# WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAREERS 2022

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**By Sofia Collignon, Queen Mary University of London and Minna Cowper-Coles, King's College London, Global Institute for Women's Leadership**

# Foreword

**By Julia Gillard, Chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership**

Democracy is flawed if both men and women are not equally represented. Yet we are still a long way from that point, with currently only 26 percent of parliamentarians being women. Change will not happen by itself. Rigorous research is a key first step to ensure we push for the evidence-based reforms needed to support more women in their political careers.

In the last few years we have heard of incidents from parliaments around the globe that have made us stand up and take notice of the deeply problematic cultures that exist at the centre of some of our democracies. Serious and long standing changes must be put in place to ensure that women and men can carry out the important work of representation in an environment where they are shown respect and their needs are properly accommodated.

This report brings together survey results from women parliamentarians in 66 countries and finds that there are some astonishing similarities in women's experiences. Women face problems at the selection

stage and with the cost of campaigning, but formal mechanisms are increasingly in place to help get women into parliaments. Nevertheless, once they are there, women face difficulties balancing their family responsibilities with their political careers, due to long commutes and onerous workloads. Most shockingly, overwhelming numbers of the women surveyed had experienced violence and harassment either online or direct physical attacks. This level of violence and harassment is not acceptable.

The findings here point to several key areas where reforms are needed. The next step is for lawmakers to heed this call. Change is needed, and urgently.

# Foreword

**By Silvana Koch-Mehrin, President and Founder of Women Political Leaders**

We cannot fix what we can't measure. In today's world, it is important to have up–to–date data and evidence to make informed decisions and drive change. This study provides just that, and I believe that it is a must–read for anyone who cares about equality and creating a more inclusive society. "Women's Political Career" delivers a comprehensive overview of the experiences of women in political careers and offers valuable insights for improving representation and increasing equality in politics. This latest edition offers new data and a fresh perspective on the state of women's political representation, taking into account the impact of the COVID–19 pandemic.

While the pandemic has presented new challenges for women in politics, the study highlights that there are still systemic issues that limit their participation, such as internal party dynamics. As a former politician, I have seen firsthand the major hurdles that internal party issues create for women seeking to participate in politics. From a lack of support and mentorship to

gender-based discrimination and bias, these issues create a challenging environment for women to succeed. Political parties play a key role as gatekeepers to positions in politics, and it is essential that they take action to remove the barriers facing women.

For too long, women have been underrepresented in leadership positions, and it is time for that to change. I encourage all decision makers and policymakers to take a close look at the findings and use them to implement policies that will drive real change. The study is a call to action for all of us to work together to create a world where women have equal opportunities to lead and succeed in politics.

Women Political Leaders (WPL) is committed to supporting its network of women politicians and advocating for fairness in the political arena. Recognizing the importance of tools and resources that help drive change, WPL will continue investing in creating resources that influence the lives of women politicians.

# Foreword

**By Obiageli Ezekwesili, Founder & President of Human Capital Africa (HCA); Founder & Chair, SPPG/FixPolitics; Senior Economic Advisor, The Africa Economic Development Policy Initiative (AEDPI); Chair of the WPL Board**

The role of research, especially data analytics, is now better recognized as an effective tool for more correctly identifying the underlying critical issues that persist in entrenching gender gaps between men and women in societies and across political, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. The partnership between the renowned Global Institute for Women's Leadership, King's College and Women Political Leaders has produced a report that provides high quality analytical evidence on the barriers and solutions that are effective for closing the gap in poor representation of women compared to men within the political life of most countries in the world.

First, the findings and results of each survey can be used in-country to rally all stakeholders in society for salient actions that can be tracked for impact by observing trends and implementing changes. Several decades of mostly anecdotal evidence induced attention to unequal access of men and women to political power or more broadly, public leadership

opportunities failed to establish the important links with the overall health of economies, productivity, social capital, cohesion, stability and other desirable social goods. Research findings of the kind that the Women Political Career Survey provides are what empower citizens, governments, businesses and other relevant actors to connect the dots and awaken more consciousness for action.

For example, this year's results should trigger reflections on what has happened in specific sectors across the 66 countries surveyed regarding the key finding of the 2015 survey that, "in comparison with men, women's political careers were impacted more heavily by their commitment to family and caring responsibilities". Have any of the countries layered more burdens and commitments on their women or taken policy measures to lighten the barriers that make politics unattractive to them? Data forces societies to confront difficult questions.

Second, the survey design makes recommendations, making it easier to understand why or how some countries improve while others decline in their scores. There is ample evidence that global improvements are not possible until more countries adopt and adapt best practices that speed up inclusive practices in politics and development. We do not need a few countries occasionally doing very well, what we need is every country doing consistently well annually to gather the

right momentum required to speedily reach the tipping point that closes the unacceptable gender gap.

The Survey has made it simple for all countries that are serious to close the gap to take the actions that can do so rapidly. Political skills are gender neutral and women can outperform men where equal opportunities exist. Just do it.

# Acknowledgements

The authors and publishing organisations (WPL and Global Institute for Women's Leadership) would like to thank all the women parliamentarians and leaders who contributed to this research by taking the time to fill out our survey. Being able to understand the views of such a diverse group, who share the extraordinary privilege of being able to represent their people as parliamentarians, is fundamental to ensuring we can build better institutions in the future. We are particularly appreciative as we know – and our research really confirms this point – how incredibly busy these women are.

We are also indebted to Dr Joyce Banda, Åsa Lindestam, Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, Ameenah Gurib Fakim and Verónica Delgadillo García for giving their valuable time to be interviewed about their experiences. While their experiences reflect the difficulties of political life and how they are gendered, their interviews also provide inspiration for those considering a career in politics. Their message is, that despite all the difficulties, the impact that you can make in a political career makes it all worthwhile.

The authors are also indebted to Anthony Pepe, Nina Melkonyan and Rabeb Idriss from Women Political Leaders who all contributed significant time and energy to this project. Anthony and Rabeb conducted the interviews, and Anthony and Nina provided useful comments on the draft reports. Antara Khanom provided valuable assistance through a literature review.

# Executive Summary

It is over a hundred years since the first women were elected to national parliaments, yet women worldwide still hold only 26.4 percent of parliamentary seats (IPU 2022). While progress has been made in recent years there is still much to be done to ensure women's voices are heard as much as men when it comes to making the decisions that shape all of our lives. This report follows on from the 2015 report *The Female Political Career* and aims to understand the experiences and intentions of women in politics in today; it is based on survey responses from women politicians in 66 countries seeking to better understand the motivations and challenges shared by women who decide to pursue a political career.

The 2015 study showed that, in comparison with men, women's political careers were impacted more heavily by their commitment to family and caring responsibilities. This project shows that combining family, care and a political career continues to be a serious concern for women entering politics and one of the biggest hurdles once they are there. Women face impossibly high workloads and this makes carving out

time to care for and support family members a real challenge.

The other major barrier for women is harassment, abuse and violence directed at women in politics. We find that 85 percent of respondents had received online abuse, and more than one in ten had suffered physical violence. This issue was pointed to as a major concern for women entering politics, and has continued to be a hurdle for them to overcome. Clearly not enough is being done to ensure the safety of women in politics.

When looking at women's entry and progression into politics we find that our respondents are highly educated with family connections to politics. Whether this may be connected to the high bars for entry is not explicitly clear. We also find that political parties are seen as the major gatekeepers to entry into politics, and getting selected and/or put in an adequate position on a list continues to be a key difficulty. Another difficulty is the cost of campaigning, women suggest that they paid on average approximately a third of the costs of campaigning from their own funds.

Despite these barriers it is inspiring and encouraging to hear the voices of the women who when they get into

politics seek to represent women's interests, and show that they do so in their choice of policies. We also find that both the women who responded to our survey and agreed to be interviewed hold on to the fact that despite the difficulties, a career in politics is worthwhile because it is, to quote Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, "the fastest and most effective way to accomplish change".

# Key Findings

The findings below are based on our online survey which had 307 responses from parliamentarians and women in politics across 66 countries.

### Combining Family and Caring with a Political Career

- Combining a career and family life is the main concern for many women politicians.
- Loss of time with family (23 percent) and loss of family privacy (14 percent) are the main concerns that women had before standing for office.
- Women politicians continue to be the primary carers for their children in 44 percent of cases.
- Women report excessive workloads including on average over 37 hours a week working in parliament, 22 hours a week on constituency work, 15 hours on other political events and 14 hours commuting.
- Only about 1 in every 4 women parliamentarians have access to childcare through parliament.

## Violence against Women in Politics

- Harassment, abuse and violence was the major concern for women when considering a career in politics after balancing family with their career.
- 85 percent of respondents experienced online harassment and abuse.
- 11 percent of respondents experienced physical violence.
- Women parliamentarians on average placed themselves at 4.4 on a scale of 0=safe to 10=very unsafe, but feelings of safety varied across regions.

## Women Supporting Women

- 94 percent of respondents said that they feel a responsibility to represent women's interests.
- We found substantial overlap between issues respondents defined as women's interests and their advocating priorities.
- Only 46 percent of respondents work in a parliament with a women's caucus, and only 19

percent work in a parliament with a mentorship programme. Despite these both being important structures for supporting women in parliament.

## Impact of COVID-19

- Respondents found COVID–19 pandemic had both negative (65 percent) and positive (23 percent) impacts on their ability to do their work.
- Social distancing measures limited their opportunities to meet with constituents and colleagues, and lockdowns meant that those with dependents often had greater difficulties balancing work with care for their family members.
- The movement to online and hybrid meetings reduced travel and allowed for more time with family.

## Entry and Progression in Politics

- Respondents tend to be highly educated and many have close family connections to politics.

- Over 80 percent of respondents indicated that they were encouraged to run by family members or a spouse.
- Political parties play a key role as gatekeepers to positions in politics. Internal party issues were seen as the major hurdle in most respondents' political careers.
- 64 percent of respondents said they had formal mechanisms for balancing gender in politics.
- On average women pay 32 percent of their campaign funding out of their private funds, and money was pointed to by many as a major hurdle for those entering politics.

# Recommendations

1. Parliaments, political parties and campaigning rules must work to provide better support to people with caring responsibilities, through providing childcare support, increased flexibility and reduced workloads.
2. Parliaments, political parties and campaign rules must work to increase the safety of women in politics, and tackle online abuse, threats and physical violence.
3. The costs of campaigning for individuals should be reduced, governments could either cap campaign costs, provide funds or else political parties should seek to fund their own candidates' campaigns.
4. Women's caucuses and mentoring schemes should be set up in more parliaments to help women work together to support women and better represent women's interests.
5. Quotas or the use of formal measures to increase the gender balance of parliamentarians remain an important tool for helping women enter into politics, we recommend their uptake where other barriers remain high.

**"Whenever a woman rises we need to ensure that she stays there because she becomes that role model, she becomes that mentor to the younger people that younger girls can look at."**

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, first female President of Mauritius (2015-2018)**

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**"Politics is the fastest and most effective way to accomplish change."**

**Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, MP, Indonesia**

# Introduction

Women remain underrepresented in positions of power globally, despite it being over a hundred years since the first women were elected to national parliaments. Worldwide they hold, on average, 26.4 percent of seats in national legislatures (IPU 2022). This lack of women in politics persists, despite a growing global consensus around the importance of gender equality in representation.

While progress has been made in recent years there is still much to be done to ensure women's voices are heard as much as men when it comes to making the decisions that shape all of our lives. When legislatures are diverse and gender balanced, we can hope to see the production of laws which better represent the needs of the full diversity of the population. Research shows that the better representation of women in politics does impact policy outcomes. Where women are better represented, scholars find outcomes such as increasing spending on care and health, and even reduced mortality and better child health (Cowper–Coles, 2020; Ng and Muntander 2018; Swiss 2012). This indicates that when politics is male dominated, the priorities of women are not being

adequately represented. This report seeks to better understand the experiences of women in politics, in order to better support them in their careers.

This report follows a previous report published in 2015. *The Female Political Career 2015* showed the results of a survey of women and men in politics and highlighted the key differences in their experiences. This report returns to women politicians. It explores the findings of a new survey of women in politics, asking about their experiences, views and ambitions. Over 300 respondents from 66 countries contributed to this project. The survey data is complemented with in–depth interviews with five women politicians whose careers span four continents and include two presidencies. These remarkable women help to bring to life the findings from the survey data.

The 2015 study showed that in comparison with men, women's political careers were impacted more heavily by their commitment to family and caring responsibilities. This project shows that combining family, care and a political career continues to be a serious concern for women entering politics and one of the biggest hurdles once they are there. Women face impossibly high workloads and this makes carving out

time to care for and support family members a real challenge.

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When looking at women's entry and progression into politics we find that our respondents are highly educated with family connections to politics. Whether this may be connected to the high bars for entry is not explicitly clear. We also find that political parties are seen as the major gatekeepers to entry into politics, and getting selected and/or put in an adequate position on a list continues to be a key difficulty. Another difficulty is the cost of campaigning, women suggest that they paid on average approximately a third of the costs of campaigning from their own funds.

Despite these barriers it is inspiring and encouraging to hear the voices of the women who when they get into

politics seek to represent women's interests, and show that they do so in their choice of policies. We also find that both the women who responded to our survey and agreed to be interviewed hold on to the fact that despite the difficulties, a career in politics is worthwhile because it is, to quote Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, the fastest and most effective way to accomplish change.

**"Leadership is a love affair, you must fall in love with people yourself and the people must fall in love with you. When that happens, it is about serving them and it is about servant leadership. . . I am saying this as an African Women in an African setup, where 85 percent of people are rural-based, you actually go into the villages and you see them yearning for love, and if you are a leader with your soul, you will hug them and sit down with them and listen to them and act on their issues."**

**Joyce Banda, President of Malawi (2012-2014)**

# About the Survey

The survey was in the field between August 2021 and January 2022. We contacted 2,346 women politicians of which we had valid email addresses. We invited them to participate in the survey and gave them the option to do it in English, French or Spanish depending on the language they felt more comfortable with. We received 307 anonymous answers (13 percent response rate). 75 percent were answered in English, 13 percent in French and 12 percent in Spanish. From the 220 answers that included the country they come from we can say that the largest concentration of responses come from the United Kingdom (10 percent); Spain (8 percent); Belgium (7 percent); Ireland (6 percent) and Sweden (5 percent). The full breakdown of responses by country can be found in the section Respondents. There is significant variation in terms of response rates per question. In the discussion above we include the number of valid responses for the different questions.

We coupled the survey with interviews with five prominent women leaders in different regions of the world. The in–depth interviews were about 45 minutes long, allowing us to put the findings of the survey in context and enrich our analysis. Combining survey data

with the interviews makes us able to better understand who are women leaders today, what are their characteristics, aims and aspirations and the struggles they continue to face.

## Respondent Profile

Women parliamentarians who responded to the survey are, on average, 51 years old. 17 percent of them indicated that they belong to an ethnic minority in their country. 63 percent of women in the sample hold an MSc or PhD. We do not find evidence of significant differences in educational profiles between continents, indicating that women in politics across the globe tend to be highly educated.

There is a diversity in the religious affiliations of the respondents. The majority of the respondents (69 percent) indicated that they are Christian, 11 percent are Muslim; 16 percent are unaffiliated with any church or religion 2 percent are Hindu and 3 percent belong to another religion. 26 percent of the sample never attend religious services, 29 percent attend religious services about once a month or more and 26 percent only attend on special holidays.

We asked women what their occupation was before their first election. The largest concentration of responses indicated that they were in the legal profession (11 percent), 10 percent were in the civil service and government administration. 67 percent of them occupy a high-level leadership or management position. 17 percent continue working in their profession for a reported average of 29 hours per week.

81 percent of women respondents were elected for their current position. 42 percent were on the party list while 19 percent of respondents were directly appointed. 43 percent of the sample represent a national constituency, 41 percent represent an urban or semi-urban constituency and 16 percent a rural one. 34 percent of women sit in the Lower Chamber of their country and 35 percent sit in the Upper Chamber. 31 percent of women are in unicameral legislatures. 3 percent are members of the European Parliament. 61 percent are incumbents in the last election and 39 percent non-incumbent.

# Entry and Progression in Politics

This first section looks at how women enter and progress in their political careers, from nomination through to their future ambitions. Previous studies have shown that women are less likely to run than men unless they have specifically been asked, and they also face greater barriers in terms of having less money to fund their campaigns and may face greater scrutiny from the media (Cowper–Coles 2020). The *Female Political Career 2015* found that women were less likely to have ambitions for higher careers and faced greater barriers in terms of campaign funding than men (Rosenbluth et al., 2015).

While 38 percent of women leaders in the survey consider that their gender has positively impacted their effectiveness as a parliamentarian, it is no secret that they face important obstacles to achieving a successful political career.

**"I think young women consider it and ask 'Is it worth the price to get into politics?"**

**Åsa Lindestam, MP (2002-2022), Deputy Speaker of the Riksdag (2018-2022), Sweden**

## Deciding to stand

Taking that first step into politics is crucial, but even at this starting point, women face more worries than men. In *The Female Political Career 2015,* they found women in parliament had greater fears around gender discrimination, loss of privacy and loss of family time than men (Rosenbluth et al., 2015).

We asked participants to indicate if they were concerned about a series of political challenges before deciding to run for office for the first time. We find, as shown in Figure 1, that the top three concerns are: that the election would take away time with family (23 percent), concerns for the privacy of their family (14 percent) and harassment, abuse and intimidation on social media (11 percent). Not being taken seriously was mentioned in fourth place (10 percent).

We asked women parliamentarians in an open-ended question what was the biggest hurdle faced to attain office. Reading their answers, some topics emerge: sexism, harassment, finances, motherhood, party barriers and lack of experience/self-confidence.
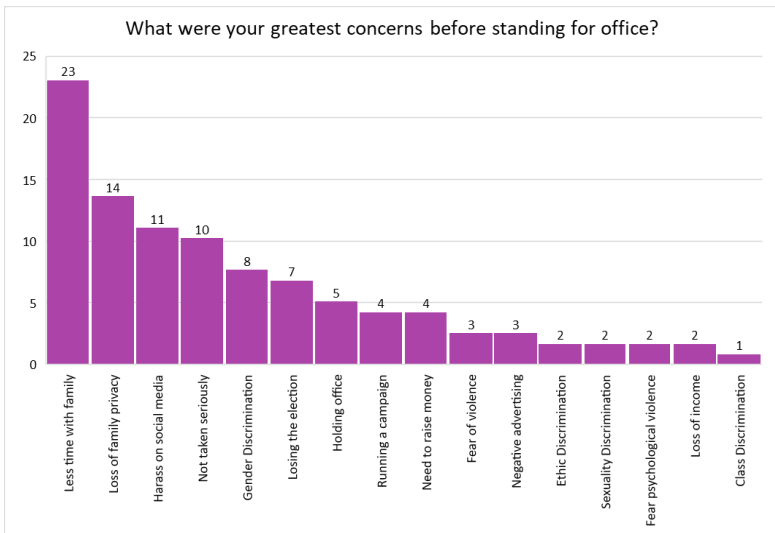


Figure 1. Percentages of respondents' greatest concerns before standing for office (n=132)

Research indicates that women are less likely than men to self nominate, run for office or see themselves as fitting the role of MPs (Clavero and Galligan 2005; Shames 2017; Fawcett 2018). Previous studies also show that women are less likely to run for office unless

they are actively asked and unless they have the support of their family members. *The Female Political Career 2015* found that it was only women with supportive families who ran for office. This finding is very much confirmed here. Figure 2 shows that 80 percent of respondents were encouraged by family members and 78 percent were encouraged by their partner.
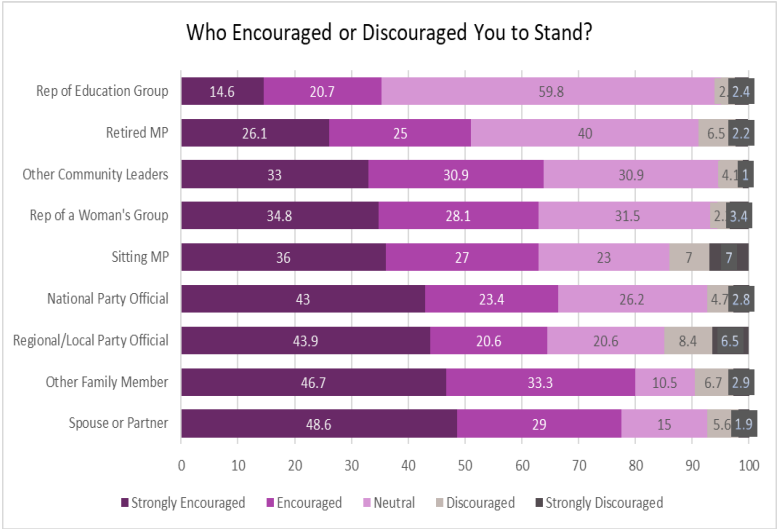


**Who Encouraged or Discouraged You to Stand?**

| | Strongly Encouraged | Encouraged | Neutral | Discouraged | Strongly Discouraged |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rep of Education Group | 14.6 | 20.7 | 59.8 | 2. | 2.4 |
| Retired MP | 26.1 | 25 | 40 | 6.5 | 2.2 |
| Other Community Leaders | 33 | 30.9 | 30.9 | 4.1 | 1 |
| Rep of a Woman's Group | 34.8 | 28.1 | 31.5 | 2. | 3.4 |
| Sitting MP | 36 | 27 | 23 | 7 | 7 |
| National Party Official | 43 | 23.4 | 26.2 | 4.7 | 2.8 |
| Regional/Local Party Official | 43.9 | 20.6 | 20.6 | 8.4 | 6.5 |
| Other Family Member | 46.7 | 33.3 | 10.5 | 6.7 | 2.9 |
| Spouse or Partner | 48.6 | 29 | 15 | 5.6 | 1.9 |

Figure 2. Percentage of respondents encouraged to stand by different individuals (n=107)

# Who are the women?

With the many difficulties facing women entering politics, it is likely that the women who do manage to succeed may be those who have a socio economic advantage or a better support network. We see from our study that the respondents tend to have the education levels, family connections and professional backgrounds that give them a head start for entry into politics.

Family connections to politics are no doubt important for both finding the inspiration and determination to

stand in political elections, but also to help facilitate the connections and networks that are essential to a successful political career.

Research has long argued that the advancement of some individuals in politics may be related to the formation of political dynasties in long-established and recent democracies. This is because individuals who have other family members involved in politics enjoy informal advantages, connections or "brand name advantages" (Feinstein, 2010; Smith and Martin, 2017; Fiva and Smith, 2018). We find that approximately 66 percent of women parliamentarians are embedded in a network where a family member is or was actively involved in politics.

The largest proportion of women with politically active family members is located in Europe: 64 percent of the answers concentrate in that region. This provides some evidence of a selection effect on women who run for office in the first place. It may be that they are required to have pre-existing strong political networks where family plays a role, not only in encouraging them to run for office but also in providing them with other intangible assets.

There is plenty of scholarly work suggesting that the availability and use of social capital determines patterns of political engagement, finding that while women have as much social capital as men, it is of different nature and often not invested in formal political participation (Lowndes, 2004). Women can use social capital to overcome patriarchal attitudes and structural disadvantages in different ways. For example, by activating and mobilising women's networks or, in the case of dynastic candidates, by relying on the political and financial resources of (often male) relatives (Aspinall, White and Savirani, 2021).
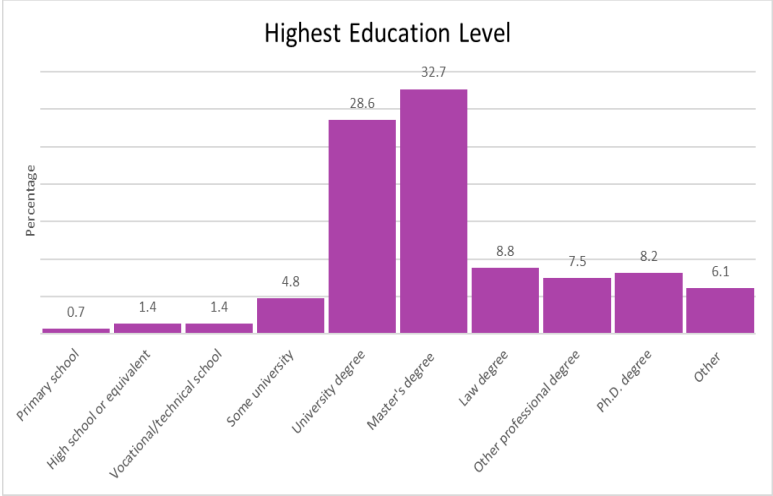


Figure 3: To show the percentage of respondents with different levels of education (n=147)

## Party Selection and Quotas

Most of those surveyed (88 percent) were members of a political party and the average length of membership was 18 years. On average women had been members of their party for 10 years before they were elected for the first time.

**"At the end of the day, women in Mauritius are still running for office in the framework that has been written down by men. Women had not been there to actually help shape that law, to shape that conversation and shape that decision-making process so this is where we literally need a law to say that each party has a to adhere to set a quota."**

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, first female President of Mauritius (2015-2018)**

Political parties are often considered to be a large part of the problem of the underrepresentation of women, as the parties themselves are often responsible for the selection and positioning of candidates, and it is in this process that women often fall behind (Cowper–Coles, 2020). When asked what was the greatest hurdle that they faced when obtaining office, one in five of the

women mentioned issues connected with internal party selection.

**"Indonesia actually has an advantageous position because we already have a law that political parties should have at least 30 percent of candidates for the house of representative are women. . . Although it still has many down sides, because still many of these women politicians are still lower on the list. So when a political party gets a seat, only the people ranked at the top end up on the list."**

**Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, MP, Indonesia**

In this context, gatekeepers from political parties are key in facilitating or obstructing the nomination of women for public office. We asked in the survey what groups women representatives consider are the most important in the selection of candidates for Parliament. 44 percent indicated that regional/local party officials or branches have the highest importance in the selection of candidates. 24 percent point to national party officials and 15 percent to others. Meanwhile, only 6 percent indicate that interest groups like trade unions are the most relevant and 10 percent assign such high importance to their party parliament caucus. In the

cases where political parties hold this power, it can be difficult for women who may be seen as political outsiders to enter into politics.

**"We need the law, we need that quota, we need that support to be able to get up and until there is no law, there is nobody that will leave the seat for a woman."**

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, first female President of Mauritius (2015-2018)**

Biggest Hurdle?
"Being selected to run by my party"

New Zealand MP

The most effective reforms for getting more women, and other politically disadvantaged groups, into politics, have been the introduction of quotas. 64 percent of respondents indicated that their party has formal rules to balance gender representation and 26 percent that those rules are informal. The story is different in the case of the representation of certain ethnic groups. 43

percent indicated that there are no rules in place, formal or informal, to balance ethnic representation and only 23 percent indicated that formal rules exist.

**"In Mexico parity is a reality. All parties are required to nominate 50 percent of the candidates as women and 50 percent men so that today we have built the Senate and the Congress of parity. . . Today things are not perfect. . . We continue to have cultural barriers that also affect politics, we continue to live in a patriarchal and sexist system . . . being in the Senate or Congress is not enough if our presence there is not capable of transforming the lives of the women we represent so that they can access a life of equal justice and freedom from violence."**

**Verónica Delgadillo García, Senator, Mexico**

## Campaigning

Being selected as a candidate is important, but candidates also have to campaign and win elections. Campaigning takes time and money and sometimes

these costs are both prohibitive for prospective politicians and disproportionately difficult for women (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2017).

Thinking about their last election, women representatives started to organise their campaign early. 32 percent indicated that they started more than 12 months before the election date; 19 percent started between 6 and 12 months before; 42 percent between 1 and 6 months before and a minority, 8 percent less than a month before. The largest proportion of women in the sample (34 percent) started campaigning full time between 1 and 2 months before the election date and 22 percent between 3 and 6 months before. This pattern reflects the time at which they received their nomination, with 58 percent of the sample receiving the nomination between 1 and 6 months before the election.
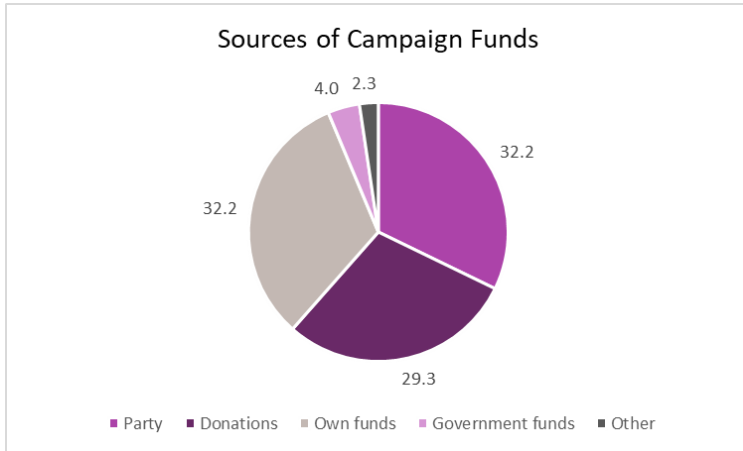
Figure 4. Showing the percentage of campaign funds from different sources (n=93)

The cost of campaigning is a serious hurdle for women entering politics. 17 percent of survey respondents suggested that it was the biggest obstacle that they faced. It is worrying to see that almost a third of campaign funding among the respondents, as shown in Figure 4, still comes from women's own pockets. Hidden within this statistic is the fact that many women are having to fully finance their own campaigns. This makes political careers unattainable for the majority of the population. Party or government funding for campaigns is a good way to address this problem (Cowper–Coles, 2020, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2017).

**"It's the lack of economic capacity to compete on equilibrium because now for you to compete, to stand for elected office, you must have the economic means to do that."**

**Joyce Banda, President of Malawi (2012-2014)**

<u>Biggest Hurdle?</u>
"The financial means"
Niger MP

We asked women parliamentarians about the media coverage experienced in their most recent campaign. 90 percent say that the media mention their party affiliation half the time or more. 10 percent say the media mention their race half the time or more. 8 percent say that the media mentioned their class background half the time or more. 16 percent mentioned educational background. 15 percent said that their physical appearance was mentioned half the time or more. 79 percent would say that their stances on issues were mentioned half the time or more. 43

percent have their gender mentioned in that proportion.

**"Politics, for what it is right now and what it represents, doesn't encourage women"**

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, first female President of Mauritius (2015-2018)**

# Ambitions

The 2015 report *The Female Political Career* found that far fewer women than men had ambitions to continue in parliament, become party chairs or ministers, but that instead women were more likely to have ambitions to work in organisations outside of formal politics (Rosenbluth et al. 2015).

We asked women parliamentarians which posts they would like to obtain in the next 10 years and we found that only 42 percent would like to hold a ministerial post. Perhaps more striking is the finding that only 16 percent would like to be a chair of a committee in the national parliament. This is worrying because it indicates that women are limiting their influence in policy by curtailing their ambition to occupy more senior positions.
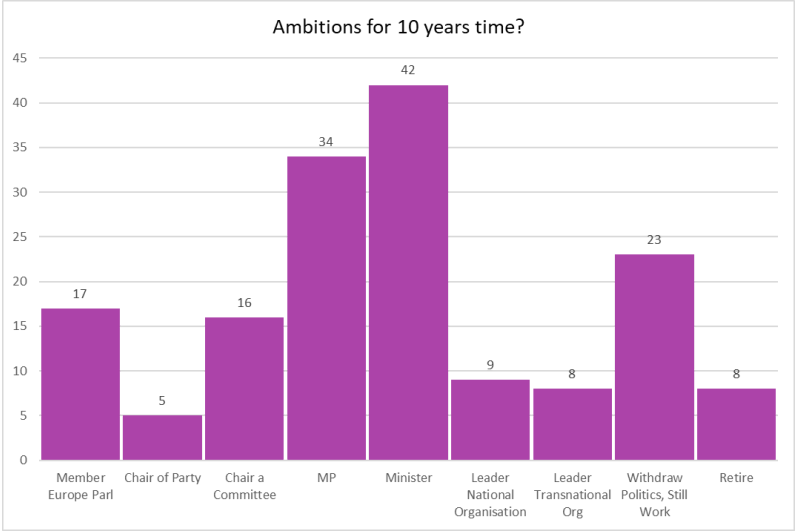
**Ambitions for 10 years time?**

Figure 5. To show the percentage of respondents ambitions for different roles (n=197)

Women parliamentarians have previous experience in government before they win a seat in the legislative chamber. The majority of women in the sample (52 percent) had been elected or appointed to local office before. 14 percent have executive experience as they had been the head of a municipality. 32 percent have been members of the sub-national legislature and 49 percent members of national legislatures. Meanwhile, only 8 percent have held a judicial office in the past and 7 percent had been head of a Sub-National Office or Region.

**"The woman is still considered as the interloper and not meant to be there. A woman is an outsider in politics so I was an outsider."**

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, first female President of Mauritius (2015-2018)**

Interestingly, while 19 percent have had a ministerial post in the past, 74 percent of respondents have never held one and only 7 percent currently hold a ministerial post. This may be an indication that, like in the case of the UK, women are successful in elections but are mainly nominated by parties that are in opposition (Collignon, 2019) or that women are still being assigned relatively junior positions once they reach parliament (Studlar and Moncrief, 1999; Pansardi and Vercesi, 2017).

Our findings echo trends identified by previous research suggesting that women leaders play under a demanding set of rules to reach and retain power (O'Brien and Rickne, 2016). Women leaders are likely to leave their posts when faced with an unfavourable trajectory and therefore, successful women leaders tend to have extensive experience in office (Müller–Rommel and Vercesi, 2017).

"I think it is often inside the women, because they are still saying no, I don't have knowledge and prefer to stay in office or member of whatever. But for men, they say yes and I am ready to do that, so it is in their mind [women]."

Åsa Lindestam, MP (2002-2022), Deputy Speaker of the Riksdag (2018-2022), Sweden

# Combining family and a political career

The survey results show that combining a family and a political career continues to be – as was found in *The Female Political Career 2015* – a major difficulty for women (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Family reasons were the greatest worries that women had before standing for office. 23 percent of women were most concerned about the loss of time with their family and 14 percent worried about family privacy.

**"We need more effort to encourage women to participate more actively in politics . . . The social stigma is still there. . . For example when I have to work until midnight for the bill, usually I get the question "how about your children?" but this question is never asked to her male counterparts. We are here the same but why do I get this question, but other male counterparts don't get this question – I think this is sexist."**

**Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, MP, Indonesia**

Questions around family pose a double bind for women. Women without children are often seen unfavourably by voters, who prefer candidates with a traditional family set up (Campbell and Cowley, 2018, Kamlongera, 2008; Tadros, 2014). However, balancing a political career with the gendered expectations around parental care is difficult for women (Teele et al., 2018). Researchers in Norway found that women drop out of politics to a larger extent than men after their first child is born (Fiva and King, 2022). Studies have found that women are more likely to have fewer or no children or to enter politics when children are older (Campbell and Childs, 2017, Rosenbluth et al., 2015 Tadros, 2014).

<u>In our survey</u>
- ❖ **71 percent** are married or living with a partner
- ❖ **29 percent** are single
- ❖ **82 percent** have children
- ❖ **50 percent** have children that are over 15 years old

Accommodating care for children alongside a busy career accounts for much of the difficulty of combining motherhood with a career in politics. In our survey we

found that women in politics are still most likely to be the primary carers for their children, with 44 percent saying that they were the primary carers and only 32 percent saying that their spouse or partner was the primary carer for their children. Being a primary carer no doubt adds substantially to their workload.
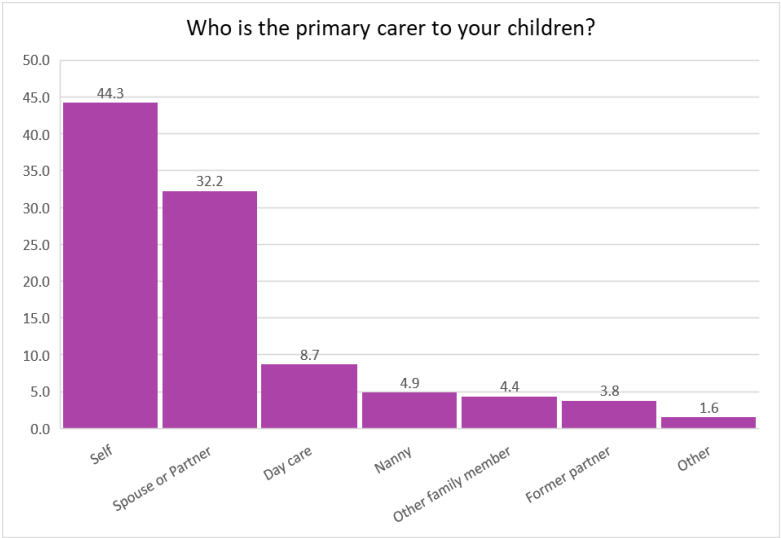
**Who is the primary carer to your children?**

| Category | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|
| Self | 44.3 |
| Spouse or Partner | 32.2 |
| Day care | 8.7 |
| Nanny | 4.9 |
| Other family member | 4.4 |
| Former partner | 3.8 |
| Other | 1.6 |

Figure 6: Showing percentage of responses indicating the primary carer(s) for their children (n=186)

> ## Biggest Hurdle?
> "Juggling childcare and daily work with the demands of campaigning"
>
> UK MP

In this context, the ability of institutions to accommodate and support parents is important for the full inclusion of women. Unfortunately, considering the importance of childcare provision for supporting women, only 26 percent had access to day-care through their parliamentary job. The lack of parliamentary support to provide day-care is particularly problematic if we consider that 66 percent of the parliamentarians surveyed do not have their primary home in the same city where parliament is located, and 32 percent face a commute that ranges between 1 to 3 hours and 28 percent travel for more than 3 hours between their homes and parliament. Commuting time varies across regions. While in Asia 83 percent of women travel for less than one hour to parliament, in the Americas the majority of respondents (43 percent) travel for more than 5 hours. This highlights the importance of offering women

parliamentarians institutional support that facilitates managing their family and political lives.

Another key issue that emerged from the survey is the heavy workload of women in parliament. This becomes evident once we look at the different activities they have to perform during a regular working week.
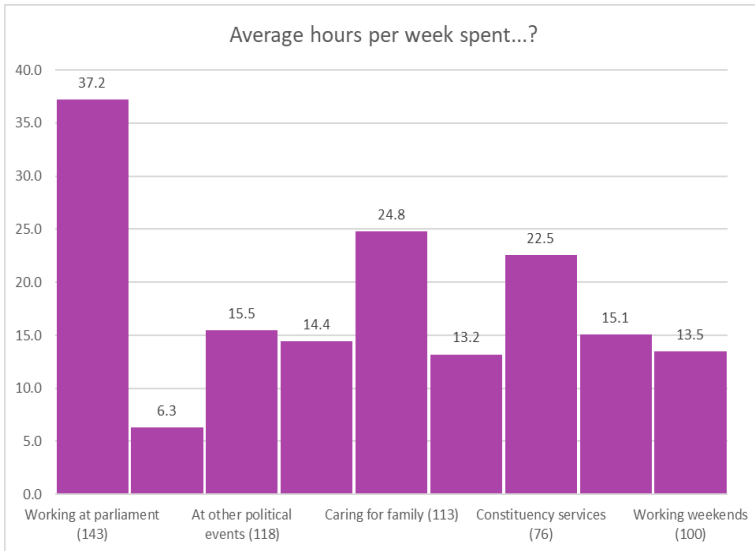


Figure 7. Showing the average number of hours spent on different tasks in an average week. Number of valid responses in brackets.

Women in politics spend, on average, 37 hours per week working at parliament; 6 hours fundraising; 16 hours at other political events; 14 hours commuting; 25 hours caring for family; 13 hours working another job (for those who work another job) and 23 hours doing constituency services. On average they worked 15 hours in the evenings and 13 hours on the weekends. The issue of the heavy workload faced by women in politics is an issue that was raised previously in *The Female Political Career 2015* (Rosenbluth, Kalla and Teele, 2015).

**"Many countries are coming to us and they really want to speak about these issues, because we have a day-care in parliament for MPs and we have fixed voting times, so they (the countries) want us to tell them how it works out and how the laws are."**

**Åsa Lindestam, MP (2002-2022), Deputy Speaker of the Riksdag (2018-2022), Sweden**

With such heavy workloads, any measures to help alleviate unnecessary work, or reduce time spent for example commuting, should be considered as ways to make parliament more accessible for people of all backgrounds. Options such as holding more meetings online, as was the case during Covid, or even job–sharing are ideas that have been welcomed by women in particular (Collignon et al., 2018; Smith and Childs 2021).

# Violence Against Women in Politics

The harassment, intimidation and abuse of women in politics is pervasive. They are part of a wider framework of violence against women in politics which includes online and offline physical, psychological, economic and semiotic forms of violence perpetrated against women in politics (Kelly, 1988; Krook, 2020, 2019; Bardall et al., 2019; Piscopo, 2016).

**"Now I am not on Twitter, because I was on Twitter and I got threats that were terrible and I couldn't sleep, so I quit."**

**Åsa Lindestam, MP (2002-2022), Deputy Speaker of the Riksdag (2018-2022), Sweden**

The issue of violence against women in politics has been highlighted in reports by the Inter–Parliamentary Union. A recent report found that 80 percent of women MPs in Africa have experienced psychological violence in parliament, 67 percent have been subjected to sexist behaviour or remarks and 39 percent of them faced sexual violence (IPU 2021). Disturbingly, the main

perpetrators of this violence are their male counterparts.

Violence against women in politics is global and found in all regions, yet it is found to impact certain women more than others. Further research has shown that younger representatives and those from minority ethnic backgrounds suffer more abuse, especially when first elected (IPU, 2016). Other studies have shown that women, ethnic minorities and members of the LGTBQ+ community are being targeted (Collignon and Rüdig, 2020, 2021; Collignon, Campbell and Rüdig, 2021; Stambolieva, 2017) and that perpetrators of political violence are biassed towards more powerful and visible women (Håkansson, 2020). An overwhelming amount of hate speech directed at Muslim and Jewish MPs in the UK questioned their loyalties portraying them as unfit for political office. While the slurs and abuse were often sexist, there were added Islamophobic and antisemitic tropes, highlighting the targeted nature of the abuse (Kuperberg, 2021). This highlights a requirement for an intersectional approach to analyse violence against women in politics and determine its gendered consequences (Bjarnegård, 2018, 2021).

**"The abuse, the gender based violence - women are beaten during the campaign, women are stripped naked during the campaign, women are called names and scandalised to an extent that it hurts marriages and so on and so forth. So it is those challenges that keep women away from running for public office."**

**Joyce Banda, President of Malawi (2012-2014)**

Our survey shows that during their career, women leaders feel relatively safe with an overall average score 4.4(0= very safe, 10= very unsafe). However, this varies by region and reflects the over representation of parliamentarians from Western Europe. Figure 8 shows some of the regional variation, where we see North America and Western Europe with the lowest scores, and Oceania, South America and the Caribbean and Asia having higher scores representing women parliamentarians feeling less safe in those areas. It is worth noting that there are very few respondents in some areas, with for example, one respondent from Afghanistan (who marked her feelings as '10' very unsafe), and only 7 from the Oceania region.

**"Some of them have guards to take them everywhere … and watch for them if it is dangerous. Women say if they need or want guards or security, some of them have alarms that they carry in their bags or fix on their desks. Also, I have it on my desk and I have three men in the office."**

**Åsa Lindestam, MP (2002-2022), Deputy Speaker of the Riksdag (2018-2022), Sweden**
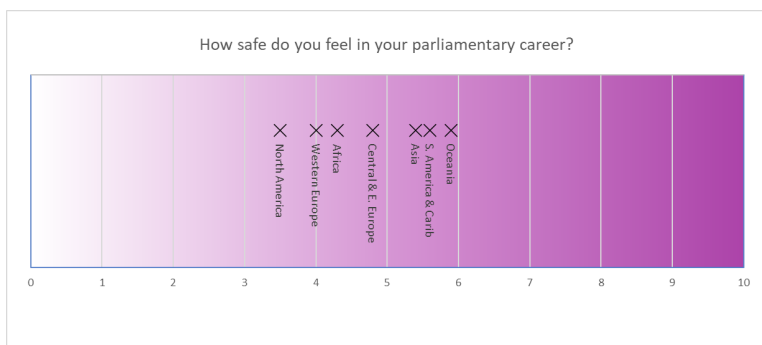


Figure 8. To show average feelings of safety by region, 0 = very safe, 10 = very unsafe

We asked women explicitly if they have experienced violence or harassment and whether the aggression had the aim to prevent them from participating in politics:

- 89 percent experienced degrading talk, libel, or false rumours about them.
- 85 percent received abusive or intimidatory messages on social media.
- 54 percent experienced threats to harm.
- 47 percent had experienced intimidation with sexual connotations.
- 29 percent suffered damage to their property.
- 11 percent suffered physical violence.
- As a result, 34 percent felt fearful and 53 percent felt angry.

In most of these cases the majority of women who had experienced these lies, threats and violence thought that the intention behind these actions had been intended to dissuade them from taking a political position, making a political decision or pursuing a course of action. This makes this violence and threats distinctly political.

**"Cyberspace - this is where women are increasingly being diminished ... it becomes the ultimate frontier for demonisation, for diminishing a woman."**

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, first female President of Mauritius (2015-2018)**

Biggest Hurdle?
"Social media stalking"
Armenian MP

Some Latin American countries have taken serious measures to address violence against women in politics. Some of the most significant strides have been in Bolivia where violence against women in politics was designated as an electoral crime and similar bills have been proposed in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru. This can be attributed to Latin America's unique mobilised feminist resistance and the phenomenon is a result of various contextual factors such as changes in women's position in society, cumulative action of feminist movements and organisations in the country, the growth of feminist values in international media, the

role of the Internet in young people's sociability, as well as various political contexts (Krook and Sanin, 2016).

We asked the respondents in an open–ended question what measures, if any, they consider should be taken to increase the security of election candidates. Suggestions can be grouped into three broad categories: a) training, b) use of technology and c) law enforcement or punishment for perpetrators. What is clear is that serious action must be taken to address this targeted violence.

Some organisations offer training for women in politics on how to deal with abuse. Other organisations are now aiming to create better digital citizenship and empower the public to be active bystanders. It is unclear which methods are better for supporting women in politics.

Inquiring about the potential consequences that violence against women in politics will have on their future careers, we find a mixed picture. 29 percent of respondents indicate that the experience will make them more likely to run for office and the same proportion said it will make them less likely to do so. It may be that while creating fear it also makes women more determined to make a change.

# The Impact of COVID-19

**"I think the take away from that first year [of COVID] was that decisions can be taken with more empathy, more solidarity and better communication - science-based communication - that women brought around. These were what defined the year of women's leadership. I think we also have been able to show that being empathetic was not a weakness."**

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, first female President of Mauritius (2015-2018) (on COVID-19)**

**65 percent** of MPs found COVID–19 had a negative impact on their ability to do their work.

**23 percent** found it had a positive effect on their ability to do their work.

The COVID–19 pandemic highlighted the importance of taking a gendered look at our leaders and the impact of their policies. In 2020, many observers suggested that women leaders were more effective in dealing with the pandemic. Research also suggests that the level of gender equality in legislatures impacted policies related to school closures, a policy with clear gendered consequences (Aldrich and Lotito, 2020). Women were also more likely to support and comply with social distancing measures than men (Collignon and Sajuria, 2021; Collignon, Makropoulos and Rüdig, 2021). Not to mention the way lockdowns led to an increase in reported incidents of domestic violence in what was called the 'shadow pandemic' (UN Women). But what is less known is how the coronavirus pandemic affects the legislative work of women parliamentarians.

**"I think that there was an effect from COVID on women who are mothers, who are caregivers or who have some responsibility at home, because of course returning home meant having more direct responsibilities and being all the time in a space where the division between the personal and the professional was very complicated."**

**Verónica Delgadillo García, Senator, Mexico on COVID-19**

To shed light on this, we included a battery of questions in the survey asking women parliamentarians about their experiences during the pandemic and how they were professionally and personally affected by it. The majority of women parliamentarians, 65 percent, indicated that COVID–19 had a negative impact on their ability to carry out their work. They mention the inability to speak with other parliamentarians, formally and informally, limited opportunities to meet with constituents, increased workloads together with caring or domestic duties as the greatest problems they encountered.

**"Women's way to lead is that women tend to lead from the behind . . . women who are showing more empathy, they actually brought in quite successful results, on the table. This has been a very good approach to showcasing women's leadership."**

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, first female President of Mauritius (2015-2018), on Women's Leadership during COVID-19**

Only a small proportion, 23 percent of respondents, indicated that COVID has positively impacted their ability to carry out their work. The most frequent reason cited for this is the amount of time saved on travel, the opportunity to be closer to the constituency, the efficiency of online meetings and the possibility to be closer to family.

Nevertheless, 17 percent indicated that the impact of COVID–19 made them more likely to run for office in the future. Open–ended questions indicate that the main reasons lay in the differences and inequalities that the pandemic deepened, the desire to grow in their political role and the opportunity to help.

Meanwhile, 13 percent indicated that the pandemic made them less likely to run for office in the future. The rationale offered by respondents mentions the abuse they have suffered during these challenging times and the desire to spend more time with their families.

**"It affected us as legislators because it postponed our agendas and postponed the need to fight in an articulated and organised way to combat the other pandemic that is the pandemic of violence and femicide in our country."**

**Verónica Delgadillo García, Senator, Mexico, on COVID-19**

# Women Supporting Women

**"What we need to do now as women leaders is to make sure that we don't lose the momentum, that we keep fighting to support as many women as possible get into positions of leadership."**

**Joyce Banda, President of Malawi (2012-2014)**

## Women Representing Women

In this section, we look into the question of what women leaders act for, in terms of representation (Pitkin, 2004). Scholars that have argued for the importance of looking at how the substantive representation of women occurs (Childs, 2002; Celis et al., 2008; Celis and Childs, 2012). We look at what women leaders do when they are in parliament.

**"For example, we federal legislators are fighting for equal pay in Mexico. Because a woman can earn up to 35 percent less for the same job and the same responsibility in our country. In my case, I have been working for 7 years to combat wage inequality and I have other colleagues who have also done so."**

**Verónica Delgadillo García, Senator, Mexico**

94 percent of women leaders in our survey agreed that as women parliamentarians they feel a responsibility to represent women's interests as part of their role. We presented women leaders with a list of policy areas and asked them to say what they consider to be women's interests. The five most frequently mentioned policy areas are: education, women's health, childcare, equality and diversity policy and workplace/labour rights. The results here are interesting as they show the breadth of issues which these parliamentarians consider to be women's interests. The top five areas are coloured red in Figure 9, and the next five are coloured yellow.
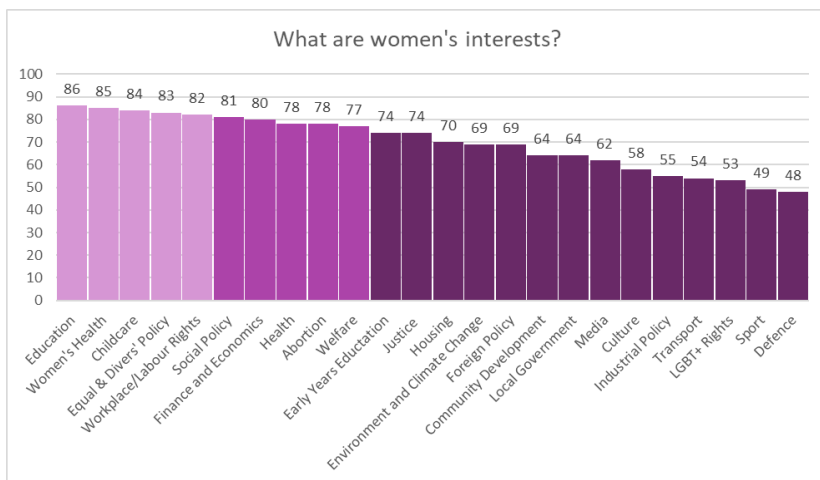
Figure 9. Showing perceptions of policy areas that are women's interests according to survey respondents.

**"It's very easy to talk about education when there are still many women who don't have enough access to education and other public support from the government."**

**Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, MP, Indonesia**

**What is your advocating priority?**
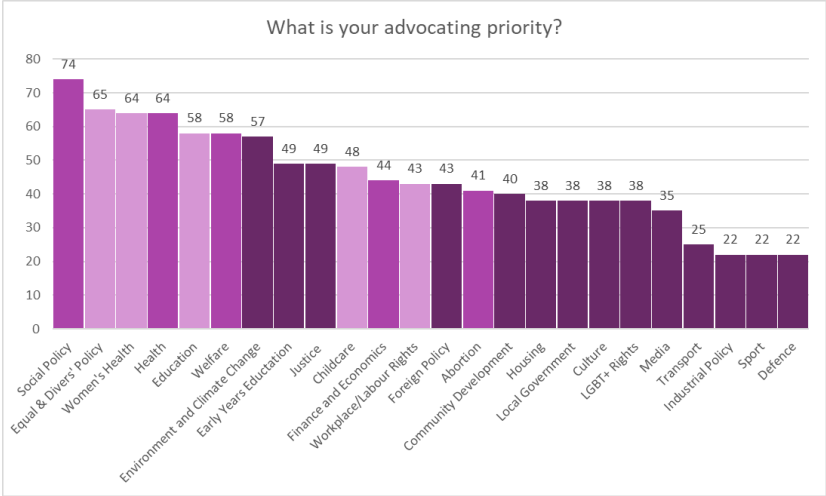
Figure 10. To show advocating priorities of respondents. The top five issue areas seen as 'women's interests' are highlighted in red, the next five are highlighted yellow.

These are highly correlated with the areas they plan to advocate or have advocated during their tenure in parliament: social policy, general and women's health, equality and diversity, welfare and education, as shown in Figure 10. The congruence between women's leaders' interest in representing women's issues is good news for the substantive representation of women.

**"So one of the good examples of [the woman's causus's] work is the law on sexual violence . . . Many women from the women's caucus worked very hard to convince the other members that Indonesia really needs this law and many members of the public and civil organisations support this law. Finally it was passed two months ago. It has been deliberated in the House for more than 5 years as there is still strong opposition from the Islamist conservative party . . . but thanks to the women's caucus, the spokesperson who is a woman, fought very hard for this bill. This could be said that this is the legacy of this group."**

**Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, MP Indonesia**

Looking in more detail at the issue positions of the women in the survey, we find that they espouse slightly 'leftist' views, they give themselves a position of 44 on average on a scale of 0 being left–wing, and 100 being right–wing.

**Do you agree or disagree? (economy)**

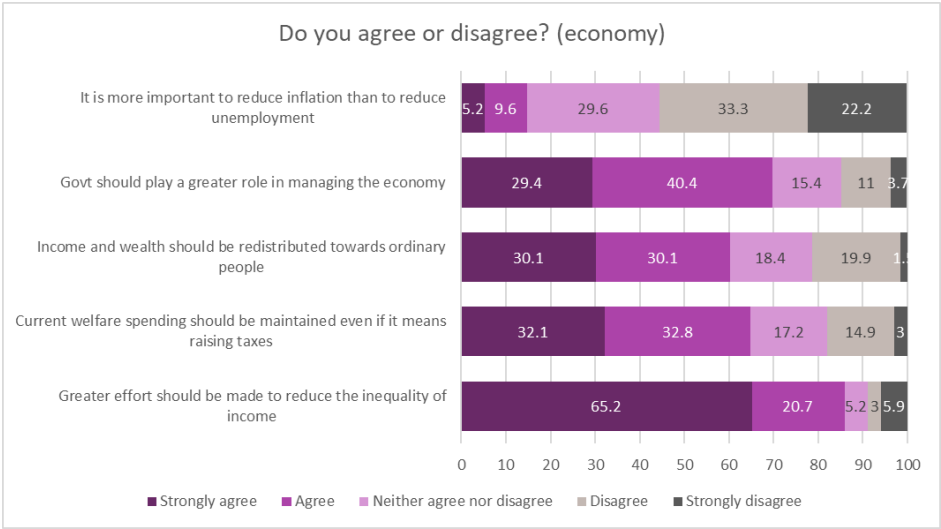| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| It is more important to reduce inflation than to reduce unemployment | 5.2 | 9.6 | 29.6 | 33.3 | 22.2 |
| Govt should play a greater role in managing the economy | 29.4 | 40.4 | 15.4 | 11 | 3.7 |
| Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people | 30.1 | 30.1 | 18.4 | 19.9 | 1.. |
| Current welfare spending should be maintained even if it means raising taxes | 32.1 | 32.8 | 17.2 | 14.9 | 3 |
| Greater effort should be made to reduce the inequality of income | 65.2 | 20.7 | 5.2 | 3 | 5.9 |

Figure 11. To show agreement and disagreement with statements on the economy n=135

The opinion of women leaders on more specific issues shows that they tend to support a greater level of government intervention in the economy and the reduction of inequality, as shown in Figure 11. 86 percent agree that greater effort should be made to reduce income inequality; 69 percent think that the government should play a greater role in managing the economy; 65 percent agree that current welfare spending should be maintained, even if it means raising taxes.

**"What helps us women is to embrace the cause together and fight for them together and in the collective … If there are women working in a collaborative manner, not only through formal spaces, it has been possible to see that through more informal spaces we have advanced together on many issues."**

**Verónica Delgadillo García, Senator, Mexico**



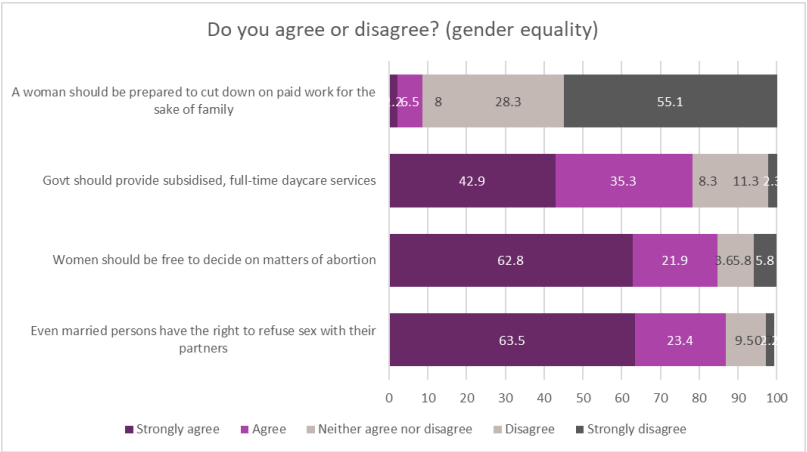**Do you agree or disagree? (gender equality)**

Figure 12. To show agreement and disagreement with statements about gender equality, n=135

When we look at issues regarding gender equality, we see that again, the respondents are broadly in favour of women's rights to bodily autonomy, employment and the provision of childcare. 85 percent agree that women should decide on matters of abortion; 88 percent agree even a married person has the right to refuse sex with their partners; 73 percent disagree that a woman should be prepared to cut down on her work for the sake of her family.

**"I made up my mind that at age 14 that I would never accept, I would just sit back and watch a girl child not go to school if I can help. And then at the age 34, I said I would never allow another woman to die giving life, if I can help it."**

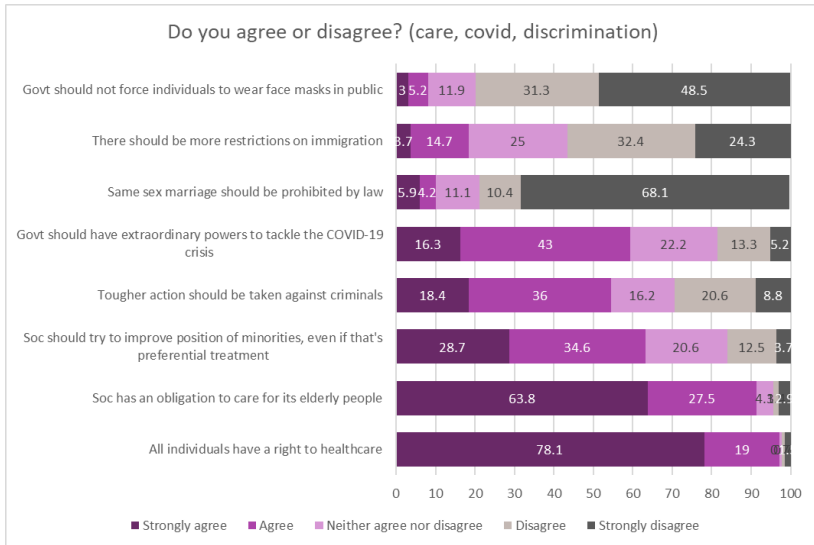**Joyce Banda, President of Malawi (2012-2014)**

Figure 13. To show agreement and disagreement with statements on care, covid and discrimination, (n=135)

Looking at other, broader societal issues, the respondents largely favour care provision, 97 percent agree that all individuals have a right to healthcare; 91 percent agree that society should care for its elderly people. The views on minorities, government powers during COVID-19 and the justice system show less cohesion, as shown in Figure 13. For example, 54 percent agree that tougher action should be taken against criminals and 59 percent agree that the government should have extraordinary powers to tackle the COVID-19 crisis.

73

Committee membership provides women with direct influence on public policy and the visibility they gain can be beneficial for career progression (Pansardi and Vercesi, 2017). 82 percent of the sample currently belong to a committee in their parliament. 18 percent either do not serve in a committee or their Parliament does not have committees. It is likely that by belonging to these committees women will be more likely to be able to legislate on their areas of interest.

# Institutional mechanisms to allow women to support other women in politics

Research has advocated for more support for women's interests by representatives and more institutional support for a broader range of women and women's interests as avenues to improve substantive representation (Celis, 2009). This is further corroborated in the survey as 90 percent of respondents consider that the support from fellow women parliamentarians is important for them.

**"Women supporting women is very noble and very good. Sometimes there are many challenges but fortunately, in the Indonesian Parliament, we have the Women's Caucus. The members are MPs from many commissions and political parties, working with different Indonesian ministries. So one of the good examples of their work is the law on sexual violence."**

**Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, MP Indonesia**

Women's caucuses are recognised as important mechanisms to help other women in their political careers through training and networking (Maryuni, 2022). However, only 46 percent of respondents work in a parliament with an active women's caucus. The main focus of these caucuses is to provide support for women parliamentarians or build cross–party working relationships. 73 percent of respondents consider that the parliamentary women's caucuses enable them to carry out their duties more effectively. This is mainly because the caucus facilitates coordination around gender policies and initiatives.

**"Even if we are in the front, we still have some more steps to go."**

**Åsa Lindestam, MP (2002-2022), Deputy Speaker of the Riksdag (2018-2022), Sweden**

**73 percent** think a women's caucus helps them do their job

Only **46 percent** work in a parliament with an active women's caucus

Only **19 percent** work in a parliament with a mentorship programme

Women leaders recognise that the support from fellow women parliamentarians is an important enabler to their work. Peer–to–peer mentorship has been used in other arenas with great success to help women's career advancement. However, 81 percent of respondents indicate there is no mentorship programme (formal or informal) for women politicians in their parliament. Of the 19 percent that indicated that there is a mentorship programme, only 28 percent say that it is a formal programme. The main functions of a mentorship programme are to advise on how the parliament works and facilitate building working relationships.

**"We need to embrace more women's participation and we have a lot of homework to do."**

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, first female President of Mauritius (2015-2018)**

Taken together, this indicates that women have limited access to formalised networks of women, but they recognise their importance. While caucuses and mentoring programmes remain rare, 76 percent say that their government has a Minister for Women or Equalities with the main function of advancing legislative reform to women's or equality policies and the majority of women (61 percent) agree that this is an effective mechanism to protect and promote women's equality.

# Conclusion

## Combining Family and Caring with a Political Career

More work needs to be done to facilitate balancing family and caring responsibilities with a career in politics. We found that it was a main concern for many women politicians, with it being the foremost concern before starting their career and with many parents continuing to be primary carers whilst continuing with their work.

Key findings:

- Combining a career and family life is the main concern for many women politicians.
- Loss of time with family (23 percent) and loss of family privacy (14 percent) are the main concerns that women had before standing for office.
- Women politicians continue to be the primary carers for their children in 44.3 percent of cases.
- Women report excessive workloads including on average over 37 hours a week working in

parliament, 22 hours a week on constituency work, 15 hours on other political events and 14 hours commuting.
- Only about 1 in every 4 women parliamentarians have access to childcare through parliament.

## Recommendation:

Parliaments, political parties and campaigning rules must work to provide better support to people with caring responsibilities, through providing childcare support, increased flexibility and reduced workloads.

# Violence against Women in Politics

Our findings around the scale and scope of violence against women in politics is shocking. This is a major problem and one that is impacting the very foundation of our democracy, as this violence is very political in nature. We fear that as minorities or outspoken women are targeted more the impact could be suffocating for the diversity of our representation.

- Harassment, abuse and violence was the major concern for women when considering a career in politics after balancing family with their career.
- 85 percent of respondents experienced online harassment and abuse.
- 11 percent of respondents experienced physical violence.
- Women parliamentarians on average placed themselves at 4.4 on a scale of 0=safe to 10=very unsafe, but feelings of safety varied across regions.

## Recommendation:

Parliaments, political parties and campaign rules must work to increase the safety of women in politics, and tackle online abuse, threats and physical violence.

# Women Supporting Women

We were pleased to see that women take the role of representing women seriously, however we were concerned to see that there were few institutional mechanisms in place to support this.

Key findings:

- 94 percent of respondents said that they feel a responsibility to represent women's interests.
- We found substantial overlap between issues respondents defined as women's interests and their advocating priorities.
- Despite these both being important structures for supporting women in parliament, only 46 percent of respondents work in a parliament with a women's caucus and only 19 percent work in a parliament with a mentorship programme.

Recommendation:

- Women's caucuses and mentoring schemes should be set up in more parliaments to help women work together to support women and better represent women's interests.

## Impact of COVID-19

The impact of COVID–19 was largely negative on women parliamentarians, as it limited their ability to do their work and connect with constituents. However, we can learn from the positives, as many respondents did

find that by saving the commuting time through remote sessions they were able to better balance their family life and political career.

<u>Key findings:</u>

- Respondents found COVID-19 pandemic had both negative (65 percent) and positive (23 percent) impacts on their ability to do their work.
- Social distancing measures limited their opportunities to meet with constituents and colleagues, and lockdowns meant that those with dependents often had greater difficulties balancing work with care for their family members.
- The movement to online and hybrid meetings reduced travel and allowed for more time with family.

## Entry and Progression in Politics

Women in politics have to overcome serious concerns over their ability to support their families and harassment before standing for office. They also face high campaign costs and the difficulties of negotiating internal dynamics and selection within their political

parties. We see that women who stand for office are highly educated and have close family connections with politics, no doubt this is because women with greater social capital have been better able to negotiate the difficulties of entry into politics. Due to this, we see control of campaign spending and the use of quotas as important in helping to increase the numbers of women in politics.

## Key findings:

- Respondents tend to be highly educated and many have close family connections to politics.
- Over 80 percent of respondents indicated that they were encouraged to run by family members or a spouse.
- Political parties play a key role as gatekeepers to positions in politics. Internal party issues were seen as the major hurdle in most respondents' political careers.
- 64 percent of respondents said they had formal mechanisms for balancing gender in politics.
- On average women pay 32 percent of their campaign funding out of their private funds, and money was pointed to by many as a major hurdle for those entering politics.

## Recommendations:

- The costs of campaigning for individuals should be reduced, governments could either cap campaign costs, provide funds or else political parties should seek to fund their own candidates campaigns.
- Quotas or the use of formal measures to increase the gender balance of parliamentarians remain an important tool for helping women enter into politics, we recommend their uptake where other barriers remain high.

# Interviews

Five women politicians were interviewed for this research. Three interviews were conducted in English, one was conducted in Spanish, and one was conducted with the help of a translator.

The interviewees were all in their home country when the interview took place, in their personal office. All interviews were conducted in one unbroken session, apart from the interview with Irina Yusiana Roba Putri, which had to be reconnected as it went on much longer than the 30 minutes duration for the other interviews, due to the translations taking up time.

Dr Joyce Banda, former President of Malawi 2012–2014, interviewed 28/03/2022 in English, over Zoom.

Hon. Åsa Lindestam, Deputy Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag, interviewed 06/04/2022, in English, over Zoom.

Hon. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of Mauritius (2015–2018), interviewed 13/05/2022 in English, over Zoom.

Hon. Irine Yusiana Roba Putri, Member of Parliament in Indonesia, interviewed 23/05/2022, with a translator, over Zoom.

Hon. Verónica Delgadillo García, Senator, Mexico, interviewed 31/05/2022, with a translator, over Zoom.

# Survey Respondents

The table below shows the number of respondents from 66 countries. Not all respondents answered the question relating to their country.

| Country | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|
| Afghanistan | 2 |
| Albania | 1 |
| Andorra | 1 |
| Argentina | 1 |
| Armenia | 1 |
| Australia | 3 |
| Austria | 1 |
| Bahrain | 1 |
| Belgium | 15 |
| Bolivia | 1 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 1 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Brunei | 2 |
| Bulgaria | 2 |
| Cameroon | 2 |
| Canada | 9 |
| Chile | 1 |
| Colombia | 3 |
| Croatia | 1 |
| Denmark | 2 |
| Estonia | 4 |
| France | 7 |
| Georgia | 3 |
| Germany | 2 |
| Ghana | 2 |
| Greece | 1 |
| Grenada | 2 |
| Guinea | 2 |
| Honduras | 1 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Hungary | 2 |
| Iceland | 2 |
| Ireland | 14 |
| Italy | 3 |
| Kenya | 1 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 1 |
| Latvia | 4 |
| Liberia | 2 |
| Luxembourg | 4 |
| Madagascar | 3 |
| Malaysia | 1 |
| Maldives | 1 |
| Mexico | 6 |
| Monaco | 1 |
| Nepal | 2 |
| Netherlands | 4 |
| New Zealand | 6 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Niger | 1 |
| Norway | 4 |
| Pakistan | 2 |
| Poland | 5 |
| Romania | 1 |
| Rwanda | 1 |
| Saint Lucia | 1 |
| Serbia | 1 |
| Singapore | 2 |
| Slovenia | 3 |
| South Africa | 3 |
| South Sudan | 5 |
| Spain | 18 |
| Sweden | 11 |
| Switzerland | 1 |
| Thailand | 2 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 1 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Tunisia | 1 |
| Uganda | 2 |
| United Kingdom | 23 |
| Zimbabwe | 1 |
| Total | 220 |

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