic, religious, or other marginalized social group.<sup>31</sup> **Table 12** identifies how women legislators have reacted to the acts of violence they experienced.

**Table 12. Effects of Violence Against Women in Politics**

2016 IPU survey of 55 women legislators from 39 countries

<b>Reactions of Women in Politics Subjected to Violent Acts</b>	<b>% of Survey Respondents</b>
Distressed over the experience	66.7%
Concerned for the security of themselves, their friends, and family members	46.7%

<sup>31</sup> IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians*, October 2016, p. 6.

Reactions of Women in Politics Subjected to Violent Acts	% of Survey Respondents
Felt weakened in their ability to complete their mandates and to express their opinions	38.7%
Reported incidents to the legislative security services or the police	51.7%
Strengthened their determination as a legislator	80.0%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians*, October 2016, p. 7.

The IPU released regional updates on sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments for Europe (2018) and for Africa (2021).

IPU's 2018 Europe regional update is based on the results of one-on-one conversations with 123 women from 45 European countries. Eighty-one participants were members of parliament (MPs) and 42 were members of the parliamentary staff.<sup>32</sup> **Table 13** identifies the prevalence of various forms of violence against European women legislators.

**Table 13. Prevalence of Various Forms of Violence Against European Women Legislators**  
2018 IPU survey of 81 European women legislators

Type of Violence	% of Survey Respondents
Suffered psychological violence during their term of office	85.2%
Received death threats or threats of rape or beating	46.9%
Been the target of online sexist attacks on social networks	58.2%
Been the target of comments relating to their physical appearance or based on gender stereotypes	67.9%
Experienced sexual violence <sup>a</sup>	24.7%
Experienced physical violence <sup>b</sup>	14.8%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Europe*, October 2018, p. 4.

- a. IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Europe*, October 2018, p. 4. This report identified two types of sexual violence: sexual harassment ("words or behavior of a degrading or humiliating sexual nature, sexual advances and/or demands for sexual favors") and sexual assault (being forced "engage in sexual acts, have sexual intercourse or carry out something of a sexual nature").
- b. *Ibid.*, p. 4. This report defines physical violence as being slapped, pushed, hit, having something thrown at you; being threatened with a firearm, knife, or another weapon; or being confined, beaten, or abducted.

More broadly, female MPs in Europe under 40 experienced higher rates of psychological and sexual harassment than male MPs. Female MPs who actively supported gender equality and condemned violence against women were often singled out for attack.<sup>33</sup>

**Table 14** identifies the prevalence of forms of violence against European female parliamentary staff.

<sup>32</sup> IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Europe*, October 2018, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

**Table 14. Prevalence of Various Forms of Violence Against European Women Parliamentary Staff**

2018 IPU survey of 42 European female parliamentary staff

Type of Violence	% of Survey Respondents
Suffered acts of sexual harassment in their work	40.5%
Received comments of a sexual nature	50.0%
Suffered psychological harassment/bullying in their work in parliament from MPs and colleagues in the parliamentary staff, mostly from men but also from women	19.5%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Europe*, October 2018, p. 2.

Of the 40.5% of European women parliamentary staff who suffered acts of sexual harassment, in 69.2% of such cases the perpetrators were male MPs.<sup>34</sup>

Of the 50.0% of cases in which European women parliamentary staff received comments of a sexual nature, in 61.5% of those cases such comments were made by male MPs.<sup>35</sup>

IPU's 2021 Africa regional update is based on the results of confidential interviews conducted with 224 women from 50 countries. One-hundred and thirty-seven participants were women parliamentarians and 87 were members of the parliamentary staff.<sup>36</sup>

**Table 15** identifies the prevalence of forms of violence against African women parliamentarians.

**Table 15. Prevalence of Various Forms of Violence Against African Women Legislators**

2021 IPU survey of 137 African women legislators

Type of Violence	% of Survey Respondents
Experienced psychological violence.	80.0%
Experienced sexual violence	39.0%
Exposed to economic violence <sup>a</sup>	29.0%
Experienced physical violence at work	23.0%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 2.

- a. IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 27. In the report, economic violence is defined as using "economic barriers and deprivation as a means of control, most often by destroying a person's property or putting in jeopardy their livelihood as a form of intimidation."

The 80.0% of African women legislators in **Table 15** who reported they had experienced psychological violence identified manifestations of this violence in **Table 16**.

<sup>34</sup> IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Europe*, October 2018, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 2.

**Table 16. Psychological Violence Against African Women Legislators:  
Prevalence of Specific Behaviors**

Behaviors described by the 80.0% of 2021 IPU Africa update women legislator respondents who reported they had experienced psychological violence

<b>Actions of Psychological Violence</b>	<b>% of Respondents Who Had Experienced These Actions</b>
Experienced sexist behavior or remarks	67.0%
Target of sexist attacks online	46.0%
Have received death threats, rape threats, or threats of beating or abduction directed at them or their loved ones	42.0%
Have faced intimidation or psychological harassment	39.0%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 2.

The 39.0% of African women legislators in **Table 15** who reported they had experienced sexual violence identified manifestations of this violence in **Table 17**.

**Table 17. Sexual Violence Against African Women Legislators:  
Prevalence of Specific Behaviors**

Behaviors described by the 39.0% of 2021 IPU Africa update women legislator respondents who reported they had experienced sexual violence

<b>Actions of Sexual Violence</b>	<b>% of Respondents Who Had Experienced These Actions</b>
Sexually harassed	40.0%
Affected by sextortion (requests for sexual favors)	9.0%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 2.

**Table 18** identifies the prevalence of forms of violence against African women parliamentary staff.

**Table 18. Prevalence of Various Forms of Violence Against  
African Women Parliamentary Staff**

2021 IPU survey of 87 African women parliamentary staff

<b>Type of Violence</b>	<b>% of Survey Respondents</b>
Sexual harassment at work	45.0%
Received requests for sexual favours in exchange for a benefit a colleague or parliamentarian was empowered to withhold or confer	18.0%
Psychological violence	69.0%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 3.

The 45.0% of African women parliamentary staff in **Table 18** who reported they had experienced psychological violence identified types of perpetrators of this violence in **Table 19**.

**Table 19. Sexual Harassment Against African Women  
Parliamentary Staff: Perpetrators**

Perpetrators of behaviors described by the 45.0% of 2021 IPU Africa update women parliamentary staff respondents who reported they had experienced sexual harassment

Type of Perpetrators	% of Perpetrators
Male parliamentarians	53.0%
Male colleagues or parliamentary staff	48.0%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 3.

African women parliamentary staff reported that “18% have received requests for sexual favours from parliamentary colleagues (56% of cases) or from parliamentarians (44% of cases) in exchange for a benefit that this colleague or parliamentarian was empowered to withhold or confer.”<sup>37</sup>

The 69.0% of African women parliamentary staff in **Table 18** who reported they had experienced psychological violence identified manifestations of this violence in **Table 20**.

**Table 20. Psychological Violence Against African Women  
Parliamentary Staff: Prevalence of Specific Behaviors**

Behaviors described by the 69.0% of 2021 IPU Africa update women parliamentary staff respondents who reported they had experienced psychological violence

Actions of Psychological Violence	% of Respondents Who Had Experienced These Actions
Were the target of sexist remarks made by male colleagues and / or parliamentarians	56.0%
Experienced psychological harassment within the context of their work in parliament	38.0%
Were attacked online	22.0%
Were threatened online	7.0%

**Source:** IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 3.

In the 56.0% of African women parliamentary staff who were the target of sexist remarks, 67% of these cases were by male colleagues working in parliament and 30% of these cases were by male parliamentarians.<sup>38</sup>

In the 38.0% of African women parliamentary staff who experienced psychological harassment within the context of their work in parliament, in 72.0% of those cases the parliamentary colleagues were the perpetrators (mostly men but some women). In 22.0% of those cases, the perpetrators were male parliamentarians.<sup>39</sup>

The 2021 Africa update also includes examples of economic violence reported includes

- 18% of female parliamentary staff have been threatened with losing their job or with having their career progression blocked, and

<sup>37</sup> IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

- 24% have been refused funds to which they were entitled, such as a salary or bonus.<sup>40</sup>

## Author Information

Travis A. Ferrell  
Research Librarian

## Acknowledgments

Susan Chesser was the previous author of this report.

---

## Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

---

<sup>40</sup> IPU, *Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in Africa*, November 2021, p. 3.