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News Release

Women MPs: Some progress but prominent figures quitting

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According to the IPU's latest [Women in Parliament 2023](#) report, the global proportion of MPs who are women has inched up to 26.9%, based on elections and appointments that took place in 2023.

This represents an increase of 0.4 percentage points year on year, a similar growth rate to 2022. However, the growth is slower than in the preceding years – elections in 2021 and 2020 saw an increase of women MPs of 0.6 percentage points.

Gender issues dominated many of the elections amid a backlash against women's rights in some countries. The report also points out that several prominent women have recently left politics, blaming burnout and threats.

The IPU report is based on parliamentary renewals in 66 chambers in 52 countries in 2023. Women made up 27.6% of MPs in those newly elected or appointed chambers, an overall increase of 1.4 percentage points compared with previous polls in the same countries.

Bright spots

There was notable progress in some areas, for example:

- In the Americas, women accounted for 42.5% of all MPs elected or appointed in chambers that were renewed in 2023, the highest regional percentage. The region thus maintains its long-held position as the region with the highest representation of women in the world, at 35.1%.
- Globally, the share of women Speakers of parliament increased to 23.8% (up 1.1 percentage points). Cambodia and Côte d'Ivoire elected women Speakers for the first time.
- Well-designed and implemented quotas continue to be a significant factor in increasing women's representation. The 43 chambers that had some form of quotas elected 28.8% women MPs on average, versus 23.2% in countries without.
- Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the highest improvement among all regions with an increase of 3.9 percentage points in 2023 elections compared to previous ballots in the same countries. The biggest gains were in Benin, Eswatini and Sierra Leone, enabled by quotas.
- Rwanda continues to lead the [IPU world ranking](#) with women accounting for 61.3% of seats in the Chamber of Deputies, followed by Cuba and Nicaragua with 55.7% and 53.9% respectively, while Andorra, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates have parity.

Gender issues dominate in some elections

The IPU report notes that gender issues frequently emerged as an important conversation during elections in 2023, notably women's reproductive rights in countries where abortion remains a contentious issue.

In the Polish elections, the issue was central after a 2020 court ruling, supported by the government at the time, which severely restricted access to abortions. The ruling was followed by massive protests across the country, led by women and young people. The report suggests that this was one factor which led the ruling party to lose power.

On the flip side, Javier Milei, who promised a referendum to repeal more progressive laws on abortion that had been put in place in 2020, was elected President of Argentina. Many reports indicated that he received more support from male voters, especially young men, than female voters.

Women quitting politics

The IPU report also highlights several high-profile female leaders who left the political arena in 2023, many of whom cited burnout and increasing online harassment as the main reasons for leaving.

At the beginning of the year, Jacinda Ardern stepped down as Prime Minister of New Zealand and decided not to stand again for her parliamentary seat. A few months later, Sanna Marin, the former Prime Minister of Finland who was voted out of power in the April election, also resigned as an MP and decided to quit politics. Several prominent Dutch women MPs also stepped down.

However, the report highlights that some parliaments are taking measures to make parliaments safer spaces, including Australia, Benin, Iceland, Ireland and Thailand.

Quotations

Tulia Ackson, President of the IPU and Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania

"More women in parliament means more inclusive and representative institutions, which means stronger and healthier democracies. We need to encourage the young women and girls out there that, although it's a tough job, they deserve to have a seat at the table, to become decision-makers and to help improve people's lives through their work."

Cynthia López Castro, President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

"The backlash we are seeing against women's rights and against women MPs in all parts of the world is unacceptable. Women are speaking up and supporting each other, with more male allies joining the fight against gender-based discrimination and violence. The IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians was created decades ago to build solidarity and joint strategies and that's why we need it even more today."

Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU

"We are seeing some growth and historic firsts for women in parliament this year but we're also witnessing some worrying trends. Our data shows that women bear the brunt of the hate in the

political space, and that trend seems to be exacerbated with the emergence of artificial intelligence. We must be vigilant and support parliaments as they step up and put in place measures to become safe spaces for both women and men.”

The IPU is the global organization of national parliaments. It was founded more than 130 years ago as the first multilateral political organization in the world, encouraging cooperation and dialogue between all nations. Today, the IPU comprises 180 national Member Parliaments and 15 regional parliamentary bodies. It promotes democracy and helps parliaments develop into stronger, younger, greener, more gender-balanced and more innovative institutions. It also defends the human rights of parliamentarians through a dedicated committee made up of MPs from around the world.

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