

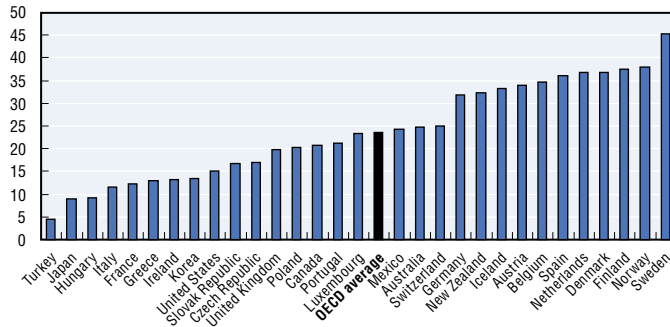
Women in parliament

Did you know?

Women are outnumbered by men in all the world's parliaments. Women hold close to half the parliamentary seats in Rwanda and Sweden and about a third in the Nordic countries, in Cuba, Costa Rica and Argentina. There is no reliable relationship between how rich a country is, and how many women are in parliament.

In nine OECD countries at least one-third of parliamentary seats are held by women. The Nordic countries and the Netherlands stand out with more than 35% of parliamentary seats held by women. In most OECD countries though, women hold under a quarter and the shares are 15% or less in Japan, Italy, France and the United States.

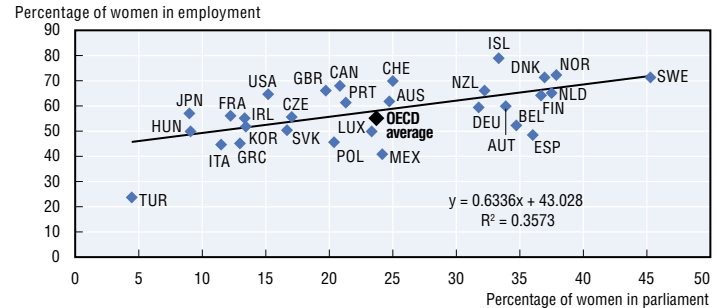
Percentage of parliamentary seats held by women
2005 or latest year available



Do women participate more in political life in richer countries? Not necessarily. Percentages are low in rich countries like the United States, Ireland, France and Japan and are high in countries with lower per capita incomes such as New Zealand, Spain and Austria.

On the other hand, there does seem to be a link between the percentage of women in employment and the percentage of parliamentary seats held by women. The chart below plots the percentage of women in parliament against the percentage of the total female population of working age (15-64) in employment. Women's participation in political life appears to reflect, at least to some extent, their participation in economic life. Percentages of women in parliament are high in Nordic countries where women make up a large part of the labour market and low in Turkey, Greece, Italy and Hungary.

Percentage of women in parliament and percentage of women in employment
2004



Source: Many countries have both a lower and upper house (bi-cameral parliaments) with different election rules for each one. For countries with bilateral parliaments the percentages shown here refer to the total of both houses. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU): www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.

Further reading:

Jütting, J. P., C. Morriison; J. Dayton-Johnson; D. Drechsler (2006), "Measuring Gender (In)equality: Introducing the Gender, Institutions and Development Data Base (GID)", *OECD Development Centre Working Papers*, No. 247, OECD, Paris.