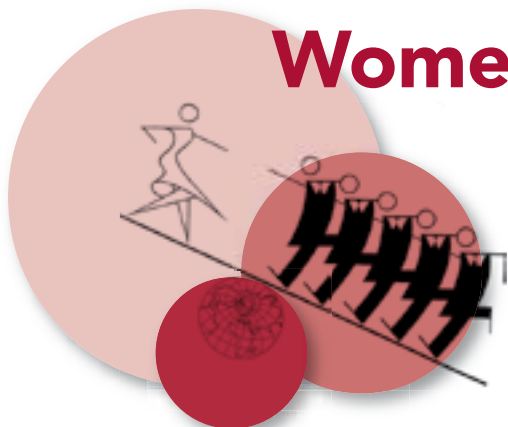


Women in Parliament in 2006: The Year in Perspective



Women in Parliament in 2006: Highlights

Globally

- The world average of women in all chambers of Parliament reached an all time high, with almost 17 percent. This is a gain of 50 percent over 1995 figures when women held 11.3 percent of all parliamentary seats.
- In January 2007, there were more women Presiding Officers of Parliament than ever before. Of the world's 262 Presiding Officer posts, 35 were held by women. Women Speakers were elected for the first time in Gambia, Israel, Swaziland, Turkmenistan, and the United States of America.
- Increases in the number of women were registered in more than 60 percent of the chambers that were renewed. Women won 16.7 percent of all parliamentary seats up for renewal in 2006 in 61 chambers in 51 countries.
- Electoral gender quotas were used in 23 countries to bolster women's participation. In those countries with gender quotas women took 21.7 percent of seats as opposed to 11.8 percent for countries without.

Regionally

- Three Gulf Cooperation Council States recorded significant political changes. In the United Arab Emirates, both women and men stood for election and voted for the first time in that country's history. Nine women entered Parliament gaining 22.5 percent of the seats. Women stood for election for the first time in Kuwait as well, but none won. In Bahrain, a woman was elected to the Lower House of Parliament for the first time in that nation's history.
- The Nordic countries continued to elect the highest number of women to their Parliaments. Their regional average increased to 40.8 percent after Sweden elected a greater number of women to Parliament than in previous years.
- Less than three percent of parliamentarians in the Pacific Island states are women. No women won seats in the elections in the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.



Photo:AFP

Women waiting to vote, Mauritania, 2006.

A Record Percentage of Women in Parliament

Women held almost 17 percent of all parliamentary seats—50 percent more than they held a decade ago. During 2006, 9,335 parliamentary seats were up for renewal. Women won 1,557, or 16.7 percent, of those seats. Of the women who won seats, 1,459 were directly elected, 63 were indirectly elected, and 35 were appointed. While the outcome was positive, it compared unfavourably with results from the previous year, when nearly 20 percent of parliamentarians who won seats were women.

A Record Number of Women Presiding over Parliaments

In January 2007, women held 13.4 percent of the 262 Presiding Officer posts in Parliaments around the world. In all, 35 women held the top position in parliament, the highest number ever reached.

Whilst they were once concentrated in the Caribbean, women Presiding Officers are making inroads into all regions. Eleven women hold the highest parliamentary position in Europe, followed by nine in the Caribbean, six in Africa, four in Asia. There are now five female Presiding Officers in the Americas, including Nancy Pelosi whose election to the third highest political office in the United States of America sparked much interest in the international media.

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

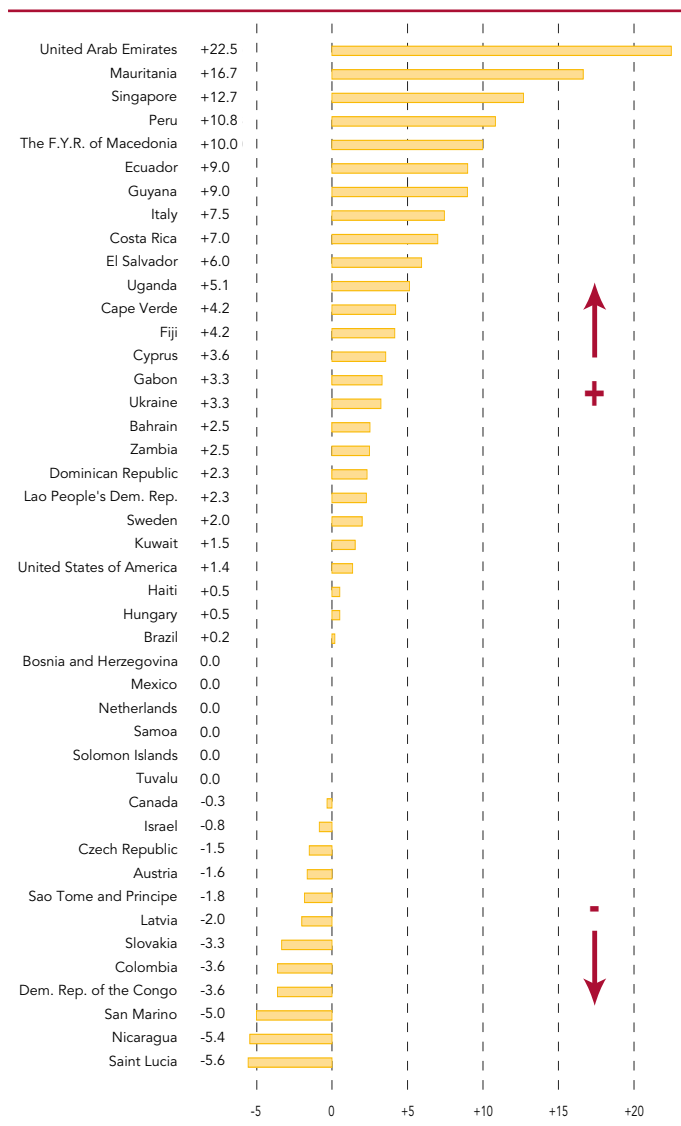
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Table 1: Parliamentary Renewals in 2006

A. Progress and setbacks of women in Lower or Single Houses of Parliament that held elections in 2006

The figures show the percentage point difference between women in parliament in 2006 and the previous legislature



Note: The table excludes the assemblies of Bhutan and Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, as well as the newly established House in Montenegro, because of a lack of comparative data.

B. Women in Lower or single Houses after parliamentary renewals in 2006

Country	Total seats filled	Total women	% Total Women	Quota
Sweden	349	165	47.3	Yes*
Costa Rica	57	22	38.6	Yes**
Netherlands	150	55	36.7	Yes*
Austria	183	59	32.2	Yes*
Uganda (1)	332	99	29.8	Yes#
Peru	120	35	29.2	Yes**
Guyana	69	20	29.0	Yes**
The F.Y.R. Macedonia	120	33	27.5	Yes**
Lao People's Democratic Republic	115	29	25.2	No
Ecuador	100	25	25.0	Yes**
Singapore	94	23	24.5	No
Mexico	500	113	22.6	Yes**
United Arab Emirates (2)	40	9	22.5	No
Canada	308	64	20.8	No
Dominican Republic	178	35	19.7	Yes**
Latvia	100	19	19.0	No
Mauritania	95	17	17.9	Yes**
Italy	630	109	17.3	Yes*
El Salvador	84	14	16.7	Yes*
United States of America	435	71	16.3	No
Slovakia	150	24	16.0	Yes*
Czech Republic	200	31	15.5	Yes*
Cape Verde	72	11	15.3	No
Nicaragua	92	14	15.2	Yes*
Zambia	158	23	14.6	No
Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	6	14.3	Yes**
Cyprus	56	8	14.3	Yes*
Israel	120	17	14.2	Yes*
Gabon	120	15	12.5	No
San Marino	60	7	11.7	No
Fiji (3)	71	8	11.3	No
Hungary	386	40	10.4	Yes*
Brazil	513	45	8.8	Yes*
Ukraine	450	39	8.7	No
Montenegro	81	7	8.6	No
Colombia	166	14	8.4	No
Democratic Republic of Congo	500	42	8.4	No
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (4)	468	36	7.7	No
Sao Tome & Principe	55	4	7.3	No
Samoa	49	3	6.1	No
Saint Lucia (5)	18	1	5.6	No
Haiti	98	4	4.1	No
Bhutan (4)	150	4	2.7	No
Bahrain	40	1	2.5	No
Kuwait (6)	65	1	1.5	No
Solomon Islands	50	0	0.0	No
Tuvalu	15	0	0.0	No

* Voluntary quota adopted by one or more political party, ** Legislated candidate quota, # Seats reserved for women.

(1) The 99 female representatives are composed as follows: 79 district representatives (1 vacant), 14 constituency representatives, 1 youth representative, 1 disabled persons representative, 2 workers' representatives and 2 representatives of the Uganda People's Defense Forces. (2) One of the 20 seats elected in December 2006 was won by a woman, and eight of the remaining 20 appointed seats were awarded to women in February 2007. (3) The Parliament of Fiji was dissolved following a coup d'état in December 2006. (4) The assemblies of Bhutan and Libyan Arab Jamahiriya are indirectly elected. (5) No woman was elected in the 2006 elections. However one woman was appointed Speaker of the House and therefore became a member of the House. (6) No woman was elected in the 2006 elections. However one woman was appointed to the cabinet and became an ex-officio member of parliament.

Maintaining a Critical Mass

Four countries maintained or surpassed a critical mass of 30 percent parliamentary representation by women after elections in 2006. Sweden elected the highest number of women ever to its Parliament. Women now hold 47.3 percent of parliamentary seats there—the second highest percentage in the world after Rwanda, where women hold 48.8 percent of seats in the Lower House. Sweden has been a world leader in women's parliamentary representation for several decades, recording progress at each election. The gains women registered in the 2006 election

boosted the average regional representation for women in the Nordic countries to an all-time high of 40.8 percent.

Challenging Nordic dominance is Costa Rica, which elected a Parliament of 38.6 percent women. Costa Rica is now the only Latin American country ranked among the top five nations in electing women to Parliament. Close behind is the Netherlands, which has maintained a rate of female representation of over 33 percent for the past ten years, and Austria, which, although registering a slight decrease elected more than 32 percent women (see Table 1). In December 2006, 19 Parliaments reached

the critical-mass target of 30 percent women in decision-making positions, the target established in the Beijing Platform for Action.

Guyana, Peru, and Uganda are all within grasp of the critical mass. All three have undertaken reforms to promote the participation of women in the electoral process, and in all three, greater numbers of women won seats in 2006. In Guyana and Peru, proportional representation electoral systems with legislated political party quotas require that at least one-third of all electoral candidates are women. Table 5 illustrates the situation in Peru, where 34.7 percent of electoral candidates were women, and 29.2 of those elected to Parliament were women. Uganda reformed its system of reserving seats for women in Parliament by raising the number of women district representatives from 69 to 80.

A Year of Highs and Lows

Table 1 shows the wide disparities in women's participation in Parliaments around the world. The largest gains were registered in **Europe**, where the rate of women's representation after 16 parliamentary renewals averaged 17.8 percent. In addition to Sweden and the Netherlands, gains were also recorded in Cyprus and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In Italy, several political parties adopted informal party quotas to increase the participation of women. As a result, Italy recorded the highest number of women ever elected to its Parliament. In contrast, setbacks were registered in the Czech Republic, Latvia, San Marino and Slovakia.

The consistent rate of progress in the **Americas** over the past decade was largely sustained through the 20 parliamentary elections held throughout the year (see Table 3). As a region, the Americas report 20 percent average female representation, trailing only the Nordic countries, and placing it ahead of Europe. In addition to the successes in Costa Rica, Guyana, and Peru already mentioned, women made further inroads into the single or lower chambers in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and El Salvador. They were elected in the highest numbers ever to those chambers. However, Colombia and Nicaragua recorded setbacks for women. No women were elected to the Parliament of St. Lucia, although one woman was appointed Speaker of the House and, by default, became a member of the

House. The United States of America made significant progress, recording the highest proportion of women ever in both Houses of Congress. In the Lower House, 16.3 percent of representatives elected were women, while in the Upper House, 24.2 percent of the seats renewed (one-third) were filled by women, resulting in a total of 16.0 percent female Senators.

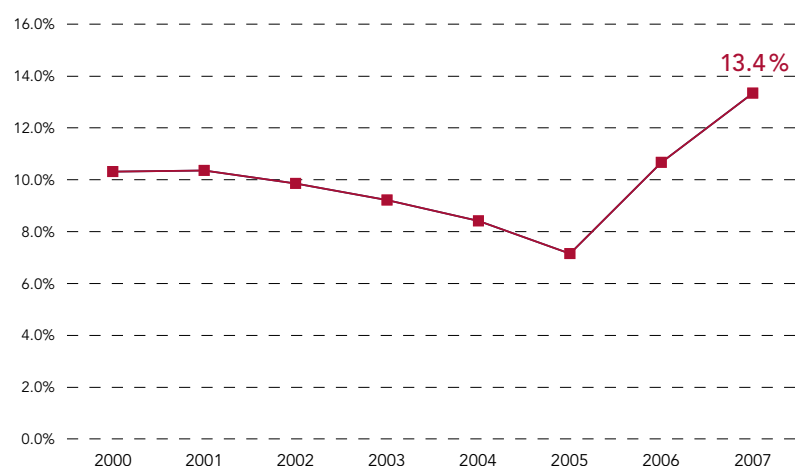
Progress continued in **Africa**, where, in addition to Uganda, Mauritania registered an impressive gain in female representation as it moved from just one woman in its Lower House prior to the 2005 coup d'état, to 17 in the new Lower House. Electoral system reform included the adoption of quota legislation requiring political parties to nominate women for at least 20 percent of their candidates. There was also a placement mandate, requiring political parties to put women in winnable positions on party lists. There were no setbacks in the number of women elected to African Parliaments.



Woman casting her ballot, Mexico, 2006.

Table 2: Women Presiding Officers of Parliaments, 2000-2007

Evolution since 2000 (January of each year)



Situation as of 15 January 2007: 35 of 262 posts (13.4%)

Unicameral: 13 women Presiding Officers

Albania; Dominica; Gambia (the); Georgia; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Israel; New Zealand; Peru; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Turkmenistan and Venezuela.

Bicameral: 22 women Presiding Officers

(10 women in Lower Houses; 12 women in Upper Houses)

Antigua and Barbuda (Lower and Upper Houses); Austria (Lower House); Bahamas (Upper House); Belgium (Upper House); Belize (Lower House); Burundi (Lower House); Colombia (Upper House); Jamaica (Upper House); Japan (Upper House); Lesotho (Lower House); Netherlands (Lower and Upper Houses); Saint Lucia (Lower and Upper Houses); South Africa (Lower House); Swaziland (Upper House); Switzerland (Lower House); Trinidad and Tobago (Upper House); United Kingdom (Upper House); United States of America (Lower House) and Zimbabwe (Upper House).

Asia maintained its steady increase in women's representation over the past decade. Gains for women in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and in Singapore were highly significant. Forty of the 173 candidates in Laos were female (Table 5), 29 of whom were elected to Parliament. This is the highest success rate (72.5%) for female candidates in 2006 (in countries for which data is available). In Singapore, the ruling People's Action Party's landslide victory brought 17 women to Parliament, and with one independent candidate elected and a further five appointed in January 2007, the total stands at 23 women, the highest number ever.

Missed Opportunities in Post-conflict States

Reversing earlier trends, some of the biggest losers were post-conflict states undergoing electoral and parliamentary reform. In recent years, elections in Afghanistan, Burundi, Rwanda, Mozambique, South Africa and Timor Leste have resulted in significant increases in the number of women in Parliament. In 2006, however, women gained only 8.4 percent of seats in the newly established Lower House of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and four percent of seats in Haiti's Lower House. Indeed, fewer women hold political office in the DRC than did so in the previous transitional assembly. Whilst electoral reform debates in the DRC and Haiti included the issue of women's political participation, no measures were adopted to guarantee women's presence in Parliament.

The Lower House of Bosnia and Herzegovina registered no progress in its female membership, with women accounting for 14.3 percent of parliamentary seats, the same proportion as the outgoing assembly.

Women of the Pacific have the Longest Way to Go

Women in the Pacific Island states are the biggest losers when it comes to their representation in Parliaments. The regional average for the Pacific states (excluding Australia and New Zealand) stands at a mere 2.5 percent, the lowest in the world, and this is a trend that has not changed in the past decade. Five countries in the sub-region—the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu—have no women in Parliament. Elections in the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu in 2006 demonstrated no progress in women's political participation in those states.

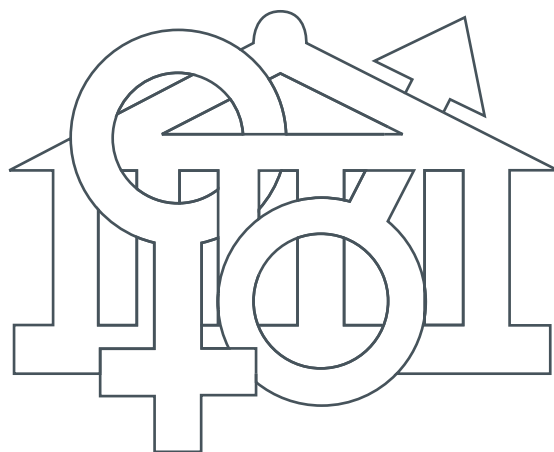
A combination of factors is responsible for this low number of women in Parliament in the Pacific Island states, but an overwhelming challenge is the prominence of patriarchal and hierarchical norms that see men as the head of the household and as the primary decision-makers. This pattern infiltrates politics where women are not generally viewed as being capable leaders, and politics remains the domain of men. Even women do not vote in large numbers for other women.

Not a Level Playing Field, Not a Level Score

As this report shows, women's participation in Parliament varies from country to country, from region to region, and is encouraged or thwarted by prevailing political, institutional, and socio-cultural attitudes. What accounts for the staggering 48 percentage-point difference between chambers with the highest and those with the lowest number of women representatives?

Electoral Systems, Perhaps...

Through its research, the IPU has determined that institutional factors, such as electoral and party systems, have an important influence on women's rates of election. Women have tended



Progress continues in the Arab States

The parliamentary make-up in the Arab States continued to change, with renewals taking place in the Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. For the first time in history, women in Kuwait and the UAE were entitled to vote and stand for election.

Despite mobilization by women's organizations, electoral and campaign training and international support, no woman was successful in Kuwait's June election. Twenty-eight of the 250 electoral candidates were female; and while some embarked on interesting and innovative campaigns, the one-month limit on campaigning disadvantaged female candidates who were unable to build name recognition. Even though the majority of registered voters were women, they apparently—and surprisingly—did not support women candidates in sufficient numbers. One woman was appointed to the cabinet, making her an ex-officio, and only female, Member of Parliament.

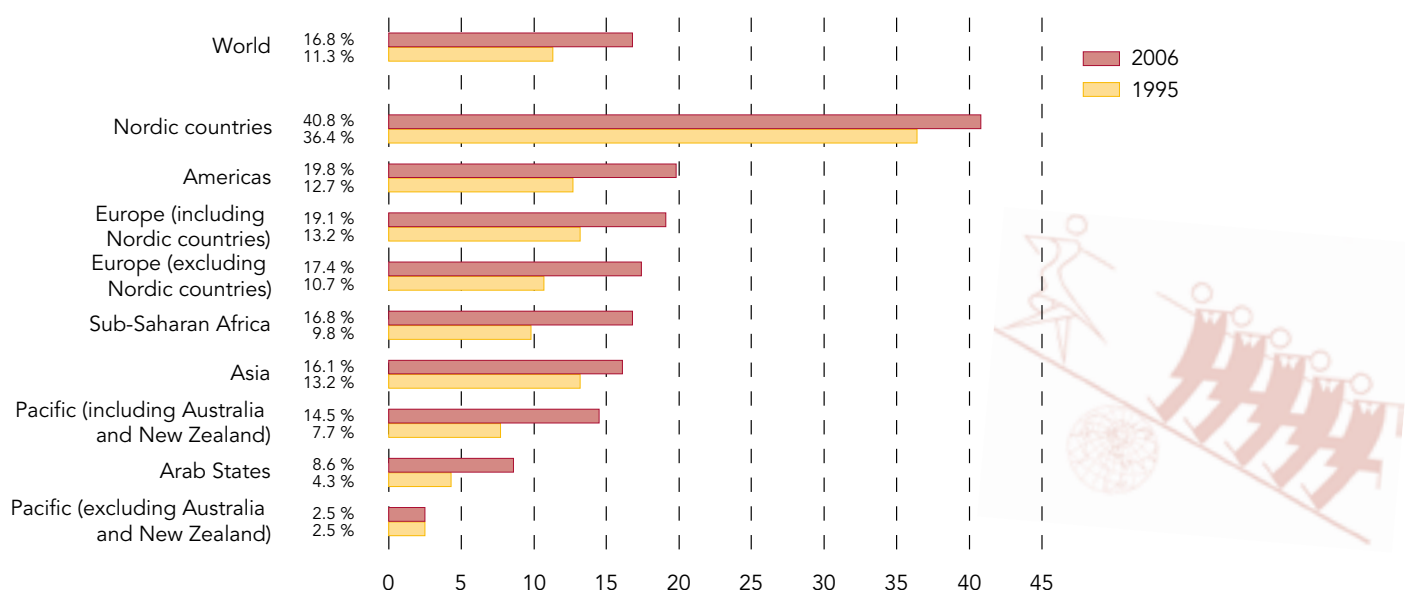
It was women's second experience of political participation in Bahrain. Eighteen of the 207 candidates contesting the November poll in Bahrain were female. Unlike the 2002 election, in which no woman was successful, one woman candidate was elected to the Lower House—for the first time in the country's history—after she stood unopposed in her constituency. Women were re-appointed to the Bahraini Upper House, increasing their share to 25 percent of the Senate seats.

Half of the 40 seats in the Parliament of the UAE were elected by a handful of voters (6,689 people, including 1,189 women) in December 2006, the country's first election in more than 35 years. Only one woman was elected. The political leadership responded positively by appointing eight women to the legislature in January 2007, bringing female membership to 22.5 percent, one of the highest of the Arab States.

Women are slowly emerging as political leaders in a region that has long been a bastion of male power. Where women have not been able to win direct election to Parliament, the political leadership has explored other avenues for increasing their participation, most notably through appointments, as in Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE. Once invisible, women are gradually realizing their political potential and their concerns are beginning to be addressed in the political arena.

Table 3: World and Regional Averages of women in Parliaments, 1995-2006

Situation for all chambers of Parliaments combined in December of each year*



* The percentages do not take into account parliaments for which data is not available.

to be elected in greater numbers in systems of proportional representation than in constituency-based systems. A close examination of the 2006 electoral results supports this finding.

- In the 26 legislatures using proportional representation, an average of 18.5 percent of parliamentarians elected were women.
- In the 22 legislatures using majority or plurality electoral systems, an average of 17 percent of parliamentarians elected were women.

However, the 1.5 percentage point difference in results between proportional representation and majority electoral systems does not sufficiently account for the vast differences between numbers of women elected. For example, Uganda uses a majority electoral system and elected close to 30 percent women, higher than most countries using proportional representation.

Gender Quotas: A Catalyst for Change

A more telling factor than the prevailing electoral system is whether or not a gender quota is used. Twenty-three countries used gender quotas, and they elected 21.7 percent women on

Table 4: Women in Upper Houses of Parliament, 2006

Women's representation in Upper Houses of Parliament continues to lag

Seventy-three Parliaments in the world are bicameral, composed of Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament.

By the end of 2006, women held 15.9 percent of the seats in Upper Houses, up from 10.1 percent a decade ago.

In the 14 Upper Houses renewed in 2006, 136 women gained seats (13.2 percent of all representatives). The majority of these women were elected, nine were indirectly elected, and 26 were appointed.

Appointments of women to Upper Houses are more common than appointments to other chambers. Appointments provide an opportunity for political leaders to influence change directly and immediately.

Upper House	Total Seats Renewed	Number of Women	% Women
Algeria*	57	2	3.5
Bahrain*	40	10	25.0
Brazil	27	4	14.8
Cambodia*	61	9	14.8
Colombia	102	12	11.8
Czech Republic	27	6	22.2
Dominican Republic	32	1	3.1
Fiji*	32	5	15.6
Haiti	30	4	13.3
Italy	322	44	13.7
Mexico	128	22	17.2
Morocco*	90	1	1.1
Pakistan*	50	8	16.0
United States of America	33	8	24.2

The chambers in Algeria, Brazil, Czech Republic, Morocco, Pakistan, and the United States of America were partially renewed. The percentages presented correspond to the results of the partial renewals. The Upper House in Fiji was dissolved following a coup d'état in December 2006. *Indirectly elected or appointed.

Table 5: Women Candidates and Women Elected in 2006

	CANDIDATES				CANDIDATES ELECTED				RATE OF ELECTION (%)		QUOTA	
	Total Candidates	Men	Women	% Women	Total Elected	Men	Women	% Women	Men	Women	Electoral Quota for women	
Mixed Electoral System												
Democratic Republic of Congo	9709	8335	1374	14.2	500	458	42	8.4	5.5	3.1	No	
Hungary	2804	2337	467	16.7	386	346	40	10.4	14.8	8.6	Yes*	
Plurality/Majority Electoral System												
Bahrain	207	189	18	8.7	40	39	1	2.5	20.6	5.6	No	
Canada	1634	1254	380	23.3	308	244	64	20.8	19.5	16.8	No	
Czech Republic (Upper House)	204	165	39	19.1	27	21	6	22.2	12.7	15.4	No	
Kuwait (1)	250	222	28	11.2	50	50	0	0.0	22.5	0.0	No	
Latvia	1024	755	269	26.3	100	81	19	19.0	10.7	7.1	No	
Lao People's Democratic Republic	175	135	40	22.9	115	86	29	25.2	63.7	72.5	No	
Samoa	229	210	19	8.3	49	46	3	6.1	21.9	15.8	No	
Solomon Islands	453	427	26	5.7	50	50	0	0.0	11.7	0.0	No	
United Arab Emirates (2)	450	385	65	14.4	20	19	1	5.0	4.9	1.5	No	
Zambia	750	644	106	14.1	158	135	23	14.6	21.0	21.7	No	
Proportional Representation Electoral System												
Bosnia and Herzegovina	688	419	269	39.1	42	36	6	14.3	8.6	2.2	Yes**	
Costa Rica	1167	573	594	50.9	57	35	22	38.6	6.1	3.7	Yes**	
Cyprus	487	374	113	23.2	56	48	8	14.3	12.8	7.1	Yes*	
Czech Republic (Lower House)	4985	3602	1383	27.7	200	169	31	15.5	4.7	2.2	Yes*	
Peru	2887	1886	1001	34.7	120	85	35	29.2	4.5	3.5	Yes**	
Slovakia	2340	1808	532	22.7	150	126	24	16.0	7.0	4.5	Yes*	
Sweden	5469	3117	2352	43.0	349	184	165	47.3	5.9	7.0	Yes*	
Ukraine	7595	6144	1451	19.1	450	411	39	8.7	6.7	2.7	No	

(1) This refers to the 50 elected parliamentary seats in Kuwait. An additional 15 seats were filled by the members of the cabinet. (2) This refers to the 20 elected parliamentary seats in the United Arab Emirates. An additional 20 are appointed to the parliament.

* Voluntary quota adopted by one or more political party ** Legislated candidate quota



Woman casting her ballot, Haiti, 2006.

average—nearly double the proportion (11.8 percent) of women elected in countries without any form of a gender quota. This trend is confirmed by the top 19 countries that have reached 30 percent or more women in Parliament in 2006: sixteen of them use quotas.

Not all quotas are equal, however. Key for the effective use of quotas is implementation and enforcement. Quotas that are legislated are more efficient when complemented with sanctions for non-compliance. For example, Costa Rica has strict enforcement measures that require political parties to ensure that their candidate lists include at least 40 percent women in winnable positions, or they will be unable to register the lists for the election. This is in contrast to Brazil for example, where

although the law on quotas requires political parties to present 30 percent female candidates on its lists (up to a maximum of 150 percent of the seats to be filled), not all political parties comply and there are no strict sanctions in place.

In countries in which women are just beginning to participate in politics, the issue of quotas is somewhat taboo. Yet even in countries where such tools are not easily accepted, the issue of quotas has prompted debate among political parties on how to increase women's participation.

Quotas are not the only mechanism. Some countries have supported women by enhancing their capacity to run for election. Bahrain offered training in campaign skills for women candidates and ran an extensive media campaign prior to the election to highlight the importance of women's political participation.

Everything in Moderation

The greatest successes have been registered when a variety of factors work in harmony. Political will by leaders, sustained women's movements and the continued emphasis placed on achieving gender equality by the international community are important ingredients. Political parties play an ever-increasing role in the management of parliamentary politics and putting into practice the principle of equality. For the Nordic countries, the use of voluntary party quotas over a sustained period has yielded results. For other countries, implementing quotas and reserved seats has paid off. There is no one simple recipe, but strength and progress lies in the combination of national and international efforts to promote the participation of women in politics. ▀