

Training Course on Forging Pathways to Gender Equality in Statistical Leadership

Module 2: Universal concepts and issues and the global picture of gender, gender equality and women's empowerment

2-1. Module Objectives

By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

- Define the concepts of gender, gender equality, gender parity, gender issues and women's empowerment.
- Explain the cross-cutting nature of gender issues across the SDGs.
- Cite and discuss gender statistics that illustrate gender disparities in leadership in general and statistical leadership in particular.
- Debate the reasons for the gender gaps in leadership.

2-2. Agenda for Module 2

SUGGESTED TIME (40 mins)	TOPIC/ACTIVITY
5 minutes	1- Setting the stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Icebreaker 1: Women's representation at the highest level in NSOs: Global Picture • A closer look into the gender representation in NSOs
5 minutes	2- Gender, gender equality and gender issues: an Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basics: defining gender, gender equality, gender parity and women's empowerment • Gender parity/disparity: Understanding the concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Icebreaker 2: Visualizing gender disparity • Gender issues targeted in the SDGs • Gender issues related to women's empowerment and global policy instruments that address these
25 minutes	3- Understanding gender gaps in leadership positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quick look at what data say about gender disparities • Gender disparity in leadership: The whys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Debate this! • Explaining gender gaps in leadership
5 minutes	4- Women's empowerment: Aiming for gender parity in leadership positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving gender parity in the UN: An illustration of how to go about it in an organization • Improving gender parity: How NOT to go about it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Icebreaker 3: 'Tokenism'

2-3. Setting the stage

2-3-1. Icebreaker!

This is the first substantive discussion of the course, so to pique interest and raise participants' awareness of gender gaps in statistical leadership, this module will start with an icebreaker.

- Suggested modality: Question and Answer round with participants to stimulate their minds.
 - Suggested tool: MS PowerPoint Presentation, Slido/Mentimeter (accessing links or QR codes through mobile phones)
- The suggested icebreaker is described below.
 - The questions will be shown as PowerPoint slides, one at a time. Participants will have 10 seconds to respond.
 - Two possible response modes are using Slido/Mentimeter **or** raising hands. For the latter, the facilitator will record the responses on a whiteboard or flipchart.
 - Discussion of answers: After all questions have been asked and responses recorded, answers will be discussed. A PowerPoint slide will show the chart in Figure 2-1.

Icebreaker 1: The Questions

Let's start with women's representation at the highest level within NSOs!

Q1: IN 2021, what was the share of national statistical offices (NSOs) headed by women globally?

- A. less than 25% B. close to 50% C. close to 75% D. more than 90%

Q2: In 2021, which region had the highest share of NSOs headed by women?

- A. Africa B. Asia C. Europe D. North America

Q3: In 2021, which region had the lowest share of NSOs headed by women?

- A. Africa B. Asia C. Europe D. North America

Icebreaker 1: The Answers

Source: Share of national statistical organizations headed by women, by region and income group (2021) (Refer to Figure 2-1 below.)

Q1: In 2021, what was the share of national statistical offices (NSOs) headed by women globally?

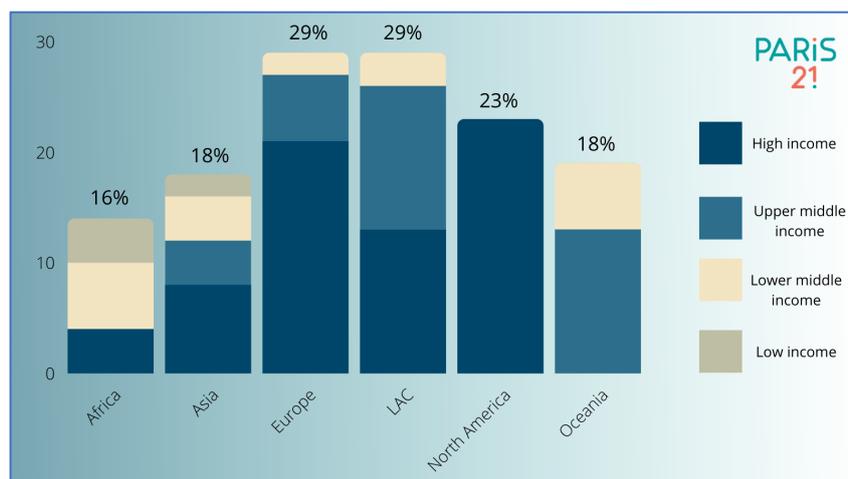
Answer: (A)- Less than a quarter of top leadership positions (Director General, Chief Statistician, or the like) among national or federal statistical offices (NSOs) worldwide are occupied by women.

Q2: Which region had the highest share of NSOs headed by women?

Answer: (C) Europe (and LAC) have the highest share, at 29%, but this is still well below the 50% gender parity share.

Q3: Which region had the lowest share of NSOs headed by women?

Answer: Africa has the lowest share at 16%.



Source: Suchodolska, Liliana & A. Misra. 2021. *The leadership gap in statistics— where are the women?*

Figure 2-1. Share of national statistical organizations headed by women by region and income group (2021)

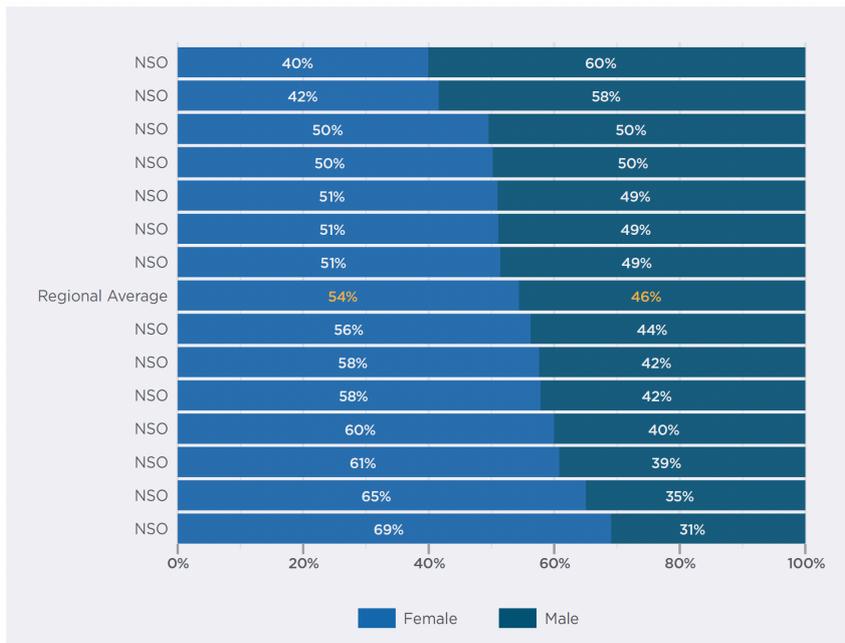
2-3-2. Looking closer: Survey of 13,300 National Statistical Office (NSO) Employees in 14 Latin American and Caribbean Countries

The survey was conducted between November 2021 and July 2022. It aims to gather data and information about the demographics, attitudes, competence, and management practices of statistics officials in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The data analysis reveals that even though women and men are as effective in leadership positions as deemed by employees, women are underrepresented in such positions. The Report¹ on the survey provides statistics on the extent of gender disparity in the 14 countries covered.

- (a) Most NSO employees are women (54 percent). Refer to Figure 2-2.
- (b) Women are overrepresented in lower ranks and underrepresented in higher ranks. Women are dominant in administrative support and, to a lesser extent, technical-professional ranks but underrepresented in managerial ranks. Refer to Figure 2-3.
- (c) In most NSOs, most managers are men, which is remarkable because most employees are women. There are only two countries where the share of female managers is higher than that of male employees. Refer to Figure 2-4.

NOTE: Training convenors for a country course could consider replicating this survey, in which the NSO and the other statistical units in the national statistical system are the responding units. The results can be presented in Module 3 of the course.

¹ IDB. 2023. [Making National Statistical Offices Work Better: Evidence from a Survey of 13,300 National Statistical Office \(NSO\) Employees in 14 Latin American and Caribbean Countries.](#)



Notes: Each horizontal bar represents one NSO in the LAC sample. The names and locations of NSOs are not identified in this report to safeguard anonymity.

Figure 2-2. Percentage of women and men among NSO employees by country

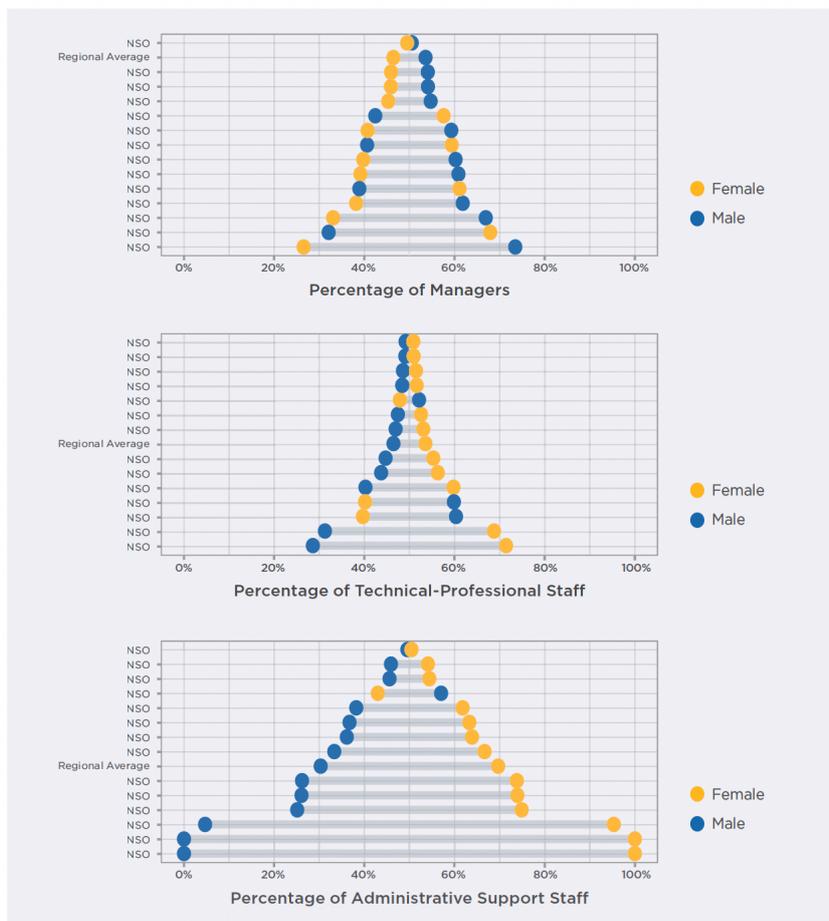


Figure 2-3. Percentage of women and men in different ranks by country

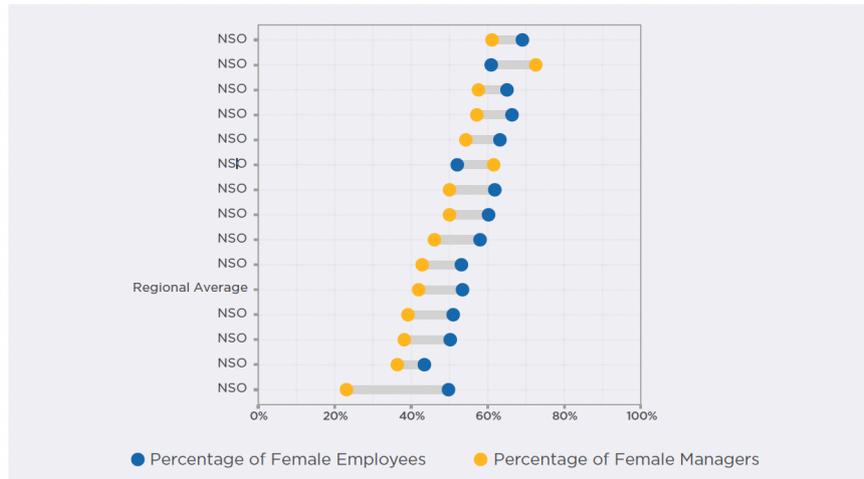


Figure 2-4. Gender representation in managerial ranks, by overall percentage of women by country

2-4. Gender, gender equality, gender parity, women’s empowerment and gender issues: an overview

This subtopic covers definitions of key terms, gender issues targeted in the SDGs, and main gender equality instruments, including the Beijing PFA and CEDAW.

- **Suggested modality:** MS PowerPoint Presentation
 - Suggested tools/materials: Infographic; information handouts; PDF links to reports/resources

2-4-1. The Basics: Defining Gender, Gender Equality, Gender Parity and Women’s Empowerment

2-4-1-1. Gender

Source: UN Women ([OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming](#))

Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes a society considers appropriate for men and women at a given time. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and between men. These attributes, opportunities, and relationships are socially constructed and learned through socialization. They are context/ time-specific and changeable.

Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, and decision-making opportunities.

Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, as are other critical criteria for socio-cultural analysis, including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, etc.

2-4-1-2. Gender Equality

Gender equality (equality between women and men) refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same; it means that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are considered, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen as a human rights issue and a precondition for and indicator of sustainable people-centered development.

2-4-1-3. Gender Parity

Gender parity refers to the equal representation and participation of women and men in various areas of society. As a goal, gender parity aims to ensure that opportunities, rights, and responsibilities are not determined by gender and is a critical component of broader gender equality efforts. It involves achieving balanced ratios of women to men in education, employment, and political and leadership representation, thereby promoting fairness and equality.

When the ratios of women to men are not balanced, we say that there is a gender “gap” or **gender disparity**.

Icebreaker 2: Visualizing gender disparity

Question: Referring to Figure 2-3, which rank exhibits the most significant gender disparity?

Answer: Administrative support

2-4-1-4. Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment enables women to have more control over their lives and participate fully in all aspects of society. It involves creating an environment where women can make choices, have equal opportunities, and access resources and benefits. Critical elements of women's empowerment include:

1. **Economic Empowerment:** Ensuring women have equal access to resources, job opportunities, and fair wages. This also includes promoting women's entrepreneurship and financial independence.
2. **Education:** Providing equal access to education and encouraging girls to pursue higher education and vocational training. Education empowers women by giving them the knowledge and skills needed to succeed.
3. **Political Empowerment:** Encouraging women's participation in politics and decision-making at all levels, from local communities to national governments. This involves ensuring women have the right to vote, run for office, and hold leadership positions.
4. **Health and Well-being:** Ensuring women have access to healthcare services, reproductive rights, and the ability to make decisions about their bodies. This includes addressing maternal health, family planning, and safe and affordable healthcare access.
5. **Social and Cultural Empowerment:** Challenging and changing societal norms and stereotypes that limit women's roles and opportunities. This includes promoting gender equality, preventing violence against women, and supporting women's rights and freedoms.
6. **Legal Rights:** Ensuring women have equal rights under the law, including property rights, inheritance rights, and protection against discrimination and violence.

Overall, women's empowerment is about creating a society where women are valued equally and have the freedom and opportunities to reach their full potential.

2-4-2. Gender issues targeted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Around the world, governments have made legally binding commitments to respect, protect and fulfill women's human rights. The 2030 Agenda builds on these commitments, recognizing the indivisibility and interdependence of *rights*, the interlinkages between *gender equality* and the three dimensions of *sustainable development*, and the need for an integrated approach to implementation. Maintaining the focus on human rights will be critical to keeping the achievement of the SDGs on track and ensuring that the means to achieve them respond to the experiences of women and girls on the ground.

In the lives of women and girls, different dimensions of well-being and deprivation are deeply intertwined: A girl born into a poor household (Target 1.2) and forced into early marriage (Target 5.3), for example, is more likely to drop out of school (Target 4.1), give birth at an early age (Target 3.7), suffer complications during childbirth (Target 3.1), and experience violence (Target 5.2) than a girl from a higher-income household who marries at a later age. At the end of this chain of events, the girl born into poverty stands almost no chance of moving out of it. During implementation, policymakers must aim to break this vicious cycle and respond to the interdependent experiences of exclusion and deprivation by providing integrated responses: A woman leaving an abusive relationship, for example, needs access to justice (Target 16.3) as well as a safe place to live (Target 11.1), medical care (Target 3.8), and a decent job (Target 8.5) so she can maintain an adequate standard of living for herself and any dependents she may have.

This means that while progress on SDG 5 will be critical, it cannot be the sole focus of gender-responsive implementation, monitoring and accountability. Progress on some fronts may be undermined by regression or stagnation on others, and potential synergies may be lost if siloed approaches to implementation take precedence over integrated, multi-sectoral strategies. This is why there is both a stand-alone goal on gender equality as well as integrating gender equality across other goals and targets, drawing attention to the gender dimensions of poverty, hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment, climate change, environmental degradation, urbanization, conflict and peace, and financing for development.

NOTE: Information on progress on SDG5 in the country will be provided in Module 3.

2-4-3. Gender issues related to leadership and global policy instruments that address these

Gender issues at the leadership level relate to the underrepresentation of women in positions of power and decision-making, as well as the need to remove barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women.

Women are often excluded from decision-making processes and may face career advancement barriers. This can be due to a variety of factors, including gender stereotypes, unconscious bias, and a lack of support for work-life balance. Gender issues at the leadership level can have significant implications for society as a whole, as they can impact policies and decisions that affect the lives of women and girls.

2-4-3-1. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

In 1995, 189 governments were joined by 17,000 participants and 30,000 non-governmental activists in Beijing for the opening of the [Fourth World Conference on Women](#). For two weeks, government

representatives worked on producing a document of agreed written targets for achieving gender equality. Through their lobbying efforts, civil society pressured governments to make meaningful commitments that would ensure gender equity across all domains for all individuals. The outcome of this momentous conference was the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) (BPfA)-- “the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women’s rights” (UN Women).

The BPfA identifies 12 critical areas of concern (See Figure 2-5). The areas of concern relating to women’s leadership are:

- Women in power and decision-making
- Education and training of women
- Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

"In each critical area of concern, the problem is diagnosed, and strategic objectives are proposed with concrete actions to be taken by various actors to achieve those objectives" (BPfA). In this way, the BPfA is a comprehensive guide to understanding and combating the critical barriers to gender equality.

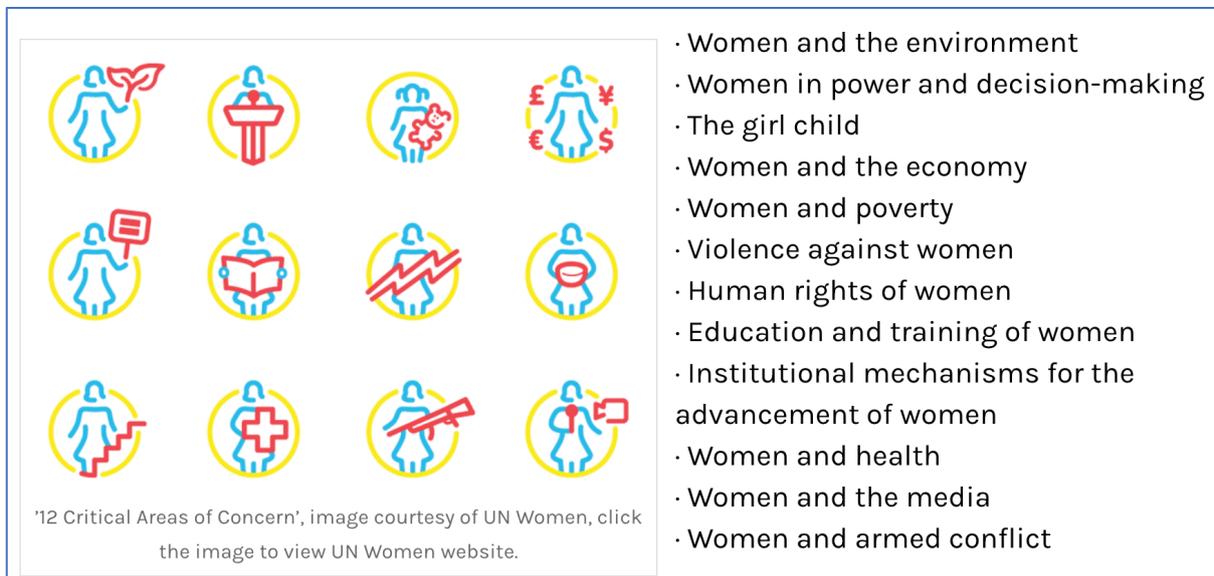


Figure 2-5. Twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

Every five years, starting in 2000, a [review of the progress](#) in attaining gender equality in the areas of concern of the BPfA is conducted by countries and at the regional level. The reviews and appraisals are discussed at the year’s Commission on the Status of Women² (CSW) session, where countries declare the progress towards achieving gender equality and pledge to undertake further action to ensure the full and accelerated implementation of the BPfA.

Note: Course materials for Module 3 will include the review of the country's progress in Beijing +25 (2020) during Module 3.

2-4-3-2. Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Described as an

² The United Nations [Commission on the Status of Women](#) was established in 1946 to monitor women's situation and promote women's rights.

international bill of rights for women, it was instituted on 3 September 1981 and ratified by 189 states. The Convention was the culmination of more than thirty years of work by the CSW.

[CEDAW](#) has been a vital tool for advancing women's rights and gender equality worldwide, providing the basis for judicial decisions and constitutional, legal and policy reforms at the country level. Because of CEDAW, women and girls worldwide have been empowered to claim their human rights. Countries have adopted equal opportunity acts aimed at improving women's position, established quotas to increase the number of women in elected office, and enacted new legislation and action plans to prevent and address violence against women. In many countries, CEDAW has helped strengthen provisions in constitutions guaranteeing equality between women and men and providing a constitutional basis for the protection of women's human rights. Legislation prohibiting general discrimination and specific areas such as employment has become a standard component of legal frameworks.

CEDAW is overseen by a treaty body called the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The Committee is responsible for reviewing each State party's progress and challenges in implementing the Convention. After the CEDAW Committee reviews a State party's progress and the challenges it experiences in implementing the Convention, the Committee issues its Concluding Observations, which provide specific guidance on how this performance could be improved in the national context. They note successful steps that have been taken to achieve gender equality, then identify the most critical measures that need to be taken in the future to implement the Convention.

The Concluding Observations are significant resources for gender equality work. They provide authoritative guidance about what CEDAW requires in individual country contexts and are valuable advocacy tools for gender equality advocates to press for needed changes in their countries.

Further information on the CEDAW and its related processes can be found @ <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/cedaw-human-rights/faq#whatiscedaw>.

NOTE: In Module 3, materials to be made available will be the latest national CEDAW report and the Committee's Concluding Observations.

2-5. Understanding gender gaps in leadership positions

This subtopic provides data-based examples of gender disparities and the challenges of empowering women. An initial exploration of reasons for the gender gaps in leadership will be undertaken. The UN Strategy for Gender Parity is introduced as a powerful way of attaining gender parity in leadership positions. It also features a discussion to raise participants' awareness of 'tokenism'.

- Suggested modality: MS PowerPoint Presentations, Debate and Argumentation, Icebreaker

2-5-1. A quick look at data that reveal gender disparities in leadership

According to the [2023 Gender Snapshot](#), globally, women hold just:



Furthermore,



For more information on the following, refer to [Facts and Figures: Women's Leadership and Political Participation](#):

- [Women in executive government positions](#)
- [Women in national parliaments](#)
- [Women in local government](#)

2-5-2. Gender disparities in leadership—the WHYS: Debate this!

The proposed structure of the debate is as follows:

- There will be a moderator
 - Briefly introduce the topic.
 - State the importance of understanding gender gaps in leadership.
 - Outline the rules and format of the debate.
- There will be two teams:
 - Men participants - proposing factors contributing to gender gaps
 - Women participants - arguing against the proposed common factors or suggesting alternatives
- Main arguments
 - Men participants' presentation:
 - Detailed argument on each factor (e.g., societal conditioning, lack of mentorship, biased corporate policies).
 - Presentation of data and examples supporting each factor.
 - Women participants' Presentation:
 - Counter-arguments to the men's participants' points.
 - Presentation of their viewpoint with support (e.g., increasing female leadership in specific sectors, the impact of educational choices).
- Rebuttal
 - Address specific points by the opposing team.
 - Reinforce their arguments with additional evidence or clarification.
- Conclusion by the Moderator:
 - Sum up the points made by both teams.

2-5-3. Explaining gender gaps in leadership

Several factors contribute to these gaps:

- One factor is **gender stereotypes**, which are deeply ingrained cultural beliefs about the roles and abilities of men and women. These stereotypes can lead to biased recruitment and promotion processes and performance evaluations. For example, women may be seen as less competent or less committed to their careers than men, even if they have the same qualifications and experience.
- Another factor is the need for more **support for work-life balance**. Women are often expected to take on most caregiving responsibilities, making advancing their careers difficult. This can be due to a lack of policies and practices that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements or parental leave.
- A third factor is the persistence of **gender-based discrimination and bias**. Women may face harassment, bullying, or other forms of discrimination in the workplace, which can make it difficult for them to succeed in leadership positions. This can be due to a lack of awareness or enforcement of anti-discrimination policies, as well as a lack of support for victims of discrimination.

These factors contribute to the gender gaps in leadership, which have significant societal implications. When women are excluded from leadership positions, their perspectives and experiences are not represented in decision-making processes. This can lead to policies and decisions that do not consider the needs and interests of women and girls. Addressing the gender gaps in leadership is therefore essential for achieving gender equality and promoting the well-being of all members of society.

2-6. Women's Empowerment: Aiming for Gender Parity in Leadership

2-6-1. Improving gender parity in the UN: An illustration of how to go about it in an organization

The Situation:

In the United Nations, progress in attaining gender parity within entities and across the staffing categories from 2019 to 2021 is summarized in Figure 2-5.

Significant progress has been made over the period. However, as the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN System reports (refer to Figure 2.6):

"... challenges remain. Throughout the reporting period, women's representation continued to be highest at entry levels, specifically P-1 and P-2. However, this representation gradually declined as positions ascended to middle to senior management levels. Gaps persist at the P-4 level and above, with a noticeable gap at the D-2 level. The overall representation of women continues to be negatively correlated with seniority."

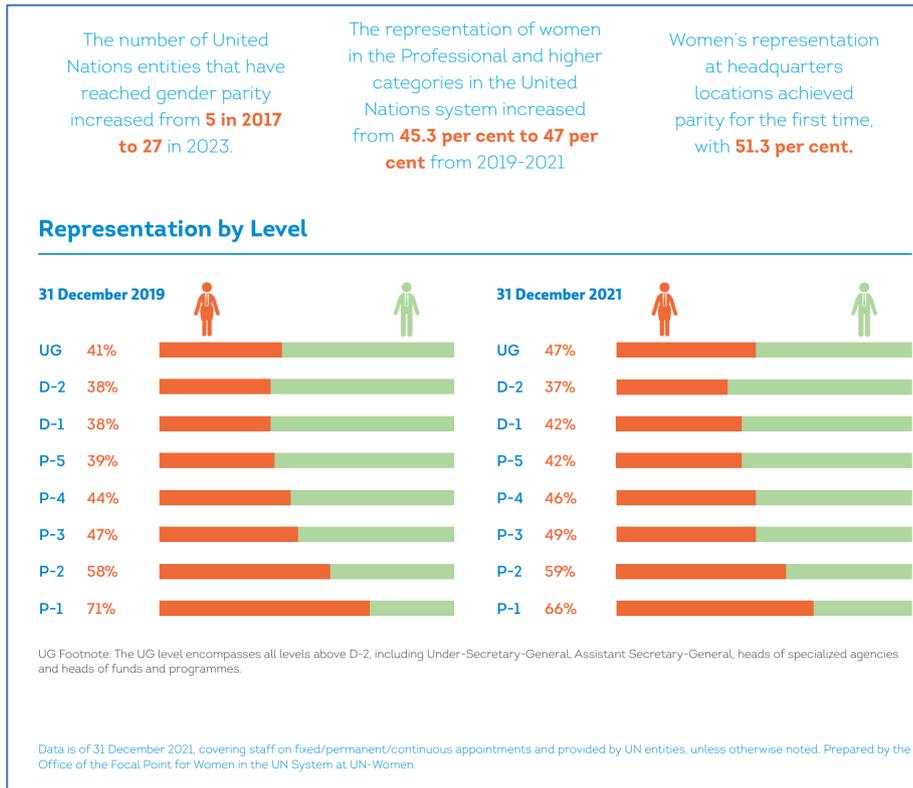


Figure 2-5. Progress in achieving gender parity in the United Nations: 2019-2021

Source: Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN System, UN Women

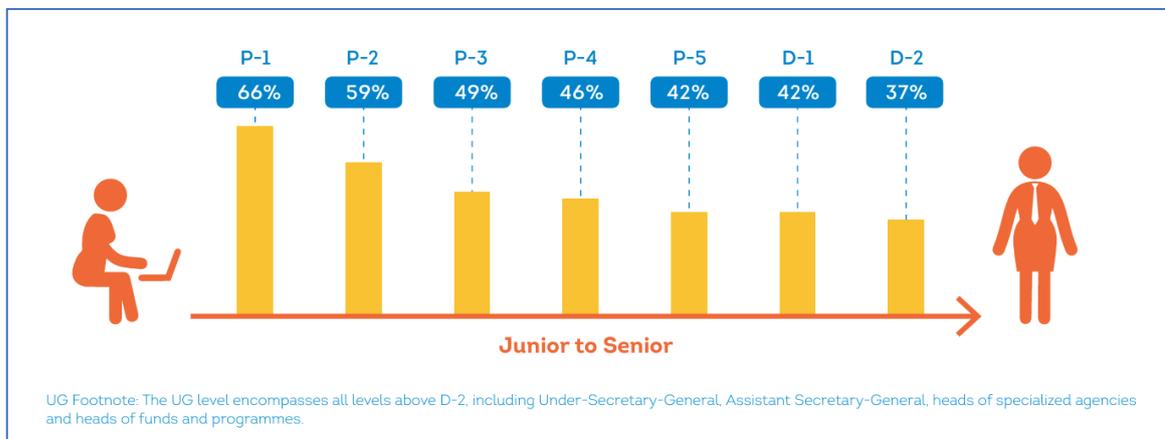


Figure 2-6. Representation of Women in the UN System, by position: 2019-2021

Source: Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN System, UN Women

The Solution:

The Secretary-General's [System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity](#) includes six UN Women-specific recommendations found in the [UN Women's Implementation Plan \(2017\)](#):

1. Good practices guidelines for creating an inclusive organizational culture;
2. Collaborate with civil society partners to encourage shadow reporting on the overall strategy;
3. Implement a dedicated strategy to significantly increase the numbers of women peacekeepers and police in peacekeeping missions;
4. Launch a new public information, social, and digital media campaign promoting women in UN field missions;
5. Establish a Database of Women National Officers;
6. Develop a communications strategy, including internal and external messaging.

Source: UN Women. 2017. [System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity: UN Women Implementation Plan](#).

NOTE: Course convenors and participants should consider the UN Strategy for Gender Parity and the UN Women Implementation Plan when developing their Capstone Project (Module 7).

2-6-2. Improving gender parity: How NOT to go about it

Icebreaker 3:

Question: Regarding gender representation in media, what does the term "tokenism" mean?

- A) A strategy to include more women in media roles
- B) A technique to ensure equal representation of all genders in media content
- C) The practice of including a few individuals from underrepresented groups to create a false sense of diversity
- D) A policy that promotes positive portrayals of women in the media

Answer: C

Tokenism—a definition:

Tokenism refers to the practice of making a symbolic effort to include members of underrepresented groups to give the appearance of equality and inclusivity without genuinely addressing or remedying underlying issues of discrimination or inequality. This can occur in various contexts, such as workplaces, media representation, or social and political organizations. For example, hiring a small number of women or people from minority backgrounds to create an impression of diversity while not providing them with meaningful roles or opportunities for advancement would be considered tokenism.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

1. Proportion of women speakers of parliament

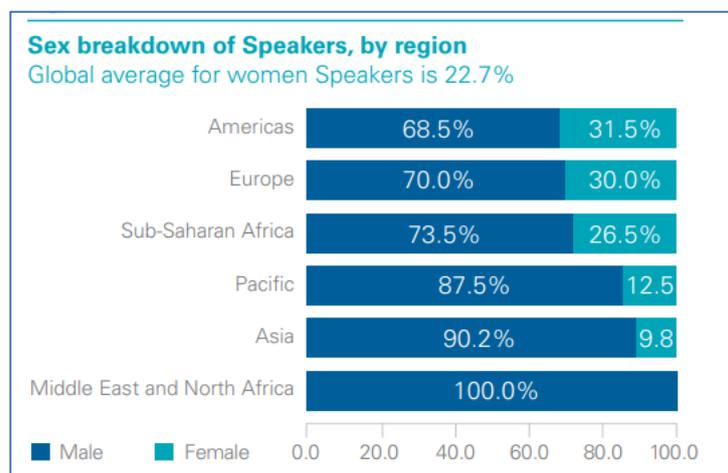
Globally, what is the proportion of women Speakers of Parliament in 2020?

Answer: The proportion of women Speakers of Parliament, all chambers combined, was 22% in 2020. This represents an increase from 10.5% in 1995.

Which region has the highest proportion of women Speakers of Parliament? Which has the lowest?

Answer: Significant regional variations exist in women's representation in leadership positions. In the Americas, women make up 31.5% of Speakers, while in the Middle East and North Africa, there were no registered women Speakers of Parliament in 2020.

Source:



2. Gender Disparities in Employment

- Vulnerable Employment: According to the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#), women often engage in vulnerable employment, like own-account work and unpaid family labor.
- Part-Time Work and Low-Paid Jobs: Women tend to work part-time and hold lower-paid occupations.
- Family Responsibilities as Barrier: An [ILO survey](#) of 1,300 private-sector companies in 39 developing countries confirmed that family responsibilities borne by women were the No. 1 barrier to women's leadership.

3. Gender Disparity in STEM Fields

- STEM Field Underrepresentation: According to [UNESCO](#), only around 33% of female students globally opt for STEM fields in higher education. Women constitute just 35% of STEM students in tertiary education.
- STEM Occupation Gap: Only 33% of researchers in STEM occupations are women. Fields like engineering and computer science exhibit significant gender gaps.
- Tackling stereotypes, promoting girls' STEM education, and supporting women in STEM careers are vital for reducing the gender gap in STEM.
