

# France

Women in decision-making: **2.42/5**

Socio-economic position of women: **3.07/5**

Violence against women: **2.42/5**



## UNDERSTANDING FRANCE

Despite parity legislation in place since 2000, gender balance in the current government and 33% of the leaders of major political parties being female, on an EU scale France has a very average representation of women in parliament (27% in the lower house; 22% in the upper house). This poor result reflects the weakness of the financial sanctions attached to legal quotas for national electoral lists, the reticence of political parties – especially conservative parties – to put forward women candidates, and the practice of holding double mandates at local and national levels.

Women make up 51.7% of public servants, but hold only 20.3% of management posts. Women are 10% of prefects, and 11% of ambassadors. In the private sector, new legislation should assist in the rapid increase of the proportion of women on boards of administration. At present, women are 22% of board members and only 3% of the presidents of large companies.

Just over half of women work full-time (53%). Maternity leave is a little short at 16 weeks but is fully paid, and a comparatively high 42% of infants under 3 and 94% of those between 3 and school-age (6 years) receive formal care thanks to a free, universal state-run pre-school system. However, a care gap remains for the youngest children (500,000 nursery places missing) and mothers continue to be far more likely to fill it: the gender employment rate differential for mothers and fathers of children under 12 stands at 17%.

In 2010-2011, 200 000 women in France aged 18-75 were victims of sexual violence outside of the home. Three times as many experienced such violence within their own homes.

## TRENDS:



The first ever gender-balanced government was instituted in France in 2012, with 17 women and 17 men, and with more women (11) heading ministries than men (9). A ministry for women's rights was re-established. Strengthened measures for gender mainstreaming were introduced at the ministerial level, and draft framework legislation is to be presented in 2013.

In 2010-2011, the French parliament adopted some of the strongest and most progressive quota legislation in the EU for parity on boards of private companies and within the higher echelons of public service. The French government has also committed to parity in the governance of universities.

In 2011, a parliamentary report defined prostitution as a form of violence against women and a resolution reaffirmed the abolitionist principles of the Republic. A legislative proposal to penalise buyers of sexual services and reinforce the protection of victims is being discussed by the parliament and senate.

In 2012, strengthened legislation on sexual harassment came into force. Deputies approved the full reimbursement of abortion procedure costs, and the availability free of charge of the contraceptive pill to girls between 15 and 18.



In 2010, the pension age increased from 60 to 62, and women and men must now work an extra two years up to 67 in order to qualify for a full pension. As women already spend long periods out of the labour market for unpaid care duties, they rarely qualify for full pensions. In addition, the raise of the pension age is not accompanied by policies to improve the employability of older women, whose employment rate is much lower than men's of the same age-group.

## Highlights

**27%**  
women in  
parliament

**49%**  
women senior  
ministers

**3%**  
women presidents  
of the largest  
companies

Legal measure  
requiring  
**40%**  
women on boards of  
administration with  
effective sanctions  
since 2010

**16%**  
pay gap

**67%**  
of dependent elderly  
receive formal care

Abortion is available  
on demand free of  
charge