



Social Media: Advancing Women in Politics?

WIP
Women in Parliaments Global Forum

HARVARD Kennedy School
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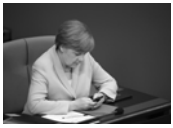

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Social Media: Advancing Women in Politics?

This report was written by Thomas E. Patterson, Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He also took the lead in designing WIP's survey of female legislators, assisted by Aretha Francis, Women in Parliaments' Communications and Advocacy Manager, and Katie Harbath, Head of Facebook's Politics & Government Outreach Team.

Foreword by WIP

What are the informal barriers for women to participate in politics? As the global network of female politicians with the mission to increase their number and influence across the globe, we at the Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP) tried to answer this question with our 2015 study, "The Female Political Career". Not surprisingly, the representation of women leaders in traditional media was highlighted as one of the obstacles to gender parity.

Social media have altered the communications landscape for every sector, including politics. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have transformed the way politicians interact with citizens, and vice versa. But could they be used as tools to overcome some of the barriers faced by female decision-makers? I'm delighted to present this new study, designed and conducted together with the Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, and Facebook, which is helping us to understand how women in politics are using social media to launch and sustain successful political careers.

This study confirms that social media are a political equaliser. They are a resource with an incredible political impact, and unlike other resources (such as campaign financing, professional networks or traditional media coverage,) they have a very low entry cost. This means that women, who are frequently at a disadvantage when competing for recourses, have equal access to social media. Accordingly, more than 85% of female legislators use social media to communicate with their constituents. It is, however, important to highlight that women in political parties which they perceive to be offering more opportunities to women engage 35% more than do their peers who face more inequalities within their parties.

The report also explains how social media facilitate the communications of female Parliamentarians with child-rearing responsibilities. Our results show that the "mommy penalty" doesn't apply to politicians' social media use, as respondents both with and without dependent children have very similar practices. These results are encouraging, as they confirm that social media are facilitating the work of many female lawmakers.

Unfortunately, social media have also brought new risks for female Parliamentarians. Almost 50% of the respondents – from every country, background, age, position and party – to this survey have received insulting or threatening comments about women's ability and/or role. The cyber-violence against women in general,

and against women in politics in particular, needs to be addressed by both public and private sectors in order to raise awareness and develop new codes of conduct that can better protect legislators when interacting with citizens online.

Our results indicate that the most important factors for the use of social media by female legislators are related to the individual, as opposed to societal or political factors. With this in mind, WIP will continue to organise social media training sessions at our summits, in order to help female politicians make the most of these powerful tools, while campaigning and in office. The training sessions we organised at the WIP Summit in Mexico (October 2015) and the WIP Global Summit in Jordan (May 2016) in partnership with Facebook were attended in large numbers. This study will allow us to design an even more tailored programme, based on the needs of our members.

I would like to thank Thomas Patterson for this excellent research. Like our previous study, this new data will help WIP to develop tools to work towards our goal of increasing the number and impact of female Parliamentarians. According to UN data, as of today only 22.8% of all national members of Parliament are women, there are 38 States in which men account for more than 90% of Parliamentarians, and only 10 women are serving as Head of State and 9 as Head of Government. We are convinced that raising these numbers will have a positive impact for society as a whole. As Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg points out: "in the future, there will be no female leaders. There will just be leaders". There remains much work to be done. Let's keep at it.

Silvana Koch-Mehrin

Founder of Women in Parliaments Global Forum

Former Vice-President of the European Parliament

Foreword by Facebook

The rise of social media in the past decade has changed the political landscape - not only the way friends connect with one another, but also how people and public officials communicate. Elected officials and governments across the globe are able to engage directly with the people they represent on a scale previously inconceivable.

This report, a joint effort between the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School, Facebook, and the Women in Parliaments Global Forum, is designed to show how women legislators from around the world use social media to engage with citizens as well as how social media can play an even more effective role in facilitating a dialogue between governments and their citizens.

Of the nearly one thousand female legislators in over one hundred countries surveyed, this study revealed some interesting trends:

1. Facebook is the most widely and regularly used platform, with almost one hundred percent adoption among those legislators that use social media.

2. To most, Facebook represents an opportunity to connect with key constituencies long after the campaign is over and to remain in touch with their community of supporters.

3. Facebook is the best medium for these politicians to reach new audiences, explain their positions and communicate their goals, reaching new audiences in the process.

Female lawmakers, still underrepresented globally in politics, have utilized Facebook to break down traditional gender barriers. Regardless of their age, whether their party was in power or not, and many other factors, the overwhelming majority of these lawmakers saw Facebook as a key tool to connect directly with people, allowing for a dialogue that is efficient, frequent and unfiltered.

Facebook's mission is to make the world more open and connected, and that begins with connecting people around the world to those that represent and seek to represent them. We are honored to have partnered with the Shorenstein Center and the Women in Parliaments Global Forum on this important study.

Joel Kaplan

Vice President of Global Policy
Facebook

Foreword by Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center

The Shorenstein Center on the Media, Politics and Public Policy is pleased to support this study of female parliamentarians' social media use. It will contribute to an understanding of the topic and provide guidance that can help female politicians strengthen their use of social media.

Women in politics face numerous barriers to their advancement, including cultural biases, financial resources, and at-home responsibilities. In recent decades, those barriers have been reduced but women are far from having political parity with men. They hold today less than a fourth of the seats in national legislatures. In some countries, few if any seats are held by women. To expand women's agency, more women are needed in public office. Social media can help advance that goal.

The importance of having more women in political office is clear. They serve as role models especially for younger women and girls, empowering them to make better choices about their lives. They enhance the representativeness of political institutions and society more broadly. They bring new perspectives to policy making, ones that can make government more responsive -- not only to underserved populations, including the poor and children -- but to all strata of society.

Social media can magnify those contributions by promoting the election of women to office. Social media are a low-cost political instrument within the reach of virtually everyone who holds or seek public office. Other political resources, including political money and organization, are unevenly distributed—some politicians have far more access to them than others. Women typically have had less access to such resources.

Yet, as the WIP/Facebook/Shorenstein Center survey reveals, female politicians are not fully equal when it comes to social media. There are barriers, such as attitudes within political parties, that must be swept away to encourage female politicians to make fuller use of social media. And they should strive to do so. The role of social media in politics will continue to grow. They are important now. They will be more important in the future.

As the survey of female parliamentarians also reveals, the obstacles to fuller use of social media are not only, or even primarily, the consequence of social and political factors. The major limitation is female parliamentarians' personal knowledge of how to use social media effectively. This report provides guidance on how they can overcome the knowledge problem.

Nicco Mele, Director

Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy

John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Acknowledgements

The Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP) would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, and Facebook on this project. We would also like to express our gratitude to the more than 900 female Parliamentarians who have taken the time to complete the survey.

WIP also wishes to provide a special mention to the WIP Ambassadors. They serve as the main point of contact for cooperation and WIP initiatives in their respective Parliaments and they have supported this research from the start.

Finally, WIP wishes to highlight the support of ParlAmericas, the Global Legislators Organisation (GLOBE), the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), and the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank & International Monetary Fund, who have all raised awareness of this research among their members.

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Executive Summary

This report is based on the results of a survey that examined the use of social media by female Parliamentarians from 107 countries. The survey sought to discover factors affecting their level of social media use and to identify areas where greater knowledge could strengthen that use.

Key Findings

- We found that more than 85 percent of female legislators make at least some use of social media, with the level of use higher during the campaign period than during the legislative period. Most users either managed their social media by themselves or split the effort somewhat evenly with staff. Facebook was by far the most widely used platform—more than 90 percent of social media users employed Facebook. No other platform was used by even as many as 70 percent.

- The primary social media audiences for most respondents were the voters that support them, their campaign workers, and their constituents. Of decidedly secondary importance were elite audiences—news reporters, other politicians within their political party, and opposition party politicians.

- Of the individual factors we examined, none was more closely associated with social media use than was age. On average, respondents under 50 years of age, as compared with those 50 or

over, were more likely to be social media users and, if a user, substantially more active in that use. Income, too, was related to social media use. Those of very high or above average income were much heavier users than those of average income or below.

- A key finding was that the "motherhood penalty"—a term used by sociologists to describe the job-related disadvantages faced by mothers relative to non-mothers—does not apply to female politicians' social media use. Respondents with dependent children were as active on social media as those of comparable age without children. Social media are a flexible tool that can be employed while in the office, traveling, or at home, which facilitates their use by female legislators with childrearing responsibilities.

- Of the societal factors we examined, none was more important than whether female legislators perceived themselves to be treated equally in their political party. Those who held that belief were far more active on social media than those who believed their party treated its female members unequally. In contrast, female legislators' perception of women's equality in their country was only weakly related to their level of social media activity.

- Several political factors were found to be associated with social media use. On average, legislators who were members of an opposition party or members of a smaller party were more active on social media—an indication that social media use, because of its low cost and the role that personal initiative plays in its use, can serve as an equalizer for female parliamentarians who are otherwise politically disadvantaged. That

conclusion is supported by the fact that poorly funded candidates were as active on social media as their well-funded counterparts. Social media were the one campaign resource where the two groups stood on nearly equal ground.

Key Recommendations

- A central finding of this study is that individual factors are the main drivers of social media use. Although contextual factors clearly have an impact, we found, for every group studied, that the variation in social media use was greater at the individual level than at the group level. Every group had a significant number of respondents who were highly active on social media and a significant number who were barely active, if at all.

- Nothing was more closely associated with level of social media use than respondents' knowledge of social media. Among respondents who used social media, those who were knowledgeable in the effective use of social media were more than twice as active as those who were least knowledgeable. Only about a fourth of respondents were highly knowledgeable, suggesting that social media are being underutilized by most female legislators.

- To make better use of social media, female parliaments should seek to "know their audiences"; acquire specific skills, such as how to use social media to raise funds; discover how to deliver targeted and relevant messages; increase their interactivity with followers; share their personal stories with followers; keep up with changes in social media platforms and use; and avail themselves of instructional resources.

1. Introduction

Women have made significant political gains in recent decades. Nevertheless, they continue to face gender-related challenges. Women today hold only 22.7 percent of national legislative seats. There are only two countries, Bolivia and Rwanda, where women make up a legislative majority. In more than thirty countries, women hold less than 10 percent of the positions[1].

The digital age has brought with it tools that can help women to achieve greater political parity. Whereas traditional news media exhibit many of the gender biases found in the broader society,[2] social media are as available to women as they are to men.[3] Social networks like Facebook, micro blogs like Twitter, and video-sharing platforms like YouTube provide women with powerful tools for their advancement.

To assess female politicians' use of social media tools, Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP) conducted a member survey in partnership with Facebook and the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. WIP's global network of national-level female legislators was polled online. Roughly 900 legislators responded to the lengthy questionnaire, and 531 respondents from 107 countries completed it (see **Appendix D**). In addition to being asked about their social media activities, respondents were asked about such elements as their position in the party hierarchy, mode of election, campaign funding, educational background, family situation, age, and income. (A copy of the survey questionnaire is provided in **Appendix B**.)

"Whereas traditional news media exhibit many of the gender biases found in the broader society, social media are as available to women as they are to men."

The survey had two major goals. One was to provide an assessment of female parliamentarians' social media use and the factors associated with that use. The second goal was to identify areas where knowledge and training could enhance that use.

In the next section of this report, we will provide an overview of female parliamentarians' social media practices. Subsequent sections will explore how the use of social media is affected by individual factors, such as age and income; societal factors, such as Internet availability and cultural attitudes toward women; and political factors, such as mode of election and party size. The final section offers recommendations aimed at strengthening female legislators' social media use.

The offices they hold

The large majority of survey respondents—96 percent—held office in their country's national legislature. The other 4 percent represented their country in a multi-country legislature (e.g., the European Parliament). Four out of five respondents were in the lower (numerically larger) chamber of their legislature or in a legislature with a single chamber.

2. Overview of Female Parliamentarians' Social Media Use

Seven of every eight (86 percent) female Parliamentarians in our sample made at least some use of social media in their work. Most users had a "hands on" approach. A small proportion of users (8 percent) assigned management of their social media largely to staff members, but the others either managed their social media by themselves (46 percent) or split the effort somewhat evenly with staff (46 percent).

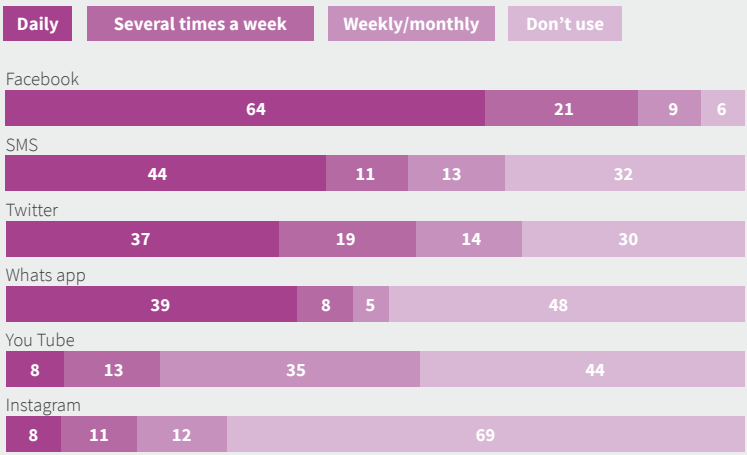
Social media users varied widely in their self-assessed skill level. A fifth of users (22 percent) claimed to be "very knowledgeable" in the use of social media, half (53 percent) said they were "somewhat knowledgeable," a fourth (23 percent) said they were "slightly knowledgeable," and a mere 3 percent judged themselves to be "not at all knowledgeable."

Most users employed more than one social media platform. Facebook was by far the most widely used—94 percent of social media users made at least some use of Facebook in their political work (see **figure 1**). Two-thirds of Facebook users claimed to use it daily, while another fifth said they used it at least several times weekly. A respondent from the Philippines noted that Facbook had enabled her to dramatically increase her public visibility:

FIGURE 1.

Facebook is most widely used social media

Frequency of use (percentage of social media users)



Note: Includes only respondents who claimed to use social media in their work. Respondents were asked about use in two contexts: "your most recent election campaign" and "conducting your work in the legislature." Chart percentages are averages for the two questions.

"My projects became known because of Facebook. One of the biggest projects my area received was a road project. And as a sign of my appreciation I posted a picture wherein I was lying on the middle of that particular road. It reached the Office of the President and my post was featured in the President's last State of the Nation Address. But all of that was because I [handle and manage] my Facebook account."

Twitter and SMS were the next most widely used platforms—each was used by about two-thirds of the respondents. WhatsApp and Instagram are newer social media and had the lowest usage levels—52 percent of respondents claimed to use WhatsApp and 31 percent said they used Instagram. YouTube had a substantial number of users

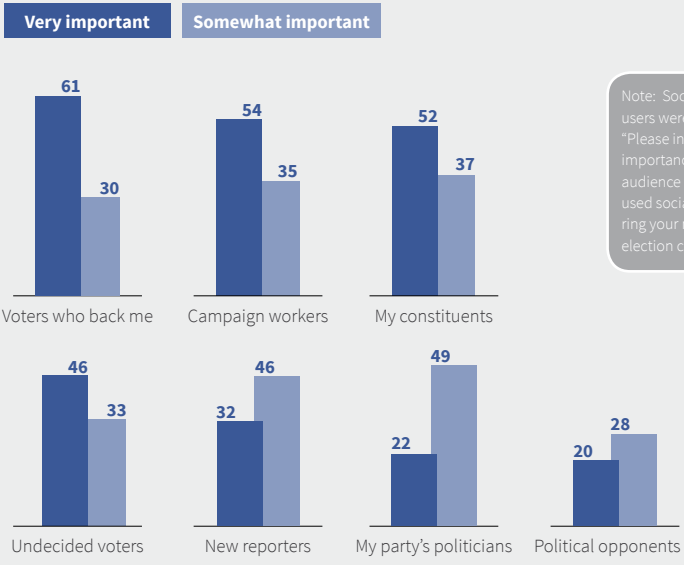
(56 percent) but its use was intermittent. Only one in twelve social media users said they used YouTube on a daily basis.

Target Audiences. For the average citizen, social media are a way to stay in touch with family and friends. For the politician, they are a channel to numerous audiences, everyone from voters to reporters.

FIGURE 2.

Loyal voters, campaign workers, and constituents are primary social media audiences during campaign

How important were . . . . during your "most recent campaign?" (percentage of social media users)



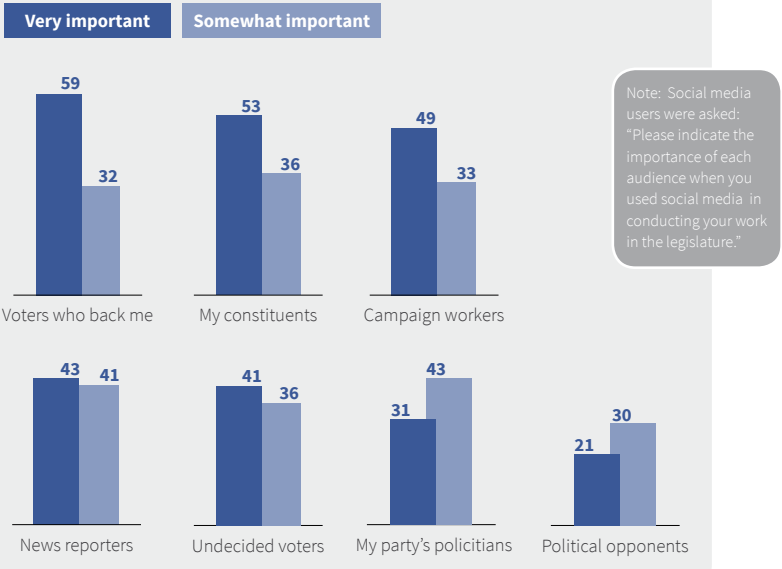
Note: Social media users were asked: "Please indicate the importance of each audience when you used social media during your most recent election campaign."

The lawmakers in our survey were asked about the relative importance of audiences they might seek to reach through social media. What emerged was the picture of a multi-audience outreach strategy, with some audiences at the center of that strategy and others on the periphery (see **Figure 2**). In the context of the election campaign, no audience was more important than the "voters who support me"—61 percent of social media users claimed them to be a "very important" audience. Campaign workers also ranked highly (54 percent), as did the legislator's constituents (54 percent) and undecided voters (46 percent).

FIGURE 3.

Loyal voters, constituents, and campaign workers are primary audiences during legislative period

How important were . . . . in "conducting your work in the legislature". (percentage of social media users)



"Elites" were also a campaign audience for female parliamentarians but ranked lower in priority than did citizens. A third of social media users said that "news reporters" were a "very important" part of their social media campaign. Only a fifth of users said the same of "my party's politicians" or "political opponents." The opposition is often a major target of candidates' traditional media strategies, but it was not central to respondents' social media strategies, which focused more on the "we" than on the "them."

The "we" also dominated social media strategy when respondents were asked about "your work in the legislature." "Voters who support me" were again the primary target (see **Figure 3**). As might be expected, "my constituents" became a more salient audience during the legislative period, rising to second position as a target audience. Interestingly, "campaign workers" remained a highly important audience during the legislative session. Staying in touch with the people who played a key role in the last campaign was a priority for many respondents.

"News reporters" were a more significant audience for respondents during the legislative period than during the campaign. "Other politicians in my party" were also judged more important during the legislative period than during the campaign. Even so, they were not a large part of respondents' social media strategies. For our respondents, social media were chiefly a means of reaching out to members of the public and only secondarily a way to reach out to those involved in day-to-day politics.

Facebook vs. Twitter. Although WhatsApp and Instagram are gaining in popularity, Facebook and Twitter were respondents' primary social media platforms. How do Facebook and Twitter com-

"Although WhatsApp and Instagram are gaining in popularity, Facebook and Twitter were respondents' primary social media platforms."

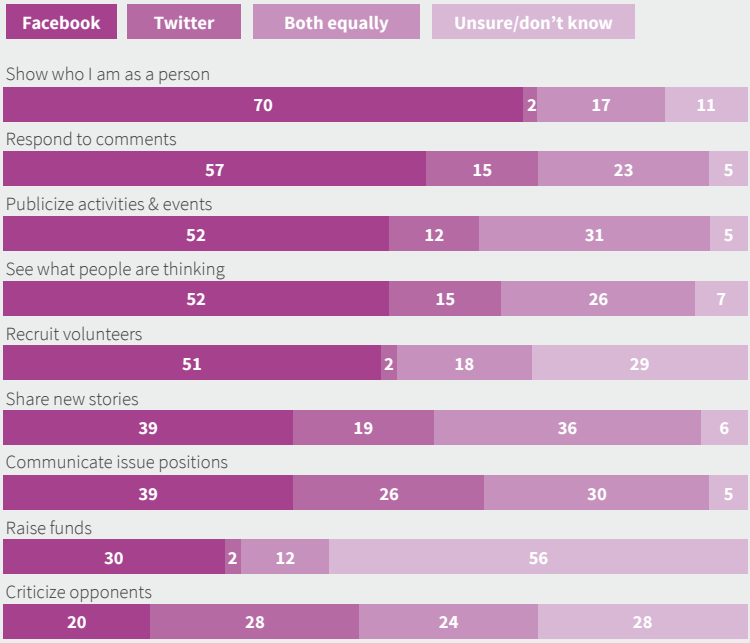
pare? Did respondents find one to be more effective than the other?

We asked respondents who use both Facebook and Twitter to rate the two platforms' effectiveness across a range of activities. Facebook was judged the superior platform in nearly every category (see **Figure 4**). Facebook's perceived advantage was greatest in terms of letting "people know who I'm like as a person"—70 percent of users gave Face-

FIGURE 4.

Facebook is seen as more effective than Twitter

"For each activity, is Facebook or Twitter more effective?" (percentage of respondents who used both platforms)



book the edge for this activity while only 5 percent rated Twitter more highly. In addition, half of the respondents rated Facebook superior in terms of "recruiting volunteers," "seeing what people are thinking," and "publicizing my political activities and events." Less than one in four claimed that Twitter was the more effective platform for these purposes. Said a Portuguese respondent, "Facebook is a very effective tool for raising political visibility."

Facebook was also judged more favorably when it came to "sharing news stories" and "communicating issue and policy positions," though by smaller margins. Facebook also had the advantage when it came to raising funds, where 30 percent judged it to be superior. Only 2 percent gave the fundraising edge to Twitter. "Criticizing opponents" was the only activity where Twitter edged Facebook—28 percent to 20 percent.

Campaigning vs. Legislating. Most professionals have a primary task that occupies their attention. Politicians have twin concerns—getting elected and carrying out the duties of office. How, if at all, does social media use vary across the two areas?

To address this question, we focused on respondents' Facebook activity, asking them how frequently they used Facebook for various purposes during their most recent campaign and during their time in the legislature. In every case, Facebook use was higher during the campaign period (see Figure 5). There were three activities—"review comments to see what people are thinking," "respond to comments," and "publicize my political activities and events"—where a majority of users made daily use of Facebook during the campaign. There was not a

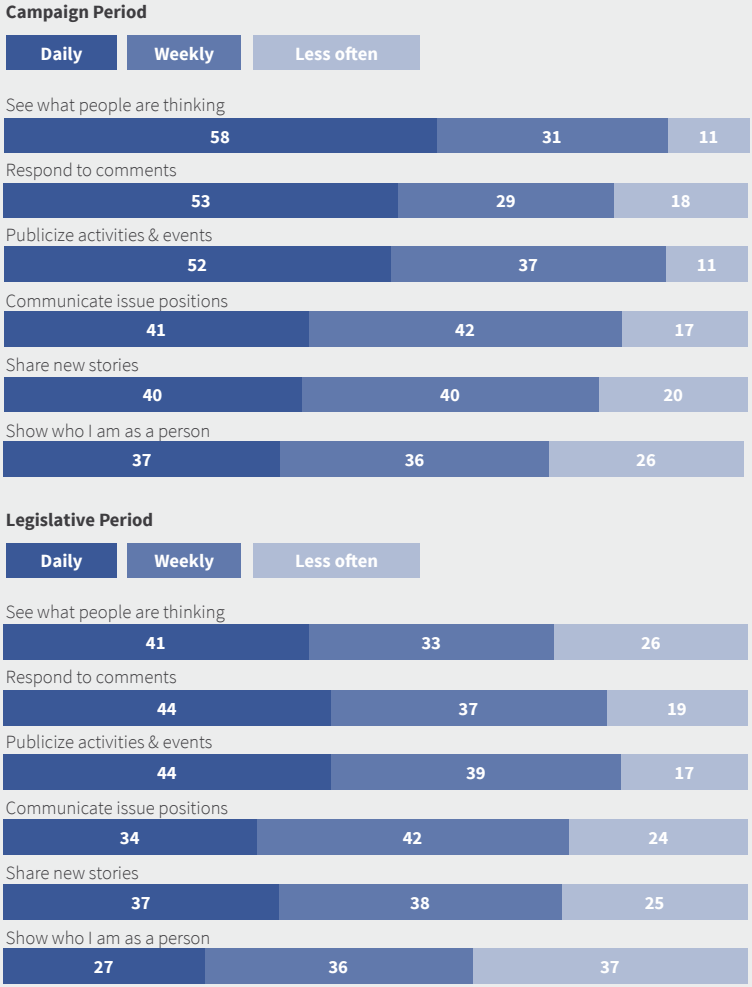
Number of followers

Survey respondents varied widely in the number of Facebook and Twitter followers they had. Among those who used Facebook, the median number of followers was about 3,500. However, 21 percent had a thousand or fewer followers. Only 18 percent had 10,000 or more followers. Twitter users had fewer followers on average. The median number of Twitter followers was roughly 2,000, with 35 percent having a thousand or fewer followers. Only 15 percent had more than 10,000.

FIGURE 5.

Facebook users are more active during campaign period than legislative period

Frequency of use (percentage of Facebook users)



single activity where a majority of users made daily use of Facebook during the legislative period.

This finding is consistent with the results of single-country studies[4]. Politicians have a powerful incentive—raising the level of their public support—to make frequent use of social media during an election campaign. They also have an interest in reaching the public while in office, but the need is less urgent. Later sections of this report will look more closely at the connection between incentives and social media use.

Social Media vs. Traditional Media. Social media have augmented rather than supplanted traditional media as a political tool. Both forms of media can contribute to political success, and our survey asked respondents to judge the comparative advantages of the two mediums.

Why politics?

Our respondents had a range of reasons for why they entered elective politics. Topping the list was a belief that "more women are needed in politics"—it was cited by three of five respondents. A much smaller number (18 percent) said that encouragement from women's organizations was an influential factor. Other collective influences also figured prominently in our respondents' decision to embark on a political career. A substantial number of respondents (44 percent) said they'd been recruited by their party to run. Somewhat fewer claimed to have been motivated by a community issue (33 percent) or prompted by community leaders (32 percent).

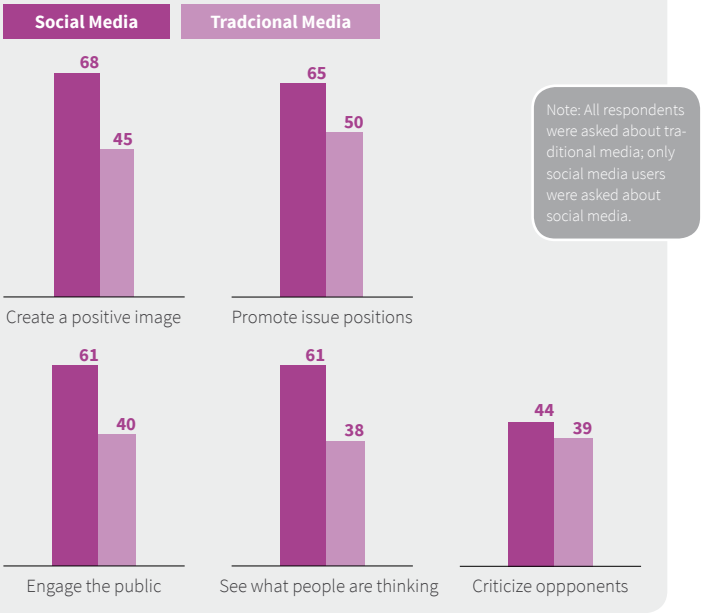
Individual factors also influenced the decision to run. A sizeable minority (16 percent) had a family member who had held political office. Others had gotten the political urge as a result of working on political staff (19 percent) or in a civic organization (18 percent). A substantial number (31 percent) said that their "high public visibility" had played a role in their decision to seek office. Surprisingly perhaps, only a small number (4 percent) said that their financial status prior to entering politics had factored into their decision. More than four times that many (18 percent) said that holding office was "my dream since childhood."

Most respondents said that, although they found both forms of media useful, they rated social media more highly. Whereas 70 percent of respondents said they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" when asked whether social media had been "very helpful to me in campaigning for election," only 41 percent said the same of traditional media. When asked about their "work as a legislator," 67 percent agreed or strongly agreed that social media are "very helpful" while only half as many (36 percent) made that claim about traditional media. These differences reflect the fact that traditional media selectively allocate their news coverage. Less than a

FIGURE 6.

Social media are viewed as more effective than traditional news media

Social media / traditional media are a "good way to . . ." (percentage of social media users)



fourth of respondents said that the news media paid them "a lot of attention." As a respondent from the Philippines noted, "[Social media] can help a lot to publicize activities and your messages, even if the traditional media don't give you space."

Respondents' preference for social media also rested on a belief that they are a more effective form of communication. As can be seen in **Figure 6**, our respondents rated social media more highly than traditional media in terms of nearly every political activity: promoting issue positions, engaging the public, creating a positive image, and discovering what the public is thinking. Traditional media were seen to be nearly as effective as social media in one area only—criticizing political opponents.

3. Individual factors and social media use

Female Parliamentarians have one thing in common—all hold high public office. Beyond that, they differ in age, educational background, income level, place of residence, and home situation. How important are these individual differences when it comes to use of social media?

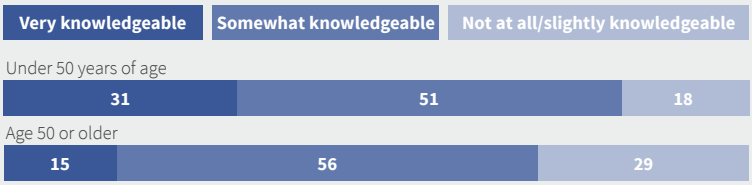
Age. Our survey revealed a major digital divide—that of age. No personal characteristic so clearly separated respondents than did age, with younger respondents making much greater use of social media than older ones.

Use and knowledge. Among respondents who were 50 years of age and older, 84 percent made at least some use of social media in their political work. For those under 50, the figure was high-

FIGURE 7.

Younger legislators are more knowledgeable about social media

"How personally knowledgeable are you in the effective use of social media for political purposes?"
(percentage of social media users)



er—89 percent. Younger respondents were also more likely to describe themselves as "very knowledgeable" in "the effective use of social media for political purposes" (see **Figure 7**). One in three of younger respondents made that claim, compared with only one in six of those 50 years of age or older. Younger users were also more likely—51 percent to 40 percent—to say they managed their social media on their own rather than delegating or sharing it with staff.

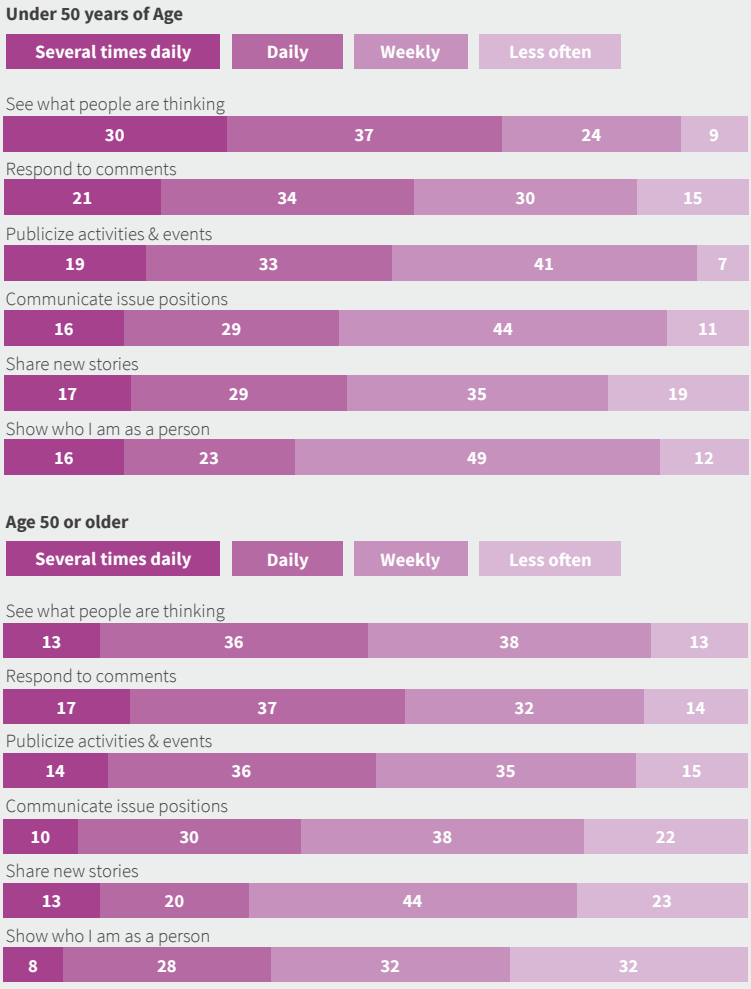
Younger users had a higher opinion of the power of social media. More than 40 percent of respondents under 50 said they "strongly agreed" when asked whether social media "are very helpful to me in campaigning for election." Only 27 percent of those 50 or older expressed the same opinion. In terms of legislative work, the gap was not as wide, with 31 percent of younger users saying they "strongly agreed" as compared with 20 percent of older users.

Frequency and Impact. When asked how often during their most recent election campaign they had pursued various social media activities on Facebook, younger respondents reported substantially higher use (see **Figure 8**). There was not a single campaign activity—everything from "publicizing my political activities and events" to "responding to comments"—where users under 50 years of age reported less frequent use than those 50 or over. The extreme case was "reviewing comments to see what people are thinking," where nearly one in three younger users claimed to have engaged in the activity "several times a day" while only one in seven older users made the same claim. During the legislative period, there was also not a single activity where users under 50 reported

FIGURE 8.

Younger legislators' social media use during campaign exceeds that of older legislators

Frequency of use
(percentage of Facebook users)



less frequent Facebook usage than those 50 years of age or over.

To gain a more exact indication of the generation gap, we created an **Activity Index** based on users' reported Facebook use for six activities—communicating issue and policy positions, responding to comments, reviewing comments to see what people are thinking, revealing personal information, publicizing activities and events, and sharing news stories[1]. For each activity, respondents were asked how often they posted new material or checked for new postings by others—several times a day, daily, a few times weekly, weekly, 2-3 times a month, monthly, or rarely/never. Each of these categories was assigned a number proportional to its frequency, which enabled us to sum the answers to get a score for each respondent. We could then compare the average score for one group, such as younger legislators, with the average score for another group, such as older legislators, to measure the difference in their activity levels. (The Activity Index is described in detail in **Appendix C**).

As measured by the Activity Index, younger respondents engaged in roughly 50 percent more social media acts during the campaign and legislative periods than did their older counterparts.

Contributing to the difference was younger legislators' greater trust in social media. When asked whether "social media are a good way for politicians to create a positive political image," 32 percent of users under 50 said they "strongly agreed," compared with 23 percent of those 50 or older. When asked whether "social media are a good way for politicians to discover what the public is thinking," the margin was 30 percent to 22 percent. The difference was also significant when it came to

1. Facebook activity was used to create the Activity Index because 94 percent of social media users in the sample used Facebook, making it the best platform for group comparisons. No other platform was used by more than two-thirds of the respondents. Moreover, users typically made great use of Facebook than other platforms they employed.

"Social media use for many young politicians is nearly second nature."

promoting "issue and policy positions" (34 percent versus 26 percent) and engaging "the public in politics" (31 percent versus 19 percent).

Age differences stem from several factors. Scholars have suggested that younger politicians see themselves as "underdogs"—less established in their positions and thereby more intent on promoting their careers.[5] That proposition gains support from the fact that younger respondents in our survey also claimed more substantial engagement with traditional news media than did older ones.[6] Without doubt, however, the age gap reflects a generational divide. Social media use for many young politicians is nearly second nature. They came of age during the digital era, and social media are a natural extension of their earlier digital experiences.

Income. Female legislators are usually more highly educated than the people they represent. Eighty-five percent of our respondents were college graduates, and half of this group also had a graduate or professional degree. As it happens, the level of educational attainment was not closely related to respondents' level of social media use—a specialized education is not required to make use of social media.

On the other hand, social media use varied by income level. Respondents who said their income was "very high" or "above average" relative to others in their country were more active than those who said their income was "average" or "below average" (see Figure 9). Across six campaign activities, 49 percent of the "very high" income group averaged daily Facebook use, as compared with 39 percent of the "above average" income group and 28 percent of the "average" or "below average" group. In fact, more than two in five in the "aver-

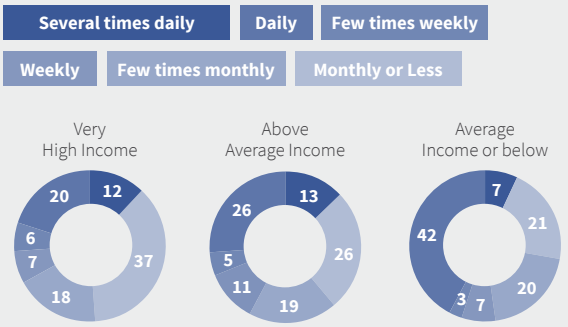
age" or "below average" income group were largely inactive, compared with only one in five of the "very high" income group. Social media use during the legislative period followed the same pattern. Although the usage rate was lower for all income groups during this period, users who had "very high" or "above average" income were significantly more active than those of "average" or "below average" income.

Income ranked second only to age as a personal characteristic associated with respondents' social media behavior. Although social media are a leveling device because of the relatively low cost of entry, their use is affected by legislators' income level. Some less-affluent respondents were as highly active on social media as the most affluent ones, but they were the exception. An active social

FIGURE 9.

Upper-income legislators make greater use of social media during campaign than those of lower income

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of respondents)



Note: Percentages are the average for Facebook users for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories.

media effort is a low-cost tool, but the costs are not trivial.

Family situation. Women everywhere still bear primary responsibility for childrearing, which has slowed women's advancement in politics as in other fields.[7] Have social media reduced that barrier? Do they make it easier for female politicians with children to be politically active?

Respondents with pre-school or school-age children in the home were just as likely as other respondents to make use of social media and, among users, were far more likely—59 percent to 39 percent—to manage their social media by themselves rather than with the help of staff. Respondents with school age children were also substantially more active in their social media efforts during both the campaign and legislative periods.

These findings suggest that the "motherhood penalty"—a term used by sociologists to describe the job-related disadvantages faced by mothers relative to non-mothers—does not apply to female

Facebook followers & individual factors	Average (median) number of followers
AGE	
50 or Higher	2.000
Under 50	3.200
INCOME	
Very high	3.400
Above average	3.000
Average or bellow	3.000
FAMILY SITUATIONS	
Under 50 w/ dependent children	3.000
Under 50 w/o dependent children	3.000

politicians' social media use.[8] However, as we saw earlier, younger legislators are far more active on social media than older ones, and legislators with school age children tend to be younger on average. Age, rather than respondents' home situation, could account for the finding.

To control for age, we compared respondents with and without dependent children who were less than 50 years of age. The two groups were virtually identical—separated by only one percentage point—in terms of the number that made use of social media and who claimed to be "very" or "somewhat" knowledgeable in the use of social media.

However, respondents under 50 with children attached greater importance to social media. Nearly 90 percent of them agreed that social media were "very helpful to me in campaigning for election," compared with 64 percent of those without children. That difference carried into claims about the importance of various social media audiences. In every case, ranging from six- to thirteen-percentage points, respondents with children under 18 were more likely to describe campaign workers, constituents, supportive voters, and undecided voters as "very important" social media audiences. The two groups differed also in how they handled their social media. Whereas a majority (56 percent) of those without dependent children managed their social media with staff assistance, a majority (57 percent) of those with school age children were self-managers.

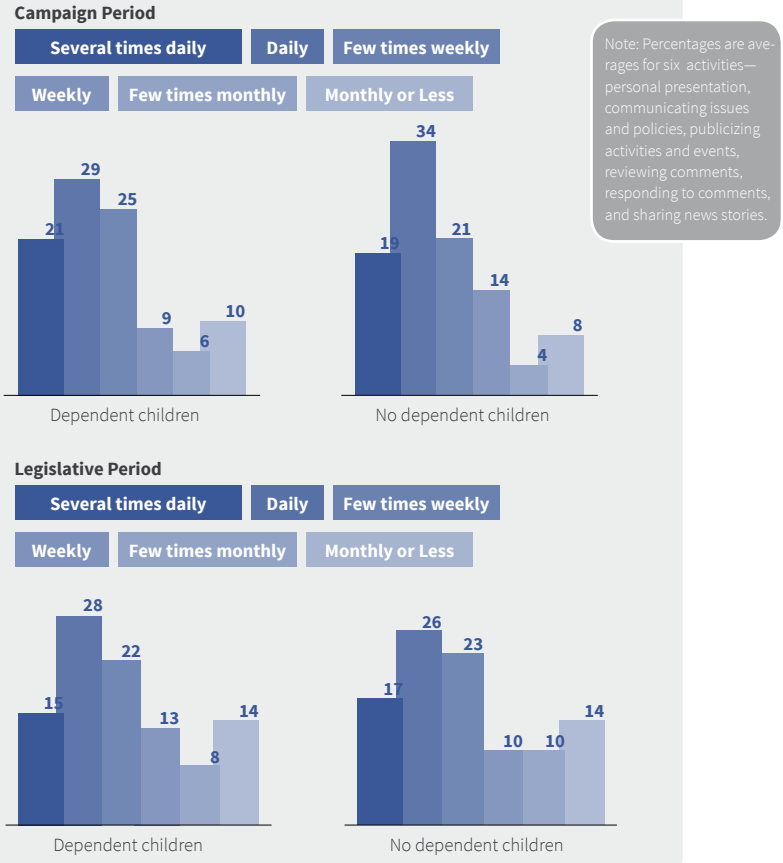
In terms of social media activity, there was no significant difference between the two groups (**Figure 10**). When averaged across six activity areas, younger respondents with and without children in the home had about the same level of Facebook

use during the campaign period. The same was true for the legislative period. There were large differences within each group—some respondents were far more active than others. But the difference between the two groups was insignificant.

FIGURE 10.

Younger legislators with dependent children are as active on social media as those without dependent children

Average frequency of use (percentage of Facebook users under 50 years of age)



Note: Percentages are averages for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories.

In sum, social media reduce the "motherhood penalty" for female politicians with childrearing responsibilities. They may incur a penalty in other ways, but social media facilitate political activity by those with dependent children. Social media are a flexible tool that can be employed while in the office, traveling, or at home. Moreover, social media use, unlike some tasks, does not require staff involvement. These features of social media are equalizers—politicians' commitment to its use is more important than the circumstances of their personal lives. Younger respondents with children under 18 spent more of their waking hours in the home—52 percent of them said they spent five or more hours at home "on a typical weekday" compared with 42 percent of those without school age children. Yet, they had virtually the same level of social media use—a testimonial to the capacity of social media to level the playing field.

4. Societal factors and social media use

Countries differ substantially in their social norms and conditions. As will be seen, these differences are related to social media use. Yet, as will also be seen, societal factors have less impact on social media use than do individual factors such as age and income.

Internet Access. Scholars have proposed that politicians in countries where Internet access is limited make less use of social media.[9] To examine that question, we asked respondents to estimate the percentage of adults in their country that had Internet access and divided them into two groups—those who placed the estimate at 75 percent or higher and those who placed it below that level. [2]

The idea that politicians in lower-access countries make less use of social media has some justification. Eighty-five percent of respondents in low-access countries claimed to make use of social media, compared with 95 percent of those in high-access countries.

"Surprisingly, low-access users were more active on social media than were high-access users."

When the behavior of social media users was examined, however, the difference between lower- and higher-access respondents was much smaller. Users in low- and high-access situations had nearly identical responses to the question of whether "social media are very helpful in my work as a legislator" and to the question of whether "social media are very helpful to me in campaigning for election." Moreover, low-access users judged

various social media audiences—everyone from campaign workers to undecided voters—as more important to their campaign and legislative efforts than did high-access users.

Most surprisingly, low-access users were more active on social media than were high-access users. There was not a single major campaign activity—everything from "communicating issue and policy positions" to "responding to comments"—where Facebook users in lower-access countries were less active than those in higher-access countries. In terms of "publicizing my political activities and events," for example, 57 percent of low-access users said they posted material "daily" or "several times a day" during their most recent election campaign, as compared with 46 percent of high-access users. Figure 11, which is based on frequency of use averaged across six campaign activities, provides a summary view of the differences in the two groups. Whereas 51 percent of low-access users posted material "several times a day" or "daily" on average for each of the six activities, the corresponding number for high-access users was 41 percent. As measured by our Activity Index, which was described earlier, low-access users engaged in roughly 20 percent more social media acts than did high-access users. Nor was the difference confined to the campaign. Low-access users were also more active during the legislative period.

What might explain the finding that social media users from countries with a lower level of Internet penetration were somewhat more active on social media? Speculatively, they relied more heavily on social media because other forms of political support were unreliable. In countries that are less developed economically, political parties are usually weakly organized and have limited resources.[10] In such coun-

2 The Internet access variable can be viewed as a measure of a country's economic development. We added the United Nations' economic development categories to our data set and correlated respondents' Internet access estimate with their country's economic development level. The result was an exceedingly strong correlation significant at the .001 level.

FIGURE 11.
Legislators from low-Internet-access countries less likely to use social media but, when they do, are more active users

tries, social media can be an invaluable platform—a tool upon which the politician can depend.

If there's merit in the proposition that social media in low-access countries can make up for a deficit in party organization, we would also expect traditional media, which can also overcome that deficit, to be relatively important. And indeed, low-access respondents did make greater use of news

outlets. When asked whether "traditional news media, such as newspapers, TV news, and radio news, were very helpful to me in campaigning for election," 48 percent of respondents in low-access countries said they "agreed" or "strongly agreed," compared with only 27 percent of those in high-access countries. When asked the same question in the context of their legislative work, the difference was similar in magnitude—44 percent to 26 percent. As **Figure 12** indicates, low-access respondents also claimed to get more news attention than did high-access respondents. In the case of national newspapers, for instance, 27 percent of low-access legislators claimed to get "a lot" of coverage, compared with only 12 percent of high-access legislators.

"Urban- and non-urban respondents differed on the principal indicator of social media use: level of activity."

Place of residence. Studies have found that urban voters are more active on social media than voters from non-urban areas.[11] Scholars have suggested that urban-area legislators thereby have more incentive to make use of social media. [12] To examine that proposition, we divided respondents into two groups—those who resided in a city or suburb and those who resided in a town, village, or rural area.

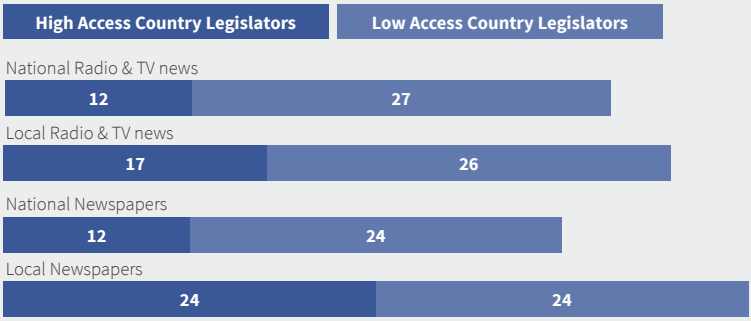
Urban- and non-urban respondents differed hardly at all on some indicators. The two groups were closely matched in terms of whether they made use of social media, whether they managed their social media by themselves or delegated it in whole or part to staff, and whether they believed themselves knowledgeable in the use of social media.

Nevertheless, urban- and non-urban respondents differed on the principal indicator of social media use: level of activity. Those from a city or suburb were more active than those from a town, village,

FIGURE 12.

Legislators from countries with limited Internet access get more news attention

Percentage of respondents saying they get "a lot" of attention from . . .



or rural area (see **Figure 13**). When their Facebook use was averaged across six activities, nearly one in five urban respondents, compared to only one in ten non-urban respondents, said they used Facebook "several times a day." When usage levels among social media users were scored using the Activity Index, the level was roughly 20 percent higher among urban-area respondents.

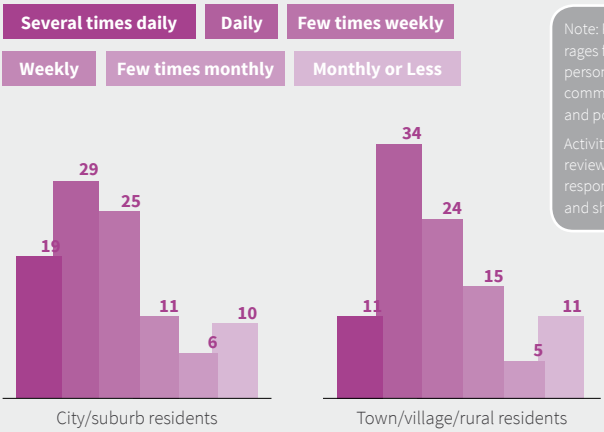
"The higher level of social media use in urban areas gives politicians from these areas a comparative advantage."

As scholars have suggested, politicians' social media activity is conditioned by constituents' social media use. Social media can be a tool for overcoming the disadvantages that come from residing in areas distant from the capital or where the population is less dense. Indeed, many non-urban respondents were quite active on social media. Nevertheless, the higher level of social media use in urban areas gives politicians from these areas a comparative advantage, and they respond to it by making somewhat greater use of social media.

FIGURE 13.

Urban-area legislators greater use of social media

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of Facebook users)



Note: Percentages are averages for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing

Activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories.

Women's Status in Society. In some countries, women have achieved equality in law with men and are approaching equality in other areas.[13] In other countries, women are still in a subordinate position. Does the social status of women affect their social media use? To assess that question, we asked respondents: "In your country, how equal are men and women in terms of society in general?" We then separated them into two groups—those who said that women are "about equal" or "slightly unequal" and those who said that women were "substantially unequal," or "extremely unequal."[14]

Facebook Followers & Societal Factors	Average (median) number of followers
INTERNET ACCESS	
High	2.500
Low	4.900
RESIDENCE	
Urban	3.500
Non-Urban	3.000
WOMEN IN SOCIETY	
Nearly equal	3.000
Very unequal	3.200
WOMEN IN PARTY	
Nearly equal	3.300
Very unequa	3.000

The groups differed somewhat on key indicators. Ninety-one percent of those from more equal societies made use of social media, compared with 86 percent of those from less equal societies. Among social media users, respondents in more equal societies were more likely—80 percent to 73 percent—to describe themselves as "very knowledgeable" or "somewhat knowledgeable" in "the effective use of social media for political purposes."

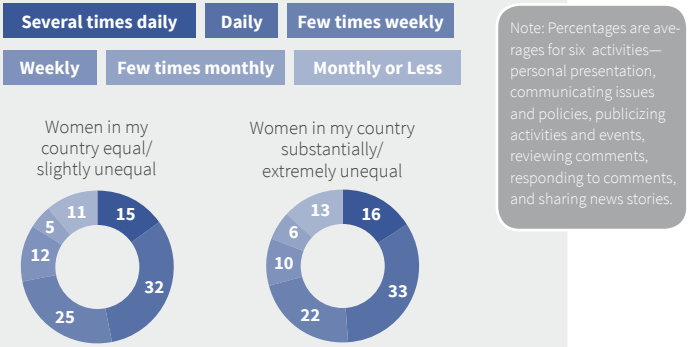
On the other hand, the level of Facebook activity among users, when averaged across six campaign activities, was nearly identical (see **Figure 14**). For example, only 1 percentage point separated the two groups in the number who posted material "several times a day" or who did so "daily."

In short, social inequality has only a small inhibiting effect. Respondents from less equal countries were somewhat less likely to use social media, but, if they used it, were just as active.

FIGURE 14.

Women's position in society is unrelated to legislators' social media activity

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of Facebook users)



Note: Percentages are averages for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories.

Women's Status in Their Political Party. One status difference—whether a female legislator's political party fostered gender equality—was strongly associated with social media use. We measured within-party equality by asking respondents: "How equal are women and men in terms of your political party." Here again, we divided our respondents into two groups—those who said that women were "about equal" or "slightly unequal" in their party and those who said that women were "substantially unequal," or "extremely unequal."[15]

The two groups did not differ significantly in their opinions of social media. They held similar views, for example, on the importance of various social media audiences and on the effectiveness of social media for various tasks. But respondents

"One status difference—whether a female legislator's political party fostered gender equality—was strongly associated with social media use."

"Social media users who saw their party as supportive of women were far more active than those who perceived their party as treating women unequally."

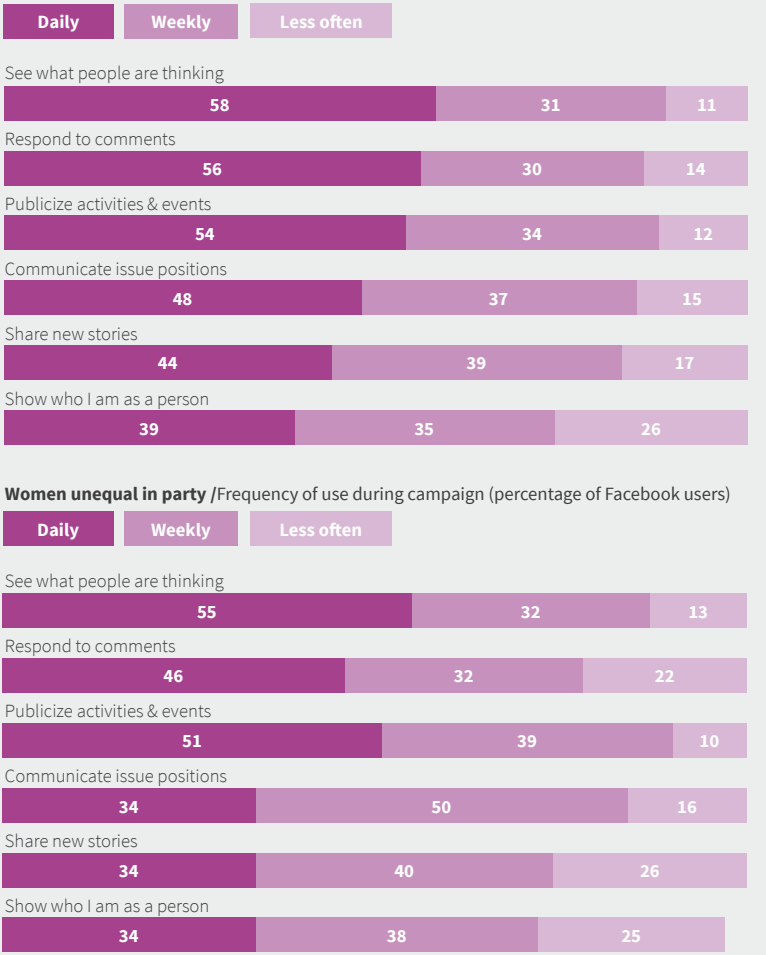
from parties that treated women more equally were more likely to use social media. Ninety-two percent of them, compared with 84 percent of respondents from parties where women were substantially unequal, said they availed themselves of social media.

The largest difference between the two groups was in the level of social media activity among those who made use of social media (**Figure 15**). Social media users who saw their party as supportive of women were far more active than those who perceived their party as treating women unequally. As an average per campaign activity, for example, 19 percent of the more-equal group used Facebook "several times a day," compared with only 10 percent of the less-equal group. Roughly half (51 percent) of the more- equal group averaged daily use for each of six campaign activities whereas only somewhat more than a third (38 percent) of the less-equal group did so. The gap was similar during the legislative period. Based on the Activity Index, social media users in more-equal parties engaged in roughly 35 percent more social media acts during the campaign than their counterparts in less-equal parties—the largest difference of any societal-related factor examined in this study.

Although scholars have not closely studied the role of party equality in female politicians' social media use, it's conceivable that women in parties that foster gender equality are more deeply committed to their party and more willing to contribute to its success. Whatever the exact explanation, our finding offers a lesson for political parties. If they treat female members equally, they can expect them to respond with a deeper level of engagement.

FIGURE 15.

Legislators in political parties that treat women equally are more active social media users



Being a woman - Did I help, or hurt?

Studies indicate that women face greater obstacles to gaining elective office than do men. In its 2015 study, "The Female Political Career," WIP concluded that "gendered social roles and gendered social expectations shrink the pool of female political candidates even before an election begins. Once in office, gendered roles and expectations continue to dog female legislators, capping ambitions as surely as they stunt their success."

The women in our survey overcame the obstacles that keep women out of public office and, ironically, many of them believed that their gender had been an asset. When asked whether on balance their gender had "helped or hurt your political career," a larger number of respondents—36 percent versus 14 percent—said it had helped rather than hurt. The other 50 percent claimed that their political career had not been appreciably affected one way or the other by their gender.

Respondents' opinion of the effect of gender on their political career was largely unrelated to most of the demographic factors examined in this report. There were minor variations associated, for example, with age, education, income level, and residential area but none approached statistical significance. Similarly, most of the political variables examined in this report were largely unrelated to respondents' opinion of the impact of gender. For example, of those holding a party or legislative leadership position, 38 percent said that their gender had helped their career while 14 percent said it had hurt. The figures for those not holding a leadership position were 35 percent and 15 percent, respectively. On the other hand, party ideology did make a difference. Respondents in left-leaning parties were more likely (44 percent versus 34 percent) to say that their gender had helped their career and less likely (11 percent versus 16 percent) to say it had hurt.

No factor, however, was more closely associated with career prospects than societal and party attitudes toward women. Although respondents from countries where women's status is greatly unequal were nearly as likely (35 percent versus 37 percent) as those from countries where women enjoyed more equal status to say that their gender had helped their political career, they were substantially more likely (24 percent versus 7 percent) to say it had hurt their career. The differences were even more pronounced when equality within the respondents' party was examined. Here, respondents from parties that treated women unequally were significantly less likely (27 percent versus 38 percent) than those from parties that treated women more equally to say their gender had helped their career and much more likely (9 percent to 26 percent) to say it had hurt. This finding highlights the major influence that intra-party equality, which has not received much attention from scholars, has on the lives of female politicians.

5. Political factors and social media use

Politicians operate within different political contexts, including differing party and electoral systems. Such differences, and their relation to social media use, are the subject of this section.

Political Party Differences. The organizing institution in every political system is the political party, though parties vary in their size, ideology, and power. Do these variations affect female legislators' social media behavior, or is their behavior largely independent of the type of party to which they belong?

Major Party versus Smaller Party. Research indicates that major-party candidates have built-in advantages over smaller-party candidates as a result of their party's greater visibility and resources. A study found, for example, that major parties are more likely than smaller parties to create and properly staff a sophisticated website operation.[16]

In some ways, our major-party respondents reaped the benefits of being in a larger party. They were far more likely than those from a smaller party (61 percent to 41 percent) to say that their most recent campaign was "well-funded" or "adequately funded." They also had a substantial edge with traditional media. They were roughly a fourth more likely to say they received "a lot of attention" from national news outlets and nearly half again as likely to claim "a lot of attention" from local news outlets.

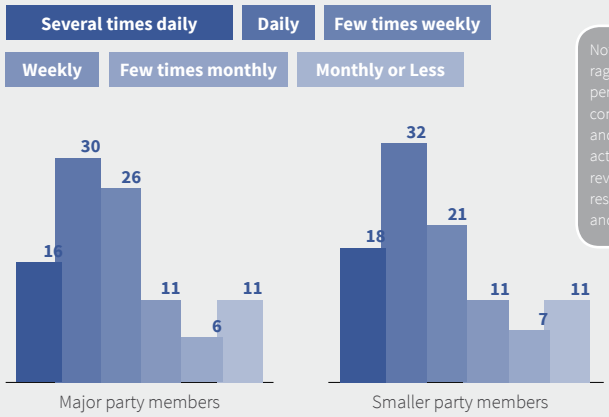
Nevertheless, when it came to social media, smaller-party respondents were on par with their major party counterparts. Both groups had nearly identical proportions of social media users—90 percent of smaller-party respondents made use of social media while the figure for major-party respondents was 89 percent.

The social media activity level among users in the two groups was remarkably similar, as **Figure 16** shows. Averaged across six campaign activities, about a sixth of each group engaged in a Facebook act "several times a day" and an additional third did so "daily." During the legislative period, though the overall level of activity declined for both groups, they again had nearly identical levels of use.

FIGURE 16.

Major-party and smaller-party legislators equally active on social media

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of Facebook users)



Note: Percentages are averages for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories.

As is the case for other politically disadvantaged groups, social media serve as an equalizer for female parliamentarians from smaller parties. Social media's low cost relative to many other forms of political activity make it a tool as readily available to smaller-party politicians as to their major-party competitors.[17]

Centrist Party versus Non-Centrist Party. Single-country studies have found that politicians from parties on the left or right are more active on social media than are politicians from parties in the center. [18] Politicians in non-centrist parties are presumed to hold more intense opinions, with social media providing an outlet for expressing them.

To test this proposition, we compared the social media activity levels of respondents who said their party had a centrist ideology with those positioning it to the left or right of the political center. And in fact, non-centrist party respondents were somewhat more active (see **Figure 17**). As measured by our Activity Index, they engaged in roughly 10 percent more social media acts during the campaign and legislative periods than their centrist-party counterparts.

Governing Party versus Opposition Party. In a competitive party system, the power of government rests with one party or a coalition of parties. Scholars have suggested that politicians who are out of power are more strongly motivated than those in control. [19] If so, they would be expected to make greater use of social media.

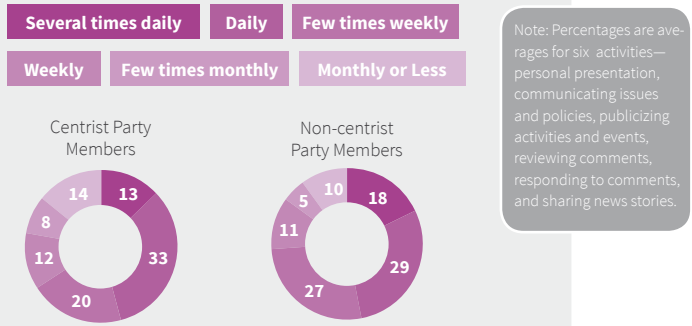
In fact, as **Figure 18** shows, opposition party respondents were substantially more active on social media than those from a governing party. Across six campaign-related activities, everything

"Opposition party respondents were substantially more active on social media than those from a governing party."

FIGURE 17.

Non-centrist party legislators are more active on social media than centrist party legislators

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of Facebook users)

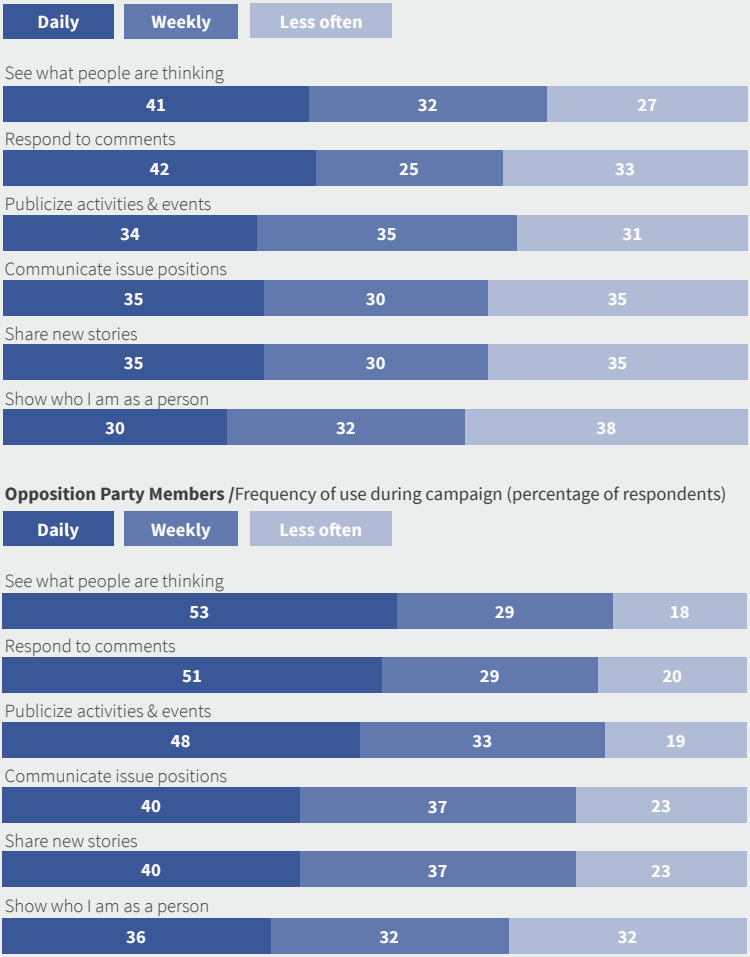


from publicizing activities to sharing news stories, opposition party respondents were more highly active. In the case of "communicating issue and policy positions," for example, 48 percent of opposition-party respondents communicated through Facebook on a daily basis during their most recent campaign, compared with 34 percent of governing-party respondents. As measured by our Activity Index, opposition-party respondents engaged in roughly 40 percent more social media acts during the campaign than did their governing-party counterparts—the largest difference of any party-related factor examined in this study.

The pattern also held during the legislative period. Although respondents in both groups were less active on social media during this period, opposition-party respondents were easily the more active

FIGURE 18.

Opposition party legislators more active on social media than governing party legislators



The parties they represent
Most of the respondents—66 percent—were members of a major party, while 34 percent belonged to a minor or mid-sized party. Two fifths said their party had an absolute legislative majority while a fifth said their party was part of the governing coalition (18 percent). The remaining two-fifths were in an opposition party. Although respondents' parties spanned the political spectrum, they were concentrated toward the middle. Nearly nine of ten described their party's ideology as moderately left-wing (35 percent), centrist (33 percent), or moderately right-wing (18 percent). Only 9 percent said their party was strongly left-wing and a mere 4 percent described it as a strongly right-wing party.

group. Being out of power appears to be a prod to social media activity.

Electoral Differences. Differences in political parties are not the only political factors that distinguish one political system from the next. Political systems also vary in their electoral structure.

Party List System versus Single-Member District System. Electoral systems take different forms, but two predominate—the party list system, where parties get legislative seats in proportion to their share of the national vote, and the single-member district system, where the top vote-getter in a district gains its seat. Candidates elected through the district system would be expected to be more active on social media, given the fact that they can gain office only by winning the most votes in their district. This expectation would be particularly true of political systems that place the primary burden of campaigning on candidates rather than on the parties. [20]

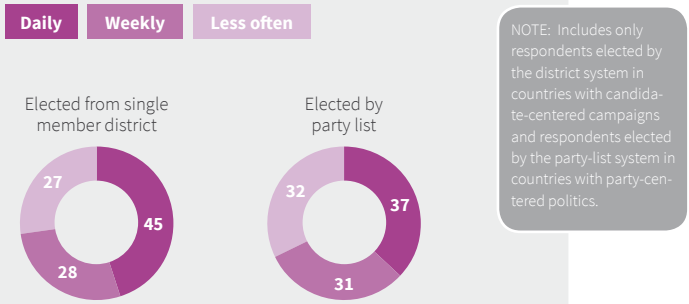
Indeed, as **Figure 19** shows, single-member district respondents in countries that have candidate-centered campaigns were more active on social media than party-list respondents in countries that have party-centered campaigns. On average for six campaign activities, 45 percent of the district-system respondents were engaged with Facebook on a daily basis compared with 37 percent of party-list respondents. District-system respondents were also heavier users during the legislative period.

Clearly, the single-member district system, which places the burden of getting elected on the politician rather than the political party, is a spur to heightened social media activity. The tendency

FIGURE 19.

Single-member district system legislators more active on social media

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of respondents)



applies to traditional media as well. District system respondents were far more likely than their party-list counterparts to receive a high level of media attention (see **Figure 20**). The difference, as would be predicted, was greatest at the local level—the support of local constituents is central to the success of district-system politicians. In terms of local newspapers, for example, district-system respondents were twice as likely as party-list respondents to say they received "a lot" of coverage.

One-sided versus Competitive Elections. A recent single-country study found that candidates in closely contested races made heavier use of social media than candidates in one-sided races.[21] Is that broadly true?

To address that question, we divided respondents into two categories: those who said they won their last election by a "very small margin" or "some-

"Those who won the last elections by a safe margin were slightly heavier social media users."

what small margin" and those who claimed they won by a "very large margin" or "somewhat large margin." Contrary to expectations, those who won by a safe margin were slightly heavier social media users (see **Figure 21**). On average for six campaign activities, they were more likely to employ Facebook "several times a day" (15 percent versus 12 percent) or daily (27 percent versus 25 percent). On the other hand, those who won election by a comfortable margin were more likely—26 percent to 20 percent—to make infrequent use of Facebook during the campaign.

FIGURE 20.

Single-member district system legislators get more news attention

Percentage saying they get "a lot" of news attention from . . . .

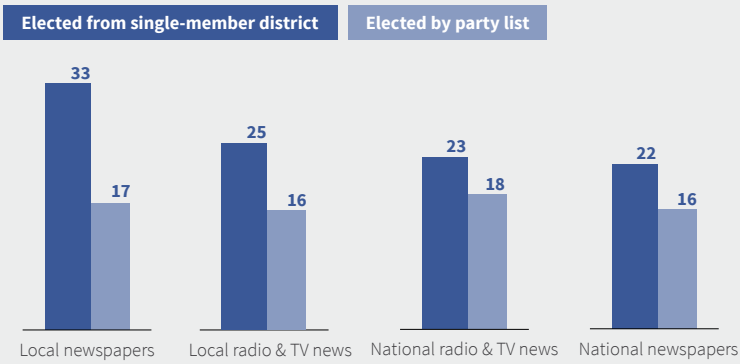
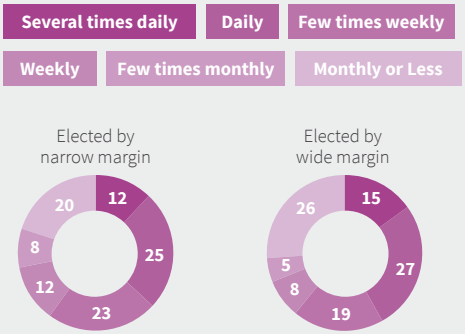


FIGURE 21.

Legislators' elected by a wide margin more active on social media

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of respondents)



This finding is at odds with the other findings presented so far. In those cases, respondents with the stronger incentive to engage in social media were the more active group. The contrary finding in this instance could owe to the fact that, on average, respondents who were narrowly elected were more likely to have a lower level of personal income, to reside in a non-urban setting, and to be in a political party where women have unequal status. Each of these factors was associated with reduced social media use.

Political Position. A country's politicians work within a common set of electoral rules but differ in their personal positions, which are the subject of this section.

Leader versus Non-Leader. Single-country studies have produced conflicting propositions about the effect of legislators' position in the legislative

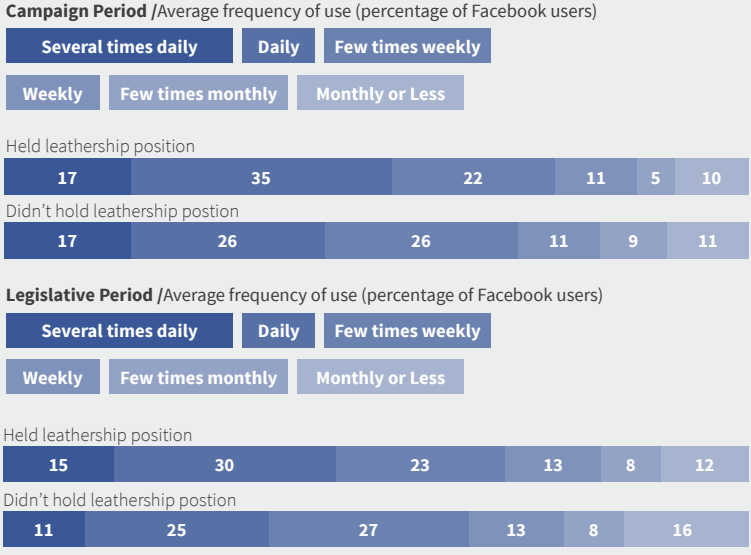
Facebook Followers & Societal Factors	Average (median) number of followers
PARTY SIZE	
Major party	4.000
Smaller party	3.000
PARTY IDEOLOGIST	
Centrist party	3.500
Non-Centrist party	3.000
GOVERMENT	
Goverment party	3.000
Opposition party	3.500
ELECTORAL SYSTEM	
Party list	4.000
District	3.700
COMPETITIVENESS	
One-sided election	4.000
Close election	2.000
POLITICAL HIERARCHY	
Leadership position	3.000
No leadership pos'n	5.000
CAMPAIGN MONEY	
Adequately funded	2.400

hierarchy. Some scholars suggest that well-positioned politicians have more resources and support, which provide a comparative advantage in the use of social media[22]. Other scholars posit that, because social media have a low entry cost, they are of particular benefit to less-established politicians[23].

To examine this issue, we divided our respondents into two categories: those who held a formal leadership position of any kind within their party or legislature and those who did not[24]. **Figure 22** shows Facebook use by the two groups as an

average of the frequency level for six activities. During the campaign period, 52 percent of the leadership group, compared with 43 percent of the other respondents, were daily users. During the legislative period, the difference was 45 percent to 36 percent.

FIGURE 22.
Legislators in a leadership position more active on social media



Note: Percentages are averages for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories.

The edge enjoyed by those in a leadership position could owe partly to their superior staff resources. Fifty-nine percent of those holding a leadership position managed their social media with significant help from staff, compared with 48 percent of those not holding a leadership position. Staff assistance could also help explain why leaders were more likely to maintain a blog (43 percent to 28 percent) and to have a political website linked to their social media accounts (73 percent to 58 percent).

Adequate Funding versus Poor Funding. The relatively low cost of social media can help poorly resourced politicians to be more politically active[25]. But do these politicians avail themselves of the opportunity? Or do better-funded politicians have an edge with social media, just as they do in other areas? To explore these questions, we divided our respondents into two groups: those who said their most recent campaign was "well-funded" or "adequately funded" and those who said it was "somewhat underfunded" or "very underfunded."

Poorly funded and better-funded respondents were equally likely—90 percent in each case—to use social media. They were also similar in their social media activity, although the better-funded respondents had a slight edge (see **Figure 23**). On average across six campaign activities, the same proportion of each group (16 percent) engaged with Facebook "several times a day," but the proportion of better-funded respondents who engaged "daily" was somewhat higher—33 percent to 28 percent.

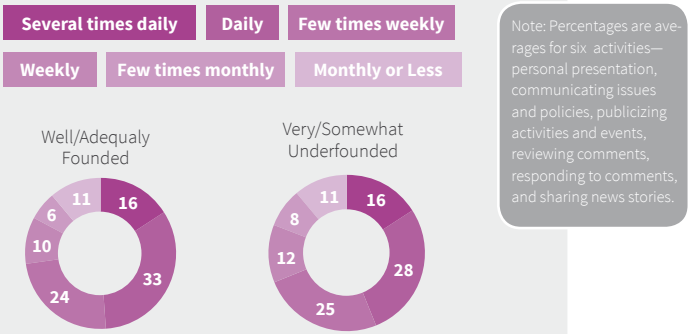
Nevertheless, social media served as an equalizer for underfunded respondents. In other areas—staffing, traditional media coverage, and support

within their party—they were at a clear disadvantage to their better-funded counterparts. Social media, which have a relatively low cost of entry and use, were the one resource where the two groups stood on nearly equal ground.

FIGURE 23.

Well funded and poorly funded legislators have similar activity levels

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of Facebook users)



Note: Percentages are averages for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories.

Media Rich versus Media Poor. The news media distribute their coverage unevenly, paying more attention to some politicians than others. How does the level of female politicians' news coverage compare with their level of social media activity? To look at that question, we divided our respondents into two groups: those who claimed to receive "a lot" of coverage from news outlets with those who claimed a lesser amount.

For all news outlets—national newspapers, national radio and television, local newspapers, and local radio and television—we found the same pattern: those who received heavier news cover-

"Some politicians are more media oriented than others, availing themselves of all media, traditional as well as social."

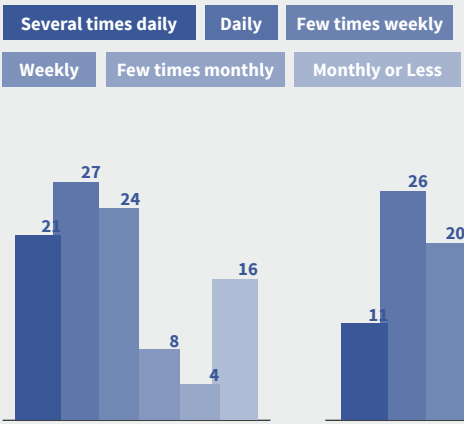
age were more active on social media. **Figure 24** shows the relationship for local newspaper coverage. As can be seen, higher-coverage respondents made much greater use of Facebook during the campaign than did lower-coverage respondents. They were twice as likely, for example, to be active "several times a day." As measured by our Activity Index, higher-coverage respondents engaged in nearly 40 percent more social media acts than did less-well-covered respondents—one of the largest differences found in this study.

Scholars have suggested that social media compensate for a lack of attention from traditional media. [26] That's true in a way. Social media are readily

FIGURE 24.

Legislators who get more news coverage are more active social media users

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of respondents)



Note: Percentages are averages for Facebook users for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories. Respondents who said they received "a lot" of news coverage, as opposed to "some," "very little," or "almost none," constitute the "heavy coverage" group.

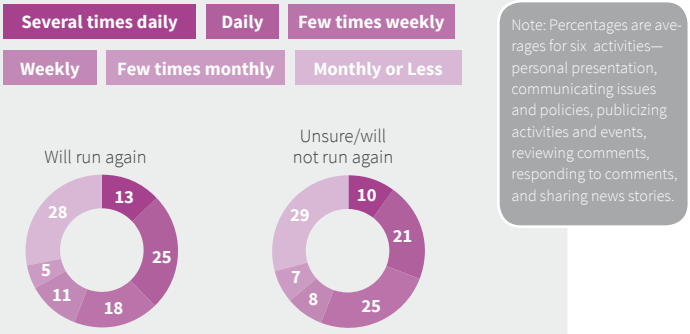
available for use by those who receive less news attention. Nevertheless, our study suggests that some politicians are more media oriented than others, availing themselves of all media, traditional as well as social.

Running Again versus Stepping Aside. Politics is a full-time career in many countries. Nevertheless, individuals who hold public office may decide at some point to retire or pursue another career. It's would seem reasonable to assume that such individuals because they have less need to cultivate public support would cut back on their use of social media. To investigate this possibility, we compared social media use during the legislative period of the respondents who said they would definitely run again to those who intended not to seek reelection or were undecided.

FIGURE 25.

Legislators who plan to run again are more active social media users during legislative period

Average frequency of Facebook use (percentage of respondents)



Note: Percentages are averages for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories.

As expected, those who planned to run again were more active on social media during their current legislative term than were other respondents (see **Figure 25**). On average across six social media activities, they were more likely to engage with Facebook "several times a day" or "daily" (38 percent to 31 percent). As measured by our Activity Index, those seeking reelection were roughly 20 percent more likely to engage in social media acts during the legislative period.

6. Lessons learned and recommendations

A central finding of this study is that individual factors are the main drivers of social media use. Although contextual factors clearly have an impact, we found, for every group studied, that the variation in social media use was greater at the individual level than at the group level. Every group had a significant number of respondents who were highly active on social media and a significant number who were barely active, if at all.

That's not to say that contextual factors are unimportant. If there was any doubt about their importance, it should have been dispelled by the effect of gender equality within a political party on social media activity. A political party that treats its female leaders unequally is shortchanging itself, as well as them. Nor can differences in personal situations be disregarded. Politicians who lack resources, whether stemming from personal income or poor campaign funding, cannot be expected as a matter of course to have social media operations on par with better-resourced politicians.

Nevertheless, female politicians would individually benefit from a fuller understanding of how to use social media effectively. This claim is not based on a gender gap in the use of social media. Studies show that female politicians are as active on social media as are their male counterparts[27].

The claim rests instead on two considerations. First, as this study has shown, social media are a political equalizer—the low cost of entry, com-

"A political party that treats its female leaders unequally is shortchanging itself, as well as them."

"Most female legislators recognize that they need a better understanding how to use social media effectively."

bined with their extensive use by citizens, make them a unique political resource. Virtually every other political resource—everything from campaign funding to news attention—is distributed unevenly, often to the disadvantage of women[28] Yet, most female legislators are not heavy users of social media. For the six political activities that comprised our Activity Index (communicating issue and policy positions, responding to comments, reviewing comments to see what people are thinking, revealing personal information, publicizing activities and events, and sharing news stories), 61 percent of all respondents and 56 percent of social media users engaged in each activity less than once a day on average.

Second, most female legislators recognize that they need a better understanding how to use social media effectively. A top assistant to U.S. President John F. Kennedy once remarked that, to take effective action, "you first have to know"[29]. That dictum applies to social media. When we asked respondents who use social media about their understanding of its effective use, only one in four claimed to be "very knowledgeable." Half claimed to be "somewhat knowledgeable," while the remaining fourth said they were "slightly knowledgeable" or "not at all knowledgeable." Said a Peruvian respondent, "I need more knowledge."

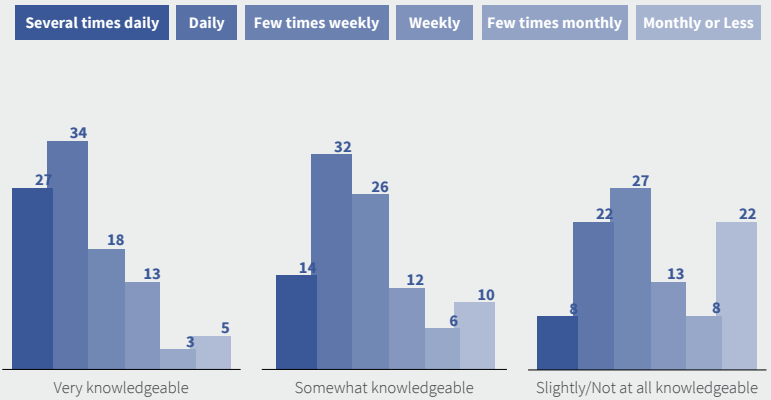
Knowledge level was the single best predictor of respondents' social media activity. As **Figure 26** shows, respondents who claimed to be knowledgeable in the use of social media were far more active than other social media users. On average across six campaign activities, they were more than three times as likely (27 percent to 8 percent) to engage with Facebook "several times a day" as were the least knowledgeable users. As measured

by our Activity Index, the most knowledgeable social media users engaged in 120 percent more social media acts on a daily basis than the least knowledgeable users. That difference was far greater than even the largest difference discussed earlier in this report—the 50 percent gap in usage between younger legislators and older ones. Indeed, once knowledge level was controlled, the age gap dropped significantly. For the most part, younger respondents were not more active because they were younger. They were more active because they were more knowledgeable.

FIGURE 26.

Legislators who are most knowledgeable about social media are the most active

Average frequency of use during campaign (percentage of Facebook users)



Note: Percentages are averages for Facebook users for six activities—personal presentation, communicating issues and policies, publicizing activities and events, reviewing comments, responding to comments, and sharing news stories. Respondents who said they received "a lot" of news coverage, as opposed to "some," "very little," or "almost none," constitute the "heavy coverage" group.

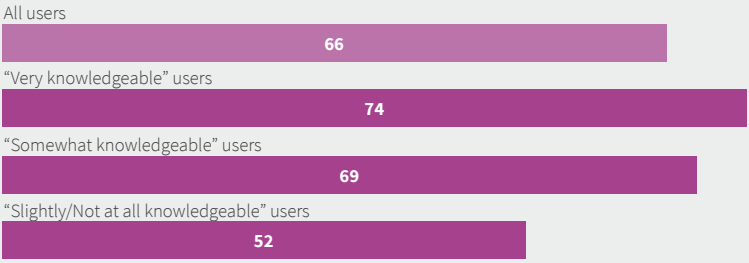
Knowledge of social media can help politicians to recognize opportunities that might have been overlooked. An example is the value of linking social media to a personal website, where the visitor can learn about the politician's issue positions, upcoming activities, and accomplishments, while being asked to lend support, time, and financial assistance[30]. Analytics can then be used to track who is coming to the site and what attracts their interest—information that can be used to adjust messaging and targeting[31]. Despite the clear value of linking social media accounts to a personal website, a full third of our respondents had not taken this step (see **Figure 27**). Even one in four of those who claimed to be "very knowledgeable" about social media had not done so.

The point is straightforward. Female legislators stand to gain from a fuller understanding of how best to use social media. The following sections provide guidelines that could strengthen social

FIGURE 27.

One in three social media users do not link their social media to a political website

Percentage of users who have a political website linked to their social media accounts



media efforts. The guidelines are based on the assumption that most legislators don't have unlimited amounts of time to invest in social media and don't have a technical background. Accordingly, the recommendations describe "best practices" for the typical user.

Know Your Audience. At the entry level, social media tools are easy to use. They're constructed that way so that millions of people will adopt them. But they're not equally effective at all tasks and in all locations.

A study found, for example, that Swedish and Norwegian politicians relied more heavily on Twitter than on Facebook,[32] even though the citizens of these countries made greater use of Facebook[33] The mismatch meant that some Swedish and Norwegian politicians were not engaging as fully with their constituents as they might have. However, the study also found that Twitter use in Norway and Sweden was higher than Facebook use among urban well-educated voters. In other words, there was a role for each platform, depending on which groups the politician was seeking to reach.[34]

Politicians should know which social media platforms are being used by their target audiences and how they are being used, and then build that information into their social media strategies. In almost every case, a multi-platform strategy makes sense, given that different platforms reach different audiences and have different strengths. Although that would seem self-evident, our survey suggests that many respondents were not pursuing that strategy. A full third of Facebook users, for example, were not making use of Twitter.

"Knowing your audience" includes tracking their responses. A study of Norwegian politicians' Facebook activity, for example, found a mismatch in the balance of what they were posting and what users were consuming, as judged by the number of likes, comments, and shares[35]. Legislators should monitor reactions to their postings to gain an understanding of what their followers prefer and adjust their messaging accordingly[36].

An analysis of the capacity of different social media platforms is beyond this report's scope but it's noteworthy that social media platforms are designed for particular purposes. Nevertheless, there are some guidelines that apply across platforms. Foremost is maintaining a steady identity and voice. Politicians are best served when they give constituents a consistent version of who they are and what they stand for. Inconsistency can create confusion, raising questions among constituents as to what a politician represents[37].

Platforms that are not routinely considered "social media" can be overlooked in devising a social media strategy. Email is a prime example. Email has been shown to be a superior tool for raising campaign funds[38]. Email's power as a fundraising tool rests on its capacity for the direct delivery of a concentrated message to a targeted audience. Moreover, email's power is magnified when integrated with social media. As one analyst put it, "email and social media marketing go together like Batman and Robin"[39].

Acquire Specific Skills. Social media platforms can serve a range of political purposes, everything from publicizing issue positions to recruiting volunteers. Each purpose requires a different tactic.

To obtain a rough idea of female legislators' understanding of tactical approaches, we asked respondents who were Facebook users to judge the platform's effectiveness for various purposes as indicated by "the amount of reach and engagement you receive." The results are shown in **Figure 28**. Fundraising was the area of greatest uncertainty—48 percent of the respondents said they were unsure about Facebook's effectiveness as a fundraising tool. When we asked respondents whether they had a particular question about the use of social media, no question was asked more frequently than that of fundraising. A Romanian respondent with 78,000 Facebook followers put it plainly: "How do I use it to raise funds?" she asked. The recruiting of volunteers was also an area of uncertainty—33 percent of Facebook users said they were unsure about the platform's effectiveness for that purpose.

Personal account or Public figure account

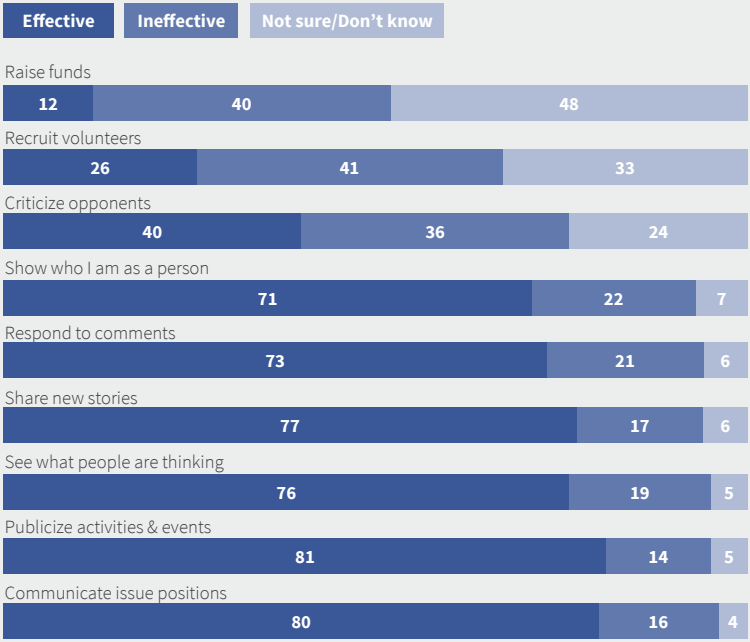
When respondents were asked how many Facebook followers they had, a far greater number had 5,000 than would be predicted on the basis of chance alone. As it happens, 5,000 is the "friend" limit that Facebook imposes on personal accounts. But Facebook also has an account category titled "Artist, Band or Public Figure" that has no limit on the number of followers. That account also reduces the burden on public officials—with it, they are not required to reciprocate or accept a follow request. For some politicians, a personal account, because of the greater control it allows, is the better choice. For most politicians, the public figure account is the better option in that it expands the platform's reach and potential for impact. Said a respondent from Ghana who has 11,000 Facebook followers, "A public profile is useful from the very start."

Uncertainty about how to use social media for fundraising and recruiting was characteristic of every respondent group—younger respondents, for example, were nearly as likely to express uncertainty as older ones. A source of the problem, as is explained below, is that many female legislators approach social media as a form of one-way communication rather than a form of interactivity.

FIGURE 28.

Fundraising and recruiting volunteers are areas of greatest uncertainty

For each activity, how effective is Facebook? (percentage of Facebook users)



The result is a "weak" tie to their followers. In order to get followers' active support that could include contributing funds or time, a "strong" tie is what is needed [40].

Increase Your Interactivity. Social media serve two strategic functions for the politician. One is publicity—making people aware of policy positions, activities, and the like. The second is engagement—discovering what constituents are

thinking[41]. Studies have found that most politicians use social media mainly as a publicity tool[42]. A study of New Zealand legislators, for example, concluded that "most politicians do not involve dialogue with readers of their posts . . . [using platforms instead as] high-tech ways of transmitting old-tech messages"[43]. Or, as another study put it, most politicians use social media "as an online billboard"[44].

"Social media serve two strategic functions for the politician: publicity and engagement."

Most of our respondents used social media as a publicity device. Although they engaged in dialogue with their followers from time to time, most used social media primarily as top-down channels for distributing information. A Swedish respondent said, "I use it only to get my message out." Among Facebook users, five times as many said they used the platform "primarily to raise my profile and get my message out" as said they used it "primarily to find out what people are thinking" (see **Figure 29**).

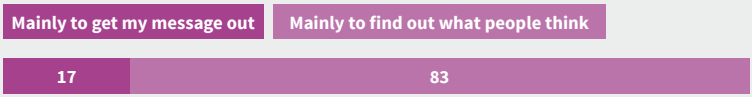
It's understandable why legislators would treat social media primarily for publicity purposes. Politics has traditionally involved top-down communication, and social media have the advantage, as does televised political advertising, of enabling politi-

FIGURE 29.

Most legislators use social media as a "billboard" rather than as a way to engage constituents

Which statement best describes your use of Facebook? (percentage of Facebook users)

Note: Includes only respondents who chose one of the two options.



cians to control their message. Moreover, the public expects political leaders to promote themselves and their agendas. Citizens want to know what their leaders are like and what they propose to do.

On the other hand, one-way communication is not what makes social media distinctive. Social media facilitate two-way communication, which allows for engagement with the public. There's an upside to doing so. Studies indicate that social media, when used interactively, are more likely to result in a positive opinion of politicians[45]. As a Finnish respondent said, "You get a good response if you ask people what they think." There's also a downside to not interacting frequently with followers. They are less likely to respond to postings by politicians who don't engage with them[46].

Interactivity is the key to developing "thick" ties with followers. As a Costa Rican respondent said, "it allows me to get to know their point of view." A Philippines' respondent noted that "my constituents alert me to problems in how programs are being administered." Personal connections deepen followers' engagement level, increasing the likelihood that they will transition from a passive supporter to an active one, which can include everything from donating to the campaign to providing information to sharing and repurposing postings[47].

FInnish MP:

"You get a good response if you ask people what they think."

Interactivity is not without its costs. It's more time consuming to use a social media platform to engage with followers than to use it a billboard. There's also the possibility of losing control of the message when interacting with followers. But the benefits—the creation of a loyal and energized body of followers—outweigh the costs for most politicians[48].

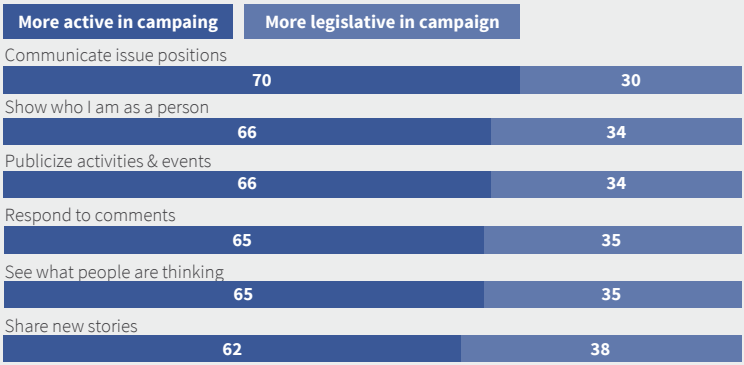
Targeted and Relevant Messages. Indiscriminate messaging can desensitize recipients to the point where they stop paying attention[49]. Targeted messages are more effective. As one analyst noted, "The days of blasting a generic message to a broad audience across several different social networks at the same time are over" [50].

At the same time, messaging that's too infrequent undermines the effort to create a personal bond with constituents[51]. As a respondent from the United Arab Emirates noted, "If you post infrequently it doesn't work well." Most of our respondents likely erred on the side of too few postings, particularly during the legislative period. As **Figure 30** indicates, social media activity was significantly lower for most respondents during that period as compared with the campaign period. Some respondents even terminated their activity during the legislative period. "I don't use it for legislative purposes," said one respondent.

FIGURE 30.

Legislators more active on social media during campaign than in legislature

Frequency of Facebook use (percentage of Facebook users)



There are at least two reasons why politicians should sustain a high level of social activity while in the legislature. First, it serves to solidify support generated by the campaign. The so-called "permanent campaign"—a development that began in the United States and has since spread—shows no sign of slowing down. [52] There's almost no better way for most officeholders to campaign while serving in office than to make active use of social media.

Second, a high level of social media activity during the legislative phase is justified by the relevance of legislative decisions. Research indicates that relevant messages are the ones that are most likely to be shared and repurposed.[53] Social media can also serve as a vehicle to highlight relevant issues that the legislature is failing to address. "Social media," said a Spanish respondent, "have allowed me to publicize policies that are not being presented in the National Congress."

Share Your Personal Story. Studies indicate that voters increasingly judge candidates as individuals as well as party representatives,[54] which has blurred the boundary between what's personal and what's political.[55] Although parties are still the lens through which most voters in most countries judge their choices, personal narratives are increasingly important.[56] Mostly true in candidate-centered electoral systems, it has also been shown to be increasingly true of party-centered systems. [57] Social media have contributed to that shift.[58]

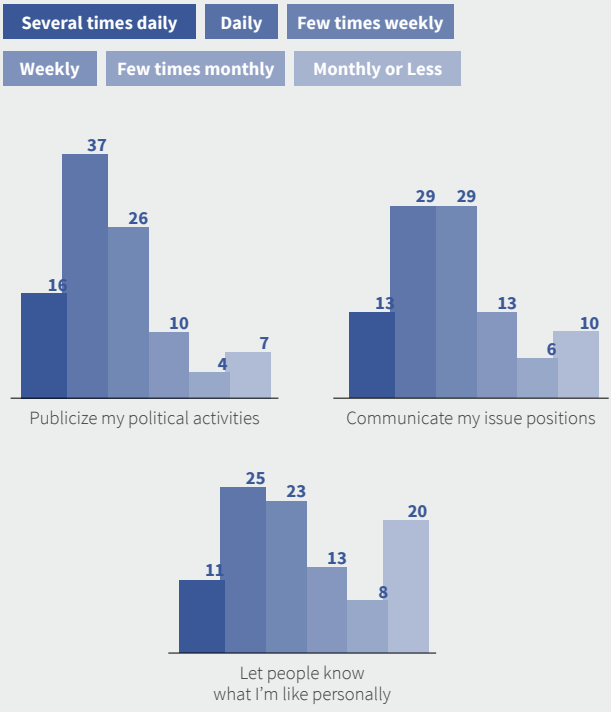
Personal postings were not a large part of the social media strategies of most of our respondents (see **Figure 31**). During their most recent campaign, they less often posted material that "lets people know what I'm like as a person" than they posted material that "communicates issue and

policy positions" or "publicizes my political activities and events." In fact, a fifth of Facebook users said they seldom if ever posted personal material. And more than one in four said they almost never posted such material during their time in the legislature.

FIGURE 31.

Personal postings get less emphasis than political postings

During campaign, how often do you use social media to . . . ? (percentage of Facebook users)



Studies indicate that female politicians are less likely than their male counterparts to share their personal stories on social media.[59] Although research has found only marginal differences in how female and male leaders use social media, personal postings are an exception. Male politicians tend to see messaging about their families and private lives as a way to round out their image profile, giving followers a look into the "softer side" of their lives.[60] For their part, female politicians tend to worry that exposing their private lives will activate gender stereotypes that run counter to their desire to create an image of strong leadership.[61] They also worry that such postings could trigger sexist comments.[62] Such concerns have a basis in fact. Nonetheless, studies show that most female politicians would benefit from messaging that highlights their caregiving and communal roles if that messaging is balanced with messaging aimed at strengthening their leadership image. [63] "Don't make it overtly political all the time," advised a British respondent.

It's worth noting that a social media strategy that includes personal display will not work for every female politician. A social media strategy that doesn't fit with a legislator's comfort level is unsustainable in the long run. Our survey revealed, for example, a sharp generational divide on postings that "let people know who I'm like as a person." Respondents who were under 50 years of age posted such material at twice the rate as those 50 or over. Social media strategies also need to conform to cultural norms. Female legislators in more traditional societies can face a greater risk of backlash if they play up their personal stories. And indeed, in our survey, respondents from countries where women's status is greatly unequal to that of men were much less likely to post personal material.

The Online Risk of Being a Woman.

Social media bring risk as well as opportunity. The use of social media exposes political leaders, men as well as women, to insulting and demeaning comments. On the other hand, women in positions of leadership are regularly subject to a type of invective seldom rarely visited upon men—insults and threats based on gender.

As the accompanying table shows, almost half of our respondents said they at least sometimes received through social media "insulting or threatening comments about women's ability/role." Of these respondents, roughly one in three claimed to get such messages "often" or "very often." When it came to "sexual threats or insults directed at me as a woman,"17 percent of respondents said they "sometimes" faced that problem and 10 percent encountered it "often" or "very often."

Sexually-based invective was reported by respondents of every background, age, position, and party. As would be expected, those who were more active on social media faced the problem more often. They were about 30 percent more likely to encounter it at least somewhat frequently. The strongest indicator, however, was women's social equality. In countries where women were extremely or substantially unequal, respondents were roughly 50 percent more likely to say they received sexual insults or threats at least somewhat often.

How often through social media do you get ...	Insulting or threatening comments about women's ability/ role?	Sexual threats or insults directed at you as a woman?
OFTEN/VERY OFTEN	16%	10%
SOMETIMES	31	17
RARELY/NEVER	53	73
	100%	100%

How can I protect myself?" asked a Namibian respondent. For egregious instances, social media outlets, including Facebook and Twitter, have a reporting process that can result in action against offenders. If physical harm is threatened, and the threat appears genuine, experts say that the recipient should immediately report the incident to authorities. Recipients are advised to retain offensive posts by taking a screenshot or saving them to a file.

"Two-thirds of all online activity is expected to take place through mobile devices."

Keep Up with Change. Social media are here to stay but are constantly evolving. New platforms have come on line in the past few years, and older ones have different trajectories. Twitter growth, for example, has stalled[64] while Facebook use continues to grow.[65]

User behavior also changes. Two recent changes have major implications for politicians' social media strategies. One is people's heightened preference for video.[66] In a recent six-month span, for example, average daily views of Facebook videos doubled.[67] Moreover, people respond differently to video than text.[68] HubSpot, a digital marketing firm, has found, for example, that social media users are far more likely to share visual content than text-only content and that text content accompanied by a relevant image is substantially more likely to be remembered by those who see it. [69]

The logic of social media is such that a highly crafted production is not required. As one analyst noted, "High production value is not what they are looking for." [70] What people are seeking is video that gives them the sense that they are engaged in "face-to-face" interactions with politicians they support. [71] Such video is easier than ever to create because of digital advances that have simplified the taking and uploading of photos and videos.

A second major change in user behavior is the shift to mobile. Within a few years, two-thirds of all online activity is expected to take place through mobile devices.[72] Mobile tablet sales recently surpassed desk and laptop computer sales, while broadband subscriptions are declining and wireless accounts are growing in number. [73]

The shift to mobile is often portrayed as a simple platform substitution that is expanding the number of Internet users, particularly in the developing world. [74] That's partly true—mobile is bringing new users to the Internet. [75] However, message consumption through mobile devices is different from consumption through computers with a high speed connection. [76] Research has found, for example, that short messages work best on mobile.[77] Mobile users are less willing than computer users to work their way through long messages. The guideline for mobile is to keep it short and to the point. It's also important to recognize that the computer and mobile audiences differ somewhat. Young adults and lower-income groups are particularly dependent on mobile devices.[78]

Take Time to Learn. Social media are revolutionary in that they offer the individual politician a low-cost means of reaching large numbers of people. But their value as a political tool depends on a politician's understanding of how best to use them. Many of our respondents acknowledged their knowledge deficit. "I need information to use it more effectively," said a Lithuanian respondent. "I need to understand it better so I can maximize its use," said a respondent from Argentina.

Investing deeply in social media training is not a sensible choice for every female legislator. For most politicians, there are not enough hours in the day to meet all the demands on their time. Like other choices they make, a cost-benefit assessment of social media is warranted. But what can be concluded is that politicians pay a price for underinvesting if social media are critical in their success. Who are these politicians? This report has identified the profile of many of them. They are the politicians who, because they're otherwise

disadvantaged by reason of resources or position, have a need for a low-cost equalizer.

Resources that can inform female legislators in the effective use of social media are readily available. Facebook and Twitter, for example, have instructional sites dedicated to the needs of political leaders. Sites aimed at the novice are also available, as are sites designed for the more knowledgeable. **Appendix A** provides a list of some of the best sites, including those of Facebook and Twitter.

7. Summary

We found that more than 85 percent of female legislators make at least some use of social media, with the level of use higher during the campaign period than the legislative period. Most users either managed their social media by themselves or split the effort somewhat evenly with staff. Facebook was by far the most widely used platform—more than 90 percent of social media users employed Facebook. No other platform was used by even as many as 70 percent of users.

The primary social media audiences for most respondents were the voters that support them, their campaign workers, and their constituents. Of decidedly secondary importance were elite audiences—news reporters, other politicians within their political party, and opposition party politicians.

Of the individual factors we examined, none was more closely associated with social media use than age. On average, respondents under 50 years of age, as compared with those 50 or over, were more likely to be social media users and, if a user, substantially more active in that use. Income, too, was related to social media use. Those with very high or above average income were much heavier users than those of average income or below.

A key finding was that the "motherhood penalty"—a term used by sociologists to describe the job-related disadvantages faced by mothers relative to non-mothers—does not apply to female politicians' social media use. Respondents with dependent children were as active on social media as those of comparable age without depend-

ent children. Social media are a flexible tool that can be employed while in the office, traveling, or at home, which facilitates their use by female legislators with childrearing responsibilities.

Of the societal factors we examined, none was more important than whether female legislators perceived themselves to be treated equally in their political party. Those who had that perception were far more active on social media than those who believed their party treated its female members unequally. In contrast, female legislators' perception of women's equality in their country was only weakly related to their level of social media activity.

Several political factors were found to be associated with social media use. On average, legislators who were members of an opposition party or members of a smaller party were more active on social media—an indication that social media use, because of its low cost and the role that personal initiative plays in its use, can serve as an equalizer for female parliamentarians who are otherwise politically disadvantaged. That conclusion is supported by the fact that poorly funded candidates were as active on social media as their well-funded counterparts. Social media were the one campaign resource where the two groups stood on nearly equal ground.

A central finding of this study is that individual factors are the main drivers of social media use. Although contextual factors clearly have an impact, we found, for every group studied, that the variation in social media use was greater at the individual level than at the group level. Every group had a significant number of respondents who were high-

ly active on social media and a significant number who were barely active, if at all.

Nothing was more closely associated with level of social media use than respondents' knowledge of social media. Among respondents who used social media, those who were knowledgeable in the effective use of social media were more than twice as active as those who were least knowledgeable.

Only about a fourth of respondents were highly knowledgeable, suggesting that social media are being underutilized by most female legislators. To make better use of social media, female parliaments should seek to "know their audiences"; acquire specific skills, such as how to use social media to raise funds; discover how to deliver targeted and relevant messages; increase their interactivity with followers; share their personal stories with followers; keep up with changes in social media platforms and use; and avail themselves of instructional resources.

Appendix A
Learning Resources

Specific Platforms

Facebook. With more than 1.7 billion users, Facebook is easily the world's premier social media platform, making it an essential tool for public figures seeking a presence on social media. Moreover, Facebook provides substantial support on how to use the platform effectively. Facebook business (elections), for instance, is dedicated to assisting candidates and campaign managers to persuade voters and build a base of supporters. Facebook also offers assistance in targeting voters by political affinity, geography, and other characteristics. *https://www.facebook.com/business/a/politics-industry*

In addition, Facebook provides step-by-step guidance for users who want to expand their audience reach beyond single messaging systems. Facebook ads, for instance, can help the user to create advertisements (visual or text content) that target women, individuals within specific salary brackets, or other constituency groups. *https://www.facebook.com/business/products/ads/*

Twitter. Twitter has more than 300 million active monthly users. Its strength is in the speed of use, although its effective use depends on well-timed and relevant tweets.[79] Twitter says its mission is "to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers."

Twitter has recently enhanced its platform for use by public officials, adding, for instance, polling and fund raising tools. Twitter has a 136-page handbook that, in its words, applies "lessons learned from campaigns and government agencies across the U.S. and around the world… to help you tap into the power of Twitter to connect with your constituents."[80] *https://blog.twitter.com/2014/the-all-new-twitter-government-and-elections-handbook*

WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a popular messaging platform in some countries, including India, Brazil, Mexico, and Russia. It claims more than a billion active users. The WhatsAppMarketing tool allows users "to create campaigns with the mobile phones of your potential clients and broadcast texts, pictures and viral videos to an unlimited number of recipients." Owned by Facebook, WhatsApp requires both the sender and receiver to have the platform's app and to be connected to the internet. WhatsApp's site provides guidance on its use. *https://www.whatsapp.com/faq/*

SMS. The only requirement for use of SMS (Short Messaging Service) is a mobile phone with service plan. There are more than 3 billion active SMS users. SMS does not require the user to connect with its audience before sending messages, nor does it require sender and receiver to have the same app. Although a useful platform in any country,[81] SMS is especially valuable in countries with low internet penetration.[82] *http://www.socialbrite.org/2010/02/23/how-to-set-up-an-sms-campaign-system/*

SnapChat. Snapchat is a relatively new and fast growing social media platform that appeals mainly to a younger demographic. Snapchat's smartphone app allows users to easily manipulate photos and send videos. Although Snapchat messages are deleted only seconds after sending them, the ease of creating and disseminating multimedia content make it useful to some public figures. *https://www.snapchat.com/ads; http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-06-02/snapchat-passes-twitter-in-daily-usage*

Instagram. Instagram is an online mobile photo-to-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking platform. Users can easily share visual content on the Instagram app, which also allows distribution through other platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. Owned by Facebook, Instagram has more than 500 million users and is growing rapidly, which has brought it into favor as a political marketing tool. *https://help.instagram.com/307876842935851/?helpref=hc_fnav*

General Advice

Getting Started. Although it's remarkably simply to start and use a social media platform, it's helpful at the outset to have a basic understanding of how to apply social media effectively. A useful guide is "10 Steps to Getting Started in Social Media Marketing." It provides tips on how to determine goals, develop a schedule, evaluate resources, and integrate marketing efforts. *https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/217578*

- Choosing a Platform. Platform selection depends on a number of factors, including constituents' use patterns. Research has made one thing clear: it is better to manage one or two platforms effectively than to manage four of five of them badly. In its "Getting Started With Social Media: A Resource Guide," Social Media Examiner provides tips on how marketers can choose the platforms that best fit their needs. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are among the platforms discussed in the guide. *http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/getting-started/*

- Live Video. Video is increasingly the medium of choice among social media users, so much so that politicians who rely heavily on social media should explore the option of adding live video to their efforts. SilconAngle has a "how to" guide on the use of live streaming tools, including Facebook Live. *http://siliconangle.com/blog/2016/02/01/facebook-live-vs-youtube-periscope-and-meerkat*

Appendix B

WIP Social Media Survey Questionaire

The survey questionnaire was administered to WIP's global membership through Qualtrics, an online survey instrument. The questionnaire was unusually long for an online survey but, in terms of the tradeoff, we deemed a smaller response rate to be less important than obtaining substantial information from those who did reply. The questionnaire was designed with automatic skips for respondents for whom a particular battery of questions was not relevant. For instance, a respondent who said she did not use social media was not asked subsequent questions about social media use.

The following questions are the English language version of the survey, which was also made available to respondents in Spanish and French.

Q1 Your gender

- Female
- Male

Q2 Your country

Q3 Your legislative office

- member of national legislature (parliament)
- member of multi-country legislature (e.g., European Parliament)
- member of sub-national legislature
- ormer legislator
- other

Q4 Which legislative chamber are you in?

- numerically larger chamber
- numerically smaller chamber (senate/upper chamber)
- legislature has only one chamber

Q5 Do you hold a leadership position in the legislature?

- No
- Yes, a top leadership position (e.g., Speaker, party leader)
- Yes, other leadership position (e.g., committee or subcommittee chair)

Q6 How were you elected?

- a party list
- by winning a district, though some of our members are elected on a list basi
- by winning in a district
- not elected by voters - serve in appointed/hereditary position

Q7 How close was your last election?

- won by very large margin
- won by somewhat large margin
- won by somewhat small margin
- won by very small margin

Q8 Relative to your campaign needs, how adequately funded was your last election?

- well-funded
- adequately funded
- somewhat underfunded
- very underfunded

Q9 Your career plans

- will run again for the legislature
- will run for a higher office
- undecided about running again
- will not run again

Q10 What considerations led you to enter elective politics? (check as many as apply)

- ☐ recruited by my party to run
- ☐ worked on staff for a party or elected official
- ☐ had high public visibility
- ☐ women's organizations encourage me to run
- ☐ community leaders encourage me to run
- ☐ worked in a civic organization or movement
- ☐ others in my family have held political office
- ☐ my belief that more women are needed in politics
- ☐ had the financial resources to succeed in politics
- ☐ it was my dream since childhood
- ☐ an issue affecting my community convinced me to run for office

Q11 **Your political party's position in legislature**

- governing party (my party has a majority of seats)
- opposition party
- party is part of the governing coalition

Q12 **Is your party...**

- a major party
- halfway between a minor party and a major party
- a minor party

Q13 **What is your party's ideology?**

- Strong left-wing
- Moderate left-wing
- Center
- Moderate right-wing
- Strong right-wing

Q14 **Your personal ideology**

- Strong left-wing
- Moderate left-wing
- Center
- Moderate right-wing
- Strong right-wing

Q15 **Are your country's elections**

- Mostly candidate centered - candidates have primary responsibility for organizing their campaigns and are the main focus of media and public attention
- Mostly party centered - parties have primary responsibility for organizing the campaign and are the main focus of media and public attention
- About evenly split between candidate-centered and party-centered

Q16 **In your country, how equal to men are women to men in terms of (response categories: "extremely unequal," "substantially unequal," "somewhat unequal," "slightly unequal," "about equal")**

- society in general
- economic opportunities
- politics in general
- your political party specifically

Q19 **On balance, do you think your gender has**

- helped your political career
- hurt your political career
- neither helped nor hurt your political career

Q20 **Now we'd like to ask a few questions about traditional news media, such as newspapers, TV news, and radio news. Traditional news media in my country are (response categories: "strongly disagree," "disagree," "somewhat disagree," "neither agree nor disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," "strongly agree")**

- more important for political newcomers/outsiders than for established politicians

- biased against my party
- a good way for politicians to promote issue and policy positions
- a good way for politicians to create a positive political image
- a good way for politicians to discover what the public is thinking
- a good way for politicians to criticize political opponents
- a good way for politicians to engage the public in politics
- more useful to men than women because men are more likely to have the knowledge and experience to use traditional media effectively
- so focused on personality and political fighting that it's hard to get people to pay attention to what's truly important in politics

Q21 How much news attention do you personally receive from (response categories: "almost none," "very little," "some," "a lot")

- national newspapers
- national radio and TV news
- local newspapers
- local radio and TV news
- online news outlets
- international news media

Q56 In your estimation, approximately what percentage of adults in your country have internet access?

- 90%
- 75%
- 60%
- 50%
- 40%
- 25%
- 10%

Q22 Now we have some questions about social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. Do you use social media in your campaign or legislative work?

- Yes
- No

Q25 Do you maintain a blog?

- No
- Yes, and I invite comments
- Yes, but I don't invite comments

Q55 Social media are (*response categories*: "strongly agree," "disagree," "somewhat disagree," "neither agree nor disagree," "somewhat agree," "agree," "strongly agree)

- more important for political newcomers/outsiders than for established politician
- very helpful to me in my work as a legislator
- very helpful to me in campaigning for election
- biased against my party
- a good way for politicians to promote issue and policy positions
- a good way for politicians to create a positive political image

- a good way for politicians to discover what the public is thinking
- a good way for politicians to criticize political opponents
- a good way for politicians to engage the public in politics
- more useful to men than women because men are more likely to have the knowledge and experience to use traditional media effectively
- so focused on personality and political fighting that it's hard to get people to pay attention to what's truly important in politics

Q24 Do you have a political website that is linked to your social media accounts?

- No
- Yes

Q26 How do you manage your social media?

- My staff does all or almost all of it
- Do some of it myself and also rely a lot on my staff
- Do all or nearly all of it myself

Q27 How personally knowledgeable are you in the effective use of social media for political purposes?

- Very knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Slightly knowledgeable
- Not at all knowledgeable

Q28 How often through social media do you get (response categories: "never," "rarely," "sometimes," "often," "very often")

- insulting of threatening comments about women's ability/role
- sexual threats or insults directed at me as a woman

Q57 How do you typically respond to sexual threats or insults on social media?

- ignore
- delete
- personally reply to offender
- block offender
- report offender to social media company

Q29 Please indicate the importance of each audience when you used social media in conducting your most recent election campaign. (response categories: "very unimportant," "somewhat unimportant," "somewhat important," "very important")

- other politicians in my party
- news reporters
- my campaign workers/volunteers
- my constituents generally
- voters who support me
- undecided voters
- first-time voters
- women
- men
- political opponents

Q30 **Please indicate the importance of each audience when you used social media in conducting your work in the legislature. (response categories: "very unimportant," "somewhat unimportant," "somewhat important," "very important")**

- other politicians in my party
- news reporters
- my campaign workers/volunteers
- my constituents generally
- voters who support me
- undecided voters
- first-time voters
- women
- men
- olitical opponents

Q31 **How much did you use the following social media in conducting your most recent election campaign (response categories: "didn't use," "monthly," "weekly," several times a week," "daily")**

- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Instagram
- WhatsApp
- SMS

Q32 **How much do you use the following social media in conducting your work in the legislature (response categories: "didn't use," "monthly," "weekly," several times a week," "daily")**

- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Instagram
- WhatsApp

Q33 **Approximately how many Twitter followers do you have?**

Q34 **What is your Twitter handle?**

Q35 **Approximately how many Facebook followers do you have?**

Q36 **What is the link or email associated with your Facebook account?**

Q37 **For each of the following activities, please indicate whether you think Facebook or Twitter is more effective? (response categories: "Facebook," "Twitter," "both equally," "not sure")**

- let people know who I'm like as a person
- communicate issue and policy positions
- publicize my political activities and events
- eview comments to see what people are thinking
- espond to comments

- raise funds
- recruit volunteers
- criticize opponents
- share news stories

Q38 For each activity, please indicate how often during your most recent election campaign you posted new material Facebook or checked Facebook for new notifications. (Note: The question refers only to new activity and not to material already on your Facebook page.) (response categories: "rarely/never," "monthly," "2-3 times a month," "weekly," "a few times weekly," "daily," "several times a day")

- let people know who I'm like as a person
- communicate issue and policy positions
- publicize my political activities and events
- review comments to see what people are thinking
- respond to comments
- raise funds
- recruit volunteers
- criticize opponents
- share news stories

Q39 For each activity, please indicate how often while conducting your legislative work you post new material on Facebook or checked Facebook for new notifications. (Note: The question refers only to new activity and not to material already on your Facebook page.) (response categories: "rarely/never," "monthly," "2-3 times a month," "weekly," "a few times weekly," "daily," "several times a day")

- let people know who I'm like as a person
- communicate issue and policy positions
- publicize my political activities and events
- review comments to see what people are thinking
- respond to comments
- raise funds
- recruit volunteers
- criticize opponents
- share news stories

Q40 Please indicate how effective you have found Facebook at promoting the following activities, as indicated by the amount of reach and engagement you receive (response categories: "not very effective," "slightly effective," "somewhat effective," "very effective," "not sure/don't know")

- let people know who I'm like as a person
- communicate issue and policy positions
- publicize my political activities and events
- review comments to see what people are thinking
- respond to comments
- raise funds
- recruit volunteers
- criticize opponents
- share news stories

Q41 Thinking now of your use of Facebook, which statement best describes your use of it?

- use it primarily to raise my profile and get my message out
- use it primarily to find out what people are thinking
- use it about equally for these two purposes

Q42 If you have a particular question about the use of Facebook so that you can use it more effectively for election/legislative purpose, please ask it here.

Q43 If you have a specific story or observation based on your use of Facebook that provides a lesson or lessons helpful to other candidates/legislators, please share it here.

Q44 Location of your home of residence

- rural area or village
- small or middle-sized town
- suburb of a city
- city

Q45 Year of birth

Q46 Highest level of education

- professional or graduate degree
- university graduate
- university but did not finish degree
- post-secondary trade or vocational training
- completed secondary school
- did not complete secondary school

Q47 Your primary occupation before entering politics

- Forestry, fishing, hunting or agriculture support
  Mining
- Utilities
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade
- Transportation or warehousing
- Information
- Finance or insurance
- Real estate or rental and leasing
- Professional, scientific or technical services
- Management of companies or enterprises
- Admin, support, waste management or remediation services
- Educational services
- Health care or social assistance
- Arts, entertainment or recreation
- Accommodation or food services
- Other services (except public administration)

- Unclassified establishments

Q48 Compared to others in your country, is your income level

- very high
- above average
- average
- below average

Q49 Marital Status

- married
- single never married
- unmarried living with partner
- single separated
- single divorced
- single widowed

Q50 Children (check as many as apply)

- none
- child/children not yet in school
- child/children still in primary or secondary school
- adult child/children

Q51 On a typical weekday, how many waking hours are you at home?

- 2 or less
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7-8
- 9-10
- more than 10

Appendix C
Activity Index

At several points in this report, we compared the levels of social media activity for different respondent groups using our Activity Index. The Index is a measure of the frequency with which a respondent initiated a social media act, either by posting new material or examining new material posted by others.

The Activity Index score for a respondent during the campaign period was created by summing the respondent's answers to the following set of questions:

For each activity, please indicate how often during your most recent election campaign you posted new material on Facebook or checked Facebook for new notifications. (Note: The question refers only to new activity and not to material already on your Facebook page.)

a. let people know who I'm like as a person
b. communicate issue and policy positions
c. publicize my political activities and events
d. review comments to see what people are thinking
e. respond to comments
f. share news stories

The Activity Index score for the legislative period was based on the same set of questions but with "while conducting your legislative work" in place of

"during your most recent election campaign" in the lead statement.

For each activity, respondents had a choice of the following responses: "several times a day," "daily," "a few times weekly," "weekly," "2-3 times a month," "monthly," and "rarely/never." We assigned a numerical weight to each of these response categories that reflected their relative frequency. For example, there are seven days in a week, so an answer of "daily" was given a score seven times greater than "weekly." The following are the weights assigned to each response category: several times a day (3), daily (1), a few times weekly (.4), weekly (.14), 2-3 times a month (.075), monthly (.033), rarely/never (0).

By converting the word categories into numbers, we were then positioned to create for each respondent a score based on their answers to the six questions. For example, a respondent who answered "daily" to three of the questions and "weekly" to three of them would have had a score of 3.42 (1 + 1 +1 +.14 +.14 +.14 = 3.42).

These individual scores could then be summed for all the respondents in a particular group and divided by the number of respondents in the group, resulting in an average activity score for the group's respondents. By doing the same thing for another group, we could then compare their average activity levels. For example, if group A had an average activity score of 2.00 and group B had an average score of 3.00, we could conclude that, according to the Activity Index, respondents in group B engaged in 50 percent more social media acts on average than did respondents in group A.

We used Facebook activity to create the Activity Index because 94 percent of social media users in the sample used Facebook. No other platform was used by more than two-thirds of the respondents. Moreover, users typically made great use of Facebook than other platforms they were employing. We conceivably could have asked the survey question differently, substituting "social media" for "Facebook." In designing the survey, we chose a specific platform on grounds that such a question would result in more accurate recall of activity. This approach is validated by media studies showing that reported media exposure based on answers to questions about specific sources (e.g., "did you read the front pages of a daily newspaper within the past 24 hours," "did you watch a television newscast within the past 24 hours") provide a more reliable and valid indicator of people's actual level of news exposure than do answers to a broad question of news exposure (e.g., "did you see or hear any news within the past 24 hours").

Appendix D

Survey Respondents, By Country

The survey was conducted using WIP's membership email list. Members were contacted several times during the period from late 2015 to mid-2016 to request their participation.

In addition to the 531 respondents included in this report, the survey was completed by a small number of former or sub-national legislators. They were dropped from the sample. The study was designed to be a study of the social media behavior of national-level legislators in office at the time of the survey.

Also excluded from the sample are a small number of respondents that were omitted for reasons of numerical balance. For example, the survey yielded 10 respondents from Andorra, which has less than 100,000 residents. To include all 10 would give that country undue weight in the data distributions. We applied a simple rule in such cases: each country could have at least three respondents but no country could have more than three respondents per million inhabitants. When a country exceeded the limit, we used random selection to select the respondents that would be deleted from the sample. Fewer than two-dozen respondents from four countries—Andorra, Fiji, Iceland, and Latvia—were affected by the rule. We compared the results when they were deleted with the results that would have occurred if they had been

kept in the sample. The findings were unaffected by the deletion, but we concluded, in the interests of creating a more representative sample, that their deletion was appropriate.

Samples obtained through online surveys, as well as other methods, are subject to distortions arising from response rates. That's particularly true when sampling elite populations. Legislators in some countries suffer from "polling fatigue." They have been asked so many times over the years to fill out a survey that they no longer respond to such requests. The United States is one of these countries—a reason that its female legislators are underrepresented in our sample. Nevertheless, because our sample was drawn from WIP's list of female legislators, which includes about 90 percent of such legislators, the sample would be expected to be more representative than if based on alternative, less exhaustive lists. We also sought to improve the representativeness of the sample by distributing the questionnaire in three languages—English, Spanish, and French. That decision was based on an earlier WIP survey showing that a very high percentage of its membership is fluent in at least one of these languages.

Our sample included a broad spectrum of WIP's membership. Legislators from 107 countries are included. The following list identifies the countries represented in the sample and the number of sample respondents from each country.

Afghanistan	2
Albania	4
Algeria	8
Andorra	3
Antigua and Barbuda	2
Argentina	1
Armenia	1
Australia	8
Austria	14
Azerbaijan	1
Bahrain	1
Belgium	12
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2
Botswana	2
Brazil	3
Bulgaria	2
Burkina Faso	2
Burundi	3
Cote d'Ivoire	8
Cameroon	5
Canada	26
Chad	3
China	1
Comoros	1
Congo, Republic of the...	1
Czech Republic	20
Democratic Republic of the Congo	7
Denmark	9
Dominica	1
Ecuador	8
El Salvador	3
Estonia	5
Ethiopia	3
Fiji	1

Finland	4
France	6
Gambia	1
Georgia	1
Germany	10
Ghana	1
Greece	10
Grenada	3
Honduras	1
Hungary	2
Iceland	3
India	3
Iran, Islamic Republic of...	3
Iraq	3
Ireland	12
Israel	2
Italy	12
Jamaica	2
Japan	1
Jordan	2
Kenya	24
Kiribati	1
Latvia	6
Liberia	5
Liechtenstein	2
Lithuania	2
Luxembourg	2
Madagascar	1
Malawi	5
Malaysia	5
Maldives	1
Malta	2
Mauritania	3
Mexico	7

Montenegro	3
Morocco	5
Myanmar	25
Namibia	4
Netherlands	3
New Zealand	7
Niger	5
Nigeria	1
Norway	12
Oman	1
Pakistan	3
Philippines	12
Poland	1
Portugal	17
Republic of Korea	1
Romania	10
Rwanda	5
Saint Lucia	2
Saudi Arabia	1
Senegal	1
Serbia	7
Seychelles	3
Sierra Leone	1
Slovakia	1
Somalia	1
South Africa	7
Spain	1
Sri Lanka	1
Sudan	5
Suriname	1
Sweden	7
Switzerland	3
Tunisia	8
Uganda	4
Ukraine	4
United Kingdom & No. Ireland	18
United States of America	1
Zambia	1
Zimbabwe	2

Endnotes

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[6]When respondents were questioned about their press attention, they were given four possible responses: a lot, some, very little, and almost none. It's possible, of course, that "a lot" of press attention might mean somewhat different to a political newcomer than someone who's been in politics for a longer period, which might account for the fact that younger respondents reported a higher level of press attention than older respondents.

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[14]Respondents were also given the choice of describing the position of women in their society as "somewhat equal." About a third of respondents did so. They are not included in this section's analysis because its purpose is to compare legislators who work in countries that differ substantially in terms of women's equality.

[15]As in the analysis of social equality, we did not include respondents who said "somewhat equal" when looking at the relationship between social media use and equality within respondents' political party.

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[20]In addition to differing in their formal electoral systems (for example, single-member district system or party-list system), countries differ in whether political parties or candidates take primary responsibility for organizing election campaigns. As would be expected, the parties usually have this burden in countries with the party-list system of election, while the candidates typically have it in countries with the single-member district system. But there are exceptions to the pattern, which changes the incentive structure. For example, candidates in a single-member district system would be expected to have less incentive to campaign vigorously if, in their country, the responsibility for organizing the campaign rested with their party and not with them. For this reason, our survey, in addition to asking respondents about their country's electoral system, asked them whether their country's campaigns were candidate-centered or party-centered. We used the combination of the two questions to look at the impact of electoral systems on social media use. One group includes only respondents elected by the district system in countries with candidate-centered campaigns and the other group includes only respondents elected by the party-list system in countries with party-centered politics. It should be noted, however, that single-member district respondents were found to be more active on social media, although by a smaller margin, when we didn't screen out respondents whose country's campaign mode did not coincide with its electoral system.

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