



Women's Political Participation in Africa 2021-2024

EAST Region

Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan,
Tanzania, Uganda

Fact Sheet

	Africa	Horn	East	Southern	Central	North	West
Lower houses of parliament 2024	26% (25%)	31% (33%)	34% (33%)	29% (28%)	22% (19%)	22% (24%)	20% (16%)
Upper houses of parliament 2024	21% (20%)	28% (30%)	34% (29%)	31% (29%)	28% (20%)	10% (11%)	7% (12%)
Parliament overall 2024	25% (24%)	30% (33%)	34% (32%)	29% (28%)	23% (19%)	20% (21%)	19% (16%)
Political party leadership 2024	9% (12%)	0% (17%)	11% (15%)	19% (14%)	0% (7%)	0% (0%)	0% (11%)
Election management bodies 2024	29% (28%)	30% (21%)	45% (45%)	37% (40%)	23% (20%)	15% (25%)	27% (24%)
Local government 2024	25% (21%)	29% (N/A)	24% (35%)	25% (20%)	24% (27%)	26% (3%)	28% (2%)
Speakers 2024	25% (21%)	0% (0%)	44% (33%)	43% (35%)	27% (18%)	0% (0%)	16% (16%)
Mayors of capital cities 2024	29% (19%)	25% (20%)	0% (0%)	20% (19%)	29% (43%)	17% (0%)	36% (20%)
Top executive positions 2024	13% (7%)	8% (10%)	28% (12%)	21% (9%)	11% (7%)	0% (0%)	7% (7%)
Cabinet 2024	24% (22%)	19% (17%)	36% (32%)	30% (26%)	18% (20%)	21% (13%)	21% (19%)

K	Increased since 2021 (in brackets)
E	Decreased since 2021 (in brackets)
Y	The same as 2021 (in brackets)

QUICK FACTS

- There has been a one-percentage-point increase of women lower house parliamentarians in Africa since 2021, from 25% to 26%. At this rate of progress, we will reach parity by 2100.
- East Africa is the best-performing region across most areas of political decision-making. It has progressed in five areas of women's political participation, declined in two and remained the same for two. The region exceeds the continental average in all areas except local government and Mayors of capital cities, of which there are none.
- In East Africa, 34% of lower house parliamentarians are women, a one-percentage point decline since 2021.
- Women in the lower houses of parliament in East Africa range from 23% in Kenya to 61% Rwanda, which has the highest proportion of women MPs globally.
- Only Kenya has not achieved or surpassed 30% of women in the lower house of parliament.
- All six countries in the region use some form of quota at national, local or both levels.
- Women are best represented in election management bodies (EMBs), and least represented as mayors of capital cities, where no women hold positions.
- The biggest increase in the region is for women in the top executive, from 12% to 28%, the highest in the region.
- Three countries in East Africa held national and/or local government elections between 2021 and 2024. In South Sudan WPP increased by four percentage points, In Kenya it remained the same and WPP declined by one percentage point in Uganda.

Context

While East Africa experiences relative peace, many East African countries face significant human rights challenges, including arbitrary detentions, restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, and the persecution of political opposition figures and activists.

Journalists often face harassment and censorship, leading to a constrained media environment. Governments in countries like Rwanda Uganda, and Tanzania have been criticised for their treatment of journalists and activists.

Many communities face violence stemming from ethnic conflicts, particularly in South Sudan. Gender-based violence remains a serious concern, exacerbated by insecurity and cultural practices. The presence of armed groups, like Al-Shabaab remains a significant threat in Somalia and parts of Kenya, frequently conducting attacks on military and

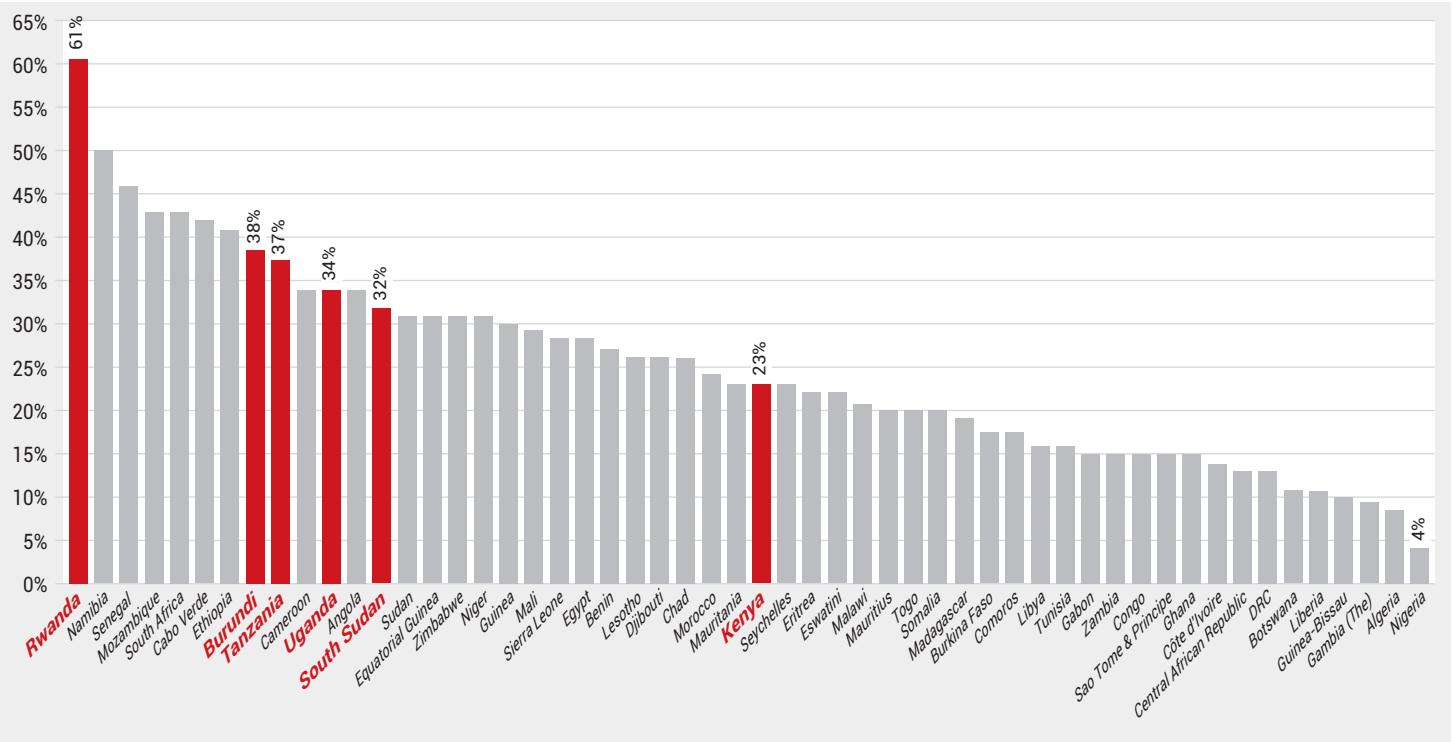
civilian targets. The region is also affected by the activities of other armed groups and militias.

These contexts directly impact women's rights in general and WPP in particular.

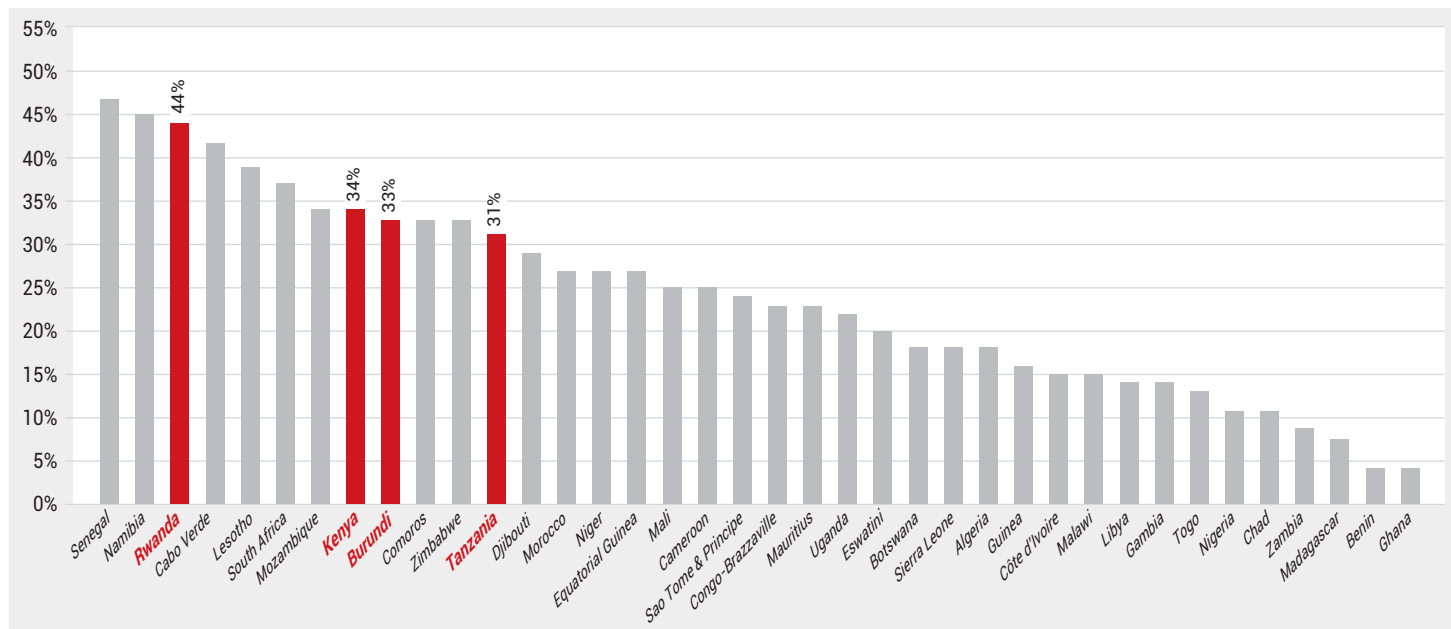


Judicaëlle Irakoze, a young activist in **Burundi**, reflects on the escalating challenges facing women in the political sphere since 2015, highlighting the repercussions faced by outspoken individuals who challenge oppressive authorities. Describing the hostile environment that silences dissent and punishes those advocating for meaningful change, she laments the unjust labels and accusations, such as being branded a "putschist" for speaking out against injustice at a young age.

WPP in Lower Houses in African countries, 2024



WPP in lower houses of parliament in Africa range from a high of 61% in Rwanda to a low of 4% in Nigeria. Rwanda has the highest proportion of women in East Africa, while Kenya has the lowest (23%).



At the **local government** level, WPP ranges from 31% in Tanzania to 44% in Rwanda.

Recent elections in East Africa (2021-2024)

Three countries in East Africa held national and/or local government elections between 2021 and 2024. In South Sudan WPP increased by four percentage points, In Kenya it remained the same and WPP declined by one percentage point in Uganda.

% Change	Lower House	Local Government
5% to 10%	South Sudan (4%)	
0 to 5%	Kenya	Kenya
-1 to -5%	Uganda (-1)	

Obstacles to WPP

Progress has been made, however, research shows that women continue to face several barriers, not only in accessing political spaces but also in exercising their agency and power once elected.

Electoral systems and quotas

Electoral systems and quotas (TSMs) have been shown to enhance WPP at all levels. The electoral system is the way in which representatives are elected, these systems.

In Africa, three main types of electoral systems are used:

- **Constituency** or "First Past the Post" (FPTP)/ plurality/majority systems - Winner takes all, generally yield poorer results for women and minority groups.
- **Proportional Representation (PR)** - Most conducive to increasing women's representation, especially using the zebra list system.



Hon. Beatrice Elachi, a Member of Parliament (MP) for Dagoretti North Constituency in Kenya and former Speaker of the Nairobi County Assembly (2017-2020), highlights that affirmative seats should be a stepping stone to competitive constituencies. The importance of women moving from affirmative action seats to competitive positions cannot be overstated, as it would allow them to have a greater impact on policy decisions.

- **Mixed system** using both PR and constituency systems - Middle ground, more countries moving to this system.

Quotas are temporary special measures (TSMs) to increase WPP. At the national level 45 of the 54 African states have some form of quota at the lower house level. At the local level of the 41 countries for which we could get data, 28 have some form of quota, with similar results to those in the lower house.

Any type of quota can be combined with any type of electoral system to increase women's political representation, with varying degrees of success. It shows that the best combination for increasing WPP in Africa is the PR system where political parties provide for quotas voluntarily at the national level, while the mixed system with legislated candidate quotas is the most effective at the local government level. In the FPTP system voluntary party quotas are the least effective, while the most effective quota in the FPTP system is reserved seats for women.

Lower House					Local Government		
Country	Rank LH	Electoral system	Quota	%Women	Electoral system	Quota	%Women
Rwanda	1	PR	Reserved seats	61%	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	44%
Burundi	33	PR	Reserved seats	38%	FPTP	Reserved seats	33%
Tanzania	37	Mixed	Reserved seats	37%	Mixed	Reserved seats	31%
Uganda	49	FPTP	Reserved seats	34%	FPTP	Reserved seats	22%
South Sudan	54	Other	Legislated Candidate Quotas	32%	N/A	N/A	
Kenya	98	FPTP	Reserved seats	23%	FPTP	Reserved seats	34%
TOTAL EAST				34%			24%

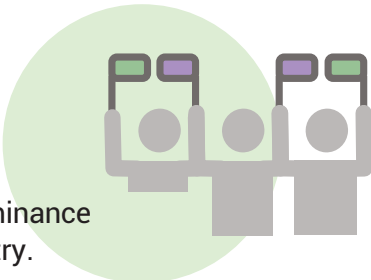
All six countries in East Africa use some form of quota system, five use reserved seats and one uses a legislated candidate quota. The table shows that the countries using reserved seats in PR system have the highest levels of WPP, while those using reserved seats in the PR system have the lowest levels of women's representation.

Reserved seats, however, sometimes have the unintended consequence of creating two tiers of women MPs, and those coming in on reserved seats are seen as inferior. In Tanzania for example, there is no clear legal framework or guidelines regarding how women are selected for PR seats, with parties accused of nepotism and favouritism, creating an environment where women in reserved seats are disadvantaged and undermined by the system and their political parties.

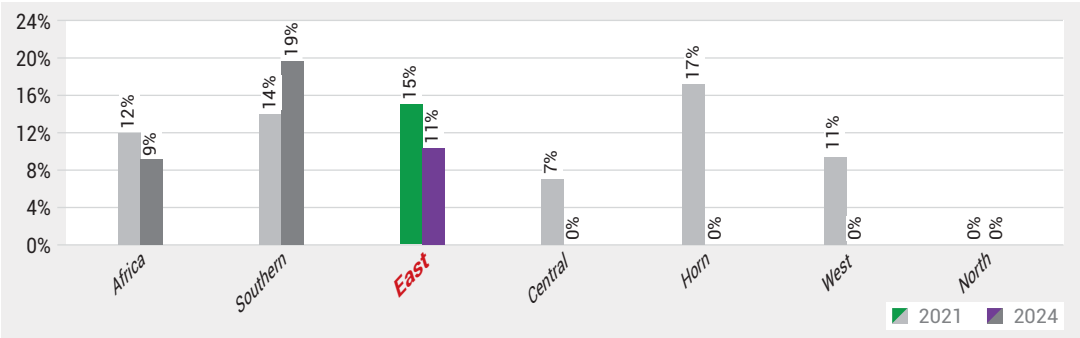


Political parties

Political parties are instrumental to advancement into national leadership, and male dominance of top leadership (Leader, Secretary General (SG) and DSG) is a feature in every country.



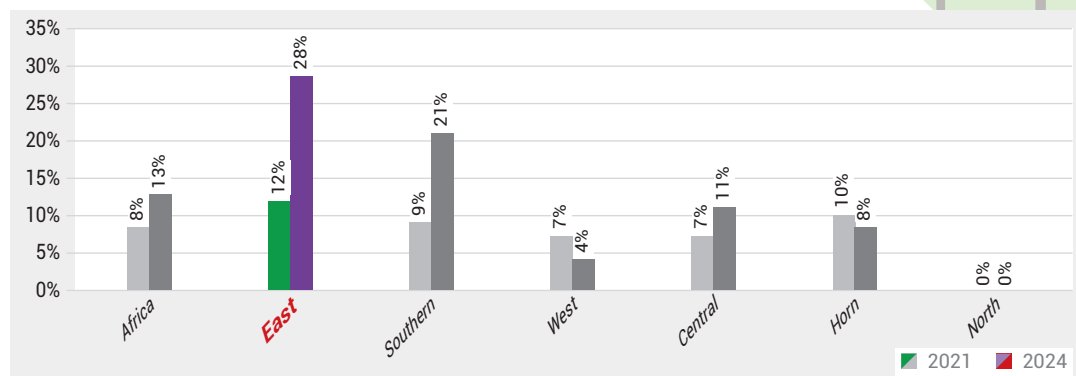
Women's representation in political party leadership in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



Since the 2021 Barometer, women's representation in executive positions of main political parties across East Africa dropped by four percentage points, from 15% to 11%

Top Executive

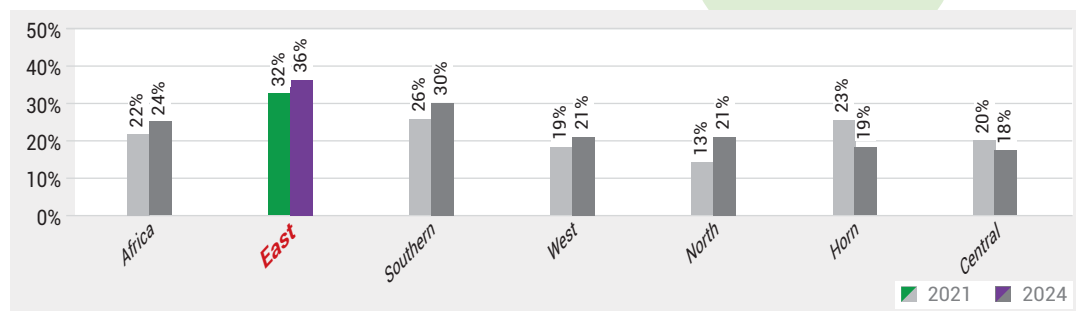
Women in top executive of governments in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



Women in top executive roles have increased in East Africa from 12% in 2021 to 28% in 2024. Samia Suluhu Hassan is President of Tanzania; Rebecca Nyandeng De Maboir is Vice president of South Sudan; Robinah Nabbanja abd Lulia Isanga Nakadama are Prime Minister and Vice Prime Minister in Uganda.

Cabinet

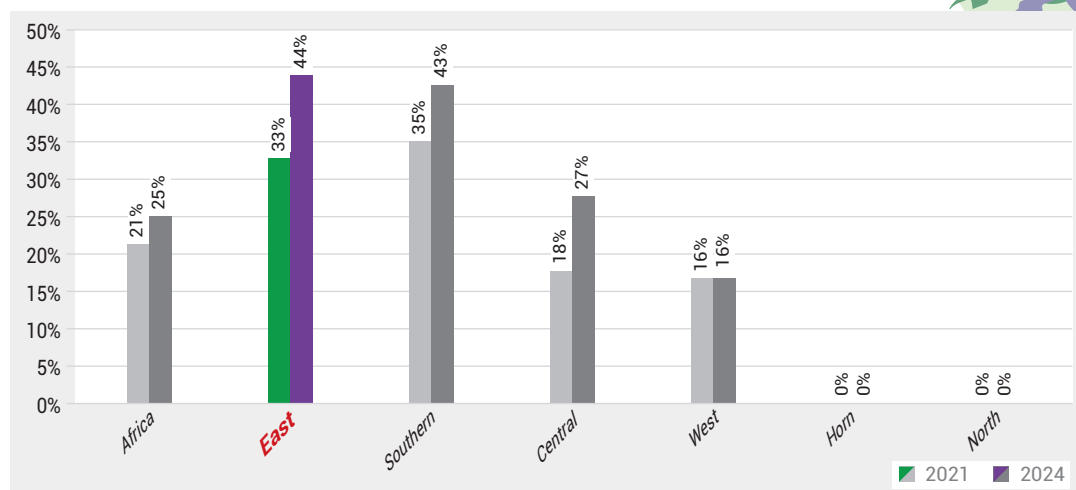
Women in Cabinet in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



Overall Female Cabinet ministers increased by two percentage points to 24%. In East Africa 36% of Cabinet are women, the highest in Africa. Women ministers range from 29% in Kenya to 42% in Rwanda.

Speakers

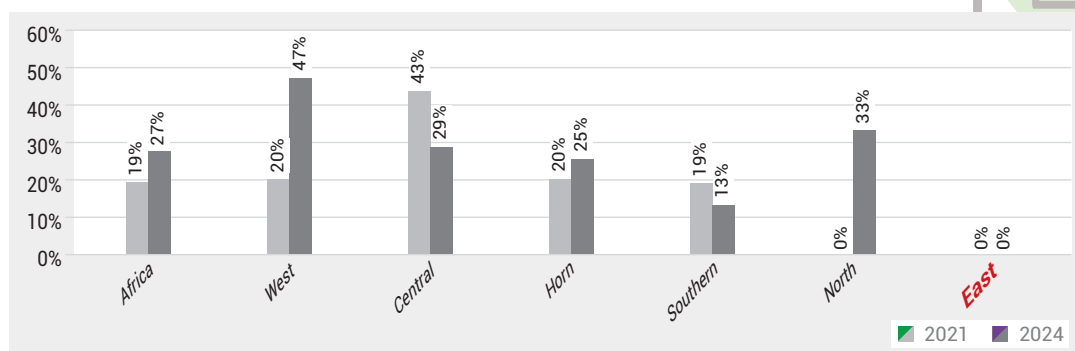
Women speakers in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



Four countries in East Africa have female speakers - South Sudan in the Transitional National Legislative Assembly; Uganda parliament; Tanzania National Assembly and the Rwandan Senate.

Mayors of capital cities

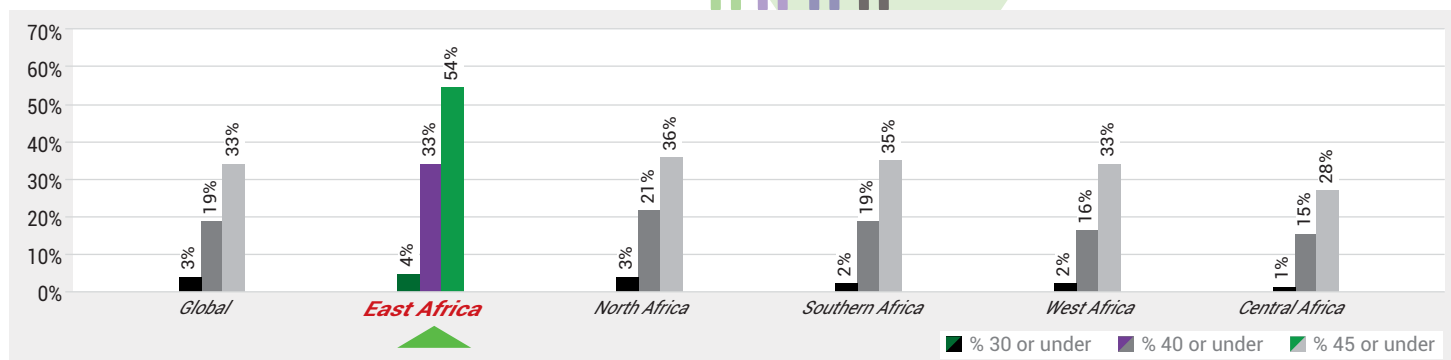
Women mayors of capital cities in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



None of the capital cities in East Africa have female mayors.

Youth representation

Youth representation in parliament in Africa by region



Overall, 32% of MPs in the lower houses of parliament are under 45 years old. East Africa has the youngest MPs in Africa, with over half (54%) being 40 years or under.

All graphs, tables and information are sourced from the second edition of the WPP Africa Barometer, read the full version [here](#).