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## WOMEN IN POLITICS

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### Women in Politics: Breaking Barriers and Leading Nations

Throughout history, politics has been dominated by men—but over the last century, women have steadily redefined global leadership, challenging outdated norms and transforming the political landscape. From heads of state to ministers, women have increasingly taken center stage, driving policy reforms, peace negotiations, economic development, and social change.

#### Why Women in Politics Matter

Women bring diverse perspectives, advocate for inclusive policy, and often emphasize collaboration over confrontation. Studies show that when women lead, countries tend to perform better in areas like education, health, gender equality, and poverty reduction.

#### Five Powerful Women Who Shaped Global Politics

##### 1. Jacinda Ardern – New Zealand

Role: Prime Minister (2017–2023)

Ardern became known globally for her empathetic, firm leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Christchurch mosque attacks. Her style—calm, transparent,

and compassionate—was often cited as a model for modern leadership.

Impact: Strengthened New Zealand’s global image; promoted climate action, child welfare, and inclusivity.

## 2. Sanna Marin – Finland

Role: Prime Minister (2019–2023)

At just 34, Marin became one of the youngest leaders in the world. She led a progressive coalition in Finland and became a symbol of millennial leadership.

Impact: Championed education, green energy, and gender equality while balancing economic reforms.

## 3. Angela Merkel – Germany

Role: Chancellor (2005–2021)

Often called the “de facto leader of Europe,” Merkel led Germany through multiple global crises, including the financial collapse of 2008 and the European refugee crisis. Her rational, science-based decision-making earned her respect across political divides.

Impact: Strengthened EU unity; promoted stability and economic growth in Europe.

## 4. Yingluck Shinawatra – Thailand

Role: Prime Minister (2011–2014)

Thailand’s first female Prime Minister, Yingluck focused on infrastructure development, flood management, and rural

economic support. Her tenure was historic, though politically contentious.

Impact: Brought greater female visibility in Thai politics; launched large-scale public investment programs.

## 5. Kamala Harris – United States

Role: Vice President (2021–Present)

Kamala Harris made history as the first female Vice President of the U.S., and the first of Black and South Asian descent. Her career in law, civil rights, and public policy reflects the growing presence of women of color in global governance.

Impact: Pushed for healthcare reform, workers' rights, and racial justice.

## Ongoing Challenges

Despite progress, women still face:

- Gender-based discrimination and violence
- Media bias and stereotyping
- Underrepresentation in national parliaments (just 26% globally as of 2024)
- Systemic barriers to campaign financing and political mentorship

## Conclusion

Women in politics are not just breaking glass ceilings—they're rebuilding the rooms with a new blueprint of leadership. The future of governance is increasingly female, inclusive, and resilient. As more women enter and reshape political spaces, global leadership is becoming smarter, more compassionate, and more effective.

## CHALLENGES

### Challenges Faced by Women in Politics

Despite growing global awareness and increasing participation, women in politics continue to face deep-rooted challenges. These obstacles are not merely political—they're cultural, economic, systemic, and often personal. For women striving to lead in government, policy-making, and diplomacy, the journey remains steep and complex.

#### 1. Gender Stereotyping

Women leaders are frequently subjected to outdated stereotypes: too emotional to lead, too soft on security, or too focused on “women’s issues.” This bias affects both public perception and media portrayal, often reducing their credibility before they’ve even spoken.

“If a woman is assertive, she's called aggressive. If she's soft, she's seen as weak. The standards are constantly shifting.” — Global Gender Gap Report

#### 2. Media Bias and Objectification

The media often focuses more on a female politician's appearance, fashion, or marital status than her policies or

vision. This persistent focus undermines her authority and shifts the narrative away from her professional capability.

### 3. Violence and Harassment

Women in politics face a disproportionate amount of online abuse, character attacks, and even physical threats. In many parts of the world, female candidates and elected officials report receiving gender-based harassment that aims to silence or intimidate them.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, more than 80% of female parliamentarians worldwide have experienced psychological violence in office.

### 4. Cultural and Social Norms

In traditional societies, a woman in power can be viewed as disruptive to the social order. Many women face resistance from family or communities who still believe leadership is a “man’s role.” This discouragement often starts at an early age, limiting women’s political ambition before it begins.

### 5. Economic Inequality and Campaign Financing

Political campaigns are expensive. Women generally have less access to personal wealth, political donors, or influential networks that provide financial backing. As a result, female candidates are often underfunded, giving male counterparts an advantage in visibility and reach.

## 6. Underrepresentation in Political Parties

Women are underrepresented in leadership positions within political parties, which means they're often excluded from strategic decisions or are placed in less "winnable" electoral districts. Even progressive parties sometimes fall short in actively grooming women for leadership.

## 7. Double Burden: Home and Politics

Many female politicians juggle family responsibilities alongside their political careers. In cultures where caregiving is seen as the woman's role, this dual expectation creates exhaustion and limits availability, especially in time-consuming leadership roles.

## 8. Legal and Institutional Barriers

Some countries still lack strong legal frameworks that support women's political participation—such as gender quotas, electoral reforms, or protections against harassment in political settings.

## 9. Lack of Mentorship and Networks

Male politicians often benefit from powerful mentorship circles. Women, especially in emerging democracies, may find fewer role models or allies to support their political journey. This isolation can hinder their strategic growth and confidence.

## 10. Public Scrutiny and Higher Expectations

Female politicians are often held to unfairly high standards. One misstep, and their entire leadership credibility is questioned—while their male peers are often given more leniency or second chances.

## Conclusion

These challenges reflect systemic issues that require global attention—not just to ensure equality, but to improve the quality of leadership worldwide. When women lead, societies benefit from more inclusive and sustainable governance. Breaking these barriers isn't just about fairness; it's about progress.

## POLITICAL WOMEN

### Leading with Resilience and Vision

In the evolving landscape of global governance, women in politics are no longer exceptions—they are becoming powerful symbols of change, integrity, and inclusive leadership. From presidential offices to grassroots movements, female politicians continue to break barriers, influence policies, and redefine what leadership looks like in the 21st century.

## Historical Context

For centuries, political power was almost exclusively reserved for men. Women were denied the right to vote, let alone hold office. The 20th century saw major shifts—starting with suffrage movements, followed by waves of feminist activism, and eventually, the rise of iconic female leaders like Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, and Benazir Bhutto.

Today, more than 100 countries have had a female head of state or government at some point, but the road to gender parity in politics remains a work in progress.

## Why Women in Politics Matter

1. **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Studies show that women are more likely to advocate for social welfare, healthcare, education, and environmental policies.
2. **Lower Corruption Levels:** Research from the World Bank suggests that increased female participation in government correlates with lower corruption levels.
3. **Peacebuilding and Stability:** In conflict zones, women have been instrumental in peace negotiations and community rebuilding.
4. **Democratic Legitimacy:** A representative government must reflect its population—excluding women from leadership undermines democratic values.

## Notable Female Political Leaders

Here are five influential women in politics who've made significant contributions globally:

### 1. Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand)

Former Prime Minister known for her empathetic leadership style. She gained global recognition for her handling of the Christchurch mosque attacks and COVID-19 crisis.

## 2. Angela Merkel (Germany)

As Chancellor for 16 years, Merkel was regarded as the de facto leader of Europe. She brought stability to the EU during financial crises and upheld liberal democratic values.

## 3. Tsai Ing-wen (Taiwan)

Taiwan's first female president and a strong proponent of democracy and sovereignty in the face of pressure from China.

## 4. Sanna Marin (Finland)

One of the world's youngest prime ministers, Marin led a coalition of five women-led parties, emphasizing climate reform and social justice.

## 5. Yuriko Koike (Japan)

Tokyo's first female governor, breaking gender norms in Japan's male-dominated political sphere, especially in urban policy reform and Olympic preparations.

## Ongoing Challenges

Even with these advances, women still face significant barriers:

- Gender bias and stereotyping
- Media objectification
- Lower funding for campaigns
- Threats, harassment, and political violence
- Underrepresentation in party leadership

(For a deeper dive, see our article on “Challenges Faced by Women in Politics.”)

## The Future of Women in Politics

To accelerate gender equality in leadership:

- Gender quotas are being implemented in parliaments globally.
- Female mentorship programs are growing.
- Digital platforms give women leaders more visibility and reach.

The future of governance must be inclusive, ethical, and visionary—qualities that women around the world are proving to deliver.