

Tools and Numbers: Movement Strategy and Women's Inclusion in Political Institutions

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“[W]e must seek to understand the full impact of ... institutions
and thus ask not only how [they] control but also how they empower”
(Katzenstein, 1984: 16)

“Strategic actors initiate change within a context of opportunities and constraints.
They are also embodied and gendered” (Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell 2010: 583)

What numbers of women are necessary for women to achieve gender parity in political office? What claims do feminists want to make about women's inclusion in public positions of political power? What tools do we need to achieve women's and men's political parity? Numbers determine the most important components of political competition. At the outset, they establish how many positions are available; they influence how many persons contest for each position; and they shape how many potential office-holders are available from among whom selectors choose. Ultimately, numbers determine how many women are necessary to achieve parity inclusion in politics and “which institutions are most open to women's participation” (Vickers 2011, 255). Numbers also help activists identify specific tools and strategies that organized women can employ to advance women's inclusion across a range of political arenas.

This paper examines how feminist activists, “melding the strategies of mobilization and representation,” might employ existing institutional arrangements to advance women's presence and inclusion in democratic political offices (Katzenstein 1984, 6). Are there extant tools or institutional structures that offer possibilities for increasing women's presence in political office quickly and with relatively low political cost (Beckwith 1989, 4)? Part of a larger project, the paper addresses two different political offices: 1) elected member of a national legislature;¹ and 2) cabinet minister. For each position, the paper identifies the number of positions in each institution, the nature of the competition, and the final selection process, and analyzes 1) the likely conditions under which women's selection chances are greatest and 2) the tools organized women might employ (or have employed) to increase their numbers. Offering examples from the major political parties in developed democracies in North America and West Europe, the paper links the variation in numbers of political positions (and hence the numbers necessary to achieve gender parity) with institution-specific tools that organized women could employ to increase their presence in political institutions. Numbers can provide a guide to the tools most useful to advancing women in political office.

¹ This paper focuses on directly elected members to lower chambers of national legislatures in democratic political systems and hence excludes, e.g., appointed legislative office such as the Canadian Senate.

Women's inclusion in public positions of political power is advantaged by the specificity of women as a group. First, two major categories define sex competition for public office: the conventional distinction between women and men. Although it is clear that this dichotomy is problematic, the ability to claim a long-standing equal half of the population positions women more powerfully for inclusion than is likely to be the case for members of politically relevant minority groups.²

Second, women are present everywhere in West Europe and North America and are not geographically concentrated³ or residentially segregated.⁴ As a result, women should be available for inclusion in all political offices. In addition, women's position as half the electorate (a large number) provides the foundation for claims of sufficient numbers of women available for legislative seats (a comparatively small number)⁵ and cabinet ministerships (a very small number).⁶ Women's availability for public offices, however, nonetheless is likely to require different organized strategies for access to office, depending upon numbers and the tools for access.

Access to public positions of political power requires understanding the competitive context and selection rules for each. It also requires knowing the numbers of posts available and, hence, the numbers of women necessary for achieving sex equality in each. The following sections identify the numbers of posts available for national legislatures and for cabinet ministers, and the selection rules that shape the competitive context for each institution.

² Minority groups, as numerical minorities, may not be able to use claims of number-based inclusion, as is the case for women. For example, in the UK, persons identified as Asian/Asian British constituted 8.0 percent of the population in 2019 ("Population estimates by ethnic group"). An insistence upon inclusion of Asian/Asian British persons in public positions of political power at 8.0 percent would produce very few such office-holders and, in cases of institutions with few positions (e.g. cabinets), might result in no inclusion whatsoever, as larger groups take precedence. Note that this is not to mean that numerical minority groups do not or should not make inclusionary claims. See, e.g., the absence of Asian Americans from US President Joe Biden's first cabinet and the media and group sanctions exacted thereafter (Amy B. Wang, "Asian American Leaders Press Biden for More Diverse Cabinet Picks," *Washington Post*, December 7, 2020; https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/asian-americans-biden-diverse-picks/2020/12/07/88ac96b8-374d-11eb-a997-1f4c53d2a747_story.html). Note as well that women generally constitute half of all politically relevant demographic minority groups, and hence can be advanced as women, bringing descriptive representation into office of under-represented minority groups. For a discussion of intersectionality, see Townsend-Bell 2014; Allen 2022; Xydias 2023; Smooth 2006; 2011; Siim 2014; Lépinard 2013; 2014; Tolley 2023; Bassel and Emejulu 2010; 2014; Simien 2007; Jordan-Zachary 2007; Alexander Floyd 2013.

³ As is the case for some ethnic groups, such as Friulians in northeastern Italy. See "Friulians."

⁴ As is the case for Black citizens in the US.

⁵ In the US in 2023, women constituted c. 50.8% of the population (c. 106,880,000 women between the ages of 20 and 69, inclusive; "Resident Population"); only a relatively small number of candidacies of women is necessary to contend for every US House seat (n= 435) and Senate seat (100). See *Quick Facts*.

⁶ For examples, the US cabinet includes 15 department secretaries; the Canadian cabinet, which can fluctuate in size, is currently composed of 36 ministers (<https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en/ministries>; this count excludes the prime minister, the treasury board president, and the party leader in the House of Commons; French President Emmanuel Macron's initial post-election cabinet had only 18 ministers (Beckwith and Franceschet 2022). The new Danish cabinet, with a reshuffle, has a record 25 cabinet members (Mads Claus Rasmussen, "Denmark Has a Record 25 Government Ministers After a Major Reshuffle," *US News and World Report*, August 29, 2024 (<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2024-08-29/denmark-has-a-record-25-government-ministers-after-a-major-reshuffle>)).

Parliaments, Numbers, and Insistence upon Half.

The preponderance of research and political activism concerning women's political representation has focused on women's access to legislative office. Selection for a national legislative seat requires nomination by a party; few candidates succeed as independents. Party elites serve as gatekeepers to nominations, but activist women's groups, within and outside parties, have succeeded in making women's inclusion among party nominees salient among the party selectorate. Formal qualifications for parliamentary office are generally minimal, but formal rules may also be leveraged to constrain party selectorate behavior to increase women's access to parliamentary candidacy and election.

The numbers of seats available in a national parliament shapes the competitive context. Where many seats are available, the competitive context is likely to increase access for female candidates. This may be particularly the case where candidates are not required to reside in the electoral district and where they may be "parachuted in" to stand for office. Where a parliament has many seats, the challenge for parties is to identify and to promote a large number of candidates; again, this may create opportunities for female candidates for parties that have to seek a large number of nominees to fill party lists or to compete in all districts.

The size of the legislature may appear to present a challenge to parties to find a sufficient number of female candidates to meet a gender parity condition (where women constitute half of all party candidates for office).⁷ If few women are available as candidates, a party is unlikely to field a set of candidates that meet gender parity. This is unlikely to be a meaningful challenge in contemporary democratic political systems, given the large (and equal) numbers of women in the mass population and the comparatively small subset thereof that could be identified and recruited as candidates.⁸

The competitive context is also constrained by the type of electoral system, which establishes the number of seats to be won in any individual district. Single-member plurality electoral systems, with only a single seat to be won, create district contests that are more zero-sum than is the case in multi-member proportional representation systems, where there are multiple candidacy opportunities and where the proportional awarding of seats offers multiple election opportunities. Recruitment of women to candidacies may also be facilitated by multi-member lists where female candidates run as part of a team, rather than simply as the sole individual candidate in a district. In sum, "[d]ifferences in competitive opportunities across electoral systems ... construct the openness or closedness of the competitive context to female candidates" (Dahlerup and Friedenvall 2009, 32), and variation in openness and closedness is likely to shape strategic choices.

⁷ Following Annesley, Beckwith, and Franceschet (2019), this paper defines gender parity as 50% female candidates, or 50% plus or minus one candidate, where the legislature has an odd-number of seats (e.g. Sweden at 349, the US at 435). Regarding challenges to finding sufficient numbers of women to stand as candidates, see, e.g., Weeks 2018, 1943); see also Dhima 2022 for issues of candidate supply.

⁸ Type of political party is likely to shape the potential for a party to construct gender parity across its candidates. Small minor parties are often unable to present full slates in electoral districts, and other parties are ideologically inhospitable to women and may find it difficult to recruit women to run for office on their list (assuming that such parties would choose to do so). See also Larserud and Taphorn 2007, 17-18).

*Tools for Candidacy and Election to National Legislatures.*⁹

Because democratic national legislatures have as their purpose and function the representation of their people, and because women in democratic political systems constitute half of the adult population, activist women and feminist groups have been able to insist upon women's descriptive representation in national legislatures. Because of women's numbers in the mass public, women have strategized to develop new tools in existing institutional and electoral arrangements 1) to increase the number of female candidates and 2) to secure women's election to legislative seats. All such tools target party elites that gate-keep candidacies and all require mobilization and activism by political women for their use. Activist women can "work" these tools to gain women's access to candidacies and elective office.

The major electoral tool has been the gender quota: 1) legislated candidacy gender quotas for national legislative election and 2) voluntary party gender quotas for candidacies.¹⁰ There are additional tools that have potential for strategic employment for increasing women's presence in national legislatures. These include:

- 1) party leader authorization for candidate lists, where a national party leader can require local parties to revise candidate lists to include women;
- 2) provisions for filling parliamentary vacancies;¹¹
- 3) all-women shortlists for specific constituencies;¹² and
- 4) nominating women in targeted seats.¹³

It appears that such tools for elective legislative function most successfully under conditions of inter-party electoral competition and where saliency of women's descriptive representation offers strategic advantage (Weeks et al. 2022; Weeks 2018), when women's votes are perceived to be important for electoral success, and where political actors can make claims about an effective (and looming) electoral gender gap.¹⁴

Of 64 countries that International IDEA identifies as having legislated gender quotas, sixteen are European democracies ("Legislated Gender Quotas"). IDEA identifies 62 countries where political parties have gender quota rules for candidacies, 23 of which are in European democratic countries. Whether legislated gender quotas applying across all parties, or party voluntary gender quotas that are not applicable universally in a political system, gender quotas identify different numbers of female candidates required to meet representational standards. Not all gender quota rules require

⁹ Many thanks to Professors Susan Franceschet and Jennifer Piscopo for sharing their insights and research on gender quotas, much of which informed this section of the paper.

¹⁰ North American and European countries have not employed reserved seats for women, which are more typical in autocratic regimes.

¹¹ Subentrata/suppléant/alternative replacement candidates re: vacancies.

¹² See, e.g., the UK Labour Party.

¹³ "Aspirant" gender quotas can be constructed by party rules that permit party selectorates to choose between a man and woman for nomination for a uninominal seat in single-member plurality districts (32). In regard to the UK, a stronger alternative is Recommendation #9 of *The Good Parliament Report* (2016, 17), that women be nominated as candidates in "at least 50 percent [of a] party's 'vacant held' and 'target seats'." Finally, in the US, it could be required that no more than one of each state's two US Senate seats, elected as single seats by plurality vote, be held by persons of the same sex See Zhou 2019..

¹⁴ Note that an actual gender gap is not necessarily required to create concern about the impact of women's votes; see discussion of "the story of the story" of the gender gap in the US, before such gap existed.

gender parity; not all gender quota rules set numerical standards.¹⁵ Most but not all parties that have internal gender quota rules are parties of the left; not all left parties in European democracies have gender quota rules.

The numbers of seats available and the positive sum nature of multi-member proportional representation electoral arrangements have facilitated the requirement of gender quotas; gender quotas are most common in such electoral systems. Although legislated gender quotas do not require parity in most cases, the strongest and most effective gender quota arrangements set clear numerical quotas and alternating male and female candidate placements on all electoral lists (Hughes et al. 2019). Under such conditions, although the competitive context should be relatively open for women seeking legislative office, developing gender quota requirements took decades of struggle in many parties¹⁶ and in national legislatures. In some cases, adoption of gender quotas through legislation was blocked by successful challenges in constitutional courts.

The strategy for increasing women's presence in elective office has been to mobilize within parties to insist upon women's nominations and thereafter on party rules that include voluntary gender quotas and thereafter to support a policy campaign that result in legislated gender quotas for all parties and, occasionally, constitutional provisions for gender quotas. This strategy targets male political elites at each level – party and legislature and in some cases, constitutional courts, facing multiple veto points that are difficult for activist women and female candidates to leverage.

Gender quotas as a strategy for increasing women's access to legislative office have taken decades to legislate and have faced considerable opposition for several reasons. First, access to candidacies and thereafter to elective office is distinctive because, again, aspirant nominees face multiple veto points, involving multiple players, diffusing authority and autonomy in the selection process. Party selectorates constitute a first formal veto point in selecting candidates, with multiple persons are involved in the selection.¹⁷ A second veto point comes with the election itself, where voters determine the outcome.

Second, the persons who legislate on legislative gender quotas are those who are directly affected by the result. This is not the case for legislated gender quotas for public corporate boards or for government agencies; corporate board members and bureaucrats do not decide these policies, which are determined by legislatures, and MPs are not constrained in their own political career trajectory by supporting gender quotas for corporate boards and government agencies. Gender quotas produce a zero-sum contest between men and women seeking elective office. Within parties, male political elites have had to advance a policy that diminishes their own nomination opportunities; within legislatures, incumbent male MPs, supporting gender quota legislation, reduce their own opportunities for re-nomination and re-election.

Finally, to be successful, gender quotas must involve formal sanctions and cannot succeed as informal practices or conventions. “Any form of results-based quota will have to be enshrined in the constitution, the election law, the political party law or another comparable law to ensure that it is

¹⁵ E.g. Andorra's Liberal Party encourages gender parity without enumeration (“Voluntary Political Party Quotas”).

¹⁶ E.g. the UK Labour Party.

¹⁷ This is the case for primary elections, e.g., in the US, as well as for formal party candidate selection and de-selection processes, e.g., in the UK.

applied and to ensure that the determined percentage or the seats reserved for women in the legislature are legally secured and cannot be challenged by any of the contestant parties” (Larserud and Taphorn 2007, 9).

The strategy of mobilizing for gender quotas as the means of increasing women’s presence in national legislatures has required lengthy struggles. The irony is that national parliaments are the arena for mobilizing for gender quotas, and the parties seated therein are the strategic targets, where women are underrepresented both in the institution and among its members. For example, it took Portugal nearly two decades to enact a gender quota law providing that 33 percent of candidates for local, national, and European elections be women (2006). The Socialist Party’s 1988 voluntary gender quota of 25 percent was followed by proposals of key revisions of the Portuguese Constitution in 1996. Multiple debates within the Occasional Committee for the Revision of the Constitution (with revision completed in 1997) resulted, in 1998, in gender parity legislation being introduced – and rejected – in 1998, with eventual successful gender quota legislation in 2006. The Parity Law was vetoed by the President in June 2006, and was returned to the Assembly of the Republic for revision and subsequent passage. It is worth noting that the Parity Law does not use the language of “quota.” Women currently hold 85 seats (36.96%) in the Assembly, the result of the 2022 parliamentary elections that produced a Socialist majority government (https://data.ipu.org/node/136/elections?chamber_id=13497).

The achievement of a gender parity quota in France also required multiple tries over time. Gender quotas were first introduced in France in 1999, including a gender parity requirement, and were finally confirmed in 2015. “[T]he demand for parity ... led to numerous legislative reforms, two constitutional revisions, and several decisions from the French Constitutional Council (CC) over more than fifteen years (1999–2015)” (Lépinard 2018, 62. Similarly, gender quotas first legislated in Italy in 1993 did not become law until 2015 (Weeks 2018, 1961).

Moreover, of European countries with gender quota requirements, only one country requires gender parity. Most countries provide a range within which women’s (and men’s) representation can vary, including less than parity. Italy and Spain, for examples, tolerate a 20 percent disparity between women’s and men’s parliamentary presence. For Italy, “the provisions for the election to the Chamber of Deputies state that out of the total number of candidacies submitted by each list or coalition list in single-member districts at a national level, none of the two genders shall be represented in a percentage exceeding 60 per cent” (Law No. 165/2017 article 3, 3.1; <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/41/35>). Spain has a similar provision (Organic Law on Regime of General Elections, Article 44 bis (1); <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/103/35>). Only France mandates gender parity, tolerating no more than a two percent difference “between the number of candidates of each sex that a party or group of parties present for single-member constituency elections” (Law No. 88-227, Article 9 (1); <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/86/35>; Beckwith and Franceschet 2023, 17 fn19).

In sum, numbers – the number of legislative seats and the numbers of veto points – have shaped the strategy that organized women have taken to develop the tool of legislated gender quotas to increase women’s election to parliaments, a strategy that has been hard fought and long fought (see Table

1).¹⁸ It is still the case the few countries require gender parity in their quota laws¹⁹ and few campaigns initially proposed a parity quota. In Europe, only France requires gender parity in party candidate lists. Nonetheless, gender quotas are the most efficient and effective means of increasing the numbers of women in national parliaments (Larserud and Taphorn 2007; Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012).

Cabinets, Numbers, and Achieving Parity

Numbers are substantially different in cabinet appointments, and the achievement of gender parity in cabinets requires different tools. The formation of cabinets differs substantially from the formation of parliaments. Cabinet posts are powerful positions and appointment to one of the most powerful cabinet posts can lead to party leadership and ultimately the prime ministership. The route to cabinet minister is through the party of the selector (the president or prime minister), and where the selector can increase the number of ministries, competition for cabinet positions is positive-sum rather than zero-sum. Competition for cabinet ministerships is diffused among multiple positions, with opportunities for appointment, for advancement through reshuffle into a more prestigious ministry, or for replacement of an outgoing minister in cabinet restructuring. Prime ministers and presidents have considerable autonomy to construct governing cabinets as they please, without authorization from other actors or potential veto players. Those who appoint members to cabinets are not themselves competitors for cabinet posts and hence do not jeopardize their own political position in appointing cabinet ministers. Selectors appoint those from within their own party,²⁰ and those whom they appoint can also be removed by them.

The number of cabinet ministers in any political system is very small compared to numbers of parliamentary seats; cabinet size is so small that it is likely that the supply pool of women for ministerial appointment is large enough to provide all-female cabinets.²¹ In cases where the selector is constrained to form a cabinet from among those holding seats in parliament, further constrained by the convention of selecting ministers from within one's own party, selectors nonetheless can find sufficient numbers of persons, including women, to appoint as cabinet ministers.

These features make inclusion of women in cabinet structurally much easier than is the case for women's candidacies to parliaments. In sum, it is relatively easy to make the case for women's inclusion in cabinets, and for gender parity at the level of cabinet minister, and, moreover, it is

¹⁸ See Espírito-Santo 2018, 216-227, 238-239. Women currently hold 85 seats (36.96%) in the Assembly, the result of the 2022 parliamentary elections that produced a Socialist majority government (https://data.ipu.org/node/136/elections?chamber_id=13497).

¹⁹ In their global dataset, Hughes et al. (2019, 232; see Figure 3) found only seven countries with a 50 percent gender quota.

²⁰ This is generally true for coalition governments, where a coalition party leader, as well as the prime minister, selects cabinet ministers.

²¹ In 2018, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez' initial post-election cabinet included eleven women, constituting a super-majority of the 17-member cabinet (Beckwith and Franceschet 2023; "Spain's king swears in Sanchez cabinet with majority of women," BBC, June 7, 2018; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44382051>). The PSOE (Spain) has formed three cabinets where women comprise more than 60 percent of ministers.

relatively easy for prime ministers and presidents to achieve it (Annesley, Beckwith, and Franceschet 2019).

Tools for Gender Parity Cabinets.

No country in Europe has a gender parity quota as a tool for increasing the number of women in cabinets. for cabinet posts. Although multiple parliaments in Europe have established gender quotas for public boards, corporate boards, and other agencies, such legislation has not included cabinet formation or gender parity for cabinets. Nonetheless, women's inclusion in cabinets has increased across time, and gender parity in cabinets has also increased. A brief review of cabinets in Europe and North America reveals gender parity cabinets in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.²²

Gender parity cabinets originate from a combination of several conditions. First, where a president or prime minister has autonomy in cabinet formation, activist women organize to influence the selector to include women among cabinet appointees. It is likely that, in electorally competitive party contexts, inclusion of women permits a president or prime minister the opportunity, in appointing women to cabinet, to advertise support for women in a bid to attract women's votes or to forestall an opposing party's ability to garner such votes. "[W]hen selectors perceive electoral benefit from selecting a woman, and be held accountable by their electorate, they are more likely to do so" (Escobar-Lemmon et al., 2021, 158). Where a previous prime minister or president has appointed a substantial number of women to cabinet, a new prime minister or president may feel compelled to match or to exceed that number, sensitive to what Annesley et al. (2019) refer to as a concrete floor, a pattern that they observed in their study of seven democracies. Moreover, Beckwith and Franceschet (2022) have found that gender parity can be established as the concrete floor, as a specific expectation that a prime minister or president will form a cabinet with equal numbers of male and female ministers.

The second tool, beyond mobilization by activist women, is the capacity to exact a gender parity promise from presidential and prime ministerial candidates, during the course of an election campaign. Such a promise, made publicly, can be leveraged, post-election, into a gender parity cabinet. Where previous presidents or prime ministers have made such a promise and constructed a gender parity cabinet, subsequent candidates are likely to make such a promise, finding it difficult to decline to do so when publicly asked. Annesley et al. found that such promises are kept. "[T]he most rapid progress in women's ministerial appointments occurs when aspirant prime ministers or presidents make a public pledge during an election campaign to include women in cabinet Subsequent candidates [make] similar promises" (Annesley et al. 2019, 275). Promises to appoint a gender parity cabinet can be easily implemented by selectors, who have autonomy in cabinet formation (Annesley et al. 2019, 276). Beckwith and Franceschet (2022) find that selectors strive to maintain gender parity even across multiple cabinet shuffles and generally succeed in doing so.

²²A brief review of cabinets in Europe and North America reveals gender parity cabinets in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. In most of these countries, gender parity in cabinet was achieved only once. See Beckwith and Franceschet 2023.

The structural boundaries of cabinet formation provide easier access for women's inclusion than is the case for women's legislative representation (see Table 1).²³ The time frame for including women in cabinet and for forming gender parity cabinets has been considerably shorter than that of including women in parliaments in equitable numbers. With small numbers of cabinet posts and structural tools that facilitate women's cabinet appointments, the strategy for increasing the presence of women in cabinet is informal and relies on bringing direct pressure on party leaders and on presidential and prime ministerial candidates and on leveraging media attention to activist women's demands.

Conclusion.

As activist women mobilize to increase women's political representation, numbers of positions and the tools for developing strategy will have an impact on mobilization outcomes. The structural requirements for election to parliament and for appointment to cabinet necessitate strategies specific to each institution. Enshrining requirements for women's political representation in law and constitutions may not be optimal for women's access to all government institutions. It is an irony that, in Europe, where countries have required gender quotas by law, no country has achieved legislative parity, yet in the absence of any legal or constitutional requirements, women's representation has increased in governing cabinets, and multiple countries have enjoyed gender parity cabinets, across political parties. Moreover, women are represented in higher percentages in cabinet posts than they are in national legislatures.²⁴ It is no longer the case, as Putnam asserted (1976), that higher political office means fewer women, with a hierarchy of power negatively related to women's inclusion.

Research on women's political representation in legislatures and in cabinets generally does not emphasize the differences in cabinet and legislative structures and does not reference both sets of institutions, except insofar as women's presence in legislatures may position them for appointment to cabinet. Annesley et al. (2019, 278) suggest the reverse, however: that women's presence in cabinet may increase women's parliamentary presence: "Although cabinets are institutions of small size, women's presence within them provides a foothold by which women's equitable inclusion in all arenas of government can be advanced." It may also be the case, however, that the relatively easy means of constructing gender parity cabinet (with few women, given small cabinet size) may permit political parties and prime ministers or presidents a means of neglecting women's parliamentary representation, offering women's cabinet inclusion as evidence of attention to gender equity while resisting equitable inclusion of women as candidates and elected members of parliaments.

²³ The ease with which women can be included in cabinet is also matched by the ease with which they can be removed.

²⁴ For example, women constitute 33 percent of the current US cabinet (5 of 15) but only 29.2 percent of US House members and 25 percent of the US Senate. In Spain, women constitute 54.5 percent (12 of 22) of cabinet members but 44.3 percent of members of the Congreso and 42.3 percent of Senators (https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_month=7&date_year=2024).

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Table 1. Tools, Numbers, and Strategic Conditions of Women's Access to Political Office

Political Office	N of Positions Available	Nature of Competition	Nature of Final Selection	Conditions and Tools for Women's Political Inclusion
Parliamentary Candidate (nomination)	Many	Nonpartisan; zero-sum at the level of the individual seat; failure to be nominated unlikely to preclude second tries. Incumbency deters in-party challengers.	Nonpartisan; elite. Internal party selection.	Gender quotas (legislated, party voluntary) require female candidates; norms of gender inclusion require female candidates. All-woman short lists. Alternative candidates filling vacancies (e.g. Sweden). Suppléant/subentrata candidates (e.g. France/ Italy). Party leader authorization of final candidate lists/promises.
Parliamentary Candidate (election)	Many	Nonpartisan at the level of the individual party list; partisan across lists and candidates. Within list, incumbency may block challengers from new groups. In-party challengers can prevail over incumbents.	Partisan; general electorate (large n). Voters are veto players.	Preference votes/personal votes.
Cabinet Minister	Several	Positive sum, where size of cabinet can be increased; failure to be selected may (or may not) damage future political career opportunities. No incumbency factor.	Generally nonpartisan; elite. Internal, single party selection.	Norms of inclusion; appointment promises; eligible women present in parliament and other eligibility pools.