



# Women's Political Participation in Africa 2021-2024

## WEST Region

## Fact Sheet

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia (The), Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

	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%)

KEY	Increased since 2021 (in brackets)
	Decreased since 2021 (in brackets)
	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.
- West Africa is the worst-performing region across most areas of political decision-making, though it has progressed in six areas, remained the same in one and declined in three areas.
- In West Africa, 20% of lower house parliamentarians are women, a four percentage point increase since 2021.
- Women in the lower houses of parliament in West Africa range from 46% in Senegal to 4% in Nigeria, the lowest in Africa.
- Only four countries (Cabo Verde, Guinea, Mali and Senegal) have achieved or surpassed 30% of women in the lower house of parliament.
- Eleven countries in West Africa use some form of quota system at national, local or both levels.
- Women are best represented in local government, and least represented in political party leadership, where no women hold positions.
- Eleven countries in West Africa held national and/or local government elections between 2021 and 2024 - 10 increased, one remained the same and two declined.

# Context

West Africa is a large region in Africa, consisting of 15 states. The region faces a complex interplay of political instability, human rights abuses, and serious security challenges. While some countries continue to make strides toward democratic governance, the rise of military coups and violent extremism poses significant threats to stability and human rights protections in the region. Repressive measures, including unlawful detentions and censorship, are common in several countries.

Many West African countries, such as **Ghana** and **Nigeria**, are experiencing democratic challenges, including allegations of electoral fraud, incomplete electoral processes, and tensions surrounding elections.

The region has witnessed a resurgence of military coups, notably in **Mali**, **Burkina Faso**, and **Guinea**. These coups often stem from frustrations over insecurity, economic hardship, and perceived governmental failures to address challenges such as terrorism and corruption.

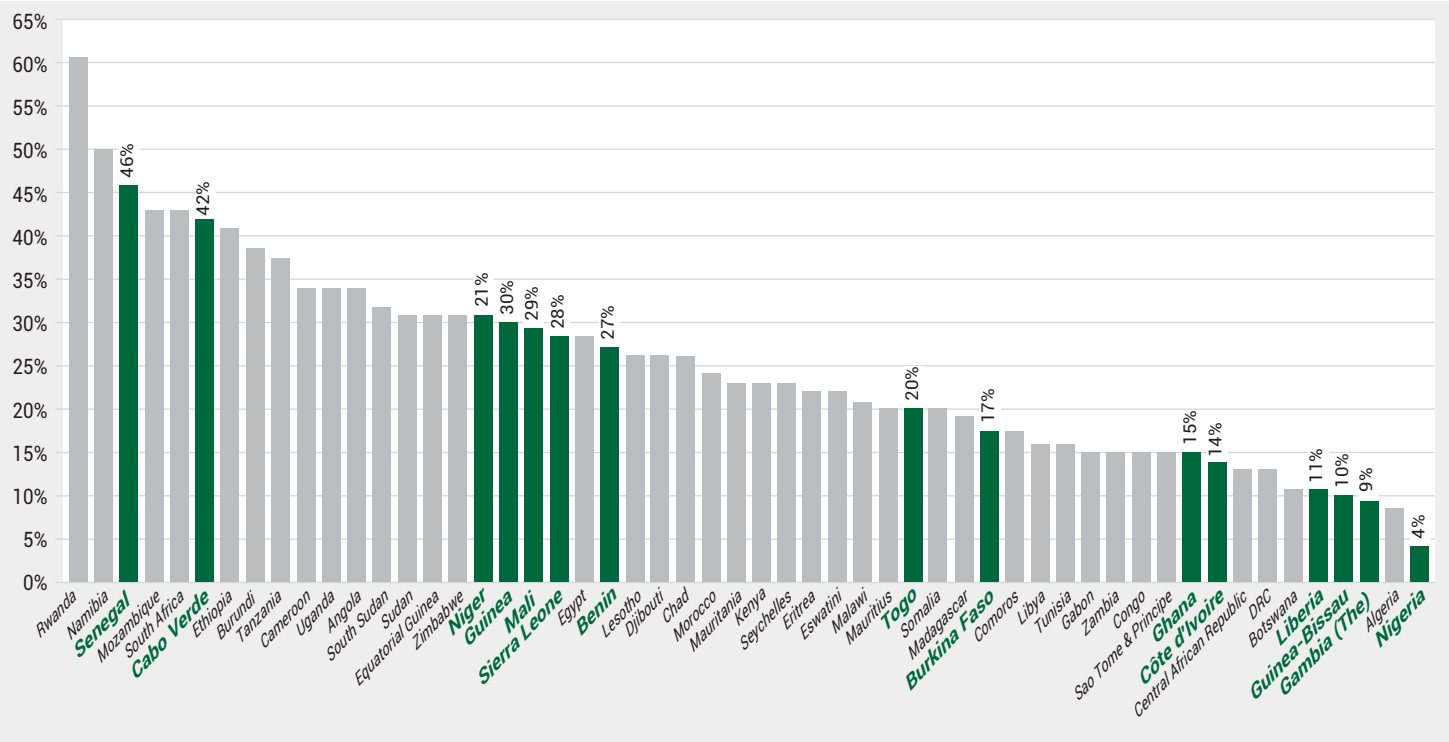
Some nations, like **Senegal**, continue to maintain relatively stable political environments, although they still face tensions regarding opposition and governance. In contrast, political instability remains high in countries experiencing coups or significant unrest, leading to difficulty in governance.

Gender-based violence and the marginalization of women remain serious issues. Security challenges are significant, particularly in the Sahel region, where groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and ISIS conduct violent attacks. Countries like **Mali**, **Burkina Faso**, and **Niger** face increasing insurgent activity, leading to large-scale displacement and a humanitarian crisis.

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

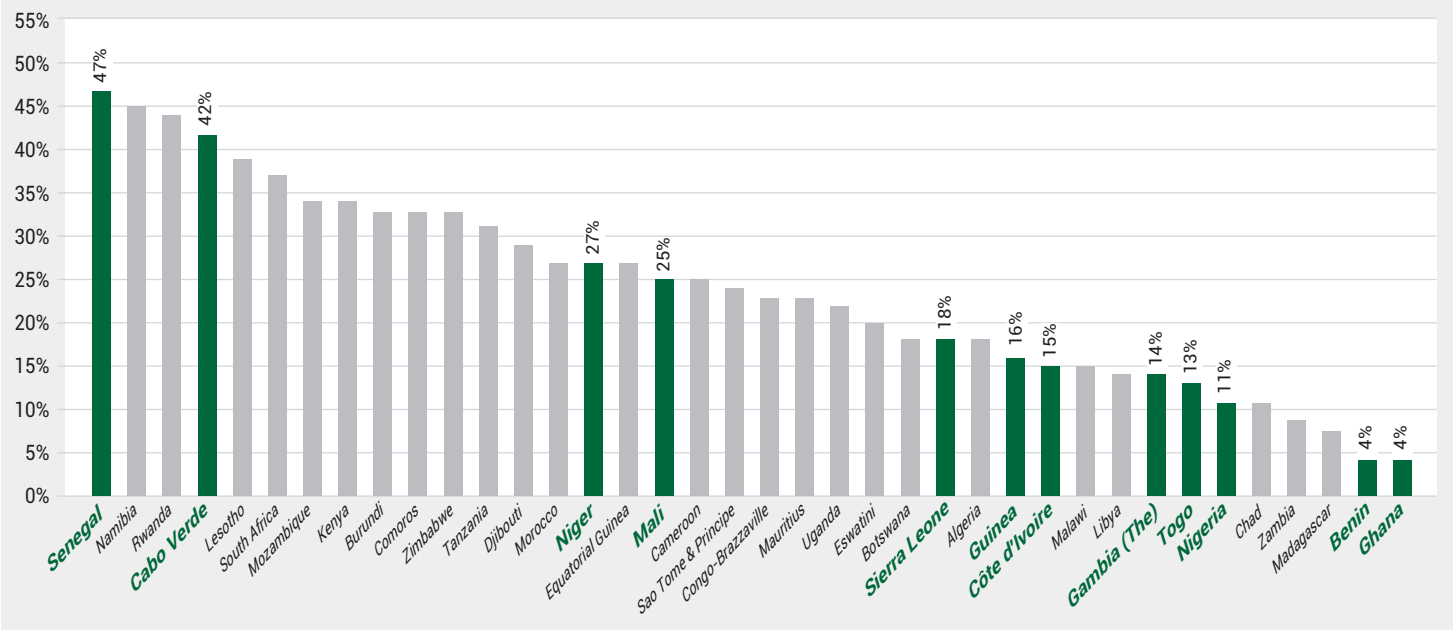
WPP in lower houses of parliament in Africa range from a high of 61% in Rwanda to a low of 4% in Nigeria. Senegal has the highest proportion of women in West Africa, 46%, third in Africa.

WPP in Lower Houses in African countries, 2024



At the local government level, WPP ranges from 47% in Senegal (the highest in the region) to 4% in Benin and Ghana.

WPP in local government by region



## Recent elections in West Africa (2021-2024)

Eleven countries in West Africa held national and/or local government elections between 2021 and 2024. There were increases of ten percent or more in five countries. Benin saw the largest increase in Africa, increasing 18 percentage points from 8% to 27%. Nigeria and Guinea-Bissau declined by two and four percentage points respectively.

% Change	Lower House	Local Government
Over 10%	Benin (18%) Sierra Leone (16%) Cabo Verde (15%) Guinea (13%) Burkina Faso (11%)	
0 - 5%	Liberia (3%) Senegal 3%) Cote d'Ivoire (2%) Gambia (The) (0%)	Guinea (1%) Senegal (1%)
-5%	Nigeria (-2%) Guinea-Bissau (-4%)	

## 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.
- **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
Senegal	13	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	46%	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	47%
Cabo Verde	24	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	42%	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	42%
Niger	61	PR	Reserved seats	31%	Mixed	Reserved seats	27%
Guinea	65	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	30%	Mixed	Reserved seats	16%
Mali	72	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	29%	FPTP	Reserved seats	25%
Sierra Leone	77	FPTP	Reserved seats	28%	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	18%
Benin	87	PR	Reserved seats	27%	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	4%
Togo	118	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	20%	PR	None	13%
Burkina Faso	136	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	17%	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	
Ghana	144	FPTP	None	15%	FPTP	None	4%
Côte d'Ivoire	150	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	14%	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	15%
Liberia	159	FPTP	Voluntary Party (CDC)	11%	FPTP	None	No data
Guinea-Bissau	165	PR	None	10%	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	14%
Gambia (The)	166	FPTP	None	9%	FPTP	None	11%
Nigeria	180	FPTP	None	4%	FPTP	None	
TOTAL WEST				20%	28%		

Eleven countries in West Africa use some form of quota system, three use reserved seats, 10 use legislated candidate quota and one political party in Liberia has a voluntary quota. The table shows that the countries using legislated quotas, have the highest levels of WPP in the lower house and local government.



The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act in **Sierra Leone** promotes women's access to finance, employment opportunities, equal pay, maternity leave, and political representation. It establishes a 30% quota for women's participation in government for appointed positions, including cabinet, ministry, and

ambassador roles, as well as elected positions, such as parliamentary and local council seats. The GEWE quota went into effect for Sierra Leone's presidential, parliamentary, mayoral, and local council elections on June 23, 2023. This resulted in an increase in women's representation in parliament from 15% to 28% and a similar increase at the local level.

The **Benin** Constitution and Electoral Code (2019) introduced a reserved seat quota in the lower house that resulted in the largest increase in women's representation in Africa, from eight percent before to 27% in 2023, an 18 percentage point increase.

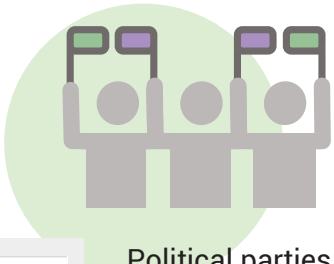
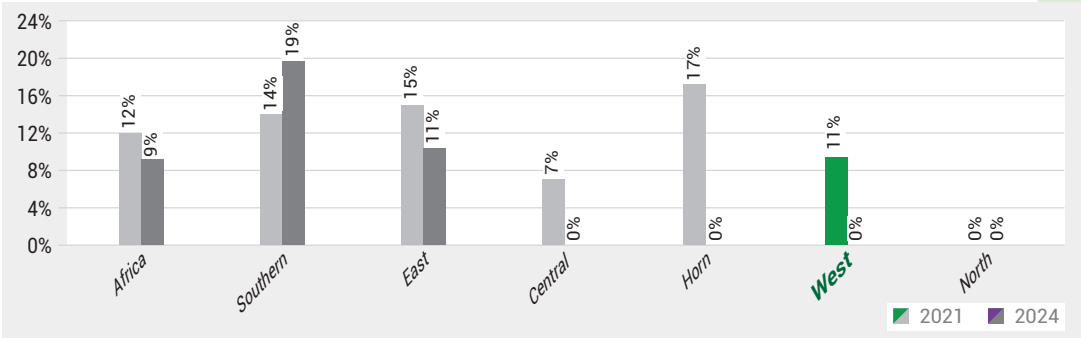


Burkina Faso penalises parties not meeting quotas by cutting public funding while rewarding those that exceed the 30% quota. Cabo Verde awards public funding to parties with at least 25% women candidates. Guinea distributes 5% of state funding to parties with elected women MPs and council

members. Mali, 10% of public funding is shared among parties with women deputies or councillors. Togo's public party funding allocation mechanism rewards successful female candidacy and reduces application fees for female candidates.

# Political parties

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



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.

There are no women in political party leadership in West Africa, a decline of 11 percentage points since the 2021 Barometer.

# Top Executive



Women in top executive roles have declined in West Africa from 7% in 2021 to 4% in 2024. Victoroire Tomegah Dogbe is Prime Minister of Togo.

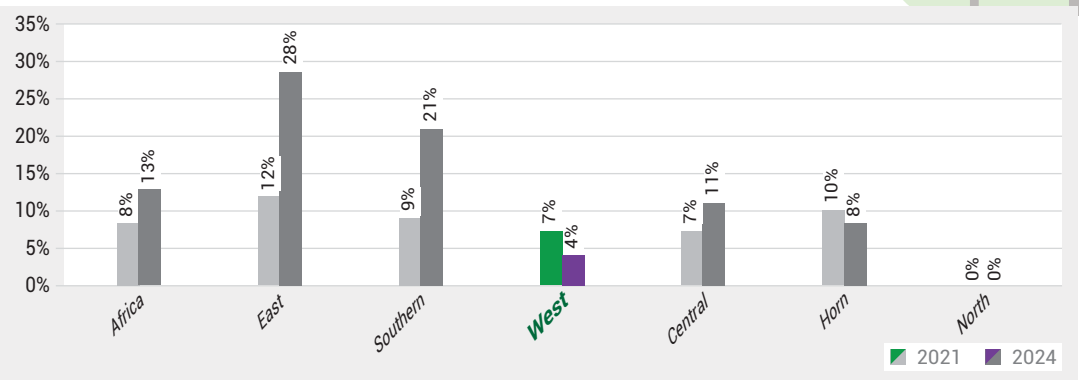


In the March 2024 elections in Senegal, 93 candidates showed presidential interest. Six were women, according to an ACCORD report. The constitutional council, however, approved only 20, of whom two were women. But Rose Wardini pulled out when her nationality was questioned, leaving Anta Babacar Ngom to test the waters. She did not win, but voters hailed her candidacy as progressive in a country that had never fielded a woman in the presidential race.



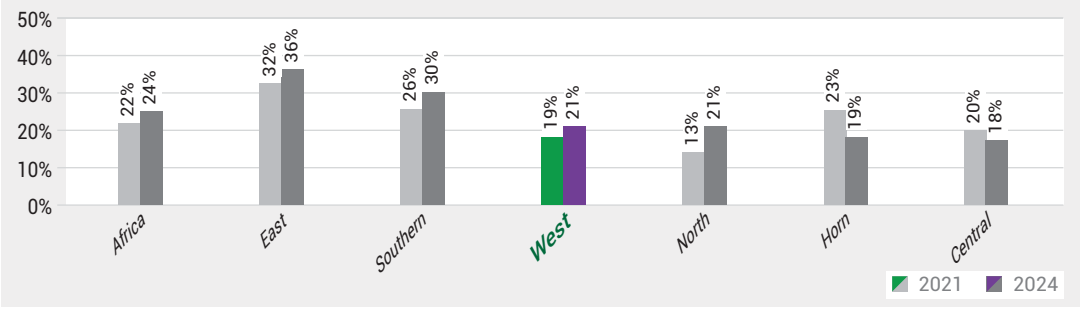
The new article 43 of the fundamental law of Benin stipulates that "The President of the Republic is elected in tandem with a Vice-President of the Republic. In the event of a vacancy in the presidency, the vice-president may take over." The Beninese President Patrice Talon chose a woman, Mariam Chabi Talata Zimé, as vice-president. This marks a major step forward in the involvement of women in governance.

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



# Cabinet

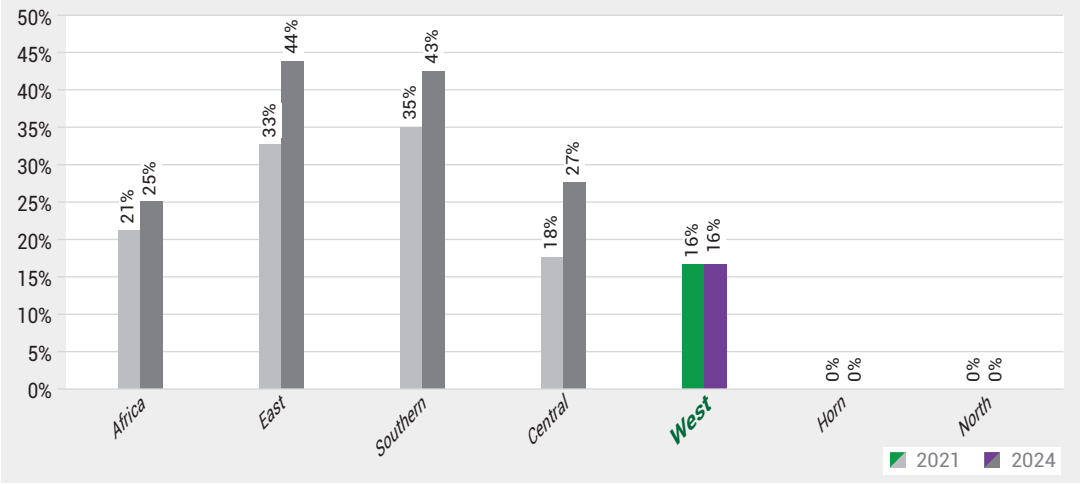
Women in Cabinet in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



Overall Female Cabinet ministers increased by two percentage points to 24%. In West Africa 21% of Cabinet are women. Women ministers range from 11% in Equatorial Guinea to 44% in Guinea Bissau, despite this country's WPP decline in the lower house.

# Speakers

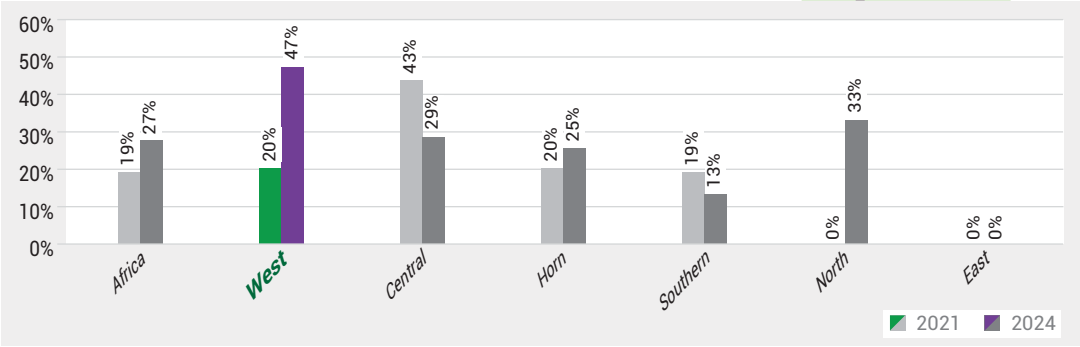
Women speakers in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



Three countries in West Africa have female speakers - Cote Ivoire Senate, the Liberian Senate and the Togo National Assembly.

# Mayors of capital cities

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

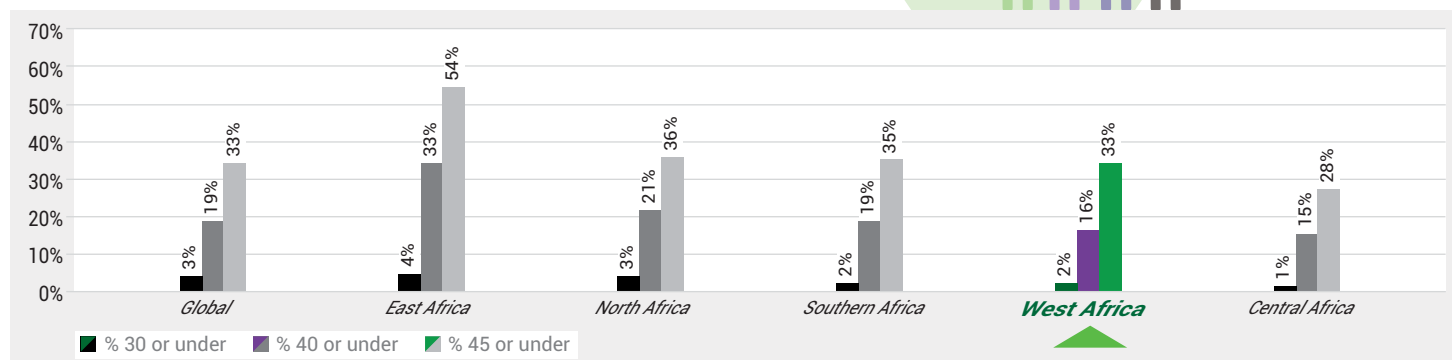


This in the only area of political decision-making where West Africa leads. There are female mayors in five of the 16 capital cities in West Africa. **Gambia** (The), Banjul, Rohey Malick Lowe, **Ghana**, Accra, Elizabeth Naa-Kwatsoe Tawiah Sackey, **Guinea**, Conakry, M'Mahawa Sylla, **Sierra Leone**, Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr **Togo**, Lome, Yawa Kouigan.



# Youth representation

Youth representation in parliament in Africa by region



"My prospects are excellent. I intend to continue demonstrating that women, especially young women, have much to contribute to building a prosperous Burkina Faso." Bénédicté Bailou, young woman member of LTA

Globally 33% of MPs in the lower houses of parliament are under 45 years old, 19% under 40 years, and just 3% under 30. In West Africa 33% are 45 years or younger, 16% are 40 or under and just 1% are 30 years or younger.

## Representation by age bracket

Country	Chamber	Average age	% 30 or under	% 40 or under	% 45 or under
Benin	National Assembly	54	0	6	24
Burkina Faso	Transitional Legislative Assembly	46	6	37	46
Cabo Verde	National Assembly	48	0	17	42
Côte d'Ivoire	National Assembly	55	0	3	15
Gambia (The)	National Assembly	43	5	41	60
Ghana	Parliament	49	1	12	28
Guinea	Transitional National Council	45	6	35	46
Liberia	House of Representatives	49	1	15	40
Mali	Transitional National Council		3	21	33
Senegal	National Assembly	51	1	15	36
Sierra Leone	Parliament	48	2	22	46

The **Gambia** has the highest proportion of MPs under 40 and 45 years. **Burkina Faso** and **Guinea** have the highest proportion of MPs 30 years or younger. All of these are states in transition, showing a willingness to bring in young people in during transitional governments.

In **Burkina Faso**, 35-year-old Ibrahim Traoré became the youngest head of state after a coup d'état in September 2022. There are 12 women out of 71 members of the Transitional Legislative Assembly (LTA), established in 2022. Five are between 25 and 40 years old, and the youngest parliamentarian is a woman.



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