

Women's Power Index

Find out where women around the world wield political power—and why it matters.

Interactive by Rachel B. Vogelstein and Alexandra Bro

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Created by CFR's Women and Foreign Policy program, the Women's Power Index ranks 193 UN member states on their progress toward gender parity in political participation. It analyzes the proportion of women who serve as heads of state or government, in cabinets, in national legislatures, as candidates for national legislatures, and in local government bodies, and visualizes the gender gap in political representation.

Scroll down below the table to view a list of current female heads of state or government, learn why women's political representation matters, find additional resources on women's political participation, and read the methodology.

How to Use the Index

Use the map to view data for one indicator at a time. Select the indicator you wish the map to display using the drop-down menu above the map.

Use the table to view data for all indicators together. The drop-down menu above the table lets you customize the list of countries or regions to display.



out of 193 countries have a female head of state or government
[See the list](#)

out of 193 countries have at least 50 percent women in the national cabinet

out of 193 countries have at least 50 percent women in the national legislature

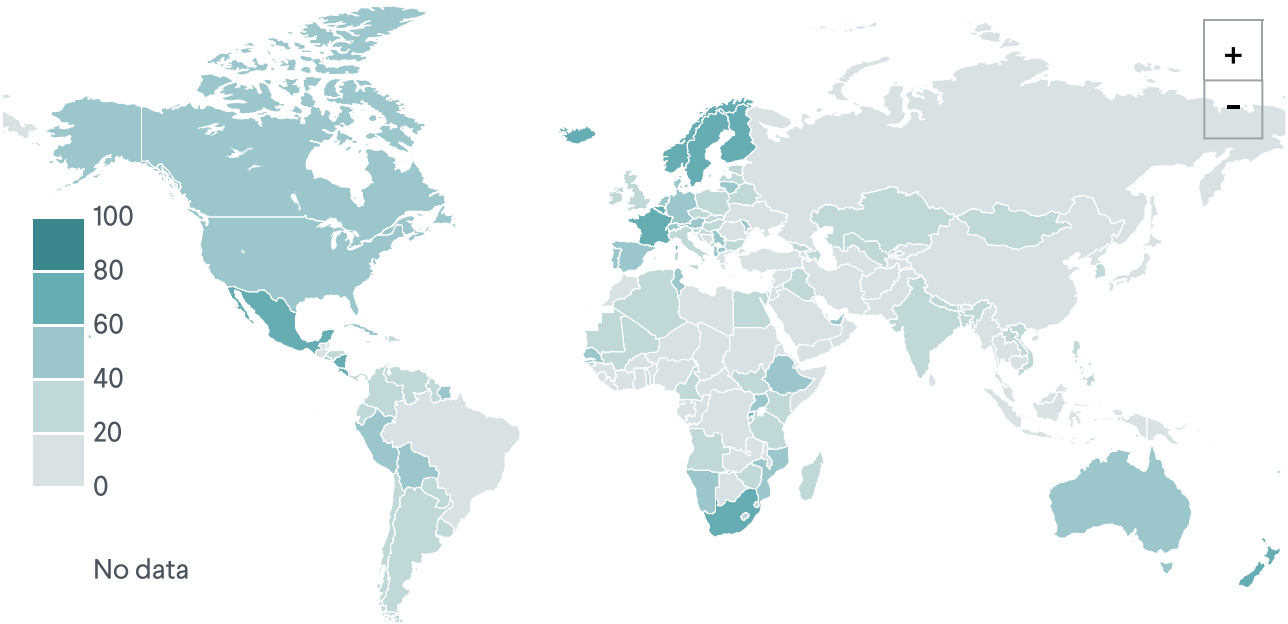
Political parity score

The political parity score is an aggregate measure of the representation of women in a country's government. A score of 100 represents women having at least 50 percent representation in all levels of government with available data. For details, see [About the Data](#).

172 countries have a score lower than 50

21 countries have a score of 50 or greater





Filter by region or country

Country	Political parity score ⓘ	Head of state (current) ⓘ	Heads of state (since 1946) ⓘ	Cabinet ⓘ	National legislature ⓘ
Costa Rica	74	Male	1	52%	40%
Rwanda	70	Male	1	55%	50%
Iceland	69	Female	3	40%	40%
Sweden	69	Male	0	57%	47%
Finland	69	Female	4	50%	40%
Nicaragua	68	Male	1	59%	40%
Andorra	66	Male	0	50%	40%
Norway	63	Female	2	39%	40%
Mexico	62	Male	0	42%	40%



Data as of 2021 unless otherwise noted.

[Download the data \(csv\)](#)

Current Female Heads of State or Government

Data as of April 6, 2021†

Search in table

Country	Name	Title
Bangladesh	Sheikh Hasina	Prime Minister
Barbados	Mia Mottley	Prime Minister
Denmark	Mette Frederiksen	Prime Minister
Estonia	Kersti Kaljulaid	President
Estonia	Kaja Kallas	Prime Minister
Ethiopia	Sahle-Work Zewde	President
Finland	Sanna Marin	Prime Minister
Gabon	Rose Christiane Raponda	Prime Minister
Georgia	Salome Zourabichvili	President
Germany	Angela Merkel	Chancellor
Greece	Katerina Sakellaropoulou	President
Iceland	Katrín Jakobsdóttir	Prime Minister
Lithuania	Ingrida Šimonytė	Prime Minister
Moldova	Maia Sandu	President

Nepal	Bidhya Devi Bhandari	President
New Zealand	Jacinda Ardern	Prime Minister
Norway	Erna Solberg	Prime Minister
Serbia	Ana Brnabić	Prime Minister
Singapore	Halimah Yacob	President
Slovakia	Zuzana Čaputová	President
Tanzania	Samia Suluhu Hassan	President
Togo	Victoire Tomegah Dogbé	Prime Minister
Trinidad and Tobago	Paula-Mae Weekes	President

.†Tsai Ing-wen and Vjosa Osmani are currently serving as the presidents of Taiwan and Kosovo, respectively, which are not UN member states.

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Why Women's Representation Matters

Today, women around the world are running for political office in unprecedented numbers—and winning. Here is why it matters.

In the aggregate, women's leadership promotes bipartisanship, equality [PDF], and stability. And when women make up a critical mass of legislatures—around 25 to 30 percent—they are more likely to challenge established conventions and policy agendas.

Common ground. Women are more likely to cross party lines to find common ground. A study of the U.S. Senate found that women senators more frequently worked across the aisle and passed more legislation than their male counterparts. In recent years, for example, female U.S. senators from both parties joined together to negotiate an accord to end a government shutdown. And in Northern Ireland,

Catholic and Protestant women's groups joined forces to establish a powerful political party that made progress across religious divides during the Northern Ireland peace efforts in the late 1990s.

Equality and social welfare. Female lawmakers are more likely to advocate for policies that support education and health [PDF]. Parliaments with a higher share of women lawmakers are also more likely to pass and implement legislation that advances gender equality, including laws on domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment. In Russia, for example, women lawmakers crossed party lines to impose penalties for violence against women. An increase in the share of women legislators is also positively correlated with investment in education and health: among the mostly high-income countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), growth in the number of female legislators led to an increase in educational expenditures. Similarly, in non-OECD India, women-led village councils were more likely to support investments in clean drinking water.

Stability. Women's inclusion at leadership tables promotes stability. One study found that when women's parliamentary representation increases by 5 percent, a country is almost five times less likely to respond to an international crisis with violence. Within countries, women's parliamentary representation is associated with a decreased risk of civil war and lower levels of state-perpetrated human rights abuses, such as disappearances, killings, political imprisonment, and torture. Indeed, in post-conflict Rwanda, where over 50 percent of parliamentarians are female, lawmakers have supported inclusive decision-making processes that promote reconciliation efforts at the local level.

To be sure, electing women does not guarantee those outcomes. Holding political office is just the first step to wielding political power; in many countries, institutional structures and political systems still limit women's ability to influence policy. Women are not a homogenous group, and not all female leaders will be cooperative, peaceful, or advocate for laws that strengthen gender equality. Being the first woman elected to a leadership position often means navigating previously

male-dominated structures, which can translate into political caution rather than policy change. Further, as the number of women seeking office rises, so too does the hostility and violence against them: politically motivated attacks on women are growing around the world.

Regardless of outcome, as the number of women leaders increases, more women will likely be inspired to become politically engaged.

Some sections of this article come from a piece originally published in CNN: “The ‘Year of the Woman’ Goes Global” (Alexandra Bro and Rachel Vogelstein, CNN, 2018)

Additional Resources

“Women in Politics: 2021,” UN Women and IPU

“Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation,” UN Women

Global Gender Gap Report 2020, World Economic Forum

Global Women's Leadership Initiative Index, Wilson Center's Women in Public Service Project

New Parline, a platform with data on national legislatures, Inter-Parliamentary Union

#ShePersisted: Women, Politics, and Power in the New Media World, Lucina Di Meco, Wilson Center

“Gender, Women, and Democracy,” National Democratic Institute

For more work from CFR scholars, see “Women Under Attack: The Backlash Against Female Politicians” in *Foreign Affairs*, by Jamille Bigio and Rachel Vogelstein, “The ‘Year of the Woman’ Goes Global” in *CNN*, by Alexandra Bro and Rachel Vogelstein, “Other Nations Have Been Putting Women in Charge. Where’s the U.S.?” in

the *Washington Post*, by Alexandra Bro and Rachel Vogelstein, and the two interactive reports *Growing Economies Through Gender Parity* and *Women's Workplace Equality Index*.

About the Data

Political parity score: The political parity score (a number between 0 and 100, 100 being the best) is an aggregate of women's representation across five indicators of political participation: heads of state or government, national cabinets, national legislatures, national legislature candidates, and local legislatures. The index measures women's descriptive representation, which refers to the numerical presence of women rather than women's impact or policy preferences.

Each indicator was scored by converting the raw data into a ratio of women's representation over men's representation and then scaling the result to 100. Thus, if women hold 25 percent of the seats in a country's national legislature, the country is given a score of 33.3 (25 divided by 75 scaled to 100) for the national legislatures indicator. The maximum score for each indicator is 100, which means that women make up 50 percent or more of the measured value for that specific indicator.

The aggregate score was then obtained by calculating the unweighted average of each of the five indicator scores (for those where data was available). For countries with the same score, we assigned them the same rank and left a corresponding gap in the index. Thus, if two (or more) countries tie for a position in the ranking, the position of those ranked below them is unaffected (i.e., a country comes in third if exactly two countries score better than it and fourth if exactly three countries score better than it).

The index will be updated on a quarterly basis with, when possible, new publicly available data. An increase or a decrease in a country's relative rank does not necessarily mean that the country has improved or worsened its female

representation in all—or any—of the five scored indicators. A change in a country's aggregate score, however, means that women's representation has changed in one or more of the five indicators.

Elected and appointed heads of state or government since 1946: The number of female heads of state and government between January 1, 1946, and March 19, 2021. We start counting female heads of state or government after World War II, when the world saw a wave of independence movements, and only include 193 UN member states. This list does not include monarchs or governors appointed by monarchs, acting or interim heads of state or government who were not subsequently elected or confirmed, honorary heads of state or government, copresidents, joint heads of state, heads of government of a constituent country, and women who were or are not constitutionally the head of government but rather serve or served in a position akin to a deputy to the president. In countries with collective heads of state, the list includes only presiding members (often called the chairperson).

This indicator was scored using the following methodology: The number of years since 1946 with a female head of state or government was divided by the number of years since 1946 with a male head of state or government. The male value was calculated by subtracting the female value from the total number of years since 1946 (seventy-six). When a female head of state or government was suspended, we counted her time in office up until the date she was suspended, even if she officially remained in office (e.g., Park Geun-hye in South Korea and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil). If a country has had a woman head of state or government at the same time, we did not double count the time period. This data was collected using publicly available information, and can be viewed in the map above.

Cabinets: Percentage of ministerial positions held by women, as of January 1, 2021. This data was collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and can be found in the UN Women's and IPU's "Women in Politics: 2021" map. IPU collected data from national governments, permanent missions to the United Nations, and publicly available information. IPU's count of the total number of ministers includes deputy

prime ministers and ministers but excludes vice presidents and heads of governmental or public agencies. IPU includes prime ministers or heads of government if they hold ministerial portfolios.

National legislatures: Percentage of seats held by women in lower and upper houses of national legislatures, as of January 1, 2021. This data was collected by IPU.

National legislature candidates: Percentage of registered female candidates in the most recent elections to the lower and upper houses of national legislatures, as of January 1, 2021. This data was collected by IPU.

Local legislatures: Percentage of elected seats held by women in local government bodies, as of September 16, 2020. This data was collected by the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), a division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. See [here](#) for the data and [here](#) for a detailed explanation of UNSD's methodology and data collection.