



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Women in Parliament in 2013

The year in review



Zimbabwean women wait to cast their votes at a polling station in Domboshava, 31 July 2013.
© Reuters / S. Sibeko

2013 breaks all the records for women's participation in parliaments worldwide. The percentage of parliamentary seats occupied by women rose to 21.8 per cent, an increase of 1.5 percentage points – double the average rate of increase in recent years.

Women's share exceeds 30 per cent in 39 lower houses (compared to 33 in 2012) and in 16 upper houses (down from 17 in 2012) – and today stands at over 40 per cent in 15 of those chambers. Newcomers to this "30 per cent club" include Austria, Cameroon, Grenada and Zimbabwe (both houses). Another record was broken with Rwanda's Chamber of Deputies for the first time ever seating more than 60 per cent women (63.8%).

At the other end of the scale, the number of chambers seating fewer than 10 per cent women remained more or less the same: 34 lower houses and 13 upper houses. The number of all-male chambers fell to five (down from 7), including two that renewed their exclusive composition in 2013 (Micronesia and Qatar).

In total, women secured 3,036 seats, accounting for 26.4 per cent of all members elected or appointed to parliament in 2013 in 49 countries. Another high.

Of the 64 chambers renewed in 2013, the proportion of women increased in 42. Their share rose fastest, by more than 20 percentage points, in two chambers – Grenada's lower house (to 33.3%) and Zimbabwe's upper house (to 47.5%). These were followed, with increases exceeding 15 percentage points, by the lower houses of four countries: Saudi Arabia, Cameroon, Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea. Women's share declined, on the other hand, in 14 chambers, led surprisingly by Grenada's appointed upper house (-17.4 percentage points), followed by

HIGHLIGHTS

Globally

- 2013 – a year of records: the global average of women in parliaments is now at 21.8 per cent, up from 20.3 per cent in 2012. This represents a gain of 1.5 percentage points in a year.
- Women's share exceeds 30 per cent in 39 lower houses and in 16 upper houses – and today stands at over 40 per cent in 15 of those chambers.
- Rwanda's Chamber of Deputies breaks another record. For the first time ever, it seats more than 60 per cent women (63.8%).
- At the other end of the scale, the number of chambers seating fewer than 10 per cent women remained more or less the same: 34 lower houses and 13 upper houses. The number of all-male chambers fell to five (down from 7).
- In 2013, quotas were used in 39 chambers holding elections in 30 countries. In chambers with legislated quotas (21), women took an average of 25 per cent of the seats. In the 18 chambers where only voluntary political party quotas were used, women gained an average of 28 per cent of seats. In chambers with no quotas (25), women gained 26 per cent of seats.

Regionally

- Americas: the highest electoral gain of the year was achieved in Grenada's lower house with a 20-point increase up to 33.3 per cent.
- Africa: the region progresses with a 2.1-point increase (22.5%).
- Arab States: the region registered the highest annual progress with a 2.8-point increase to 16 per cent of women in parliament. Saudi Arabia makes a 20 point gain with the appointment for the first time ever of 30 women to the Shura Council.
- Asia achieves the least progress, with a 0.5-point increase (18.4%).

Bhutan (-16) and Swaziland's lower house (-7.7). Five chambers reported no change. The trend overall, these few exceptions notwithstanding, has clearly been one of significant progress for women in parliament.

Table 1A: Parliamentary renewals in 2013

Progress and setbacks of women in lower or single houses of parliament renewed in 2013

The figures show the percentage point difference between renewals in 2013 compared with the previous electoral results

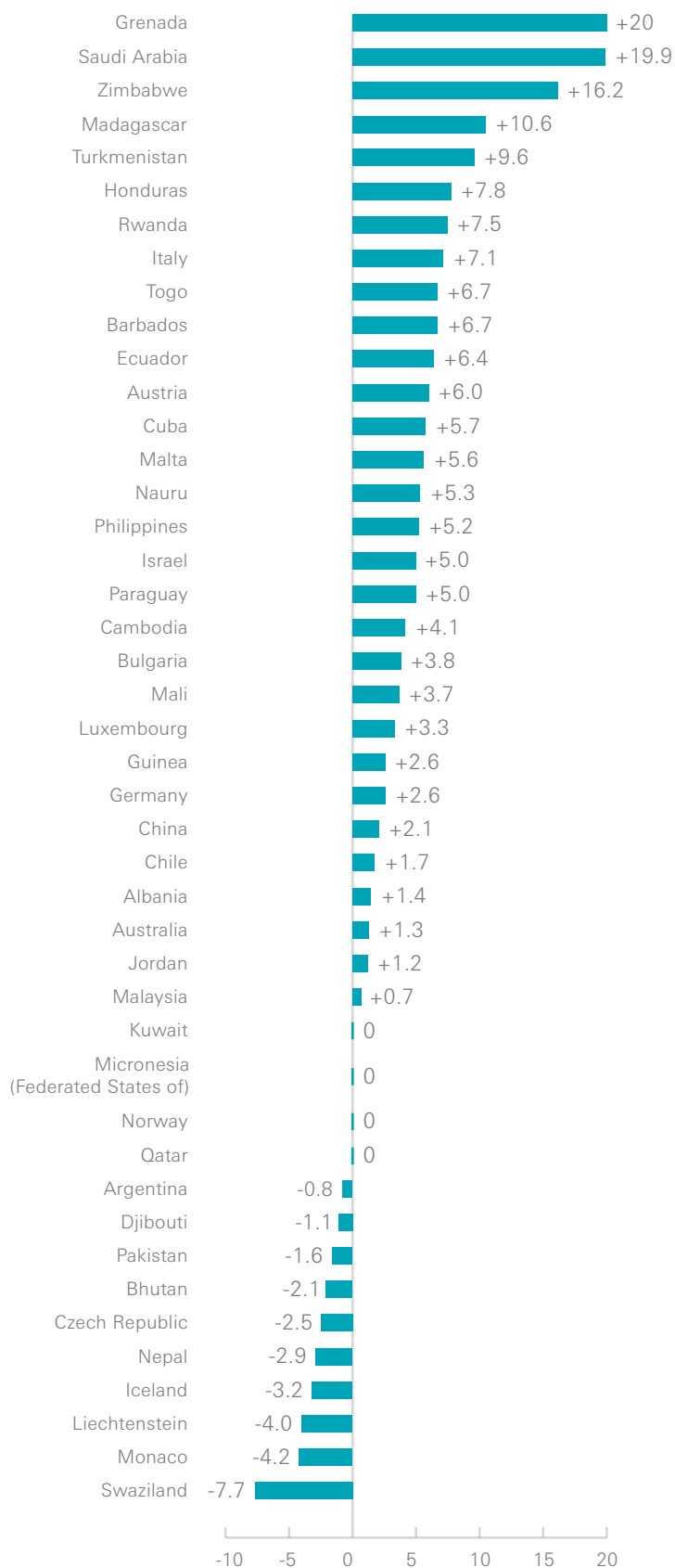


Table 1B: Women in lower or single houses after parliamentary renewals in 2013

Country	Total seats	Total women	% women	Quota
Rwanda	80	51	63.8	Yes***#
Cuba	612	299	48.9	No
Iceland	63	25	39.7	Yes*
Norway	169	67	39.6	No
Ecuador	137	53	38.7	Yes**
Argentina ¹	257	94	36.6	Yes***
Germany	631	230	36.5	Yes*
Austria	183	61	33.3	Yes*
Grenada	15	5	33.3	No
Zimbabwe	270	85	31.5	Yes*#
Cameroon	180	56	31.1	Yes*
Nepal	575	172	29.9	Yes**
Italy	630	179	28.4	Yes*
Luxembourg	60	17	28.3	Yes*
Philippines	289	79	27.3	Yes*
Turkmenistan	125	33	26.4	No
Australia	150	39	26.0	Yes*
Honduras	128	33	25.8	Yes**
Mauritania	147	37	25.2	Yes***
Bulgaria	240	59	24.6	No
China	2987	699	23.4	Yes**
Madagascar	147	34	23.1	No
Israel	120	27	22.5	Yes*
Equatorial Guinea	100	22	22.0	No
Guinea	114	25	21.9	Yes**
Monaco	24	5	20.8	No
Cambodia	123	25	20.3	No
Liechtenstein	25	5	20.0	No
Saudi Arabia	151	30	19.9	Yes#
Pakistan	323	67	20.7	Yes#
Czech Republic	200	39	19.5	Yes*
Kenya	350	65	18.6	Yes***#
Albania	140	25	17.9	Yes**
Paraguay	80	14	17.5	Yes***
Barbados	30	5	16.7	No
Chile	120	19	15.8	Yes*
Togo	91	14	15.4	Yes**
Malta	70	10	14.3	Yes*
Djibouti	55	7	12.7	Yes**
Jordan	150	18	12.0	Yes#
Malaysia	222	23	10.4	No
Mali	147	14	9.5	Yes*
Bhutan	47	3	6.4	No
Kuwait	65	4	6.2	No
Swaziland	65	4	6.2	No
Nauru	19	1	5.3	No
Micronesia (Federated States of)	10	0	0.0	No
Qatar	35	0	0.0	No

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

** Legislated candidate quota

*** Legislated and voluntary quotas

Seats reserved for women

1. The chamber was partially renewed in 2013. These figures refer to the overall composition of the chamber after the renewal.

Regions at a glance

Women of the Americas: seizing opportunities

Women in the Americas continued to lead the world in expanding their presence in parliament, increasing their share to an average of 25.2 per cent (+1.1 points) in 2013. Their participation exceeded 30 per cent in the lower houses of three States – Ecuador, Grenada and Argentina – and fell just shy of half in Cuba’s unicameral parliament.

Cuba’s steady progress toward parity continued in 2013, with women occupying 48.9 per cent of the country’s parliamentary seats, up from 43.2 per cent. The 612 candidates elected in 2013 – all members of the Communist Party – included an unprecedented 299 women, reflecting the government’s commitment to social equality, including gender parity in decision-making.

Following electoral reforms in Ecuador and Honduras, women have been elected to the unicameral parliaments of both countries in greater numbers than ever before. For its elections in 2009 and 2013, Ecuador’s 2008 constitutional commitment to gender equality in elections requires male and female candidates to alternate on candidate lists, providing a legal foundation for progress toward parity. Women have since gained 13 additional seats in the Assembly and now account for 38.7 per cent of its members (+6.4 points). Three women also serve in the legislature’s leadership positions – one as president and two as vice-presidents. In Honduras, in the lead-up to the first elections since the country’s 2009 coup, Congress established a 40 per cent quota for women in the 2013 elections and a 50 per cent quota for the 2017 elections. These measures, coupled with the country’s proportional representation (PR) system, which tends to favour women’s participation, propelled a leap in the percentage of women elected to parliament from 18 per cent to 25.8 per cent (+7.8).

Conversely, Chile, using only voluntary quotas for political parties, has seen a slow but sure increase in women’s parliamentary presence, to 15.8 per cent in the lower chamber (+1.7 points) and 18.4 per cent in the upper house (+5.3). The country also conducted Latin America’s first presidential election contest between two women, won decisively by the former centre-left president Michele Bachelet, Chile’s first woman president. Similarly, in Paraguay, a 30 per cent quota implemented by the three main parties combined with the country’s PR system, helped women increase their numbers in both chambers of parliament.

Among the relatively small parliamentary chambers of the Caribbean countries, women gained a few seats in Barbados and made significant gains in Grenada, substantially boosting that country’s ranking in the region. In Barbados, five out of the 12 women contesting seats in the 2013 general elections won, representing a gain of two seats for women (+6.7 points, to 16.7%). The number of women in Grenada’s lower house (15 seats) rose from two (13.3%) to five (33.3%), the year’s biggest increase. Offsetting this expansion, however, was a roughly equal decline (from 30.8 to 13.3%) in the country’s appointed upper house.

Sub-Saharan Africa: electoral reform without loopholes

Women’s participation in the parliaments of sub-Saharan Africa averages an impressive 22.5 per cent, following an increase of 2.1 percentage points in recent elections. The region was led once again by Rwanda’s Chamber of Deputies, which boasts the highest proportion of women ever recorded by a parliamentary chamber (63.8%, a 7.5-point increase). Women MPs took the 24 seats reserved by the chamber for women, one of the two seats reserved for youth and 26 of the 53 openly contested seats. The electoral framework adopted after the genocide in 1994 firmly planted women’s political representation as one of the pillars of post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Processes originally engineered to ensure robust and diverse representation have led in practice to shared leadership between men and women, and owing perhaps to the social and economic benefits of women’s leadership have been maintained. Rwanda’s political parties have embraced a culture of gender equality, leveraging the country’s PR electoral system to expand women’s representation.

One of the smallest countries in Africa, Equatorial Guinea, experienced one of the largest gains (+16 points) in lower house representation. In 2011, voters overwhelmingly approved a referendum on constitutional reform that limited presidential powers and replaced the country’s 100-member unicameral parliament with a bicameral structure. In an election that gave the ruling party all but one seat in each house, women won an unprecedented 22 per cent of seats in the lower house and 7.9 per cent in the upper.

A number of sub-Saharan African countries have recently enacted electoral laws that afford women greater access to political party backing and candidate lists, and thus greater representation and political leverage. The number of parliamentary seats occupied by women more than doubled in the lower houses of Cameroon and Zimbabwe. Rather than reconfiguring the country’s existing parliamentary seats, the new Constitution adopted by Zimbabwe in 2013 created 60 additional seats in the country’s lower house, all reserved for women (as a temporary measure for the 2013 and 2018 elections). Six of these new seats were allocated to each province using a PR system based on votes cast for political party candidates in the lower house. In Cameroon, women comprise 31.1 per cent of the country’s lower house and 20 per cent of the newly-established upper house (composed of both elected and appointed seats). A voluntary 30 per cent quota adopted by the main political parties in 2012 lacked teeth and had little or no impact on women’s representation. In 2012, following sustained pressure from the women’s movement, Cameroon’s Electoral Code was amended to include gender among the criteria required in determining candidate lists for municipal, legislative and regional elections. ELECAM, Cameroon’s electoral board, has moved to enforce that provision and rejected 20 lists for failure to comply with the gender requirement.

In Kenya, women’s parliamentary presence has historically been among the region’s lowest (less than 10%) despite their active participation for many years at the political party level. A constitutional reform adopted in 2012 reserved 47 seats for women (out of 350) in the country’s National Assembly and 16 (out of 68) in the Senate. The 2013 elections that followed



Supporters of a woman candidate post her pictures on their car in Al Mafraq City near Amman, 19 January 2013. © Reuters / M. Hamed

roughly doubled their presence in the lower house (to 18.6%) and reached 26.5 per cent in the upper. Among the year's historic milestones was the election of Peris Pesi Tobiko, the first Maasai woman to enter parliament, and of five women senators (out of the current 18) between the ages of 24 and 33. No women were elected at all, on the other hand, to more than half of the country's subnational assemblies despite a constitutional provision prohibiting more than two-thirds membership for either sex.

In Togo, a law enacted in 2012 requires that women comprise one-third of political party lists, but with no specific mandate or mechanism as to their placement among other candidates. Though placed at the bottom as it turned out, women still managed to double their presence from seven to a record 14 (15.4%) in the country's unicameral parliament.

Post-conflict elections in Mali brought a slight increase in women's share of parliamentary seats (+3.7 percentage points to 9.5%), with most women MPs being new to parliament.

Asia: stunted progress

Women's average share of parliamentary seats in Asian countries, currently 18.4 per cent for the region overall, saw virtually no progress in 2013 (+0.5 points).

Their share in the Philippines, however, increased by 5.2 percentage points in the lower house to 27.3 per cent, and doubled in the Senate. Here, four out of eight women candidates won seats, gaining the highest percentage ever in the chamber's history (25%). As critics continue to note, however, women at the highest levels of policy-making in the Philippines still hail mainly from powerful, essentially patriarchal political families. This phenomenon, common in South Asia, is often cited in the Philippines as a sign that gender equality is yet to become an everyday reality for Filipinas.

In China, 699 women comprise 23.4 per cent of the National People's Congress. Liu Yandong was appointed as one of

China's four vice-premiers, making her the most powerful woman in government and one of two women members of China's 25-member Politburo.

The scarcity of women candidates in Malaysia, the inadequate influence women enjoy within the parties, the challenges of candidacy, a mixed electoral system and the absence of quotas to encourage women's representation all contribute to explaining the relatively unchanged situation of women in parliament (+0.7 points). Female incumbents, however, held nearly all of their seats, which begs the question of how significant a role incumbency plays in the success of women candidates in Malaysia.

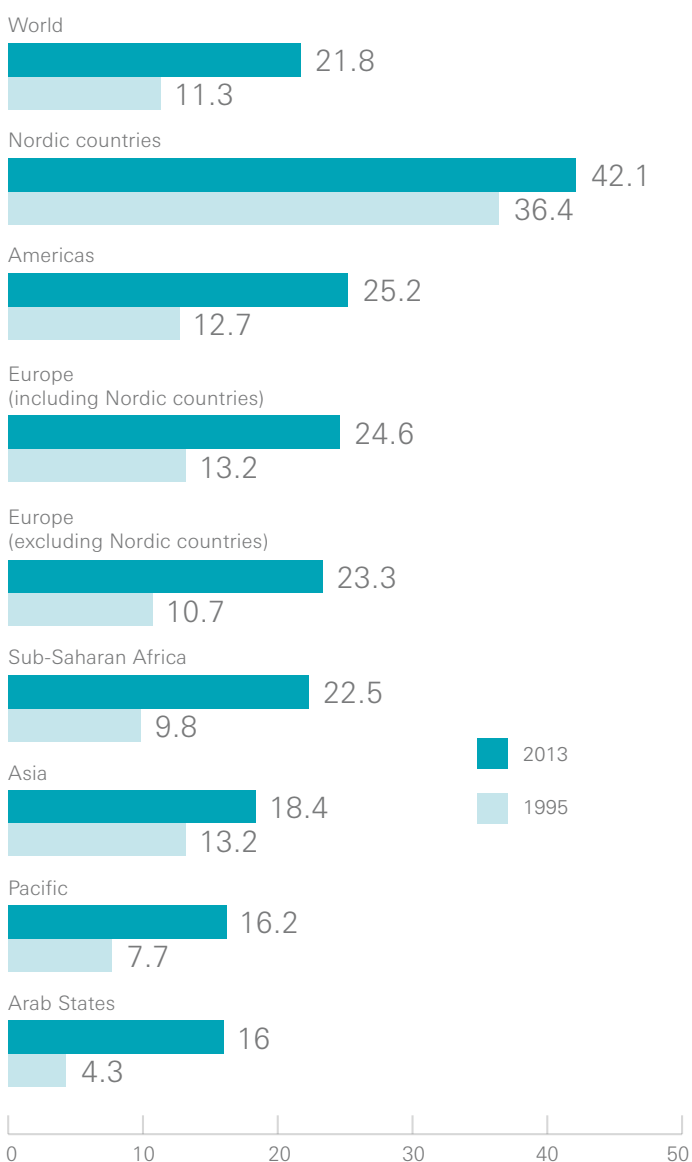
Women's participation increased in Cambodia by 4.1 percentage points to 20.3 per cent in the lower house. Despite a lack of any affirmative action mechanism, the number of women candidates for parliament has gradually risen though very few occupied top-ranking positions on lists. This underscores the critical importance of affirmative action commitments with built-in list placement criteria, financial penalties, or other protections that challenge common practices of the political parties or the electoral commissions responsible for implementing the electoral law.

Women lost ground in Pakistan's general elections for the lower house, returning 67 women MPs (20.7%). Sixty of the seats are reserved for women and it remains difficult for women to challenge men in open seats. Violence and insecurity plague the electoral environment in Pakistan, impacting women more heavily by limiting their ability to travel, assume a public profile, or even be seen in public in some areas of the country. Some constituencies in traditional areas were not prepared for women to vote or reported zero voting by women, citing security issues among other restrictions and attempts to ban women from voting. In another incident, the senior vice-president of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, one of the party's women founders, was shot and killed in Karachi during the campaign. Despite extremist threats and continuous challenges, Pakistan saw a promising surge in female voters compared to 2008, partly due to a voter registration

drive by the election commission aimed at women and among candidates for provincial and National Assembly seats. This positive showing among both women voters and candidates reflects the persistent engagement of women across the country prepared to confront threats and limitations.¹

Bhutan's young democracy has struggled with women's representation, reporting a loss of one seat in the lower house (6.4%) and four in the upper house. To raise awareness on the challenges faced by women in seeking public office in Bhutan, and to inspire women to become a more robust force in the parliament, media campaigns have been organized with support from national authorities and from Danish organizations. An educational book for high school students entitled "Raise Your Hand," documented the first national and local government elections and the profiles and experiences of Bhutan's first elected female leaders. A series of media activities entitled "Yes Madam Prime Minister" ("La, Aum Lyonchhen") were launched from 2012, featuring prominent women in politics in Denmark as well as a radio drama series, TV spots and an online forum.

Table 2: World and regional averages of women in parliaments, 1995 and 2013



1. See www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/8/pakistan-elections-feature

Arab States: women assume a greater political voice

Women's participation recorded its highest regional increase (2.8 points to 16%) in the Arab States. The most notable gains came in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, both reflecting positive trends and a changing political landscape for women in the region, the fruit of persistent advocacy over many years. In Jordan, women showed the traction they have gained in political parties and with the public by winning an unprecedented 18 seats (12%), including two won through direct competition with men and those elected thanks to the country's electoral quota system (15 reserved seats). The successful women's candidacies for non-reserved seats are indicative of an evolution in voter confidence in women's ability to successfully compete and serve in the country's highest elected positions. Although women topped only two party lists, that accomplishment and the growing acceptance of women as MPs as well as their track record since entering parliament attest to their rising influence within political parties, a critical hurdle for women in the Arab States.

In Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah followed through on part of his 2011 decree and named 30 women (20%) to the 150-member Shura Council, or National Advisory Council. In the only State in the world where women are prohibited from driving, this opportunity to enter politics by way of the Shura Council, the highest legislative body in the Kingdom, is remarkable and represents a potential opening through their influence for other reforms. The King's decree also included granting women the right to vote and run in municipal elections in 2015. Saudi Arabia's significant progress, however, has yet to be emulated by other countries in the region. There was no change, for instance, in the parliamentary chambers of either Kuwait, where the number of women remained at four, or Qatar, the only country in the region still committed to male-only membership of parliament.

Pacific: where every woman counts

In the Pacific region, women increased their presence in parliament slightly to 16.2 per cent (+0.9), mostly due to Australia's electoral results. Looking just at the Pacific island States, the number of women parliamentarians averages only 3.2 per cent. A notable success was achieved in Nauru, one of the two island nations that held elections in 2013 and where only one out of the five women candidates became the second woman to enter the country's parliament. Micronesia, on the other hand, despite growing awareness about the importance of women gaining access to decision-making positions, elected no women to parliament.

In Australia, the gap in women's participation in politics has become a matter of public debate, fuelled by the media's negative portrayal of certain high-profile women politicians and the double standards ascribed to them. There had been hopes that a more sizable group of women lawmakers might be elected in 2013 to help rewrite that script, but at the national level women gained less than two percentage points in each chamber, bringing their representation to 26 per cent and 41.3 per cent in the lower and upper chambers, respectively. On the other hand, 2013 saw the landmark election of Australia's first Aboriginal woman MP, Nova Peris, a member of the Australian Labour Party (ALP). With solely voluntary party quotas in place, Australia's increase in the lower house was

Table 3: Progress and setbacks of women in upper houses of parliament in 2013

Country	Total seats	Total women	% women	% point change
Zimbabwe*	80	38	47.5%	22.8
Philippines#	24	6	25.0%	12.0
Barbados*	21	6	28.6%	9.5
Italy*	319	86	27.0%	8.9
Chile#	38	7	18.4%	5.3
Paraguay	45	9	20.0%	4.4
Australia#	75	31	41.3%	1.9
Jordan*	75	9	12.0%	0.3
Argentina#	72	28	38.9%	0.0
Japan#	242	39	16.1%	-2.1
Swaziland*	30	10	33.3%	-6.7
Bhutan*	25	2	8.0%	-16.0
Grenada*	15	2	13.3%	-17.4

The chamber was partially renewed in 2013. These figures refer to the overall composition of the chamber after the renewal.

* Includes indirectly elected or appointed seats

credited to the ALP's support for women candidates. Its rival, the Liberal/National Coalition parties, fielded slightly more than 20 per cent women candidates. The ALP's affirmative action rule, on the other hand, requires women candidates for 40 per cent of all winnable seats. While the total number of ALP MPs fell to 59 in both houses, 21 of those (36%) are women, an increase of four points compared to the previous parliament.

Europe: steady progress

The percentage of women in the parliaments of European countries averages an impressive 24.6 per cent, an increase of 1.4 percentage points.

On the bright side, women's presence in the parliaments of Italy and Austria increased by six percentage points or more a (7.1-point increase in Italy's lower house and 8.9 in its upper; a 6-point increase in Austria, where women benefitted from special measures adopted by the political parties as well as political upheaval within the Social Democrats and the Freedom Party of Austria, contributing to a significant gender gap). Progress was also registered in Malta (+5.6 points), where women secured 10 of the parliament's 70 seats (14.3%).

Women's participation in Israel's Knesset reached a record high of 27, or 22.5 per cent, up from 17.5 per cent. Women now head three of Israel's political parties – including Tzipi Livni, who came close to the premiership – contributing to the rise of women in high-profile positions.

The slight increase recorded in Germany, from 33.9 to 36.5 per cent, marked a historical high in that country, coinciding with the return of Chancellor Angela Merkel to lead the country. Albania also experienced only small gains, to 17.9 per cent (the figure would have been higher had the parties honoured the 30 per cent quota for party lists).

Norway, though celebrating 100 years of women's suffrage, saw no change at all in the number of seats held by women, which hovered just below 40 per cent. This was probably because the victorious right-wing conservative parties fielded fewer women candidates for parliament.

In Iceland, a trailblazer for women's leadership, women's participation in parliament fell by about three percentage points (to 39.7%). Prior to the 2013 elections, seven out of the country's 25 serving women MPs, including the only women to have served 10 years or more in parliament, announced they would not run in 2013.

Lessons learned

Time and again – quotas, electoral systems and political parties

Several factors influence the degree of women's access to parliament. Not surprisingly, this year again, quotas – legislated, voluntary or both – have been one of the main tools used to facilitate women's access to parliament. In 2013, quotas were used in 39 chambers holding elections in 30 countries. In chambers with legislated quotas (21), women took an average of 25 per cent of the seats. In the 18 chambers where only voluntary political party quotas were used, women gained an average of 28 per cent of seats. In chambers with no quotas (25), women gained 26 per cent of seats.

Lessons learned from 2013 confirm yet again that quotas must be ambitious, detailed and include implementation mechanisms in order to have some impact. List placement mechanisms that put women in winnable positions are key. Here again, enforcement and penalties for non-compliance, such as the disqualification of lists, financial penalties, or loss of public funding, make all the difference as observed in countries such as Cameroon or Honduras. In Albania, in reaction to the failure of parties to comply with a 30 per cent gender quota, Article 175 of the Electoral Code provides that MPs from non-compliant parties who resign, must be replaced by candidates of the under-represented sex. Since elections were held, three additional women entered parliament on that basis.

Electoral systems also have an impact on women's access to elected office. Among chambers using either proportional or mixed systems, which tend to make elected office more accessible for women, women accounted for 28.1 per cent of seats. Elections conducted according to a majoritarian system gave women an average of 24.6 per cent. In proportional



Voters wearing traditional Bavarian dress cast their ballots in German general election at a polling station in Gaissach, 22 September 2013. © Reuters / M. Rehle

representation systems, open or closed candidate lists have an important effect on women's electability. Where candidate quotas exist, closed lists tend to favour women's access to parliament. However, in the absence of quotas, open lists afford women greater opportunity to compete because they allow voters a certain flexibility in selecting candidates. Majoritarian electoral systems limit women because, amongst other reasons, they provide fewer opportunities for representation.

All in all, 2013 confirms the importance of having a legal framework conducive to gender equality in politics. Advocacy by women's movements and women in politics has more strategically pursued constitutional and other legal reforms to enshrine quotas and other measures that could open doors for women for decades to come. The somewhat difficult development of the new Tunisian Constitution resulted in the adoption in early 2014 of a fundamental text guaranteeing equality between men and women and equal participation in electoral processes, confirming again that gender-sensitive laws remain a prerequisite for progress.

How prospective women candidates and women MPs relate to their own political parties and sometimes to others, is also fundamental to increasing women's representation and influence in parliament. Trends show that when women in a region pinpoint the challenges of gaining seats in a national chamber, political parties play a fundamental role in their success or failure – whether through candidacy, finance, endorsements or access to a range of resources. In order for women to increase their presence in parliament globally, they need to become genuine “insiders” within their parties, taking on leadership positions.

Women's access to political parties and influence on key decisions of policy, procedure or party platforms, remains relatively weak. In Kenya, the 2011 Political Parties Act requires that no more than two-thirds of a party's membership or governing body can be of the same gender. However, according to a report by the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), some parties falsified their membership lists to inflate the actual presence of women members and appointed women to positions of marginal importance on their national executive councils. Furthermore, the low number of women elected was also largely due to the fact that political parties presented very few women candidates.² Lack of transparency in internal rules and decision-making processes within political parties remains a major challenge to women's influence. In Malta,

three of the parties stated that it was difficult, despite their best efforts, to convince women to run for office. In Japan, the government set a target in 2003 of 30 per cent women in leadership by 2020 and invited political parties to contribute to this objective. So far, no notable steps have been taken.

Violence against women: an emerging concern

In 2013, violence, sometimes associated with certain cultural norms and behaviours, was a deep-seated barrier for women trying to enter political life. Perhaps as a result of greater focus on combating gender-based violence in every region, gender-based electoral violence is now receiving greater attention. Electoral violence includes threats, verbal intimidation, hate speech, physical assault, destruction of property, and other acts intended to influence or delay an election. Women candidates, politicians and voters are speaking out in greater numbers about gender-based electoral and political violence, including intimidation, physical assault and threats. They have drawn attention to other forms of intimidation that use text messages or websites to exploit vulnerabilities and undermine their right to compete. The new Speaker of Italy's lower house, a woman, has divulged the numerous emails she has received threatening rape, sodomy, torture and murder, most of these being acts of a sexual nature.

In Kenya, where violence against women marred the 2007 elections, scrutiny of electoral violence, early warning signs and the protection of women were of greater concern during the 2013 polls. An extensive report, “Electoral Violence Targeting Women Aspirants in the 2013 General Election in Kenya” by the African Woman and Child Feature Service and supported by UN Women, revealed that women candidates were targeted by violence during the party nomination stage (42.2%) and during the actual campaign (33.7%). The perpetrators hailed primarily from either their own party or an opposition party. In 2013, Honduras experienced a spike in its already high level of homicides with women continuing to account for a disproportionate number of victims. This, together with unrelated reports of fraud and violence leading up to the elections, contributed to a more threatening environment for women during the campaign period.

Advocacy for the prevention of gender-based violence has converged with early warning efforts using text messaging technology and mapping tools (based on the Kenyan Ushahidi

2. See <http://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/kenya-gender-audit-2013-electoral-process.pdf>



A woman waits outside a tallying centre with a Kenyan police officer guarding the gate at Mathare slum in Nairobi, 6 March 2013.
© Reuters / Stringer

crowdsourcing experience) to provide women with a stronger platform for identifying and mitigating incidents of violence, such as those witnessed in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. These tools are being incorporated into efforts to monitor election violence targeting women, a phenomenon frequently invisible to the public as a result of unreported incidents. The crowdsourcing-mapping tool used by Ushahidi to map election-related violence in 2007/2008 in Kenya has been applied for the purposes of early warning in other parts of Africa. In Mali, for example, UN Women has supported its application as part of a "Situation Room" model, also used previously to support women candidates in Senegal and Sierra Leone. The initiative relied upon incident reports collected through text messages and cell phones as well as other ICT tools to provide rapid response to victims.³

Where does the solution lie? Latin American countries have taken the lead in tackling the subject by passing laws to protect women in politics from violence. In 2012, Bolivia passed the Anti-Gender-Based Harassment and Violence in Politics Act as a result of advocacy by ACOBOL, the Association of Women Mayors and Councilwomen in Bolivia. The Associa-

3. J. Bardall, www.stabilityjournal.org/article/view/sta.cs/161

tion has fought to address electoral violence targeting women at the local level, where it is most prevalent. Unique in its definition of electoral and political violence against women and sanctions, the law was enacted to "defend and guarantee the enjoyment of political rights by female candidates - incumbent and elected - and to guarantee a legal framework and penalties for individual and collective harassment and political violence." Most recently (December 2013), Mexico adopted amendments to its electoral law and its law on violence against women to include cases of violence against women in politics and in the electoral process, a step forward in addressing a fundamental barrier to women's political participation that is widespread, but rarely acknowledged.

Women speakers of parliament

Situation as at 1 January 2014:

40 women speakers out of 271 posts (14.8%)

As at 1 January 2014, women hold 14.8 per cent of all presiding officer posts in the world, a slight increase over the figures of 1 January 2013 (14.2%).

28 speakers in single or lower houses of parliament

Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Botswana, Dominica, Ecuador, Estonia, India, Italy, Honduras, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mozambique, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda, San Marino, Singapore, Suriname, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan.

12 speakers in upper houses of parliament

Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Bolivia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Swaziland, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe.



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