



A-Z about elections in your country and the world.

Where Are The Women in Nigeria's Politics?



April 2020
Review

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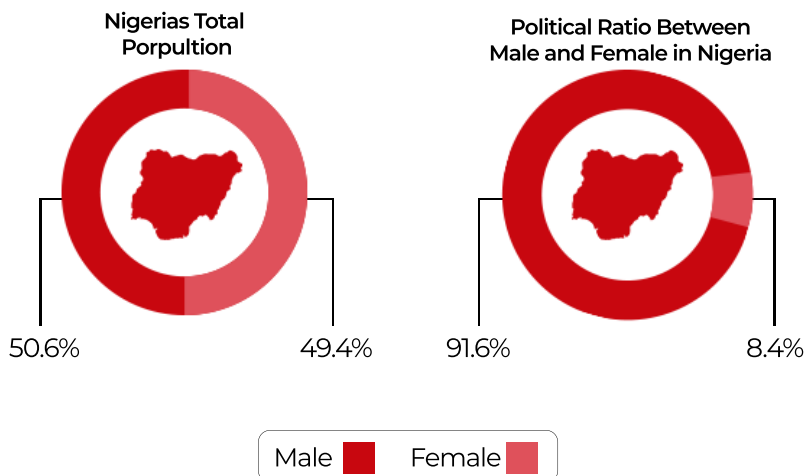
Where it concerns the representation of Nigerian women in politics, the 2015 elections took the meagre progress that the country has made, back to point zero. For the first time since 1999, the percentage of women who won elections dropped. Currently, among Nigeria's elected officials, only 4.17% are women. Globally, the figure is not impressive either.



Why This Matters

Nigeria's population is made up of approximately 49.4% female and 50.6% male, a difference of 1.2%, yet its representation in political leadership shows a gap of 91.6% difference, with the male politicians, taking dominance.

Various research has shown that the most important reason why there are few women in politics stems from the entrenched cultural practices that suggest that women are to play certain roles in the society, and those roles don't include leadership or politics. This reason prevents a lot of women from attempting to get involved in politics or run for office. For those who attempt to, it is commonplace for the electorate to not see them as credible candidates because of their gender. Other reasons include inadequate funds, patriarchal institutions that do not support inclusion, repressive nature of socialization and lack of self-esteem.



What the Numbers Say

In the 2019 elections, 275 women, (11.5% of the total number of candidates) contested for deputy governorship. **In the 36 states of Nigeria, there are only 4 female Deputy Governors**, representing 11%. Before the 2019 election, this number was 6, representing 16.7% of the Deputy Governors in Nigeria.

FEMALE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE 2019 ELECTIONS FOR DEPUTY GOVERNORSHIP



275

CONTESTED FOR DEPUTY GOVERNORSHIP
Making **11.5%** of the nominated candidates



4

WOMEN HAVE SO FAR BEEN RECORDED AS ELECTED
Representing **11%** of the elected

GENERAL FEMALE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE 2019 ELECTIONS



2,970

WERE ON THE ELECTORIAL BALLOT
Making **11.36%** of the nominated candidates



62

WOMEN HAVE SO FAR BEEN RECORDED AS ELECTED
Making **4.17%** of the elected

What the Numbers Say

The 9th Senate has 109 members, and only 6.4% (7) are women, all of which served in the 8th Senate. Aishatu Ahmed Dahiru is the only female senator from Northern Nigeria (Adamawa Central, APC) while the rest are from Southern Nigeria. Women representation in the Senate has increased from 2.8% (3 out of 106) in 1999, to 8.3% (9 out of 109) in 2007 and since 2011, has maintained a steady 6.4% (7 out of 109).

Year	Percentage of Women in Parliament	Number of women out of 109 members of the senate
1999	2.8	3
2003	3.7	4
2007	8.3	9
2011	6.4	7
2015	7.3	8
2019	6.4	7

What the Numbers Say

In the Federal House of Representatives made up of 360 members, there are only 11 female representatives, a 3.05% representation. Women representation in the House maintained a steady increase from 12 (3.33% of 360) in 1999 to 26 (7.2% of 360) in 2011, in 2015 and 2019 however, the numbers fell disappointingly.

Year	Percentage of Women in Parliament	Number of women out of 360 Federal Representatives
1999	3.3	12
2003	5.8	21
2007	6.9	25
2011	7.2	26
2015	3.8	14
2019	3.1	11

What the Numbers Say

The State Houses of Assembly made up of 990 members currently has 40 female members, a figure lower than the 51 that it was after the 2015 elections. Women representation in The State House of Assembly grew from 24 (2.4% of 990) in 1999 to 68 (6.9% of 990) in 2011, after which it started declining in 2015, to 46 and 40 out of 994 seats in 2019.

Year	Percentage of Women in Parliament	Number of women out of 990 members of the senate
1999	2.4	24
2003	3.9	40
2007	5.8	58
2011	6.9	68
2015	4.6	46
2019	4.2	40

In all, there are 62 women who are members of the elected officials in Nigeria. This number is 4.17% of the total elected officials and 2.09% of the 2970 women who were on the ballot papers of 2019 elections.

What Can We Learn from Rwanda?

Rwanda ranks first globally in the representation of women in its legislature with a **64%** representation. Theirs has been a unique journey since the genocide in 1994 where about a tenth of their population were killed. However, prior to their civil war in 1990, women's representation in politics was very similar to what is currently obtainable globally.

The country's laws were given a total overhaul in 2003, to include a quota system for women in all decision making organs. This was an initiative of the Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, in a bid to make up for the loss of the male population from the 1994 genocide, which led to a reduction in the availability of the human resource for decision making roles, most of which were often occupied by men. Their population was at the time made up of 60% - 70% female as more men were killed in the genocide, yet those who were left behind (the women) were grossly less educated and exposed than the men who were now gone. The 2003 constitution instructs that there be a 30% allocation to women for any cadre of national leadership in Rwanda. In the quota system, the seats reserved for women are contested in women-only elections, and women can also be elected for the openly contested seats, should they win the contest. In the first election that happened after this reform, women won 48.8% of the seats available in the lower house parliament. Since then, the Rwandan government has made a conscious effort to educate women, and equip them with relevant skills. The women parliamentarians have played a significant role in adopting laws that protect and benefit women and children.

Bottomline

We see a lot of good examples in countries where women are equally represented in leadership or where women themselves are in top leadership positions. In February 2020, in the heat of the coronavirus, Forbes did a report titled: “What Do Countries With The Best Coronavirus Responses Have in Common? Women Leaders”. It showed how the countries with the responses to the coronavirus are being led by women. Maybe there is something to learn and explore about women’s leadership styles, maybe we should open our doors for women. Several studies have shown how leadership in the hands of women can be different and beneficial. Excluding them from the political process slow progress that is being made effective leadership, but will also take us many steps backwards.

“Women, traditionally marginalized from governance should be leading and organizing with other groups around constitutional and electoral reform. Until we (i) change the incentives for being in government e.g. no more ‘free’ money from resource allocations, we won’t stop attracting the worst characters into politics and government and (ii) clean up electoral process (proportional representation instead of first past the post), more independent INEC/SIECs, take out the NP and the Army and stop the ‘eventualization’ of elections (lock down, no movement, spread out over weeks), we will be unable to recruit the leadership we need to move the country forward.

*Within the parties and outside the parties, more women need to be organizing for political power with their numbers. This means taking control of the parties by joining in large numbers, paying dues and influencing the ideology and values of the parties – long term this will change the trajectory of our politics. But it entails engaging and contributing our own resources to parties – not in terms of donating to campaigns (that’s good too) but in terms of building the parties.” says **Ayisha Osori, Executive Director at Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)**. “Forming alliances with other under-represented – youth, people living with disability and using the numbers (in an organized way i.e auditable membership, program of engagement etc.) to negotiate for concessions while waiting for (1) and (2) to yield results” she adds.*

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