Women in Politics

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Women's participation in politics has increased significantly in the past 25 years. Some key indications of this progress include the overall percentage of women in parliaments and the number of women being elected or appointed as heads of state and government. A recent Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) report[1] has observed that globally the percentage of seats held by women in lower and single houses of parliament increased from 11.6 percent in 1995 to 24.9 percent in 2020. Similarly, the share of women as speakers of parliament has nearly doubled from 10.5 to 20.5 percent in the last couple of decades. Likewise, more and more female presidents and prime ministers have entered office. Between 1960 and 2017, 114 different women have governed 74 countries.[2] And almost 40 percent of countries where women have come to power have experienced the rise of two different female leaders (i.e., Finland, Bangladesh, and New Zealand).

However, it is worth noting that the advancement of women's participation in the political decision-making process is not growing at the same pace for all countries. Some regions continue to have lower or single parliamentary chambers with less than 5 percent women: three in the Pacific, three in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and one each in the Americas, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. The growth of women's parliamentary representation in Asia, for example, is the slowest compared

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[1] IPU. 2020. "Women in Parliament: 1995–2020 – 25 Years in Review." Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2020. https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review.

[2] Amy C. Alexander and Farida Jalalzai. 2020. "Symbolic Empowerment and Female Heads of States and Government: A Global, Multilevel Analysis." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 8 (1): 24-43. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1441034.

to any other region in the world,[3] from 13.2% in 1995 to 20% in 2020. Meanwhile, Asia's share of global GDP has soared within the last 50 years, from 12% of global GDP in the 1960s to 31% in 2015. Gender inequality in political institutions also differs significantly among Asian countries.

In 1995, European countries dominated the top-10 list of lower and single houses of parliament with the highest women's participation. But in 2020, the chart is a more diverse list with five countries in the Americas, two in sub-Saharan Africa, and one in the MENA region.[4] Furthermore, women have yet to crack the executive ceiling, as 61 percent of countries throughout the world have never elected or appointed a female as president or prime minister. These countries include the most high-profile nations, such as Japan, the United States, and Russia.

The lack of women's participation in politics has multiple consequences. Haque[5] suggests that the underrepresentation of women increases the risk of causing a legitimacy crisis for the government. It is also seen as wastage of women's potential given the better education attainment among women nowadays. Others argue from a substantive representation perspective that female politicians bring forth improvement in the standards of parliamentary behaviour and responsiveness to women in the community.[6] Consequently, this representation of interest is a pivotal aspect in every attempt to improve the quality of democracy.

This book provides an excellent update as to how women's status in politics has been improving since the 1990s. Each chapter discusses the challenges and opportunities to equal representation based on regional trends, ranging from Asia to Europe. And while there is no "silver bullet" as

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[3] Ella Prihatini. 2019. "Women's Representation in Asian Parliaments: A QCA Approach." *Contemporary Politics* 25 (2): 213-35. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2018.1520057.

[4] IPU. 2020. "Women in Parliament: 1995–2020 – 25 Years in Review." Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2020. https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review.

[5] M. Shamsul Haque. 2003. "Citizen Participation in Governance through Representation: Issue of Gender in East Asia." *International Journal of Public Administration* 26 (5): 569-90. https://doi.org/10.1081/PAD-120019236.

[6] Marian Sawer. 2000. "Parliamentary Representation of Women: From Discourses of Justice to Strategies of Accountability." *International Political Science Review* 21 (4): 361-80; Ana Catalano. 2009. "Women Acting for Women? An Analysis of Gender and Debate Participation in the British House of Commons 2005–2007." *Politics & Gender* 5 (1): 45-68. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X09000038.

a strategy to end gender disparity in politics, readers of political representation could still gain important takeaways from these observations. The introductory chapter aims to unpack the role of women in politics and the opportunities of female leadership. It argues that women's leadership in politics is positively affecting society, especially after women leaders have been seen to be more successful than their male counterparts at mitigating the current COVID-19 crisis.[7]

While most scholars agree that the introduction of gender quotas in politics has increased women's representation worldwide,[8] the results of this institutional approach are not guaranteed. Furthermore, elected female MPs are also often under double scrutiny for their political dynastic background,[9] as their participation in politics is merely seen as an extension of male politicians' interests.[10] Thus, the last section in this chapter will elaborate on some potential strategies to improve women's influence in the decision-making processes that will ensure policies become more responsive to women's interests and concerns.

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[7] Luca Coscieme, Lorenzo Fioramonti, Lars F. Mortensen, Kate E. Pickett, Ida Kubiszewski, Hunter Lovins, Jacqueline McGlade, et al. 2020. "Women in Power: Female Leadership and Public Health Outcomes during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *medRxiv*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.07.13.20 152397; Kayla Sergent and Alexander D. Stajkovic. 2020. "Women's Leadership Is Associated with Fewer Deaths during the COVID-19 Crisis: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of United States Governors." *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, July 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000577.

[8] Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook, and Jennifer M. Piscopo, eds. 2012. *The Impact of Gender Quotas*. New York, US: Oxford University Press; Ella Prihatini. 2019. "Islam, Parties, and Women's Political Nomination in Indonesia." *Politics & Gender*, 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1017/ S1743923X19000321.

[9] Amrita Basu. 2016. "Women, Dynasties, and Democracy in India." In *Democratic Dynasties: State, Party and Family in Contemporary Indian Politics*, edited by Khanchan Chandra, 136-72. New York: Cambridge University Press.

[10] Kanchan Chandra. 2016. *Democratic Dynasties*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chandra's book on Indian political dynasties argues that the causes of dynastic politics lie in the structure of India's contemporary institutions – the state and political parties. The large returns associated with state office ensure that the families of politicians will want to enter politics. The organisational weakness of political parties ensures that they are likely to get tickets (party nominations) when they do. Nevertheless, it is important to note that dynasty politics is not unique to democratising countries or less developed economies; instead, as Hess argues: "The Constitution states that 'no title of nobility shall be granted by the United States,' yet it seems political nobility is as American as apple pie". Stephen Hess. 2016. *America's Political Dynasties: From Adams to Clinton*. Washington DC, US: Brookings Institution Press.

Women's Role in Politics and Policy Making

During most of the nineteenth century, the right to vote was confined to adult men who owned property, earned some minimum level of income, or paid some amount of taxes. Women's access to politics and policy making were very limited as they were unable to cast their vote or to get nominated for elective office. It was not until Liberia in 1839 and Greece in 1844, that the right to vote for all adult males was granted.[11] The legal right to participate in politics and policy making on an equal basis with men is the first step in achieving equal representation. Based on this principle, women across the globe were pursuing their legal right to vote and to stand in elections. This right is also known as women's universal suffrage.

Feminist scholar Marian Sawer argues that representation matters.[12] Yet, women's political representation has multiple meanings that often drive ambiguity, indicating that the presence of women will also serve the goal of representation of women as a collective group. She elaborates that the term *political representation* can refer to at least three different meanings: (1) representation of interests, ideas or values, perspective, and experiences, (2) representativeness, which includes effects on aspirations and on the status of a group, and (3) equal right to represent, to participate in decision-making, and to increase the pool of talent. The right of women to participate in public life on an equal basis with men is regulated in Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This right does not oblige women to make a difference to public life, it is simply allowing women to be part of the political process.

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[11]   Adam Przeworski. 2009. "Conquered or Granted? A History of Suffrage Extensions." *British Journal of Political Science* 39 (2): 291-321. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000434.

[12]   Marian Sawer. 2000. "Parliamentary Representation of Women: From Discourses of Justice to Strategies of Accountability." *International Political Science Review* 21 (4): 361-80.

Extensive research asserts that women's participation in politics has increased dramatically over the past 100 years,[13] following the success of the suffrage movements that took place in various countries around the world. The movements resulted in New Zealand, in 1893, becoming the first self-governing country to grant the vote to all adult women, followed by Australia in 1901, Finland in 1907 and Norway in 1913.[14] In 1907, Finland became the first country to elect a female member of parliament.

In 1950, only half of the countries in the world had granted women universal suffrage. However, as of today, parliaments are moving in the direction of gender parity, with women holding 50 percent or more seats in four countries: Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia, and UAE.[15] Studies demonstrate that in the 1990s, women successfully politicised their absence from parliament and challenged the legitimacy of men's domination in the decision-making processes.[16] The strategies to increase women's presence in parliaments, such as electoral gender quotas, were adopted as part of the implementation of the United Nations Beijing Platform for Action in 1995.

Women's role as speakers of parliament has also reached a record high with an average of 20.5%.[17] Since 2015, all parliaments in four regions have

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[13] Melanie M. Hughes and Pamela Paxton. 2008. "Continuous Change, Episodes, and Critical Periods: A Framework for Understanding Women's Political Representation over Time." *Politics & Gender* 4 (2): 233-64. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X08000329; Pamela Paxton, Melanie M. Hughes, and Matthew A. Painter. 2010. "Growth in Women's Political Representation: A Longitudinal Exploration of Democracy, Electoral System and Gender Quotas." *European Journal of Political Research* 49 (1): 25-52. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.01886.x.

[14] Adam Przeworski. 2009. "Conquered or Granted? A History of Suffrage Extensions." *British Journal of Political Science* 39 (2): 291-321. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000434.

[15] IPU. 2020. "Women in Parliament: 1995–2020 – 25 Years in Review." Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2020. https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review.

[16] Sarah Childs. 2013. "In the Absence of Electoral Sex Quotas: Regulating Political Parties for Women's Representation." *Representations* 49 (4): 401-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2013.850320; Sharyn G. Davies. 2005. "Women in Politics in Indonesia in the Decade Post-Beijing." *International Social Science Journal* 57 (184): 231-42. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2451.2005.00547.x; Mona Lena Krook. 2006. "Gender Quotas, Norms, and Politics." *Politics & Gender* 2 (1): 110-18. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X06061010; Mona Lena Krook. 2009. *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[17] IPU. 2020. "Women in Parliament: 1995–2020 – 25 Years in Review." Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2020. https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review.

appointed their first woman speaker, and Asia tops the list with five representatives: Nepal, Viet Nam, Philippines, Indonesia and Kazakhstan. The only region that has yet to have a female speaker is the Pacific. This condition reflects the fact that the Pacific is the only region with zero female MPs in some countries, such as Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Women's political role in parliament is also measured by leadership at the committee level. IPU also reports that the gender gap remains an issue, with women chairing 73% of gender equality committees and only 10% of defence committees. In line with the global trend, a study on Indonesia suggests that women continue to occupy feminine and less prestigious committees regardless of party ideology.[18]

Moreover, women's share in the executive branch has improved since 1960, when Sirimavo Bandaranaike first cracked through the glass ceiling in Sri Lanka.[19] Alexander and Jalalzai's study[20] shows that up until February 2017, 114 women have served as executives in 74 countries: 49 presidents and 65 prime ministers. As many as 26 of the 114 women served in the capacities of "Acting" or "Provisional" leaders. This makes only 88 women non-interim: 36 presidents and 52 prime ministers. As of 1 January 2020, women comprise 6.6% of elected heads of state (10 out of 152) and 6.2% of heads of government (12 out of 193) – the head of state and government is the same in two countries: Bolivia and Switzerland.[21] However, it is important to highlight that more than half of female top executives are in Europe, with nearly all governments in the Nordic countries being headed by a woman, except Sweden. This condition indicates how difficult it is

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[18] Ella Prihatini. 2019. "Explaining Gender Gaps in Indonesian Legislative Committees." *Parliamentary Affairs*, December 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsz047.

[19] Farida Jalalzai. 2018. "Women Heads of State and Government." In *Measuring Women's Political Empowerment across the Globe: Strategies, Challenges and Future Research*, edited by Amy C. Alexander, Catherine Bolzendahl, and Farida Jalalzai, 257-82. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

[20] Amy C. Alexander and Farida Jalalzai. 2020. "Symbolic Empowerment and Female Heads of States and Government: A Global, Multilevel Analysis." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 8 (1): 24-43. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1441034.

[21] IPU. 2020. "In 2020, World 'cannot Afford' so Few Women in Power." Inter-Parliamentary Union. March 10, 2020.

for women to climb the political ladder and to crack the executive glass ceiling.[22]

Also, from the executive branch is women's share in cabinet ministerial positions. Overall, the proportion of women ministers is at an all-time high at 21.3 per cent (851 out of 4,003), or 7.1% higher than in 2005.[23] However, men continue to dominate high prestige and masculine portfolios[24] whilst ministerial recruitment is often determined by informal rules.[25] A prime example for this is: there are only 25 female finance/budget ministers and 22 female defence ministers. On the other hand, women tend to oversee family and social affairs, environment and energy portfolios – in what some refer to as "pink" portfolios.[26]

Effects of Women's Political Leadership

In her seminal book, Anne Phillips[27] introduces the politics of presence theory, which suggests that female politicians are best equipped to represent

[22]   Farida Jalalzai. 2016. "Shattered Not Cracked: The Effect of Women's Executive Leadership." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 37 (4): 439-63. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2016.1192430; Andrew Reynolds. 1999. "Women in the Legislatures and Executives of the World: Knocking at the Highest Glass Ceiling." *World Politics* 51 (4): 547-72. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100009254; Tania Verge and Javier Astudillo. 2019. "The Gender Politics of Executive Candidate Selection and Reselection." *European Journal of Political Research* 58: 720-40. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12312.

[23]   IPU. 2020. "In 2020, World 'cannot Afford' so Few Women in Power." Inter-Parliamentary Union. March 10, 2020.

[24]   Silvia S. Claveria. 2014. "Still a 'Male Business'? Explaining Women's Presence in Executive Office." *West European Politics* 37 (5): 1156-76. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2014.9114 79; S. Jacob, J. A. Scherpereel, and M. Adams. 2014. "Gender Norms and Women's Political Representation: A Global Analysis of Cabinets, 1979–2009." *Governance* 27 (2): 321-45. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12044; Mona Lena Krook, and Diana Z. O'Brien. 2012. "All the President's Men? The Appointment of Female Cabinet Ministers Worldwide." *The Journal of Politics* 74 (3): 840-55.

[25]   Claire Annesley. 2015. "Rules of Ministerial Recruitment." *Politics & Gender* 11 (4): 618-42. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X15000434.

[26]   Kendall D. Funk, Magda Hinojosa, and Jennifer M. Piscopo. 2017. "Still Left Behind: Gender, Political Parties, and Latin America's Pink Tide." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 24 (4): 399-424. https://academic.oup.com/sp/article-abstract/24/4/399/4775165; M. Tremblay and D. Stockemer. 2013. "Women's Ministerial Careers in Cabinet, 1921–2010: A Look at Socio-demographic Traits and Career Experiences." *Canadian Public Administration* 56 (4): 523-41. https://doi.org/10.1111/capa.12038.

[27]   Anne Phillips. 1995. *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford, US: Oxford University Press.

the interests of women; hence, descriptive representation will lead to substantive representation. Most studies argue that women in parliament do make a difference, although the safest position is to say that empirical support for this conclusion is rather "mixed".[28] Some scholars find that women are more likely to sponsor and vote for bills related to women's issues,[29] are more effective as legislators,[30] are more inclined to promote women's autonomy,[31] are more likely to mention the words "women" and "gender" during hearings than male MPs,[32] and display less interruption during debates or hearings.[33] Others suggest descriptive representation does not always lead to a rise in substantive representation. In their comparative study of legislative debates in seven European countries, Back and Debus

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[28] Lena Wängnerud. 2009. "Women in Parliaments: Descriptive and Substantive Representation." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12(1) (1): 51-69. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev. polisci.11.053106.123839.

[29] Eda Bektas and Esra Issever-Ekinci. 2019. "Who Represents Women in Turkey? An Analysis of Gender Difference in Private Bill Sponsorship in the 2011–15 Turkish Parliament." *Politics & Gender* 15 (4): 851-81. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18000363; Michele L. Swers. 2016. "Pursuing Women's Interests in Partisan Times: Explaining Gender Differences in Legislative Activity on Health, Education, and Women's Health Issues." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 37 (3): 249-73. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2016.1188599.

[30] Craig Volden, Alan E. Wiseman, and Dana E. Wittmer. 2013. "When Are Women More Effective Lawmakers Than Men?" *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (2). https://doi.org/10.1111/ ajps.12010.

[31] Sarah Childs, Paul Webb, and Sally Marthaler. 2010. "Constituting and Substantively Representing Women: Applying New Approaches to a UK Case Study." *Politics & Gender* 6 (2): 199-223. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X10000048; Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris. 2003. "Westminster Women: The Politics of Presence." *Political Studies* 51 (1): 84-102. https://doi. org/10.1111/1467-9248.00414.

[32] Karen Bird. 2005. "Gendering Parliamentary Questions." *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 7 (3): 353-70. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2005.00196.x; Tali Mendelberg, Christopher F. Karpowitz, and Nicholas Goedert. 2014. "Does Descriptive Representation Facilitate Women's Distinctive Voice? How Gender Composition and Decision Rules Affect Deliberation." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (2): 291-306. https://doi. org/10.1111/ajps.12077.

[33] Ana Catalano. 2009. "Women Acting for Women? An Analysis of Gender and Debate Participation in the British House of Commons 2005–2007." *Politics & Gender* 5 (1): 45-68. https:// doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X09000038; Lotte Hargrave and Tone Langengen. 2020. "The Gendered Debate: Do Men and Women Communicate Differently in the House of Commons?" *Politics & Gender*, 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000100.

assert that women are more underrepresented in legislative debates when they represent parties with many female MPs.[34]

In terms of public policy, cross-national analyses have shown that more female lawmakers in parliaments are associated with higher welfare state spending,[35] lesser infant death and better measles vaccination status.[36] Swiss et al. also assert that an increase in women's parliamentary seats was followed by improved child health status, especially in developing countries.[37] Similarly, a study on 139 nations during 1995-2012 found that gender quotas are associated with large increased government expenditure toward public health.[38]

Public health policy outcomes became the central interest of the public with the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. As of 6 August 2020, there have been more than 18 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 702,642 deaths.[39] The pandemic has gendered impact, which makes women

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[34] Hanna Bäck and Marc Debus. "When do women speak? A comparative analysis of the role of gender in legislative debates." *Political Studies* 67, no. 3 (2019): 576-596.

[35] Catherine Bolzendahl. 2011. "Beyond the Big Picture: Gender Influences on Disaggregated and Domain-Specific Measures of Social Spending, 1980–1999." *Politics & Gender* 7 (1): 35-70. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X10000553; Park Soon Seok. 2017. "Gendered Representation and Critical Mass: Women's Legislative Representation and Social Spending in 22 OECD Countries." *Sociological Perspectives* 60 (6): 1097-1114; Frances Rosenbluth, Rob Salmond, and Michael F. Thies. 2006. "Welfare Works: Explaining Female Legislative Representation." *Politics & Gender* 2 (2): 165-92. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X06060065.

[36] Amm Quamruzzaman and Matthew Lange. 2016. "Female Political Representation and Child Health: Evidence from a Multilevel Analysis." *Social Science & Medicine* 171 (October): 48-57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.10.025.

[37] Liam Swiss, Kathleen M. Fallon, and Giovani Burgos. 2012. "Does Critical Mass Matter?: Women's Political Representation and Child Health in Developing Countries." *Social Forces* 91 (2): 531-57. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/491192/summary.

[38] Amanda Clayton and Pär Zetterberg. 2018. "Quota Shocks: Electoral Gender Quotas and Government Spending Priorities Worldwide." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (3): 916-32. https://doi.org/10.1086/697251.

[39] World Health Organization. 2020. "Coronavirus." 2020. https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus.

experience double and often triple burden.[40] A report published by the United Nations suggests that women's lives are affected by the pandemic disproportionately and differently from men.[41] ILO reports that women globally comprise over 70% of workers in the health sector, including those working in care institutions.[42] In some countries, COVID-19 infections among female health workers are twice that of their male counterparts.[43] Women are confronting increases in domestic violence, care duties, unemployment, and poverty. The closure of schools, daycare, and other public facilities to control COVID-19 transmission in various countries might have a differential effect on women, who provide care within families, which will limit their work and economic opportunities. Experts further predict that the longer-term impact of the pandemic will not be equal for men and women; hence COVID-19 is throwing away decades of hard-won battles both in terms of gender equality and women's economic rights.[44]

Experience from past outbreaks suggest the importance of incorporating women in response teams and plans to improve the effectiveness of health interventions whilst promoting gender equity.[45] Despite these calls, women continue to have low representation in COVID-19 national response

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[40] Helen Jaqueline McLaren, Karen Rosalind Wong, Kieu Nga Nguyen, and Komalee Nadeeka Damayanthi Mahamadachchi. 2020. "Covid-19 and Women's Triple Burden: Vignettes from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Vietnam and Australia." *Social Sciences* 9 (5): 87.

[41] United Nations. 2020. "Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women." United Nations. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_women_9_apr_2020_updated.pdf.

[42] Emanuela Pozzan and Umberto Cattaneo. 2020. "Women Health Workers: Working Relentlessly in Hospitals and at Home." International Labour Organization. April 7, 2020. http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_741060/lang--en/index.htm.

[43] UN Women. 2020. "COVID-19: Emerging Gender Data and Why It Matters." UN Women. 2020. https://data.unwomen.org/resources/covid-19-emerging-gender-data-and-why-it-matters.

[44] Jenna Norman. 2020. "Gender and Covid-19: The Immediate Impact the Crisis Is Having on Women." *British Politics and Policy at LSE* (blog). London School of Economics and Political Science. April 23, 2020. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/gender-and-covid19/; Sofia Sprechmann. 2020. "COVID-19 Is the Biggest Setback to Gender Equality in a Decade." World Economic Forum. 2020. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/gender-equality-women-employment-covid19/.

[45] Sophie Harman. 2016. "Ebola, Gender and Conspicuously Invisible Women in Global Health Governance." *Third World Quarterly* 37 (3): 524-41. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.110882 7; Clare Wenham, Julia Smith, and Rosemary Morgan. 2020. "COVID-19: The Gendered Impacts of the Outbreak." *The Lancet* 395 (10227): 846-48. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30526-2.

teams.[46] One prime example of this absence of women's participation is the White House Coronavirus Task Force where women only comprise 8.7% of members. This percentage is staggeringly low compared to women's share in the healthcare sector (80%) and in healthcare leadership positions (11%).[47] As a result, women's interests and concerns are far from being met. A survey of 30 countries and their response plans suggests that only a quarter of countries had made funding or policy commitments for gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, or women-specific economic assistance. More than half (54%) of countries have taken no action on GBV, despite clear evidence of the impact of the crisis on these issues.

Despite the lack of representation, the media reports that a few female state leaders are managing this pandemic in their respective countries better than their male counterparts.[48] Women heads of government in Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand, and Slovakia, for example, are being recognised for the strategic and rapid response they are leading that includes lockdown, widespread testing, and social distancing measures.

The empirical data further suggests that countries led by women had 1.6-times fewer deaths per capita and managed to "flatten the curve" more effectively and faster than male-led governments.[49] Female leaders are also recognised for their transparent and compassionate communication

[46] CARE. 2020. "Where Are the Women? The Conspicuous Absence of Women in COVID-19 Response Teams and Plans, and Why We Need Them." https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE_COVID-19-womens-leadership-report_June-2020.pdf.

[47] Anushka Kalyanpur, Dannielle Thomas, Diana Wu, Laura Tashjian, May D. Sifuentes, and Rachel Hall. 2020. "Rapid Gender Analysis: COVID-19 in the United States." CARE. http://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/7.8.2020-USA-RGA.pdf.

[48] Anne-Marie Croteau and Louise Champoux-Paillé. 2020. "Why Women Leaders Are Excelling during the Coronavirus Pandemic." *The Conversation*, May 13, 2020. http://theconversation.com/why-women-leaders-are-excelling-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-138098; Jennifer Hassan and Siobhán O'Grady. 2020. "Female World Leaders Hailed as Voices of Reason amid the Coronavirus Chaos." *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/04/20/female-world-leaders-hailed-voices-reason-amid-coronavirus-chaos/.

[49] Luca Coscieme, Lorenzo Fioramonti, Lars F. Mortensen, Kate E. Pickett, Ida Kubiszewski, Hunter Lovins, Jacquelin McGlade, et al. 2020. "Women in Power: Female Leadership and Public Health Outcomes during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *medRxiv*, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.07.13.20152397.

when disseminating their government's policies. This aspect of gender stereotype and political communication during the COVID-19 pandemic has been identified as an interesting development by Johnson and Williams.[50] They argue that the pandemic has opened up particular opportunities for female leaders' everyday feminine traits to be embraced and seen as a strength instead of a weakness. German Chancellor Angela Merkel nicknamed "Mutti" (mommy) and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, for example, had been portrayed metaphorically by the media as the maternal protector of their respective countries.

Scholars suggest that this perception benefits female leaders because the health nature of the crisis combined with the lockdown approach that brought people to stay at home – often considered as a feminine sphere. As leaders, women are more effective in advising their citizens on how to survive these challenging times and continue to run things from where people live. In particular, Ardern, Merkel, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and Sint Maarten Prime Minister Silveria Jacobs have been praised for their "effective messaging and decisive action", unlike "the bombastic approaches of several of the world's most prominent male leaders".[51] Their instructions about COVID-19 response policies, published in video or live Facebook chats, were clear and effective.

Women are also leading the way in response efforts at the sub-national government levels. Kayla Sergent and Alexander Stajkovic found that American states with women governors had fewer COVID-19 deaths than states with male governors.[52] Women governors who issued early stay-at-home orders had fewer COVID-19 deaths in their states compared to men governors who issued the same instructions. Meanwhile, their observation of psychological mechanisms linking women to leadership effectiveness, drawn on 251 briefings by 38 governors, suggests that women governors

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[50] Carol Johnson and Blair Williams. 2020. "Gender and Political Leadership in a Time of COVID." *Politics & Gender*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X2000029X.

[51] Jennifer Hassan and Siobhán O'Grady. 2020. "Female World Leaders Hailed as Voices of Reason amid the Coronavirus Chaos." *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/04/20/female-world-leaders-hailed-voices-reason-amid-coronavirus-chaos/.

[52] Kayla Sergent and Alexander D. Stajkovic. 2020. "Women's Leadership Is Associated with Fewer Deaths during the COVID-19 Crisis: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of United States Governors." *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, July 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000577.

expressed more empathy and confidence than men. Another study finds that US black women mayors displayed four key strategic approaches: proactive leadership, advocating transparent and evidence-based decision-making, protecting vulnerable communities, and sharing advice on best practices and lessons learned.[53]

Potential Strategies to Improve Women's Influence in Politics

Women's increased representation in politics, especially in parliament, in the last few decades has been made possible because of the implementation of electoral reforms, which include gender quota as a positive affirmative action.[54] Although the first electoral gender quotas were adopted in the 1930s, these approaches became increasingly trendy in the 1990s and 2000s.[55] Today, elections in 81 countries are held under legislation that provides for gender quotas. Krook's conceptual analysis on electoral gender quotas discusses some caveats in gauging the impacts of quotas.[56] She highlights the frequent mismatch (positive and negative) with the proportion mandated by the quota. Basically, different models of quota adoption result in different impacts; therefore, quota alone is not sufficient.

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[53] Kendall D. Funk. 2020. "Local Responses to a Global Pandemic: Women Mayors Lead the Way." *Politics & Gender*, 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000410.

[54] Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall. 2005. "Quotas as a 'fast Track' to Equal Representation for Women: Why Scandinavia Is No Longer the Model." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7 (1): 26-48. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674042000324673.

[55] Drude Dahlerup, ed. 2006. *Women, Politics, and Quotas*. New York, US: Routledge; Mona Lena Krook. 2009. *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[56] Mona Lena Krook. 2014. "Electoral Gender Quotas: A Conceptual Analysis." *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (9): 1268–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013495359.

Using original survey data from Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state, Iyer and Mani[57] documented that women lag behind men on supply-side[58] factors that may hinder their political participation: knowledge about political institutions and processes, self-perception as leaders, beliefs in the ability of citizens to affect government functioning and empowerment in terms of being able to influence household decisions or to be mobile outside the home. They assert that controlling these determinants reduces the gender gap in electoral political participation by 73% and in non-electoral political participation by 40%. Another study drawn on field and survey experiments in the US suggests that party leaders can help to improve the supply and demand side by taking simple steps to encourage local recruitment efforts and emphasise the importance of women's representation.[59]

The spread of COVID-19 and the crises that followed reiterate the importance of women's presence in politics, as female leaders have shown better leadership performance compared to their male counterparts. Hence, the investigation of potential strategies to improve women's access to politics and decision-making needs to be a higher priority in the post-COVID era. The United Nations urges all governments to recognise and remove barriers to women's political participation. All parties should acknowledge pre-existing inequalities and social norms that are discriminatory, and to consider measures to minimise these practices. One practical approach is to initiate flexible working arrangements and other

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[57] Lakshmi Iyer and Anandi Mani. 2019. "The Road Not Taken: Gender Gaps along Paths to Political Power." *World Development* 119 (July): 68-80. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.03.004.

[58] Understanding why there are so few women in office requires thinking about both the supply of female candidates and demand for women on the ballot (Joni Lovenduski. 2016. "The Supply and Demand Model of Candidate Selection: Some Reflections." *Government and Opposition* 51 (3): 513-28. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2016.7). While each of these likely influences women's representation, it is also possible that the combination of the two is especially powerful (Christopher F. Karpowitz, J. Quin Monson, and Jessica Robinson Preece. 2017. "How to Elect More Women: Gender and Candidate Success in a Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (4): 927-43. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12300).

[59] Christopher F. Karpowitz, J. Quin Monson, and Jessica Robinson Preece. 2017. "How to Elect More Women: Gender and Candidate Success in a Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (4): 927-43. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12300.

measures to ensure that women are not excluded from key governance processes due to extra care and domestic work responsibilities.[60]

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[60] Sabine Freizer, Ginette Azcona, Ionica Berevoescu, and Tara Patricia Cookson. 2020. "COVID-19 and Women's Leadership: From an Effective Response to Building Back Better." 18. UN Women. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/policy-brief-covid-19-and-womens-leadership.