

Women's Political Participation in Africa 2024

	Africa	Horn	East	Southern	Central	North	West	Notes
Lower houses of parliament 2024	26% (25%)	31% (33%)	34% (33%)	29% (28%)	22% (19%)	22% (24%)	20% (16%)	1
Upper houses of parliament 2024	21% (20%)	28% (30%)	34% (29%)	31% (29%)	28% (20%)	10% (11%)	7% (12%)	2
Parliament overall 2024	25% (24%)	35% (33%)	34% (32%)	29% (28%)	23% (19%)	20% (21%)	19% (16%)	3
Political party leadership 2024	9% (12%)	0% (17%)	11% (15%)	19% (14%)	0% (7%)	0% (0%)	0% (11%)	4
Election Monitoring Bodies 2024	30% (28%)	30% (21%)	45% (45%)	39% (40%)	23% (20%)	15% (25%)	27% (24%)	5
Local government 2024	25% (21%)	29% (N/A)	24% (35%)	25% (20%)	24% (27%)	26% (3%)	28% (2%)	6
Speakers 2024	25% (21%)	0% (0%)	44% (33%)	43% (35%)	27% (18%)	0% (0%)	16% (16%)	7
Mayors of capital cities 2024	29% (19%)	40% (20%)	0% (0%)	20% (19%)	29% (43%)	17% (0%)	43% (20%)	8
Top executive positions 2024	15% (7%)	8% (10%)	28% (12%)	21% (9%)	11% (7%)	0% (0%)	11% (7%)	9
Cabinet 2024	24% (22%)	19% (17%)	36% (32%)	27% (26%)	18% (20%)	21% (13%)	21% (19%)	10

KEY	Increased since 2021 (in brackets)	
		Decreased since 2021 (in brackets)
		The same as 2021 (in brackets)

1. Data compiled from IPU website December 2023.
2. 25 African countries have an upper chamber. Data compiled from IPU website December 2023.
3. Combined upper and lower chamber, or lower only where there is no upper chamber.
4. Top three officials in ruling and opposition party in each country. Data from party websites.
5. Electoral commissioners in the 41 countries where these exist. Data from Election Management Body websites.
6. Data available for 19 African countries.
7. Speakers and heads of upper and lower chambers; data from parliament websites.
8. Data compiled from websites of capital cities.
9. Presidents, deputy presidents, prime ministers, and deputy prime ministers.
10. Data compiled from government websites.

The 2024 Africa Women's Political Participation (WPP) Barometer concludes that with just six years to go until 2030, it is unlikely that African countries will meet the 50% target set in Sustainable Development Goal Five (SDG 5.5) on WPP. Women's representation in African parliaments has increased by just one percentage point from 25% in 2021 to 26% in 2024, despite elections in 36 African countries since the first edition of the Africa WPP Barometer in 2021. The second edition of the Africa WPP Barometer will be formally launched to commemorate Africa Day on 27 May 2024. The Barometer shows that women constitute just a quarter (25%) of the 13,057 parliamentarians in Africa - 26% in the lower houses, and 21% in the upper houses of parliament.



Globally, women's representation in the lower houses of parliament has increased from 11% in 1995 when the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing cast a spotlight on this glaring gap to 27% in 2024. Sub-Saharan Africa mirrors the global trend, with an increase from 10% women in the lower houses in 1995 to 26% in 2024. According to this trend, it could take until the end of the decade for women to be equally represented in parliament - globally and in Africa.

The table shows changes in the ten metrics of WPP tracked since 2021, for Africa as a whole, as well as by region (as defined by the African Union). Green denotes progress; red retrogression and yellow the same as 2021. The table - 65% green; 35% red and 10% yellow - shows that change is at best slow, at worst regressive. As in 2021, at 30%, women are best represented in Electoral Management Bodies (EMB). The biggest increase is women mayors from 19% in 2021 to 29% in 2024. But women constitute only 25% of councilors (up from 21% in 2021). Women are also most glaringly absent in top executive positions (15%). Raising serious questions as to whether political parties are walking the talk on gender equality, the biggest drop in WPP occurred in top political party positions, from 12% (a figure already abysmally low) to 9%.



Recent elections in Africa (2021-2023)

Overview of WPP in Africa for elections held at national level between 2021 to 2023

% Change	Central	East	Horn	North	Southern	West
Over 10%	Chad Equatorial Guinea				Eswatini	Benin Sierra Leone Cabo Verde Guinea Burkina Faso
5%-10%		South Sudan				
0-5%	Congo	Kenya	Ethiopia Djibouti	Morocco Mauritania	Angola Lesotho DRC	Liberia Senegal Cote d'Ivoire The Gambia
-5%	Sao Tome and Principe	Uganda	Somalia		Zimbabwe Zambia	Nigeria
-10%				Tunisia		Guinea-Bissau
-10% or lower				Algeria		

Source: Compiled by GL with data collected for the WPP Africa Barometer.

Thirty one countries held national elections between 2021 and 2023. West Africa held the most elections (11). This region had the highest number of countries (five) that registered an increase of over ten percentage points in WPP but also the highest number of countries (six) in which WPP stayed the same or regressed. Overall, WPP regressed in nine countries; increased by less than five percentage points in 13 countries and increased by over ten percentage in only nine countries.



Overview of WPP in Africa for elections held at local government level between 2021 to 2023*

% Change	Central	East	Horn	North	Southern	West
Over 10%					Zimbabwe	Guinea
5%-10%				Morocco		
0-5%		Kenya		Tunisia Algeria	Eswatini Mauritius Zambia	Senegal
-5%					Lesotho South Africa	

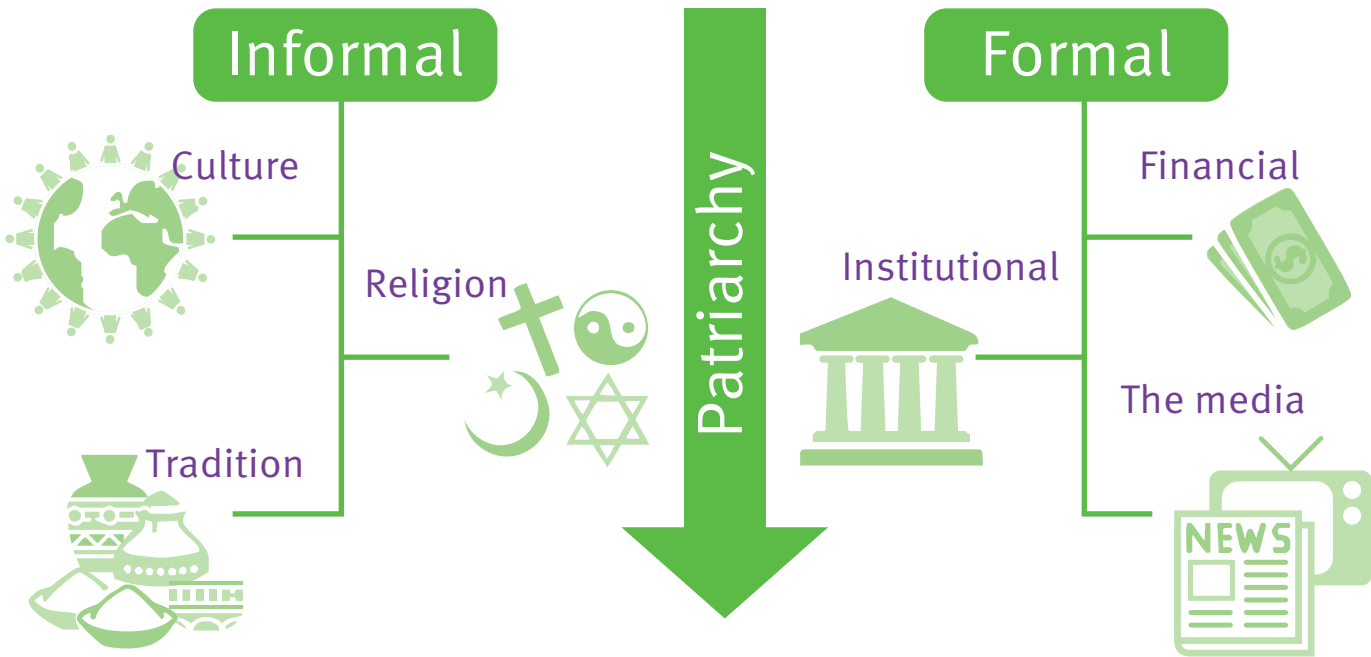
Source: Compiled by GL with data collected for the WPP Africa Barometer.

Eighteen countries in Africa held local government elections between 2021 and 2024. Zimbabwe witnessed the highest increase (19 percentage

points) because of the newly implemented quota system. South Africa had the largest decrease (a negative four percentage points).

* More data is now available for North, West and East Africa, which may account for some of the wide variations in WPP in LG in these regions between the 2021 Barometer and 2024, for example there was no LG data for any of the countries in the Horn, for this Barometer we have data for one country only, Djibouti, skewing this region's average.

Barriers to WPP



Espoir Abalo, a politician from **Togo** explains: “When you are a woman and you work in the political arena, society puts tags on you. They say you are a promiscuous woman and they also criticize you if you are single, saying that you'll be single for life as if it is a shame. You must understand that in Togo, patriarchy is the rule, so marriage is highly valued, and if you're single, you are considered no good. If you are a woman who gets promoted in a political post, automatically people will say that you got the job because you slept around. They never have these degrading remarks about men. I am under the impression that everything is done to discourage women to get into the political world.”

Electoral systems and quotas

Electoral systems and quotas or Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) play a critical role in enhancing WPP at all levels. Globally, there are three main electoral systems First-past-the-post (FPTP) in which candidates contest in a constituency and the one with the highest number of votes wins; Proportional Representation (PR) in which seats are allocated according to the percentage vote that a party gets and the Mixed system, a combination of both of these. Quotas are affirmative action measures to increase WPP. These include legislated candidate quotas, reserved seats and voluntary party quotas. Any one of these types of quota can be combined with any type of electoral system to increase women's political representation, with varying degrees of success.

Forty one of the 54 states in Africa have some form of quota at the lower house level.



Electoral systems, quotas and WPP in African lower houses of parliament 2024

	PR		FPTP		Mixed		Other		Total countries
	No	%W	No	%W	No	%W	No	%W	
Legislated candidate quota	7	21%	5	17%	4	32%	2	29%	18
Reserved seats	6	30%	5	31%	3	0%	2	21%	16
Voluntary party quota	3	44%	4	17%					7
TOTAL WITH QUOTA	16	32%	14	25%	7	26%	4	26%	41
NO QUOTA	3	19%	6	21%	4	17%			13

Source: Compiled by GL with data from WPP Africa Barometer.

The table shows that the countries that use some form of quota have much higher representation than countries where no quota is being applied. The Proportional Representation (PR) system with a quota yields the most favourable results with

representation at 32%, followed by the mixed system (26%) and FPTP (25%). Representation of women in parliament is markedly lower in countries with no quota.

Electoral systems, quotas and WPP at the local level in Africa 2024

	PR		FPTP		Mixed		Total countries
	No	%W	No	%W	No	%W	
Legislated candidate quota	7	19%	4	22%	2	45%	13
Reserved seats	1	27%	6	22%	5	21%	12
Voluntary party quota	2	25%	1	18%			3
NO QUOTA	3	9%	7	8%	3	18%	13
TOTAL WITH QUOTA	13	25%	9	22%	7	39%	28

Source: Compiled by GL with data from WPP Africa Barometer.

Data available for women's representation at the local level shows higher WPP in countries with a quota, especially when combined with the mixed system, two countries - Senegal and South Africa

using a legislated quota in a mixed system - account for the highest levels of women in local government.

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act in **Sierra Leone** promotes women's access to finance, employment opportunities, equal pay, maternity leave, and political representation. It establishes a 30% quota for women's participation in government for appointed positions, including cabinet, ministry, and ambassador roles, as well as elected positions, such as parliamentary and local council seats. The GEWE quota went into effect for Sierra Leone's presidential, parliamentary, mayoral, and local council elections on June 23, 2023. This resulted in an increase in women's representation in parliament from 14.5% to 28.2%, and a similar increase at the local level.



GEWE Act effectiveness



14.5%



28.2%



Political parties

In the three years since the 2021 Barometer, women's representation in executive positions of the main political parties (Leader, Secretary General and Deputy Secretary) dropped by three percentage points, from 12% to nine percent.

Political parties are notorious for writing gender equality into their political manifestos, even supporting gender quotas in laws, but then failing to implement these in their own structures.



"One of the most significant challenges was my entrance into politics. It is very difficult for women because one has to be nominated by their political party first where several names may be put forward and they go through a primary election to choose only one person to represent the ward. It is at this point that most women find it difficult because they will then need to begin campaign canvassing for votes. Campaigns by their nature are very expensive. Unfortunately, due to the patriarchal structure of families, most women do not have control of the family finances. Fortunately for me, I had personal projects that allowed me to fund myself which still was not enough but at least there was a starting point."

Margaret Nyahoda, Councillor in Nyanga District council, Zimbabwe



Election laws and management

Election Management Bodies (EMBs) are essential in ensuring transparent, inclusive, and accountable electoral processes. In most African countries, EMBs comprise statutory bodies with commissioners appointed through a process of public nominations that is more conducive to women's participation. This explains the higher level of women's representation (30%) in this area of WPP.

Funding is identified a major challenge for women candidates. International Idea has analysed data from 180 countries globally. This shows that 70%

of countries worldwide provide direct public funding to political parties. Of those with a public funding system, approximately 30 countries (17%) have gender-targeted (specific) public financing, including Albania, Brazil, Costa Rica, France, Georgia, Kenya and South Korea. International IDEA has been advocating for gender-targeted public funding as an effective instrument to encourage women's involvement in politics. By linking the amount of public financing for gender equality among candidates, political parties can support women's participation.



70% of countries provide **direct public** funding to political parties



However, only **17%** of countries have **gender-targeted** public funding to promote women's political participation



In **Algeria**, political parties receive state funding based on the number of women candidates elected.^[1] **Burkina Faso** penalises parties not meeting quotas by cutting public funding while rewarding those that exceed the 30% quota.^[2] **Cabo Verde** awards public funding to parties with at least 25% women candidates.^[3] **Guinea** distributes 5% of state funding to parties with elected women MPs and council members.

Kenya's Political Parties Act 2011 restricts funding if the registered office bearers are predominantly one gender.^[4] In **Mali**, 10% of public funding is shared among parties with women deputies or councilors.^[5] **Togo's** public party funding allocation mechanism rewards successful female candidacy and reduces application fees for female candidates.

The media and social media

Fyness Mangonjwa, the youngest MP in **Malawi** recalls how she became the subject of national ridicule after an interview she gave to the media in broken English went viral. "Emotionally hurt by the experience, I sought English lessons from a personal teacher, which significantly aided me. Over the past three years, I've grown to understand my role and now, I've committed to making politics my profession, investing heavily in my career."^[6]



According to the 2020 Global Media Monitoring Project, 30% of the news carried in Africa's newspaper, television and radio news is on politics and governance.^[7] Online news platforms continue this trend, with political stories constituting 25% of their coverage. The study

found that in Africa women constitute 18% of news sources (22% in the politics topic category) compared to the global average of 20%. Online GBV constitutes a new layer of struggles for women journalists and politicians.



African women

18%
news source

(22%)
politics topic category



Joanna Bérenger, daughter of the former **Mauritian** Prime Minister Paul Berenger has refused to be seen as a political heiress: "Many times, I have explained in the media that my father never initiated or boosted my entry into politics, even though I am conscious that being his daughter has given me visibility and sympathy from voters during the early days of my political engagement. However, having to repeat it again, today, when the question is never asked to the many sons of politicians, is a sad reminder that the legitimacy of women in politics is always and constantly questioned," she says. She broke new ground in Mauritius by breast feeding her baby in parliament.



[1] Algeria: Loi organique n° 12-03 du 12 janvier 2012 fixant les modalités augmentant les chances d'accès de la femme à la représentation dans les assemblées élues.
 [2] <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas> (country pages accessed 12 February 2024)
 [3] Government of Cape Verde: Electoral Law No 56 /VII/2010
 [4] Government of Kenya, Political Parties Act, no 11 of 2011
 [5] Government of Mali, Loi N° 05-047/ DU 18 Août 2005 Portant Charte Des Partis Politiques
 [6] Global Media Monitoring Project 2020
 [7] Faith Kaunde (2024) Navigating Politics as a Woman. <https://mwnation.com/navigating-politics-as-a-woman/>

Violence against women in politics (VAWP)



VAWP is not new, but it has gained more attention and visibility in recent years thanks to the efforts of various actors and initiatives. For example, a study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 2021 based on confidential interviews with 224 women parliamentarians and staff from 50 countries and one sub-regional assembly^[8] revealed that 80% of the women interviewed had experienced psychological violence, 67% had been subject to sexist behaviour or remarks, 42% had received death threats, rape threats, or threats of beating or abduction, and 23% had endured physical violence.^[9] Women report that the majority

of abuse stems from male parliamentarians, especially those from rival parties.^[10] According to studies undertaken by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and UNWomen, while political violence is commonly assumed to occur between rival parties, party colleagues are among the most violent perpetrators.^[11] Women's family or friends, community and religious leaders, state security forces and the police are often the perpetrators.^[12] Media outlets can also play an influential role in perpetrating violence - either through their reports or through disseminating violent messages about politically active women from other sources.^[13]



In **Senegal**, the testimony of law professor **Amsatou Sow Sidibé** speaks volumes. She is the leader of the Citizen Movement CAR LENEEN and was a candidate at the 2012 presidential election, and a failed candidate for sponsorship for the February 2024 presidential election. She says that in 2012, when she was first candidate to the presidential election, she was shocked and traumatised by what a religious leader told her. "This religious leader told me that it was not possible to have a woman as president of the Republic because the religious leaders of the country cannot have a private meeting with a woman, even if she is the president of the Republic. These remarks were very hurtful and left their mark on my political career."



Anta Babacar Ngom was one of the two women candidates at the presidential election of 25th February 2024. She indicates that her experience "as candidate to the presidency has highlighted many challenges, one of them being violence which has taken the form of "intimidations, threats and smear campaigns aimed at damaging our credibility and public image", she stresses. She says she has to deal with "analysis by political writers, critical and caustic press articles by certain columnists and comments by influencers and activists, which are denigrating. There have been times when I have seen debates on television revolving around my dress code, which would never be the case for other male candidates".



[8] Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa (2024) Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2021-11/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-africa> (Accessed: 18 February 2024).

[9] *ibid*

[10] *ibid*

[11] Jroland (2018) #NotTheCost: Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics. Available at: <https://www.ndi.org/not-the-cost> (Accessed: 25 February 2024).

[12] https://www.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/vawip_cr_o.pdf

[13] *ibid*



The role of men

"Going forward, the best way is to engage men to be allies to the cause. We must not fight them. Actually, we need to have a conversation with men; they could be the voice that is missing. Let's create positive masculinity as we fight for numbers of women in politics and in positions to increase."

Dr Thando Makubaza, PADARE

Engage men to be allies to the cause



Men are the gate keepers to these barriers at the level of family - as either fathers or brothers failing to promote or prioritise the education of their daughters and sisters; as husbands and male relatives not providing support to women's political aspirations. Men are also the gate keepers of tradition and culture in society. Men dominate the current political landscape, from parliaments and heads of state through the media and the party apparatuses. As long as men choose to make it difficult for women to access even the

lower rungs of the political hierarchy it is difficult to make meaningful progress in expanding women's political participation. There is therefore clear need to engage more effectively with men at all of these levels - of family, community, schools, culture, faith, media and political institutions - to stimulate changes in attitudes and approaches. These changes are sought in anticipation that peer pressure amongst men and a critical mass of women leaders will eventually lead to continued progress.

Making a difference?

Formal access to positions of power and decision-making processes is a pre-condition, but not a guarantee for women to have decision-making power in the political sphere. Whether women have substantive influence with, over and through people is central to their decision-making power. This power varies between and within countries based on cultural and socio-economic context.

Indicators for effective participation can be quantitatively measured by assessing the extent to which women hold leadership positions in cabinet (24%), as speakers (29%), mayors of capital cities (26%), and in portfolio committees and in which areas. Women are least represented in political party leadership (9%) and top executive positions (15%).

Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah the third and current vice president of **Namibia** served as the deputy-prime minister from 2015 to 2024. She is set to become the party's first female presidential candidate in November 2024 following the passing away of President Hage Geingob. President Geingob was not going to stand again and had announced her as the SWAPO candidate. **Patrice Talon**, the head of State of **Benin** chose a woman, **Mariam Chabi Talata Zimé**, as vice-president.



Fatma Zohra Zerouati, is a state engineer in ecology and the environment, who joined politics in 2012 and more specifically the Tamajoue Amal El Djazair (TAJ) party, which stands for the Rally of Hope for **Algeria** which she chairs. Zerouti served as Minister of the Environment and Renewable Energies from 2017 to 4th January 2020. "In the Politburo, I was in charge of the environment .This gave me the opportunity to introduce the concept of sustainable development in the political programme of the party and to organise related activities. My experience as a woman politician has influenced the way I work, because it's not possible to propose political alternatives without knowing all the aspects and data linked to a country's issues."



Looking to the future

Age is yet another barrier for women's entry into politics. Young women are the least represented amongst political leadership. IPU data on youth participation in parliaments show that only 2.2% of parliamentarians are under 30, and less than

1% are young women.^[14] But while there is growing recognition of the crucial role that youth can and must play in governance and political decision making, a lot more needs to be done to support youth wanting to participate in politics.

2.2%
parliamentarians
under 30



less than
1%
young women

"Leaders are talking about children's issues but they're 65, and that doesn't make any sense... We can't have 65 year olds discussing issues that probably don't even understand."

Chelsea Mujuru, former junior councillor in the City of Harare, Zimbabwe



Bénédicte Bailou is one of the five young women in the Legislative Transition Assembly (LTA) of **Burkina Faso**. Despite losing her bid for presidency of the LTA, she is not discouraged. "In any election, you have to be convincing. Unfortunately, I was not able to convince anyone this time, but I must admit that I am proud to have been a candidate. It was a challenge I wanted to take up. What is more, in terms of symbolism, it was important for me to show that a woman, especially somebody young, can aspire to occupy such a high strategic position in an African country heavily influenced by patriarchy."



[14] <https://www.ipu.org/news/call-action-young-womens-political-participation-and-leadership> accessed 3 February 2024

Acronyms

AU	African Union
EMB	Electoral management body
FPTP	First past the post
GL	Gender Links
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LG	Local government
LH	Lower house (of parliament)
LTA	Legislative Transition Assembly
MMP	Mixed member proportional (System)
NDI	National Democratic Institute
PR	Proportional representation (System)
RFP	Revolution For Prosperity
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TSM	Temporary special measure
UH	Upper house (of parliament)
WPP	Women's political participation

The Barometer forms part of the International Idea-led consortium: *Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa*. The six other organisations in the consortium are FAWE, FEMNET, Gender Links, IFAN Gender Laboratory, PADARE, and WLSA. The consortium focuses on eight African countries: Botswana; DRC; Eswatini; Tanzania; Zimbabwe; Kenya; Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. The Barometer forms part of the Knowledge Generation, Documentation and Dissemination component of the WPP project.

For more information: Contact Susan Tolmay - Gender and Governance Associate, GL Services governance@genderlinks.org.za.

