

Support for Women in Politics in Egypt

Excerpts from an IFES nationwide pre-election survey

A project by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)



Project Background

- The Democracy, Elections and Technical Assistance (DELTA III) works in Egypt to support electoral reform dialogue, transparency and good governance and promotes citizen participation in electoral processes.
- DELTA III is a project by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Egypt Survey Details and Methodology

- Fieldwork for the Egypt survey was implemented between July 8 and August 5, 2011 by the Egyptian Research and Training Center (ERTC), a Cairo-based research organization.
- The survey is nationally representative of Egypt's adult population: the sample size is 2,297; includes 1,188 men and 1,109 women.
- All respondents are aged 18 and above.
- The sample represents all of Egypt's governorates excluding the five (5) remote governorates of South Sinai, Northern Sinai, Marsa Matrouh, Red Sea and the New Valley (which represent 1.8% of the Egyptian population). As such, the sampling frame covered 98% of Egypt's population. See map for regions covered in the survey.
- A total of 200 Primary Sampling Units were selected from the 24 governorates using the probability proportionate to size (PPS) selection method.
- A weight factor was introduced to bring the realized sample in line with the desired sample to adjust for minor discrepancies for observed age proportions.
- The **margin of error** is $\pm 2.04\%$.



Support for Women in Politics

The findings indicate there is support among both men and women for women's involvement in various political roles, yet men display lower support. Furthermore, even though Egyptians say they support women in political roles, they still overwhelmingly say they would prefer a male legislator to represent them in parliament. As Egypt transitions to an electoral democracy, it should be kept in mind that there is a contingent of men and even some women who oppose women in political roles. This will be a hurdle for women to overcome during this period of transition and reform.

Majority of Egyptians Support Women in Political Roles, but a Sizeable Portion Oppose Women in these Roles

In this time of transition in Egypt, women have an opportunity to push for reforms, particularly in the political arena. The data from this survey shows some positive support for women in political roles, yet a disparity of support between genders and sometimes religious groups is observed.

Majorities of Egyptians say they support women in various political roles; however, responses are often nearly split between strong support and moderate support, and at the same time, around one quarter of Egyptians say they strongly oppose women in each of these roles.

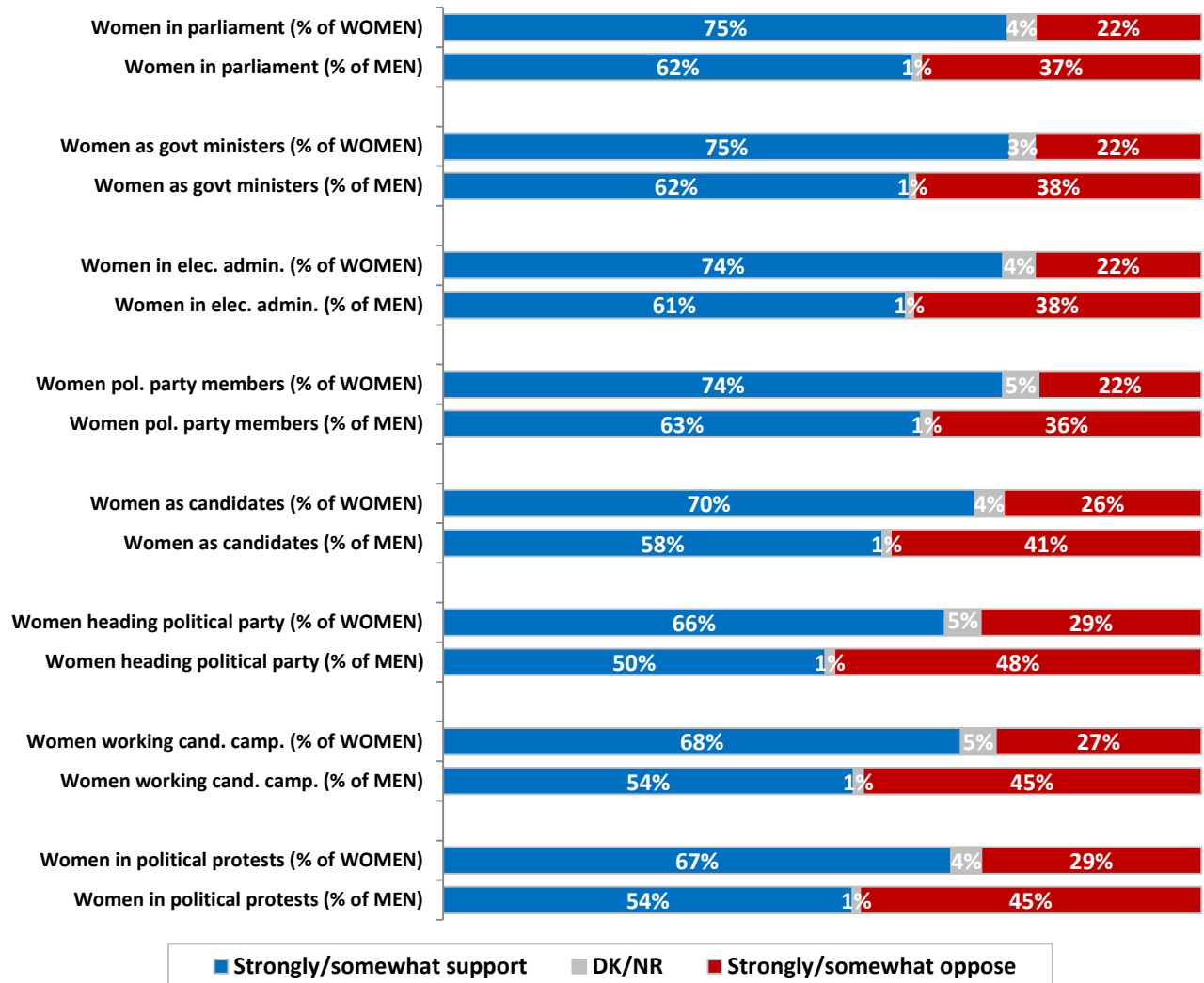
Respondents say they strongly or somewhat support women working in election administration (68%); being members of political parties (68%); heading a political party (58%); working for a candidate during a campaign (61%); running as candidates in elections (64%); serving in parliament (68%); serving as ministers (68%); or participating in political protests (61%).

Nevertheless, there is a significant proportion of Egyptians, around one-third, who oppose women in these roles; between 20% and 30% of that opposition say they strongly oppose women in each of these roles.

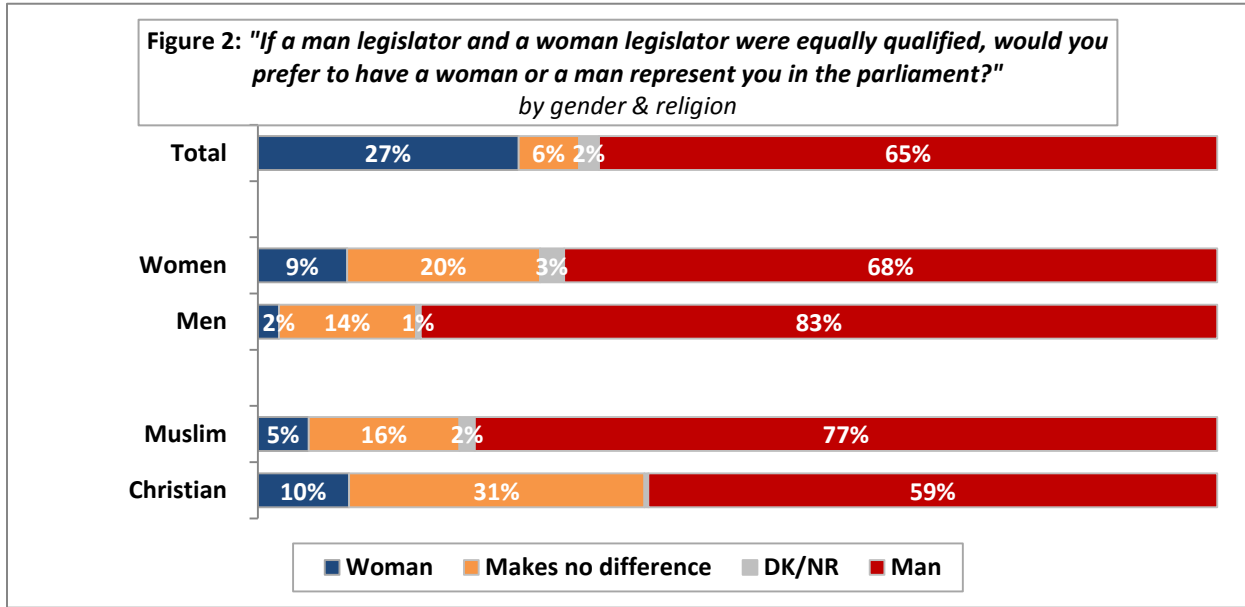
When looking at responses by gender, we see majorities of both men and women supporting women in the various political roles; however, higher percentages of women support women in each of these roles, and higher percentages of men oppose women in each these roles. Over one-third of Egyptian men oppose women in each of these roles (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Support/Oppose Women in Various Political Roles by gender



Even though most Egyptians say they support women in political roles in theory, when asked whether they would in practice prefer a male legislator or a woman legislator to represent them in parliament provided that they were equally qualified, Egyptians overwhelmingly would prefer a man to represent them in parliament. Eighty-three percent of men and even 68% of women would prefer a male legislator. Seventy-seven percent of Muslims and 59% of Christians would prefer a male legislator (Figure 2).



Among those who said they would prefer a woman to represent them in parliament, the first two reasons include women’s equality (30%) or to give a voice for women (26%). Other reasons given include the belief that women are better suited to certain issues (16%); women are more responsible (13%); women are more responsive to needs of society (13%); women are more ethical (9%); or the feeling that men have failed to improve things (7%).

Those who would prefer a male legislator cite reasons such as men are stronger (49%); men are natural leaders (31%); and the interpretation from the Quran that men are the protectors and maintainers of women (30%). Other responses stated include men are more interested in politics (18%); women have family responsibilities (9%); and men are smarter (6%).

Knowledge and Support for Gender Quotas

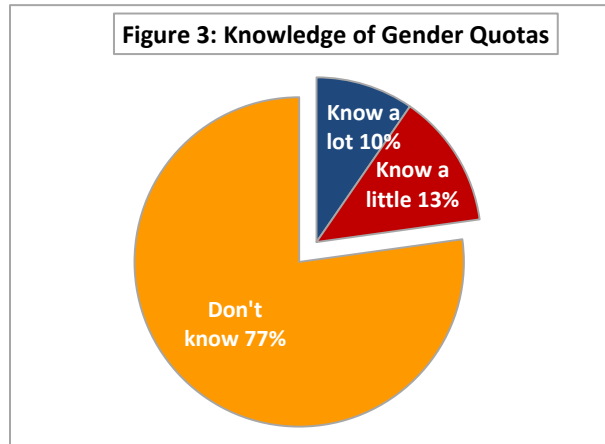
Knowledge Levels of Gender Quotas¹ is Low and Support for Gender Quotas is Split

When measuring knowledge levels on gender quotas, the data clearly illustrates the low level of awareness of such a notion amongst the population. Nearly eight in 10 Egyptians (77%) say they do not

¹ Egypt had reserved seats for women from 1979-1986 and again from 2009 to 2011; however, women only achieved 2% of representation in parliament. Following the revolution, discussions began about introducing a gender quota in Egypt. This possibility of a reserved seats quota has been taken off the table for the upcoming elections, yet many women’s groups continue to hope to achieve this electoral reform in the future. In the upcoming elections, each political party is required to at least list one woman in the proportional representation part of the ballot, but she can be placed at any point on the list.

know about the notion of gender quotas. Only 23% of Egyptians say they know a lot (10%) or a little (13%) about gender quotas. (Figure 3).

Interestingly, twice as many men as women (31% and 15%, respectively) are aware of gender quotas than women. Not surprisingly, awareness of gender quotas increases as education levels increase. Only 5% of Egyptians with no education are aware of gender quotas, compared to 11% with a primary education, 16% with an intermediate education, 24% with a secondary education and 51% with a university education or higher.



Those who are aware of gender quotas were then asked to what extent they support or oppose the adoption of gender quotas in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Fifty percent of respondents say they strongly (15%) or somewhat (35%) support the adoption of gender quotas in the upcoming elections, while almost the same proportion (46%) say they somewhat oppose (11%) or strongly oppose their introduction (35%). Similar to the pattern discussed above, not only do more men oppose gender quotas, a statistically significant percentage of them strongly oppose gender quotas, whereas more women strongly support gender quotas (Figure 4).

