

Women in Government Forum

Women in
Government
Leadership

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**WORLD
GOVERNMENT
SUMMIT 2023**



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The Summit is a gateway to the future as it functions as the stage for analysis of future trends, concerns, and opportunities facing humanity. It is also an arena to showcase innovations, best practice, and smart solutions to inspire creativity to tackle these future challenges.

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Introduction

The world needs more women in leadership roles, especially in the public sector. This is not simply about closing a gender gap, it is about shaping a better tomorrow. While the rate of women's representation has increased, women remain systematically underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide: as voters, in elected office, in civil service, in the private sector, and in academia. This is especially prevalent in the public sector: across dimensions of gender parity, women's political presence within and across countries presents the largest gap. According to the OECD, only a few countries exceed 40% representation in the top echelons of civil service, and women leaders are often connected to social portfolios.

Women's participation in public and economic life strengthens equitable governance, economic growth, and public trust, from the community level to top policymaking circles. When the people who set public policy are more representative of the societies they serve, they enjoy greater public trust and focus more on issues such as human development and public service delivery. There are clear advantages when women assume leadership roles in the private sector, too: diversity positively affects the quality of work and increases economic returns. Studies by the OECD have outlined that companies with greater gender diversity, not just within their workforce but directly among senior leaders, are significantly more successful. According to McKinsey & Company, for every 10% increase in gender diversity in executive management, earnings before interest and taxes rose by 3.5%.

One step forward: where we are today

Overall, countries have made strides in advancing female representation in leadership. More women are holding positions in the upper levels of national governance; closing the gap has often been catalyzed by countries' initiation of gender quotas. Multilateral dialogue has also acknowledged the need for gender parity in leadership, notably, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), which was adopted by the UN at the end of the Fourth World Conference and set out an internationally agreed target to achieve balanced political participation and power-sharing between women and men in decision-making.

When women become leaders, they provide a different set of skills, imaginative perspectives, and, importantly, structural and cultural differences that drive effective solutions. Evidence shows that female leaders typically have more compassion and empathy, and a more open and inclusive negotiation style. Today, the term "Feminine leadership" is a style of management that is being adopted by leaders of all genders. It is used as a shorthand for an approach that emphasises empathy, humility, and relationship dynamics in an organization. The result can deliver a more considered decision-making process and subsequent action. Moreover, women leaders can provide better mentorship, especially for the younger generation. Regardless of a person's gender, all people need someone who will guide them, and support their professional and personal progress. Specifically, for mentoring and coaching young talent, women leaders are better mentors.

For all these reasons, the future is female. It is not one overtaken by women, but one that builds a bridge to equality and balance. While increasing women's equality and representation across all dimensions is necessary for their true and complete empowerment, the importance of women in government leadership cannot be ignored: women in leadership do not just lift up women, but all members of society.

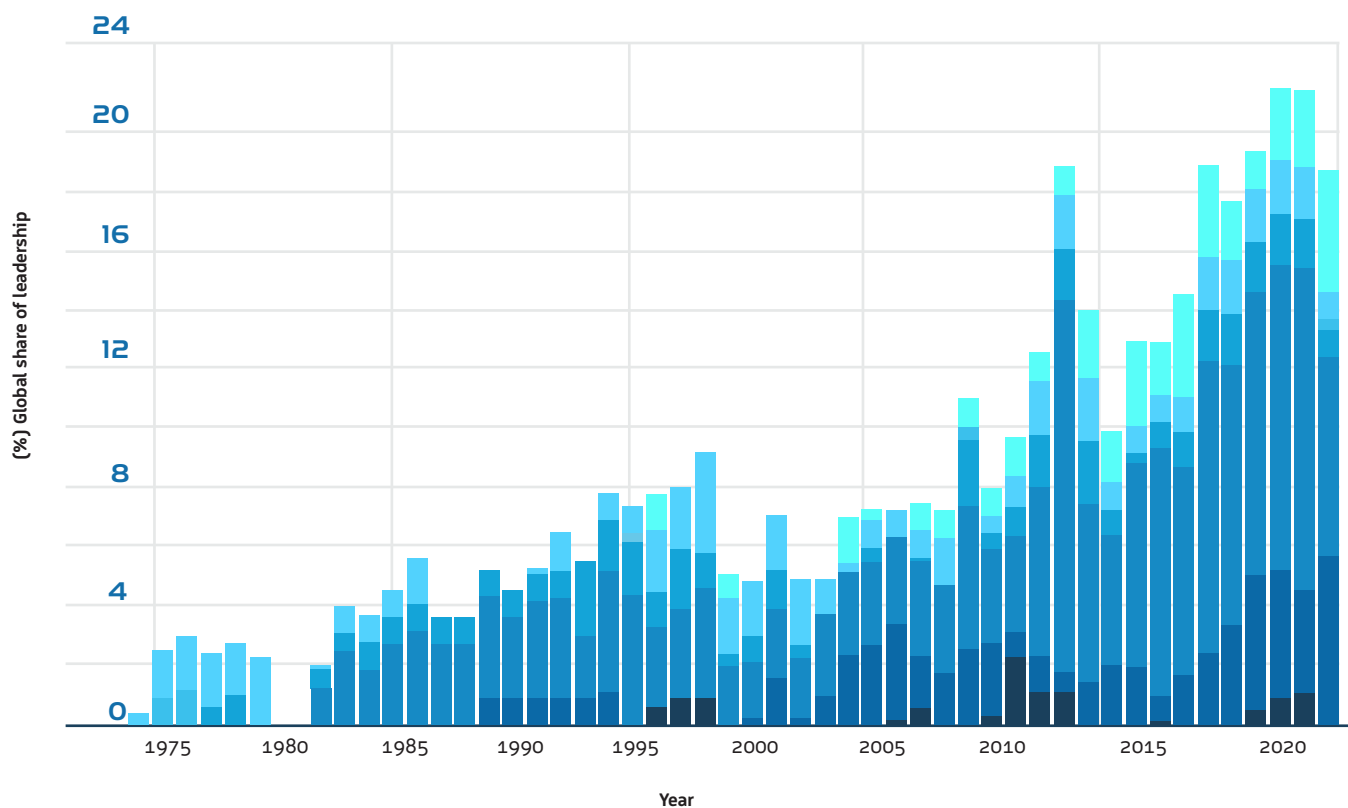
In 2019, the proportion of women in senior management roles, both public and private, grew to 29%, the highest number ever recorded. Looking at the public sphere, the global average share of women in ministerial positions rose from 9.9% in 2006 to 16.1% in 2022, and the global average share of women in parliament rose from 14.9% to 22.9% over the same period, representing a two-fold increase in both categories. Moreover, the number of women as heads of state, the highest level of public office, has been increasing over the past 50 years, though it has not risen equally or evenly across regions (Figure 1).

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>
² https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf

FIGURE 1

Womens share of time in power as heads of state, 1972-2022

■ Central Asia
 ■ East Asia and the Pacific
 ■ Europe
 ■ Latin America and the Caribbean
■ Middle East and North Africa
 ■ North America
 ■ South Asia
 ■ Sub-Saharan Africa



Source

World Economic Forum, Forum calculations 2022.

Note

The graph charts the aggregate share of time women held as heads of state, by year and by region.

While this is a great step forward, there is much more to be done to close the distance to parity and speed up progress. According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2022, at the current rate of progress, it will take 155 years to close the Political Empowerment gender gap. The Global Gender Gap Index, which enables this analysis, is the longest-standing metric that tracks progress toward closing gender parity gaps across 146 countries. It has benchmarked the evolution of gender parity across the

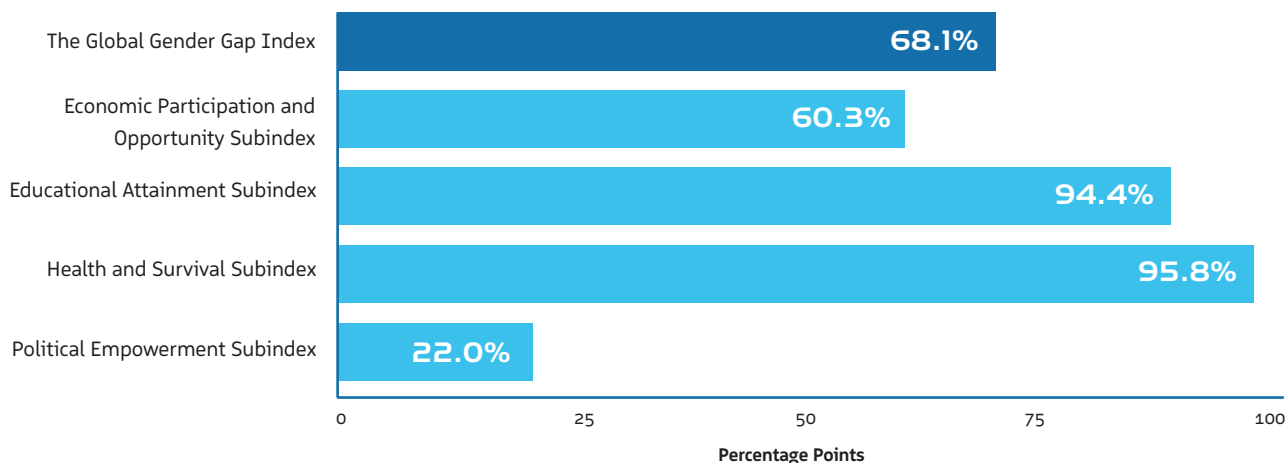
following four dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. Across these subindexes, the global gender parity score for Political Empowerment is by far the lowest at 22% (Figure 2). Furthermore, while the Political Empowerment subindex tracked advances toward parity between 2006 and 2016, it has shown no progress since last year and stalls behind its 2019 peak.

³Subindex composed of the following indicators: women in parliament, women in ministerial positions, years with female/male head of state (last 50)

FIGURE 2

The state of gender gaps, by subindex

Percentage of the gender gap closed to date, 2022



Source

World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index, 2022.

Note

Population-weighted averages based on the sample of 146 economics included in the index in 2022.

Furthermore, while the Political Empowerment subindex tracked advances toward parity between 2006 and 2016, it has shown no improvement since last year and stalls below its 2019 peak. In fact, despite a general upwards trend, the World Economic Forum has documented progress to gender parity falter in the last few years. The 2022 edition of the Global Gender Gap Report found that while the composite distance to gender parity has lessened since the previous year, it has not recovered the loss which was documented from 2020 to 2021; trends prior to 2020

showed the gender gap on track to close within 100 years. Now, achieving full gender parity is on track for 132 years, representing a generational time loss. This setback is likely explained by compounding factors which impact women disproportionately, such as economic shocks caused by COVID-19 and a weak recovery since, inadequate care infrastructure, and the global cost of living crisis. This, in turn, stalls women’s return to the workforce and talent development, says Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director at the World Economic Forum.

Women in executive government positions

According to data collected by the UN, as of September 2022 there are 28 countries across which 30 women serve as Heads of State and/or Government. Consistent with the gender parity timeline set out by the World Economic Forum, the UN estimates that at the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be

reached for another 130 years. Next, women make up 21% of government ministers, with only 14 countries having achieved 50% or more women in cabinets. For this measure there is again a slow annual increase of 0.52 percentage points, implying 55 years to parity in ministerial positions.

Women in national parliaments

26% of all national parliamentarians are women, an 11% increase since 1995. Five countries have more than 50% female representation in parliament in single or lower houses, these are Rwanda, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico,

and the UAE. 27 countries have reached more than 40% representation; the majority of these countries having applied gender quotas to their national parliaments. Lastly, 24 countries have less than 10% representation.

⁴https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#_edn1

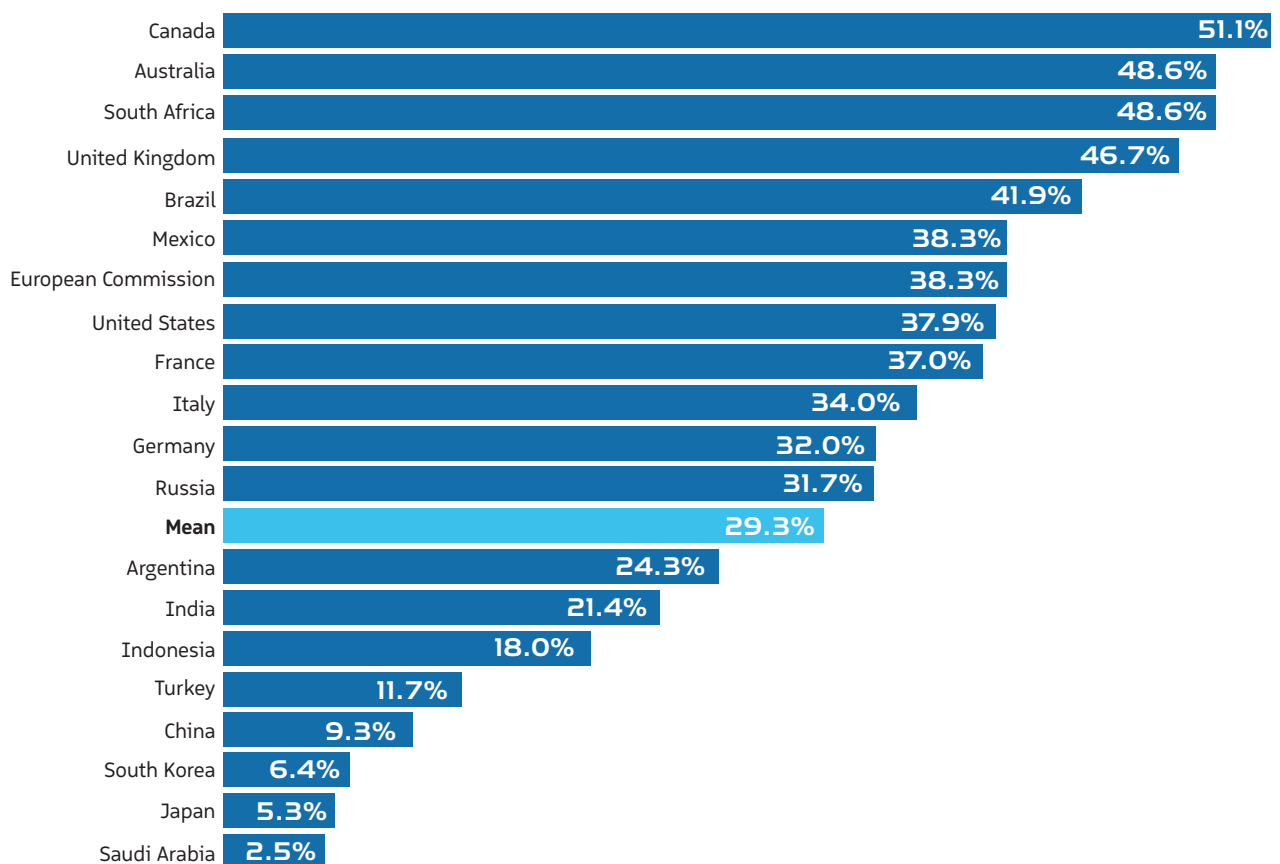
Representation by country subset: G20, EU, and OECD countries

The Global Government Forum’s Women Leaders Index, which ranks countries on the proportion of women in senior roles within their national civil services, has found that the mean proportion of women in the senior civil service across G20 nations is 29.3%. This represents a 1.6 percentage point improvement in two years and 6 point improvement over 10 years. However, a significant spread

in representation among countries can be seen (Figure 3). Canada has the highest ranking of the G20 and is the only country in this sample to have reached gender parity; there, women account for 51.1% of positions in the top five grades of the civil service. Figures 4 and 5 show historic country trends (percentage change) since 2012.

FIGURE 3

Women in the senior civil service, G20 countries



Note

The data covers the top five tiers of civil service in all countries, except for Italy and Germany, which have a slightly narrower definition of the senior civil service.

⁵https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#_edn1

⁶<https://www.womenleadersindex.com/data/>

⁷equivalent to the top five grades which comprise roughly the top 1% of central government civil servants, defined as non-elected senior leaders and managers across federal or national governments

FIGURE 4

Top seven performing G20 countries vs mean, change since 2012

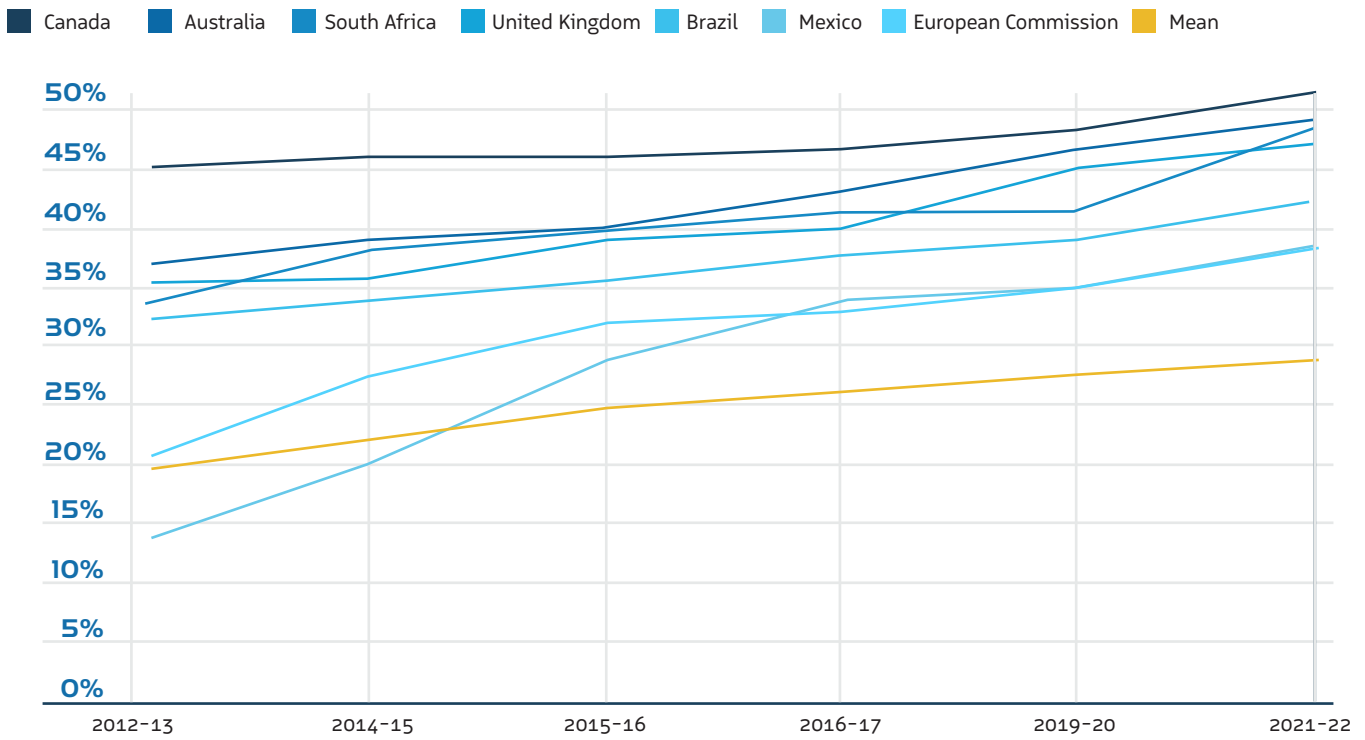
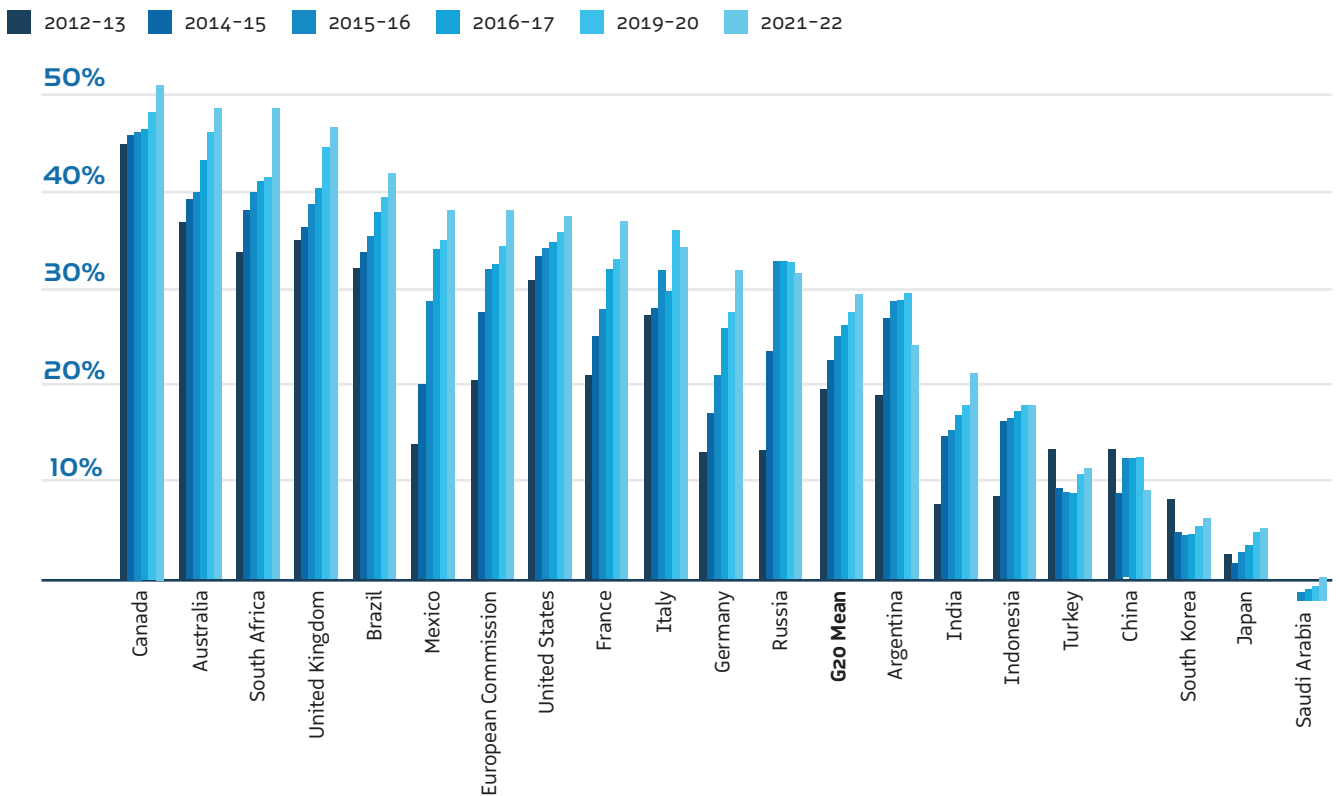


FIGURE 5

Women in the senior civil service, G20 countries, change since 2012

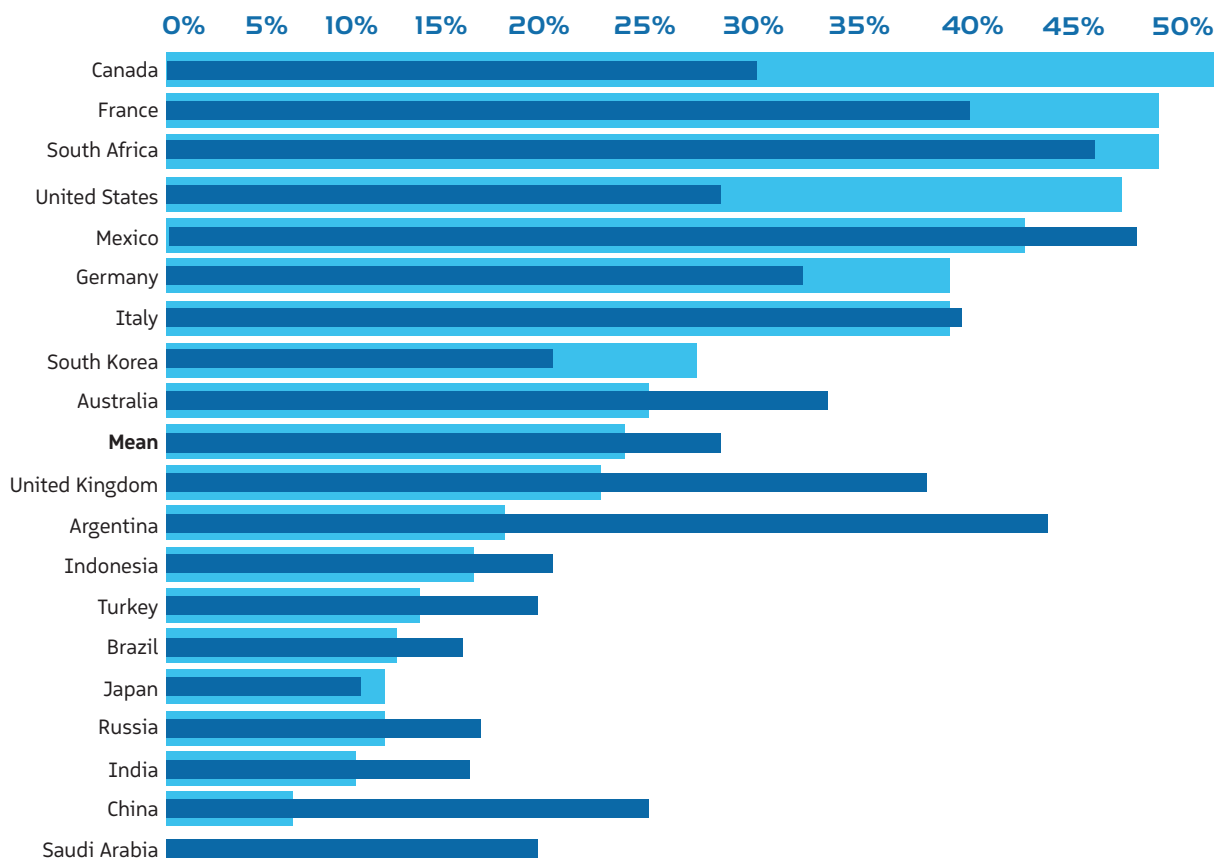


Note
The data covers the top five tiers of civil service in all countries, except for Italy and Germany, which have a slightly narrower definition of the senior civil service.

FIGURE 6

Women in the senior civil service, G20 countries

Cabinet Ministers Lower house elected



Looking at cabinet minister representation within the G20 (Figure 6), the mean proportion of women is 25.3%, below

the senior civil service average. Here, Canada ranks highest as well, with 51.4% of its ministers women.

Of the EU27 countries, the mean proportion of women in the top two tiers of civil services is 42.7%. Within the countries in this sample, women account for 50% or more of the most senior ranks of the civil service in nine, six of which are in Central and Eastern Europe. Among the EU27 the leader is Bulgaria, where women account for 59.5% of the top two tiers of its civil service. Here as well, at 30.9%, the mean proportion of women in the cabinets of EU countries is lower, even more so relative to the G20, than their representation in senior civil services.

Lastly, data collected from the OECD Government at a Glance report (2020), shows women representation as D1

and D2 managers, defined by the OECD and adapted from the International Standard classification of occupations. This measure is slightly more narrow than that of the senior civil service. The OECD mean is 36.2%, and across the 38 member countries, seven have reached or exceeded gender parity: Latvia, Sweden, Iceland, New Zealand, Greece, Canada, and Slovakia. Just like in the G20 and EU27, OECD countries are doing better on the representation of women at the senior levels of their civil services than they are in government (top ministerial cabinet appointments), with the OECD cabinet mean at 34.6%.

⁸The equivalent of permanent secretaries and directors general in the UK system, and broadly equating to organisational chief executives, board-level directors and the heads of secretariats or major business units

The purpose of gender quotas is to ensure that women make up at least a “critical minority” of 30 or 40% (though some require a true balance of 50-50), rather than be a few tokens in political life. Gender quotas entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body. This may include a candidate list, parliamentary assembly, committee, or government. Instead of placing the burden of recruitment on individual women, gender quotas place the burden on those who control the recruitment process.

Quotas can be legally mandated, by the constitution or by electoral law, or voluntary, decided by individual political parties themselves. Moreover, quotas can apply across stages of the selection process: to aspirants (those willing to be considered for nomination), candidates (those nominated to be placed on the ballot), and those elected (reserved seats). Figure 7 shows a summary of the different quota types in existence.

FIGURE 7

Moderated by	At What Level ?		
	Aspirants	Candidates	Elected
Legal quotas (Constitutional or electoral law)	Primaries	Candidate quotas	Reserved seats
Voluntary party quotas	Aspirant quotas (Short lists)	Candidate quotas	Reserved seats ^a

^aAgreements among political parties reserving a certain number of seats for women like in the case of Morocco.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance provides global information on the various types of gender quotas, detailing the percentages and targets in countries where they are applicable. Their database classifies three types of quotas; the main ones used today: reserved seats, legislated candidate quotas, and voluntary political party quotas. Information on legislated quotas — either reserved seats or candidate quotas — include

the national level (Single/Lower house) and subnational level (local, district, or state/provincial levels). However, the latter is not exhaustive. According to the International IDEA’s research, there are 137 countries with at least one constitutional, electoral, or political party quota. Moreover, they report that the average level of representation for women in countries with quotas is 27.6%.

⁹ <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/quotas>

Gender-balanced public management: the case for women in leadership

Gender parity in leadership may seem unnatural to some, mainly because they have habituated to the notion that leaders are typically male. Yet, male dominance is not the “natural” state of human society. Hunter-gatherer communities are assumed to have been relatively egalitarian, and female leaders and matriarchal societies have always existed. Some speculate that the origin of agriculture, some 12,000 years ago, changed the game: defending crops and livestock led to heightened levels of warfare, and as women were physically weaker, the role of defending resources was increasingly left to men. This, in turn, helped men gain material wealth and leadership positions, perpetuated by rules of kinship and descent systems that prevented conflict with others.

The case for increasing the representation of women in leadership spans many dimensions, including but not limited to their psychology and resulting leadership style, their affect on increasing economic returns, and lastly, the fact that society’s male-dominated status quo doesn’t appear to result in optimal public and private sector outcomes.

First, women are excelling in leadership not because they are adhering to the style and habits that have proved successful for men, but by drawing on skills and attitudes developed from a shared experience of being women. Relying on self assessments of leadership performance, men are more likely than women to describe themselves in ways that reflect “transactional” leadership, or viewing job performance as a series of transactions with subordinates. This entails exchanging rewards for services and punishment for inadequate performance; men are more likely to use power that comes from their organizational position and formal authority.

Women, on the other hand, describe themselves in ways matching “transformational” leadership, getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal. Moreover, women emphasize personal characteristics like charisma, interpersonal skills, hard work, or personal contacts rather than organizational status as the key of their power. Women are hence “interactive” leaders as they actively prioritize positive interactions with subordinates, encouraging participation, shared power and information (participative management). Moreover they work on enhancing other’s self-worth and their excitement about their work, energizing people. This shows their belief that

in allowing employees to contribute and to feel powerful and important, it is a win-win situation for employees and the organization as a whole.

Of the key traits that make leaders more effective, women tend to show more humility, self-awareness, self-control, moral sensitivity, social skills, emotional intelligence, kindness, prosocial and moral orientation. Moreover, women’s sociopolitical attitudes tend to be more compassionate, other-oriented, and egalitarian than those of men. This is reflected in policymaking; women favor policies supporting families, education, and health care. Generally, women’s attitudes and values guide leadership behavior that places more emphasis on the public good.

The second case for women in leadership is that their representation increases economic returns and the quality of work. According to The Economist and McKinsey Global Institute, if the gender gaps in participation, hours worked and productivity were all bridged, the world economy would be \$28.4 trillion (or 26%) richer. Focusing on the private sector, in a study by S&P Global, the stock prices of companies with women CEOs and CFOs outperformed the market average. Moreover, in the 24 months after a woman became CEO, stock price momentum increased by 20%. And 24 months after the appointment of a woman CFO, companies’ profitability increased by 6% and stock returns grew by 8%. The literature is consistent in reporting that women leaders improve financial performance metrics across institutions. Women leaders help derisk performance, and reduce the likelihood of corruption, lawsuits, and reputational scandals. Moreover, they often improve CSR and ESG, decreasing the chance of environmental infringements; firms with more women on their boards are more likely to disclose their greenhouse emissions. Lastly, women invest more in innovation. According to Jie Chen et al., firms with female directors achieve greater innovative success and increased female board representation improves performance in innovation-intensive industries. Concretely, their research found that an 10% increase in female representation in boards was associated with a 7% increase in innovation patents and citation.

¹⁰ <https://hbr.org/1990/11/ways-women-lead>

¹¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomaspremuzic/2022/03/02/the-business-case-for-women-in-leadership/?sh=5a0251769cbb>

¹² <https://www.apa.org/topics/women-girls/female-leaders>

¹³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomaspremuzic/2022/03/02/the-business-case-for-women-in-leadership/?sh=5a0251769cbb>

¹⁴ <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2022/why-finance-functions-need-more-women-leaders>

In the first systematic examination of whether women politicians are good for economic growth, Baskaran et al. used comprehensive data from India for 4265 assembly constituencies from 1992–2012, during which most states had four elections. Employing an econometric analysis, Baskaran et al. garnered results for female leader's influence on economic performance, corruption, infrastructure (an important input to economic growth, especially in developing countries), and electoral uncertainty. It was found that women legislators raised economic performance by about 1.8 percentage points

Looking ahead: considerations for increasing women's representation

While the rate of women's representation has increased, it must be accelerated; women's access to higher levels of government remains especially elusive across the world. Studies have shown a critical mass is needed for women's leadership to have significant benefits. Therefore, all of society must support increasing women's representation. Yet, women battle systemic disadvantages which are compounded by current global challenges. Moreover, social stigma on women's inability to lead is still perpetuated, causing some to self-select out of leadership opportunities. Consequently, governments, private sector actors, civil society, multilateral organizations, nonprofits, and other institutions can and must leverage their respective capabilities to help women overcome the barriers that dim their full potential.

The most proactive and proven measure to bolster women's leadership is through legislated gender quotas, which directly increases female representation and has pushed respective countries to the forefront of closing the gender gap worldwide. Nevertheless, maximizing progress and success relies on a variety of programmes and policy tools.

Canada has the highest proportion of women in its senior civil service of all G20 countries and has held the top spot since 2012. Yazmine Laroche, retired deputy minister, puts the majority of progress in Canada's representation of females in public service on two programs introduced by then cabinet secretary Jocelyne Bourgon in the 1990s. These were the Accelerated Executive Development Program (AEDP) and the Assistant Deputy Minister Pre-Qualification Process (ADMPQP). The AEDP allowed public servants in the first of five executive-level ranks to sign up for an intense series of assignments in various ministries and functions, behavioural analysis, and interviews. Those that qualified would be promoted to a more senior executive level and were well positioned to become assistant deputy ministers and from there, deputy ministers, the heads of departments. The ADMPQP was aimed at those in the middle of the executive ranks who

per year, male legislators were about three times as likely as female legislators to have criminal charges pending against them when they stand for election, women are more likely to oversee completion of projects, and that women legislators only perform better than men in non-swing constituencies, rationalized as men tending to exhibit political opportunism while women displaying more intrinsic motivation. The third case for women's leadership is there does not seem to be a clear business case for having so many men in leadership.

wanted to become assistant deputy ministers. Similarly to the AEDP, the ADMPQP created a pool of qualified assistant deputy ministers from which deputy ministers could pick to fill vacancies. Candidates went through a rigorous screening process involving interviews before a hiring board of the most senior deputy ministers. What made these programmes so successful is that they allowed women who felt they were not likely candidates for top jobs to still try, and many proved successful. Lastly, Laroche identifies the Advanced Leadership Program, in which participating public servants were given access to senior leaders both inside and outside the public service and received leadership-focused learning opportunities including visits to public service abroad. As most countries have relatively higher female representation in the lower ranks of their government than the upper; programs emulating the AEDP, ADMPQP, and Advanced Leadership Program would be useful in helping prepare and advance qualified women to higher levels of government.

Beyond career development and training programs, there are many ways various stakeholders can champion female representation in government. These include creating requiring companies, departments and agencies to reach and report on targets, developing dedicated teams and networks, supporting women's mentorship, promoting flexibility and introducing supportive workforce policies on women's issues, and lastly, using data to track progress and identify actions for improvement.

Women empowered to be agents of change are key to the prosperity and security each country, indeed, the international community, strives for. To attain this now and for future generations, let us ensure their agency, voice, talent and perspective can be put to work, and untap the enormous capacity retained in half of our world's population.

¹⁵ <https://www.theigc.org/blog/are-women-politicians-good-for-economic-growth/>

¹⁶ Baskaran, T, S Bhalotra, B Min, Y Uppal (2018), 'Women Legislators and Economic Performance', IZA Discussion Paper 11596, Institute of Labor Economics, Bonn.

¹⁷ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomaspremuzic/2022/03/02/the-business-case-for-women-in-leadership/?sh=5a0251769cbb>

¹⁸ <https://www.womenleadersindex.com/canada-perspective/>



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