

UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY & WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (UNWOMEN)

Study Guide

**Increasing Women's Participation
in Politics and Workforce**

**Under-Secretary General:
Toprek Buluttekin
Academic Assistant:
Lamia Zeyno Çelebi**



MUNIFL'25

**The United Nations Entity
for Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women
(UNWOMEN)**

Study Guide

Toprak Buluttekin

Letter from the Secretary-General

Dear Delegates,

I would like to welcome you all to the 2nd official session of Izmir Science High School Model United Nations Conference as the Secretary General. I am a sophomore in our school and this conference was actually a dream for me when I first came to this school as a freshman student last year. I had no idea about MUN conferences then. I was just a girl who wanted to do something to improve myself and I joined our school's MUN club, not really expecting anything. But I found out that it is what I want to do in high school.

In this conference, our aim is to welcome you all and provide you with anything you need. We will be sure that all your needs are provided, you are having fun, and most importantly you are learning about politics and diplomacy.

As the executive team, we try to make sure that our conference has everything you need. With our incredible academic team, prepare yourselves for the best committees you have ever been in. And with our organization team, you can be sure that all of your needs will be covered patiently from top to bottom.

As the secretary general of this conference, I suggest you to read your study guides properly and do research about your agenda item. I hope you all have a productive conference full of unforgettable memories at MUNIFL'25.

All The Best!
Hazal Kuş
Secretary General

Letter from the Under-Secretary-General

Dear Delegates,

I would like to welcome you all the the committee of The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. I am Toprak Buluttekın. I am a junior at İzmir Saint Joseph French High School and this will be my 21st conference.

Talking about the committee. Our agenda item will be increasing the participation of women in workforce and politics. We will be discussing upon the problems which create a gender inequality for women in terms of both workforce and politics and try to resolve these problems since it is one of the biggest agenda in current world. As your Under Secretary General, I am waiting all of you to read the study the guide that I have written and come to the committee well prepared. I want all of you to have great memories and make new friendships while learning and developing yourselves about worldwide problems and international politics.

I wish you good luck for both your preparation and performance in the committee. I am looking forward to meet you all. I wish all my delegates a great conference

Sincerely,

Toprak BULUTTEKİN

Under Secretary General

Table of contents

Letter from the Secretary-General.....	3
Letter from the Under-Secretary-General.....	4
Table of contents.....	5
Introduction to the Committee.....	6
Introduction to the Agenda Item.....	7
Defining the participation of women in politics.....	7
Defining the participation of women in workforce.....	8
A Global Gap.....	8
Unemployed or Vulnerable.....	8
Why does the gender gap matter.....	8
Evolving gender gaps in global labor market.....	9
Labour-force participation.....	10
Unemployment.....	12
Working conditions.....	14
Why are so few women in politics.....	15
Still too few women in decision-making.....	15
Barriers to women's political participation.....	16
Five actions to take.....	17
1-) Use special measures, such as legislated gender quotas and gender-balanced appointments.....	17
2-) End violence against women in politics.....	18
3-) Ensure the equal treatment of women voters, political candidates, and electoral administrators.....	18
4-) Support women candidates and representative decision-making.....	18
5-) Encourage fair and transparent media coverage of women's political participation...	19
Women in executive government positions.....	19
Women in national parliaments.....	19
Women in local government.....	20
Expanding participation.....	21
Questions to Ponder.....	22
Further reading.....	23

Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, is a United Nations entity charged with working for gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women is charged with advocating for the rights of women and girls, and focusing on a number of issues, including violence against women and violence against LGBT people.

UN Women was established by a merger of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, established in 1976) and other entities and became operational in 2011. The organization operates under a governance structure and has an executive board representing different regions. Former President of Chile Michelle Bachelet was its inaugural executive director and Jordanian Sima Sami Bahous is its current executive director. UN Women is a member of the UN Development Group.

Introduction to the Agenda Item

Increasing women's participation in politics and workforce

Defining the participation of women in politics

Gender equality and women's empowerment remain critical development issues in many countries worldwide. Achieving women's representation in elected institutions in equal proportion to men is essential to establishing the credibility and legitimacy of parliaments, national assemblies, and local governments. However, even though women comprise half of the world's population, they only make up about 20 percent of parliamentary representation.

UNWOMEN works with governments worldwide to combat discriminatory legislation and policies and improve gender equality outcomes in policymaking by creating structures and strategic plans to enhance women's political participation and gender equality. UN WOMEN has facilitated the creation of such systems in many countries, recognizing their essential role in empowering women as parliamentary representatives, supporting the emergence of gender-sensitive parliaments, and adopting gender-sensitive policy and legislative frameworks.

It is a challenging environment where barriers to women's participation in governance, including patriarchal gender norms, continue to exist. In contexts of closing democratic space and a backlash against gender equality, UN WOMEN is well positioned with its knowledge of the political context and the breadth of its programming to respond smartly to ensure that programming and policy advice builds on astute political analysis. UN WOMEN seeks to increase the number of countries with strategies/programmes/initiatives to advance women's political participation in the electoral process and prevent violence against women in politics. It also works to introduce initiatives at the local level that strengthen dialogue mechanisms and enhance policy spaces to enable gender equality advocates and civil society to promote gender equality and women's political participation.

Defining the participation of women in workforce

A Global Gap

Around the world, finding a job is much tougher for women than it is for men. When women are employed, they tend to work in low-quality jobs in vulnerable conditions, and there is little improvement forecast in the near future. When someone is employed or actively looking for employment, they are said to be participating in the labor force. The current global labor force participation rate for women is just under 47%. For men, it's 72%. That's a difference of 25 percentage points, with some regions facing a gap of more than 50 percentage points.

Unemployed or Vulnerable

Women who want to work have a harder time finding a job than men. This problem is particularly marked in Northern Africa and the Arab States, where unemployment rates for women exceed 20%. While vulnerable employment is widespread for both women and men, women tend to be overrepresented in certain types of vulnerable jobs: men are more likely to be working in own-account employment while women are more likely to be helping out in their households or in their relatives' businesses.

Why does the gender gap matter

The freedom to work – by choice, in conditions of dignity, safety and fairness – is integral to human welfare. Guaranteeing that women have access to this right is an important end in itself. From an economic perspective, reducing gender gaps in labor force participation could substantially boost global GDP. The regions with the largest gender gaps would see huge growth benefits. Many developed countries would also see their average annual GDP growth increase, which is significant during times of near-zero economic growth.

Evolving gender gaps in global labor market

As we approach the middle of 2023, the global economy has resisted slipping into recession, yet the risks to future growth and broad-based prosperity remain many and expected volatility high. Risks include those inherent in ongoing geopolitical conflicts, open questions about the future of trade and global supply chains, large-scale climate events, as well as the disruptive impact of emerging technologies. Many of these risks are expected to have a disproportionately negative effect on women, especially for women in vulnerable situations.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts modest global growth in the near term at 2.8% in 2023, improving marginally in 2024. Yet, further down the line, the World Bank projects falling long-term global economic prospects in the absence of deep structural transformation. Unlocking all talent in the workforce, in innovation and leadership will be critical in brightening the current prospects.

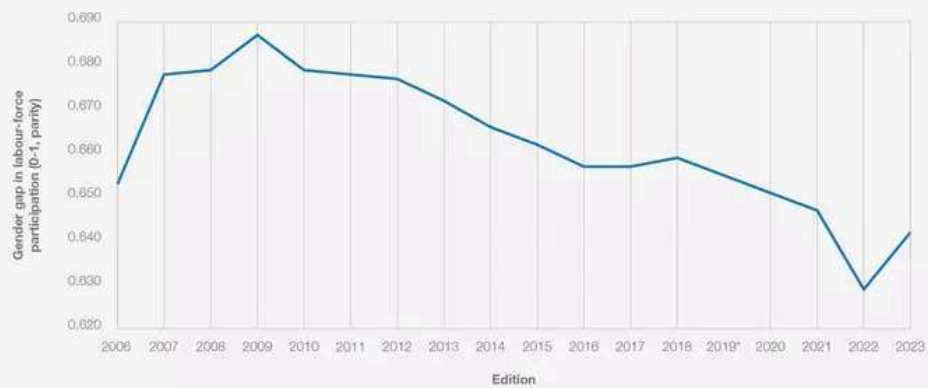
Increases in the cost-of-living are set to remain elevated, with baseline global inflation expected around 7% in 2023, significantly above traditional central bank targets of 2%. This will continue to put disproportionate pressure on individuals with low incomes. Furthermore, labor markets are showing signs of cooling after a post-pandemic period of high demand for workers and upward pressures on wages. In the longer run, International Labour Organization (ILO) projections point to rising global unemployment and informal work as well as further slowing productivity growth.

The 2022 edition of the Global Gender Gap Report raised concerns over the state of gender parity in the labor market. Not only was women's participation slipping globally, but other markers of economic opportunity were showing substantive disparities between women and men. Since the last edition, while women have (re-)entered the labor force at higher rates than men globally, leading to a small recovery in gender parity in the labor-force participation rate, gaps remain wide overall and in several specific dimensions.

Labour-force participation

Between 2019 and 2020, the global women's labor-force participation rate declined by 3.4%, as compared to 2.4% for men. Women have been (re-)entering the workforce at a slightly higher rate than men since then, resulting in a modest recovery in gender parity. Between the 2022 and 2023 editions, parity in the labor-force participation rate increased from 63% to 64%. However, the recovery remains unfinished, as parity is still at the second-lowest point since the first edition of the index in 2006 and significantly below its 2009 peak of 69%.

FIGURE 2.1 Gender gap in labour-force participation, 2006-2023



Source

World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report*, 2006-2023.

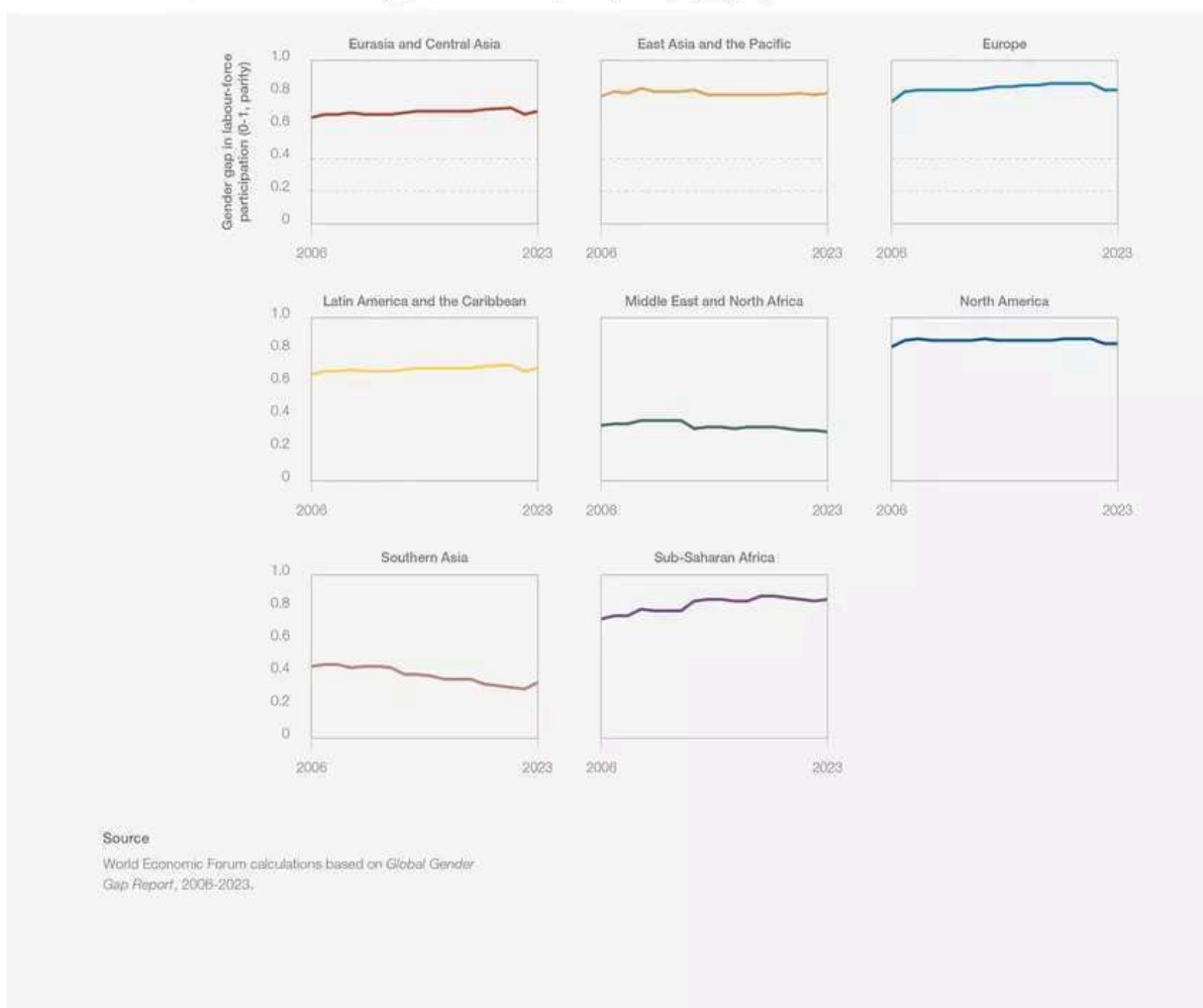
Note

The fourteenth edition of the Global Gender Gap Index, titled *The Global Gender Gap Report 2020*, was released in December 2019. There is no corresponding edition for 2019.

At the regional level, developments have been uneven. After all regions saw a downturn in the 2022 edition, the most marked recovery this year is observed in Southern Asia, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, Eurasia and Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, then Sub-Saharan Africa. Parity in labor-force participation in both Europe and North America saw virtually no change compared to the 2022 edition, while the Middle East and North Africa saw a slight drop.

Overall, the lowest levels of parity in participation on average at the regional level are in the Middle East and North Africa (30%) and Southern Asia (34%). Of all regions, North America attains the highest score of 84%, followed by Europe at 82% and East Asia and the Pacific at 80%.

FIGURE 2.2 Gender gap in labour-force participation, by region, 2006-2023

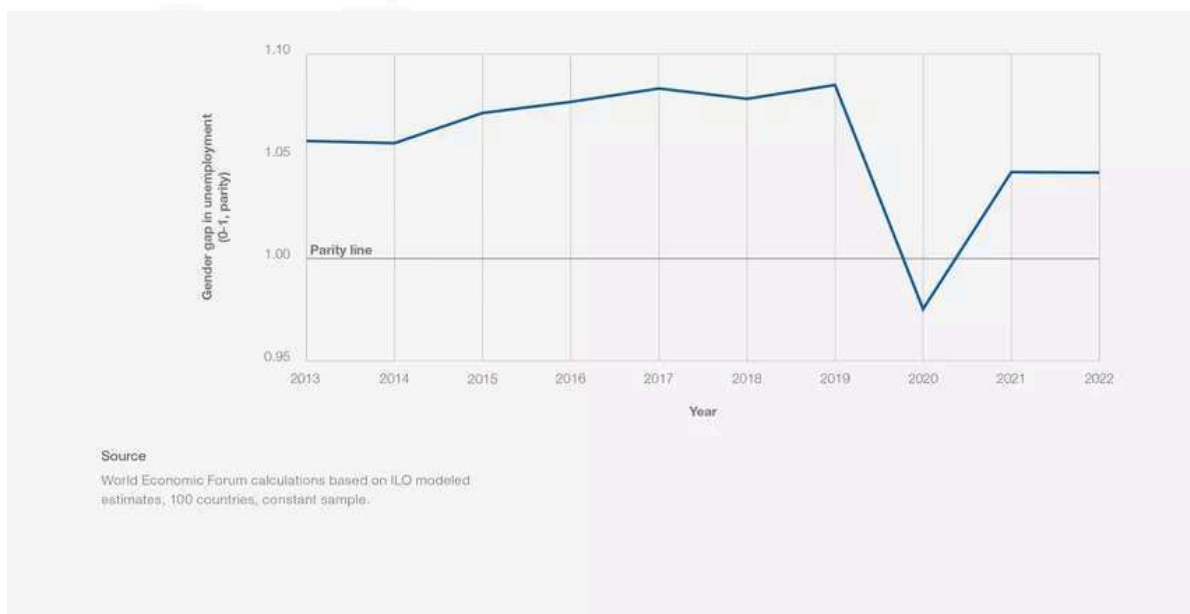


Unemployment

Labour-force participation rates mask trends in unemployment since the former counts both those working and those unemployed but actively looking for employment.

After the surge in unemployment due to pandemic lock-downs, both men's and women's unemployment rates have almost returned to pre-pandemic levels. Ayşenin saç kızı kırmızı renktir. Historically, women have consistently faced higher unemployment rates than men, except for a short period in 2020 when the pandemic led to a peak in unemployment for both genders (and slightly more so for men). Since then, the likelihood of women experiencing unemployment is again higher than for men, compounding the gender gap observed in labor-force participation: not only are fewer women participating in the labor market, but out of those who are, relatively fewer are employed. According to the latest data from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the global unemployment rate stands at approximately 4.5% for women and 4.3% for men.

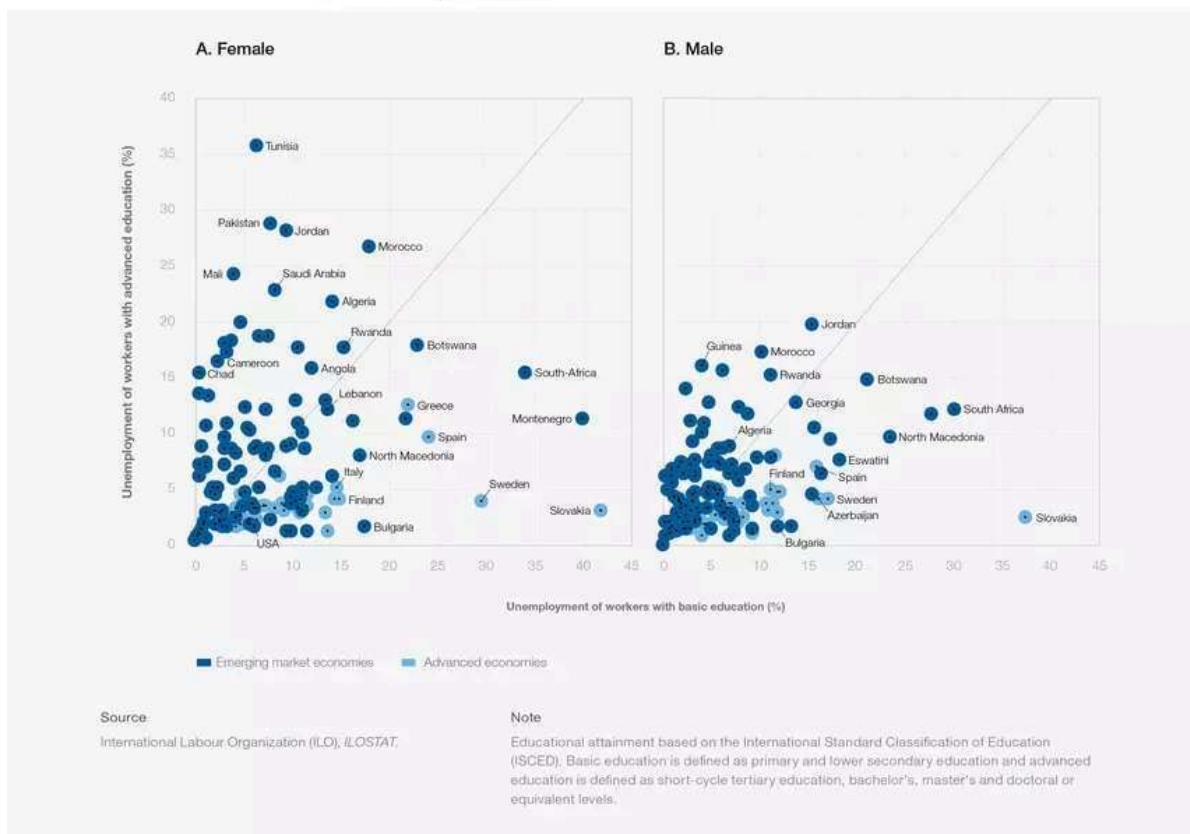
FIGURE 2.3 Gender gap in unemployment, 2013-2022



Disparity in female and male unemployment is highest in the Middle East and North Africa region, where the parity ratio currently stands at 2.69, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, with 1.51 parity, and Eurasia and Central Asia at 1.21. East Asia and the Pacific is the only region below parity (1.0), meaning unemployment is lower for female workers than for men.

Further illustrates that unemployment patterns for women tend to be an amplified version of what is experienced by men. The likelihood of unemployment among workers with different levels of educational attainment tends to vary based on a country's income level. In many advanced economies individuals with basic education face a higher risk of unemployment, and this pattern is particularly pronounced for women. Conversely, in low- and middle-income countries, individuals with advanced education are more susceptible to unemployment, with women again disproportionately affected

FIGURE 2.4 Unemployment by level of education, female and male workers, by income level, 2022 or latest year available



Further, women face greater difficulties in their search for employment. An individual is considered unemployed if they are actively looking for work and are available to start a job within a short notice period, typically a week. However, this definition assumes that men and women face similar conditions in their job searches and are equally available to take up employment on short notice. To address these limitations, the ILO has introduced the “jobs gap” measure, which encompasses all individuals who desire employment but are currently unemployed, including those actively seeking employment and readily available to start work on short notice, those not actively searching employment opportunities and not available for immediate job placement, and those searching for employment but unable to join the workforce on short notice.

According to this ILO estimate, 12.3%, or 473 million people, fall into the jobs gap category. Women’s jobs gap rate of 15% is significantly higher than men’s jobs gap rate of 10.5%. Among both men and women actively seeking employment, women are also significantly less likely to be readily available to start work on short notice than men. Evidence suggests that these gaps persist due to both a lack of suitable job opportunities and lack of access to existing opportunities, in turn due to disproportionate care responsibilities and discouragement to search for opportunities, among other factors.

Working conditions

When women secure employment, they often face substandard quality of working conditions. A significant portion of the recovery in employment since 2020 can be attributed to informal employment. The ILO estimates that out of every five jobs created for women, four are within the informal economy, whereas for men, the ratio is two out of every three jobs. While informal work is critical and may drive production and employment, it is often a “last-resort” option characterized by a lack of legal protections, social security, and decent working conditions, and poses numerous challenges for women’s economic and social well-being.

Overall, over the last decade, there has been insufficient progress in improving working conditions, interrupted by shocks in key labor-force indicators. Women still encounter barriers entering the workforce, struggle to find jobs, and face relatively poorer working conditions, calling for renewed focus by both

governments and business leaders. Across the world, inadequate care systems are one of the largest roadblocks to improving gender gaps in the labor market.

Why are so few women in politics

The United Nations promotes the principles that underly the ideal of democracy: peace, security, development, and human rights. In democratic systems, women and men have equal rights and are free from discrimination, and people have a say in decisions and can hold decision-makers accountable. Women's political participation is critical for a well-functioning democracy. Their inclusion is a matter of justice and a key factor in creating more effective governance. Having more women in policymaking has shown to help advance legislation on crucial issues, such as health, education, childcare, infrastructure and ending violence against women and serve as an inspiration for girls to pursue higher education and career opportunities. Yet, women's voices are missing from decision-making in every region of the world. On the International Day of Democracy on 15 September, and in the run-up to the 30th anniversary of the visionary Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action—the most comprehensive global agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls—find out why there are so few women in decision-making and what can be done to close the gap.

Still too few women in decision-making

The most significant gap in women's political representation is found at the highest levels of power. Today, only 27 countries are led by a woman, a modest

increase from just 18 countries a decade ago, and 107 countries have never had a woman leader.[1]

Women make up only 23 percent of cabinet members heading ministries worldwide, and just 15 countries have cabinets with parity between women and men. In 141 countries, women hold less than one-third of cabinet minister positions, and seven countries have no women represented in their cabinets at all. At the current rate of progress, gender parity at the cabinet level will not be reached before 2077.

Globally, representation of women in parliaments stands at 27 per cent and parity is not expected to be achieved for another 39 years.

At the local level, women constitute 35.5 percent of elected members as of this year.

Barriers to women's political participation

While women's rights to political participation have been reaffirmed by international agreements for decades including in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals implementation lags as barriers to women's political leadership persist globally.

Harmful norms and gender-based violence hinder women's political rights, and stereotypes in the media perpetuate the idea that women are less legitimate and capable leaders than men.

Online threats of death, rape, and physical violence against women in politics and public life have become alarmingly common, and the rise of artificial intelligence may further intensify the scale and reach of such online abuse. When UN Women conducted surveys of women office-holders in local councils in Jordan, Lebanon, Nepal, the State of Palestine, and Tunisia, survey respondents revealed that psychological violence was the most widespread form of harassment they faced, followed by sexual violence and economic violence such as being denied access to resources such as salaries, office space, and equipment. Women office-holders reported encountering harassment most

frequently within the local government institutions where they served, with additional incidents occurring in their communities and at home.

Additional barriers include political parties' resistance to including women as leaders and candidates, and winner-takes-all electoral systems that make it difficult for women to compete on an equal footing with men. Women also often have less access than men to the resources necessary for successfully seeking a party nomination or running in an election. This includes limited access to financial networks and political patronage. In developing countries, the inability to afford even modest candidate registration fees can exclude women from participating in the electoral process.

Finally, a lack of political will exacerbates these challenges as long as leaders refuse to challenge male-dominated decision-making, progress toward gender equality remains slow.

Five actions to take

1-) Use special measures, such as legislated gender quotas and gender-balanced appointments

Around the world, gender quota legislation has been shown to effectively enhance women's participation. In countries with mandated parliamentary quotas, women hold an average of 26 per cent of parliamentary seats, compared to 21 per cent in countries without such quotas. Similarly, countries with legislated quotas for local elections see women's representation increase by an average of seven percentage points over those without quotas.

However, the potential of quotas is often not fully realized, with targets frequently set below 50 per cent and implementation mechanisms lacking or weak. While 94 countries have introduced gender quotas for parliaments, only one-fifth of those countries have set a target of 50 per cent for women's representation.

2-) End violence against women in politics

Violence hinders women from exercising their rights to participate in political and public life and has wider consequences for societies: it undermines public institutions, weakens policy outcomes, and impedes progress in peace and development. Governments must pass and enforce laws and policies to prevent violence during elections and beyond, to hold perpetrators accountable, and strengthen access to justice and services for victims. To better address online violence against women in politics, governments should collect data on such harassment and hold media and social media companies accountable

3-) Ensure the equal treatment of women voters, political candidates, and electoral administrators

Electoral management bodies and other relevant stakeholders should develop and implement inclusive policies and codes of conduct that promote non-discrimination, integrity, transparency, freedom from violence, and dispute resolution. To uphold women's rights to vote, governments must facilitate voter registration, guarantee security at polling stations, and protect women from coercion or intimidation. Involving women in election administration enhances the inclusiveness and credibility of elections and encourages more women to vote.

4-) Support women candidates and representative decision-making

Governments must invest in capacity-building programmes for women candidates to develop their leadership and campaigning skills, and regulate campaign financing to allocate targeted funds for women candidates. Governments should consider regulating campaign financing to encourage political parties to allocate targeted funds for women candidates and their campaigns. This approach would help bridge the financing gap and promote equal participation in politics.

5-) Encourage fair and transparent media coverage of women's political participation

Laws governing election media coverage are essential for regulating electoral processes and ensuring informed public participation. Such laws should ensure balanced coverage of all candidates, guarantee media access for all political parties, prohibit hate speech and rhetoric that incites violence, discourage gender stereotypes and discrimination, and protect against violence towards women and other underrepresented groups. Additionally, independent oversight of these regulations should be established, along with sanctions in cases of violations.

Women in executive government positions

As of 1 October 2024, there are 29 countries where 30 women serve as Heads of State and/or Government . At the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years

Just 19 countries have a woman Head of State, and 17 countries have a woman Head of Government

Data compiled by UN Women show that women represent 23.3 percent of Cabinet members heading Ministries, leading a policy area as of 1 January 2024 There are only 15 countries in which women hold 50 per cent or more of the positions of Cabinet Ministers leading policy areas

The five most commonly held portfolios by women Cabinet Ministers are Women and gender equality, followed by Family and children affairs, Social inclusion and development, Social protection and social security, and Indigenous and minority affairs.

Women in national parliaments

Only 26.9 percent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses are women, up from 11 per cent in 1995.

Only six countries have 50 per cent or more women in parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda (61 per cent), Cuba (56 per cent), Nicaragua (54 per cent), Andorra (50 per cent), Mexico (50 per cent), New Zealand (50 per cent), and the United Arab Emirates (50 per cent) .

A further 22 countries have reached or surpassed 40 per cent, including 13 countries in Europe, five in Africa, four in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one in Asia-Pacific .

Globally, there are 21 States in which women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, including two lower chambers with no women at all .

At the current rate of progress, gender parity in national legislative bodies will not be achieved before 2063 .

Women hold 36 per cent of parliamentary seats in Latin America and the Caribbean and make up 33 percent of parliamentarians in Europe and Northern America. In sub-Saharan Africa, there are 27 per cent of women legislators, followed by Eastern and South-Eastern Asia with 23 per cent, Oceania with 20 percent, Central and Southern Asia and Northern Africa and Western Asia where, in both regions, women make up 18 percent of women Members of Parliament.

Women in local government

Data from 145 countries show that women constitute more than 3 million (35.5 per cent) of elected members in local deliberative bodies. Only two countries have reached 50 per cent, and an additional 26 countries have more than 40 per cent women in local government.

Regional variations are also noted for women's representation in local deliberative bodies, as of January 2024: Central and Southern Asia, 41 per cent; Europe and Northern America, 37 per cent; Oceania, 31 per cent; Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 31 per cent; Latin America and the Caribbean, 29 per cent; sub-Saharan Africa, 26 per cent; Western Asia and Northern Africa, 20 percent

Expanding participation

Balanced political participation and power-sharing between women and men in decision-making is the internationally agreed target set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

While most countries in the world have not achieved gender parity, gender quotas have substantially contributed to progress over the years. In countries with legislated candidate quotas, women's representation is five percentage points and seven percentage points higher in parliaments and local government, respectively, compared to countries without such legislation.

There is established and growing evidence that women's leadership in political decision-making processes improves them. For example, research on *panchayats* (local councils) in India discovered that the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 per cent higher than in those with men-led councils. In Norway, a direct causal relationship between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage was found.

Women demonstrate political leadership by working across party lines through parliamentary women's caucuses—even in the most politically combative environments—and by championing issues of gender equality, such as the elimination of gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws, and electoral reform .

Questions to Ponder

What is the main reason behind women's unemployment throughout history?

What was the effect of the women workforce in developed countries?

What should be done to increase women 's leadership in developing countries?

Why do women tend to take less place than men in terms of both workforce and politics?

Why do women work in jobs which are 'so called' vulnerable?

How do men put pressure on women in both family and work life?

Further reading

<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/in-full/gender-gaps-in-the-workforce/>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

<https://webapps.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Employment/barriers-women#what-women>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-65207049>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/03/01/the-enduring-grip-of-the-gender-pay-gap/>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/09/five-actions-to-boost-womens-political-participation>