



legislated gender quotas were in place in the single or lower house. In these countries 30.3% of the total number of MPs are women. In comparison, in countries with no gender quotas (19) which had a parliamentary renewal only 22.2% of parliamentarians elected were women. There is an 8-point percentage difference in gender parity achievement between countries with quotas and those without.

There are multiple types of gender quotas, and the ease and effectiveness of implementation can differ across voting systems. This new report, *Pursuing Parity: Examining Gender Quotas Across Electoral Systems*, explores the different quota mechanisms through which gender parity can be achieved, examining the benefits and the potential drawbacks of the approaches. It then assesses the ease and success of quota implementation across majoritarian and proportional voting systems. Following this, it has created country case studies of several of the approaches that explore the mechanisms in action.

*Pursuing Parity* illustrates how implementing gender quotas and moving to a proportional representation voting system (PR) can help speed up the progress of achieving gender parity in elected bodies around the world and at home. I commend it and the webinar to those who are interested. You will gather that a system of proportional representation is the one that is most likely to promote women and so I hope that you all will become converts if you are not already. If you are not convinced then ponder the fact that the only other country in Europe apart from the UK which elects its Parliament on a majoritarian (first-past-the-post) system is the democratic haven of Belarus!

Power rests in the hands of politicians so the rise to power for women is through education (so disgracefully denied in Afghanistan) and entry into politics. You who have heard me on this subject in the past will have noted that I regard women generally as more able than men to be successful politicians and that is not just because I entered Parliament on the day Britain saw its first female Prime Minister. I stress that these are generalisations but women are more used than men to having to juggle many tasks at the same time – home management, domestic budget, elevator of children and often these days combined with a full or part-time job. Such multi-tasking is the life of a politician. Women are less polemic, though not necessarily less Machiavellian. They are more ready to seek compromise and to understand a pragmatic approach. I have no doubt that if more women were in charge of their countries' fortunes there would be less war in the world and fewer soldiers being killed and maimed. My conclusion, therefore, is that it is not just in women's but in men's best interests to promote women in public life – if only men have the good sense to see it!

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