

## Gender equality in politics

Ensuring the participation and representation of all groups of society in public decision making allows for different perspectives to be included, helping ensure that public policies and services reflect the distinct needs and realities of women and men of diverse backgrounds (OECD, 2020). Achieving gender equality in politics is not just about counting the numbers of women in parliament and ministerial positions, but also making sure that women, in diverse situations and conditions, have the opportunity to influence policies in a positive way (OECD, forthcoming). However, although gender-balanced representation is not just a matter of numbers, collecting and publishing gender-disaggregated data is a crucial step towards recognising gender imbalances and disparities, and creating policies that actively foster inclusivity.

Over the past decade, the share of women parliamentarians, increased by 7.5 percentage points on average across OECD countries (Figure 12.5). As of 2023, the share of women sitting in lower or single house parliaments across the OECD area stood at an average of 33.8%, indicating that gender-balanced representation in parliaments is far from being reached. Only two OECD countries, Mexico and New Zealand, had gender parity in their parliaments as of 2023. Over the past decade, Chile has seen the greatest increase (21.3 p.p.) in the share of female parliamentarians, followed by New Zealand (17.8 p.p.), Colombia (16.8 p.p.), and Australia (13.7 p.p.).

In order to improve women's representation in parliaments, OECD countries report taking measures such as introducing mandatory quotas and voluntary targets, mentorships, networking and capacity-building actions for women, and measures to make parliaments more female-friendly workplace (OECD, 2022). Most OECD countries have introduced electoral quotas, which remains a widely used measure for promoting gender equality in parliaments (Figure 12.5). However, it is important to combine electoral quotas with other mechanisms to support gender equality more broadly in case of countries where electoral quotas are introduced.

A gender-balanced cabinet is a strong indicator of a government's commitment to gender equality and ensuring a gender lens is applied in crucial government decisions. As of 2023, on average, women occupied 35.7% of cabinet positions across OECD countries, albeit with considerable variations across countries (Figure 12.6). In 2023, 8 out of 38 OECD countries have 50% or more women in their political executive: Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain. In contrast, less than 10% of cabinet ministers in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Japan, and Türkiye are women. Women continue to primarily hold portfolios related to social and cultural policy – most commonly those on women and gender equality, family and children's affairs, social inclusion and development, social protection and social security, and indigenous and minority

affairs – rather than to those related to energy, defence and home affairs, which are dominated by men (IPU/UN WOMEN, 2023). Achieving gender equality in cabinets, therefore, also pertains to the allocation of portfolios.

### Methodology and definitions

Data for women parliamentarians refer to the lower/single house of parliament and were obtained from the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline database. Data refer to the share of women parliamentarians recorded as of 1 January 2023 and 31 October 2012. There are three key types of gender quotas: legislated candidate quotas (which regulate the gender composition of the candidate lists and are legally binding on all political parties in the election); legislated "reserved seats" (which regulate by law the gender composition of elected bodies by reserving a certain number of seats for women members, implemented through special electoral procedures); and party quotas (also called voluntary party quotas, that are adopted by individual parties for their own candidate lists, and are usually enshrined in party statutes and rules). Data on quotas were obtained from the Inter-Parliamentary Union's PARLINE database.

Data on women cabinet ministers in national government were obtained from the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Women in Politics database. Data show women as a share of cabinet members who head ministries as of 1 January 2023 (excluding ministers without portfolios). Heads of government were also included where they held ministerial portfolios.

### Further reading

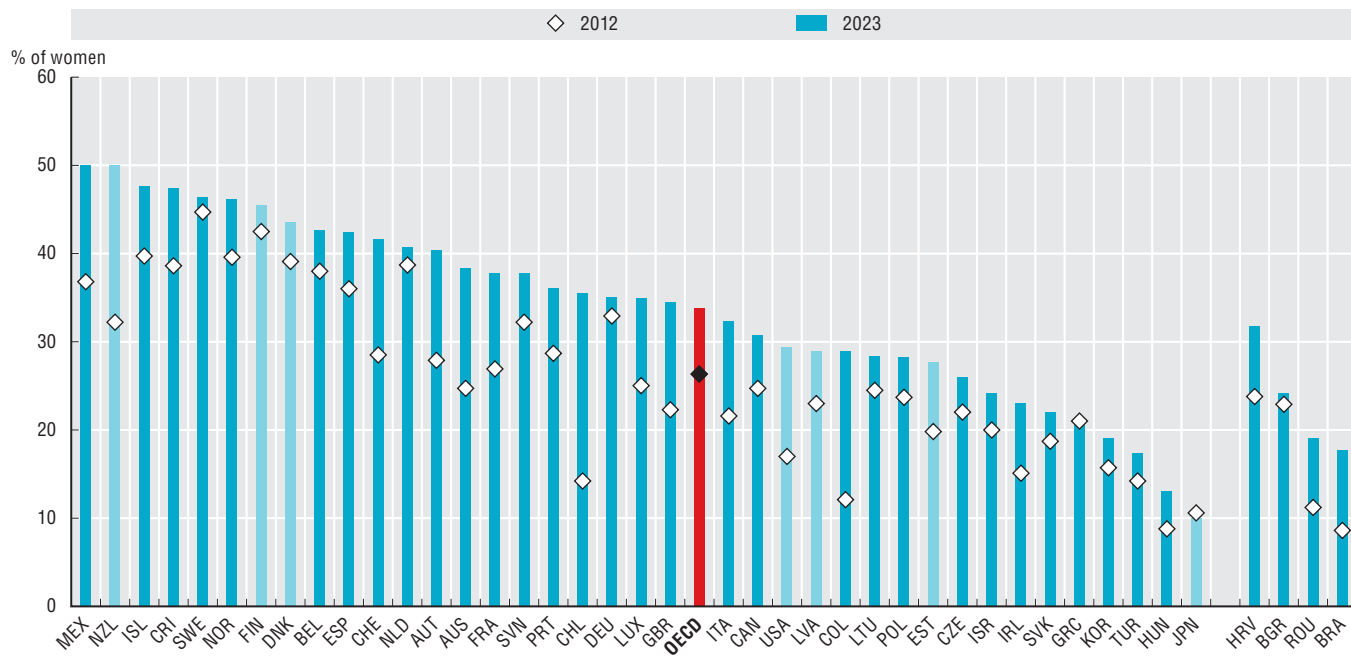
- IPU/UN Women (2023), *Women in Politics: 2023*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023> (accessed on March 2023).
- OECD (2022), *Report on the Implementation of the OECD Gender Recommendations*, OECD, Paris, C/MIN(2022)7.
- OECD (2020), *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for All Generations?*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e5cb8a-en>.
- OECD (forthcoming), *Toolkit on Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023*.

### Figure notes

- 12.5. Light blue bars represent countries without electoral quotas in their lower or single house parliaments as of March 2023.

12.5. Gender equality in parliament and electoral gender quotas, 2012 and 2023

Lower or single house of the legislature



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), PARLINE (database).

StatLink <https://stat.link/6qkbhi>

12.6. Gender equality in cabinet ministerial positions, 2023



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Women in Politics (2023).

StatLink <https://stat.link/m0adnx>



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