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**KING'S**  
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**LONDON**



Hon Ya Kumba Jaiteh  
Member of Parliament  
The Gambia

**Women political leaders:  
the impact of gender on  
democracy**

Ya Kumba Jaiteh, a former MP from the Gambia, speaking in the UK House of Commons at the Women MPs of the World Conference in 2018



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This report was written by Dr Minna Cowper-Coles, Visiting Research Fellow at the Global Institute for Women's Leadership. She holds a PhD in Political Science from Birkbeck College University of London on gender and political support in the Middle East.

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# Foreword

by **Rosie Campbell**, *Professor of Politics and Director of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership, King's College London*, and **Shannon O'Connell**, *Senior Advisor, Gender and Politics, Westminster Foundation for Democracy*

As representatives of two institutions dedicated to the promotion of women's political participation and leadership, we are often asked why gender equality in politics and public life is so important. It has always been easy to point to the principles of basic rights and the fundamental values of democracy in responding to this, but it has been more of a challenge to catalogue the specific benefits and advantages that come from women's leadership. Until now.

In recent decades, hundreds of research projects and studies have examined what happens when women take their place as leaders in politics and public life. This report pulls together over 500 of those efforts into a single, cogent document. What emerges is a picture that is bright, emboldening, optimistic and unequivocal – when women are able to exercise political leadership in a manner that is authentic to them, there are gains not just for women and girls but for the whole of society.

As noted in the report, women are altering the political framework in a way that is bringing more robust consideration of issue areas that can deliver better outcomes for women and girls and that also directly benefit men and boys, such as improving public health services and access to clean water, expanding the provision and quality of education, and tackling violence in the home.

Women are also bringing collaborative and inclusive leadership styles into a political environment that has more frequently been characterised by division and one-upmanship, which are approaches that by their very nature deprioritise the well-being of communities and thoughtful, informed debate.

Other key points outlined in the report include:

- Women political leaders are reshaping the nature of politics and international relations in a manner that is bringing in issues and problems previously perceived as 'non-priorities,' such as gender-based violence and reproductive health.
- As elected officials, on average, women work harder than men to represent their constituencies, which is linked to a stronger sense among voters that government is responsive to their needs.
- Increased representation of women in elected office plays an important role in counteracting corruption and focusing resources on the quality and consistency of public service delivery.
- As policy makers, women are prioritising issue areas that benefit the most vulnerable in society through healthcare, welfare and education. As such, more women leaders seem to make for more equal and caring societies.

- ♦ States where women hold more political power are less likely to go to war and less likely to commit human rights abuses.

Together, these factors represent the key ingredients to drive economies, ensure stability and improve quality of life. Yet despite this catalogue of benefits, there are still significant barriers to women's equality of participation in politics and public life. The 'big three' all make a showing in the research: money, violence and cultural norms. Norms are linked to women's access to the time, freedom of choice and freedom of movement required to fully engage in politics.

Some of these obstacles emerge from the manner in which we organise our societies and economies, but many are connected to the ways in which political parties – as the primary mechanism through which politics moves – conduct themselves. Political parties are a big part of the problem when it comes to political equality and inclusion so they must also be part of the solution.

While impediments to women's political equality must be noted in any analysis of this topic, they are not the focus of this report. Instead, the findings highlight how women, women's organisations and other allies have been uniquely creative and adaptive in responding to both formal and informal barriers to their leadership, recruiting family members, forming support networks, building issue-based coalitions and constructing systems that reinforce collaboration and focus on service delivery. Women demonstrate political leadership every day, even when they are not bestowed with an office or official title.

We commissioned this report in early 2020 before we were aware of the scale of the COVID-19 global health pandemic and its subsequent economic fallout. The contents of this report could not be more timely; during the pandemic the potential positive impact of women's political leadership was the focus of many international news stories and the gendered social impacts of the crisis have been brought to the fore. The gendered impacts are myriad. It is a terrible fact that men are over-represented among the fatalities of the virus, but women are disproportionately affected by the social and economic consequences. Women make up the majority of health and social care professions in many countries, and are thus at the frontline of fighting the pandemic. Many of the sectors hardest hit are those where women are over-represented. Women have taken on a greater share of the increased domestic burdens generated by the closure of schools and childcare providers and this may have a retrogressive impact on equality in the longer term. Rates of domestic violence against women have gone up and those living in poverty, disproportionately women, are the most vulnerable to the aftershocks. Understanding the gendered nature of political leadership and decision-making is more important than ever as we collectively rebuild and hopefully move towards a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive future.

This report tells us a lot more about women's political leadership, but it also identifies important gaps in research and evidence and shortcomings in where political equality efforts have focused to date. For example, we need to know more about the experiences of Black, Asian and ethnic minority women, as well as women with disabilities and women from more diverse social and economic backgrounds. The women who are making it through the barriers into formal politics still tend to come from elite communities. A greater



diversity of women in elected office will undoubtedly lead better representation and better policy.

There are also imbalances in the literature due to language and geography. The experiences of women in North America and Europe are better documented than those of women in other parts of the world, and are least accessible in the Middle East, North Africa and parts of Asia. Again, knowing more about what's going on for politically-active women globally helps uncover where and how meaningful gains can be made towards political equality.

We would like to thank the author, Minna Cowper-Coles, for her extraordinary work on this comprehensive and compelling report. This is a unique and important piece of work that makes an unequivocal case for the multitude of ways that politics, governance, economies and societies thrive when women take their place as leaders.



# Executive summary

This report aggregates over five hundred pieces of academic and institutional research on the ways in which women's political careers differ from their male counterparts, what stands in their way, and what impact their political presence has on democracy and policy. Parity of political presence between women and men is fundamental for a representative, legitimate and accountable democratic system, and this report points to the diverse and important ways that women's political representation improves and contributes to democratic institutions and processes. It also highlights methods and approaches which address their underrepresentation. Bringing this research together in this way gives us a holistic understanding of the political recruitment and impact of women politicians that will provide a platform for future research and action. The report has three chapters:

1. Women's political careers
2. Women political leaders and the quality of democracy
3. Women political leaders and policy making

## Key findings

### Women's political careers:

- Female role models can help close the ambition gap between the genders and inspire more women to run for political office.
- Quotas – when implemented properly – are found to increase women's representation in politics.
- Political funding and networks which target women help to reduce some of the obstacles preventing women's entry into politics.
- Political parties are a major barrier to women's entry into politics, they need to be part of the solution.

### Women political leaders and the quality of democracy:

- Women in politics tend to do more constituency work than men.
- Having more women representatives is related to lower levels of corruption.
- Evidence suggests women tend towards a leadership style that is more cooperative and inclusive, and which is less likely to enforce hierarchies.
- Women politicians are altering the framework of politics, by introducing legislation in areas previously considered beyond the scope of government, from domestic violence to female genital mutilation, but also by broadening perspectives on other policy areas.

Throughout the report, conclusions are categorised according to the following colours:

**Green:** the literature clearly points to this finding.

**Yellow:** the literature indicates this finding, but with less certainty (through less evidence/a number of studies finding otherwise).

**Red:** more research is needed on this point.



### **Women political leaders and policy making:**

- ♦ Women in politics, more often than men, prioritise women's interests, such as equal rights, reproductive rights and sexual health, families and childcare, and stopping violence against women.
- ♦ Women in politics also prioritise broader social 'care' issues more than men such as education, welfare and healthcare, this extends to the international sphere where women politicians spend less on militarism and more on aid.
- ♦ Women in politics often see representing women as part of their role and legislate more than men on women's priority issues.
- ♦ Women in politics are more able to propose and pass women friendly legislation when there is a greater proportion of women in the legislature and when there is a women's caucus or women's parliamentary body

Taken together, the literature presents a remarkable picture of the ways in which women are altering the political landscape. Women political leaders are reshaping the frameworks of politics and international relations. They work harder to represent their constituencies and play an important role in counteracting corruption. They are prioritising policy that benefits women such as on equal rights and violence against women, but also policy that benefits the most vulnerable in society through healthcare, welfare and education. More women leaders seem to make for more equal and caring societies.

### **Key actions:**

- ♦ Introduce quotas and positive measures at the national and/or party level.
- ♦ Reconfigure political institutions to be more gender sensitive.
- ♦ Ensure political institutions accommodate the caring responsibilities of their members.
- ♦ Set up (cross-party) women's parliamentary bodies.
- ♦ Ensure women's organisations and movements work together with women in parliament.

This report points to the many constraints that women in politics still face, from violence against women in politics, to bias within political parties and persistent cultural barriers. However, it also gleans the literature for solutions to these problems and provides suggestions on how to overcome them.

### **More research is needed:**

- ♦ On women political leaders in under researched geographical areas such as the Middle East and Central Asia.
- ♦ On accessing and bringing together non-English research on women political leaders.
- ♦ On how to make more political institutions gender sensitive and what the impact of gender sensitive institutions will be on policy making.
- ♦ On motivators for women to enter politics. Does and how does feminism work to motivate women?
- ♦ On the effectiveness of different reforms and regulations of political parties and electoral structures intended to redress the gender imbalance in political representation.
- ♦ On violence against women in politics, in terms of how it is putting women off entering politics and what can be done to stop it.
- ♦ On whether having more women in politics leads to greater legitimacy for democratic institutions.
- ♦ On the impact of race on women's political priorities and the capacity of women legislators to implement them.
- ♦ On how class differences among women impact upon their political roles and capabilities.

This report presents an overview of the current state of research on these subjects. It is intended as the groundwork for future research on women's political leadership. The research shows that greater inclusion could bring about incremental differences that together might amount to a fundamental reshaping of the political sphere.

## **Conclusion**

This report highlights the important impact that women can have in politics. It shows that having more women legislators will improve democracies by not only creating a greater responsiveness to policies which are important to women, but also by prioritising constituency work, using inclusive practices and refocusing politics towards issues that matter more for people's day to day lives. It also points to key areas for action to help ensure women can enter and stay in politics and to enable them to make these important contributions.

# Introduction

There are still many fewer women than men in legislatures and positions of political power worldwide. This report aims to aggregate research on the ways in which women's political careers differ from their male counterparts, what stands in their way, and what we can all hope to gain from their political presence. Parity of political presence between women and men is fundamental for a representative, legitimate and accountable democratic system, and this report points to the diverse and important ways that women's political representation improves and contributes to democratic institutions and processes. It also highlights methods and approaches which address their underrepresentation. The breadth of research included here points to the importance not just of including women, but ensuring the needs and perspectives of the full diversity of women of different nations, races, and classes are politically represented. Bringing this research together in this way gives us a holistic understanding of the political recruitment and impact of women politicians that will provide a platform for future research and action

Taken as a whole, the literature summarised in this report presents a remarkable picture of the ways in which women are altering the political landscape. Women political leaders are reshaping the frameworks of politics and international relations. They work harder than men to represent their constituencies and play an important role in counteracting corruption. Women in politics tend to use more inclusive and cooperative styles of leadership and representation. They are prioritising policy that benefits women such as on equal rights and violence against women, but also policy that benefits the most vulnerable in society through healthcare, welfare and education. More women leaders seem to make for more equal and caring societies.

Now, more than ever, with interstate cooperation and healthcare as pressing priorities, increased attention has been directed at women political leaders and their different styles of leadership (Wittenberg-Cox, 2020). This literature review sets out the academic literature and presents an overview of the current state of research on these subjects. It is intended as the groundwork for future research on women's political leadership. There are important areas that require further detailed research, such as the role played by women political leaders in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also on areas highlighted in this review, such as on gender sensitive institutions and the violence against women in politics. The research shows that greater inclusion could bring about incremental differences that together might amount to a reshaping of the political sphere.

## Research approach

This report summarises evidence from over five hundred academic papers, articles and institutional reports on the topic of women political leaders – their career and support, their effect on democracy, and the substantive issues they pursue. It presents a synthesis of existing English-language evidence,



from 1995, the year of the Beijing World Conference on Women, to 2020, surrounding gender, representation, and democracy from a wide range of perspectives, derived from heterogeneous cultures and political structures around the globe. It provides an empirical overview of women's political representation – how women's political careers differ in support, entry, behaviour, and substance – and the ways in which greater representation of women may and does alter the quality of democracy and bring about policy changes which benefit women. Each section could be, and has been, the subject of many books, and a great deal of research. As such this literature review cannot hope to be comprehensive but instead draws out the prominent themes that recur in the reviewed texts.

## Report structure

The report is organised into three main sections: Women's political careers, women political leaders and the quality of democracy and women political leaders and policy making. The first section addresses the careers of women in politics and how they can be supported. It examines the factors that bring women into politics and what keeps them there and helps them to progress. The second section explores women political leaders' impact on the quality of democracy. This builds upon ideas of representation and legitimacy of democracy, but also investigating claims suggesting women leaders may have more inclusive styles of leadership, be more responsive to constituents and even less corrupt than men. The final section looks at the policy priorities of women in politics in comparison to men and points to how women tend to advance policy both on 'women's interests' but also which benefit society more broadly. Each section will provide a review of existing literature and findings on the topic.

Throughout the report, conclusions are categorised according to the following colours:

- **Green:** the literature clearly points to this finding.
- **Yellow:** the literature indicates this finding, but with less certainty (through less evidence/a number of studies finding otherwise).
- **Red:** more research is needed on this point.

# Methods

The majority of the literature was gathered through systematic searches, using the key words and selection criteria in the appendix. This was complemented by a 'sweep' of the websites of prominent organisations concerned with women's political leadership, for reports on this subject. This research was further aided by Professor Joni Lovenduski who recommended readings and central texts on the area, Shannon O'Connell who pointed to some key pieces of research, and the interns at GIWL who assembled an additional bibliography and notes.

Over a thousand documents: book, journals and reports were selected from these initial searches, as they were identified as addressing one of the three subject areas. These were then scanned through and documents were excluded if they were not original research, had not been peer-reviewed and/or published (if academic) or were not relevant specifically to the research question or if they pre-dated 1995. In some cases, exceptions were made for key or seminal pieces of research, or if they were seen to fill a thematic or geographical gap. After the 'filtering' process, there were over 500 pieces remaining. These were read, summarised and the main findings were then grouped into themes within the three research questions and written up. Finally, drafts of the report were read by scholars and practitioners from GIWL and WFD who recommended some further pieces of research and theory for inclusion.

## Overview of the literature

The literature included here is mostly original research in peer-reviewed academic journals. This includes quantitative and qualitative and mixed-methods research. A very few important theoretical or historical pieces were included, if they were deemed to fill a substantial gap in our understanding. The greatest share of the literature is made up of quantitative studies.

A large proportion of the academic literature included here looks at North America and Europe, indeed there is more on North America and Europe than there is on Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, Oceania plus all of the cross-national studies put together. This may partially be because the focus here was on English language research. It is worth noting, that an effort was made to include research beyond Western Europe and North America, and studies with a slightly broader focus were included where it was seen suitable on, say, women in Yemen, or democratic transitions in South Asia. Many of these sources have made important contributions, by widening our understanding of women friendly policy or the best ways to get women into politics.

There are many studies exploring the paths to power and impact of women politicians at different levels of politics in the US and to a lesser extent Europe and Canada. Latin America, Africa and Asia all have emerging literatures, with much focus on quotas in Latin America and Africa, and at the local

Panchayat level in India. There is a distinct lack of analysis focussing on the role and impact of women political leaders in the Middle East or Central Asia. These gaps in literature point to important areas for future research.



# 1. Women's political careers

Women make up less than a quarter of the representatives in legislatures worldwide (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). Addressing the overrepresentation of men and underrepresentation of women is important for building legitimacy and accountability into democratic frameworks, but also in terms of including women's perspectives and experience into the structures of power and policy making. Importantly also having more women in politics should mean having a greater variety of women and the inclusion of a diversity of views within the structures of power.

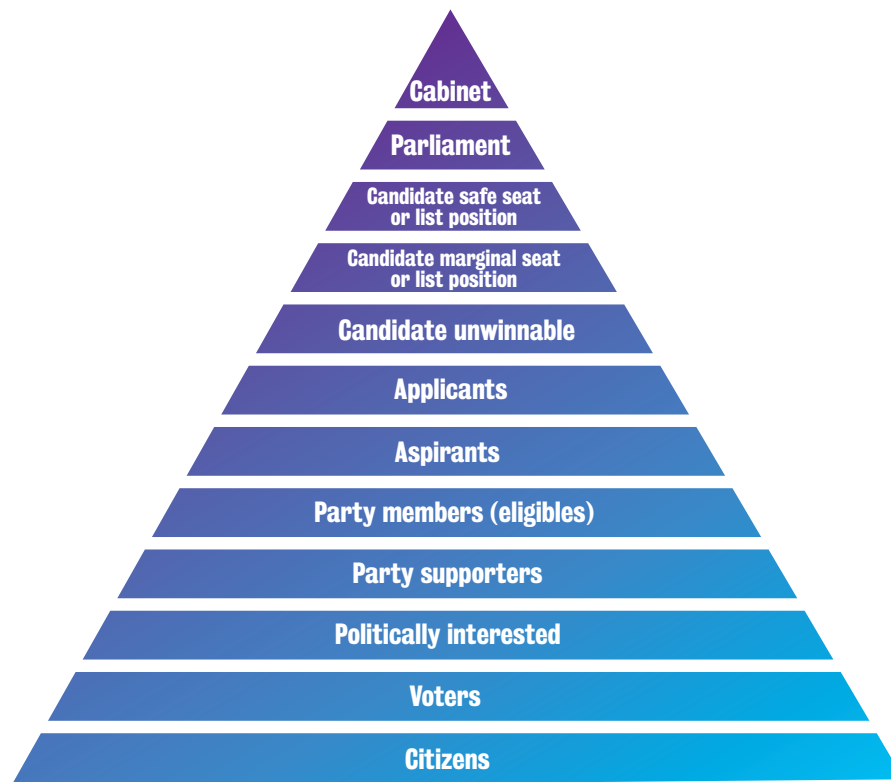
This chapter explores the whys and hows of women's political careers. The focus is intended to be on the positive factors, but it is impossible to explore this subject without at least mentioning the many obstacles that stand in the way of women's entry into politics and the difficulties they face when there.

The literature on this subject is rich in theory as well as empirical research. The main focus is on women's underrepresentation in legislatures and recruitment, rather on women's political careers in the broader sense. Studies range from cross national quantitative studies to in depth interviews with women Members of Parliament, with each contributing to our understanding.

The context to this chapter is centred on two theoretical bases for understanding political recruitment. First is the model of supply and demand in political recruitment, originally set out by Lovenduski and Norris (1995). This model has been used by a number of academics to point to where the problem with women's political underrepresentation lies. 'Supply' side problems entail lack of qualified women willing to stand as candidates, while problems of 'demand' might involve political parties preferentially choosing male candidates, usually through bias at different points in the process. This theory has since been overtaken by feminist institutionalist accounts which place more emphasis on gender ideologies and the distorting effects of institutions (Krook, 2010). These approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive and indeed both Lovenduski (2016) and Krook (2010) suggest that elements of both approaches can and should be incorporated in future research. These theoretical frameworks help to identify the points at which women's underrepresentation happens.

Figure 1 provides a diagram to show the many stages in the 'ladder of recruitment' and indicates a number of the stages at which women may 'fall away' or where positive measures might be introduced.

**Figure 1:** Extended Ladder of Recruitment, (Lovenduski, 2016).



Women’s activism, feminism and women’s organising with parties are the location of many of the positives within this chapter. Women’s movements act as the motivation for many women in politics, sites for networking and women’s funding, but also as the lobbying groups which push for the introduction of quotas and other positive measures. Here, and with the role model effects, one finds virtuous circles where the entry of women into politics leads to more women entering into politics further down the line.

The first section looks at why women enter politics. Then the next looks at the ways in which women have entered politics. The third section explores the factors which allow women to gain leadership positions within politics. The final one looks at the obstacles that women face in their political careers and how they can be overcome.

## **A. Why women enter politics**

There are several studies which find that women are less likely to be interested in politics, less likely to participate in political activities, or run for political office (Clavero and Galligan, 2005; Coffé and Dilli, 2015; Fox and Lawless, 2014; Fuszara, 2010; Jennings, 1998; Khan and Naqvi, 2018; Lawless and Fox, 2005; Maddison, 2007; Shames, 2017; Verba et al. 1997). This research suggests there is a problem with the ‘supply’ of women aspiring to enter politics. However, recent work critiques this research base. Piscopo and Kenny (2020) suggest this narrative tends to put the ‘blame’ on women for their underrepresentation. Further they point out that while political ambition is more important in US where candidates are self-starters, in much of the



rest of the world political parties largely determine who runs. They suggest that gender differences in political ambition are largely determined by the political context and institutions and as such research should still focus on structural inequalities and understanding the gendered dynamics of candidate emergence. This section points to some of the factors which inspire and motivate women to enter politics.

### Key findings

- Women are on the whole less interested and active in politics than men, but this may be due to political contexts which disincentivise women's political participation.
- Female role models can help close the ambition gap between the genders and inspire more women to run for political office.
- Feminism and the desire to represent other women motivates some women to run for political office.
- More research is needed to provide a more holistic account of how feminism motivates women to enter politics. The current research does not explore this fully but rather is patchy, with specific focuses but very little in terms of an overview.
- More research is needed on the motivations for men and women entering politics. The current research suggest that women are motivated more by a sense of duty to other people or their community than men, but the evidence is far from conclusive.

**Green:** the literature clearly points to this finding.

**Yellow:** the literature indicates this finding, but with less certainty (through less evidence/a number of studies finding otherwise).

**Red:** more research is needed on this point.

### Feminism, womanism and gender-based activism

Women's gender-based activism, whether taking the form of feminism or womanism, has increased women's political involvement. While there is little research which looks holistically at the role of feminism in motivating women to enter politics there is evidence of its effect in several different studies.

First, it helps to increase women's political awareness and to encourage women to self-nominate to run in political parties (Matland, 2005). Interviews with women in politics shows that they were motivated to enter so as to be able to promote women's equality, or the representation of either women in general or else particular groups of women (Fawcett, 2018; Kamlongera, 2008).

Further, organising around women's issues in civil society has given women political experience and confidence (Matland, 2005; ODI, 2015). This can be accelerated when a feminist political 'moment' pushes women's rights to the headlines. Crowley (2006) suggests that the ratification drive for the Equal Rights Amendment in the US motivated more women to engage in politics and run for positions. In the aftermath of the drive to ratify the ERA more women became members of state legislatures.

## Role models

Women seem to be more interested in politics and more likely to participate, and even run, when there are prominent women in politics who could act as role models. This effect is found in much of the literature worldwide (Alexander and Jalalzai, 2016; Atkeson, 2003; Bauer and Okpotor, 2013; Barnes and Burchard, 2013; Campbell and Wolbrecht, 2006; Dassonneville and McAllister, 2018; Dewi, 2015b; Fridkin and Kenney, 2014; Gala, 1997; Gilardi, 2015; High-Pippert and Comer, 1998; Ladam, 2018; Liu and Banaszak, 2017; Mariana et al, 2015; McAllister, 2019; Reingold and Harrell, 2010; Uhlaner and Scola, 2016; Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2007).

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“Engendering” politics at the elite level translates to “engendered” politics at the mass level.’ (Barnes and Burchard, 2013)

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In general, this finding holds for states with gender quotas. In these cases the introduction of quotas and the increase of women in the legislature has meant that women are more likely to be politically engaged, and even more likely to run (Bari, 2010; Barnes and Burchard, 2013; Beauregard, 2017; Burnet, 2011; Caul Kittilson, 2005; Jayal, 2006).

This being said, there are studies which do not find that having a prominent female political role model impacts levels of political interest and or engagement among women (Broockman, 2014; Carreras, 2017; Dolan, 2006; Lawless, 2004a) and others which do not find an effect from quotas (Darhour and Dahlerup, 2013; Zetterberg, 2009). Liu (2018), interestingly, in a study on Asia found that presence of female parliamentarians seems to discourage female political engagement, which she suggests might be because of a backlash effect or because they see that political engagement does not seem to make a difference.

## Activism, a sense of duty or helping others

Men and women candidates have largely similar reasons for running for office or entering politics. Their main motivation for entering politics is because they want to effect change and see this as a good way of doing so (Dabelko and Herrnson, 1997; Fawcett, 2018).

However, both quantitative and qualitative studies often point to women being more interested in entering politics because of certain issues, or a feeling of duty towards a community or group rather than being motivated by self-advancement (Prindeville, 2002; Kamlongera, 2008). These motivations are often connected to having worked previously in the public sector, non-profit sector, or in grassroots activism. Cowell-Meyers (2001) describes the differences in motivations for men and women in running for election to the Northern Ireland Assembly. She suggests women framed their motivations more in terms of public service and representing the community or in order to bring about peace and while men spoke more in terms of personal interest.

## B. How women are entering politics

It is difficult to point to all the routes that women take in entering politics because these are vast and varied, however there are a number of themes that are drawn out in the literature pointing to the areas where there are, or have been, differences between how men and women get involved in politics.

### Key findings

- Political parties are the major barrier to women's entry into politics.
- Political parties are found to not do enough to recruit women.
- Political parties can be biased against women candidates at the selection stage.
- Political parties often disadvantage women by placing them either further down candidate lists, or in unwinnable seats.
- Quotas – when implemented properly – are found to increase women's representation in politics.
- Women in politics are currently more likely than men to come from elite family backgrounds, because these 'elite' women are able to overcome more of the barriers that face women.
- There is some evidence that women are more likely to enter politics having worked in the public sector, non-profit sector or civil society activism compared to men.
- There is some evidence that women are more likely to enter the political sphere at a time of stress or change. This seems to happen at the state level (e.g. implementation of a gender quota after a peace agreement) and the level of political parties and political organisations (e.g. being given party leadership when the party is weak).
- There is no conclusive evidence that local government acts as a place of entry for women entering politics.
- More research is needed into the effectiveness of different reforms and regulations of political parties intended to redress the gender imbalance in political representation.

**Green:** the literature clearly points to this finding.

**Yellow:** the literature indicates this finding, but with less certainty (through less evidence/a number of studies finding otherwise).

**Red:** more research is needed on this point.

### Grassroots activism and public sector work

There is some evidence that women in politics tend to come into politics as a way of extending their work at the grassroots level, or as a way to expand upon the work they do for a particular section of society. Activism tends to be an important part of both male and female politicians' backgrounds (Fawcett 2018). In terms of their careers before politics, there is evidence of a gender gap. Women tend to come into politics from the public sector or non-profit sector – and often particularly after a career in education (Barrett, 1995;

Josefsson, 2014; Schwindt-Bayer, 2011) - more than men (Bird, 2003; Fawcett, 2018; Rosenbluth, 2015). While men are more likely than women to have backgrounds in the military (Baturu and Gray, 2018) or business (Fawcett, 2018).

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“I don’t see myself as a politician. I see myself as a community activist. So whether in ten years from now I’m here doing what I’m doing, I’m not a politician. And, I think that’s a good way for me because I don’t lose sight of the community where I come from and why I’m here—to help to change their lives, to make them feel better . . . I’m in this to make a better life for me, for my family, for my community.” (Member of the Northern Irish Legislative Assembly interviewed by Cowell-Meyers, 2001)

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Being in a civil society organisation or working within the community are important for developing skills, building constituencies and encouraging women to enter politics (Cornwall and Goetz, 2005; ODI, 2015; WomanKind, 2016). Some studies suggest women activists often enter politics because of work at the community level. Examples can be found in Tadros’s book (2014) on women and politics in the context of ‘development’, and in Ng and Ng’s (2008) study of women in the District Boards in Hong Kong, one of whom, for example, originally become involved because of issues with drainage in her housing estate.

Religious organisations can also play an important role in bringing women into politics. Mapuranga (2016) suggests that membership of religious organisations, such as churches or the Salvation Army, has been useful for women politicians in Zimbabwe as a way for them to gain a network, experience, pride and purpose. Dewi (2015b) and Rinaldo (2008) suggests that the rise of pluralistic, progressive Islam in Indonesia was an important precursor to women’s political engagement there, because it made space for women to organise within Islam, fostered their political engagement and has allowed for the emergence of Islamic feminism.

## Local government

Local government is often seen as a gateway to a further political career. Yet this is not always the case for women. There is evidence that suggests that local government is more accessible to women and some that it is not.

Local government is seen by some to be more appealing and accessible to women. The issues dealt with at a local level are seen as being more closely linked to women’s experiences and expertise. Chin (2004) gives the example of local politics being more about waste disposal, education, clean air and childcare and as such, apparently, being more relevant to women. Further, the barriers to entering local government can be easier to overcome than at a national level. Local government work is often a part time job and is local, so does not require a long commute or dislocation (Gidengil, 1997). Further, winning a position involves a less competitive election requiring fewer financial resources and networks of support (Gidengil, 1997).

Bitušíková (2005) describes how in Slovakia, while women are underrepresented at every level, they do better as mayors of smaller towns and villages. The women she interviewed suggested this was because it was work close to home so women could balance it with their family responsibilities. They also felt like they understood and cared about the local issues and wanted to help their areas. Also, these positions are hardly ever well paid so perhaps there is less competition from men.

In Chhoeun et al.'s (2008) study of commune councils in Cambodia they found women increasingly participated and won seats. They attribute this to the lower required level of education needed, and the fact that they are a somewhat new institution, so men's interests had not yet become entrenched.

However, several studies find that in many cases women are not more highly represented at the local level, such as in the UK, Australia and Canada (Fawcett, 2017; Kelly, 2001; Maddison, 2007; Tolley, 2011). The Fawcett Society (2017) found that there is a lower proportion of women in local government than at the national level in the UK. The reasons given are the lack of childcare support, no parental allowances, and sexism within councils (Fawcett, 2017) and the difficulty of juggling political work with domestic responsibilities, particularly when there are few or no financial justifications (Kelly, 2001). A study of local politics in Europe by Sundström and Wängnerud (2016) found that where there is less corruption there are more women in power and suggest that perhaps the networks of power and interest conspire to keep women out of politics.

## Political parties

Entry into formal politics, in most countries, is through political parties. This is where scholars suggest the 'demand' side of the model of political recruitment lies. The literature points to there being a major problem with how parties recruit women. A number of studies, from around the world, suggest that political parties often form a barrier to women's entry into politics (Bauer, 2012; Conteh, 2018; Fuszara, 2010; Hinojosa, 2012; Maddison, 2007; Murray, 2008; Rule, 1981; Siwatibau, 2007; Studlar and McAllister, 1991; Tadros, 2014; Tremblay, 2012).

The key problem is that women are not selected as candidates by political parties as often as men. Many articles point to the problem of parties not doing enough to ensure women run for political office as a major reason for women's underrepresentation in politics (Bauer, 2012; Conteh, 2018; Maddison, 2007; Murray, 2008; Siwatibau, 2007; Studlar and McAllister, 1991; Tadros, 2014; Thames, 2018).

Problems with the under selection of women as candidates can be caused by women being less likely to self-nominate or to see themselves as fitting the image of an MP (Fawcett, 2018). But it can also be due to bias within the political party itself. Some articles point to a problem with the party chairs or selectorates who discriminate against women at the selection stage, because women are not seen to resemble the current party elite or fit the idea of the ideal candidate (Cheng, 2011; Dahlerup, 2018; Fawcett, 2018; Kenny, 2011; Niven, 1998; Park, 1999; Rule, 1981; Tremblay and Pelletier, 2001; Yishai,



1996). In other cases, members of political parties have actively discouraged women from running, or sidelined and discredited them (Fawcett, 2018; Geisler, 1995).

Interestingly, the academic literature is unclear as to whether women candidates do better or worse than male candidates in elections, with evidence pointing both ways, but on the whole showing them to do equally well (Brians, 2005; Ekstrand and Eckert, 1981; Fulton, 2014; Hinojosa, 2012; McElroy and Marsh, 2010; Murray, 2008; Shair-Rosenfield and Hinojosa, 2014; Thames, 2018). Other studies find women do not do as well as men (King and Leigh, 2010). Some studies find women are slightly more likely to support women candidates (Dolan and Ray, 1998; Dolan, 2008; Rosenthal, 1995). Campbell and Heath (2017) suggest that because of the scarcity of women candidates, research in this area can be somewhat unreliable, because they are based not only on small samples but also the women candidates being studied may be 'exceptional' in some way.

There are a range of other factors which leads to the underrepresentation of women in politics which stem from the political arrangements in different parties and states. Many studies point to the importance of whether candidates are selected by primaries or by nominations at the local level. Often primaries tend to disadvantage women candidates because of the cost of an additional campaign (Hennings and Urbatsch, 2016; Hinojosa, 2012). Further, Hennings and Urbatsch (2015) point out that women are disadvantaged by the running mate formula where a lead and their vice run together. This is because most parties are unlikely to have two women on a ticket but might have two men. Another problem is when there is a lack of clear rules for the selection of candidates, as this leads to the use of informal networks, patronage and 'who you know' systems to select candidates. These generally exclude women to a greater extent than men (Fawcett, 2018; Kenny, 2011, Matland, 2005).

Parties might be more likely to field women candidates in certain situations. A number of examples come up in the literature, such as: when a party wants to look more inclusive or to appeal to a Western, liberal audience (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008a; Ben Shitrit, 2016); if the party is trying to appeal to female voters (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008a; Ben Shitrit, 2016; Caul Kittilson, 2006; Jiménez, 2009; Short, 1996); if the party has a leftist (or green) ideology (Caul, 1999; Childs, 2008; Dahlerup, 2018; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Maddison, 2007; O'Brien, 2018; Siaroff, 2000; Yishai, 1996), or has a more centralised structure (Caul Kittilson, 2006), if there are active feminists and highly placed women within the party (Caul, 1999; Kunovich and Paxton, 2005; Threlfall, 2007) and, of course, most important is whether parties have adopted a quota system or active recruitment campaign of some sort (Childs, 2008; Fawcett, 2018; Fuszara, 2010).

Beyond the selection process, there are other ways in which political parties disadvantage women candidates. Often women are placed lower down on candidate lists than men or in positions that are more difficult to win (Chhoeun et al., 2008; Childs, 2008; Clavero and Galligan, 2005; Fawcett, 2018; Fuszara, 2010; Esteve-Volart and Bagues, 2012; Khan and Naqvi, 2018; Oduol, 2015; Rodriguez, 2003; Studlar and McAllister, 1991).

Political parties continue to present obstacles to women's representation. It is essential for women candidates to have support from political parties throughout the process of becoming a political representative, but it seems this is often lacking (Childs, 2013; Fawcett, 2018; Niven, 2006; Shvedova, 2005).

The persistence of women's underrepresentation in political parties and legislatures has led many countries to introduce quotas and other positive measures as the best way to overcome the barriers to women's recruitment.

## Quotas and other positive measures

The major advances in women's representation globally in recent decades can be attributed most of all to the introduction of quotas and other positive measures (Tripp and Kang, 2008). Some of the jumps in the levels of women's representation have been startling. Bauer (2012) describes how eight states from Sub-Saharan Africa had leapt into the top 30 list of countries with the highest levels of female representation – largely due to the implementation of quotas. In Tanzania, Yoon (2008) found that women hold over 30 percent of seats, but this number would be about 7 percent were it not for quotas. Davidson-Schmich (2006) found that the numbers of women representatives at the state and federal level in Germany doubled due to the implementation of voluntary party quotas.

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“Given the pervasively gendered nature of politics in many countries, only the equivalent of an exogenous shock could loosen the hold of longtime norms associating politics with men. Gender quotas provide this kind of exogenous shock.” (Baldez, 2006)

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In their many forms, whether as voluntary party quotas, parity laws, candidate quota laws, or reserved seats, these mechanisms for increasing women's representation have on the whole worked (Baldez, 2006; Bauer, 2012; Bird, 2003; Caul Kittilson, 2005; Dahlerup and Friedenvall, 2005; Darhour and Dahlerup 2013; Davidson-Schmich, 2006; Sater, 2007; Tremblay, 2012; Tripp and Kang, 2008; Yoon, 2008).

In some cases, they are more effective than in others. Research suggest that for quotas to work, there should be enforceable sanctions against parties which do not comply and strict rules as to how they should be implemented – namely where women should be placed on lists, or specify that they should be in a reasonable proportion of winnable seats (Caul Kittilson, 2005; Dahlerup, 2011; Delgado-Marquez et al., 2014; Gwiazda, 2017; Jones, 2004; Schmidt, 2009; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009). Gwiazda (2017) shows that in Poland the introduction of quotas did not significantly increase the number of women elected and Miguel (2008) found that the quota in Brazil hardly changed the number of women, because of flaws in the way it worked. Rosen (2013) in a cross-national comparison found that the effect of quotas seemed to be higher in developing countries – perhaps because in more developed contexts women were already represented at a higher level.

The impact of gender quotas on the representation of ethnic minority women is unclear. Hughes (2011) has shown that when quotas are introduced to benefit

minorities or women, they often benefit that group at the expense of other underrepresented groups, rather than at the expense of the majority ethnic males. However, she does make tentative claims as to the benefits of tandem quotas where they exist for both ethnic minorities and women. On the other hand, Celis et al. (2014) found that ethnic minority women are particularly well represented in the Netherlands where a gender quota is in place, partly due to the efforts of party elites to maximise support.

On the whole, quotas have been successful and have been recommended by UN Women as a strategy for getting more women into parliaments (UN Women, 2011). Krook (2006) identifies the four main reasons for their adoption as being as a result of women's mobilisation to increase representation, political elites introducing them to gain a strategic advantage, because they are consistent with ideas about equality and representation and because of international norms and sharing across national boundaries.

In the absence of gender quotas, many scholars recommend the regulation of political parties to enhance gender equality of representation (Childs, 2008; Childs, 2013; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Norris, 2014). More research is needed into how effective different regulations and reforms of political parties are in redressing the imbalance in representation of women and men.

### **Time of change or stress**

Women have often managed to press for gains in terms of rights and representation at times of stress or change. This pattern of women taking advantage of opportunities happens at a number of levels. It must be noted, however, that in many cases women gain leadership positions in times of crisis not solely because of women taking advantage. It can also perhaps be because leadership positions come with fewer advantages and greater costs at these times, so the usual male candidates may not want them. Further, when an organisation is in need of reform and revitalisation introducing a woman to a leadership position may look more like a fresh start than appointing another man (O'Brien, 2015).

At a state level, Dahlerup (2018) points out that some of the gains in women's representation has come as a result of post conflict transitions or elite dislocations such as post-genocide Rwanda (Bauer and Burnet, 2013; Burnet, 2008). Women have managed to ensure gender quotas and favourable electoral systems are put in place in post-settlement systems after peace agreements (Anderson and Swiss, 2014). Women's involvement in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa allowed them to press for greater representation of women in the post-apartheid system of government (Geisler, 2000; Hassim, 2002). However, often, even when women have been involved in the 'struggle' they can be side-lined in the aftermath— women have not made gains, for example in post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe or in the wake of the Arab Spring (Dahlerup, 2018), in Nicaragua (Saint-Germain, 1993) or in Zimbabwe (Geisler, 1995). Scholars suggest that the presence of an active women's movement and a high status for women in society before the moment of change makes it more likely that women will benefit from the

transition (Anderson and Swiss, 2014; Moghadam, 2014; Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet, 2002).

Women also can make gains within political movements and parties at times of crisis, or when the focus is elsewhere. O'Brien (2015) in a study of 55 parties across ten democracies finds that women are more likely to be given the party leadership position when a party is doing badly. Importantly in O'Brien's study it is unclear whether these women were being passed 'a poisoned chalice' because no one else wanted to take the fall, whether women were seen as better at coping with crises or whether women were taking advantage of the unrest surrounding the crisis. Clark and Schwedler (2003) in their study of Islamist parties in Yemen and Jordan, suggest that women gain ground when there are 'windows of opportunity' because the party is distracted by entering electoral politics or some other contentious issue. Ben Shitrit (2016) in her study of Jewish-nationalist and Islamic-nationalist movements in Israel and Palestine argues that women can enter these conservative nationalist organisations and upturn gender expectations because the national cause is seen as more important.

On an individual level, many female leaders have emerged at times of crisis and instability. In her examination of female presidents and prime ministers worldwide, one of the few 'trends' Jalalzai (2008) found was this tendency for women to come to power at times of instability. In South Asia, many prominent women leaders have come to power through independence struggles, and often with the shock of a political assassination bringing people together (Richter, 1990). It may be important to note that many of these women led peaceful movements pressing for transitions to democracy (Thompson, 2002). Thompson (2002) suggests that women leaders were accepted because they looked like a 'clean break' from the previous corrupt system and did not seem to threaten other male political leaders.

## Political or elite family

Many studies of women in politics have pointed out that many of them – particularly historically and in more patriarchal societies - come from elite or political families. The family background of a woman candidate can help them to overcome many of the traditional barriers to entry for women. Political families might encourage women to be involved in politics, while elite families can facilitate entry into powerful networks and provide money for campaigning. This problematic phenomenon is a symptom of the difficulties faced by women entering politics and has been found to reduce both over time and with the introduction of gender quotas.

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“Female leaders often need to compensate for gender biases and structural barriers . . . One such compensatory tool is the availability of family ties that give women access to resources and networks. However . . . with time, as society gradually accepts women's participation in politics as normal, female politicians no longer need such ties.” (Baturu and Gray, 2018)

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A political family can inspire women to enter politics, and reinforce ideas around values, duty and responsibility towards others (Prindeville, 2002).

Further, a famous family name can give women recognition beyond their own achievements (Baturu and Gray, 2018; Kumari, 2012; Pai, 2012) and enable them to enter networks from which they would otherwise have been excluded (Baturu and Gray, 2018; Hinojosa, 2012). A political family seems to be important for politics at all levels. Prindeville (2002) in her examination of female Native American and Hispanic grassroots activists and public officials in New Mexico describes how many of them came from politically active families where they were socialised into activism. Having a political family is also important for women in legislatures and executive positions (Adler, 1996; Baturu and Gray, 2018; Jalalzai, 2004; Kumari, 2012; Pai, 2012; Richter, 1990; Sater, 2007; Solowiej and Brunell, 2003; Thompson, 2002). There is a particular phenomenon where a number of women politicians come to politics as the widows or daughters of a killed politician. This is perhaps most pronounced among the prominent women prime ministers and presidents of South Asia (Bari, 2010; Jalalzai, 2004; Kumari, 2012; Pai, 2012; Richter, 1990; Thompson, 2002), though it has also been the case in the US (Solowiej and Brunell, 2003).

Of course, political dynasties, and families fostering political interest does not solely benefit women. Male candidates often have family connections to politics too (Fawcett, 2018; Hinojosa, 2012). However, it might be that with fewer women in politics this 'socialisation' is more important in creating the impetus to run and faced with greater obstacles the 'leg up' of political connections and name recognition is likely to be more important.

A wealthy background can also help women to enter politics. The research suggests that women leaders are more likely than men to be from upper class or elite backgrounds (Adler, 1996; Bari, 2010; Baturu and Gray, 2018; Clark et al., 1993; Kamlongera, 2008; Saint Germain, 1993; Sater, 2012; Yishai, 1996). Being wealthy is likely to help with funding political campaigns but it also allows women to be more educated and as such ensure they are qualified enough to enter politics (Baturu and Gray, 2018; Dewi, 2015). Further, Richter (1990) points to the importance of having full time household help and childcare as enabling women to enter politics without jeopardising family life.

While family and background can help some women run, in other cases women politicians are used as proxies for their male family members – particularly where there is a gender quota in place (Bari, 2010; Hinojosa, 2012; Khan and Naqvi, 2018). Women proxies act as a work-around so political parties can maintain the current patronage networks (Hinojosa, 2012; Sater, 2012). Bush and Gao (2017) find a similar phenomenon in Jordan where small tribes strategically exploit gender quotas by promoting women from the tribe to gain more seats on councils.

Two factors seem to reduce the importance of family ties for women entering politics – time (Baturu and Gray, 2018) and quotas (Bauer, 2012) – this presumably is because over time, and with quotas, the barriers for women's entry into politics are reduced so the advantages of coming from an elite family are not as important.



## C. How and why women in politics achieve leadership positions

Rosenbluth et al. (2015) in their survey of legislators in 84 countries found that women legislators are less likely to seek a ministerial position than men. Yet the numbers of women in leadership positions are increasing.

For the most part, the evidence is not very clear as to the factors which help women to achieve leadership positions (Bauer, 2011). Many studies point – inconclusively – to different characteristics of government, and women’s backgrounds and position as factors which can help or hinder women’s ascent. Bauer (2011) discerned two main themes which seemed to impact women’s ascension to the chief executive (president or prime minister) role or to cabinets world-wide. She found women tend to come to power at a time of transition (as described above) and that culture has some impact. The rest of the literature endorses the idea that ‘culture’ has an impact as it finds that there tend to be more women in leadership positions as society and the political sphere becomes more women friendly.

### Key findings

- Women are more likely to become cabinet ministers or leaders when there are more women in the legislature.
- Women are more likely to become cabinet ministers when there have previously been female cabinet ministers.
- Even at the cabinet and executive levels power is gendered. Women tend to be assigned to roles in ministries of health and education rather than foreign affairs and defence.

Green: the literature clearly points to this finding.

### Result of politics and society becoming more ‘feminised’

Broad cross-national studies show that certain factors seem to help ‘explain’ the number of women in cabinets. The most prominent factor is that there tend to be more women in cabinet or in leadership positions when there are more women in the legislature (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013; Bego, 2014; Deen and Little, 1999; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2005; Krook and O’Brien, 2012 ). Another factor that correlates with higher levels of women in leadership positions, is when women are more educated in society in general (Bego, 2014). Together this seems to show that women are more likely to lead, when society as a whole is already more feminised.

This finding that the feminisation of society and politics matters has some bearing on the findings of Annesley et al. (2019) in their book on the appointment of women to cabinet. They suggest that the appointment of women is determined by a gendered process involving the interactions between the selectors, those eligible for cabinet positions, and the rules (both written and unwritten) which govern cabinet appointments. They suggest that for the most part the rules for appointing cabinets give presidents and prime ministers significant agency to appoint ministers, and they tend to appoint friends and political allies from their networks, who are often men. However, recently (and with large differences between countries) new ‘representational criteria’ have been introduced to the process of appointing candidates, which although

informal may be highly institutionalised and stipulate the need for certain ethnicities, races, genders and regions to be represented. These representational criteria for the most part explain why women are appointed as ministers. Further, Annesley et al. (2019) suggest that once more than one woman has been appointed to cabinet this forms a ‘concrete floor’ a level from which there is little backsliding as it becomes the minimum number of women needed for a cabinet to appear legitimate. Annesley et al.’s (2019) model of cabinet appointments shows that it is not just the feminisation of society but the feminisation of the rules and precedents of cabinet appointments that explain women’s greater or lesser representation in cabinet.

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“[I]n a majority of cases women’s cabinet appointments were explained by the presence of more women among political elites.” (Krook and O’Brien, 2012)

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Further, it seems that views on whether a man or a woman would be more suited for leadership depends on the political focus at the time. McDonagh (2010) proposes that if or when states are more maternalistic and take ‘care’ to ensure the wellbeing of their citizens, then women are more likely to come to positions of power. On the other hand, militarised societies are less likely to appoint women to certain leadership positions. Barnes and O’Brien (2018) explore the appointment of women as ministers of defence. They find that this is unlikely when a state is involved in a conflict of some sort, if it is a military dictatorship and if it has high levels of defence spending. Women are more likely to be minister of defence when there are more women in the legislature and the executive, and in states where the remit of defence has moved closer towards peacekeeping. Yishai (1996) describes the way society in Israel is militarised means that women are not seen as sufficiently qualified or as capable as men to lead because of their lack of military experience and negative stereotypes of women. Arriola and Johnson (2014) in their study of politics in Africa show that when ethnic cleavages and patronage networks play a big role in politics, women are less likely to be appointed to cabinet positions, because they are often less able to access the resources that would enable them to take on the role of a ‘patron’.

## Characteristics of government

Many studies find that the characteristics of the government, parliament and political institutions play a role in determining the likelihood of women being appointed as ministers or to leadership positions. For example, some studies find that women are more likely to hold a higher proportion of cabinet or leadership positions when there is a left-leaning executive (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2005), strong partisan competition (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2005), a high turnover (Deen and Little, 1999), when there is a ‘specialist’ recruitment system where presidents appoint cabinet ministers from outside of parliament (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013; Siaroff, 2000) and when international norms, such as EU membership (Bego, 2014) or African Union and UN regulations (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013) might have an increased influence on the government. There is however little consensus on these characteristics and whether and how they impact the appointment of women to leadership positions.

## Background of women leaders

Women who gain leadership positions tend to be those with higher levels of education and experience (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013), indeed Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2009) suggest that women in cabinets in Latin America tend to be more qualified for the position than men.

## Power is gendered even at the top

Often when women do access positions of power it is gendered. For example, women tend to be appointed to ministries or committees concerned with health, education or gender equality and committees that are generally seen as less important than, say, economics and foreign policy (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013; Bolzendahl, 2014; Britton, 2005; Deen and Little, 1999; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2009; Heath et al., 2005; Miguel, 2012; Rodriguez, 2003; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010).

Ayata and Tütüncü (2008a) explore the increase of women in the AKP in Turkey and suggests that while more and more women have been introduced to the party (in order to try to appeal to women voters and Western audiences) they remain excluded from the centre of power and are unable to change the party rhetoric.

## D. How women cope with life in politics: the problems and how they can be overcome

There are numerous obstacles to women entering and staying in politics. These have been considered in depth in many other studies, so will not be covered in detail here. Short explanation are included for each problem so as to be able to point to the solutions, work arounds and coping mechanisms that are highlighted in the literature.

### Key findings:

- Women face cultural barriers to participating in politics. Women in politics may be disadvantaged by negative stereotypes of women, they may also face sexual harassment, attacks on their reputation, morality, or qualifications.
- Quotas or positive discrimination measures can help to get women into politics in areas where there are high cultural barriers. Having women in politics may then change social attitudes to be more accepting of women leaders.
- Domestic and caring obligations are a major barrier for women entering politics.
- The financial costs of entering politics, from the costs of campaigning to living off stipends at the local level, can also prevent women from entering politics.

**Green:** the literature clearly points to this finding.

**Yellow:** the literature indicates this finding, but with less certainty (through less evidence/a number of studies finding otherwise).

**Red:** more research is needed on this point.

- Funding specifically designated for women candidates, such as EMILY's List, can help women overcome financial barriers to politics.
- Women often have difficulty entering male dominated power networks.
- A number of studies find that women tend to make up a higher percentage of the legislature where the electoral system is proportional representation.
- Incumbency hinders women's access to political positions, as men are more likely to be incumbents, and incumbents have an electoral advantage.
- In countries where women have significantly lower literacy levels than men, this acts as a barrier to their entry into politics.
- Women may benefit from alternative networks. Examples include specific spaces for women, such as women's caucuses, women's political organisations and even the women's sections of religious organisations.
- More research is needed into how parenthood and caring responsibilities impacts male and female politicians differently.
- More research is needed into the ways political institutions and organisations can be more accommodating of the domestic and caring responsibilities of women.
- More research is needed into how political parties and the state can reduce the financial barrier to women's entry into politics, perhaps through regulating and reducing campaign funding, for example.
- More research is needed to greater understand how abuse, threats and violence directed against women in politics prevents women from seeking positions or else makes them leave politics early.
- More needs to be done to understand how to combat violence against women in politics.

## Cultural and societal gender attitudes

### Problem

Cultural and social attitudes about the appropriate roles for men and women can be a major barrier to women's participation in politics. Numerous studies point to a patriarchal culture (sometimes religion is used as a proxy for this) as a major factor in barring women's entrance into politics or more egalitarian gender attitudes as facilitating their entry. This has been found to be the case worldwide, in studies ranging from the US states to Papua New Guinea (Arceneaux, 2001; Chhoeun et al., 2008; Chin, 2004; Clavero and Galligan, 2005; Fuszara, 2010; Hill; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Inglehart et al., 2002; Kamlongera, 2008; Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Mateo Diaz, 2005; Matland, 1998, only in developed countries; Ndeda, 2014; Nicholl, 2007; Norris, 1985; Norris and Inglehart, 2001; Oduol, 2015; ODI, 2015; Omvedt,

2005; Panday, 2008; Pavlović, 2001; Paxton, 1997; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Paxton and Hughes, 2014; Rai, 2011; Reynolds, 1999; Ruedin, 2012; Sabbagh, 2005; Saint-Germain, 1993; Sater, 2007; Shvedova, 2005; Siaroff, 2000; Siwatibau, 2007; Soaki, 2017; Susub, 2013; Tremblay, 2007; Tremblay, 2012; Truong, 2008; Windett, 2011; Yoon, 2004).

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'[A] given society's traditional cultural heritage continues to have significant impacts on both the percentage of women in its parliament, and its level of political rights and civil liberties' (Inglehart et al., 2002)

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There are various mechanisms through which cultural attitudes disadvantage women and preclude their entry into politics. Several studies suggest that in certain cultures women are not seen as viable candidates (Chin, 2004; Hora, 2014; Sater, 2007; Siwatibau, 2007; Yishai, 1996). This may impact their recruitment by political parties as they are not considered to fit their ideas of what a candidate looks like (Cheng, 2011; Dahlerup, 2018; Fawcett, 2018; Kenny, 2011; Niven, 1998; Park, 1999; Rule, 1981; Tremblay and Pelletier, 2001; Yishai, 1996). In other studies, women are not taken seriously or are actively subverted or harassed by their male colleagues (Bauer, 2012; Britton, 2005; Clavero and Galligan, 2005; Fawcett, 2018; Hazarika, 2008; Panday, 2008; Tamale, 2000). In some cases they are blamed by society for family problems or their reputations and morality are called into question (for working, traveling with men and often late) and this may lead to them being socially ostracised (Clavero and Galligan, 2005; Geisler, 1995; Hazarika, 2008; Hsiung, 2001; Kiamba, 2008; Ndeda, 2014; Panday, 2008). Cultural attitudes towards women often have implications towards women's mobility as in some cases it is seen as inappropriate for women to travel alone or with a man which impedes their ability to work in politics (Panday, 2008; Ndeda, 2014). In Kenya, Ndeda (2014) describes how women cannot campaign in the evenings without risking their reputations and their safety unlike men.

Race, religion, ethnicity and class can interact with cultural contexts to mean certain groups face increased difficulties in terms of their representation. Joshi and Och (2014) in a study of women's representation in 16 countries across Asia find that working class women and those who have average levels of education are severely underrepresented. In the US, Hardy-Fanta et al. (2006) show that all women and all ethnic minorities are severely underrepresented at both the state and the congressional level with non-Hispanic white men being grossly overrepresented. Further, factors which predicted greater representation of white women and women of colour differed, meaning that future researchers and practitioners should be careful to note these differences and not apply a one size fits all model to women's representation (Scola, 2006). Hancock (2009) points to the importance of recognising the way intersectional dynamics impact views of candidates even if they do not fit into the usual 'target' areas for intersectional analysis.

The way that cultural attitudes hamper women's access to political positions can often be masked by official rhetoric, such as in communist and ex-communist states. In Vietnam, where it is stated in the constitution that 'women and men have equal rights in all areas', women still struggle with expectations around family life and domestic duties (Truong, 2008). Galligan and Clavero (2008) suggest a similar finding in post-socialist Central and



Eastern Europe where there is no feminist culture and where gendered institutions persist because there is a lack of will or ability to acknowledge them. Baluta and Rothstein (2015) suggest a similar phenomenon in Romania, but also suggests that the equality rhetoric of feminism seems too reminiscent of communism, and that the idea of women in politics too easily summons up the image of Elena Ceausescu, making feminism and a greater number of women in politics unappealing to most people.

Cultural contexts also create stereotypes about women as leaders. Some studies suggest that men (or voters more generally) are less likely to see women as good or effective leaders or else they may find women as politicians less likable (Aalberg and Jenness, 2007; Lawless, 2004b; Okimoto and Brescoll, 2010; Sater, 2007; Smith et al., 2007). A prominent example of these stereotypes is the public reaction to Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign where she was seen to be too ambitious and calculating and was punished more for accusations of her wrongdoing than Donald Trump was for his (Jalalzai, 2018). Other studies suggest that gender stereotypes are more salient over certain issues, and at times of crisis, with women being seen as less desirable leaders during times of war or terrorism (Falk, 2006; Fridkin and Kenney, 2009; Holman et al., 2011; Lawless, 2004b).

It is important to note that culture impacts both the 'supply' and 'demand' for women candidates, with women less likely to put themselves forward in a context hostile to women's leadership (Piscopo and Kenny, 2020) but also parties are less likely to want female candidates in a society where women are seen as unable to lead.

The media can also fuel and perpetuate negative images of women or else exclude women candidates. Some studies find that the media is less favourable, or even more hostile, to female candidates and politicians than their male counterparts (Aalberg and Strömbäck, 2011; Bauer, 2012; Clavero and Galligan, 2005; Fawcett, 2018; Kropf and Boiney, 2001; Shor et al., 2014; Skalli, 2011; Trimble et al., 2015; Trimble, 2016). Trimble et al. (2015) describe how the news media in Canada propagates a view of political leaders as white and male, and highlights negative features of those who do not fit this model. Other studies have not found this to be the case, with the media presenting fairly equal coverage to men and women (Atkeson and Krebs, 2008). Whether the media is hostile or not, female politicians and candidates seem to worry more about how they are portrayed in the media than men, and this worry may prevent them from entering politics (Bligh et al., 2012; Rosenbluth et al., 2015).

### **Successes, positives and solutions**

If or when societies become more equal, where attitudes to women are better, more women enter politics. Some quantitative studies use 'length of time since women's suffrage' as a proxy variable for the level of women's rights in a country, and find that the longer women have had the vote the more likely it is that there are going to be a higher proportion of women in the legislature (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Mateo Diaz, 2005; Thames and Williams, 2013).<sup>1</sup> Many studies point to a connection between level of development,

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<sup>1</sup> Rosen (2013) finds problems with this variable, she suggests it does not work as well in post-colonial contexts where women's suffrage is often linked to year of independence not the outcome of a long process of women's activism and the fight for rights and equality.

culture and women's representation with more developed countries having more women representatives (Inglehart et al., 2002; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Matland, 1998; Rosen, 2013; Stockemer, 2015). The idea is that economic development, leads to societal modernisation and cultural change which in turn encourage democratisation and the entry of women into politics (Inglehart et al., 2002; Inglehart and Norris, 2003). If this is the case, then cultural barriers to women's participation in politics may reduce over time.

Further, having women in leadership positions can effect a gradual change to the way women in general are seen, which in turn can make it easier for women to get into politics. Some studies have found that in areas where women have been leaders, negative stereotypes against women as leaders are reduced (Beaman et al., 2009; Kerevel and Atkeson, 2015). In a similar point, but looking at discrimination within parties, Tajali (2017) has found that the inclusion of women in Islamic parties in Turkey and Iran has allowed these women to challenge the discriminatory attitudes and behaviours of the male leaders of these parties and push for greater representation of women.

Quotas can be a good way to 'fast track' this process. Several studies point to increased status for women as a result of quotas. In India and Bangladesh quotas and reserved seats for women have been introduced at the level of village politics (panchayats and union parishad). Studies show that the women who participate in politics at this level have gained an increased status in their families and in the community (Gala, 1997; Jayal, 2006; Nanivadeker, 2006; Nazneen et al., 2010; Panday, 2013). But also, Bhavnani (2009) found that women were more likely to be elected in local politics in areas even after the quota had been withdrawn – perhaps because it had led to a greater acceptance of women as politicians. Elsewhere, quotas seem to be having an effect on how women are viewed. Johnson et al. (2003) and Burnet (2011) suggests this might be happening in Uganda and Rwanda where women are viewed with more respect and have become more prominent in the public sphere since the quotas have been introduced.

Several studies in the US show that, as a group, women in the legislature are more ethnically diverse than men, and that there is more gender diversity among African American and Latino legislators – so although coming from discriminated ethnicities, races and genders, ethnic minority women do not face the full 'double disadvantage' that might be supposed (Bratton et al., 2008; Hardy-Fanta et al., 2006; Scola, 2006). Celis et al. (2014) found a similar phenomenon of surprisingly high levels of representation of ethnic minority women in Belgium (and the Netherlands where there is a gender quota). They suggest this is due to the political elites seeking candidate lists 'in which numerous identities are represented by a limited number of candidates with whom the electorate can identify'.

Karam and Lovenduski (2005) suggest that women MPs need to use mass media effectively, particularly focusing upon women working in the media as being able to convey their messages. They suggest that the effective use of media can enhance the image of women politicians, promote their ideas and reach, educate and mobilise those who are more difficult to reach. Further, Krook and Norris (2014) suggest that the state should ensure that national broadcasters give fair and equal coverage to male and female candidates and politicians and that these broadcasters should be held to this.

## Domestic obligations and care

### Problem

A fundamental barrier for women entering politics, and ongoing difficulty for women in politics, is balancing politics with the other caring and domestic roles which tend to fall upon women. Several pieces of research mention this as an important barrier for women entering politics or seeking higher office (Bennett and Tang, 2009; Britton, 2005; Chhoeun et al, 2008; Clavero and Galligan, 2005; Conteh, 2018; Elder, 2004; Fawcett, 2018; Fulton et al, 2006; Fuszara, 2010; Hazarika, 2008; Hora, 2014; Kamlongera, 2008; Kiamba, 2008; Maddison, 2007; Ng and Ng, 2008; Omvedt, 2005; Park, 1999; Rosenbluth et al., 2015; Shvedova, 2005; Teele et al., 2018; Thomas and Bittner, 2017; Truong, 2008).

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'The women I interviewed stated that the most debilitating challenges they faced were personal problems created by balancing the demands of the job and their traditional domestic obligations. Marriages are ending; friends express feelings of abandonment; children voice concerns of neglect.' (Britton, 2005)

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Some studies have highlighted how voters and parties tend to prefer candidates with a traditional family set up (married with children) or else there is stigma or suspicion attached to single women (Kamlongera, 2008; Tadros, 2014). Yet this presents a 'double bind' for women, who then tend to have less time to be both a good mother or carer and a successful candidate (Teele et al., 2018). The 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' relationship between parenthood and politics for women (but not usually for men) is explored in depth in Thomas and Bittner's (2017) book. They highlight how the impact of parenthood on politics is a new area in need of further research.

The pressures of balancing politics with domestic responsibilities can be very difficult for women. These difficulties might explain why many studies find that women in politics are more likely to be single or divorced than men (Conteh, 2018; Schwindt-Bayer, 2011) and to have fewer or no children (Rosenbluth et al., 2015; Schwindt-Bayer, 2011; Campbell and Childs, 2017) or only to enter politics later once their children are older (Rosenbluth et al., 2015; Tadros, 2014).

### Successes, positives and solutions

As with the issues surrounding cultural barriers to women's participation in politics, it would take a great social shift to bring about a gender balance in care and domestic duties. Without this balance in place, the main impetus is to ensure that 'politics' allows for care. Everything from political meetings, candidate training courses through to political institutions like parliaments must make better accommodation for people's caring responsibilities, through flexibility in timings, provision of creches, space for breastfeeding etc (See e.g. Childs, 2016; Childs and Campbell, 2017).

It is worth noting that families can be both a burden and/or a source of support for politicians. It is important for women legislators to have a family which

supports them in their decision to run for office (Clark et al., 1993; Fawcett, 2018; Kamlongera, 2008; Prindeville, 2014; Rosenbluth et al., 2015; Sater, 2007; Tadros, 2014). Taking this one step further many women in politics use their family to help them with their political campaigns, from pamphleteering to helping run meetings and acting as campaign managers (Prindeville, 2002; Tadros, 2014). While family involvement in politics is common practice for men and women, Tadros (2014) suggests that maximising the ability of family members to help women, through including them in training, might be an effective way of promoting women in politics.

## Money and resources

### Problem

Entering politics, particularly running an election campaign, is costly in terms of money and time and men tend to be wealthier and have greater access to resources than women, often through networks. Rosenbluth et al. (2015) in their survey of politicians in over 84 countries found that women were less likely to receive individual donations than men and as such they were more reliant on party sponsorship and support. Several studies point to the financial cost of entering politics as a considerable obstacle for many women (Bauer, 2012; Chin, 2004; Chhoeun et al., 2008; Fawcett, 2018; Hinojosa, 2012; Hogan, 2007; Jacqueline, 1997; Kamlongera, 2008; Kiamba, 2008; Ndeda, 2014; Ng and Ng, 2008; Sater, 2007; Shvedova, 2005; Siwatibau, 2007; Smith et al., 2012; Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2017).

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‘The financial constraints that many women interested in politics face compared to their male counterparts bar them from contesting, thereby making their political potentials go unnoticed’ (Ndeda, 2014)

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While the costs of campaigning tend to be greater for higher level political jobs, finances can be just as limiting for, for example, local politics where there is often just a stipend or very low levels of pay (Fawcett, 2017; Kelly, 2001). Thus, women entering this kind of politics may have to balance it with their caring duties and a second job, unless they can rely on resources from elsewhere (such as from their family, their partner’s income or due to being wealthy themselves) (see Ng and Ng, 2008).

### Successes, positives and solutions

Yet again the most fundamental way to deal with this would be to address gender equality in resources throughout society (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Mateo Diaz, 2005; Matland, 1998; Oakes and Almquist, 1993). The ODI suggests that if women gained more economic and social capital resources at the household level then they would be in a better position to seek change at the community and national level (ODI, 2015). Cross-national studies often point to greater economic equality between men and women, through a higher percentage of women in the labour force, and their economic resources, as being related to a higher proportion of women in the national legislature (Mateo Diaz, 2005; Matland, 1998; Oakes and Almquist, 1993; Rosenbluth et al., 2006; Thames and Williams, 2013). However, other studies do not find this

to be an important factor (Bego, 2014; Bitušíková, 2005; Norris, 1985; Paxton, 1997; Tremblay, 2012).

Where funds have been set up to help women candidates run, they have largely been effective, such as EMILY's list and Wish in the US (Jaquette, 1997; Krook and Norris, 2014; Rosenbluth et al., 2015). Gaunder (2012) suggests that more female candidates have entered Japanese politics recently because of the money put up by the Democratic Party of Japan's water and seed program which targets women and provides half the cost of running in most cases. In the US, some studies now do not find a gender gap in campaign resources (Dabelko and Herrnson, 1997; Gaddie and Bullock; 1995). Crespín and Deitz (2010) find that in the US Democrat women are actually at an advantage compared to men in terms of gaining funding for their campaigns from individual funders.

Political parties and the state can take active steps in reducing this barrier. Political parties and the state can work to reduce the cost of campaigning, through regulating and introducing limits on campaign funding (Childs, 2013; Hinojosa, 2012; Krook and Norris, 2014). Otherwise political parties can provide funds and subsidies for women candidates and/or ensure that they are funded and subsidised to the same degree as men candidates (Childs, 2013; Khan and Naqvi, 2018; Krook and Norris, 2014; Shvedova, 2005). The literature here largely points to possible solutions rather than showing the effectiveness of different measures. More research is needed on the role political parties and the state could play in reducing the cost of entry into politics.

## **Inequality of education and experience**

### **Problem**

In much of the literature there is an insistence that the lack of women in politics is not due to a lack of 'supply' of qualified women or because women candidates were less qualified than their male colleagues and so less able to gain office (Gaddie and Bullock, 1995; Hinojosa, 2012). Many studies for instance find that women politicians tend to be very well educated, often as and sometimes even more educated than their male colleagues (Barrett, 1995; Baturo and Gray, 2018; Bird, 2003; Fawcett, 2018; Sater, 2007).

The problem in the West is in large part a problem of gendered perceptions. In many cases the idea of what kind of experience or education is required for a political position is defined in male terms (Murray, 2015). Research suggests that women are less likely than a man of similar status, to believe that they are qualified to run for political office (Fox and Lawless, 2004).

There are, however, important locations where women and men do differ substantially in terms of their education levels. This is most evident at the level of very local politics, as is described in Chhoeun et al.'s (2008) study of commune councils in Cambodia and Jayal's (2006) study of the local government panchayat system in India. In Malawi too, Kamlongera (2008) points to low literacy rates among women as a restraint upon their ability to enter politics. Where women are more likely to be illiterate or lack basic



education, they are less able to access and participate in politics. The ODI stresses the importance of an education for enabling women to voice their concerns with credibility (ODI, 2015), and Chhoeun et al. (2008) and Tadros (2014) suggest a minimum level can both increase candidates' abilities, their perceived abilities and give them more pride and prestige.

The literature also points to examples where women suffer from the lack of support provided once they have entered Parliament. Bari (2010) and Khan and Naqvi (2018) in their studies of women brought into parliament through quotas in Pakistan, find they have been hampered in their ability to pass laws because they have been provided with neither the training nor the technical support needed for drafting legislation or on the legislative process. This is undoubtedly a symptom of the lack of respect afforded these women but demonstrates the importance of the provision of training and support within parliament being equally accessible to all.

### **Successes, positives and solutions**

The broad societal solution here would be to ensure that men and women are both given a foundational education and that they have equal access to arenas where they can gain further education, skills and experience (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005).

Participating in politics at the grassroots level and in civil society organisations can give women practical experience of politics and the skills needed for a future career (Cornwall and Goetz, 2005; Krook and Norris, 2014; Tadros, 2014; ODI, 2015; WomanKind, 2016).

While there is little in the literature which suggests that women politicians are less qualified or able than their male colleagues, many studies point to training as a way of helping women enter politics. It may be that this training is useful mainly in addressing women's lack of belief in their own qualifications, rather than addressing a lack of skills among women more generally.

Much of the literature points to the benefits that could result from the provision and support for schools or centres, or leadership institutes, to train women and prepare them with skills such as communication, public speaking and in the use of media for political careers and election campaigns (Fawcett, 2018; Khan and Naqvi, 2018; Krook and Norris, 2014; Lovenduski, 2005; Shvedova, 2005; Tadros, 2014). Further, training programmes which are long-term can allow women to build skills as and when they need them and develop the relationships with the other people on the training course, thus building important networks (Tadros, 2014).

Finally, within the context of parliament and/or political parties training and support should be readily accessible for men and women (Bari, 2010; Khan and Naqvi, 2018; Krook and Norris, 2014).

## Networks

### Problem

Networks are crucial for gaining funds, political support and developing constituencies. As politics have been male-dominated so long, many of the networks of power surrounding it are male-dominated 'old boys clubs' and are intrinsically difficult for women to join. Bjarnegård (2013) describes the persistence of male power emphatically as based on these networks of power that she terms 'homosocial capital'. Often informal networking takes place after hours, in bars or cafés which may be difficult for women to access due to social stigma or else because women are more likely than men to have caring responsibilities and so not be free 'after hours'.

Several studies point to women's lesser access to networks as a major obstacle to their entry into politics and ability to further their political careers (Bjarnegård, 2013; Britton, 2005; Clavero and Galligan, 2005; Fawcett, 2018; Hsiung, 2001; Kiamba, 2008; ODI, 2015; Rhode, 2003; Rodriguez, 2003; Shvedova, 2005; Tadros, 2014).

In contexts where politicians maintain their positions through patronage networks and corrupt practices, women are often excluded to an even greater degree. Studies in Europe, Lebanon, Papua New Guinea, Senegal and Thailand all point to the ways in which women are excluded from male patronage networks, sometimes embedded within political parties, and thus political power structures (Bjarnegård, 2013; Beck, 2003; El Hussein, 2012; Susub, 2013; Sundström and Wängnerud, 2016).

Certain contexts can make the entrenched patronage networks even more difficult to displace. For example, in Lebanon, the Taif agreement – which brought peace after the civil war – has reinforced religious divisions within the political system, but an effect of this is that, as El Hussein (2012) writes, it has perpetuated patron-client relations within each of the different groups and excluded groups which could cross cut the religious barriers and work to end patron-client relations (such as women's groups) from gaining power. Another example is in Arab states, where male dominated tribal systems - which are reliant on patronage networks - strongly overlap with more formalised political groupings and make it particularly difficult for women to enter politics (Sabbagh, 2005).

Often cultural attitudes towards women makes it more difficult for women to gain entry to men's political networks. For example, Hsiung's (2001) study of political engagement of women in China describes how women are persistently seen as sexualized beings with all unnecessary contact with men or even good working relationships with male colleagues often leading to speculation about affairs and inappropriate sexual behaviour. This means that women often self-exclude from networking opportunities with men in order to protect their reputations. Tadros (2014) exposes similar issues around informal meetings taking places in bars and at late hours when it is more difficult for women politicians and candidates to join without risking reputations and their security.

## **Successes, positives and solutions**

There are, of course, cases where women have entered into elite networks, for example Edling et al. (2013) find that women have the same status in elite networks in Sweden. Rodriguez (2003) found that in some cases women had penetrated the 'camarillas' or political networks through which a great deal of informal politics is conducted in Mexico.

In other cases, women have found alternative networks from the traditional male dominated networks of power. These can be within parties, such as the New Zealand Labour Women's Council which has worked to promote women and has become a woman focused network which has boosted the careers of many of its members (Curtin, 2008). Mapuranga (2016) suggests that membership of religious organisations, such as churches or the salvation army, has been useful for women politicians in Zimbabwe as a way of gaining them a network, but also experience, pride and purpose.

Ways to improve women's access to networking might involve capitalising on existing groups and using them in different ways. The literature suggests that for example training programmes for women entering politics offer important networking opportunities, which could be maximised to help create support networks for women (Krook and Norris, 2014; Tadros, 2014). Or else other women's meetings, family groups, membership networks linked to NGOs or religious organisations could be used to help build support bases and gain experience within an organisation (Tadros, 2014). Pini et al. (2004) discuss the potential of the Australian Local Government Women's Association for further empowering its members.

A number of studies point to the importance of women's caucuses, women's political bodies, women's sections of political parties, women's movements and other women-only (or women-friendly) spaces in supporting women in politics (Clavero and Gilligan, 2005; Curtin, 2008; Krook and Norris, 2014; Palmieri, 2013; WomanKind, 2016). There are many different forms that these women's spaces might take. Many studies advocate in particular women's political bodies which connect women members of the legislature with each other and women's organisations outside of it (Palmieri, 2013). This allows women to organise, create agendas, find common ground, support each other and foster and maintain connections between female politicians and women's organisations in civil society. Not only do these seem to aid and encourage women's substantive representation, but they are supposed to help support the careers of women in politics through creating additional networks. Clavero and Gilligan (2005) suggest that the lack of connection between women MPs and between them and civil society women's organisations has hindered women's political advancement in Central and Eastern Europe.

In order to aid women in moving from the informal to the more formal sphere of politics, they could be helped with connections to think tanks, political and local networks or through formal apprenticeships with women politicians (Krook and Norris, 2014; Tadros, 2014).

## Violence and abuse against women politicians

### Problem

Violence against women in politics is an issue which is increasingly growing in visibility (Krook, 2019; Women in Parliaments Global Forum, 2016). The abuse, threats and violence directed against women in politics are increasingly a reason why women do not want to enter politics or why they are leaving it (Bigio and Vogelstein, 2020; Fawcett, 2018; Krook and Restrepo Sanín, 2019; Krook, 2019). Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2019) suggest a broad understanding of what constitutes violence against women in politics to include physical, psychological, sexual, economic and semiotic violence. They also suggest that acts of violence should be distinguished from harassment which is the creation of a hostile work environment.

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'Female MPs in Europe are particular targets of only ne attacks. 58.2 per cent of those interviewed had experience of abusive, sexual or violent content and behavior on social networks. In addition, electronic communication is the primary means used for threats against female MPs. In 75.5 per cent of cases, the perpetrators of these threats are anonymous citizens.' (IPU,2018)

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Cases of abuse, sexual harassment and blackmail against women MPs were described in the literature, such as Tamale (2000) describing how women MPs in Uganda face sexual harassment when going about their work (breast and crotch grabbing by colleagues as examples), or Hazarika (2008) giving an account of a woman in local government in India being falsely accused by her colleagues of participating in pornography and being subjected to a virginity test. In an article on the issue, Bigio and Vogelstein (2020) give numerous examples of the disproportionate levels of violence and threats aimed at female officials and women politicians both directly and online, including for instance, nearly half of European female politicians having been threatened with rape or death and 55 percent of female officials in a survey of Cote D'Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania and Tunisia being subjected to violence while performing their duties. Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2019) in addition to several incidents of physical and sexual violence, point to economic violence and harassment of women politicians – such as the burning of the crops of one Indian local councillor or women (but not men) in local politics in Latin America being denied offices, travel expenses or telephones – and semiotic violence, where women are subjected to humiliation and degrading language.

### Successes, positives and solutions

Unfortunately, there is not much evidence of success or positives on this issue as yet. Ending violence and abuse against women in politics is not easy as it is underreported, stems largely from social attitudes, and is often difficult to police (UN Women, 2018).

One of the few concrete cases in the literature of positive action taken against violence against women in politics is in Bolivia. Here a law was passed in 2012 criminalising political harassment and political violence against women. There is little research on how successful the law has been although an initial report shows that still very few cases are found in favour of the victim and 7 out of 10

cases go unpunished (UN, 2013). Whether this law will take greater effect or succeed in improving the situation is still unclear.

In Germany legislation has been passed in 2018 and 2020 which obliges social media companies to take down illegal content and report hate speech to the police. Again, there is little evidence on how effective this has been as yet. Initial studies into the 2018 law show that it may not have been particularly effective at tackling hate speech (Echikson and Knodt, 2018).

The literature suggests some points for further action. One of the major problems is that this issue is underreported. Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2019) point out that violence against women in politics is widely seen as ‘the cost of doing politics’. Clear language around violence against women in politics is needed, together with ‘safe spaces’ for reporting incidents (UN Women, 2018). Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2019) point to criteria based on hate crime identification as a starting point that could be used for encouraging reporting of incidents of violence against women in politics. The language and protocols should be publicised with awareness campaigns. This would serve to address the major problem of underreporting, helping women to feel justified in reporting incidents without fear of repercussions or victim blaming (UN Women, 2018).

Ending abuse online is difficult as it involves anonymous accounts and it is often justified through appeals to freedom of expression (Bigio and Vodelstein, 2020; Fawcett, 2018; Krook and Norris, 2014; UN Women, 2018). As such, clear guidelines and tighter rules around abuse and enforcement are needed from the state, political parties and by social media providers (Fawcett, 2018; UN Women, 2018).

## **Electoral structure**

### **Problem**

The electoral structure is only the ‘mechanism’ through which men and women enter formal political positions. Political parties are, for the most part, the institutions which are responsible for selecting and supporting candidates and members of legislatures. As has been shown above, political parties themselves can be a barrier to women’s entry into politics. However, numerous studies have found that electoral systems can also make a difference. The major finding here is that in proportional representation systems, women tend to have a larger share of seats. A number of studies find this to be the case (Kunovich and Paxton, 2005; Mateo Diaz, 2005; Matland, 1998 finds this has an impact in developed countries; Norris, 1985; Rule, 1981; Rule, 1987; Reynolds, 1999; Rosen, 2013; Salmond, 2006; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Siaroff, 2000; Thames, 2018; Tremblay, 2012; Tripp and Kang, 2008, Yoon, 2004). In particular, women benefit from a closed list proportional representation system (Bauer, 2004; Dahlerup, 2018; Gray, 2003), although some suggest a panachage open system gets more votes for women (Golder et al., 2017).

A first past the post system or majoritarian system is seen to disadvantage women (Bauer, 2012; Nicholl, 2007; Ogai, 2001; Siwatibau, 2007). Although, some studies do not find that electoral type makes a difference (Bernauer et al.



2015; Caul Kittilson, 2006; Matland, 1998 finds this does not have an impact in developing countries).

Other studies suggest that the size of the district or council is important, with bigger as being more likely to increase the proportion of women (Matland and Brown, 1992; Welch and Studlar, 1990). This is because with larger district magnitudes more candidates are sent from each district to the national legislature, as such women can be put on a political party's ballot without 'displacing a male' (Paxton and Hughes, 2014).

Similarly, gender quotas are most effective in closed list proportional representation systems (Bauer, 2004; Davidson-Schmich, 2006; Gray, 2003; Jones, 1998; Jones, 2009; Schmidt, 2009; Yoon, 2004). District magnitude (bigger as better for women) within a proportional representation system also enhances the effect of a quota, as women tend to be further down candidate lists, so when there are more seats allocated per district, women do better (Jones, 1998; Schmidt, 2009).

Incumbency has often been cited as a barrier to women's representation. The idea being that it is more difficult for candidate to unseat an incumbent, and as most incumbents are male, women are at a disadvantage. Some studies seem to confirm this (Kerevel and Atkeson, 2013; Palmer and Simon, 2001; Pettey, 2018; Schwindt-Bayer, 2005; Schwindt-Bayer et al., 2010; Studlar and McAllister, 1991; Welch and Studlar, 1996), while others have not found incumbency to have an effect (Caul Kittilson, 2006).

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**'Women do not get elected because they are not incumbents, and because they do not get elected, they do not become incumbents, truly a vicious cycle.'**  
(Studlar and McAllister, 1991)

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When looking at electoral systems in general, it is important to also consider the cultures of political institutions, which in themselves can seriously hamper women's ability to get into and progress in politics. Political institutions can pressure women to dress in certain ways, make it difficult to balance a career in politics with childcare (through long working hours and the need to live in two places), or to breastfeed a child. They can also create an atmosphere hostile to women through sexual harassment, or even male dominated art. Further they can enable the exclusion of women from informal networking groups where policy might be decided (Britton, 2005; Childs 2016; Erikson and Josefsson, 2018; Fawcett, 2018; Fuszara, 2010; Krook, 2018). For this reason, many feminists welcome the setting up of new political institutions, where there is no 'old boys club' and new norms can be formed (Cowell-Meyers, 2001; Kenny and Verge, 2013; Lovenduski, 2005).

As a final, but important, note on this section, the major barrier to women's entry into politics is the political party itself, as described above. The problems within political parties tend to be bias against women at the point of candidate selection and then to a lesser extent the exclusion of women from positions of power and networks at higher levels.

## **Successes, positives and solutions**

While changing the electoral system may not be easily achievable everywhere, when there are opportunities these can be used to ensure the new system accommodates women. Gaunder (2012) suggests that more female candidates have entered Japanese politics recently partly because of the recent change to a mixed electoral system with some proportional representation built into it. In the post-apartheid system in South Africa, women successfully ensured greater representation for women (Geisler, 2000; Hassim, 2002). Peace agreements in Africa have led to the implementation of gender quotas and the implementation of proportional representation systems explaining much of the recent increase in women's representation (Anderson and Swiss, 2014; Hughes and Tripp, 2015). The devolution of power within a state can also provide an opportunity for women, for example, in Scotland (Kenny, 2013).

There seem to be a number of factors that help to ensure that moments of transition do benefit women. Many suggest that having an active women's movement and a relatively high status for women before the transition helps (Anderson and Swiss, 2014). Moghadam (2014) suggests these factors were important in impacting women's status in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet (2002) found these to be important in determining outcomes in democratisation Chile and Nigeria.

Scholars emphasise the importance of a party environment which actively encourages the nomination of women candidates (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Lovenduski, 2005). This is cited as an important factor in encouraging female candidates in the UK (Fawcett, 2018; Hinojosa, 2012) but also Karpowitz (2017) found in the US that a letter of encouragement from the party increased the number of women nominated in state level candidate nominations.

If quotas are introduced, they need not solely target the make-up of candidate lists, but can shape the higher levels of the legislature too. Lovenduski et al. (2002) describe how in Finland there is a quota for legislative committees where they have to have 40 percent women. The introduction of quotas, as described above, has largely been successful in bringing women into politics.

## **E. Actions to support women in politics**

This section distils the evidence above into points of action for different institutions.

### **For governments and parliaments**

Governments and parliaments should consider how the political status quo disadvantages women and act to ensure legislation is in place to reduce the barriers to women's entry into politics. In some cases, and where possible, gender quotas can be introduced. These are a good way to fast track women's political representation.

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‘[T]he presence of an institutionalized separate space for women is important in a range of ways. It can actively promote the descriptive representation of women, support them while they once they are elected but also in providing women with an alternative reference group, an environment where feminist positionings are validated.’ (Curtin, 2008)

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A key action at the parliamentary level would be to set up a women’s parliamentary body or caucus. Women’s parliamentary bodies or caucuses are an important resource for women in politics. They should allow women to share information, ideas and resources. It may be cross party so be used to build consensus on certain issues. They help support female MPs and foster a more inclusive Parliament as a whole. They can also facilitate connections between women representatives and women’s movements in civil society (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Norris, 2014; Palmieri, 2013). Further, a women’s parliamentary body can publicise and celebrate the achievements of women in politics, creating a positive feedback loop (Palmieri, 2013).

- Change the electoral system to have more proportional representation (Ogai, 2001).
- Consider different levels for democratic institutions, devolution/ decentralisation of power can benefit women (Ortbals et al., 2012).
- Allow for, and/or introduce positive discrimination or quotas with effective mechanisms to increase the number of women in political positions (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Lovenduski, 2005; Shvedova, 2005).
- Introduce legislation where women are required to hold a certain proportion of seats on government appointed bodies (e.g. Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and Germany) (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005).
- Introduce term limits to restrict the impact of incumbency (Schwindt-Bayer, 2005).
- Political institutions like parliaments should adapt to be ‘gender-sensitive’, accommodating to a more diverse selection of members and candidates. Recommendations include e.g. changing imagery and language used through to changes in working hours and zero-tolerance of sexual harassment (Childs, 2016; Fawcett, 2018; Krook and Norris, 2014; Palmieri, 2018)
- Take measures to prevent violence against women candidates (Krook and Norris, 2014). Evidence is needed to see whether legislation criminalising violence against women in politics in Bolivia or legislation requiring social media provider report hate speech in Germany has been effective. Other possibilities may be through awareness campaigns and safe spaces for reporting crimes.
- Create women’s parliamentary organisations or caucuses (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Norris, 2014; Palmieri, 2013).

- Ensure that national broadcasters give fair and equal coverage to male and female candidates and politicians (Krook and Norris, 2014).
- Regulate campaign funding, and party funding to reduce costs and ensure women have equal access (Childs, 2013; Hinojosa, 2012; Krook and Norris, 2014).

## For political parties

Political parties form a major barrier to women's entry into politics. They need to take positive measures to ensure women are included and supported at each stage of political recruitment.

- Parties to adopt voluntary quotas or other positive measures, such as All Women Shortlists (Childs, 2008; Childs, 2013; Hinojosa, 2012; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Norris, 2014; Lovenduski, 2005).
- Parties to formalise selection procedures and include equal opportunity practices (Childs, 2013).
- Parties to guarantee placement of female candidates in winnable seats and/or in equal positions on party lists (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Shvedova, 2005).
- Parties to provide funds and subsidies for women candidates and/or ensure they are funded and subsidised to the same degree as men candidates (Childs, 2013; Khan and Naqvi, 2018; Krook and Norris, 2014; Shvedova, 2005).
- Parties to create and support women's sections (Childs, 2013; Krook and Norris, 2014).
- Parties to provide training for women candidates (Childs, 2013; Krook and Norris, 2014).
- Parties to ensure they (repeatedly) ask women to run and appoint a search director/ talent spotter focusing on women (Childs, 2013; O'Leary and Shames, 2013).
- Parties to take explicit measures to combat threats of violence against women candidates and parliamentarians (Fawcett, 2018).
- Parties to foster connections between women's organisations in civil society, women politicians, think tanks and other political networks (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Norris, 2014; Palmieri, 2013)
- Parties to make better accommodation for female candidates' and politicians' caring responsibilities throughout their careers (Childs, 2016; Childs and Campbell, 2017; Fawcett, 2018).
- Parties to work to include women in grassroots work and at a local level, enabling political apprenticeships (Krook and Norris, 2014; Tadros, 2014),

- Parties to give media and social media training for women candidates (Childs, 2013; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Women in Parliament Global Forum, 2016).

### **For women's movements, women's caucuses and civil society organisations**

Women's movements and organisations are fundamental to the struggle for equal representation. They are key to motivating and engaging women in politics, they are a space for organising, connecting and building networks and they can be the driving force behind policy change. Feminist or women's movements are important in pushing for the greater representation of women (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Norris, 2014). They have been instrumental in calling for the introduction of quotas (Anderson and Swiss, 2014), they have pushed for the greater appointment of women cabinet ministers (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013). They can and do provide training for women entering politics (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013; Krook and Norris, 2014). They have pushed for women to be selected through providing CVs of suitable women to the government and parties (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005). Women's movements importantly can also act as a watchdog, monitoring the situation for the representation of women and protesting if the situation regresses (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005). Further, women's movements support women politicians through their careers, through the provision of networks and resources (Rosenbluth et al., 2015).

- While women's movements and women's parliamentary bodies are important, their impact can be amplified if and when they work together (Geisler, 2006; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Shvedova, 2005).
- Lobby for the greater representation of women and/or the introduction of quotas and positive measures (Anderson and Swiss, 2014; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Norris, 2014).
- Raise awareness through campaigns which point to the importance of balanced participation and representation of women and men, e.g. the Movement for Equal Rights–Equal Responsibilities in Cyprus (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Norris, 2014).
- Collect, monitor and disseminate facts about women's political participation and representation (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005).
- Foster connections between women's organisations in civil society, women politicians, think tanks and other political networks (Krook and Norris, 2014; Tadros, 2014).
- Provide training for women aspirants, candidates, and politicians, including media and social media training (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005; Shvedova, 2005; Tadros, 2014; Women in Parliament Global Forum, 2016).
- Provide funds and/or fundraising opportunities to women political candidates (Hinojosa, 2012; Khan and Naqvi, 2018; Krook and Norris, 2014; Lovenduski, 2005).



- ♦ Encourage women to participate in civil society organising where they can develop skills (Cornwall and Goetz, 2005; ODI, 2015; Tadros, 2014; WomanKind, 2016).
- ♦ Promote the use of equality rhetoric so that the idea of gender equality is accepted more broadly, changing society's frames of reference (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005).
- ♦ Maximise the ability of family members to help women by including them in training (Tadros, 2014).
- ♦ Provide parties with lists of eligible women when it comes to nominations (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013; Karam and Lovenduski, 2005).
- ♦ Act as watchdogs on parties and protest when there are setbacks (Karam and Lovenduski, 2005).

## **F. Concluding comments**

This chapter describes the motivations for women entering politics, the routes they have taken, and the factors which help or hinder them in politics. I want to highlight the way that feminism and women's organisations bookend this chapter, as the motivating force for women, and as a source of ongoing support. Women's organisations and feminism in different senses are present throughout this chapter in pushing for the feminisation of society, the introduction of quotas or offering training, resources and support networks to women candidates. Women's activism, in whatever form, is both the past and the future for women's involvement in politics. This chapter shows that the obstacles women face when entering politics are deeply entrenched and institutionalised. However, it also shows the many ways in which women are using opportunities which present themselves and creating new ones to push for greater numbers of women in politics.

## 2. Women political leaders and the quality of democracy

This chapter looks at whether increasing the number of women in politics impacts democracy itself. One of the main arguments for including greater numbers of women in politics is to ensure political representatives reflect more truly the population they represent. As such, it is seen to improve democracy and give more legitimacy to the institutions of government. Beyond this important argument, there is also evidence that having women in politics improves the quality of democracy in other ways. Women leaders are thought to have more inclusive leadership styles, are more proactive legislators and more responsive to constituents. They may even reduce corruption and improve the provision of essential services. An interesting finding is the way that the inclusion of women in politics reshapes the political sphere by reframing what is deemed 'political'. As a final cautionary note, this chapter highlights the fact that including more women does not necessarily make a better democracy. Many authoritarian states, due to external pressures or to increase their perceived legitimacy 'add women' without democratising power itself. These women tend to act as tokens and do not have any real power. As such more women does not necessarily mean more democracy, but including more women in a democracy can improve its overall quality.

- Women in politics tend to do more constituency work than men.
- Having more women representatives is related to lower levels of corruption.
- Having more women representatives does not always bring more democracy, as women may be included in non-democratic parliaments where they have little power and act as tokens.
- There is some evidence that suggests women tend towards a leadership style that is more cooperative and inclusive, and which is less likely to enforce hierarchies.
- There is some evidence which suggests having more women in politics leads to a better implementation of welfare and health services and infrastructure.
- Women politicians are altering the framework of politics, by introducing legislation in areas previously considered beyond the scope of government, from domestic violence to female genital mutilation, but also by broadening perspectives on other policy areas and looking to address causes and work within communities.
- Women political leaders in some cases are associated with lower levels of conflict, fewer human rights abuses and less military spending.
- More research is needed into whether having more women in politics may lead to greater legitimacy of democratic institutions, and whether trust in government is an appropriate measure.

**Green:** the literature clearly points to this finding.

**Yellow:** the literature indicates this finding, but with less certainty (through less evidence/a number of studies finding otherwise).

**Red:** more research is needed on this point.

- There is no clear evidence that women are more effective at law-making than men, there is evidence which points both ways, and it is likely that the context plays an important role in determining this.

## Improving trust and accountability

The greater representation of women in parliaments and governments may improve the quality of democracy by making women feel like they are represented, and as such giving the institutions of democracy greater legitimacy. This is likely to be particularly true when having more women representatives also increases the diversity of women representatives. One of the major arguments for the greater inclusion of women in politics is that it inherently improves democracy by better representing the citizens of the state (Weldon 2002b; Celis and Childs, 2020). Lovenduski (2019) has argued that politicians are rarely accountable to women and this means that one of the fundamental tenets of democracy – accountability – is denied to women. While new forms of feminist and women’s activism and organisation – for example using social media - are increasingly striving to hold political representatives to account, women’s ability to hold political power to account would be accelerated if there were more women political representatives.

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‘When greater proportions of female state legislators are present, the likelihood that women feel better about government, and hence the democratic society in which they live, improves.’ (Atkeson and Carrillo, 2007)

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While the theory is strong on this point, there is some evidence which suggests this might be the case, but it is not overwhelming. One way of measuring whether having more women improves the legitimacy of a democracy is to measure whether citizens report greater feelings of trust in government. The connection between these measures is rather tenuous, and the evidence here is not overwhelming. Atkeson and Carrillo (2007), Ulbig (2007) and Schwindt-Bayer et al. (2010) find that greater female representation leads to increased feelings of trust in government, but Lawless (2004) does not.

## Are women more democratic in their leadership style?

Some studies find that women bring distinctly feminine qualities to their role as leaders and to their methods of leadership (Adler, 1997; Ayman, 2010; Childs, 2004; Holman, 2015; de la Rey, 2011). In many cases, researchers have found women’s style of leadership to be more democratic, cooperative, and inclusive (Adler, 1996; Adler, 1997; Childs, 2006; Eagly and Johnson, 2003; Fraga et al., 2006; Holman, 2015; Rosenthal, 2000; Tripp, 2001). Tripp (2001) suggests that female leaders in particular in Africa have taken a stand against division and sectarianism. Holman (2015) shows that women mayors in America have more contact with community groups and focus more on constituent demands rather than those of the business community or their own policy priorities. Adler (1996) follows 25 global women leaders and suggests that many women leaders have made an effort to break with hierarchies and to create consensus. She gives the examples of Corazon Aquino, President of the Philippines, not living in the presidential palace but instead working out of a small office; Golda

Meir, President of Israel, insisting that committee meetings were conducted without hierarchies – ‘like a kibbutz’ - and the Irish President, Mary Robinson, keeping the door of her house open to the people of Ireland.

Other studies found women politicians less likely to rebel (Cowley and Childs, 2003), or be openly rebellious (Childs, 2006), though it is hard to determine whether women’s disinclination to rebel is because of higher risks or a more cooperative nature and style of politics (Cowley and Childs, 2003). Childs (2006) suggests that it may demonstrate a different, less macho style of politics with more work behind the scenes.

Other scholars find little difference between the leadership styles of men and women in terms of communication, cooperation, or inclusivity (Cowell-Meyers, 2001; Reingold; 1996), or find that differences are based more on strategy than gender (Funk, 2015). Shair-Rosenfield and Stoyan (2018) found that women in executive positions were less likely to rule in an authoritarian or hierarchical manner, but the effect existed primarily when they had high levels of popularity and reduced when popularity levels reduced.

Political culture and gendered institutions can also provide a restraint to more feminized, inclusive or cooperative styles of leadership (Childs, 2004). Male leaders are more likely to succeed and ascend to higher status positions within masculine organisational structures (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Masculine institutions can perpetuate male leadership styles that operate most successfully within the established system (Eagly and Carli, 2003; de la Rey, 2011). Even new organisations and institutions determined to do politics differently from before may struggle not to fall back into old practices when they work within male-dominated institutions or when the new ideas have not been sufficiently reinforced, such as with political recruitment in Scotland or the Women’s Equality Party in the UK (Evans and Kenny, 2020; Kenny, 2011). This highlights the importance of looking at the context in which women, and women’s organisations are working and trying to change cultures to enable more inclusive leadership styles.

### **Are women more effective legislators and/or better representatives?**

The evidence is divided on how effective women are as legislators, with some studies showing them to be more effective than men, and some not. Their effectiveness seems to depend largely on the political context. There is, though, a clear finding in the literature that women legislators are more concerned with, and responsive to, their constituents.

In some contexts, women law makers have been found to sponsor more bills and secure more funding (Anzia and Berry, 2011), and introduce and pass more priority legislation (Fraga et al., 2006) than men. In other instances, by contrast, scholars have found no significant difference in the effectiveness of male and female law makers (Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Bratton, 2005; Jeydel and Taylor, 2003). In some cases, female representatives were quieter and spoke less than male representatives (Bäck et al., 2014), while other studies found that female representatives gave more speeches and involved themselves more in debates (Pearson and Dancey, 2011). The differences can perhaps depend on cultural context, number of women also present, overall session

attendance (Khan and Naqvi, 2018), or the policy areas discussed (Bäck et al., 2014).

Other institutional barriers or structural challenges can impede a female legislator's effectiveness. Elements such as seniority and membership (Jeydel and Taylor, 2003), clientelism (Taylor-Robinson and Heath, 2003), and position in either the majority or minority can affect a legislator's ability to get bills passed (Bratton, 2005; Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer, 2011). In Honduras, women MPs may be seen as less effective than male MPs for engaging less in corrupt practices or pork barrel projects in a clientelist system (Taylor-Robinson and Heath, 2003).

Gender differences between legislators do seem to exist in the ways in which they relate to and serve their constituencies. Beck (2001) found women in local government to be more responsive to constituents. Clark et al. (1993) also found that female legislators in Taiwan are more likely to emphasize their constituency roles. In terms of the work itself, women have been found to prioritize constituency work (Norris, 1996), and generally receive and conduct more constituency work than male representatives (Holman, 2015; Richardson and Freeman, 1995). This, too, can vary by constituent gender. Studies have found that female representatives are able to reach female constituents better (Childs, 2002; Reingold, 2000, Schwindt-Bayer, 2010). This could stem from female constituents finding female MPs more approachable (according to UK MPs interviewed by Sarah Childs, 2002), or women spending more time working within their constituencies (Norris, 1996).

### **Are women less corrupt?**

Corruption ranges from small to large offenses, petty crimes to collusion (Bauhr et al., 2019). The academic literature finds a clear link between having (more) women as representatives and lower levels of both types of corruption. This effect is found at all levels of government.

Women's representation in local councils has been found to reduce corruption. Scholars have found this effect in local councils worldwide, from Africa to Europe to Asia, in a way that refracts through regional context but demonstrates a clear trend (Bauhr et al., 2019; Chhoeun, Sok, and Byrne, 2008; Goetz, 2002; Jayal, 2006; Sundström and Wängnerud, 2016).

At the parliamentary level, although female legislators have been found to be less corrupt as individuals, the effect of female representation in aggregate also has an impact on corruption, with greater overall representation of women in parliament decreasing levels of corruption (Bari, 2010; Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti, 1999; Jha and Sarangi, 2018; Schwindt-Bayer et al., 2010; Stockemer, 2011). Goetz (2002) found in particular that female politicians in Uganda could make a significant impact in anti-corruption even against an increasingly authoritarian government.

It is worth noting that while higher levels of female representation might be associated with lower levels of corruption, so is low levels of female representation associated with higher levels of corruption (Sandstrom and Wängnerud, 2016; Stockemer, 2011). There are several explanations for this



relationship. The first explanation is that corrupt practices tend to exclude women from power. Second, greater gender equality and lower levels of corruption both tend to be outcomes of democratisation and development and so there may be some element of there being a correlation between them rather than a causation. Third, women in power may act to reduce corruption, through actively targeting corruption and improving the provision of services. The literature gives evidence which suggests that all three explanations may contribute to this overall pattern.

The first explanation is that women are excluded from power when there are high levels of corruption because they cannot infiltrate the networks used for corrupt practices as easily as men (Bauhr et al., 2019). Corrupt practices allow those already in advantageous positions to remain so. As politics is still a male-dominated sphere, corrupt practices might serve the men who are already in the system, and obstruct further female representation (Sundström and Wängnerud, 2016). Beck (2003) observes this effect in the patronage politics in Senegal, which inhibited women from accruing resources and access to political positions.

However, when the public mood moves against corruption, women's relative position as outsiders and new entrants in a male-dominated field can act in their advantage. Tripp (2001) suggests that women's outsider role in Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Kenya has emboldened female representatives to speak vociferously against corruption.

The seeming relationship between corruption and women's representation may be a result of political context (Alatas et al., 2009). For example, studies have shown that female labour force participation has been found to display the same negative association on corruption (Swamy et al., 2001), as well as not to have an effect (Jha and Sarangi, 2018). Elsewhere other measures of greater gender equality and good governance have been shown to moderate the connection (Caballero and Ziegler, 2012; Schwindt-Bayer et al., 2010; Sung, 2003). As such, there is some evidence that having women in politics does not reduce corruption *per se* but that the contexts which give rise to more women in politics are likely to reduce corruption – such as higher levels of development and democracy.

Finally, this relationship between women in politics and the reduction of corruption might be because women politicians act to reduce corruption more than men. They might disrupt corrupt networks, but also they might focus on improving the provision of services which may have been accessed previously through corrupt practices, such as providing better healthcare and a more efficient bureaucracy (Bauhr et al., 2019). The literature suggests that women legislators may act differently to men in power because they are more wary of the repercussions of their actions. Women can face a steeper risk for operating outside of political norms, or engaging in corrupt practices (Esaray and Chirillo, 2013). Further, female voters hold female politicians more accountable than men and male voters (Eggers et al., 2018; Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer, 2017). There is evidence to suggest that the action of women political leaders is at least partially responsible for the reduction in corruption (Bauhr et al., 2019).

Corruption runs counter to democratic principles of fairness and representation. Should female representatives have a role in lowering levels of corruption,

individually or in aggregate, this will have an effect on a country's democracy, and can potentially enhance constituents' levels of satisfaction and trust with their government (Schwindt-Bayer et al., 2010). As such, this association points to a way in which greater female representation improves the quality of democracy.

### **Improved provision of services**

The next chapter explores how women politicians tend to push for more women friendly legislation, and increased spending on welfare, healthcare and education. These policy preferences may not relate directly to the quality of democracy, but a good democracy also entails implementing policies and providing services to the public. As such, while it is difficult to untangle the 'policy' from its delivery, there are studies which do show that women political leaders alter outcomes.

Women political leaders seem to improve health for adults and children, and access to high quality latrines which are crucial to improving health in India. Ng and Muntaner (2018) find that an increased level of women's leadership is linked to lower mortality rates in the Canadian provinces. In a study of developing countries, Swiss et al. (2012) find that increased female representation leads to improvements in child health in terms of higher levels of immunisations, and reduced levels of infant and child deaths. Lee (2018) in a quasi-experimental piece of research in India shows that female leaders are more likely to increase access to high quality latrines than male candidates. Having women leaders also seems to improve the levels of education among young women. Clots-Figueras (2012) finds that having more women leaders improves the levels of female education in urban areas in India.

These studies, while rigorous in themselves, do not demonstrate a global pattern of women leaders leading to better health, sanitation and education. They do however, add another piece of evidence to a picture, which when taken together with the evidence surrounding female policy preferences, and the connection between women and the reduction in levels of corruption, shows the differences that increasing women's representation could make in the provision of services.

### **Expanding political frameworks**

Having more women in politics has brought about a fundamental change in what is considered to be 'politics'. The feminist movement and women politicians have brought legislation into realms that were previously considered beyond the scope of government. Women in politics have introduced, for example, legislation on female genital mutilation, domestic violence and childcare and maternity policies which have altered the status quo in terms of what is deemed as politics, bringing the 'private' into the political (Caul Kittilson, 2010; Goetz, 1998). An example of how greater gender equality in government might alter what society sees as the responsibility of the state might be found in Iyer et al.'s (2012) study. They found that the election of women to high positions in India, tends to be followed by an increase in reported crimes against women. They argue that this is not because of

increased levels of violence against women, but because women are more likely to report them. This seems to reinforce the idea that the greater representation of women leads to an increased awareness of gender and power, and an expansion of what women see as their rights and government obligations.

Further, women in politics have offered insights into the gendered impact of legislation that would have previously been seen as gender neutral and have diversified the idea of what is seen as women's interests (Celis, 2006). Cowell-Meyers (2001) describes how the women politicians she spoke to thought of politics in terms of communities and networks of people and with a greater understanding about how structures shape and impact relations between people. As such they may have shifted and broadened the understanding of what constitutes politics. One example of how greater gender equality in government tends to alter the ways policies are formed is highlighted in Mackay's (2010) comparison of domestic violence legislation in Scotland and England. She suggests that because of the greater gender equity in the Scottish parliament, and the involvement of women's groups in policy making, domestic violence was looked at as an issue more holistically. Thus, in Scotland, prevention measures such as media campaigns and training strategies were put in place. While in England the focus was on domestic violence as a crime, so the emphasis was put on policing.

With women diversifying and broadening what is deemed as political, the democratic mechanism may be strengthened as policies impact more people's lives in a more tangible way, and as people are made more aware of the impact of power differentials in society.

Finally, women in politics are expanding political frameworks in other ways. They have been using foreign policy opportunities to press for greater gender equality, altering standard perceptions of international relations as the domain of conflict and the sanctity of state sovereignty. Angevine (2017) found that women in Congress are more likely than men to introduce legislation that benefits women globally such as the 'Afghan Women Empowerment Act' and the 'Women and Children in Crisis and Conflict Protection Act'. Bashevkin (2014) finds that women foreign policy decision makers are more likely than male foreign ministers who preceded or followed them to make pro-equality statements, and that having more women in foreign policy elites might lead to more aid being directed towards women's programmes. While again, these acts are not revolutionary in themselves they point to the way women are creating a gradual shift in focus in the international realm.

### **Peace, militarism, and human rights**

States tend to be more democratic when they are not at war, militaristic or committing human rights abuses. There is evidence that states where women hold more political power are less likely to go to war, spend less on the military and are less likely to commit human rights abuses. Feminist scholars and politicians suggest that men and women hold different perspectives on peace and security, with women being more likely to promote interconnection (Tickner, 1992; Wallstrom, 2010).

Studies have found greater female representation in the legislature positively related to a longer lasting peace and reduced levels of conflict (Demeritt et al. 2014; Melander, 2005; Shair-Rosenfield and Wood, 2017), lower military spending (Koch and Fulton, 2011; Clayton and Zetterberg, 2018), and a more gender equal eventual peace deal (True and Riveros-Morales, 2019). Melander (2005) also finds that states with higher levels of women legislators are less likely to commit personal integrity human rights abuses such as political imprisonment and torture. This effect does not seem to translate to female executives, however (Koch and Fulton, 2011; Melander, 2005), and is moderated by which political party is in power and the gender balance within the legislature (Koch and Fulton; True and Riveros-Morales, 2019).

Evidence at the individual level also seems to support this. In interviews with members of the legislative assembly in Northern Ireland, Cowell-Meyers (2011) found that women, unlike men, expressed explicit interest in running for office to promote peace. Simms (2008) also gives an account of New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark steering the country away from nuclear weapons and the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

### **‘More women’ does not necessarily equal ‘more democracy’**

There are clear and important reasons why the descriptive representation of women is necessary for representative government, women’s political equality, accountability and the legitimacy of democratic governments (Celis and Childs, 2020 forthcoming). However, the presence of women does not necessarily indicate a more democratic context (Dahlerup, 2018; Lovenduski, 2019). In fact, some studies find more women in national parliaments in less democratic places (Stockemer, 2011). Many non-democracies have high numbers of women in the legislature – often through quota systems - but with very little power (Fallon et al., 2012). Indeed, efforts which seem to promote the inclusion of women such as quotas are often used to improve the appearance or bestow some kind of legitimacy to otherwise autocratic regimes (Bush, 2011; Tripp and Kang, 2008), or regimes seeking to appeal to foreign aid donors (Kang, 2015; Panday, 2008). Scholars suggest this has been the case in Pakistan under Musharraf (Bari, 2010; Dutoya, 2016), in Rwanda under Kagame (Bauer and Burnet, 2013; Burnet, 2011) and in Morocco (Sater, 2007). Further, some quotas are used to give a ‘fresh face’ to old parties and tactics particularly when they enable the party leaders or government to handpick or appoint the women who either act as proxies for men or otherwise are assumed to play by the same old rules (Baldez, 2006; Bari, 2010; Panday, 2013; Zetterberg, 2008).

The other side of the coin is that sometimes women’s ‘representation’ may seem to reduce with democratisation. The major example of this is in Central and Eastern Europe where, with the end of communism and the introduction of democracy, the number of women in parliament fell substantially (Fallon et al., 2012; Fuszara, 2010). In recent years the numbers of women in politics have started to increase in these states.



## Concluding comments

This chapter points to several ways in which women political leaders seem to be changing the status quo, shifting the focus of politics, increasing trust, and as such creating a more inclusive and responsive version of democracy. The research included here is rarely presented together in this way and there are numerous gaps that exist in the current understanding of this subject. This chapter shows strong findings that indicate a relationship between having more women in politics and less corruption, and that shows that women politicians prioritise constituency work. Beyond this, there is some evidence that women may be more inclusive and cooperative in their leadership style, and promote peace-making and cooperation at an international level. As ever, political context is important here in restraining or encouraging different leadership styles and the effectiveness of women as legislators, with women being more effective and more assertive as more women enter the political sphere. This chapter shows how having more women in politics alters, and improves, the quality of democracy.





### 3. Women political leaders and policy making

This chapter asks whether women political leaders legislate in a way which differs from men. Do women in politics have different political priorities and when do they manage to create legislation which addresses these priorities? It is worth noting that to a great extent the priorities of women and men in politics tends to overlap. This chapter focuses on the areas of difference.

It is important to remember that women's interests vary widely according to context and intersect with different racial, class and other identities. Smooth (2011) highlights this point, describing how in interviews with African American state legislators she found they described issues from criminal justice through child welfare as women's issues. Many of these issues were beyond the scope of the usual set of 'women's issues' analysed in research. The literature acknowledges the differences within and breadth of what might constitute women's interests and woman friendly policy, but the breadth and diversity of policy issues important to women must continue to be reviewed and reiterated (Angevine, 2017; Celis, 2008; Celis and Childs, 2012; Celis and Childs, 2020; Childs and Krook, 2009; Dahlerup, 2018; Htun and Weldon, 2010; ODI, 2015; Smooth, 2011).

Nonetheless, the literature shows some broad areas of consensus as to priority policies for women such as equality before the law and freedom from violence. Further, as women tend to both have responsibility for caring and tend to be poorer than men world-wide, issues that relate to the family or to alleviating poverty are also commonly cited as being women's interests. There are major policy areas which women tend to prioritise more than men, such as healthcare and education. There is substantial evidence in the literature that women in the legislature do prioritise different policy issues and advance them into legislation where possible, more than their male counterparts (Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Caroll, 2001; Celis, 2006; Chaney, 2006; Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Childs, 2001; Childs, 2002 on the UK; Childs, 2006a; Curtin, 2008; Dodson, 2001; Dodson, 2006; Dolan, 1997; Gerrity et al., 2007; Little et al., 2001; MacDonald and O'Brien, 2011; Maddison, 2007; Miguel, 2012; O'Regan, 2000; Reingold, 1992; Sater, 2007; Sawyer, 2012; Schwindt-Bayer, 2006; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Swers, 1998; Swers, 2002; Swers, 2005; Tamerius, 2010; Taylor-Robinson and Heath, 2003; Tremblay, 1998; Wängnerud, 2000; Wängnerud and Sundell, 2012).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first two look at policy areas where women and men might differ. The first explores how women political leaders prioritise areas typically considered 'women's interests'. The second looks at the way women in politics also tend to advocate better education, welfare and health as well as broader issues such as environmental concerns and peace. The final section highlights the conditions which might obstruct or facilitate women being able to legislate on these policy areas.

- Women in politics prioritise women’s interests, such as equal rights, reproductive rights and sexual health, families and childcare, and stopping violence against women.
- Women in politics also prioritise ‘care’ issues more than men such as education, welfare and healthcare.
- Particularly in e.g. India and Africa women politicians prioritise providing access to clean water and providing good quality sanitation.
- Women in politics also prioritise issues associated with care in the international sphere, such as international aid, and deprioritise military spending.
- Women in politics see representing women as part of their role and legislate more than men on women’s priority issues.
- Women in politics are more able to propose and pass women friendly legislation when there is a greater proportion of women in the legislature and when there is a women’s caucus or women’s parliamentary body.
- Women in politics seem to prioritise environmental concerns more than men.
- Women can be aided in promoting women friendly policy when there is a women’s policy agency or machinery.
- Parties from the political left tend favour women friendly policy, but the evidence suggests that leftist governments do not substantially increase women friendly policy making.
- Non-democratic, patriarchal, nationalist and communist political environments hamper women’s ability to promote women friendly policy.
- Women are better able to promote women friendly policy when they are in the cabinet.
- Women can push for legal improvements for women at moments of opportunity and change.
- More research is needed on how more gender equal political contexts improve women’s ability to promote their policy priorities.
- More research is needed on how race, ethnicity and class may interact and impact women’s policy priorities and their capacity to promote their policy preferences.

**Green:** the literature clearly points to this finding.

**Yellow:** the literature indicates this finding, but with less certainty (through less evidence/a number of studies finding otherwise).

**Red:** more research is needed on this point.

## A. Women’s interests

One of the main justifications for increasing the proportion of women in legislatures and government around the world is the belief that women are

more likely than men to advocate and legislate on matters of interest and importance to women.

Several studies give support to the idea that it is important to have women in politics because they are more likely to be active and legislate on women's issues than men. The literature finds women in politics represent women on three different measures. Scholars find women in politics believe they should represent women. Women in politics push for legislation on women's issues, and finally having more women representatives leads to more woman friendly policy on the ground.

First research shows that women legislators do (often) consider representing women as part of their role (Childs, 2001; Childs, 2002; Cowell-Meyers, 2003; Reingold, 1992; Smooth, 2011), although often women candidates and legislators might not point to women's issues as their priorities (Dolan, 2005).

Second, numerous studies point to the role of women legislators in promoting and pushing through legislation on women's rights and gender equality (Carroll, 2001; Chaney, 2006; Childs and Withey, 2004; Childs, 2006a; Dodson, 2001; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2014; Goetz, 2008; Lovenduski, 2003; MacDonald and O'Brien, 2011; Pearson, 2011; Reingold, 2000; Sawyer, 2012; Schwindt-Bayer, 2006; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Swers, 2002; Tamerius, 2010; Volden et al., 2018; Wängnerud, 2000).

Finally, cross-national research also suggests that greater numbers of women in power leads to more women friendly law. For example, Atchison and Down (2009) find that 'the proportion of cabinet portfolios held by women is positively associated with the total number of weeks of maternity and parental leave guaranteed by the state'. Caul (2008) found similar trends with women's descriptive representation seeming to influence 'both the rate of adoption and the scope of maternity and childcare leave'. Weldon (2002) also finds (although she emphasises that other factors are more important) that having more women in the legislature contributes to better legislation on the ground preventing violence against women.

The section below explores in more detail the policy areas which emerge frequently in the literature as being 'women's interests'.

## Equal rights

Women's rights and the idea that women and men should be equal before the law is an important tenet of much feminist campaigning, and is frequently cited in the literature as an important 'interest' to women (Bari, 2010; Childs, 2002; Edwards, 1991; Norris, 1996; Taylor-Robinson and Heath, 2003). This often includes policies addressing equal opportunities for employment and even targets for redressing gender inequality in income (Barrett, 1995; Buchanan and Annesley, 2007; Dolan, 1997; Fischer-Tahir, 2010; Holman, 2015). The priorities in this area vary according to the region and context.

Most pressing in the literature on Africa are issues surrounding property, land and inheritance. In many states, men have traditionally had sole control over marital property and land and a greater part of inheritance, and women's

movements have been fighting to bring about reforms (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013; Britton, 2005; Goetz, 2002; Tripp, 2001; Wang, 2013).

In India, Clots-Figueras (2011) mentions the Hindu Succession Act, which privileges male heirs, and the ways it has been circumvented and annulled in states with legislatures with higher proportions of women.

In the Middle East and North Africa, there are a number of areas where women are pushing for increased rights. Sater (2007) mentions how women parliamentarians in Morocco managed to push a reform which allowed Moroccan citizenship to be passed from mothers to their children (it had previously been only transferrable from fathers). In Palestine, Jamal (2001) points to the lack of reform – despite pressure from the women’s movement – of the personal status law which gives religious laws authority on subjects relating to marriage, divorce, child custody and property rights, and therefore often disadvantages women. Shahrokni (2009) has discussed how in Iran conservative and progressive women have come together, for example on blocking a law which would have facilitated polygamy.

In Japan, Gaunder (2012) mentions women trying to reform laws which oblige families to register under one surname as central to women’s equality campaigns.

## **Reproductive rights and women’s and sexual health**

The legality of abortion is often cited in the literature as a key signifier of women’s rights and interests (Berkman and O’Connor, 1993; Cowell-Meyers and Lanbein, 2009; Dolan, 1997; Eduards, 1991; Norris, 1996; Sawyer, 2012; Swers, 1998). This may be because much of the literature on women’s political representation is generated in the US where abortion is a highly prominent and contentious issue, with the divide in views fitting close to the feminist/anti-feminist divide. That being said, abortion is pointed to as an important issue elsewhere. For example, in Northern Ireland (Cowell-Meyers, 2001) and Indonesia (Rinaldo, 2008). Rinaldo (2008) discusses women political activists in Muslim women’s groups in Indonesia and describes divergences between groups in how they see the issue. One group advocate for legalising abortion (up to the 40th day of pregnancy) to prevent the dangers of illegal abortions. They use justifications from within Islam to support this view.

Like abortion, women’s health and sexual health more generally is also recognised as a concern for women. This may include provision for breast cancer, contraception and even VAT on sanitary products (Bari, 2010; Childs, 2002; Dolan, 1997; Swers, 1998; Swers, 2005). In general issues surrounding women’s health are less contentious than those surrounding abortion, however, sexual health and policy making around it can be particularly contentious because it is perceived to touch upon issues of morality.

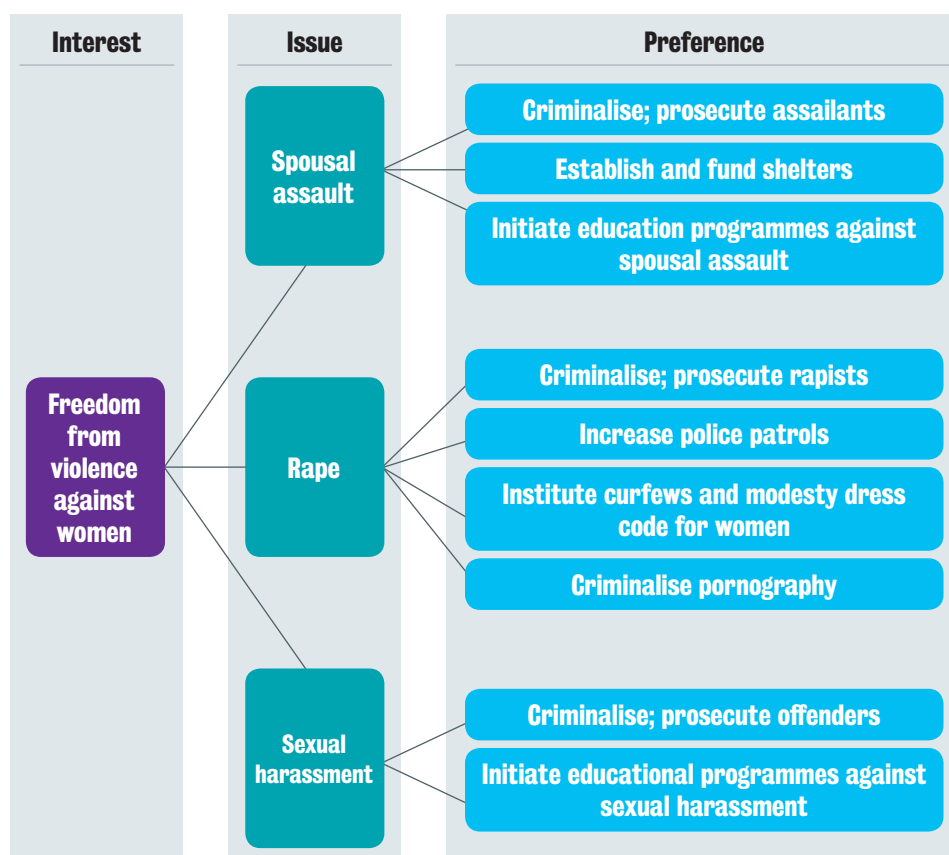
## **Violence against women**

Another urgent concern of women according to the literature is violence against women (Childs, 2002; Fischer-Tahir, 2010; Goetz, 1998; Holman,

2015; Htun and Weldon, 2012; Norris, 1996; Sater, 2007; Swers, 1998; Tripp, 2001; Wang 2013; Weldon, 2002b). Concerns about violence against women are global, if different in their emphasis. Domestic violence and sexual harassment are mentioned in the literature on the UK and US (Childs 2002, Holman, 2015). Fischer-Tahir (2010) and Bari (2010) cites violence against women - in particular honour killing - as serious issues for women in Iraq and Pakistan. Sater (2007) finds that female parliamentarians in Morocco agree that domestic violence and marital rape should be punishable by law, though (at the time of the research) they had not proposed any legislation on this.

Figure 2 shows a diagram from Beckwith (2014) that highlights how women’s shared interest in freedom from violence against women might lead to different policy preferences in different contexts. The literature considered in this report shows a much wider variety in issues related to this shared interest.

**Figure 2:** Women’s interest, issues, preferences in freedom from violence against women (Beckwith, 2014).



Women in Ghana introduced legislation on female genital mutilation and human trafficking (Bauer and Okpotor, 2013). In Senegal, Beck (2003) describes legislation banning female genital mutilation. Studies in Uganda highlight legislation against gendered violence, such as genital mutilation and domestic violence, as significant achievements for women in parliament (Goetz, 1998; Wang, 2013). Freedom from gendered violence appears to be important as a women’s interest globally, and stands out as such in the literature, even if the priority issues differ by region.



## Families and childcare

One of the most cited areas of women-friendly policy concerns family, childcare and parental leave (Atchison and Down, 2009; Atchison, 2015; Bratton and Ray, 2002; Buchanan and Annesley, 2007; Carroll, 2001; Caul, 2008; Childs, 2002; Cowell-Meyers, 2001; Cowell-Meyers and Lanbein, 2009; Dolan, 1997; Gaunder 2012; Little et al., 2001; Lovenduski et al., 2002; Swers, 1998; Swers, 2005; Wängnerud and Sundell, 2012). Studies may specifically cite childcare provision by the state, parental leave, flexible work, enforcement of child support payments, and other benefits to help families look after children. These issues tend to be a priority in Western states, particularly in Europe, however e.g. Wang (2013) looking at Uganda, points to the removal of school fees and the extension of maternity leave as major achievements for women legislators. Nordic countries are highlighted as countries that have best addressed this interest through models of equality of employment (Buchanan and Annesley, 2007; Lovenduski, Campbell and Sampson-Jacent, 2002).

## Concluding comments

The literature points to policy areas that tend to be considered ‘women’s interests’, because they primarily impact women. This section has shown that while there is much consensus around the kinds of areas considered, there are also important regional variations. These regional variations are not explicit, but when the research is taken together patterns do seem to emerge. Violence against women and equal rights are two areas which are considered women’s interests around the world, although there are important variations in the particular issues pointed to in different areas. While at the level of this report much of the nuance is lost, certain broad trends are visible. In terms of violence against women, female genital mutilation is more of an issue priority in Africa, while honour killings are more important issues in the Middle East and South Asia. Equality in property rights is a continuing battle for women in Africa, while in Europe and North Africa the focus is more on income equality. Similarly access to abortion is prioritised in particular as a feminist issue in North America, while parental leave and childcare seems to be a priority issue in Western Europe. To better conceptualise these regional variations, it might be worth using Beckwith’s (2014) distinction between women’s ‘interests’, women’s policy ‘issues’ and ‘preferences’. Thus while women may agree that ‘freedom from violence’ is an important ‘interest’, the particular priority issues and preferences might vary between countries, regions and actors. When considering women’s representation at a global level, women’s interests may be global, but the specific issues of concern and policy preferences will change according to context.

While it is important to remember this regional variation, this section points to a broad consensus in the literature that women in politics do act for women.

## B. Women and care policy

Beyond women’s interests there are broad policy areas which women legislators prioritise. These areas may be seen to reflect women’s greater ‘ethics of care’ (Mackay, 2001). This section points to how women in politics work to benefit

not just women, but all society, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable: children, the poor and the sick.

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[T]he impact of women in legislature is not limited to family or services provision, perhaps female legislators are more interested in the “social project” as a whole than in “women’s interests” more narrowly defined’ (Bolzendahl, 2011)

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Several studies point to women legislators being more ‘left-leaning’ than men on issues such as healthcare, welfare and social spending (Dabelko and Herrnson, 1997; Heidbreder and Scheurer, 2013; Little et al., 2001; Poggione, 2004). A number of studies find that increases in the number of women in the legislature or having a female mayor correlates with higher social spending (Braendle and Colombier, 2016; Bolzendahl, 2009; Bolzendahl, 2011; Chen, 2013; Clayton and Zetterberg, 2018; Courtemanche and Green, 2017; Enns-Jedenastik, 2017; Funk and Philips, 2019; Holman, 2013; Park, 2014). Other studies do not find having a female mayor makes a difference (Ferreira and Gyourko, 2014).

This section highlights some of the policy areas specifically mentioned as priorities for women in politics, which cannot be considered solely as ‘women’s interests’, but instead seem to prioritise the wellbeing of society as a whole.

## Education

Education is cited as an important issue for women in studies worldwide (Bari, 2010; Barrett, 1995; Britton, 2005; Clots-Figueras, 2011; Clots-Figueras, 2012; Cowell-Meyers, 2001; Dolan, 1997; Fischer-Tahir, 2010; Hazarika, 2008; Holman, 2015; Norris and Lovenduski, 1989; Swers, 2005;). It might be particularly important because of the gender gap in education (Dolan, 1997; Clots-Figueras, 2012) or because women tend to be primarily responsible in caring for children and as such schools and education is a particular concern to them.

There is some interesting nuance in terms of how and whether women prioritise education in India. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) show that men at the local level prioritise education more than women (who instead prioritise access to clean water). Clots-Figueras (2011, 2012) finds that women legislators tend to bring improvements education in urban but not rural areas, and that there are differences between the level of education prioritised by ‘ordinary’ women legislators compared to those from the scheduled castes and tribes. These variations point to the importance of context and intersections of identity.

## Welfare and social services

Many studies find that women legislators are more interested in or more likely to prioritise or legislate on social services and welfare provision than men (Bolzendahl, 2011; Chen, 2013; Cowell-Meyers, 2001; Cowell-Meyers and Lanbein, 2009; Holman, 2015; Little et al., 2001; Norris, 1996). The reasons

women may prioritise welfare and social services more than men might be because women tend to be both poorer on average than men – and thus perhaps more likely to be reliant upon welfare and benefits, tend to do more caring, and they also tend to make up a larger proportion of those working in welfare and social services.

## Healthcare

Women legislative leaders are more likely than men to prioritise healthcare (Barrett, 1995; Braendle and Colombier, 2016; Britton, 2005; Carroll, 2001; Clayton and Zetterberg, 2018; Clots-Figueras, 2011; Courtemanche and Green, 2017; Cowell-Meyers, 2001; Cowell-Meyers, 2003; Cowell-Meyers and Lanbein, 2009; Dolan, 1997; Fischer-Tahir, 2010; Little et al., 2001; Norris and Lovenduski, 1989; Swers, 1998; Swers, 2005). Again, women may prioritise this area because women are more likely to have more experience of care, be likely to work in care, or have greater responsibility for the health and welfare of their dependents.

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*'[I]n the absence of women in the legislature, vulnerable populations would be more at risk. When women are elected in significant numbers and the need is great, higher amounts of money are spent on vulnerable children, disabled adults and elders.'* Courtemanche and Green, 2017

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Two studies point to how effective women legislators have been in this area in terms of outputs. Ng and Muntaner (2018) find that an increased level of women's leadership is linked to lower mortality rates in the Canadian provinces. In a study of developing countries, Swiss et al. (2012) find that increased female representation leads to improvements in child health in terms of higher levels of immunisations, and reduced levels of infant and child deaths.

## Clean water and sanitation

Clean water and sanitation does not appear in the dominant American and European literature as a women's interest but is mentioned in the literature in studies on women in India (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Gala, 1997; Hazarika, 2008; Jain, 1996; Lee, 2018) and South Africa (Britton, 2005). Clean drinking water is a concern to everyone, but access to clean water is particularly important for women in India, where women tend to have the responsibility for fetching water and for caring for the sick. Research in India suggests that women candidates are more likely than men to promote high quality latrines, possibly because women are more aware of the need for good sanitation for people's health (Lee, 2018).

## Environment

Some scholars suggest that the environment is an issue area which women are more likely to prioritise (Little et al., 2001; Norgaard and York, 2005; Schreurs, 2001). This may be because they suffer disproportionately from

environmental problems (Norgaard and York, 2005). Or else it may be due to women having an 'ethic of care' which extends to the world around them.

## **International priorities**

As discussed in the previous chapter, there is also evidence that states with more women legislators are likely to spend less on the military (Clayton and Zetterberg, 2018; Koch and Fulton, 2011) and be more peaceful and less likely to commit human rights abuses (Melander, 2005; Shair-Rosenfield and Wood, 2017).

Further, Lu and Breuning (2014) and Hicks et al. (2015) find that countries with greater levels of female political representation are also more generous in their donations to international development aid and at responding to international crises. This points to a broader understanding perhaps of the 'ethics of care' extending beyond national frontiers.

## **Concluding comments**

This section highlights priority areas for women legislators that extend beyond 'women's interests' to society more broadly. Explanations for this point to both women's greater experience of deprivation and inequality and the role played by women in caring for others. Whatever the explanation, these studies show that women legislators tend to impact policy in a way that extends far beyond the areas usually designated as women's interests and that women in politics will likely prioritise better care for society as a whole.

## **C. Constraints and supports for promoting women's policy priorities**

This section focuses on the factors which can enable or inhibit law making on women's policy priorities. This final section returns to some of the obstacles detailed in the first chapter in showing the extent to which political context determines outcomes, but also touches upon debates around critical mass and critical actors. It again emphasises the importance of women's organisations and women's spaces for women legislators. For simplicity, in this section the term 'women friendly' is used for women's policy priorities as such as those described in the two sections above, but the examples used in the literature on the whole relate more to the 'women's interests' section rather than the broader policies on care.

### **Critical mass or critical actors**

A major point of debate within the academic literature is whether a 'critical mass' of women are needed in a legislature to push through women friendly legislation, or whether a few key (women) legislators and activists can do it. The idea of critical mass is anchored in work by Rosabeth Kanter (1977) which suggests that when women only have a 'token' presence they are unable to change the culture of the group, and are undermined by their 'token' status.

But when they make up a larger proportion of the group – a ‘critical mass’ – their power increases and they become more able to make changes or act as a group. Some studies which look at deliberative groups suggest that the proportion of women in a group can impact upon the amount women speak and the way they are treated (Funk and Taylor-Robinson, 2014; Funk et al., 2017; Kathlene, 1995; Karpowitz et al., 2015; Mendelberg et al., 2014). This suggests that the proportion is important in terms of how effective women can be, and that their impact would increase even more as the proportion of women crosses a threshold.

Other scholars suggest that having a few key activists – ‘critical actors’ – can be as or more effective at making change than having the correct proportions of women. This debate often centres around the ability of women representatives to bring about the substantive representation of women. Childs and Krook (2009) explain that there are several ways in which having more women in masculinized contexts could be less effective – due to backlash, or more diverse women being unable to form groups. Even when women might want to act for women, they might find themselves in political institutions where this is not possible without significant costs. As such, studies should not assume critical mass is the answer to women’s underrepresentation.

A number of studies serve to bolster the idea that increasing the proportion of women is important for the substantive representation of women, even if they do not explicitly support the idea of critical mass (Barnes and Jones, 2011; Berkman and O’Connor, 1993; Braendle and Colombier, 2016; Bratton and Ray, 2002; Caiazza, 2004; Caul, 2008; Clayton and Zetterberg, 2018; Courtemanche and Green 2017; Cowell-Meyers and Lanbein, 2009; Gaunder, 2012; MacDonald and O’Brien, 2011; Mateo Diaz, 2005; Park, 2017; Schwindt-Bayer, 2005; Svaleryd, 2009; Swiss et al., 2012; Wängnerud and Sundell, 2012; Weldon, 2002a).

Other studies do not find a link between the proportion of women and substantive representation (Celis, 2006; Htun and Weldon, 2012), or are wary of the idea even though they acknowledge that a more gender diverse parliament is better for women (Bratton, 2005; Weldon, 2002b). Curtin (2008) suggests that a greater number of women is ‘a necessary but not sufficient condition to achieve women-friendly outcomes’. She suggests other factors (as will be discussed below) are also important.

A number of studies point to the importance of critical actors (Annesley, 2010; Curtin, 2008; Grey, 2006; Lovenduski and Guadagnini, 2010; Piscopo, 2014). Childs and Withey (2006) point to the importance of MP Christine McCafferty in changing government policy, in the case of VAT on sanitary products. Crowley’s (2004) findings suggest that ‘token’ numbers of women were effective – perhaps even more effective – than larger groups in her study on child support in the US. Piscopo (2014) traces sexual health reform in Argentina and points to the importance of individual female actors in creating the networks and coalitions (both within parliament and in outside institutions to ensure its implementation) and their mobilisation of resources to push the legislation through. She suggests that substantive representation occurs when individual actors have the commitment to do so.



Some studies suggest that both the proportion of women and the actions of critical actors are important in legislating and implementing policy for women (Bratton and Ray, 2002; Chaney, 2011; Sawer, 2012).

## Feminism

Some studies suggest that the extent to which women political leaders act on behalf of women depends on the extent to which they subscribe to feminist ideas around the need for greater representation of women, and their attitudes towards feminist and women's issues (Barnes and Jones, 2011; Dodson, 2001).

There is some debate as to whether being feminist (regardless of gender) is more important than being a woman in terms of acting for women in the legislature. While Dodson (2001) finds feminist women are the most effective in acting for women, she finds that both non-feminist women and feminist men also may often pursue women friendly legislation, but usually in different areas from each other. Tremblay and Pelletier (2000) find in their study of the Canadian parliament that feminism (or political party but not gender) is usually the most significant predictor of what a legislator's opinion will be about liberal and gender related issues.

There are cases, however, when being feminist can in fact be counterproductive for women friendly policy making. For example, in South Africa, Britton (2005) describes how a new generation of feminist legislators focussed their energy on feminist issues such as abortion and pornography, when women's most pressing needs were access to clean water, land ownership, healthcare, education and employment.

Other studies point to the importance of a feminist or women's movement outside of parliament in advocating for women friendly legislation (Bauer, 2012; Costain and Majstorovic, 1994; Dodson, 2006; Hassim, 2003; Htun and Weldon, 2012; Lovenduski and Guadagnini, 2010; Tripp, 2001; Weldon, 2002a; Weldon, 2002b). Dodson (2006) shows the importance of a women's movement in holding legislators to account and framing the debate in public opinion on matters of substantive representation and working with female legislators. Htun and Weldon (2012) find that the most important factor in pushing for the adoption of policies on violence against women is having an autonomous feminist movement. They suggest this is the case because a feminist movement works to increase awareness and motivation among legislators and the general public. Further, unlike legislators, it can maintain momentum on issues because it does not need to appeal to voters, maintain consensus with other party members or dilute their message in other ways.

Further, a number of studies highlight the importance of public opinion supporting liberal or feminist positions as encouraging and pushing for the greater adoption of women friendly policy (Costain and Majstorovic, 1994; Cowell-Meyers and Lanbein, 2009).

Substantive representation is best brought about when feminists and women work together across divides and in different parts of governments. This is something that has been highlighted by Annesley (2010) in the context of New Labour's welfare reform and by Eduards (1991) regarding legislation in

Sweden. Often it is not the fact that legislators or leaders are feminist, or the presence of a feminist movement, but these working together which makes the difference.

### **Women's political institutions: Caucuses, parliamentary groups, ministries and women's machinery**

Besides women's movements and individual actors, many states, parliaments and parties have institutions designed to aid women's influence in policy making and implementation. While these institutions range from parliamentary groups or caucuses to full ministries dedicated to women and gender equality. The presence of these more 'official' institutions has been connected with greater substantive representation of women (Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008b; Bauer, 2012; Johnson and Joseffson, 2016; Rodriguez, 2003; Sawyer, 2012).

Some studies suggest that while a caucus or parliamentary group can be very effective at increasing substantive representation, it is most productive when it works together with the women's movement (Bauer, 2012 on Africa; Palmieri, 2013; Weldon, 2002; Weldon, 2002b)

Several within-party women's organisations are mentioned in the literature and they give us an insight into how they tend to work. Childs and Allen (2019) find that in the UK the women's organisation within the Labour Party (WPLP) maintains a focus on women's issues and interacts with party leadership. Curtin (2008) looks in particular at the New Zealand Labour Women's Council and suggests this is where policies are often made and then adopted by the party but also that women political leaders can use this organisation to gain experience and to trial policies.

Cross-party women's groups are seen to be more effective at promoting women friendly policy making, as they allow a 'safe space' for women to connect with other women across party lines on issues of mutual interest (Dodson, 2006; Fuszara, 2010). Wang (2013) points to the women's caucus in Uganda as crucial to ensuring the increase in pro-women legislation since 2006. It is a cross-party organisation and all women (and men) can join. It worked together with civil society organisation and the women's movement to pinpoint areas for action. Sawyer (2012) suggests that women's cross-party parliamentary groups were crucial in the passage of a bill allowing an abortion pill in Australia.

Policy agencies and women's ministries and machineries have the potential to act as important institutions for advocating and implementing women friendly legislation. However, they are often seen to be an 'ineffective symbol' unless they are provided with sufficient resources, have public support and unless they work with women's movements (McBride and Mazur, 2010; Rai, 2003). There are cases of them having helped with policies, for example on violence against women but they 'add to, rather than replace' the work of other organisations and actors in promoting women friendly policies (Htun and Weldon, 2012).

Other frameworks for ensuring the political representation of women in their diversity are suggested by other authors, such as Celis and Childs (forthcoming 2020) based around three feminist principles of inclusiveness, egalitarianism and responsiveness.

## Party and ideology

Political parties often have clear policy preferences on issues relating to women. More 'left-wing' parties – at least in Western democracies - tend to be more in favour of women friendly policies.

Many studies on the US show that Democrats on the whole are more feminist than Republicans (Caiazza, 2004; Carroll, 1984; Dolan, 1997; Wolbrecht, 2000; Swers, 1998). There are similar findings elsewhere. Tremblay and Pelletier (2000) suggests that party is a major predictor of attitudes towards liberal and gender issues in Canada. Childs (2002) suggests that in the UK it was Labour MPs in particular who were bringing women's issues back onto the agenda. Htun and Power (2008) find that in the Brazilian congress leftist parties seem to have a clear and coherent set of views on women's issues.

However, the academic literature does not find that when leftist parties are in government there is a considerable increase in pro-women legislation. Indeed, neither Atchison (2015) nor Htun and Weldon (2012) find that having a left-wing government is a significant contributor to female-friendly policy making. Caul (2008) did not find it to be of great importance in a study of maternity and childcare leave.

The literature suggests that political party probably plays a moderating influence on attitudes towards women friendly policy, with women overall being more likely than men to hold liberal or pro-equality views, but the main parameters of those views are likely to fall in line with party positions. Tremblay (1993) and Erickson (1997) both suggest that this is the case in their studies of political candidates in Canada.

It must be emphasised however, that acting 'for women' is not the preserve of the political left; see e.g. Gray (2003) on Chile and Webb and Childs (2012) on the UK conservative party. Och's (2019) study of the debates on parental leave and the gender makeup of corporate boards in the German Bundestag shows that feminist arguments are used even by members of conservative parties in these debates. Childs (2003) explains how women from the political 'right' may act 'for women', however they may not be feminist and party ideology will also intervene, moderating their views. Thus, for example, on childcare, if a woman MP thinks that state should be minimalist (party ideology) and women should bear and raise children (gender view) then she is unlikely to support more state childcare. However, they may be willing to support measures preventing domestic violence or promoting women's health.

O'Brien (2018) in cross-national analysis finds that Christian democrats and leftist parties both mention women a lot in their policy statements, but that Christian democrats do so more in terms of women in traditional roles. In Muslim societies, religious-political organisations also sometimes enable the promotion of 'pro-women' policy. The research shows that in addition to the more usual leftist and progressive feminist groups that exist in Muslim societies, there is also a trend of women expressing their concerns over women's rights within the framework of Islam (Ben Shitrit, 2016; Hoodfar, 1999; Moghadam, 2013; Sater, 2007). Muslim feminists propose alternative gender-relations based on Islamic texts and suggest that current Islamic ideas are not a correct reading of the text. In this way they aim to use an emancipatory Islam to gain increased

rights (Hoodfar, 1999; Moghadam, 2013). Interestingly, Meyersson (2014) compares Turkish provinces where the Islamic Refeh party narrowly won, with those where it narrowly lost. He finds that in the regions governed by the Refeh party, the rates of female secular secondary education increased which in the long run led to a decrease in adolescent marriages and higher female political participation. Tajali (2017) in an ethnography of women in Islamic parties in Turkey and Iran showed how women in these parties have challenged the discriminatory attitudes and behaviours of the male leaders of these parties and pushed for greater inclusion of women.

As such, taken together, political ideology does not seem to be as important a factor in enabling or preventing women's substantive representation as might be presumed.

## Political context

The extent to which women political leaders can bring about change and represent women depends on the political context. On the one hand, there may not be the political will for women friendly legislation because of the dominant culture, or else women politicians may be hampered in their efforts because of the masculine style of an institution (Chappell, 2006; Franceschet, 2011; Walsh, 2012). There are cases too where women friendly contexts are emerging which facilitate women friendly policy making.

In Africa, some of the states lauded for their high levels of women in the legislature have political contexts that restrict these women making a policy impact (Bauer, 2012). Rwanda is often pointed to for being the first state to have more women than men in the legislature. However, Burnet (2008) and Debusscher and Ansoms (2013) point out that as the number of women has increased, the state has become less democratic. This has restricted their ability to implement changes or influence policy. In Uganda, political parties have little power and the way that patronage systems extend throughout the political system means that women are largely powerless (Goetz, 2002; Tamale, 2000). Goetz (2002) describes how the president simply deleted from the final legislation a hard-won amendment that women had lobbied to introduce allowing wives to co-own marital property with their husbands. However, Wang's (2013) account points to how Uganda may have changed more recently.

In communist states, such as communist Romania and China, there are often women in senior political positions, but they rarely hold power. Additionally, because of the view that equality already exists, plus the view that feminism is 'bourgeois' women were (and are) seldom able to pursue or promote women-friendly policies (Baluta and Rothstein, 2015; Zheng, 2005).

The promotion of women friendly policy can be difficult in certain aggressively nationalist contexts because it is seen as detracting from the national cause, which is prioritised above all else. Ben Shitrit (2016) emphasises this in her study of religious and nationalist movements in Israel and Palestine, as does Yishai (1996) in her study of women in politics in Israel.

In Kuwait, the struggle for women's suffrage shows how democratic reform, women's rights and a patriarchal society can conflict and highlights the difficulties faced in some parts of the world. Wills (2013) describes how the Kuwaiti national assembly rejected a decree made by the emir giving women the right to vote. They did this not solely because of anti-women attitudes, but because the assembly were incensed by the Emir's attempt to rule by decree. Interestingly, a group within the assembly created an identical bill but it was narrowly rejected. Thus two different 'ideas' of democracy came into conflict – greater participation vs. parliamentary power.

Often patriarchal culture obstructs women friendly legislation and policy from progressing, such as the case in Kuwait above. In patriarchal cultures women legislators are often ignored, sidelined, patronised and even sexually harassed making their work more difficult. Tamale (2000) in interviews with Ugandan women politicians even heard stories of them having their crotch and breasts grabbed by male colleagues. Even when legislation has been passed, masculine institutions can prevent their implementation. For example, Goetz (1998) describes the magistrates and police failing to implement new legislation on violence against women in South Africa.

Masculine and male dominated political institutions exist even in much more 'liberal' cultural contexts and these can prevent women from entering politics, and obstruct their ability to work while they are there. Scholars have pointed to the US Congress (Dodson, 2006) and the UK Parliament (Childs, 2016) as well as Latin American legislatures (Schwindt-Bayer, 2010) as gendered institutions.

Palmieri (2018) emphasises the importance of having a gender sensitive parliament for greater representation of women. Studies seem to highlight how a female-friendly political institution can facilitate the substantive representation of women. Cohen Bell and Rosenthal (2003) suggest that having female congressional staff might lead to greater substantive representation of women. Mackay (2010) suggests that the more egalitarian set-up of the new devolved Scottish parliament accounts for the more holistic approach being taken towards violence against women in Scotland compared to England. More research is needed into this area.

The substantive representation of women is often helped by the international community. Often pressure from the international community at key moments, or in tandem with aid provision, has helped to accelerate legislative reform (Guadagnini, 2007; Htun and Weldon, 2012; Wang, 2013).

## **Position of women politicians**

The position of women politicians is an important factor when considering whether they can deliver women friendly policy. Members of the cabinet are likely to be more able to influence policy than a newly elected or appointed 'quota woman'.

Local government is sometimes considered to be a good place for pro-women policymaking, because the issues decided on here are 'closer to home' and can be felt more immediately in the vicinity (Beall, 2005). Smith (2014) finds



that women in executive roles at the city level do seem to introduce more women friendly policy, but again it depends greatly on the context and their levels of power. In India, where quotas have been introduced in councils at the village and district level, women have introduced a number of changes, from emphasising the importance of education for girls, to reducing child marriage and introducing measures to combat addiction (Jayal, 2006; Nanivadeker, 2006).

However, prejudices can be strongly held at the local level and there is often less scrutiny over informal practices (Beall, 2005). Further, the fact that local governments are dealing with a relatively easily shifting population – where people and businesses can come and go – often discourages redistributionist policies in favour of economic development. This is because of the way local government is funded in most places by local taxes. Often local governments need to work with businesses and the private sector to get money and sponsorship which ends up meaning they prioritise them. This often means local government is a difficult arena for promoting women friendly policy (Holman, 2015).

While it might be assumed that when women have more power they are more likely to act for women, this is not always the case. There is a marked difference in the literature between how women act in cabinet and as the executive leaders.

Most studies agree that a greater number and proportion of women in the cabinet is likely to lead to more woman friendly policymaking (Atchison and Down, 2009; Atchison, 2015; Bauer and Okpotor, 2013; Curtin, 2008).

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‘[I]n the case of women in cabinet, descriptive representation is translated to action by position. Because they are members of the executive and policy initiators, female ministers are uniquely positioned to pursue female-friendly policy agendas through cabinet discussion and coordination of policy initiatives with parliament and party leadership.’ (Atchison, 2015)

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However, most studies do not find that when women are in the executive they seek to represent women or actively advocate for more women friendly policy (Adler, 1996; Bauer, 2011; Caiazza, 2004; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2014; Mun, 2015). This might be because women have had to become masculinised in order to reach those positions, or it might be that once they are in charge they want to be seen to be acting for the nation as a whole rather than just advocating for women. It seems the particular contexts in which they come to power may have an effect. Curtin’s 2008 study of New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark is enlightening. Curtin finds that Clark did introduce women friendly policies – including paid parental leave, after school care and pension reforms - but did not label them as such. Curtin suggests this is because she was facing some backlash from the media for being part of a ‘feminist mafia’ so was keen not to reinforce that image.

Women in the legislature may be less effective at promoting women friendly policy when they are new and inexperienced (Gauder, 2012; Cowley and Childs, 2003). This is one of the worries associated with the introduction of quotas. In certain jurisdictions, women introduced to parliament through

a quota have been denigrated as elite or unqualified or simply lack power because of being new and in the minority (Bauer, 2012; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Gray, 2003). In Pakistan the women in the reserved seats suggested they were seen to have 'charity' seats and lacked the power and authority of other members (Khan and Naqvi, 2018). This has made it difficult for them to push legislation through. The majority of studies show that 'quota women' are making positive contributions for women through, for example, drafting private members bills, attending many sessions (more regularly than male MPs), and making interventions on women's issues (Bari 2010; Khan and Naqvi, 2018; Murray, 2010; Xydias, 2007/8). The literature seems to indicate that the introduction of women through quotas has been leading to incremental changes to the agenda and by bringing in women's perspectives, even though they have not meant major 'overnight' policy shifts (Bari, 2010; Caul Kittilson, 2005; Franceschet and Piscopo, 2008). One piece of research, however, suggests that 'quota shocks' do occur, where the introduction of an effective gender quota leads to a rapid rise in government spending on health (Clayton and Zetterberg, 2018).

Finally, the power and influence of women legislators will be affected by the size of their party and whether it is in power. For example, Mateo Diaz (2005) suggests that the position of a party determines how the members in parliament can act. Smaller parties might be easier to influence but might seek unanimity on certain issues, while larger parties might be more open to a spectrum of opinions.

## **Race, ethnicity and class**

Women politicians come from different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds, which interact with their position as 'women' to influence the ways in which they represent other women. As mentioned in Chapter One, often non-majority racial, ethnic, religious identities and or having a working-class background can present additional difficulties in accessing political power. However, there are many further ways in which race, ethnicity and class can impact women's substantive representation.

Research in the US highlights the ways in which race interacts with gender. In her seminal work, Hawkesworth (2003) describes the processes and effects of racing-gendering on black female members of congress. She gives accounts of black congresswomen being ignored, silenced or looked over in committee meetings, or not being able to access key white male decision makers, or being mistaken for one another by congressmen. She suggests this racing-gendering hampers these women's ability to substantively represent.

In terms of law making, the research points to a number of interesting ways that identity and policy preferences interact. An important starting point is Smooth's (2011) finding that the black female legislators she spoke to defined women's interests in broad terms, seeing issues from childcare through to criminal justice as having direct and indirect impacts on women's lives. This important issue is addressed by Minta (2012) who points to the importance of an intersectional approach when looking at lobbying, caucuses and law-making as it shows what is being missed. He suggests that organisations designed to promote the interests of women and/or minorities tend to focus on issues which

address the 'core' of their groups and are relatively less controversial, the interests of minority women may fall through the gaps. He gives the example of groups aiming to bring women together tending to focus on less 'controversial' issue areas such as ending domestic violence and sexual abuse, rather than areas where there are party divides such as on abortion and welfare. Welfare impacts minority women the most but often gets left aside. Equally when women's groups and minority groups work together, they may find issues of mutual interest in, say, affirmative action which benefits minority men and middle-class women. While it must be acknowledged that these groups working together is important for promoting both of their interests (Minta and Brown, 2014), again issues such as welfare which directly which impacts minority women the most are often overlooked. Taking an intersectional approach is crucial to understanding where and how interests and needs of minority and underrepresented groups of women are being overlooked.

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'Through tactics such as silencing, stereotyping, enforced invisibility, exclusion, marginalization, challenges to epistemic authority, refusals to hear, legislative topic extinctions, and pendejo games, Congresswomen of color are constituted as "other." In committee operations, floor debates, and interpersonal interactions, they are treated as less than equals in various ways that carry palpable consequences for their identities and policy priorities.' (Hawkesworth, 2003)

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Studies have found black female legislators tend to have – relative to other groups – a clear and cohesive set of policy preferences (Orey et al., 2006). These policy preferences respond to both 'women's interests' and 'black interests' (Bratton et al., 2006). The overlapping identities of black women legislators means they can often gain support for their proposed legislation beyond their immediate groups and as such they are able to introduce legislation and get it passed at a level not dissimilar from more traditionally privileged groups such as white men (Orey et al., 2006).

Clots-Figueras (2011) in her study of the impact of female legislators on policy outcomes in India explores the contrasting positions between women legislators and those in the seats reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. She suggests that the 'ordinary' women legislators are more likely to be from a high caste and as such are less likely to want to change policy which might hurt them as a class, while the women from the scheduled castes and tribes have a double interest as women and as being from the lower rungs of society, in increasing welfare provision to the poor. As such class and gender can interact to either reinforce policy preferences or counteract each other.

These effects are important. They show how class and race can impact both policy priorities and the effectiveness of legislators. Intersectional approaches are most developed in the US and are emerging elsewhere, however more research is needed in this field and intersectionality needs to be made more central to research on women political leaders.

## **Moments of opportunity: statebuilding and peacemaking**

The moments when constitutions are created, or settlements are drawn up, are key opportunities for women to push for gender equality to be included in the legislation. Feminists are able to make serious gains during these moments, particularly if they work together and when they have played a role in the 'struggle' or 'movement' leading to the moment (Waylen, 2006a; Waylen, 2006b). However, nationalist movements have served to exclude or deprioritise women, even in the settlement, because issues relating to gender are seen as a distraction from the 'cause' or other identity and potentially divisive between different 'sections' within a movement (Jamal, 2001; Rebouché and Fearon, 2005).

## **D. Concluding comments**

This final chapter has shown the impact women political leaders have in terms of their policy making. There is overwhelming evidence that women do represent women's interests. This finding serves to confirm and emphasise the importance of having women in politics as they do represent women and women's interests more than men.

However, as this chapter has shown, women in politics differ from men not only in prioritising issues that are typically considered 'women's interests' such as reproductive rights and maternity leave, but they also prioritise government spending on care, in terms of education, welfare, healthcare, clean water and even the environment and peace. Thus, studies show that women political leaders promote policies which benefit men and women, but particularly the most vulnerable in society.

There are, of course, contextual factors that can hamper women in this task but equally there are structures which can aid them. Women are best able to promote women friendly policy when there are more women in power, when they have more power, and when they work together. The most enabling contexts are when women work together across institutional boundaries, whether in cross party caucuses, and/or when women legislators work together with the women's movement.

# Conclusion

This report has synthesised and drawn out the themes from hundreds of pieces of research on women political leaders' careers and the impact they have on politics. It shows that there are still many difficulties that women in politics have to face, but they are having a substantial effect on policy and are slowly reshaping the way politics is done.

Feminist and women's movements are key in advocating for greater female representation, changing social attitudes and supporting women as they enter politics. This report has shown that feminism is often the motivating force for women, and can also be a source of ongoing support. Women's organisations have also played an important role in pushing for the feminisation of society and the introduction of quotas or positive discrimination measures. Further they may offer training, resources and support networks to women candidates and politicians.

However, it is important that the male-dominated institutions of politics, in particular the parliaments and the parties take steps to ensure they do what they can to accommodate and actively promote the inclusion of women. This may mean introducing recruitment campaigns, or setting up women's caucuses, but in many places - where institutions may have been slow to change - quotas can be a helpful tool in fast-tracking the inclusion of women.

This report highlights the important impact that women can have in politics. It shows that having more women legislators will improve democracies by not only creating a greater responsiveness to policies which are important to women, but also by prioritising constituency work, using inclusive practices and refocusing politics towards issues that matter more for people's day to day lives.



# Appendix

## Search locations

### Online

Jstor  
Google scholar  
University of London Library

### Institutional websites

The Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford  
Equality and Human Rights Commission  
European Institute for Gender Equality  
The Fawcett Society  
The Gender and Development Network  
Harvard's Women and Public Policy programme  
Inter-Parliamentary Union  
UN Women  
Women Deliver's policy briefings  
Woman Kind  
Women Political Leaders  
WomenStats.org

## Search terms and filters

**Research Question 1: What does the literature reveal about why women enter politics, and the factors that help them to stay there and progress?**

(Gender OR women OR female OR sex) AND (Politician OR "political party" OR parliament OR congress OR senate OR "local government" OR "grassroots activism" OR legislature) AND (support OR progress OR career OR promote OR sustain OR leadership)

**Research Question 2: What does the literature reveal about the impact of women in politics on the quality of democracy and the legislative environment?**

(Gender OR women OR female) AND (politic\* OR parliament OR "local government" OR "grassroots activism" OR legislature) AND (corruption OR "quality of democracy" OR "descriptive representation" OR independent\* OR transparen\* OR efficacy)

**Research Question 3: What does the literature reveal about the impact of women in politics on pro-equality or women friendly policy making?**

(Gender OR women OR female) AND (Politician OR parliament OR congress OR "local government" OR "grassroots activism" OR legislature) AND

(“substantive representation” OR “equality” OR “women’s rights” OR policy OR “women friendly”)

### **Filters**

1990-2020

Not including patents or citations

Only in English

Searches ended at 100 pages, or after 250 items with nothing new or relevant to add.

### **Publications**

**Exclude:** Dissertations, blogs, magazine articles

**Include:** Books, academic journal articles and research outputs from Non-Governmental Organisations and Think Tanks.

### **Research type**

**Exclude:** Secondary research

**Include:** Quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research

### **Subject matter**

**Exclude:** Purely theoretical research, where focus is not on research question.

Excluding historical works on pre 1950s

Where the relevance is unclear.

**Include:** where focus is on research question.

### **Quality criteria**

**Exclude:** Research of poor quality with only tenuous connections to the research question.

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