



Extracted from *Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas*  
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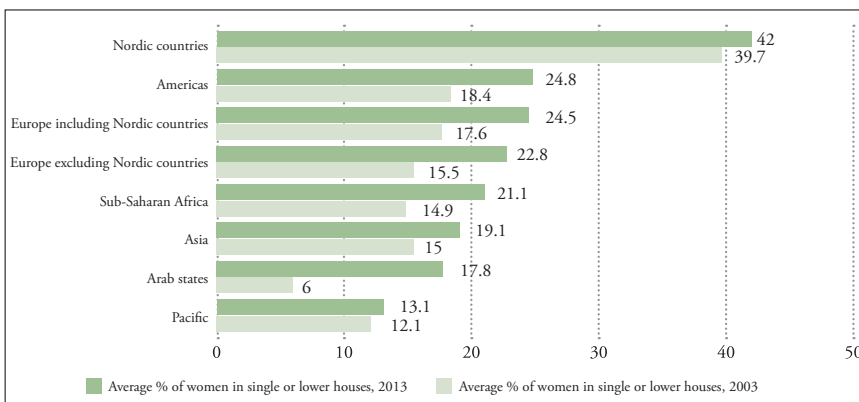
# Women in parliaments – global and regional trends

In the past two decades, the global landscape of women in politics has changed markedly. According to IPU statistics on women in parliament, at the end of 2013 women comprise 21 per cent (average for both houses) of parliamentarians worldwide, up from 15 per cent in 2003 and 13 per cent in 1998.

To date, some 37 countries have reached the critical mass of 30 per cent women in their lower houses of parliament, as mandated by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1990,<sup>3</sup> though a large majority of countries lags behind: 72 countries currently have less than 15 per cent women in their lower houses. Countries with the highest numbers of women in elected offices, led by Rwanda with 64 per cent women in its lower house, are spread all over the world and cut across all levels of economic development or democratic freedoms and liberties.

The Nordic countries have the highest regional average of female parliamentarians as of October 2013 with 42 per cent women in their single or lower houses. The Americas, Europe (excluding Scandinavia) and Sub-Saharan Africa come next, with 24.8, 22.8 and 21.1 per cent, respectively. Asia (19.1 per cent), the Arab states (17.8 per cent) and the Pacific (13.1 per cent) are at the bottom (see Figure 1). In the past decade, all major regions except the Pacific have made at least 5 percentage point increases in their respective averages, though the highest increase has been in the Arab states, where the average number of female parliamentarians increased by 11.8 percentage points from 6 per cent (2003) to 17.8 per cent (2013). This increase was largely the result of recent improvements in Algeria and Saudi Arabia, and changes in Morocco, Libya and Iraq from the early 2000s to the recent democratic openings. More steady increases have taken place in the Americas, where the average number of women in single or lower houses increased from 18.4 per cent in 2003 to 24.8 in 2013, which were prompted in part by the widespread use of gender quotas in Latin America. Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia experienced increases of roughly 6 and 4 percentage points, respectively, in the past decade.

**Figure 1: Number of women in parliaments, 2003 and 2013 regional averages**



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world011013.htm>>.<sup>4</sup>