Women in parliaments

National parliaments with a higher proportion of women members than the EP

Women in EP and EU national parliaments

Women in EP by political group

Female representatives in the EP by Member State

| FI | IE | HR | MT | SE | ES | FR | AT | UK | NL | IT | LV | SI | DE | EP | BE | LU | DK | SK | PT | RO | PL | CZ | EL | HU | LT | BG | CY | EE |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 76.9% | 54.5% | 54.5% | 50.0% | 50.0% | 62.5% | 50.0% | 46.1% | 42.2% | 42.2% | 36.5% | 38.5% | 35.7% | 35.7% | 37.5% | 39.5% | 39.5% | 37.5% | 39.5% | 39.5% | 39.5% | 39.5% | 39.5% | 39.5% | 39.5% |
| Total seats in 2014 | 13 | 11 | 11 | 6 | 20 | 54 | 74 | 18 | 73 | 73 | 8 | 8 | 96 | 751 | 21 | 6 | 13 | 13 | 21 | 32 | 51 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 17 | 17 | 6 | 6 |
| Gender quotas applied at the 2014 elections | No | No | Yes | 40% | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | 50% | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Total seats in 2019 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 6 | 21 | 59 | 79 | 19 | 29 | 76 | 8 | 8 | 96 | 705 | 21 | 6 | 14 | 14 | 21 | 33 | 52 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 17 | 17 | 6 | 7 |
| Gender quotas in 2019 | No | No | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | 50% | 50% | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |

* For more information on Italy, please see page 2.

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Women in national parliaments compared with the European Parliament

The map shows those national parliaments across the world, which have a percentage of women members equal to or above the 36.1 % share of women Members in the European Parliament (EP). Worldwide, 26 countries have 36.1 % or more of women members in their national parliament. 

Source: Women in national parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (information for 1 December 2018).

Women in EP and national parliaments

The graph illustrates the average representation of women in national parliaments in Member States and in the EP. The line for national parliaments up to 1996 is illustrative only, as data are available for only some Member States. A notable increase in the percentage of women in national parliaments can be seen in the mid-2000s, which could be the consequence of the introduction of electoral gender quotas in several Member States around this time (France, Belgium, Portugal, Spain).

Women in the European Parliament, EP Equality and Diversity Unit, 2018

Women in national parliaments, IPU (as of 1 December 2018).

Women in EP by political group

The hemicycle chart illustrates the distribution of women Members among the EP political groups, showing in which political groups the proportion of women is higher than the EP average (36.1 %) and in which it is lower.

NB: the groups are ordered by proportion of women Members rather than by position on the political spectrum. The share of each political group in the chart reflects the proportion of women from that group in the total number of women in the EP.

Female representatives in the EP by Member State

The graph shows the total number of seats in each Member State and the percentage of those which currently hold women Members. For the 2014 European elections, eight Member States had gender quotas that concern the make-up of electoral lists. Member States’ gender quotas are gender-neutral, aiming to avoid the under-representation of both women and men. Only two Member States required lists in parity (50%/50%) – Belgium and France. Slovenia and Spain required gender-balanced electoral lists, with each gender represented by at least 40% of the candidates on the list. Croatia also had a 40% gender-balanced list, but the requirement will be legally enforceable only at the third regular European elections, i.e. in 2024. The gender-balanced lists in Portugal required at least 33% (1/3) of each gender. Poland’s gender quota for the European elections was first applied in the 2014 elections, with at least 35% of candidates of each gender. Romania’s electoral rules establish that no all-women or all-men lists are possible.

Gender quotas applicable to the 2019 EP elections

In order to ensure that candidates from both sexes are placed in positions on an electoral list with a good chance of winning a seat, some Member States required the alternate ordering of men and women on the list (‘zipping’). This is the case of France, Belgium (only the first two positions on the list) and Portugal (not more than two consecutive candidates of the same sex on the list). Slovenian electoral law required at least one candidate of each gender in the upper half of the list. In Spain, the 40%/60% ratio applied within each five-candidate cluster on the list.

Some Member States had gender clauses for national elections but not for the European elections, for instance Greece and Ireland. Whilst in some Member States electoral lists which do not meet the requirements of the gender clause were invalid (e.g. Spain, Slovenia and Romania), in others such lists were admitted to the elections but the party or coalition submitting them was punished with a fine and/or a cut in electoral campaign subsidies (e.g. Portugal). Italy had gender-balanced lists (1/3 for each gender) for the 2004 and 2009 EP elections. It introduced a new system in 2014 whereby third preference votes were not counted if the voter had not voted for at least one candidate of each gender.

Voluntary party quotas

In those Member States without a legally binding electoral gender quota, political parties sometimes voluntarily introduce quotas for the nomination of candidates. This so called ‘incremental track’ seeking to increase women’s representation progressively is sometimes regarded as more successful than the ‘fast track’ of legislative gender quotas, given the examples of Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands which have large percentages of women in their national parliaments.


Quota Project: Global database of Quotas for Women, International IDEA, IPU and Stockholm University.

Electoral systems and women elected

Analysts have sought to establish a relationship between electoral systems and the percentage of women elected. Whilst there is agreement that proportional representation systems are more favourable for female candidates than majoritarian systems, the link between open electoral lists (preferential voting, cross-list preferential voting) and women elected has progressively is sometimes regarded as more successful than the ‘fast track’ of legislative gender quotas, given the examples of Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands which have large percentages of women in their national parliaments.


This is an updated version of an infographic published in February 2017.

Country codes: Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Germany (DE), Estonia (EE), Ireland (IE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), France (FR), Croatia (HR), Italy (IT), Cyprus (CY), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Hungary (HU), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Austria (AT), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Finland (FI), Sweden (SE), United Kingdom (UK).

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