



Women are more than **50%** the population, but we are less than **25%** of our elected public representatives. Ireland sits at disappointing 99th place internationally in our % of female parliamentarians - That needs to change.

Women for Election want to see an Ireland with the full participation of all women in Irish politics. We inspire, equip and support women to succeed in politics. We work for systematic and sustainable change across all levels of our political system. We are a non-partisan, independent organisation – we work with women across political parties, and independents, with a view to seeing more women elected. Our approach works -

We've worked with or trained more than half of the women who were elected to their local council last year, and we've worked with or trained 31 of the 36 TDs elected in 2020. But we need to do more.

The current rate of change is slow, too slow. We need to put measures in place to ensure more women **RUN** for election. And we need to support women once they are elected. In summary, the next Programme for Government should:

1. **Legislate for a **quota** system to be extended to local and Seanad elections.**
Parties should be required to ensure at least **40% of their election candidates are of each gender.**
2. **Introduce additional targets to improve **diversity** within our political system.**
And to help ensure that we continue to help and support women to run for election
3. **An entitlement to **maternity/adoptive leave** should be introduced for all elected TDs, Senators and Councillors.**

General Election 2020

Only 36 Female TDs elected (of 160)

+1 relative to GE2106 (35 of 158)

Local Elections 2019

Only 29% candidates were women

226 (24%) women were elected

Seanad Election 2020

24 (40%) women senators elected/
appointed to the Seanad

The 2020 general election for the first time saw at least one woman running in every constituency which shows how far we are from a balanced political system.

12 constituencies elected 0 women, and in 20 constituencies just 1 woman was elected.

The *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012* introduced gender quotas into the Irish electoral system. The gender quota system applies for both men and women. The quota system allows for a party's state funding to be cut by half unless at least 30% of their general election candidates are of each gender. This requirement is set to increase to 40% in 2023. It's important to remember that quotas simply get candidates onto the ticket – the electorate chose who represents them.

Quotas work. The introduction of quota requirements saw significant change in the number of women in politics. The numbers and proportion of women running in the first general election after the quota was introduced (2016) almost doubled. However, we have **NO quotas** in place for local elections or for Seanad elections – local councils are often the first step to national politics, and with no quotas in place, the potential for a building a sustainable pipeline of women candidates for Dail elections is remote.

Maternity Leave – a right, not a privilege

One of the real challenges and barriers to women in politics is the challenge of balancing home/family life with the demands of political life. Elected politicians have **no entitlement** to maternity leave. If we are to attract, and retain, more women into political life they should – at the very least – be able to access maternity leave.

Recommendations

Local government matters to local communities. We rely on our local authorities to provide services such as libraries, planning, housing, roads, and the arts. Local authorities are a key element of our democratic system, and local councillors play a key role in our democracy.

Local election experience is often a predictor of who will be elected to our Dáil. Many of our TDs were previously elected to their local council, particularly so for women TDs. Similarly, the Seanad plays a critical role in our democratic structures and process. Through initiating and scrutinising legislation, facilitating debate on issues of national and international importance, the Seanad plays an important role in providing a check and balance on Dáil Éireann, and within our political system.

Women for Election are proposing 3 key recommendations:

1. Legislate for a **quota system to be extended to local and Seanad elections.**

Parties should be required to ensure at least **40% of their election candidates are of each gender.**

2. Introduce additional targets to improve **diversity within our political system.**

And to help ensure that we continue to help and support women to run for election

3. An entitlement to **maternity/adoptive leave should be introduced for all elected TDs, Senators and Councillors.**

Conclusion

We need a better balance in our political system, we need the full participation of women in all aspects of our political system. Quotas, at a local and Seanad level, and the introduction of maternity leave would play a significant role in seeing more women elected. We would ask the Citizens' Assembly to include these recommendations in their report to government.