Women in local government
in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023[1]

Tracking and achieving gender parity in local government is crucial for gender equality and sustainable development.

Despite women's increased engagement in public life, parity democracy, including gender parity (50/50) in elected positions around the world, is far from being achieved, both at national and local levels of government. Gaps remain because of structural challenges that reinforce discriminatory norms, practices and policies and perpetuate male-dominated power dynamics. Latin America and the Caribbean region is not an exception. It remains a challenge to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.5.

In response, countries gathered under the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean for more than 45 years have put forward a progressive and comprehensive Regional Gender Agenda, to guide public policy, actions, and decisions to promote gender equality, women's autonomy, and sustainable development in the countries of the region (Box 1). Ensuring the full participation of women in public and political representation positions and achieving parity democracy is an agreement in the context of the Regional Conference. The Regional Gender Agenda recognizes the importance of the production of statistics on women's representation in political and public life as a means to monitor progress, identify setbacks and stagnation, and break the statistical silence on the unequal distribution of power and resources that undermine sustainable development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDG 5. As a result, women's autonomy in political decision-making has been systematically monitored in Latin America and the Caribbean through a series of regional indicators of women's representation in executive and legislative bodies of national and local governments.[2]

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1   This brief was prepared jointly by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the custodian agency for SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) indicator 5.5.1b, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as the institution responsible for the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, building on the 5.5.1b data collection partnership between the two entities.
2   Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Gender Equality Observatory, 2023. Available at: https://oig.cepal.org/en/autonomies/autonomy-decision-making

Globally, an indicator on women's representation in local government was included in the SDG indicator monitoring framework of the 2030 Agenda, SDG indicator 5.5.1b, to complement the SDG indicator 5.5.1a (on women's representation in parliaments) (Box 2). This inclusion acknowledges the key role women local leaders have in sustainable development: the research has shown that women in local governments across the world redefine local priorities by being more inclusive and prioritizing gender-responsive local policies and measures.[3] Seven years after the adoption of the SDG monitoring framework, tracking women's representation in local government has achieved some milestones for the region. UN Women (the custodian agency for SDG indicator 5.5.1b) and ECLAC Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (consolidating, in the region, official gender statistics and information on women's autonomy in political decision-making) have jointly compiled data for 21 countries with elected local governments, among which 19 have now data for at least two points in time, allowing analysis of trends.

This brief presents a regional analysis of recent trends in women's representation in local government using data for SDG indicator 5.5.1b. The analysis shows that women's representation in local government is lower in the region compared to the world, and at the current rate of progress, the SDG target of gender parity is unlikely to be achieved by 2030. A few countries have closed the gender gap, with the support of legislation that ensures parity (50/50) in elected positions, such as well-designed electoral quotas and other measures to address the barriers that limit women's political participation. Most countries, however, are lagging, using less ambitious quotas or no quotas at all. To bolster women's political participation at local level, bold actions are needed, including legislative changes that promote gender parity through the implementation of quotas, policies and other temporary special measures to accelerate women's participation, comprehensively address structural gender inequality, and enhance data and statistics.

Box 1:

The Regional Gender Agenda and the importance of measurement for gender equality

Over the last 45 years, ECLAC member States gathered in the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean,[a] have made a series of commitments that constitute the Regional Gender Agenda. This comprehensive and cumulative agenda aims to guarantee women's human rights and advance women's economic, physical and decision-making autonomy and gender equality. Regarding women's political participation and representation, commitments such as the Quito Consensus (2007), the Santo Domingo Consensus (2013) and Santiago Commitment (2020) have highlighted parity in political representation as a determining condition of democracy, an end goal to eliminate structural exclusion of women in society, and a key element to strengthening women's autonomy.

Through the entire Regional Gender Agenda, the countries of the region have recognized the importance of measurement and national information systems with

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[3]   For more information, see Berevoescu and Ballington, Women's representation in local government: a global analysis. UN Women, December 2021.

a gender perspective for breaking the statistical silence on women's situation and advancing toward gender equality. The Quito Consensus (2007) led to the creation of a Gender Equality Observatory, to improve coordination between United Nations agencies, regional and global cooperation organizations, national machineries for the advancement of women, and national statistical institutes of the countries of the region. As part of its work, the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean of ECLAC systematically compiles, analyses, and disseminates data on three interdependent dimensions of women's autonomy in the region: economic autonomy, physical autonomy, and autonomy in decision-making. The three dimensions of women's autonomy are interdependent and need to be interpreted with an intersectional, intercultural, lifecycle, and human rights framework.[b]

> " transforming data into information, information into knowledge and knowledge into political decisions "

The Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, approved at the XIII Regional Conference, is a political and technical tool for overcoming the structural challenges to achieving gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Montevideo Strategy recognizes the necessity of a compressive and systematic approach to monitoring, evaluation, and accountability in the implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda, in line with the 2030 Agenda.

By acknowledging the essential role of "transforming data into information, information into knowledge and knowledge into political decisions", the Montevideo Strategy proposes information systems as one of the ten fundamental pillars for the implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda and the overcoming of the structural challenges of gender inequality for achieving gender equality by 2030. These four main structural challenges are defined as (i) socioeconomic inequality and the persistence of poverty in the framework of exclusionary growth; (ii) the sexual division of labour and unfair social organization of care; (iii) the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere; and (iv) discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns and the predominance of a culture of privilege.[c]

Overcoming the structural challenges of gender inequality, particularly the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere is essential for the achievement of SDG target 5.5 by 2030. The Buenos Aires Commitment, adopted in November 2022 at the xv Regional Conference, charts a path towards a care society: a new development and organizational model that prioritizes the sustainability of life and the planet. To achieve this, the Commitment establishes the urgency to recognize the irreplaceable value of care for both people and the planet, and to make its provision a societal matter based on social co-responsibility. The right to care implies that the State has an obligation to adopt normative frameworks, policies, comprehensive care programs and systems that respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of those who provide and receive care, whether paid or unpaid. These frameworks should prevent all form of sexual and workplace harassment, liberate time for women to engage in employment

and education, participate in public life, politics, and the economy, and fully enjoy their autonomy. Therefore, States are called upon to promote measures to overcome the unfair distribution of time use and the current social organization of care as the path to a transformative and gender responsive post-pandemic recovery.

With equality as one of its goals, care society requires the overcoming of cultural patriarchal patterns, social norms and perceptions that relegate women to the private sphere and understand the public sphere as belonging to men; the transformation of the power relations that underlie the sexual division of labour; ending the culture of privilege; and guaranteeing women's economic, physical and political autonomy. By emphasizing the political dimension of everyday life, care society aims to consolidate a society that promotes time, resources and services availability as necessary to make life sustainable, based on equal protection of the right to care and be cared for. Furthermore, the right to provide and receive care and to exercise self-care is recognized as a key element in order to "free up time for women, so that they can engage in employment, education, public and political life and the economy, and enjoy their autonomy to the full".[d]

[a] Civil society organizations, and particularly women's and feminist movements and organizations, academic institutions, intergovernmental agencies and cooperation agencies, actively participate in sessions of the Conference.
[b] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023. Available at: https://oig.cepal.org/en/autonomies/interrelationship-autonomies.
[c] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 (LC/CRM.13/5), Santiago, 2017.
[d] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Buenos Aires Commitment (LC/CRM.15/6/Rev.1), Santiago, 2023.

Sources:
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *45 years of the Regional Gender Agenda* (LC/MDM-E.2022/4/Rev.1), Santiago, 2023b.
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *The care society: a horizon for sustainable recovery with gender equality* (LC/CRM.15/3), Santiago, 2022.
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Breaking the statistical silence to achieve gender equality by 2030: implementing the information systems pillar of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030* (LC/CRM.15/4), Santiago, 2022.

Box 2:

SDG indicator 5.5.1b (women's representation in local government)

SDG indicator 5.5.1b measures the proportion of elected positions held by women in deliberative bodies of local government. It is part of the set of indicators monitoring Goal 5, on gender equality and women's empowerment, under Target 5.5 on women's full, equal and effective participation in decision-making in political, economic and public life. It complements SDG indicator 5.5.1a, on women's representation in single or lower house of parliaments, by accounting for the representation of women among the millions of members of local government that influence the lives of local communities around the world.

The indicator was included in 2016 in the SDG monitoring framework as a Tier III indicator (indicators for which the methodology or data collection standards do not yet exist). The indicator's methodology, developed by UN Women, built on existing practices in national data collection and regional data compilation, including, among others, the monitoring of women's representation among mayors and local council members by the United Nations Regional Commissions in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia. Wide consultation with national and international stakeholders followed, leading to the reclassification of the indicator to Tier II (indicators with developed methodologies and data collection standards but for which data are not widely available) in November 2017. The indicator was reclassified as Tier I in October 2019, after a successful first round of global data compilation undertaken by UN Women in partnership with the United Nations Regional Commissions.

As of 1 January 2023, globally, there are 141 countries with data for the indicator out of 161 with elected governments. In the region, the corresponding numbers of countries are 21 out of 27 countries.[e]

The recommended national data source for the indicator is administrative data on election results produced by Electoral Management Bodies or equivalent bodies tasked with organizing elections at local level. Almost all countries with available data in the world and in the region are able to use this source. In Latin America and the Caribbean, electoral data are reported by 17 out of 21 countries with available data for the indicator. Other countries in the region are producing equivalent data based on censuses and surveys of local government units.

Data compilation for the regional monitoring of the SDG indicator 5.5.1b is undertaken jointly by UN Women and ECLAC's Division for Gender Affairs, building on ECLAC's previous experience in regional data compilation on women in political decision-making. Data request forms for 5.5.1b are customized to reflect the local government organization in each country[f] and data previously reported. These forms are sent to National Statistical Offices, who are further liaising with Electoral Management Bodies. The data compiled are disseminated through the UN Women website on Women in Local Government, ECLAC'S statistical database CEPALSTAT and the Gender Equality Observatory, and the UN SDG Global Database (see Box 5 for additional resources on SDG indicator 5.5.1b data).

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[e] Data are not available for Argentina, Bahamas, Dominica, Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Six countries –Barbados, Grenada, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines– do not have elected local deliberative bodies.
[f] Information on local government organization is maintained by UN Women and available at https://localgov.unwomen.org/

Sources:
United Nations Statistics Division. SDG Indicator 5.5.1b Metadata, 2023. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-05-05-01b.pdf
UN Women, Women in Local Government website, 2023. Available at: https://localgov.unwomen.org/

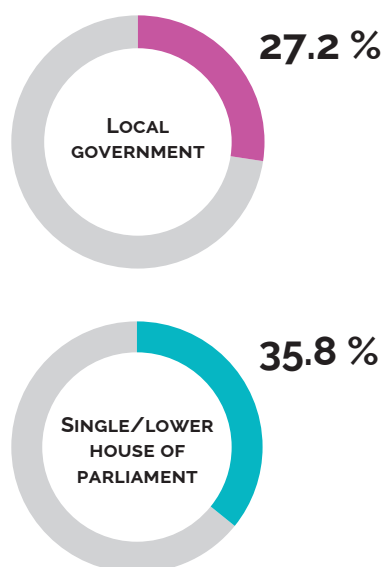# 1. Trends and patterns in women's representation in local government

Women's representation in local government is lower in the region compared to the world.

As of 1 January 2023, women held 27.2 per cent of elected seats in local deliberative bodies in the region, compared to 35.5 per cent at the global level (Diagram 1). Women's representation in Latin America and the Caribbean ranked fifth among other regions, being surpassed by Central and Southern Asia, Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (Figure 1). The annual increase rate for women's representation is slightly higher in Latin America and the Caribbean (0.8 compared to 0.5 percentage points per year at the global level), however, at the current rate of progress, the region is unlikely to catch up with the world or meet the gender parity target by 2030.

Diagram 1.
Women's representation in local government and single and lower house of parliament at regional level and in the world, 2023.

Latin America and the Caribbean   **World**
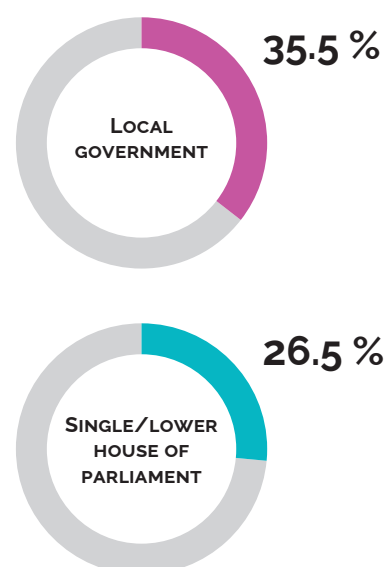
LOCAL GOVERNMENT 27.2 %   **LOCAL GOVERNMENT** 35.5 %

SINGLE/LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT 35.8 %   **SINGLE/LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT** 26.5 %

Sources:
UN Women, Women in Local Government website, 2023. Available at: https://localgov.unwomen.org/
Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline-Global Data on National parliaments: Global and Regional averages, 2023. Available at: https://data.ipu.org/women-averages

Figure 1.
Proportion of elected seats held by women in local government, by region, 2020 and 2023.

Sources:
UN Women, Women in Local Government website, 2023. Available at: https://localgov.unwomen.org/

There is a wide variation of women's representation in local deliberative bodies within the region. Some countries have reached or are very close to parity –Antigua and Barbuda (67 per cent), Bolivia (50 per cent), Mexico (47 per cent), Costa Rica (46 per cent)– while other countries are lagging –Panama (9 per cent), Guatemala (11 per cent), Brazil (16 per cent), and Colombia and Jamaica (18 per cent) (Map 1).

Women's representation in local government is overall lower than women's representation in single and lower houses of parliament (27.2 compared to 35.8 per cent) (Diagram 1). While in most countries there is similar representation at the two levels of decision-making power, the patterns diverge in a few countries: in Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica and Panama, parliaments have proportionally more women than local governments; while in Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, and Honduras, the opposite is true (Map 1).

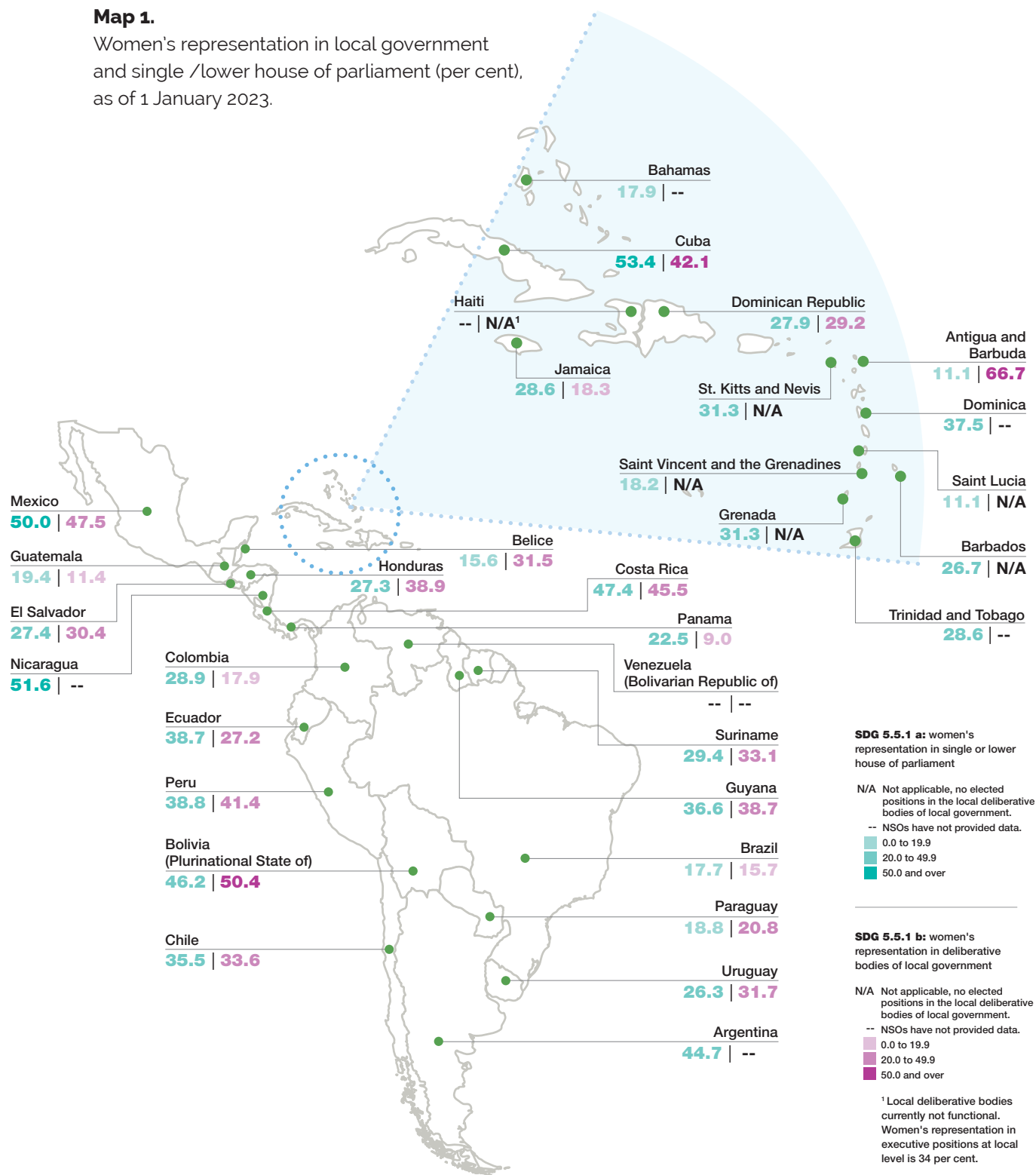**Map 1.**

Women's representation in local government
and single /lower house of parliament (per cent),
as of 1 January 2023.

Bahamas
17.9 | --

Cuba
53.4 | 42.1

Haiti
-- | N/A[1]

Dominican Republic
27.9 | 29.2

Antigua and
Barbuda
11.1 | 66.7

Jamaica
28.6 | 18.3

St. Kitts and Nevis
31.3 | N/A

Dominica
37.5 | --

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
18.2 | N/A

Saint Lucia
11.1 | N/A

Grenada
31.3 | N/A

Barbados
26.7 | N/A

Mexico
50.0 | 47.5

Guatemala
19.4 | 11.4

Belice
15.6 | 31.5

Honduras
27.3 | 38.9

Costa Rica
47.4 | 45.5

Trinidad and Tobago
28.6 | --

El Salvador
27.4 | 30.4

Nicaragua
51.6 | --

Colombia
28.9 | 17.9

Panama
22.5 | 9.0

Venezuela
(Bolivarian Republic of)
-- | --

Ecuador
38.7 | 27.2

Suriname
29.4 | 33.1

Peru
38.8 | 41.4

Guyana
36.6 | 38.7

Bolivia
(Plurinational State of)
46.2 | 50.4

Brazil
17.7 | 15.7

Paraguay
18.8 | 20.8

Chile
35.5 | 33.6

Uruguay
26.3 | 31.7

Argentina
44.7 | --

SDG 5.5.1 a: women's
representation in single or lower
house of parliament

N/A Not applicable, no elected
positions in the local deliberative
bodies of local government.

-- NSOs have not provided data.

0.0 to 19.9

20.0 to 49.9

50.0 and over

SDG 5.5.1 b: women's
representation in deliberative
bodies of local government

N/A Not applicable, no elected
positions in the local deliberative
bodies of local government.

-- NSOs have not provided data.

0.0 to 19.9

20.0 to 49.9

50.0 and over

[1] Local deliberative bodies
currently not functional.
Women's representation in
executive positions at local
level is 34 per cent.

Sources:
UN Women and ECLAC, Joint data compilation on SDG indicator 5.5.1b. Available at: https://localgov.unwomen.org/
Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline-Global Data on National parliaments: Global and Regional averages, 2023. Available at: https://data.ipu.org/women-averages

For most countries, there is little progress in the share of women elected from one election to another.

The average increase in women's representation between the last two waves of local elections was 3 percentage points on average per country. Among the 19 countries with trend data available, 11 had an increase in women's representation. In countries like Peru and Honduras, legislative changes towards parity, raising the quota target from 30 to 50 per cent, have resulted in increases by 15 and 11 percentage points respectively. However, in six countries the increase was meager, by less than 2 percentage points. Five countries recorded no increase in women's representation (two of them already reached 50 per cent); while the remaining three countries recorded a decrease (Figure 2).
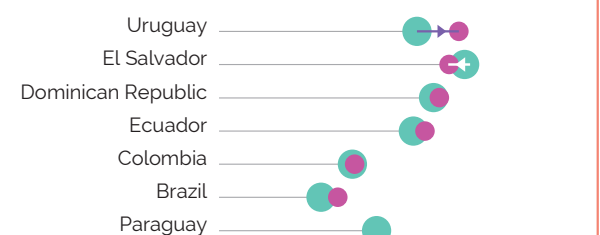
Figure 2.
Proportion of elected seats in local government won by women in the last two rounds of elections (per cent), by country and quota arrangement.
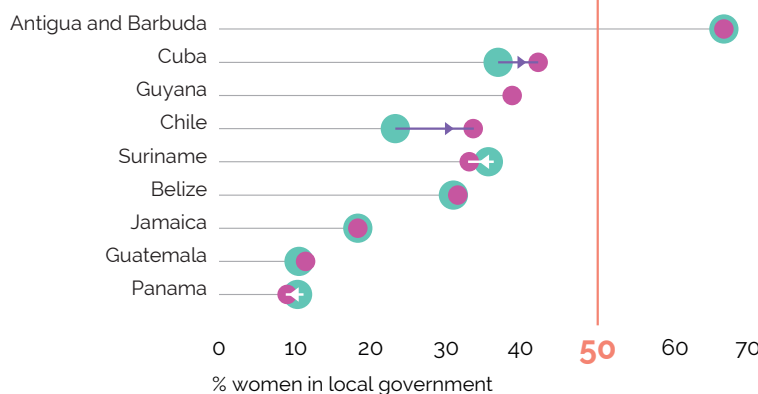

● Last elections
● Previous elections

Notes:
1. Analysis refers to the two most recent elections reported as of 1 January 2023. Data trends are not available yet for Guyana and Paraguay.

2. Well-designed parity quotas refer to quotas that targeted 50 per cent women's representation, with alternate placement of women and men on candidate lists; and rejection of candidate lists as sanctions for non-compliance with quota provisions. The information refers to the quotas in place at the time of election results reflected in the latest data for 5.5.1b.

Sources:
UN Women and ECLAC, Joint data compilation on SDG indicator 5.5.1b. Available at: https://localgov.unwomen.org/

2. The impact of legislated quotas on women's representation

Legislated gender electoral quotas are temporary special measures to correct gender imbalances in elected positions. They are one of the most effective tools to achieve gender parity in elected political bodies over a short period of time and have been successfully used world –and region– wide to improve women's participation at national and local levels.[4] Following the historic approval of the world's first gender quota law, in Argentina, in 1991, addressing women's representation in parliament, several countries in the region have implemented similar legislation. By 2022, 18 countries introduced constitutional and legislative changes to promote women's representation at national or local levels, with nine implementing gender parity quota laws (50/50).[5]

More than half of countries with elected local governments use quotas to fast-track women's representation.

As of 1 January 2023, 15[6] out of 27 countries with elected local governments in Latin America and the Caribbean use legislated gender quotas for local elections; the corresponding global numbers are 88 out of 161 countries.[7]

The use and type of legislated quotas are linked to the type of electoral system. All 15 countries implementing quotas in Latin America and the Caribbean have an electoral system based on proportional representation or a mixed electoral system (combining a proportional representation system with a majority/plurality system). The type of quota used is candidate quota, setting a minimum proportion of women to be included in the candidate lists. An additional five countries with proportional representation or mixed systems in the region do not have legislated quotas. Finally, none of the seven countries using exclusively plurality/majority systems have quotas.

Eight countries have quotas that set parity targets (50 per cent women/either gender), six countries have set targets at 30 to 40 per cent, and one country has set the target at 20 per cent or below. Several countries use implementation rules to increase the effectiveness of quotas. Ten countries put in place ranking/placement rules to help ensure women are placed in winnable positions. Thirteen countries have sanctions for non-compliance of lists with electoral provisions on gender quotas, including 11 countries where non-compliant lists are rejected. Nine countries use both ranking/placement rules and sanctions for non-compliance.[8]

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4   United Nations, Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Report of the Secretary-General at the Sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2020; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Participación de las mujeres en la toma de decisiones en América Latina y el Caribe, 2023. Available at: https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/participacion_de_las_mujeres_en_la_toma_de_decisiones_en_america_latina_y_el_caribe.pdf

5   Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Participación de las mujeres en la toma de decisiones en América Latina y el Caribe, Santiago, March 2023. Available at: https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/participacion_de_las_mujeres_en_la_toma_de_decisiones_en_america_latina_y_el_caribe.pdf

6   UN Women, Women in Local Government, 2023. Available at: https://localgov.unwomen.org/access-quota-information; Haiti also has legislated gender quotas at local level (candidate quotas and reserved seats), however, the deliberative bodies of local government are currently not functional.

7   Ibid.

8   Ibid.

In addition to gender quotas, a few countries in the region use electoral quotas to advance the representation of other groups: four countries have quotas for youth and three countries have quotas for Indigenous people. However, in the region (as well as worldwide) an intersectional perspective is rarely used and women's representation among these groups remains largely unaddressed (Boxes 3 and 4).

Well-designed parity quotas are elevating women's representation in local government.

Well-designed parity quotas with targets of 50 per cent women, ranking/placement rules, and strong sanctions of list rejection for non-compliance with quota requirements increase women's representation in local government and accelerate the achievement of gender parity. Regionally, countries with well-designed parity quotas have much higher women's representation compared to those without quotas, by 13 percentage points on average (45 compared to 32 per cent on average per country).[9] Less ambitious quota targets, on the other hand, can have a ceiling effect, limiting women's representation below the quota target, while failure to specify strong implementation mechanisms renders the quota ineffective. In the region, countries with less ambitious quotas have women's representation at 25 per cent on average[10] per country.[11]

Box 3:

Youth electoral quotas at local level

Young people are key agents of social change and innovation, making invaluable contributions to societies. However, the potential of their contributions may not be always recognized. Temporary special measures to address youth underrepresentation in decision-making are not widely used in the region. Only four countries have put in place youth electoral quotas at the local level: Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru. However, none of them included an intersectional perspective: women's representation among youth remains unaddressed.

>> In **Dominican Republic**, political parties must include at least 10 per cent of youth candidates (up to 35 years old) in their proposed list. In case of non-compliance, political parties are given 72 hours to comply before the list is considered void.

>> In **Ecuador**, each list must contain at least 25 per cent of young people to be registered.

>> In **Mexico City**, lists must include candidates between 18 and 29 years of age.

>> In **Peru**, each candidate list has to be composed of at least 20 per cent of citizens under the age of 29.

Source: UN Women, Women in Local Government website/Country Profiles, 2023. Available at: https://localgov.unwomen.org

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9   Unweighted averages.
10   Ibid.
11   UN Women calculations based on SDG indicator 5.5.1b data and information on quotas, available at: https://localgov.unwomen.org/

Box 4:

Quotas for Indigenous people

Latin America and the Caribbean is home to an estimated 58 million Indigenous people making up 9.8 per cent of the regional population.[g] Around 28 million Indigenous people are women and girls,[h] many of them facing multiple barriers to the realization of their political rights. These include discrimination, stereotyping norms and violence, and other structural barriers (e.g., illiteracy, language constraints, lack of financial support for campaigning). These obstacles are often intersectional and grounded on multiple characteristics such as sex, gender, status or identity, race, ethnicity, disability, age, language, socioeconomic status, and HIV status,[i] hampering their prospects of equal and meaningful political participation.

Three countries in the region –**Bolivia, Peru** and **Venezuela**– took steps to promote the meaningful participation of Indigenous people in local decision-making by introducing quotas:[j]

» In **Bolivia**, seats in departmental assemblies and municipal councils are reserved for Indigenous peoples. Special attention is provided to the representation of Indigenous women, who must make up 50 per cent of the nominees on the lists for the reserved seats. Failure to comply with these provisions results in the rejection of the list with a window of 72 hours for amending the list.

» In **Peru**, each candidate list must also include a minimum of 15 per cent representatives of native communities and original peoples of each province, corresponding to where they reside, as established by the National Jury of Elections.

» In **Venezuela**, at least one Indigenous person must be elected to the municipal council in municipalities with a population of 300 or more indigenous persons.

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Sources:
[g] UN Women (2022), Submission to the CEDAW Committee for the elaboration of a General Recommendation on Indigenous women and girls.
[h] Ibid.
[i] CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous women and girls.
[j] UN Women (2023). Women in Local Government website/Country Profiles. Available at: https://localgov.unwomen.org/

3.   Data challenges and opportunities

Additional data on women's political participation and the structural challenges they face are needed to inform public policies that strengthen women's autonomy in decision making.

Data disaggregation to understand variations within countries remains a major gap, but good practices exist.

Three quarters of countries with elected local governments in the region produce and report data for SDG indicator 5.5.1b, including disaggregated by tiers of local government. However, further disaggregated data are needed to capture the SDG principle of "leaving no one behind" and inform the design of policies and programmes that can target groups of women with least access to elected positions in local government.

Sex, age, and geographical areas are minimum dimensions of disaggregation that are already available or can be easily integrated into the electoral data systems maintained by the EMBs. For example, Peru is regularly producing data for SDG indicator 5.5.1b disaggregated at the level of provinces and the capital of country (Map 2). The data show that the share of women elected in local government in 2022 increased compared to the previous election results, in all provinces, due to new parity measures, including 50 per cent candidate quotas for women. In 2022, Metropolitan Lima continued to lead in women's representation achieving, together with three provinces, over 45 per cent. Despite good progress, however, some of the provinces are lagging, at less than 40 per cent women.
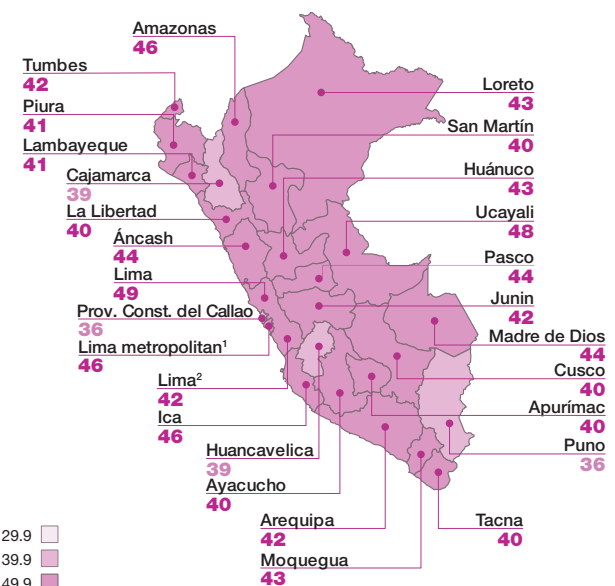
Map 2.
Proportion of elected seats held by women in local government (per cent) by province, Peru, 2018 and 2022.

Peru, 2018.

Amazonas	25
Tumbes	32
Piura	25
Lambayeque	31
Loreto	28
San Martín	28
Cajamarca	21
La Libertad	26
Huánuco	24
Áncash	26
Ucayali	34
Lima	33
Pasco	25
Prov. Const. del Callao	26
Junín	29
Lima metropolitan[1]	37
Madre de Dios	35
Lima[2]	31
Cusco	22
Ica	34
Apurímac	22
Huancavelica	23
Puno	22
Ayacucho	25
Arequipa	31
Tacna	32
Moquegua	28

Peru, 2022.

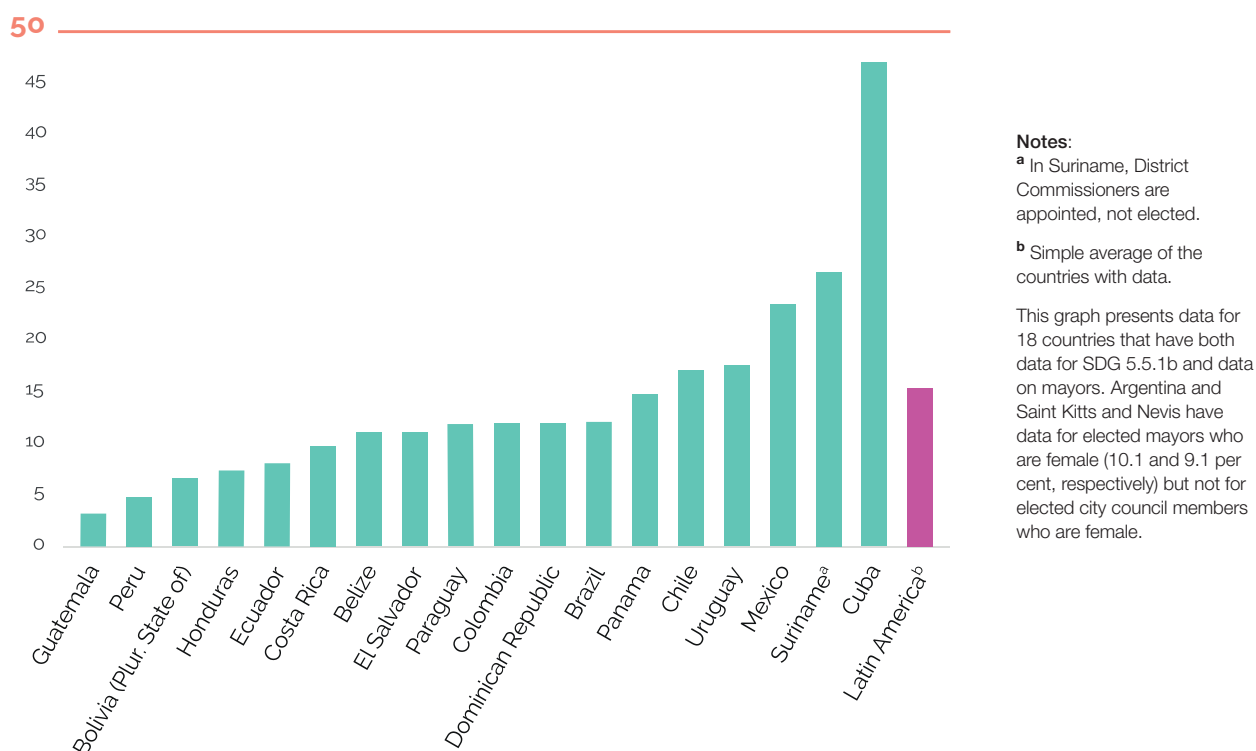|	
Amazonas	46
Tumbes	42
Piura	41
Lambayeque	41
Loreto	43
San Martín	40
Cajamarca	39
La Libertad	40
Huánuco	43
Áncash	44
Ucayali	48
Lima	49
Pasco	44
Prov. Const. del Callao	36
Junín	42
Lima metropolitan[1]	46
Madre de Dios	44
Lima[2]	42
Cusco	40
Ica	46
Apurímac	40
Huancavelica	39
Puno	36
Ayacucho	40
Arequipa	42
Tacna	40
Moquegua	43

20 - 29.9
30 - 39.9
40 - 49.9

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI) of Peru.

Complementary data on women in local executive positions are needed to highlight major gender gaps in political representation.

Additional indicators, systematically monitored in the region, can highlight other aspects of women's participation in decision-making. While SDG indicator 5.5.1b covers only positions in deliberative bodies of local government, complementary data can show, for example, the much lower women's representation among the more powerful positions of mayors or equivalent heads of the executive. For instance, data for the lowest tiers[12] of local government in 18 countries in the region show that, women's representation among mayors in 2021 was twice lower than among municipal council members.[13] For instance, in Costa Rica and Mexico, women represent almost half of local council members, however, less than a tenth and a quarter of mayors, respectively.

Figure 3.
Proportion of elected mayors who are women (per cent), latest available data as of December 2021.

Notes:
a In Suriname, District Commissioners are appointed, not elected.

b Simple average of the countries with data.

This graph presents data for 18 countries that have both data for SDG 5.5.1b and data on mayors. Argentina and Saint Kitts and Nevis have data for elected mayors who are female (10.1 and 9.1 per cent, respectively) but not for elected city council members who are female.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Gender Equality Observatory, 2023. Available at: https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/elected-mayors-who-are-female/

12   Local government organization varies across countries in terms of number of tiers. About half of countries in the world have only one tier of local government, typically at the municipal level. However, in other countries, the local government may comprise two, three or four tiers of local government. While SDG indicator 5.5.1b monitors women's representation in deliberative bodies across all local government tiers a country may have, two additional indicators monitored by ECLAC Gender Observatory are focused on the lowest tier of local government only, tracking women's representation among heads of the executive bodies (mayors) and members of deliberative bodies (city councils), respectively
13   Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, CEPALSTAT Statistical Database, 2023. Available at https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/elected-mayors-who-are-female

Administrative electoral data add information on voters and candidates in local elections.

Electoral data on women's representation as registered voters, voters and candidates are a cost-effective source of information. For instance, information on women's representation among candidates allows countries to assess their progress concerning candidate parity and evaluate their need for strong legislated candidate quotas. For example, Chile's Electoral Management Body, SERVEL, reports statistics on registered candidates by age, sex, and political party for different elected positions.[14] The data reveal that the percentage of women candidates for local government positions in the 2021 election was only 22.6 per cent in the case of *Alcaldes (mayors or equivalent positions)* and 38.9 per cent for *Concejales (members of local deliberative bodies),* both far from parity. The percentage of elected women was 17.1 for *alcaldías* and 33.2 for *concejalías.* SERVEL also has data on voter turnout by sex, which was 49.5 per cent for women and 44.9 per cent for men in the 2021 general elections.

Sample surveys are used to generate data on inclusive political and civic participation.

Other statistics on women's political participation are collected through surveys. For instance, in Mexico, coordination between the national statistics office (INEGI) and the national electoral institute (INE), resulted in the implementation of the *Encuesta Nacional de Cultura Cívica 2020* (ENCUCI). The survey provided information about the participation of citizens in public affairs, civic culture, and citizenship.[15] For example, the data collected show that the voter turnout for eligible people over 19 was 82.9 per cent for women and 80.6 per cent for men.

Similarly, since 2011, the National Statistics Office of Colombia (DANE) implements the *Encuesta de cultura política* (EPC), a survey that generates statistics on Colombian political culture, social capital and community engagement, and electoral participation, among others, as input to design public policies that strengthen democracy and peaceful living in the country.[16] The 2021 survey, for example, revealed that the participation in the election of local representatives in October 2019 was 78.9 per cent for women and 76.4 per cent for men.

Experiences in surveys and administrative data in the region as well as from other regions are currently used to build global statistical standards on collecting data on inclusive participation in political and public affairs in the context of the Praia City Group on Governance Statistics.[17]

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14   Servicio Electoral de Chile (SERVEL), Estadísticas de datos abiertos. Available at https://www.servel.cl/centro-de-datos/estadisticas-de-datos-abiertos-4zg/

15   Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), Encuesta Nacional de Cultura Cívica (ENCUCI) 2020. Available at https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/encuci/2020/#Documentacion

16   Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE), Encuesta de Cultura Política EPC. Available at https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/gobierno/cultura-politica

17   Praia City Group on Governance Statistics, Task Team on Participation in Political and Public Affairs. Further information available at: https://www.sdg16hub.org/dashboard/praia-group/task-team-participation

Box 5:

Global and regional resources

The **Women in Local Governmen**t website is the UN Women knowledge and data hub on women's participation in local government. It features most updated global data on SDG indicator 5.5.1b, country profiles of local government organization, electoral systems and legislated quotas at local level, and resources for monitoring and analysis of women's political participation.

Available at: **https://localgov.unwomen.org/**

The **Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean** aims to analyze and draw attention to compliance with international agreements on gender equality in the region; provide technical support and capacity-building to machineries for the advancement of women, national statistics offices and other governmental institutions; and conduct diagnostic studies of inequalities between women and men in key areas. The Observatory measures participation of women in decision-making in local power structures through SDG Indicator 5.5.1b as well as through two other indicators: elected mayors who are female (percentage of women in the total number of elected mayors) and elected city council members who are female (percentage of women in the number of elected city council members).

Available at: **https://oig.cepal.org/en**

Global and regional resources
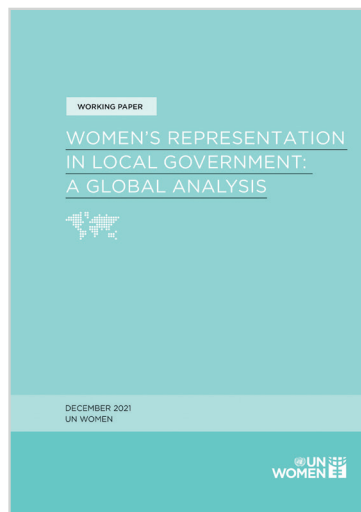
Working Paper ***Women's Representation in Local Government: A Global Analysis*** published by UN Women, features data and analysis of women's representation. The paper considers the impacts of legislated quotas and electoral systems in local elections on women's political participation and identifies remaining data gaps on women's political participation in local government.

Available at:
https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Womens-representation-in-local-government-en.pdf

As an outcome of the coordinated work of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, the document ***Breaking the statistical silence to achieve gender equality by 2030: implementing the information systems pillar of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030*** presents the current situation of statistical production with a gender perspective in the region, the factors that have been key to making progress in this area and the remaining challenges.

Available at:
https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ef84caca-22ff-4e4b-8468-780ff9bc7bdf/content

4. Steps towards gender parity in local government

Bold actions are needed to bolster women's political participation and representation at local level.

Gender parity in decision-making is essential for tackling multiple and intersecting challenges of our time and central to achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Yet women's representation in local governments in the region stands at 27.2 per cent. Looking ahead, swift action is needed to achieve women's full and effective participation in decision-making at local level.

The following recommendations for advancing women's political participation in Latin America and the Caribbean are grounded in international and regional normative frameworks and commitments, including the Regional Gender Agenda, and build on promising practices from around the world.

» **Turn commitments into action**: Fully implement existing regional and international commitments and obligations with respect to the achievement of gender equality in political and public life, and the strengthening of the autonomy of all women in all their diversity in decision-making processes;

» **Anchor parity in electoral legislation**: Adopt electoral and parity laws with gender parity targets and ensure implementation through ranking/placement rules and effective sanctions of candidate list rejection for non-compliance with legal provisions;

» **Prevent and sanction violence against women in politics**: Prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and respond with effective normative frameworks, awareness campaigns, and sanctions to those that occur in political and public life;

» **Collect better data for all**: Produce and use globally comparable data, disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics, on women's participation in political and public life;

» **Raise the bar for collaboration**: Improve the data reporting for SDG indicator 5.5.1b by enhancing coordination between the National Statistical Offices and Electoral Management Bodies;

» **Invest in developing women's life-long political skills and strengthening their autonomy in decision-making processes**: Support engagement of women in politics through capacity-building and awareness-raising, while recognizing the need for targeted support to women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination to participate in public life and politics;

» **Level the field through financing for gender equality**: Regulate campaign finance to ensure equal access to financial resources for women and men.

» **Leave no women behind**: Increase political participation of women in all their diversity –including Indigenous and Afro descendent women, young, rural, and migrant women, women with disability, and in their sexual diversity– through community outreach, mentoring, capacity development initiatives and by opening legislative and policymaking spaces for them;

» **Clear the way for more women in politics**: Reinforce an enabling environment for women's participation in public life and decision-making by addressing women's poverty, gender division of labor, unpaid domestic and care work burden, unequal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, technology, and skills development.