



Fast Facts: Women's leadership and political participation

2022 Edition

Overview

Equal participation and leadership of women in political and public life across Africa are key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. However, data shows **women remain underrepresented** at all levels of decision-making across Africa. The region is far from achieving gender parity.

Female Heads of State and Government

Ethiopia and Tanzania are the two countries in Africa with female presidents. President Sahle-Work Zewde was appointed in 2018 while Ms. Samia Saluhu Hassan was sworn in as president in 2020 after the passing of President John Magufuli.

In addition, Africa has five prime ministers: **Rose Christiane Ossouka Raponda of Gabon, Saara Kuugongelwa of Namibia, Najla Bouden of Tunisia, Dogbe Tomegah of Togo and Robinah Nabbanja of Uganda.**

Africa is progressively embracing women's leadership to make changes to structural policies and transform itself towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Women in National Parliament

Of 10,510 parliamentarians in Africa in 2021, only 2,622 or about **25 per cent are women**. While the figure shows an increase from 23 per cent in 2018, it indicates that further efforts should be undertaken to achieve the 50 per cent parity in African parliaments.

All 54 African countries have committed to a target of ensuring that women hold at least 33 per cent of parliament positions by 2030.

As of 2021, in the parliament of **10 African countries, 33 per cent or more of the members are female. Rwanda** leads with **61 per cent** of its parliament seats occupied by women. See more details in figure 1.

Figure 1 Share of Women in African Parliaments as of 1 April 2021 (%)



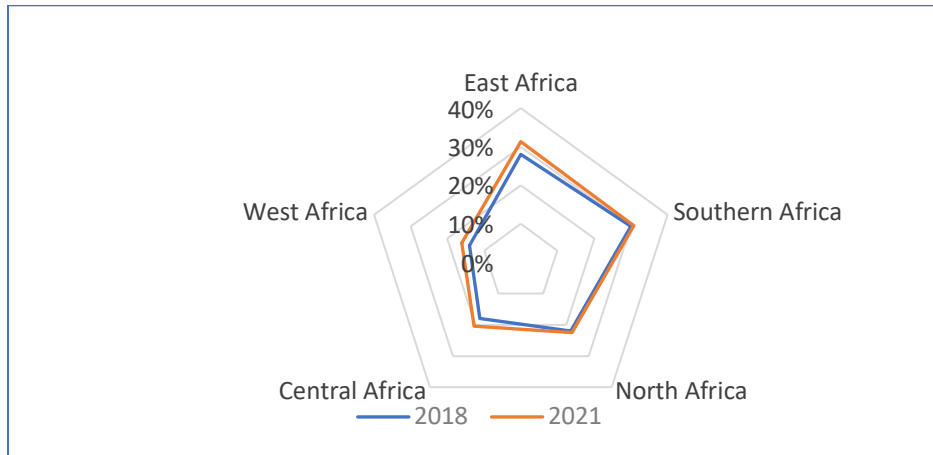
Across all five sub regions of Africa, **women’s representation in parliament has improved significantly** compared to the previous years.

For instance, between 2018 and 2021, **the share of women parliamentarians has increased** from 18 per cent to 20.5 per cent in Central Africa, from 14 per cent to 16.1 per cent in Western Africa and from 28 per cent to 31.3 per cent in Eastern Africa.

Eastern Africa and Southern Africa (with 30.5 per cent) are on track to achieve the 33 per cent target. While Western Africa appears to be behind other sub-regions, **Senegal leads the sub region** with the highest representation of women in parliament at 43 per cent, and similarly:

- **Rwanda leads in Eastern Africa** with 61. per cent;
- **South Africa leads in Southern Africa** with 46.5 per cent;
- **Cameroon leads in Central Africa** with 33.9 per cent; and
- **Egypt leads in Northern Africa** with 27.4 per cent.

Figure 2: Sub regional Women Representation in Parliaments (2018-2021)



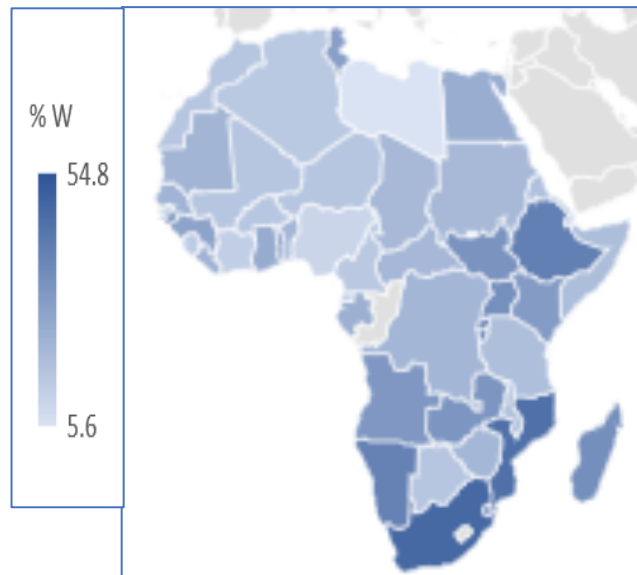
Women in ministerial positions

The share of **female cabinet ministers** in Africa has shown a slight increase from 22 per cent in 2017 to 24.35 per cent in 2020. Of the 1,380 ministers in Africa, **only 336 are female**. This means many African countries need twice as much representation to reach gender parity as outlined in SDG 5 for gender equality.

The gender **gap is the widest in strategic ministerial portfolios** such as ministries of defense and finance. Only 11 per cent defense ministers in Africa are women while only two countries have a female finance minister.

Rwanda and Guinea-Bissau are the only two African countries to achieve gender parity, with 54.8 per cent and 50 per cent of their ministerial positions occupied by women respectively. They are followed by South Africa with 48.3 per cent, Mozambique with 45.5 per cent and Ethiopia with 40 per cent. See more details in figure 3.

Figure 3: Representation of Women in Ministerial Positions in Africa (%)

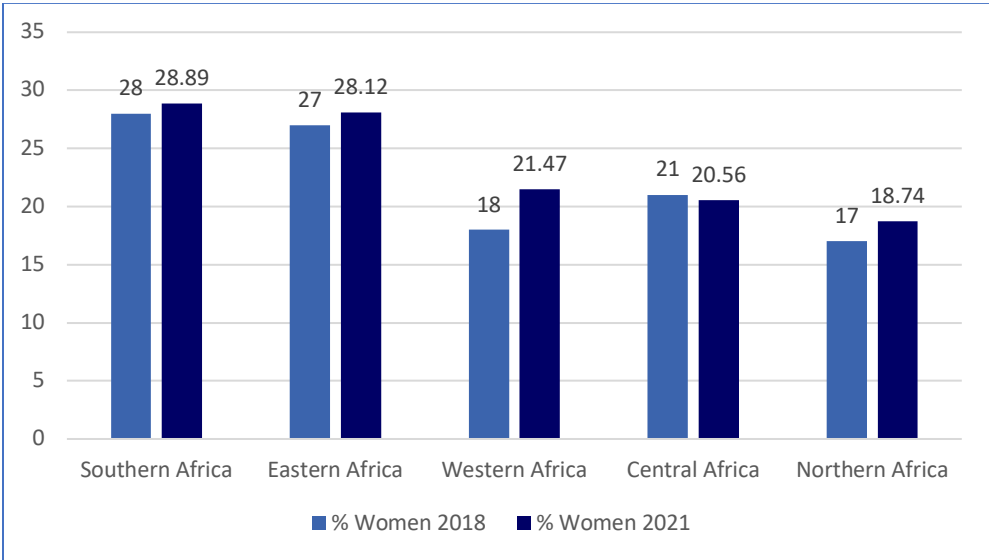


Of the 54 African countries, only 17 states have achieved 30 per cent or more representation of women in ministerial positions.

Ethiopia saw the largest increase in women’s representation in the executive branch from 10 per cent in 2017 to 40 per cent in 2021.

At the sub regional level, **no significant progress is recorded** between 2018 and 2021, excluding Western Africa where women’s ministerial representation increased by 3.47 per cent. **More efforts should be made** at the sub regional level to meet achieve gender parity and SDG 5 targets. See more details in figure 4.

Figure 4: Sub regional Representation of Women in Cabinets in Africa (2018 vs. 2021)

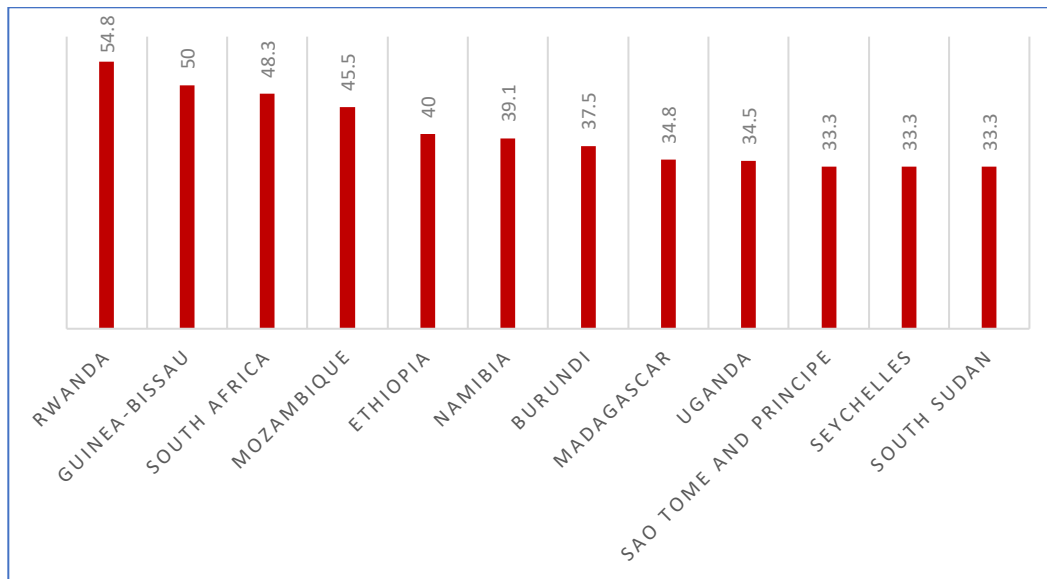


Source: IPU

Across the world, **the number of countries with 30 per cent or more of female representation in cabinet has doubled** from 2018 to 2021, increasing from 22 countries to 45 respectively.

As of 2021, **12 African countries have 33 per cent or more of members** in ministerial positions who are female, compared to only seven in 2018. See more details in figure 5.

Figure 5. African countries with over 33% female representation in ministerial positions (January 2021)



Moving forward

Women's substantive representation and leadership in political life are crucial to closing the gender gap in decision-making. As shown above, many African countries still lag behind in guaranteeing women equal opportunity and access to power and decision-making.

Addressing systemic, persistent, and longstanding challenges requires proactive, rigorous and sustainable efforts that bring all key actors, including ECA, together to **make gender parity** at all levels of decision-making a reality.

For more information, visit: www.uneca.org