

Men as Allies in Parliamentary Work for Gender Equality



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- Why does a group that makes up half of the world's population **not also hold half of the influential positions in politics and economics**, defying logic and common sense?
- Why is it so difficult for women to **attain positions** as elected representatives, in political leadership, or in business?
- Why are many of the **difficulties that confront women politicians different** than those that confront men politicians?

The answers to all of these questions have at least one common denominator

Gender Stereotypes

Gender

- **Group of socially constructed values that define the characteristics and behaviours each society assigns to men and women**
- **Unlike sex, which is determined at birth, gender is learned**
- **It is not about denying sexual or biological differences, but about questioning their relevance for carrying out certain tasks**

Some stereotypes and myths about women and femininity

- **Women are sensitive and use intuition rather than reason**
- **They are mothers above all and must sacrifice themselves for others**
- **They are naturally suited for taking care of others**
- **They are not ambitious, ambition is masculine**
- **They are modest, they are not interested in power**
- **They are submissive, delicate**
- **They are weak and dependent on men**
- **They cannot control their emotions**

**There are also stereotypes about
masculinity**

- They must **provide economically** for their families
- They are **strong, ambitious, and determined**
- They are **managerial and rational**
- They are **independent, autonomous and not afraid of making decisions**
- **They do not express their feelings or emotions**
- They like **sports**
- **They do not know how to look after children**
- They are **disorganized and untidy**

**One of the most damaging
and harmful stereotypes:**

Leadership is masculine

The good leaders are men

Stereotypes about leadership are manifested in gender inequality

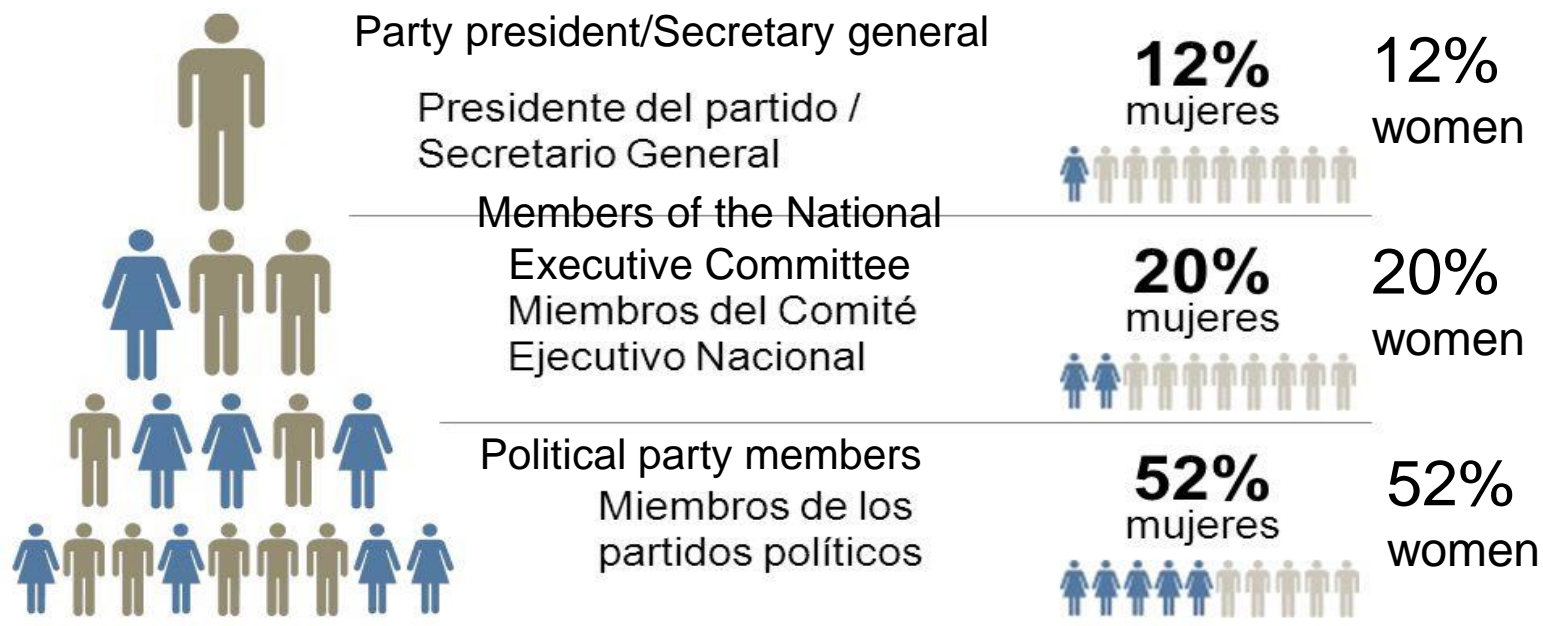
- **In Latin America only 4% of companies have a woman president or CEO** (CEPAL data , 2015)
- **Only 5% of CEOs and 19% of board members of the biggest companies in the world are women** (ILO data, 2016)
- **In Europe, women hold the top leadership position in only 3 out of every 100 companies** (European Commission data, 2016)

**In politics, inequality can be
observed in the **very structure of
political parties...****

In Latin America **MORE** than 50% of party members are women, but **LESS** than 15% of presidents and secretary generals are

Title: Political parties: With more power, less representation

Partidos políticos: cuanto más poder, menos representación



*Muestra compuesta por partidos políticos en Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, República Dominicana, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Perú, Uruguay y Venezuela.
Fuente: Base de datos GEPPAL. BID/IDEA.*

**Stereotypes are constructed from
very early socialization experiences,
which are influenced by images in
publicity and the media**

**All of this has
real consequences**

Global Politics

- In 2016 only 15 countries had a female **Head of State**
- **Only 22% of parliamentarians** are women
- **Only 17% of government ministers** are women (and in portfolios that keep with stereotypes)

**It is within this context we
understand the reasons for quotas
and demands for parity**

Quotas and Parity

- While in democracy laws provide for formal equality for all people, in practice this has not been effective for women
- The “minimum quota” is a measure that seeks to create conditions of equality between men and women in the political arena and improve representation in democracies
- **Parity**: proposes a balanced percentage representation of women and men in decision-making roles in politics



- Although **cultural change** is moving us forward and will prevail in the long run, **public actors must also push for progress**
- Not only must we **pass laws**, but we also must ensure **that laws are obeyed** and establish **sanctions for failure to comply**

This leads to one more consideration:

***Equality in numbers does
not equal substantive
equality***

(equality in power or influence)



- **There are few women leaders in parties around the world or in key committees, like the budget committee**
- **For example, in the Honourable Chamber of Deputies of the Province of Buenos Aires, *THERE ARE NO WOMEN in committees like transportation, labour, or budget***

**How does the world concretely improve
with equality?**

**Why does the world need more women in
political decision-making?**

Some benefits of equality for democracy

- ***Different agendas:*** The more women there are in parliaments, the more legislation on families, women, and minorities in general
- ***Women are more inclined to inter-party work, even in partisan settings:*** 25% of US congresswomen affirm that women from the opposition have provided key support in the approval of laws that mattered most to them, while 17% of congressmen thought the same
- ***More women, more confidence in democracy:*** a study conducted in 31 countries shows that women's presence in parliaments increases the perceived legitimacy of the government among citizens

Some economic benefits of equality

- Evidence from the *private sector* also shows that **gender diversity in decision-making improves results**
- In a 2016 analysis of *the top Fortune 500 companies*, those that had *more women on their board of directors* were **53% more profitable**, had **42% more sales** and **66% greater return on invested capital** than those that had fewer women
- The correlation between *gender diversity in boards of directors and better performance* was found **across all industries**, from consumer products to technology

**To achieve equality, it is essential to have
men as allies**



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What does it mean to be an ally?

- It is not being a protector, paternalistic or condescending
- It is not being a “spokesperson” or becoming a “feminist,” but rather *using the spaces where historically men have had more privilege and a greater voice than women* (parliaments for example) to push for equality
- It is not “accompanying,” but rather *actively working with women legislators, with women’s caucuses and organizations* to promote measures to address inequality

What forms does **inequality in parliament usually take?**

- **Men's clubs:** *for example, when meetings to share information and make decisions take place outside working hours or outside of political spaces* (social or sporting events that women do not attend).
- **Microaggressions:** “*low intensity sexism*”, subtle and daily sexism. For example, when someone from technical support explains his services to a man assuming that the woman does not understand what he is talking about, or *when in political parties after a meeting it is assumed that the women will prepare the minutes or draft the memos*
- **Condescension:** for example, *when women are made to feel that they should be grateful just to be in the parliament*, that they should “be present” without questioning or interfering with their opinions, when they are given an explanation of “what they should do,” etc.

Three examples of measures that promote equality

1. Involving **political parties**

- **Routine organization of activities and training within the party to promote greater equality in the participation of all actors**
- **Further, training not only women **BUT ALSO MEN** in the party **on technical aspects of gender topics** to eradicate the idea that gender is a “women’s issue” and must be addressed by women legislators**

2. Actions and measures taken by parliamentary actors



Examples:

- **Reviewing the composition of committees and ensuring that there are no committees without women members**
- **Taking care that language is gender-sensitive (applying the “principle of reversibility”).
E.g.: When using “*congressmen*”, women in the institution are made invisible**
- **Using the Congress web page as a “display window” to showcase past or present events related to promoting gender equality (activities, legislation, history, etc.)**

3. Drafting **legislation and public policy**

Public policies that encourage shared domestic responsibilities and facilitate women's increased presence in public spaces and the production chain

- In Latin America and the Caribbean, **maternity leaves have an average duration of 12 to 13 weeks versus paternity leaves of 2 to 5 days**. Aside from leaves, states have hardly developed other measures to reconcile family and work responsibilities, like fathers' rights to care for their children following the leave
- In **14 countries in Latin America**, women make up 52% and men 3% of inactive workers who declared caregiving and domestic work as the reason for their inactivity