



10 Things to Know about Women's Representation in the United States

The body of research regarding women's political representation is presented almost exclusively in academic spheres with difficult jargon and challenging to interpret methodologies. This fact sheet shares ten pieces of research around women's political representation and explains the current and desired state of women's representation.

Women are far less likely to be recruited to run for office than men.

Being invited or encouraged to run for office leads many individuals who otherwise might never consider the option to suddenly throw their hat in the ring. And women are just as likely as men to respond positively to recruitment as men, but they are asked much less often. If you know a woman who would be great in elected office, invite her to consider the possibility. It could make all the difference!

Percentage of Women and Men Who Are Recruited to Run for Office

OFFICE	WOMEN	MEN
Local or Community Office		
School Board	18%	21%
City Council	16%	22%
Mayor	6%	10%
District Attorney	1%	2%
State Level Office		
State Legislator	16%	24%
Statewide Office (i.e., State Treasurer)	1%	2%
Governor	1%	4%
Federal Office		
House of Representatives	4%	10%
Senate	2%	4%

*Source: <https://www.american.edu/spa/wpi/upload/2012-men-rule-report-final-web.pdf>

NUMBER TWO

Win or lose, women running for office are inspiring role models to young girls.

When girls and young women observe higher numbers of women running for office they report increased faith in American democracy. Similarly, girls and young women from areas that do not have women running for office do not report any difference in their confidence for American democracy. Even when candidates don't win, simply observing campaigns for women candidates positively impacts political engagement for young women. Know that when you consider running, you are considering a path that will inspire young girls rising after you. Do it for the kids!



*Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/11/22/how-women-candidates-are-making-girls-feel-better-about-politics/>

NUMBER THREE

Women are more likely to collaborate across party lines.

*In a report by Quorum, “female senators in recent years have demonstrated **more bipartisanship** with other women than their male counterparts.”*

Women cosponsor more bills across party lines and more regularly attend and participate in bipartisan events. They engage with one another in both professional and informal capacities which fosters strong relationships in their

public service roles. Relationship building is a key element of effective service in political office, and it is one that women have mastered. Recognizing women's willingness and ability to work across party lines, more women in office could positively impact the political frustration and divisiveness felt by many Americans.

*Source: <https://www.quorum.us/data-driven-insights/working-together-and-across-the-aisle-female-senators-pass-more-legislation-than-male-colleagues/>



NUMBER FOUR

Women are effective political leaders.

In comparison to their male counterparts, women legislators introduce more bills, get more bills through committee, and see more bills enacted into law. In terms of honoring their constituents, women deliver about 9 percent more funding to their districts, and regularly pursue legislation that best serves women and children. Finally, the World Economic Forum has found that women consistently support efforts that are predictive of lower death rates, specifically: medical care, preventive care, other social services and post-secondary education.

*And that the impact of women in leadership could add an additional **US\$1,750 billion** to the US GDP.*

*Sources: <https://www.quorum.us/data-driven-insights/working-together-and-across-the-aisle-female-senators-pass-more-legislation-than-male-colleagues/>; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/03/07/what-would-change-if-there-were-more-women-in-congress-more-than-you-think/?arc404=true>; <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/the-more-women-in-government-the-healthier-a-population/>; http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf

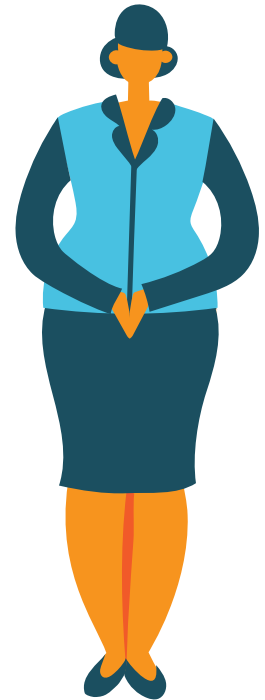
The US is far behind the curve for women's representation.

*According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union the United States ranks **76th out of 193** countries for our representation of women in elected office.*

We trail behind countries such as Rwanda, Cuba, and Bolivia (the only three countries to have a women majority in government). Despite making up a little more than half the population, for every one woman serving in political office she is matched by three men. The World Economic Forum predicts that given current rates, the global gender gap across a range of areas will not close for another 108 years and the gap in political participation won't close for another 99 years. Luckily, there are ways we can improve this timeline.

First, we can start recruiting women to political office in greater numbers, specifically we can request top party leadership to prioritize the recruitment of women. We can donate and volunteer for women's campaigns. We can vote for women at the polls. And finally, if you are a woman, you can take the leap and run for office yourself.

*Source: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/politics/women-running-for-office/>; <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/03/04/the-us-ranks-75th-in-womens-representation-in-government.html>; http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf



Most Americans like the idea of women in office.

In 2018 the Pew Research Center conducted a study finding that “about **six-in-ten Americans (61%)** say it’s a good thing that more women ran for U.S. Congress in 2018 than in the past, while a third say this is neither good nor bad. Just 5% see this as a bad thing.” In this same study more than four-in-ten Americans shared that they hoped to see a woman president in their lifetime. It is expected that these responses will continue to improve in 2020 and beyond.

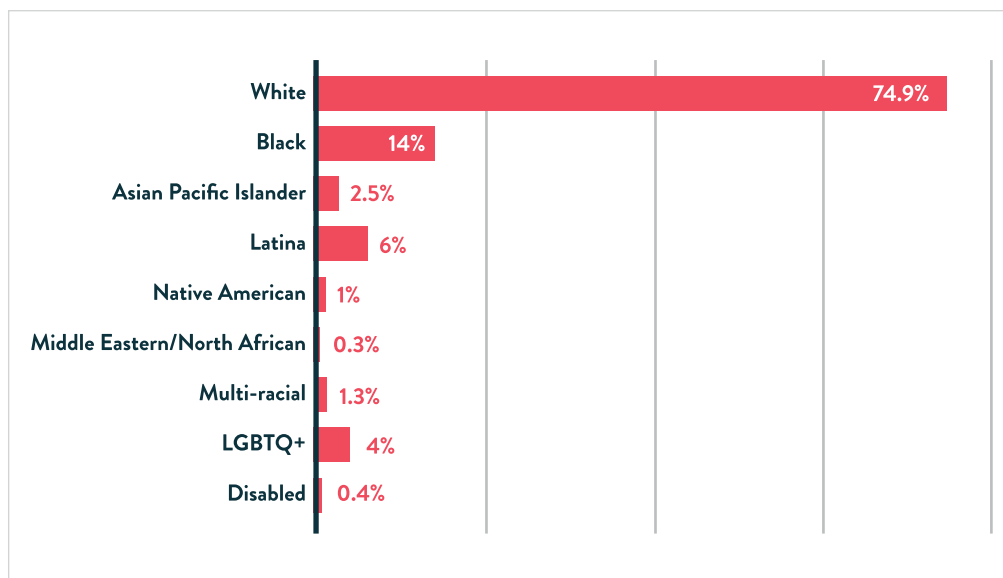
Pew also found that women have a relative advantage over men in several aspects of political leadership:

	Women are better	Men are better	No difference
Being compassionate and empathetic	61%	5%	33%
Serving as a role model for children	41%	4%	55%
Working out compromises	42%	8%	50%
Being honest and ethical	31%	4%	64%
Maintaining a tone of civility and respect	34%	9%	56%
Standing up for what they believe in	30%	11%	58%
Being persuasive	21%	20%	59%
Working well under pressure	17%	17%	65%
Being willing to take risks	9%	37%	54%

*Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/22/most-americans-say-more-women-running-for-congress-is-a-good-thing/>; <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/09/20/women-and-leadership-2018/>

Not all women are supported equally when running for office.

Percentage of Political Representation



Between Congress, State executive offices (governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general), state legislators, and mayors of the 100 most populous cities in the US, women occupy a total of 2,475 seats of the approximately 8,500 seats available rounding out at about 30%. Of that 30%, most of the representation is held by cis, white, able-bodied, Democratic women. There are clear divides in not just supporting women, but what type of women.

While all women face barriers in their pursuit of public office, BIPOC women, LGBTQ+ women, disabled women, Republican women, lower income women, etc. face even greater setbacks. This is especially visible in fundraising, whether it be that PACs are less likely to donate money to women or that women have less access to communities of wealth.

Solving for this issue starts by being aware of diversity deficits in the first place. From there we can work to actively recruit more diverse political candidates, support and vote for these candidates, and amplify the platforms of diverse women already serving in office.

**Source: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/20/tackling-women-s-underrepresentation-in-u.s.-politics-comparative-perspectives-from-europe-pub-75315>*

NUMBER EIGHT

There are a variety of (sexist) factors holding women back from pursuing elected office.

The Pew Research Center conducted a study identifying various expectations and challenges women face that are holding them back from pursuing elected leadership or experiencing success when they do run. These factors include:

- 38% of Americans believe that women are held to higher standards than men and must do more to prove themselves
- There are still some Americans (37%) who say that they aren't ready to have a woman in higher elected office
- 27% of Americans identify that women receive less support than men from leaders in the major political parties

Pew also found that women are acutely aware of the challenges they are taking on when they run for office, and that these perceptions are also impacting how frequently women run.

- 47% of women believe women who run for office are held to higher standards and have to do more to prove themselves.
- 41% of women believe that Americans are not ready to elect a woman to higher office
- 33% of women notice the lack of party support offered to women

Despite these observations and setbacks, men and women alike reject the idea that women aren't tough enough for politics.

- 73% of women and 72% of men say toughness is not a reason that there aren't more women in top elective office.
- About half (48% of women and 49% of men) say that family responsibilities are not a barrier for their political leadership

We know that there are perceptions of women being primarily responsible for childcare and home management. We acknowledge that women are more often perceived to be more risk averse, and that this can present a disadvantage when it comes to getting support for risk-taking. However, we also realize the great shift that is happening in further recognition of the strength, competence and leadership women bring to all forms of leadership--elected office included.

If you want to learn more about what running for office could look like for you we encourage you to join the [She Should Run Community](#) and check out the [Cultivating Leadership](#) lessons in the Incubator.



*Source: <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/01/14/chapter-3-obstacles-to-female-leadership/>

NUMBER NINE

As a group, women are more civically engaged than men.

“A study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that in September 2015, 21.8 percent of the U.S. male-identifying population spent time volunteering, while 27.8 percent of those who identified as women—6 percent higher, did the same.”

In fact, girls and young women outpace their male counterparts in several indicators of civic engagement: volunteering, membership in community

associations, and voting. As women continue to age they are overrepresented in hours dedicated to volunteer service, students in service learning courses, and women report placing higher value on helping others in need.

I don't know about you, but this sounds exactly like the type of person I would want to serve as a leader in public office.

However we still see consistent research from the [Center for American Women and Politics](#) and which indicates that women are grossly underrepresented among our elected officials. A pattern that is repeated for leadership in business, law, and higher education.

This is a pattern that requires intentional intervention. At She Should Run, our [Help Her Lead program](#) guides adult role models to talk to young girls about their capacity for elected leadership. For women who are curious about the opportunity of running for office we provide a series of resources focuses on answering questions and building leadership ability. [Check out the She Should Run Starter Kit here.](#)



*Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/civiconation/2020/03/17/civic-engagement-benefits-all-of-us-so-why-are-women-more-involved-than-men/#d9c3d274f725>; <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/civic-engagement-and-political-leadership-among-women>

NUMBER TEN

Women occupy workplaces and professions that have the most direct consequence for our daily lives.

Women show up everywhere in the direct services that most impact citizens. Worldwide women comprise over 75% of the healthcare workforce. In education women represent 76% of the workforce. In sectors such as pharmaceuticals,

law, and business women's representation continues to grow year over year. And since the 1980s women have consistently earned more college degrees over their male counterparts. However in terms of executive representation across all sectors women's representation hovers at approximately 20%. We trust women to cultivate the education of themselves and others, to ensure our health, to advocate for us in courtrooms, but we still have a long way to go to ensure that their voices are adequately and accurately represented in elected office.

**Source: https://www.who.int/hrh/statistics/spotlight_2.pdf?ua=1; <https://www.healthcareers.com/article/healthcare-news/does-healthcare-have-a-gender-problem>; <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimlessler/2019/07/02/now-theres-more-college-educated-women-than-men-in-workforce-but-women-still-lag-behind-men-in-pay/#731156da4c31>; <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/02/the-explosion-of-women-teachers/582622/>; <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace#>*

NEXT STEPS

Do you want to have an effect on women's representation?

Whether by encouraging more women to run, sharing our time and talents, or simply learning more about the importance of women's political representation, there are actions both large and small that can have a significant impact moving forward.

You can determine how you will help improve women's representation by [taking our Role Call quiz](#) to see how to best dedicate your strengths and interests to this cause.