

## Sweden: women's representation in parliament

Sweden has the second highest percentage<sup>1</sup> of female parliamentarians in the national parliament. 45.3 percent of the elected candidates were women in the 2002 election. This means that 158 seats of the total 349 seats are taken by women. And in the cabinet, almost 50 percent of ministers are female (10 out of 22). Today all the parties acknowledge the importance of involving women in politics and have well defined goals for women's participation in politics. As such, we can conclude that Sweden has been very successful in encouraging more women to take part in politics.

But it has not always been like that: it is a long and ongoing process. The turning point came in 1972 when the Liberal Party and the Social Democrats recognized the importance of involving women in politics and the importance women's votes can play in politics. Since then the situation has constantly improved for Swedish women in politics. In 1971 the percentage of women in the parliament was 14 percent, compared with 45.3 percent today. Since the 1980s the level has been over 30 percent.

### ELECTION 2002 DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS

PARTY	WOMEN		MEN		Total
	% of women	Number of women	% of men	Number of men	
The Social Democratic Party	47.2	68	52.8	76	144
The Conservative Party	40.0	22	60.0	33	55
The Liberal Party	47.9	23	52.1	25	48
The Christian Democrats	30.3	10	69.7	23	33
The Left Party	46.7	14	53.3	16	30
The Centre Party	50.0	11	50.0	11	22
The Green Party	58.8	10	41.2	7	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>349</b>

Source [http://www.riksdagen.se/templates/R\\_PageFull\\_\\_\\_\\_7724.aspx](http://www.riksdagen.se/templates/R_PageFull____7724.aspx)

<sup>1</sup> Rwanda has the highest percentage of elected women with its 48,8 %.



### **Voluntarily Party Quotas**

The Liberal Party was the first Swedish party to regulate a minimum level of women's representation to 40 percent in 1972. During the 1980s and 1990s the rest of the Swedish parties represented in the parliament also set numerical goals for women's participation.

The Social Democratic Party, the Left Party and the Green Party all have quotas to ensure the participation of women in politics. The Social Democratic Party quota is set at 50 percent which implies a maximum level for both men and women and is therefore intended to be a gender neutral quota. The Moderate Party and the Center Party opt for a "softer" strategy and do not use quotas or strict regulations, but rather recommendations and targets.

The Swedish quota system is not regulated in constitutional laws. The quotas are decided by the political parties and are normally set in the parties' own regulations. This means that the parties themselves set a minimum or maximum level for women candidates on the party list. And the political parties are also the ones that decide the composition of the party list with the candidates. For example; the Social Democratic Party uses a zipper system which means that every other position is reserved for male and female candidates.

The combination of the Swedish electoral system of proportional representation and voluntary party quotas has proven to be a successful means of increasing the number of women in politics, both, within political parties and in the national and local assemblies.

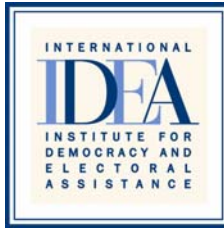
Sweden and the other four Nordic countries - Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland - all have high levels of female representation in their parliaments. The regional average of the Nordic countries is 40 percent. All five countries have a proportional representation system. Like Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland also have voluntary party quotas. Finland however, does not have a quota system. An overview of women's representation in the Nordic region is presented in the box below.

### **WOMENS REPRESENTATION IN THE NORDIC PARLIAMENTS**

<b>Country</b>	<b>% of women</b>	<b>Number of women</b>	<b>Total seats</b>	<b>Year of election</b>
Sweden	45.3	158	349	2002
Norway	37.9	64	169	2005
Finland	37.5	75	200	2003
Denmark	36.9	66	179	2005
Iceland	33.3	21	63	2003

Source: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)

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In the 2006 election, Swedish political parties are applying a well ingrained slogan among politicians: “every second seat for a woman”. With this, the expectation is that Sweden will continue to have one of the world’s highest levels of women in parliament.

**Find out more about women’s representation in parliaments and quota systems:**

“Women in Politics” at International IDEA

<http://www.idea.int/gender/index.cfm>

The International IDEA and Stockholm University Gender Quota Database

[www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)

Swedish Case Study in IDEA’s Handbook *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*

<http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/upload/Sweden.pdf>

Inter-Parliamentary Union

[www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)