



# Women Lack Representation in World Parliaments

Discussion > Advanced 8



## Exercise 1 – Vocabulary

<b>quota</b>	A set number that is allowed or needs to be achieved.
[noun]	<i>Ex: The sales team celebrated making its <b>quota</b> for the year.</i>

<b>level the playing field</b>	To make a situation fair for everyone involved.
[phrase]	<i>Ex: The developers have introduced major changes to <b>level the playing field</b> for younger gamers.</i>

<b>critical mass</b>	The minimum amount of something needed for the success of a project, organization, business, etc.
[noun]	<i>Ex: We need 50 percent more customers in order to reach <b>critical mass</b>.</i>

<b>dismal</b>	Worse than expected; disappointing or depressing.
[adjective]	<i>Ex: The show had <b>dismal</b> attendance; half the seats were empty.</i>

<b>trailblazer</b>	Someone or something that does or discovers something for the first time.
[noun]	<i>Ex: Henry Ford is the main <b>trailblazer</b> of the automotive industry.</i>



## Exercise 2 – Reading

*Read the text aloud with your tutor and discuss the key points.*

### **Women Lack Representation in World Parliaments**

A report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union found the effort to increase the number of women parliamentarians around the world has suffered set-backs despite recent progress. Over the past year, the IPU found the number of women in national parliaments globally increased only by 0.1% compared to 2016. It says women represent 23.4% of world parliamentarians.

Before 2016, the Inter-Parliamentary Union reported the number of women being elected to parliaments around the world to be increasing annually by 6% on average. IPU secretary-general, Martin Chungong says women are faring better in countries that have electoral quota systems than in those that do not.

“So, this actually calls for more countries to adopt quota systems to try to level the playing field,” he said. “We need more and more women in parliament to create a critical mass so that parliamentary decisions and outcomes are adequately informed by the interests of both men and women. And this... is a very major factor for legitimacy and effectiveness in decision-making processes.”



In 2017, Rwanda has come out on top in the rankings, with the lower house of parliament made up of over 61% women. Bolivia is in second place with 53.1% female representation, and Cuba is in third place with 47.2%. These compare favorably with the United Kingdom, which ranks 47th at 30% and the United States, which ranks 104th, with a dismal showing of just 19.1% female lawmakers.

Regionally, the report finds the Nordic countries leading with an average of 41.7% female representation. Next are the Americas and Europe, with 28.3% and 26.4% respectively. It shows some improvement being made in Latin America, with Argentina, Chile and Ecuador as trailblazers.

While female participation in Asia and the Arab world's election process remains below 20 percent, the Pacific region has the lowest proportions of female lawmakers, at an average of 15%.

However, New Zealand, which ranks 17th, recently elected 37-year-old Jacinda Ardern as Prime Minister, the third woman to hold this office. Ardern is expecting her first child later this year, sparking a national conversation about the balance between work and motherhood.



## Exercise 3 – Discussion

*Discuss the following questions with your tutor.*

1. What are your thoughts on female representation in parliaments around the world?
2. Do you find it surprising that the U.S. ranks 104th in the IPU's report? Why? Why not?
3. Do you expect to see a steady increase in the number of female parliamentarians worldwide?
4. Are there many women in government in your country? Why do you think this is the case?
5. What challenges do you imagine female politicians often face in your country?
6. Has your country had any female leaders? If so, please share what you know about them.
7. Who do you consider to be the most admirable women in the world? Please explain your answer.
8. “Gender equality is not only an issue for women and girls.” Do you agree with this statement?