

## Effects of quota in the electoral system to the advancement of gender equality and women's rights

**Gender-balanced decision making is instrumental for advancing development, democracy, and security for all citizens.** As women represent half of the global population, it is critical to ensure women equal representation in politics.

Gender quota in politics involve setting up a percentage or number for the representation of a certain group most often in the form of a minimum percentage. Quotas are used as a measure to **increase the representation of excluded or under-represented groups in politics.**

Quotas compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats.

In the past decades, gender quotas have been introduced in numerous countries around the world of various political and socio-economical contexts. **Half of the countries of the world today use some type of electoral quota.** Present are three main types of political quotas:

- **Voluntary party quotas** have been adopted by political parties in many countries and involve a party committing itself to nominating a certain percentage of female candidates for electoral lists.
- **Candidate quotas** are required by the law of a country and stipulate that a certain number of candidate positions must be reserved for women. They sometimes include conditions on the position of women on the electoral list, for instance by requiring that every second entry on the list must be a woman.
- **Reserved seats** are positions for which only female candidates can compete and are used as a more direct way of regulating the number of women in elected positions.

The low proportion of women in many countries is not a consequence of an absence of willing female candidates. The barriers to women getting elected is negative attitudes towards female leaders, failure by political parties and systems to promote female candidates and the existence of the overall systemic discrimination of women which effectively prevent women to invest funds and time in their political engagement.

Gender quotas are effective in changing number and % of legislators, and over time, changing attitudes towards woman legislators. In addition, quotas improve is the extent to which different groups obtain representation.

There is also strong evidence that voters' willingness to vote for women are strongly and positively changed by persistent exposure to women leaders.

Quotas can be an effective temporary measure that will allow the erosion of the false negative attitudes that act as barriers to women representation.

**Some of the positive effects of gender quotas:**

- Quotas directly increase women representation in leadership positions.
- Quotas may affect bias and discrimination towards women leaders in the short term and changing attitudes and social norms in the long term.
- Quotas have many positive externalities. Women leaders may serve as role models for other aspiring women. Role models can show the returns to a person achieving a certain position.
- Quota can improve motivation of women by changing a woman's own implicit biases on her expected performance compared to men.
- Quota induced female leadership may increase entry into politics by women, and success in that realm, by overcoming self-imposed stereotypes.
- Women may underinvest in their own human capital if they believe leadership opportunities are unavailable, thus quota can improve investments into the women human capital.

**Discussion questions:**

Key question is whether the reduction in discrimination from quotas can translate into increased votes for female candidates, presenting a long-term impact of quotas on female representation and female leadership?

Second question equally important is to what extent and how effective, female leaders represent women's rights? Women do make different policy choices than men. There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrate that men and women differ in policy preferences.

Final question is how effective are gender quotas in ensuring representation of Roma women? They are underrepresented among women and among Roma. Even the countries with gender quota and minority quota do not account sufficiently to Roma women political representation.