

# Women in Politics

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# Deficit in representation

- Women in politics:
  - the role of women in the political process, and
  - the impact of politics on women's lives
- Political Science dominated by men
- Politics dominated by men
  - Women make up half of the electorate
  - Women often vote in greater numbers than men
  - Fewer women than men run as candidates and are appointed in political office (as president, prime minister, minister, deputy, senator, judge, in bureaucracy)
- Deficit in representation, linked to democratic deficit

# Women heads of state

Few women elected presidents

- Isabel Peron 1974, Argentina
- Vigdís Finnbogadóttir 1980, Iceland
- Chandrika Kumaratunga 1994, Sri Lanka
- Ruth Perry 1996, Liberia
- Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga 1999, Latvia
- Roza Otunbayeva, 2010 Kyrgyzstan

Depends on whether president is directly or indirectly elected

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many monarchies moved away from the salic law to allow daughters to inherit throne (except Japan)

## 9 of 13 current women leaders are their country's first

Current women heads of government

✓ Country's first female leader

Head of government	Country	Years in office
✓ PM Mia Mottley	Barbados	6.4
PM Mette Frederiksen	Denmark	5.3
✓ Pres. Hilda Heine	Marshall Islands	4.7
✓ Pres. Samia Suluhu Hassan	Tanzania	3.5
✓ PM Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa	Samoa	3.4
✓ Pres. Xiomara Castro	Honduras	2.7
✓ PM Giorgia Meloni	Italy	1.9
✓ Pres. Dina Boluarte	Peru	1.8
✓ Borjana Krišto*	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1.7
PM Evika Silina	Latvia	1.0
Viola Amherd*	Switzerland	<1
PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra	Thailand	<1
✓ Pres. Claudia Sheinbaum	Mexico	<1

\* Krišto is chairwoman of the Council of Ministers. Amherd is the presiding member of the Federal Council, a rotating single-year position.  
 Note: Years in office includes nonconsecutive terms held by the same woman. Figures are through Oct. 1, 2024. Data is limited to heads of government for the 193 United Nations member states.  
 Source: Pew Research Center analysis of data from the Council on Foreign Relations and independent sources.

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# Women in the executive

- Growing unevenly
- Initially appointed in 'soft' positions (Minister of Family, Culture)
- Recently appointed in 'hard' positions (Finance, Foreign Affairs, Defense)
- Depends on electoral system and party leaders

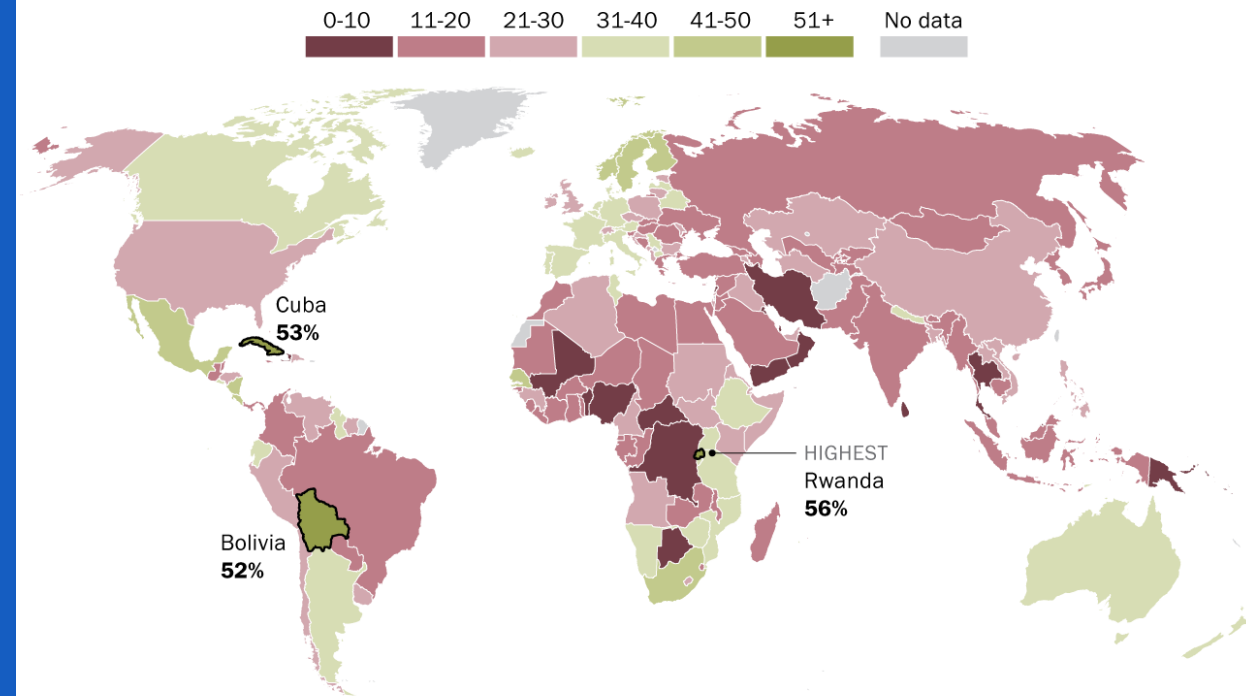


# Women in legislatures

- Growing but still underrepresented
- Sometimes allowed to run only in electoral districts where the party is unsure of support

## Women make up half or more of national legislatures in just three nations

% of members of legislative bodies that are women

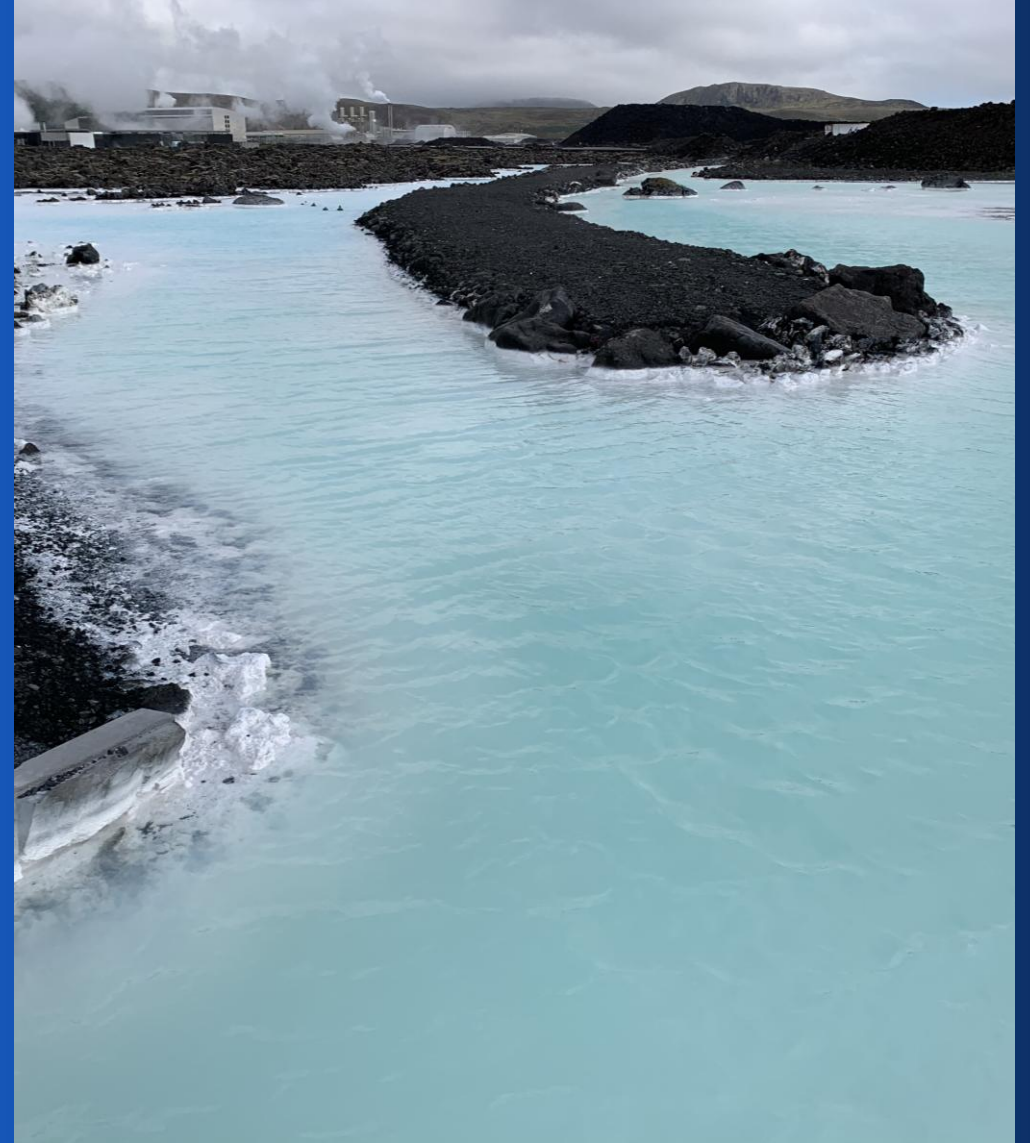


Note: As of Jan. 1, 2019. Includes 192 countries for which there are 2019 data available.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of data from Inter-Parliamentary Union.

# Significant differences among countries

- **Scandinavia** – women make up > 40% of cabinets and legislatures; occupied offices traditionally seen as masculine (Finance, FA)
- **Rwanda** – since genocide women have accounted for > 60% of legislators and 46% of ministers. Kagame has ruled since 2000
- **Western Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand** – good representation between 30-40% in Parliament, some women PMs
- **US** – lower numbers under second presidency of D. Trump; no woman president; women about 1/4<sup>th</sup> of state governors
- **Other regions** (including CEE) – some presidents and PMs, generally low representation in Parliament



# Descriptive representation leads to beneficial effects

- **Descriptive representation** – “the politics of presence” (Philips, 1995); each additional woman in office is a gain, the more so since portfolios are significant
- **Substantive representation** – women in political office make decisions / policies benefiting women (Wängnerud, 2009) – women in office matter if they effect policy changes
- **Style of conducting politics**
  - Men prefer competition, posturing
  - Women prefer cooperation, inclusivity

# A more complicated picture (1)

- Women elected in public office did not respect democratic principles:
  - Isabel Peron (Argentina),
  - Park Geun-hye (South Korea),
  - Tatyana Turanskaya (Transnistria)



## A more complicated picture (2)

- Women representing far-right political parties advocated for conservative policies that cut down abortion, contraception and promoted natalist policies; populists responsible for democratic backsliding
  - Marine Le Pen (France)
  - Diana Sosoaca (Romania)
  - Alice Weidel (Germany)



# Determinants of women's political representation – culture

- Culture, religion,
- Social Structure
- Politics
- International Factors

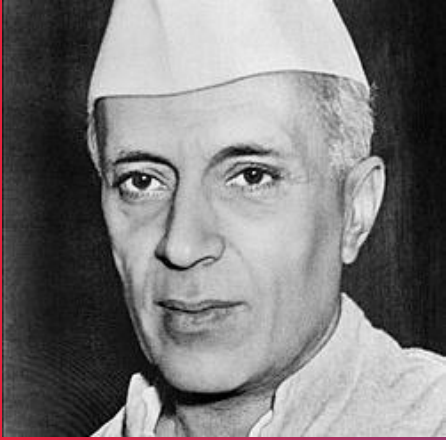
# Determinants of women's political representation – culture

- World Value Survey Questions on Women's Place (2020)
- Religion – some religions encourage women to limit themselves to the household

	Canada	US	Germany	Romania	Morocco	Nigeria
<b>Men make better political leaders</b>	1,73	1.86	1.61	2.21	2.48	3.13
<b>University education is more important for boys</b>	1,68	1.67	1.44	1.77	1.99	2.37
<b>Men make better business executives</b>	1.73	1.76	1.62	2.09	2.36	2.86
<b>Justifiable for a man to beat his wife</b>	1.63	1.42	1.10	1.40	3.27	1.93
<b>In democracy, women must have same rights as men</b>	2.13	2.55	1.39	2.31	3.26	3.94

# Determinants of women's political representation – social structure

- **Economic development** of country – high income countries generally have more women in Parliament than low income countries
- **Money** at the disposal of women candidates
- **Time** at the disposal of women candidates
- **Education** of women
- **Work** - women's participation in labor force
- **Networks** – parties, voluntary organizations, former politicians, political families
- **Deterrent**: Violence against women politicians



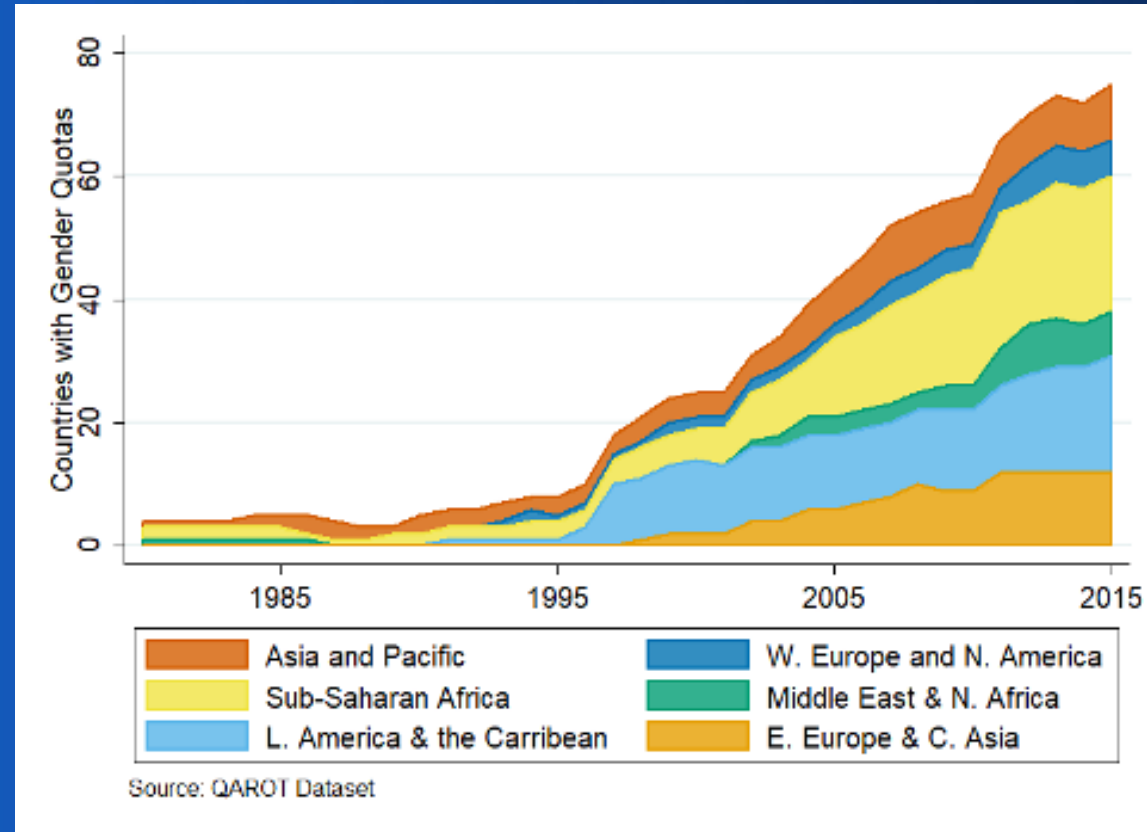
## Political families – the Nehru-Ghandis

- Jawaharlal Nehru
- Indira Gandhi
- Sanjay
- Rajiv + Sonia
- Rahul, Priyanka



# Determinants of women's political representation – politics

- Democratic leaders appoint more women, up to a point (glass ceiling)
- **PR electoral system** allows for more women in Parliaments
- Electoral and party **quotas** can raise number of women in office
- **Deterrents:**
  - democratic backsliding, populism
  - party gatekeepers



# Determinants of women's political representation – international factors

- Women's movement made a difference
- Women's advocacy in the UN and other international organizations
- International instruments (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW)
- **Deterrent**: war, conflict, precarity



# Do women matter in politics?

- They can advance policies that protect women, families and children, as well as other policies
- Must reach “**critical mass**: (% in legislature for women to pursue their policy initiatives)
- Must overcome the position as “**token women**” (one woman is elected, receives a lot of exposure, but is ignored in decision-making)
- Must convince “**party gatekeepers**” (leaders deciding appointments or inclusion on electoral lists) of their value
- Must pursue the **common good** more than their own interests (free of corruption)
- Must serve as **models** for other women

# Thank you!



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