



A WORLD STILL GROWING TOWARDS EQUALITY

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In 1893, New Zealand became the first country to grant women the right to vote. Since then, we see a growing trend in the world to grant women the right to vote as well as overall women's suffrage.

Rwanda, with 56.3 percent female representation in government, started the trend after the Rwandan genocide in 1994, when the population was 70 percent female. As a result, women began to assume leadership roles in every facet of Rwandan life, including government. Today, Rwanda maintains the high percentage of women in

government by instituting a minimum percentage of elected officials.

Similarly, Sweden has a 44.5 percent female representation in government. Specifically, 158 seats out of a total of 349 seats in Sweden's national parliament are held by women. How did Sweden get to this level of female representation? In 1972, the Liberal Party and Social Democrats became aware of the importance of women in politics, and instituted a party quota, which regulates a minimum level of 40 percent female representation. Since then, the number of women in government has been on the rise in Sweden to reflect a more equal and balanced government.

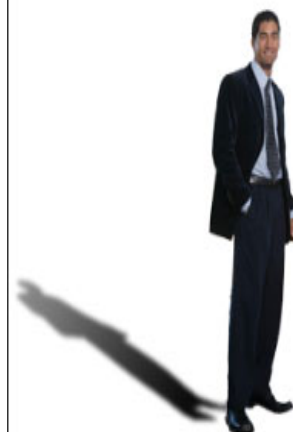
Both Sweden and Rwanda realized an important aspect in governing: women have been proven to be better at reconciliation, and are more in tune with the "soft governing" that officials, such as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, champion every day.

Although the road to women's suffrage has been carved, there is still much work to be done in the world before women will truly have the same opportunities as their male counterparts. There are still countries such as Brunei, Lebanon, Bhutan, and Vatican City where women have no voting rights. In other countries such as India and Kuwait, women representation within government is strikingly low. As we look toward the future, let's hope countries like Sweden and Rwanda can propel us forward.



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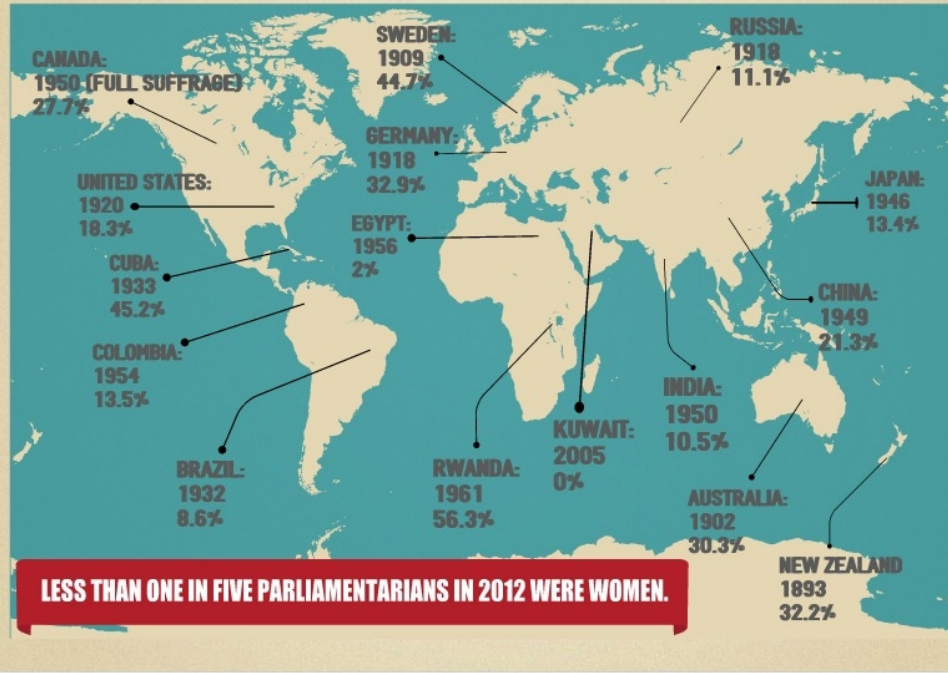
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In 1893, New Zealand became the first country to grant women the right to vote. We examine the year a country's women gained the right to vote, and the percentage of congress or parliament they make up.



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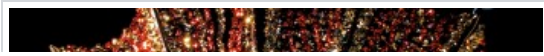
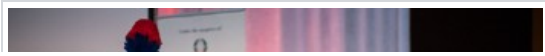
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