



PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat was approached by the CWP Network about conducting research on the measures, support mechanisms, and activities CPA Branches have to promote the participation of women in politics.

Research Report | August 2025 | By Faith Oyenekan and Charlotte Corby



About the CPA

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) connects, develops, promotes and supports parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA collaborates with parliaments and other organisations, including the intergovernmental community, to achieve its statement of purpose. It brings parliamentarians and parliamentary staff together to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify benchmarks of good practices and new policy options they can adopt or adapt in the governance of their societies.

About CWP

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Network was founded in 1989 to increase the number of female elected representatives in Parliaments and legislatures across the Commonwealth and to ensure that women's issues are brought to the fore in parliamentary debate and legislation. The network provides a means of building the capacity of women elected to parliament to be more effective in their roles; improving the awareness and ability of all Parliamentarians, male and female, and encouraging them to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation and helping parliaments to become gender-sensitive institutions.

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BACKGROUND

Many countries are implementing measures to increase women's participation in politics, particularly in parliament. These measures include reserving seats for women, establishing quotas within political parties, creating women's political networks, and enacting electoral reforms.

Several factors influence women's political participation, but access to financial resources—both direct and indirect—plays a crucial role in their decision to run for office. Support can come from various sources, including civil society organisations, political parties, and academic institutions.

Support mechanisms can take different forms, such as training programmes, mentorship opportunities, campaign funding, and networking events. Each type of support addresses specific challenges women face in politics, such as skill development, confidence-building, and resource mobilisation. Additionally, the availability of online resources is improving these support mechanisms, making them more accessible to those currently in office or aspiring to run.

QUESTIONS

In support of the production of this document, CPA Branches were asked to respond to the following research questions:

- 1. What kind of programmes, workshops, training sessions, and events are offered by various organisations to support women in their political journey, from international to local levels?
- 2. Is there funding and campaign support accessible for women candidates, provided by international organisations, governments, political parties, or local charities and groups?
- 3. Are there any available resources, research materials, manuals, or guides focusing on women's pathways to politics, their political participation, as well as funding and campaigning efforts?

The document is organised to first present the information and resources gathered from Branches during the overall research process. It then provides an overview of key global organisations and notable online resources.

This document is a live working document, and it is intended to be updated according to the information provided by CPA Branches and Regions. Relevant information can be sent to <u>programmes@cpahq.org</u> or Ms Bénite Dibateza, Gender Lead benite.dibateza@cpahq.org

CWP AFRICA REGION

- Women in Political Participation (<u>WPP</u>) is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and implemented by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (<u>International IDEA</u>), it aims to advance gender equality in politics and governance.
- The Community Advocacy and Awareness (<u>CRAWN</u>) Trust is the host organisation and permanent secretariat for the National Women's Steering Committee NWSC, a coalition platform that brings together individuals and organisations working for women's political and economic freedom.
- The African Women's Development Fund funds various women's organisations and movements in Africa and the Middle East (AWDF).
- The <u>African Women's Development and Communications Network</u> is a Pan-African Feminist and membership-based network. Working to ensure that the voices of African women are amplified, and their needs and aspirations are prioritised in key policy dialogues and outcomes.
- <u>ElectHER</u> is a women's political advancement initiative by The Social Change Network (TSCN) Africa and Women in Leadership Advancement Network (WILAN). It addresses women's under-representation in elective offices through behavioural change communications, skills development, human capital and funding mobilisation. It's overall goal is to enable capable women to competitively decide, run and win elections.

Kenya

• The Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (<u>KEWOPA</u>) brings together Kenyan female parliamentarians to champion women's leadership in Kenya. They focus on capacity-building for female politicians, pushing for legislative reforms, and mentoring younger women to enter politics.

Nigeria

• Women in Politics Forum (<u>WIPF</u>) is a non-partisan organisation with a United Nations Economic and Social Council Consultative Status (ECOSOC). It focuses on providing support and resources to women in order to increase and advocate for the participation of women in politics. They provide mentorship and training to women as well as programs on political advocacy and socio-political activism.

Uganda

• Forum for Women in Democracy (<u>FOWODE</u>) is a leading Ugandan organisation working to enhance women's participation in leadership and governance. They offer training, advocacy, and mentorship to encourage women to run for office and influence policy. They also conduct civic education on women's rights and political representation.

Rwanda

• Though not strictly a political organisation, the National Women's Council (<u>NWC</u>) plays a vital role in promoting women's leadership at the local and national levels in Rwanda. They mobilise and train women to participate in leadership and influence policy from the grassroots to the parliamentary level.

Ghana

• Women in Law and Development in Africa (<u>WiLDAF</u>) is a pan-African organisation with a strong presence in Ghana, aiming to increase women's leadership in politics through legal advocacy, training programs, and promoting gender equality in decision-making.

Malawi

Malawi adopted a National Action Plan (<u>NAP</u>) for the period of 2021-2025. One of its main objectives
and actions is to put in place interventions and measures of increased women's and girls' participation
at all levels of decision making, including participation in various institutions and platforms at national,
regional and international level. It also plans to support the implementation of gender related laws to
ensure increased participation.

MALAWI CASE STUDY MALAWI ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) confirmed its commitment to promoting gender inclusivity in politics by implementing a 50% discount on nomination fees for female candidates, young people and people with disabilities aspiring for parliamentary or local seats in the 2025 Tripartite Elections.

A non-refundable fee of K1.25 million for a parliamentary seat and K100,000 for a Councillor seat. All presidential aspirants are required to pay a nomination fee of K10 million, according to the MEC's communique.

Oxfam leads the 50:50 campaign aimed at achieving equal representation of women in elected positions. This initiative aims to alleviate financial barriers that often hinder women's participation in politics. Oxfam country director, Linga Lireni Mihowa stated that "women are often underrepresented in decision-making roles, and our goal is to increase the percentage of women in Parliament from the current 22% to at least 30%, with a long-term target of 50%". She also emphasised the critical challenges women face in accessing financial resources for political engagement.

NGO Gender Coordination Network Chairperson, Maggie Kathewera Banda, stated that cutting the nomination fees by half would increase Malawi's chances of meeting the 50:50 campaign targets as many women are eager to participate in politics. She also stated that "the Declaration on Gender and Development, which was signed by Southern African Development Community (SADC) Heads of State and government in September 1997, commits SADC countries to ensure equal representation of women and men in decision making positions. The inclusion of women in decision-making positions is, therefore, a fundamental human right and an issue of social justice".²



Source: Malawi 50:50 Campaign

¹ https://www.nyasatimes.com/malawi-electoral-commission-to-implement-50-discount-on-nomination-fees-for-female-aspirants/

² https://times.mw/reduce-womens-nomination-fees/

CWP ASIA REGION

Pakistan

- The Women's Development Foundation of Pakistan (WDFP) is a foundation that strives to build an empowered society through strengthening women in all fields of life and promoting a gender balanced society. It has an active network of civil societies that support developmental activities.
- Shirkat Gah <u>Women's Resource Centre</u> provides support to women and other marginalised societies from the grassroots to the government and international areas.
- Aurat Publication and Service Foundation (<u>AF</u>) is a national non-profit and non-governmental
 organisation that is committed to creating a just and equal society for women while also spreading
 awareness for women's empowerment.
- Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (<u>PILDAT</u>) are involved in providing
 resources, research materials, manuals, and guides that focus on women's pathways to politics, their
 political participation, as well as funding and campaigning efforts.
- Women's Action Forum (<u>WAF</u>) is an activist forum that is at the forefront of promoting women's movement in Pakistan and is a purely voluntary organisation that has its membership open to all women that agree and align themselves with its charter.

Maldives

Hope for Women (<u>HFW</u>) is a non-governmental organisation working towards promoting gender equality
and women's participation in public life. It envisions a society where women are fully engaged in all
aspects of public life, including politics.

CWP AUSTRALIA REGION

- Women for Election Australia (<u>WFE</u>) run educational non-partisan, online and in-person political campaign workshops to help women get elected.
- <u>Politics in Colour</u> run regular online workshops and conversions that address the challenges and barriers facing people from under-served communities and assist diverse Australians considering a career in politics. They also run face-to-face training, coaching, mentoring and support for diverse communities and people, customised training, coaching and mentoring by former politicians who can provide advice and support to candidates and incumbents.
- <u>She Runs</u> is a non-for-profit organisation focused on supporting women's political, economic, and civic participation.
- <u>EMILY's List</u> is a national organisation that supports women on their campaign and election journeys to Australian parliaments. The organisation is founded upon feminist principles and supports candidates through mentoring, training, and campaigning.
- Global Institute for Women's Leadership (<u>GIWL</u>) Australian National University (ANU) was established as GIWL's first international base in 2018, with a focus on advancing gender equality across the Asia-Pacific region. GIWL brings together rigorous research, practice and advocacy to better understand and address the causes of workplace gender inequality and the lack of gender diversity in leadership positions across sectors and countries.



AUSTRALIA CASE STUDY PATHWAYS TO POLITICS FOR WOMEN

pathwaystopolitics.org.au

About Pathway to Politics

Pathways to Politics for Women aims to increase the number of women in Australian politics by equipping diverse women to boldly embrace their political ambitions, thrive as leaders and make a profound contribution to society. Through comprehensive practical training, workshops, mentoring and career-long support, Pathways to Politics provides unparalleled expertise for women who are serious about driving change through political leadership.

The proudly non-partisan programmes are uniquely designed in collaboration with eight leading universities across Australia, tailored to each local context. Participants gain first-hand insights from prominent politicians, advisors, speechwriters and media trainers to give them confidence and clarity about their future in politics in a safe, supportive environment.

Programmes are open to women across Australia. Programme participation is fully funded through the support of the Trawalla Foundation and university partners. Pathways to Politics for Women celebrated 10 years of impact in 2025.

National Model

The programme is delivered annually in each Australian state and territory, delivered in collaboration with eight leading universities and tailored to each local context.

The national network is led by the National Co-Convenors Sarah Buckley, CEO of the Trawalla Foundation, and Dr Meredith Martin, Director of the University of Melbourne's Pathways to Politics programme. Each state/territory programme also receives strategic support and guidance from a local steering or advisory committee, drawing on the expertise of senior university representatives, politicians and Pathways to Politics alums.

Program Delivery

Through the programme, participants gain first-hand insights from prominent politicians, advisors, speechwriters and media trainers, aimed at giving them confidence and clarity about their future in politics. They are supported to realise their capabilities through practical workshops, Q&A's and exercises provided in a respectful and supported environment. This includes media training, campaign training, workshops with politicians and other political experts, and delivering a stump speech in parliament. Modules cover topics such as political vision, campaign planning, media training, speechwriting and leadership skills.

Alumni may also apply for the annual Pathways Alum Mentoring programme which is designed to empower and support alums who plan to run for office in the next five years. They are provided with the opportunity to have one-to-one guidance from an experienced political mentor. Masterclasses are also offered throughout the year to the entire alum community.



SUCCESS RATES



- Since launching in 2016, Pathways to Politics has achieved 84 electoral successes nationally across the political spectrum and at all levels of government -local, state and federal.
 - This includes two alums currently serving in the Victorian Parliament across five parties
- Over one third of alums have gone through pre-selection or run for office.
- 2024 was a busy election year, with over 120 Pathways to Politics alums running in local and state/ territory elections across Australia and 49 electoral successes achieved - a 41% success rate.
 Approximately 160 women complete the program annually. There are currently more than 600 alums nationally.

Pathways to Politics hosts a free online <u>Knowledge Hub</u> where women can find practical tools, information and inspiration to help them run for public office.



CWP BRITISH ISLES AND MEDITERRANEAN (BIM) REGION

- <u>Elect Her</u> offer a number of programmes, workshops, training sessions, and events to support and guide women through their political journey. They are multiparty, supporting all parties and none, and as such work across the political spectrum providing resources, help and community to any women wanting to get involved politically. They work across the three nations of Britain, with some specific resources focused on devolved political participation in Scotland and Wales.
 - The <u>Fund Her</u> grant is available for women from low income and under-represented backgrounds to provide financial support for the personal costs of standing for office.

Cyprus

- The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (<u>MIGS</u>), established in 2000 by a group of gender researchers, activists and academics, conducts workshops on gender equality and women's rights, focusing on building capacities for political participation. It campaigns for women's equal representation in parliament, organises stakeholder discussions for women on company boards and undertakes various research projects within this scope.
- At the Executive Level, the Republic of Cyprus, through the initiative of the Office of the Commissioner
 for Gender Equality, has developed the first National Action Plan (2021-2025) for the implementation
 of UN Resolution 1325, aiming to promote the full participation of women in conflict prevention,
 peacebuilding and peacekeeping negotiations. It supports female candidates in elections through training
 and mentoring programmes and empowers women to equally pursue decision-making positions both in
 Cyprus and internationally.

Isle of Man

'Women in Manx Politics' is an ongoing research project conducted by academics from University
College Isle of Man, Oxford Brookes University, and Edge Hill University. The project explores the
accessibility of politics to Manx women, barriers to their participation in politics in both the past and
present, and the patriarchal history of Tynwald.

United Kingdom

- <u>Women2Win</u> seeks to Inspire, encourage, and support Conservative women who want to take up public office in the UK.
- The Conservative Women's Organisation (<u>CWO</u>) provides training, mentoring and speaking opportunities to support women who wish to become involved at all levels of public life or in their local communities.
- <u>The Jo Cox Women in Leadership Programme</u> is a personal and political development programme for passionate and experienced women members of UK Labour who are ready to lead.
- The How to be a Parliamentary Candidate residential course is run by the Labour Women's Network UK and provides expert training and advice from trainers who have real world experience of the process and how to campaign within all election scenarios.
- <u>Centenary Action</u> fight for an equal and representative democracy where women are directly involved in the decisions that affect their lives. Their mission is a #GenderEqualParliament by 2028 aiming to achieve equal representation of women in parliament. They also run a range of campaigns and take actions to promote the representation of women.
- The All-Party Parliamentary Group (<u>APPG</u>) on Women in Parliament brings together MPs and peers to discuss and campaign for increasing the number of women in Parliament in all pares and to support women in Parliament and those standing for public office.
- The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading charity campaigning for gender equality and women's rights. Their campaigns focus on a fight for equal pay, securing equal power and challenging attitudes and changing minds. They also publish reports and publications to educate and lead the debate on gender equality.



JERSEY CASE STUDY **PLAN TO STAND CAMPAIGN**

The Plan to Stand campaign launched in 2024, ahead of Jersey's next election in 2026. The ethos has always been to encourage a general diversity of candidates to stand for election. Plan to Stand builds on their successful campaign leading into the 2022 election, where Jersey had 32 female and 62 male candidates (compared to 30 female and 61 male in the 2018 election)

The 4 core goals of Vote.je 'Plan to Stand' campaign are:

- That the 2026 elections increase public trust in the States Assembly
- That the 2026 elections are more competitive than previous elections.
- To inspire and empower more Islanders to stand for election.
- That the 2026 election candidates are representative of the diversity of Jersey's different communities.

In 2024, the foundations of the campaign were laid, which included:

- Updating the Vote.je website with important information for candidates and a vibrant branded campaign, featuring a diverse mix of faces to reflect the demographic make-up of Jersey and help Islanders to see 'people like me' - which includes an equal mix of men and women
- Further building (from that established in 2022) the email database of Islanders interested in standing for election and sending regular communications providing useful information and access to resources.
- Recorded a series of videos (see also: Anyone thinking of standing for election... | By Vote.je) featuring current States Members talking about their experiences of public office and why they would encourage others to consider standing. There are plans in place for more videos to be released including one Member focusing on why she believes it is a family friendly career choice



Vote.je is the official guide to voting and standing for election to the States Assembly - Jersey's elected parliament.

Jersey's most recent Island-wide election took place on 22 June 2022. Elections for States Members take



In 2025, as the campaign builds momentum, Jersey organised its first event which served as a prime opportunity to raise awareness of the role that female elected representatives can take in their community.

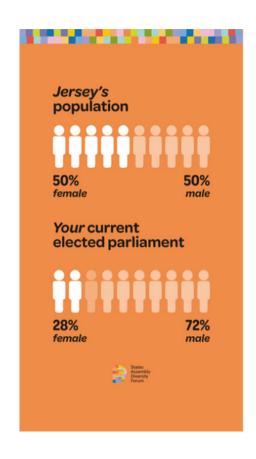
Designed to inspire and empower brand new female election candidates to come forward at the next election in 2026, the event focused on the Island's female States Members, past, present and future to celebrate the achievements of the pioneering women of Jersey politics. The event included a panel discussion and Q&A session with current States Members, followed by a guided tour of the States Chamber - the home of the States Assembly, highlighting watershed moments in Jersey's political history such as the election of Ivy Forster - the first ever female elected States Member.

For further details see here

There are several community groups that champion women and their participation in Island life, including:

- The Diversity Network
- Soroptimist International
- <u>Liberate</u>
- Jersey Women for Politics





CWP CANADA REGION

- <u>Equal Voice</u> is a Canada wide charity dedicated to improving gender representation in Canadian politics. They specifically have two Alberta Chapters, one in Calgary, and one in the Northern Alberta region. They offer grants and current research for women in politics.
- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (<u>FCM</u>) conducted a three-year program (2021-2024), Canadian Women in Local Leadership (CanWILL), dedicated to empowering women in politics. CanWill provided 18 grants up to \$10,000 to municipalities and their provincial partners who are focused on empowering women to pursue candidacy or sustain their leadership roles within local governance. More information on the program can be found here.
- The Groupe Femmes Politique Democratie (<u>GFPD</u>) is a club aimed at aspiring candidates, political staff, elected and former elected women, and activists from various political parties. It brings women together to exchange ideas, in complete confidentiality, on the practice of politics.
- <u>The Judy LaMarsh Fund</u> raises money for Liberal Party women candidates and help them get elected to parliament, through fundraising events, direct mailing and the Internet. The Liberal Party also provides subsidies for women candidates, including childcare expenses and travel costs.

Northwest Territories

- The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), in cooperation with several NGOs created a
 "made in the North" campaign school for women. The program is designed to help women overcome
 the challenges and barriers they face when considering running for elected office. Campaign School
 workshops have been delivered in NWT communities since 2007 by the GNWT, the Native Women's
 Association of the NWT and the Status of Women Council of the NWT.
- The <u>NWT Rebate Program</u> supports candidates by offering a rebate for their personal monetary contributions to their campaign. All personal monetary contributions that the candidate makes to their own campaign, up to a maximum of \$6,000, is eligible for a 50% rebate, up to a maximum of \$3,000.
- The <u>She Can</u> Campaign is a program offered by the Government of the Northwest Territories (NWT). It seeks to increase women's representation in political leadership at all levels of government across the NWT.

Ontario

• The Ontario Legislative Assembly Women's Forum organised an engaging full day event in Toronto on March 4, 2025, bringing together 124 young women and gender diverse individuals. This initiative was designed to encourage active citizenship and foster public engagement through education and empowerment. One participant, aged 18 to 30, was chosen from each provincial riding to represent their community. The participants also had the opportunity to witness parliament in action, interact with influential women from Ontario and key parliamentary figures, and gain an exclusive, behind-the-scenes view of the Ontario legislative process.

CWP CARIBBEAN, AMERICAS AND ATLANTIC (CAA) REGION

• The Young Women in Leadership (<u>YWiL</u>) initiative is implemented across the Caribbean. The Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) and <u>ParlAmericas</u>, in partnership with the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, hosted the first-ever YWiL Conference in Trinidad and Tobago in 2020. The programme is designed to support young women leaders in building knowledge, skills, and networks necessary for their work as current and future change makers.

Trinidad and Tobago

- The Young Women Empowered to Serve (YES!) Leadership Programme, developed by the Women Parliamentarians of Trinidad and Tobago (WPTT) and hosted in partnership with the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, is designed to inspire and equip young women between the ages of 18-30, for active roles in Parliament and other political decision-making spaces. The Programme is a pragmatic blend of professional development, mentorship and networking in which young women are exposed to the Legislative process, Diplomacy and Protocol, Leadership, Advocacy and the intersection between Gender and Sustainable Development. The apex of the YES! Leadership Programme is a parliamentary debate allowing participants to utilise the skills they have learnt.
- <u>CIWiL</u> and the <u>CIWiL Trinidad and Tobago National Chapter</u> host free Candidate Training Workshops
 for prospective women candidates, their teams, and women interested in leadership. These training
 workshops have been offered virtually and in-person on several occasion, ahead of Trinidad Local
 Government Elections and Tobago House of Assembly Elections.

Saint Lucia

<u>CIWiL</u> and the CIWiL Saint Lucia National Chapter (<u>CIWiL SLU</u>) organised a 10 week training seminar
in 2023 for women that are interested in politics and holding leadership positions. The purpose of this
seminar was to boost the confidence of women who want to take up these posts in politics and help
build their leadership skills. Some of the activities were a mock campaign, election, and a parliamentary
debate held in the Saint Lucia House of Assembly.

Belize

• The Women in Politics (<u>WIP</u>) project was an initiative of the National Women's Commission (NWC) that was designed to increase awareness of women to stand for elections and transform the political process at all levels of government. This initiative was active from 2009 until 2017.

CWP INDIA REGION

- The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, through <u>National Youth Parliament Scheme</u>, organises several workshops, seminars, and educational campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of women's participation in politics. Through these events the benefits of diverse representation and the need to overcome barriers that discourage women from entering politics are also highlighted.
- The Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (<u>PRIDE</u>) conducts research and
 analysis on various aspects of women's participation in politics, including barriers to entry, trends
 in representation, and the impact of gender-sensitive policies. It also organises training programs,
 workshops, and seminars aimed at building the capacity of women interested in politics.
- The Election Commission of India conducts electoral training programs for women candidates, electoral officers, and political party workers.
- The political parties in the country have established women's wings (like All India Mahila Congress, BJP Mahila Morcha) which promote women candidates for contesting elections. Local charities & Groups like SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), Pradan (Professional Assistance for Development Action) provides leadership training and support for women, including those interested in political participation.

CWP PACIFIC REGION

- The Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships (<u>PacWIP</u>) site has been designed as a tool to promote women in politics, including women candidates.
- The <u>Pacific Women's Political Empowerment Research Group</u> conduct research and engage in development practice that will support increased political representation of women in the Pacific region, particularly focusing on PNG, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands.
- Pacific Women Lead (PWL) at the Pacific Community (SPC) has a goal for Pacific women and girls to
 have their equal share in resources, opportunities and decision-making available to men and boys. One of
 the themes of this project is to promote women leadership. The PWL at SPC programme provides grant
 support to civil societies, other partners, and SPC member governments. The programme also provides
 support to multiple programmes and divisions that focus on women in leadership activities. These
 include:
 - SPC Principal Strategic Lead Pacific Women and Girls
 - Women in Leadership (Wil) programme
 - Supporting the annual Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting, the Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women (held every 3 years as part of the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and other events).

Fiji

• The <u>Soqosoqo Vaka-Marama</u>, <u>FemLink Pacific</u>, and Fiji Women Rights Movement co-host the <u>Fiji Women in Politics Forum</u> and this forum has the overall aim of increasing women's participation in politics due to the overall under-representation of women in all spheres of society.

FIJI CASE STUDY

In Fiji, various institutions, organisations, and advocacy groups work to promote gender equality in politics. Whilst progress has been made in increasing women's representation in Parliament, challenge such as cultural norms, gender bias, and political barriers exist. Strengthening women's political engagement is essential for advancing gender equality and ensuring diverse perspectives in decision-making at all levels. This is essential for achieving Fiji's Sustainable Development Goal 5.5, which calls for full and effective participation of women and equal leadership opportunities in political, economic, and public decision-making.

The 2022 election candidate distribution by gender and age group reveals a significant gender imbalance, with male candidates outnumbering female candidates in all age groups except for the 80+ category. An interesting deduction can be made about the 80+ age group, where female representation is at its highest, indicating that women may enter politics later in life. The gender imbalance underscores the need for targeted policies and initiatives to promote greater female participation in political leadership, particularly among younger and middle-aged demographics.

Fig 1.1 illustrates the percentage trends of male and female election candidates by age group in the year 2022.

Fig 1.1: Candidate Statistics by Gender and Age Group

Candidate Statistics by Gender and Age Group, year 2018											
2018 General Election	Age	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	80+	Total	
	Female	0	6	10	16	14	7	3	0	56	
	%	0	37.5	33.3	30.8	16.7	14.9	60	0	23.8	
	Male	1	10	20	36	70	40	2	0	179	
	%	100	62.5	66.7	69.2	83.3	85.1	40	0	76.2	
	Total	1	16	30	52	84	47	5	0	235	
Candidate Statistics by Gender and Age Group, year 2022											
2022 General Election	Age	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	80+	Total	
	Female	0	2	8	18	13	10	2	1	54	
	%	0	13.3	24.2	26.1	11.2	10.4	16.7	50	15.7	
	Male	0	13	25	51	103	86	10	1	289	
	%	0	86.7	75.8	74.0	88.8	89.5	83.3	50	84.3	
	Total	0	15	33	69	116	96	12	2	343	

Source: Fijian Election Office, 2018 and 2022 Supervisor of Election (SoE) Report

INITIATIVES

The Fijian Parliament was one of the first countries to incorporate gender scrutiny into its parliamentary processes thorough its Standing Orders. Specifically, Standing Order 110 (2) mandates that committees must consider gender equality when conducting activities, ensuring that the potential impact of a legislation or policy on both men and women are explored equally. In 2017, the Fijian Parliament introduced a Gender Toolkit to support MPs and committee staff in conducting gender assessments during legislative reviews and other oversight work. The toolkit serves as a practical guide for scrutinising legislation from a gender perspective and is also helpful for the public when making submissions to Committees.

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Fiji Group has been actively engaged in several initiatives to promote women's representation and participation in politics:

- <u>3rd Pacific Women in Power Forum</u>: In February 2024, CWP Fiji Group Members attended this forum in Auckland, New Zealand. The event facilitated interactions among Pacific women MPs, allowing them to share best practices and discuss leadership challenges. Notably, Fijian MP Hon. Lynda Tabuya volunteered to mentor young women MPs in the region.
- Survey Participation on Gender-Based Challenges: In May 2024, key members, including Deputy Speaker and CWP Fiji Group Chair Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua and Deputy Chair Hon. Premila Kumar, participated in a survey on 'Sexism, Harassment, and Violence Against Women in Parliaments'. This study was a joint effort by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)
- <u>Publication Initiative</u>: The CWP Fiji Group is planning to publish a booklet titled 'Celebrating Women in Parliament from 1966-2024'. This initiative aims to increase women's representation in Parliament by 30 percent in the 2026 General Election and empower women throughout the region.
- <u>2024 Women's Mock Parliament</u>: The event was held in 29-31 July 2024 in the Fijian Parliament, Suva. It is an important initiative aimed at empowering aspiring women politicians and national leaders. The event offered a unique opportunity for Fiji's aspiring young leaders to become future leaders and to highlight women's leadership at the national level, empower women's participation in parliamentary democracy, and encourage women's involvement in Fiji's electoral process. A total of 58 women from across the country and from all walks of life participated, and they were also given insights into the workings of Parliament, its processes and rules.
- The Parliament Speaker's Debate: The Speaker's Debate, an initiative to promote the 2030 Agenda and the (Sustainable Development Goals) SDGs was revived in 2024. It serves as a platform for discussing and debating significant national issues related to SDGs. The Parliament of Fiji facilitates this panel discussion and open forum to foster dialogue on key policy matters affecting Fiji. Two Speaker's Debates were held in 2024, the first in June focusing on the theme. "Women's Public Leadership: Empowering Women's Participation at All Levels of Decision-Making", and the second in October on the theme "Drugs The Evidence is Clear: Invest in Prevention".

The Fijian Parliament has made significant strides in promoting gender equality by integrating gender considerations into its legislative processes, such as Standing Order 110 (2) and the Gender Toolkit. The CWP Fiji Group actively engages in initiatives to enhance women's political participation, including forums, surveys and publications.

Events like the Women's Mock Parliament and the Speaker's Debate further empowers women in politics, reflecting the Fiji Parliament's commitment to gender equality and increased representation at all levels.

CWP SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION

Singapore

- Association of Women for Action and Research (<u>AWARE</u>) is the leading women's rights and gender
 equality group in Singapore and it works to identify and eliminate barriers through research and
 advocacy, education and training, and support services. As an NGO that actively advocates for gender
 equality and women's rights, it shares its research, knowledge, experience and expertise with policy
 makers and politicians on specific issues to promote a fairer, more equal, more inclusive and safer society,
 regardless of gender.
- People's Action Party (<u>PAP</u>) Women's Wing is committed to work with Singaporeans and partners to champion women's development. Starting from 3 women MPs in 1984 to 23 women PAP MPs in 2024, the party recognises the importance of women's political participation to champion women's and Singapore's development, and pledges to push for more women representation in Parliament.
 - The Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system was introduced in 1988, along with party support for female politicians. Unlike the Single Member Constituencies (SMCs), where individual candidates contest elections, the GRC system requires most constituencies to be represented by teams of candidates. This system was originally designed to promote racial diversity in parliament, but it also helped mitigate biases against female biases against female candidates.

Selangor

- The Selangor Women's Assembly (<u>Siwanis</u>) proposed a bold initiative to ensure 50% female representation in politics during its 2024 sitting held at the States Legislative Assembly. This proposal aims to address the persistent gender imbalance in political representation, urging the state government to consider concrete measures to achieve gender equality in political leadership.
- Wanita Berdaya Selangor (<u>WBS</u>) is a women empowerment organisation that aims to empower women
 in Selangor. This includes publishing scholarly materials, developing educational and leadership modules
 to empower Selangor women as it is committed to gender equality and sustainable development in
 Selangor.

GLOBAL ORGANISATIONS

- The Inter-Parliamentary Union (<u>IPU</u>) has been tracking and empowering women parliamentarians for decades, convinced of the link between strong democracies and gender equality. Their work focuses on three main objectives: increasing the number of women in parliament through well-designed quotas and parliamentary caucuses; supporting women in parliament; and transforming parliaments into gender-sensitive institutions that deliver on women's rights.
- The United Nations Development Programme (<u>UNDP</u>) works with governments worldwide to combat discriminatory legislation and policies and improve gender equality outcomes in policymaking by creating structures and strategic plans to enhance women's political participation and gender equality. UNDP has facilitated the creation of such systems in many countries, recognising their essential role in empowering women as parliamentary representatives, supporting the emergence of gender-sensitive parliaments, and adopting gender-sensitive policy and legislative frameworks.
 - UNDP Maldives compiled guidance and research on <u>Temporary Special Measures for Gender Equality in Public Administration</u> and it highlights the commitment to amplifying political engagement and representation of Maldivian women.
- National Democratic Institute (<u>NDI</u>) works to support women to overcome the barriers to their equal
 and active political participation. Its multi-national approach to women's political empowerment and
 democratic development reinforces the message that regardless of the democratic model, the inclusion
 of women as equal participants in decision making is a core principle that should be shared by all
 democracies.
- <u>UN Women</u>, under their Women's Leadership and Political Participation programme provide training for women political candidates to help build their capacities and offer voter and civic education and sensitisation campaigns on gender equality. They back gender equality advocates in calling on political parties, governments and others to do their part in empowering women. Other initiatives encourage young men and women to engage in advocacy around making gender equality measures central to public policymaking.
- The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) works to strengthen democratic processes in different countries and regions, focusing on governance, representation, and women's political empowerment. WFD's work considers the social, cultural, economic, and political factors that stop women from fully participating in politics and governance. WFD works with political parties, men and key stakeholders who have an impact on women's opportunities to take part in politics and public life. They also offer services just for women which allows emerging leaders to further develop their skills in a supportive environment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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