ASEAN Gender Observatory Brief

Violence against Women in Politics and Elections

in Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, and Thailand

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Operational Definitions

Gender Observatory (GO) is an institutional framework and mechanism for monitoring gender equality and women's rights. It creates a structured data and knowledge base that enables multi-sector stakeholders to track progress and challenges in advancing women's empowerment.[1] It may also refer to a national or regional entity that systematically collects, documents, and disseminates gender-related data across priority areas to promote the equal participation of women.[2]

Women's Political Participation (WPP) refers to the ability of women to participate equally with men at all levels and in all aspects of political life and decision-making.[3]

Women's Political Leadership (WPL) refers to the representation and balance of women leaders across the full spectrum of formal political decision-making institutions—both appointed and elected—including the legislature (law-making), the executive (policy implementation), and the judiciary (law interpretation and adjudication).[4]

Violence against Women in Politics (VAWP) is a form of gender-based violence encompassing any act or threat of physical, sexual, or psychological harm intended to prevent women from exercising or realising their political and human rights.[5]

Violence against Women in Elections (VAWE) is a form of gender-based violence occurring within the context of political competition and governance in democratic or democratising states, particularly during electoral processes.[6]

[1] "What is the African Union Gender Observatory?" African Union accessed 18 September 2025, https://go.au.int/en/why-join-us.
[2] Women Research Institute, "Violence against Women in Indonesia's 2024 Elections," Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 25 February 2025, https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/violence-against-women-indonesias-2024-elections.
[3] "Preventing violence against women in politics," UN Women, July 2021, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Guidance-note-Preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics-en.pdf.
[4] Devin K. Joshi and Ryan Goehrung, "Conceptualising and measuring women's political leadership: From presence to balance," Politics and Gender 14 (3), p. 350–375, https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soss_research/2693.
[5] "Preventing violence against women in politics," UN Women.
[6] Gabrielle Bardall, "Violence, politics and gender," Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Politics, 26 February 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.208.

Context

Gender equality remains a pressing challenge across Southeast Asia. Women's political participation and leadership have made little headway in recent years, while violence against women in politics (VAWP) and elections (VAWE) continues to grow. Such violence is intensified by authoritarian tendencies and intersectional vulnerabilities linked to ethnicity, religion, and class. Despite its pervasiveness, VAWP and VAWE remains underreported, normalised, and frequently dismissed—reflecting a wider institutional failure to protect women in politics.

Although national initiatives to strengthen WPPL exist, data collection remains fragmented, inconsistent, and often inaccessible. The absence of structured VAWP and VAWE reporting mechanisms—combined with significant country-level data gaps—undermines the region's capacity to monitor trends, assess risks, and design effective interventions.

ASEAN Gender Observatory

The absence of an ASEAN-level observatory to track women's political participation and related violence stands in sharp contrast to other regions of the Global South. In Latin America, for instance, the Organisation of American States established a regional mechanism to monitor VAWP and VAWE, looking to advance women's political rights. Countries such as Mexico and Bolivia have since adopted VAWP-specific laws, informed by regional data and advocacy generated through this observatory. By comparison, ASEAN and its member states lack any equivalent institutional framework, resulting in fragmented efforts and muted policy responses.

Without harmonised data collection and reporting standards, ASEAN misses key opportunities for peer accountability, collective advocacy, and policy learning. Fragmentation prevents member states from benchmarking progress, sharing innovations, or identifying where commitments have fallen short. This not only weakens ASEAN's credibility in international forums but also erodes its ability to deliver on its gender equality pledges.

Crucially, the scarcity of data is itself a critical finding. The absence of information exposes where institutional attention is absent, accountability is weak or non-existent, and gendered political violence is tolerated or ignored. From the outset, the observatory recognised that many institutions—parliaments, electoral bodies, and political parties—actively resist transparency on VAWP and VAWE reporting. This resistance is not incidental; it reflects entrenched power structures and a persistent lack of political will to confront gendered violence in politics.

The observatory makes this institutional silence visible—not only by showing what is known, but also by revealing what remains systematically obscured and why. It reframes data gaps not as technical shortcomings but as evidence of institutional neglect and political avoidance. This reframing offers civil society, researchers, and policymakers a strategic lens through which to demand reform, transparency, and accountability.

By conducting comparative analysis across Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos, this report seeks both to inform policy recommendations for establishing national and regional gender observatories and to serve as a collaborative platform for knowledge exchange. Beyond consolidating information, the observatory functions as a political strategy—building trust, mobilising collective action, and sustaining momentum among actors committed to advancing gender equality and women's political leadership in Southeast Asia.

Objective

This study undertook a comparative mapping of gender-disaggregated data on women's political participation, VAWP, and VAWE across Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos. By consolidating and systematising available datasets, it aims to establish a reliable evidence base to inform the development of standardised data indicators and reporting mechanisms for an ASEAN Gender Observatory initiative.

Methodology

This study employs a desk-based comparative analysis to examine women's political participation and leadership as well as VAWP and VAWE across Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos. Data were gathered from a wide range of official documents, government reports, and materials produced by non-governmental organisations as well as from publicly accessible online sources. Additional references were drawn from academic publications, independent research institutions, and media reporting, which ensure a broad and contextually grounded evidence base.

However, the study acknowledges several methodological limitations:

- **Data availability and accessibility** remain inconsistent across countries, with major gaps in public datasets.
- **Variation in format and quality of data sources** presents risks of bias.
- **Underreporting** of VAWP and VAWE persists due to the absence of formal institutional mechanisms for systematic documentation.
- **Limited ownership and reliability** due to most data points originating from non-governmental organisations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, as opposed to national authorities.

A central challenge in developing a regional comparative overview is the absence of standardised data structures. Websites of Elections Management Bodies are generally difficult to navigate, lack up-to-date or gender-disaggregated information, and often present inconsistent figures across reporting cycles. In cases such as Indonesia, questions about data accuracy further complicate cross-country comparison. These discrepancies collectively hinder the construction of a coherent, reliable, and comparable dataset for regional analysis.

Key Findings

Across ASEAN, gender equity has advanced in many sectors, yet women's political participation and leadership remain among the region's most persistent gaps. Women continue to be underrepresented at all levels of government and political institutions, constrained by structural, institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers.[1] As of late 2024 and early 2025, women hold an average of 23–23.5 percent of parliamentary seats in Southeast Asia, which is below the global average of 27.2 percent.[2] Progress remains uneven, shaped by variations in electoral systems, quota policies, and patriarchal political cultures. Notably, only Indonesia and Timor-Leste—ASEAN's newest member—have legislated candidate quotas to promote women's political participation and leadership, while other countries rely on voluntary party measures with inconsistent results.

Paradoxically, research indicates that women in electoral autocracies often achieve higher parliamentary representation than in democracies.[3] In 2024, women held 30.6 percent of seats in Vietnam—the highest in Southeast Asia—and 28.3 percent in the Philippines.[4] By contrast, Indonesia remains stagnant at around 22 percent despite its gender quota.[5] These divergent outcomes highlight how regime type, quota design, and entrenched sociopolitical structures collectively shape uneven trajectories for women's political participation and leadership.

Amid this stagnation, VAWP and VAWE have intensified—manifesting in harassment, smear campaigns, disinformation, and physical threats. A 2022 WFD study found that 76 percent of women parliamentarians in Southeast Asia experienced psychological violence, while 60 percent faced online attacks.[6] Such intimidation deters women's participation as voters, candidates, activists, or political leaders, and undermines democratic integrity.[7] More broadly, the persistence of VAWP and VAWE reflects resistance to gender equality and deeper signs of democratic backsliding in the region.

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[1] Sue Maguire, "Barriers to women entering parliament and local government," Institute for Policy Research of the University of Bath, October 2018, https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/barriers-to-women-entering-parliament-and-local-government/attachments/IPR_Barriers_to_Women.pdf.

[2] "Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments," Inter-Parliamentary Union, accessed August 2025, https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_year=2025&date_month=08.

[3] Anna Lührmann, Marcus Tannenberg, and Staffan I. Lindberg, "Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes," Politics and Governance 6 (1), p. 60–7, https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i1.1214.

[4] "Women in parliament: 1995–2025," Inter-Parliamentary Union, accessed August 2025, https://www.ipu.org/file/21048/download.

[5] Delia Wildianti, Hurriyah, Putri Ramadhana, and Alya Eka Khairunnisa, "Potret keterwakilan anggota legislatif perempuan hasil pemilu tahun 2024," [A snapshot of women legislators post-2024 elections], Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia, November 2024, https://www.kemenpppa.go.id/buku/potret-keterwakilan-anggota-legislatif-perempuan-hasil-pemilu-tahun-2024.

[6] Aim Sinpeng and Amalinda Savirani, "Women's Political Leadership in the ASEAN region," Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 6 December 2022, https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/womens-political-leadership-asean-region.

[7] Gabrielle Bardall, "Breaking the Mold: Understanding Gender and Electoral Violence," International Foundation for Electoral Systems, December 2011, https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/africa/MZ/ifes-breaking-the-mold-understanding-gender-and/view; Jessica Huber and Lisa Kammerud, "Violence against Women in Elections: A Framework for Assessment, Monitoring, and Response," International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2017, https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/migrate/vawie_framework.pdf.

VAWP functions to preserve masculine dominance in political spaces. It pushes women back into the private sphere as where they "belong" by obstructing their public participation. These acts are often legitimised by cultural norms that normalise violence and discrimination against women, portraying such behaviour as acceptable or even justified.[8]

Ultimately, VAWP is not merely an attack on individuals but an attack on democracy itself. It exposes structural weaknesses within political systems that tolerate exclusion, intimidation, and discrimination. It reinforces patriarchal hierarchies, discourages women from entering or remaining in politics, and signals that political participation is not equally accessible. Addressing VAWP requires more than protective mechanisms—it demands systemic transformation to dismantle the power structures that sustain gendered political violence.

An Uneven Landscape

By early 2025, 71 countries have achieved at least 30 percent women's representation in parliament.[9] Of these, 41 countries (57.75 percent) use proportional representation systems, 15 (19.72 percent) employ plurality or majority systems, and 13 (18.31 percent) adopt mixed systems such as mixed-member proportional or parallel. These figures suggest that while electoral systems shape women's representation, their influence is neither uniform nor universally decisive.

By contrast, gender quotas have shown a more consistent and significant impact. A regression analysis of 153 countries found that gender quotas exerted the strongest and most reliable effect on women's representation—surpassing the influence of electoral systems, candidate list types, or district magnitude—even when regional variation was controlled.[10] This underscores that quotas are among the most globally effective tools for expanding women's political representation, regardless of political or cultural context.

Examining Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos as highlights for the ASEAN region illustrates how electoral design and quota mechanisms directly shape women's political participation and leadership while intersecting with the growing problem of VAWP and VAWE.

Indonesia is the only country among the four that combines proportional and semi-proportional systems. It uses an open-list proportional representation system for the lower house or House of Representatives (DPR) and a single non-transferable vote system for the upper house or Regional Representatives Council (DPD).

The legal framework mandates a 30-percent women's quota for legislative candidates and national party leadership, alongside a voluntary 30-percent target for EMBs such as the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Elections Supervisory Body (Bawaslu). However, inconsistent enforcement and weak placement of women candidates on party lists have diluted the quota's impact on actual seat gains.[11]

Institutional loopholes further undermine progress. In 2008, the Constitutional Court ruled that majority vote outcomes are prioritised over list placement mandates, which effectively dismantled mechanisms such as the zipper system and ensured that women were placed in electable

[8] Mona Lena Krook, "Violence against Women in Politics," Oxford University Press, 20 August 2020, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190088460.001.0001.
[9] "Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments," Inter-Parliamentary Union, accessed August 2025, https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_year=2025&date_month=08.
[10] Aili Mari Tripp and Alice Kang, "The Global Impact of Quotas: On the Fast Track to Increased Female Legislative Representation," Comparative Political Studies 41 (3), 13 July 2007, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006297342.
[11] Wildianti, Hurriyah, Ramadhana, and Khairunnisa, "A snapshot of women legislators post-2024 elections," Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia.

positions.[12] In 2023, KPU decided to round down decimals in calculating the 30-percent quota, which was met by strong civil society protest, also weakened compliance. The consequences were clear: only 1 of the 18 political parties competing in the 2024 elections actually proposed 30-percent women's proportion across all electoral districts.[13] Both Bawaslu and the Supreme Court later found this to be in violation of electoral principles.[14]

Meanwhile, political parties remain a major obstacle. Many treat the quota as a procedural obligation rather than a substantive commitment.[15] Ware often placed in unelectable positions and excluded from leadership roles where real decision-making occurs.[16] Deep-seated patriarchal norms, male-dominated party hierarchies, and the absence of political will continue to render quota policies largely symbolic.

Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos all employ first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral systems, with some distinct variations in practice.

In **Malaysia**, the FPTP system applies to both the House of Representatives (*Dewan Rakyat*) and state assemblies, while the upper house (*Dewan Negara*) is largely appointed by the State Legislative Assembly (*Dewan Undangan Negeri*) and the state ruler (*Sultan*). Despite limited policy discussions, Malaysia has no binding gender quota, relying instead on voluntary party pledges.[17] Studies show that this system, combined with the absence of quotas, entrenches the dominance of well-financed male candidates with established networks.

In **Laos**, where a pure FPTP system is applied for the National Assembly (*Sapha Heng Xat*) within a single-party framework, independent candidates are occasionally elected.[18] Although women hold 22 percent of seats, representation is largely contingent on elite nomination practices within the ruling party. This leaves women's participation dependent on hierarchical patronage.

In **Thailand**, elections for the House of Representatives use a parallel system which combines FPTP with closed-list proportional representation. Senators are indirectly selected through layered intra- and inter-group processes. Despite constitutional commitments to gender balance, implementation remains inconsistent. For example, while the Democrat Party has adopted a gender quota of women candidates, it applies only a 20-percent quota on party lists, exposing the limited commitment at party level.

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[12] "Lagi, Putusan MK dikritik karena abaikan affirmative action," [Constitutional Court ruling ignores affirmative action], Hukum Online, 19 January 2009, https://www.hukumonline.com/berita/a/lagi-putusan-mk-dikritik-karena-abaikan-affirmative-action-hol20948.

[13] Iqbal Basyari, "Tak semua partai penuhi imbauan KPU soal jumlah minimal 30 persen caleg perempuan," [Not all political parties complied with 30-percent women's quota] Kompas, 9 November 2023, https://www.kompas.id/artikel/17-parpol-tak-penuhi-jumlah-minimal-30-persen-caleg-perempuan.

[14] Dian Dewi Purnamasari, "Ihwal keterwakilan perempuan, KPU terbukti langgar administrasi pemilu," [KPU found to be in administrative violation on women's representation rule], Kompas, 29 November 2023, https://www.kompas.id/artikel/bawaslu-minta-kpu-perbaiki-daftar-caleg-sesuai-putusan-ma.

[15] Susana Rita Kumalasanti, "Parpol dinilai masih jadi penghambat pemenuhan kuota 30% perempuan," [Political parties deemed a barrier to 30-percent women's quota in elections], Kompas, 8 July 2025, https://www.kompas.id/artikel/parpol-masih-jadi-penghambat-pemenuhan-keterwakilan-30-persen-perempuan?open_from=Artikel_Terkait.

[16] Titi Anggraini, Ahmad Alfarizy, Nur Fauzi Ramadhan, and Sandy Yudha Pratama Hulu, "The Domestication of Women in Indonesian Politics," Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 30 October 2025.

[17] Chin Huat Wong and Wo Chang Xi, "Getting women in: Electoral and legislative institution design for women quota; Lessons from a decade of advocacy," Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Presentation at Malaysia Gender Outlook Forum, 28 August 2025.

[18] Champathong Phochanthilath and Siliphaithoun Xayamoungkhoun, "Barriers to women's political leadership and participation in Laos," Westminster Foundation for Democracy, unpublished report, July 2024.

Across all four countries, women's political representation remains persistently low, shaped by the interplay of restrictive electoral systems, weak or voluntary quota mechanisms, and patriarchal political cultures. While proportional systems and quotas have widened entry points, poor enforcement, tokenism, and male gatekeeping blunt their transformative potential.

In Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos, voluntary quotas and lack of legal mandates have allowed political actors to sidestep meaningful reform. The absence of binding frameworks, independent oversight, and accountability mechanisms reinforces the status quo. In Indonesia, despite legislated women's quota, a combination of legal ambiguity, institutional inertia, and political capture persist, which limits genuine gains.[19]

These institutional weaknesses also expose women to gendered disinformation, harassment, and intimidation, much of which remains unreported due to the absence of gender-sensitive electoral regulations. As a result, women across the region continue to face both structural exclusion and personal risk, reflecting broader democratic deficits and the entrenchment of male-dominated political orders.

Southeast Asia's uneven progress on women's representation underscores that laws alone do not guarantee equality. Without robust enforcement, political will, and protection from gendered violence, quotas risk becoming performative gestures rather than transformative tools. Advancing women's political leadership thus requires a dual approach: strengthening institutional accountability and dismantling sociopolitical barriers that continue to normalise exclusion and violence against women in public life.

Regional Patterns

Women's political participation and leadership across the region remain far behind regional and global gender equality goals. Since the early 2000s, progress has been slow and uneven, with wide disparities among countries despite shared commitments under international frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and various ASEAN declarations.

Prior to the turn of the century, women's representation in national **legislatures** across the region was extremely low—typically in single-digit or low double-digit percentages. This reflects that the political systems then were even more male-dominated, with little to no structural support for women. This began to shift after Indonesia introduced a voluntary gender quota for political party candidate lists, followed by others' adoption of similar or adjacent measures.

Introduction of a 30-percent voluntary gender quota in 2003 marked a turning point for **Indonesia**. Through successive electoral reforms to date, the quota became increasingly binding, contributing to steady gains in women's representation. In the 2024 elections, women won 21.9 percent of seats in the lower house (up from just 8 percent in 1999) and 37 percent in the upper house. However, quota enforcement has fluctuated between election cycles due to inconsistent implementation by KPU and weak compliance among political parties. These inconsistencies have diluted progress and left women's gains vulnerable to administrative discretion.

[19] Yeong Pey Jung, "Mapping women in power: The representation and role of women in Malaysian politics (1955–2025)," Penang Institute, Presentation at Malaysia Gender Outlook Forum, 28 August 2025.

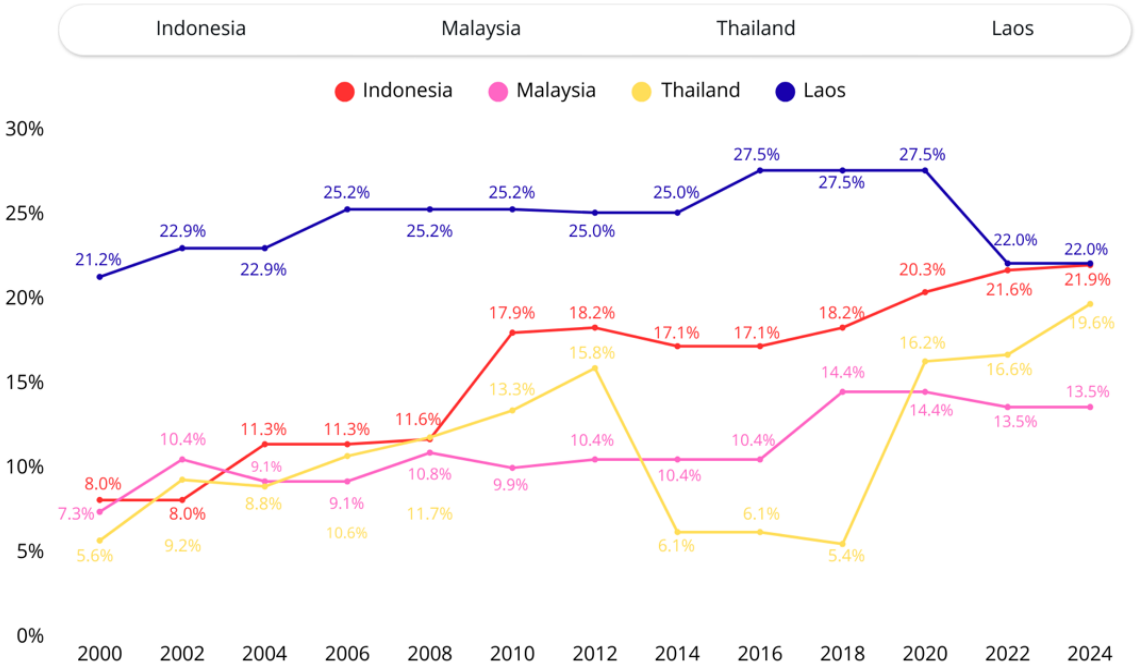

Figure 1. Women in parliament (2000–2024)

Source: Hurriyah (2025)

In contrast, **Malaysia** and **Thailand**—both lacking binding gender quotas—have made slower progress. As of 2024, women occupy 13.5 percent of seats in Malaysia's lower house and 20 percent in the upper house, while Thailand reports 19.2 percent and 23 percent respectively. Most advances in these countries stem from individual party initiatives and advocacy rather than institutional reforms.

In **Laos**, the unicameral legislature's centralised candidate selection process reached a 22-percent women's representation in the early 2000s but has since plateaued. Although not supported by formal quotas, its single-party structure provides limited gender balancing through controlled nomination practices.

Time-series data in **Figure 1** confirm that quota adoption such as seen in Indonesia has been critical to increasing women's representation, whereas the absence of such mechanisms leave women's representation to be persistently low. This snapshot demonstrates that with adequate enforcement mechanisms, mandatory quotas are key to closing the gender gaps in politics.

As of 2024, Indonesia recorded the highest overall representation of women in legislative bodies among the four countries. In upper houses (excluding Laos), Indonesia led with 37 percent, followed by Thailand (23 percent) and Malaysia (20 percent). In lower houses, Laos reported 22 percent, while Indonesia trails closely (21.9 percent)[20] alongside Thailand (19.2 percent) and Malaysia (13.5 percent). Women's representation also remains low at the subnational level: Laos (30 percent), Thailand (20.4 percent), Indonesia (19 percent), and Malaysia (11.6 percent).

[20] This figure is accurate based on the results of Indonesia's 2024 elections. Note that as of October 2025, with resignations and recalls, the share of women seat stood at 129 of 580 (22.2 percent).

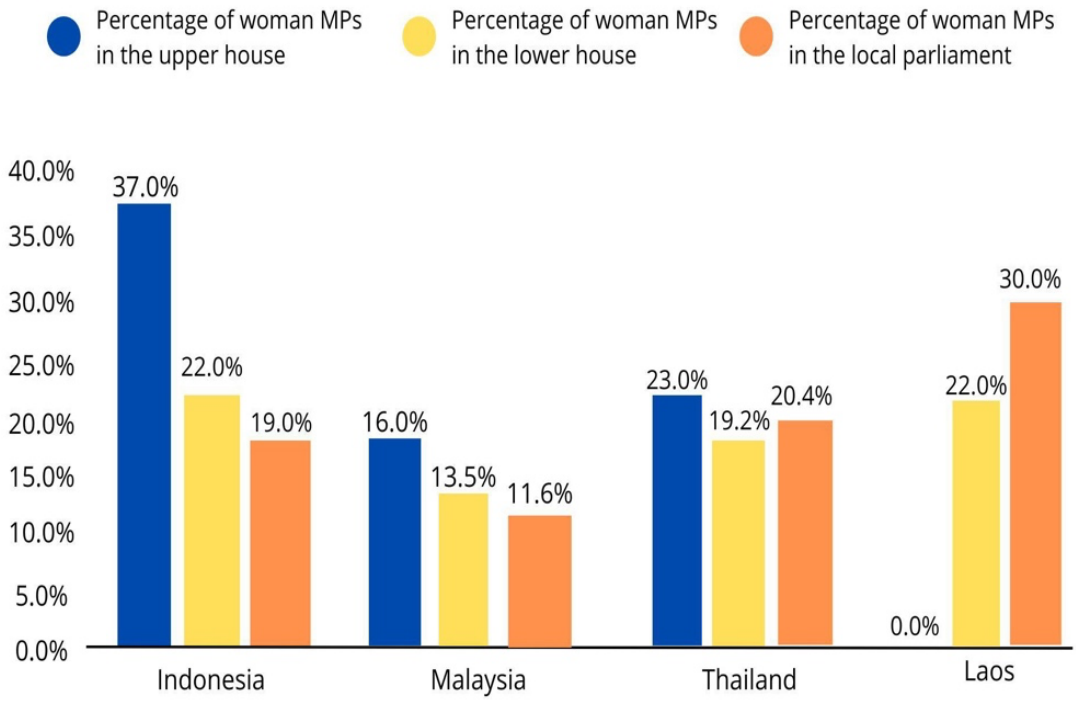

Figure 2. Women in national and subnational parliaments (2024)
Source: Hurriyah (2025)

In the **executive** branch, women's representation also varies widely. As of 2024, Thailand had the highest share of women in cabinet with 8 of 28 ministers (28.6 percent), followed by Laos with 3 of 17 (17.6 percent), Indonesia with 5 of 40 (12.5 percent), and Malaysia with 3 of 27 (11.11 percent). However, Indonesia's figure dropped to 7.5 percent by September 2025 following cabinet reshuffles, making it the least diverse cabinet among the four.

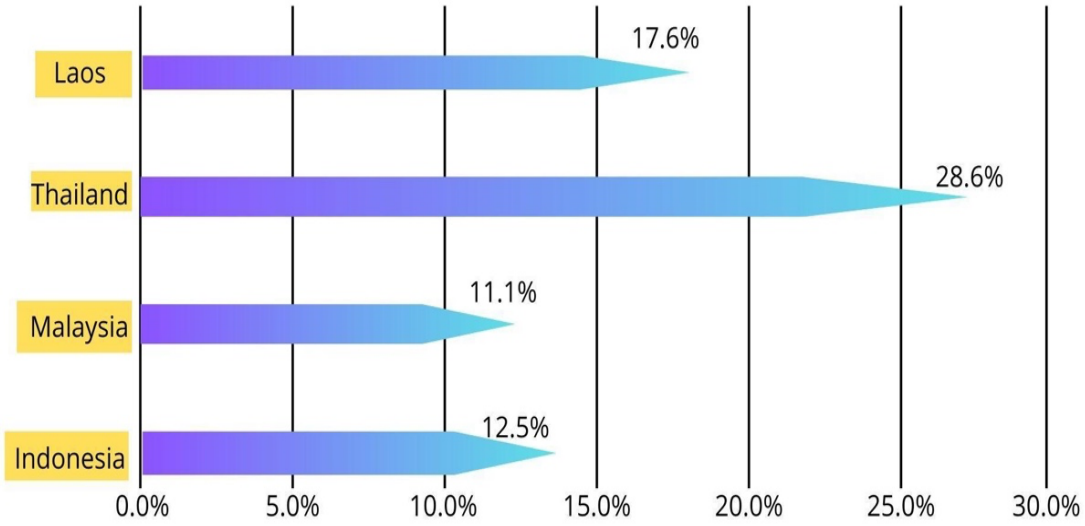

Figure 3. Women in cabinets (2024)
Source: Hurriyah (2025)

At the **bureaucratic** level, women constitute a majority of civil servants in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand (over 57 percent), but hold far fewer senior or decision-making posts. Laos lags behind with 35.3 percent overall. For instance, while women account for 57 percent of civil servants in Indonesia, only 16.9 and 16.2 percent occupy mid- and top-level executive positions respectively. This reveals a sharp disconnect between statistical gains and genuine leadership access. In contrast, women dominate central bureaucracies in Thailand but remain underrepresented in local government leadership, holding only 11.9 percent of local executive posts in 2019.

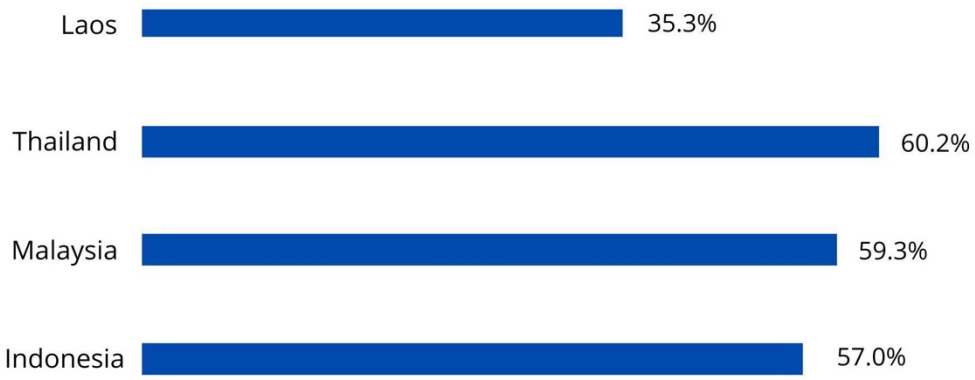

Figure 4. Women in bureaucracies (2024)

Source: Hurriyah (2025)

Gender representation in electoral management bodies also remains uneven and often opaque. At the national level, Laos leads with 33.3 percent of women members, followed by Malaysia (28.6 percent) and Indonesia (25 percent), whereas Thailand records no women representation in its national EMB—a stark indicator of exclusion in electoral governance.

In Indonesia, women's participation drops steeply at subnational levels, with only 15.4 percent of provincial and 15.7 percent of municipal EMB members being women. In the other three countries, subnational data are either unavailable or undisclosed, reflecting broader institutional neglect of gender-sensitive reporting.

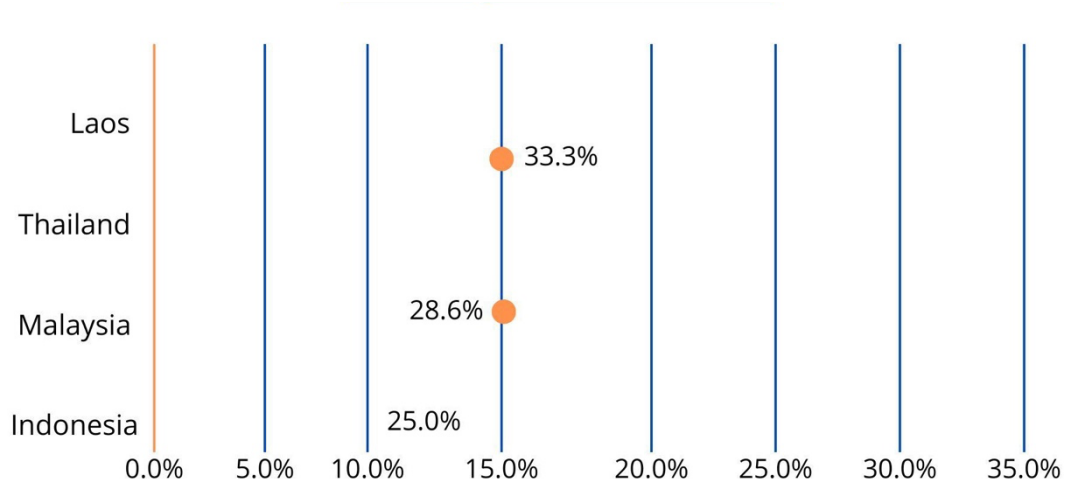

Figure 5. Women in electoral management bodies (2024)

Source: Hurriyah (2025)

Among the four countries, while Indonesia is the only country that has a 30-percent quota for women in EMBs, final appointments remain subject to parliamentary approval, where resistance rooted in "quality versus quota" debates continue to limit equitable outcomes.[21]

At the **subnational** level, women's political representation remains both low and poorly documented. While national statistics are often available through election commissions or parliamentary databases, data on women's participation at the provincial, municipal, and lower administrative levels are extremely difficult to find while those that are available tend to be fragmented, incomplete, and outdated. This invisibility reflects not just a technical data gap but a deeper institutional neglect: what is not measured is rarely prioritised. Even basic information—such as the number of women serving as governors, mayors, or district heads—is inconsistently recorded or publicly reported. In Indonesia, for instance, official gender-disaggregated data on local leaders are scattered across different ministries and rarely updated.

In **Indonesia**, across its 38 provinces, only two governors and six vice-governors are women after the 2024 elections. In **Thailand**, although recent data show some improvement, with women holding an estimated 17 percent of provincial governorships and a growing number of local executive roles, the figures remain well below parity. In **Malaysia** and **Laos**, where local executives are appointed rather than elected, no comprehensive datasets exist—an omission that makes it difficult to assess trends or advocate for reform.[22]

This opacity has significant consequences. Without reliable, comparable data, governments and development partners cannot assess whether decentralisation has translated into more inclusive governance. The absence of gender-sensitive monitoring also limits accountability: when women's participation at the local level is invisible, the barriers they face—from patriarchal gatekeeping to resource constraints—remain unaddressed. Moreover, the lack of public data weakens the political case for gender quotas or leadership programmes targeting subnational levels, reinforcing a cycle of neglect.

Ultimately, the scarcity of data on women's local-level representation is itself an indicator of marginalisation. A comparative view of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos reveals that women's representation across legislative, executive, and bureaucratic institutions remains uneven and structurally constrained. While quotas and institutional reforms can expand access, they do not guarantee equitable outcomes without consistent enforcement, transparent monitoring, and supportive political cultures.

The four cases demonstrate that quota adoption is necessary but insufficient—without political will, gender-sensitive institutional design, and sustained accountability, women's participation risks remaining tokenistic. To advance genuine gender equality in politics, Southeast Asian countries must strengthen enforcement mechanisms, mainstream gender parity across governance structures, and address the patriarchal norms that continue to limit women's leadership potential.

Growing Threats

Alongside persistent barriers to participation, women politicians across Southeast Asia increasingly face violence and harassment that undermine their safety, credibility, and full participation in political life. WFD's earlier study revealed alarming rates of violence against women in politics: 94

[21] "Memastikan inklusivitas dalam seleksi anggota KPU dan Bawaslu masa jabatan 2022–2027," [Ensuring inclusivity in the selection of Indonesia's 2022–2027 election commissioners and supervisors], Centre for Political Studies of Universitas Indonesia, unpublished position paper, 11 November 2021.
[22] "Senarai Datuk Bandar Yang Di-Pertua," Jabatan Kerajaan Tempatan Kementerian Perumahan dan Kerajaan Tempatan Malaysia, accessed August 2025, https://jkt.kpkt.gov.my/senarai-datuk-bandar-yang-di-pertua.

percent of women grassroots leaders and 82 percent of women politicians reported experiencing some forms of violence or sexual harassment during their political activities.[23] Yet despite its prevalence, VAWP and VAWE remain poorly documented and chronically underreported, with none of the four countries examined—Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos—having a specific legal framework to address them.

Indonesia and Malaysia have enacted broader laws, such as Indonesia's Law No. 12 of 2022 on the Sexual Violence Crimes and Malaysia's 2022 Anti-Sexual Harassment Act, but neither integrates protections of women in electoral or political contexts. Thailand and Laos rely on broader legislations, such as Thailand's 2008 Civil Service Act and Laos' 2004 Law on the Development and Protection of Women and Children alongside the amended 2013 Labour Law, which remain limited in scope and enforcement. Together, these fragmented frameworks leave women politicians vulnerable to gender-based violence in the political arenas.

In **Indonesia**, VAWP manifests in multiple forms—ranging from online smear campaigns and sexually suggestive attacks to dismissals of elected women by party elites.[24] According to the Women Research Institute (WRI), 94 percent of women politicians consider VAWP a serious problem, with over half experiencing verbal abuse that questions their competence, and 52 percent witnessing or hearing of sexual harassment among colleagues.[25] Incidents of VAWE also reportedly increased during the 2024 elections but remain underreported due to stigma and weak institutional mechanisms.[26] Another study by Centre for Political Studies of Universitas Indonesia highlights the use of deepfake artificial intelligence technologies to target women candidates, further blurring the lines between harassment and digital manipulation.[27] Compounding the issue, several candidates with histories of sexual violence were elected to office, with parties normalising such behaviour as the "cost of doing politics."[28]

In 2024, KPU introduced a regulation to prevent sexual violence within its ranks, mandating safe working environments and internal handling mechanisms. However, this followed multiple reports of misconduct by KPU officials, including a high-profile case involving the Chief Election Commissioner.[29] The regulation remains largely administrative and internal—unanchored in

[23] Sinpeng and Savirani, "Women's Political Leadership in the ASEAN region," Westminster Foundation for Democracy.
[24] Delia Wildianti and Putri Ramadhana, "Kekerasan terhadap perempuan dalam pemilu dan dampaknya terhadap keterwakilan politik perempuan," [Violence against women in elections and its impact on women's political participation], Jurnal Masyarakat Indonesia 50 (1), p. 95–108, https://puskapol.fisip.ui.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Kekerasan-terhadap-Perempuan-dalam-Pemilu-dan-Dampaknya-terhadap-Keterwakilan-Politik-Perempuan.pdf; Kekerasan Berbasis Gender dalam Pemilu 2024 di Indonesia: Mengungkap Fakta yang Tersembunyi," [Gender-Based Violence in 2024 Elections: Uncovering the Hidden Facts], Kalyanamitra, 2024.
[25] Women Research Institute, "Violence against Women in Indonesia's 2024 Elections," Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 25 February 2025, https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/violence-against-women-indonesias-2024-elections.
[26] Women Research Institute, "Violence against Women in Indonesia's 2024 Elections," Westminster Foundation for Democracy.
[27] "Reformasi pemilu untuk mendorong keterwakilan substantif dan perlindungan partisipasi perempuan," [Electoral reform for substantive participation and representation of women in politics], Centre for Political Studies of Universitas Indonesia, 2025.
[28] Ella Syafputri Prihatini and Sri Budi Eko Wardani, "The Cost of Politics in Indonesia, Westminster Foundation for Democracy," November 2024, https://costofpolitics.net/asia-and-the-pacific/indonesia.
[29] Denty Piawai Nastitie, "Jejak kasus pelanggaran etik Ketua KPU Hasyim Asy'ari," Kompas, 4 Juli 2024, https://www.kompas.id/artikel/jejak-kasus-pelanggaran-etik-ketua-kpu-hasyim-asyari-dari-loloskan-gibran-jadi-cawapres-hingga-pelecehan-seksual; "Pernyataan sikap Komnas Perempuan atas Putusan DKPP RI tentang pelanggaran kode etik penyelenggara pemilu terhadap Ketua KPU Hasyim Asy'ari," [Statement of the National Commission on Violence against Women on the ethical violation of election commissioner Hasyim Asy'ari], National Commission on Violence against Women of Indonesia, 4 July 2023, https://komnasperempuan.go.id/pernyataan-sikap-

electoral law and lacking external enforcement—highlighting the reactive, rather than preventive, nature of institutional responses.

In **Malaysia**, women leaders continue to face entrenched harassment both online and offline. During the 15th General Election, women candidates were subject to widespread objectification, sexualisation, and smear campaigns.[30] They also endured body shaming, obscene remarks, double entendre "jokes," and even death or rape threats.[31] Parliament itself remains a hostile space, with male MPs frequently making sexist comments without repercussion.[32] The 2022 Anti-Sexual Harassment Act remains largely unenforced within political institutions, leaving a gap between legal reform and political practice.

At the 2025 Gender Outlook Forum hosted by WFD and Wanita Berjaya Selangor, several Malaysian women leaders shared personal testimonies about being targeted by sexualised disinformation and smear campaigns designed to erode their moral standing. Their accounts illustrate how deeply rooted patriarchal norms and weak accountability perpetuate the normalisation of abuse in political life.[33]

In **Thailand**, VAWP also takes multiple forms, often intersecting with state repression. The 2025 CEDAW Report noted that women politicians and activists face discrimination, harassment, and violence, sometimes extending to family members. Allegations of sexual abuse during detention underscore how political violence and gender-based violence converge. In 2023, sexual harassment cases within the Move Forward Party sparked public demands for a party code of ethics.[34] Civil society groups emphasised that isolated disciplinary actions are insufficient without systemic reforms to address the patriarchal norms embedded in Thai politics. Meanwhile, young women activists face constant online harassment and surveillance, often state linked.[35]

Online spaces further amplify these risks, as women face hate speech, trolling, fake news, and threats of death or rape. Joint research by Stoponlineharm.org and WFD further shows that women are frequently discredited, mocked, and subjected to gender-based attacks that portray them as unworthy of political office or reliant solely on family ties.[36] Social media platforms such as Facebook, X, TikTok, and YouTube serve as major arenas for disinformation, with little regulation of gendered or sexualised attacks. Yet despite these trends, incidents often go unrecorded in official political-violence statistics, revealing how state repression and societal biases intersect to undermine women's legitimacy and safety in politics.

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detail/pernyataaan-sikap-komnas-perempuan-atas-putusan-dewan-kehormatan-penyelenggara-pemilu-ri-tentang-pelanggaran-kode-etik-penyelenggara-pemilu-terhadap-ketua-kpu-hasyim-asyari.

[30] Ross Tapsell and Jananie Chandrarao, "Gendered disinformation and election campaigning: A Malaysia case study," Georgetown Journal of International Affairs 25 (1), 2024, p. 193–199, https://doi.org/10.1353/gia.2024.a934903.

[31] "Women's groups condemn death threats against ADUN Syerleena Abdul Rashid," Women's Aid Organisation, 18 July 2018, https://wao.org.my/womens-groups-condemn-death-threats-against-adun-syerleena-abdul-rashid.

[32] "Tajuddin warned as MPs clash during sexual harassment bill debate," Malay Mail, 20 July 2022, https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/07/20/tajuddin-warned-as-mps-clash-during-sexual-harassment-bill-debate/18434.

[33] "Malaysian women politicians confront systemic barriers, online abuse," Malaysia Kini, 8 September 2025, https://www.malaysiakini.com/announcement/754493.

[34] Mitch Connor, "Sexual harassment claims spark call for ethical code in Thai politics," Thaiger, 3 November 2023, https://thethaiger.com/news/national/sexual-harassment-claims-spark-call-for-ethical-code-in-thai-politics.

[35] Aim Sinpeng, "Women politicians in Southeast Asia face an epidemic of online violence," Centre for International Governance Innovation, 24 November 2022, https://www.cigionline.org/articles/women-politicians-in-southeast-asia-face-an-epidemic-of-online-violence.

[36] Cofact Thailand, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Decode Plus, and International Commission of Jurists, "Digital duty: Tech vs online violence against women in politics," Thai Public Broadcasting Service, 10 June 2025, https://blog.cofact.org/forum680610.

In **Laos**, evidence of VAWP is largely qualitative. A 2024 study found that nearly one-fifth of women politicians reported emotional abuse from supervisors or colleagues, while one-third experienced unequal treatment in promotions or task assignments.[37] Some also faced false accusations of adultery—tactics intended to discredit and silence women. With no formal reporting mechanisms, such abuses remain invisible in official political discourse.

Across all four countries, common patterns emerge:

- **Online harassment and disinformation are rising**, often sexualised and morality-based, exploiting patriarchal norms to delegitimise women's leadership.
- **Underreporting is systemic**, as victims fear retaliation, institutional mistrust, or social stigma.
- **Legal and institutional gaps persist**, with few tailored mechanisms in EMBs, legislatures, or political parties to address VAWP and VAWE.
- **Intersectional vulnerabilities**—such as religion, ethnicity, or marital status—are frequently weaponised to constrain women's political participation.

Political parties often enable these conditions, as women candidates and staff regularly face harassment, exclusion, and intimidation within their own parties, while parties lack gender-sensitive complaint procedures or codes of conduct; further perpetuating a culture that normalises abuse as part of political competition.

Similarly, EMBs also play a role in perpetuating impunity, such as seen in the 2023 case in Indonesia where KPU removed a clause barring candidates convicted of sexual crimes against children—previously included in its 2018 regulation—which prompted wide condemnation.[38]

Ultimately, these patterns expose how institutional neglect, patriarchal norms, and digitalised harassment intersect to constrain women's political participation across Southeast Asia. Without binding regulations, transparent data, and proactive enforcement, VAWP and VAWE will continue to silence women's voices—undermining both democratic integrity and gender equality.

[37] Phochanthilath and Xayamoungkhoun, "Barriers to women's political leadership and participation in Laos," Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

[38] "Peraturan KPU No. 10 Tahun 2023 mereduksi kebijakan afirmasi dan tidak mendorong tata pemerintahan bebas dari kekerasan terhadap perempuan," [KPU Regulation No. 10 of 2023 reduces affirmative action and goes against the goal of eliminating violence against women], National Commission on Violence against Women, 12 May 2023, https://komnasperempuan.go.id/siaran-pers-detail/siaran-pers-komnas-perempuan-peraturan-kpu-no-10-tahun-2023-mereduksi-kebijakan-afirmasi-dan-tidak-mendorong-tata-pemerintahan-bebas-dari-kekerasan-terhadap-perempuan.

Conclusion

Women's political participation and leadership in ASEAN continue to face deep-rooted structural barriers. While mandatory quotas and mixed electoral systems in some countries have opened limited entry points for women, progress remains constrained by weak enforcement, entrenched party gatekeeping, and persistent under-representation in local and executive leadership. At the same time, violence against women in politics (VAWP) and elections (VAWE) is rising across the region, yet remains largely invisible due to inadequate legal frameworks, fragmented data, and the absence of institutional mechanisms for reporting and redress.

In concluding this brief, the author offers a set of lessons learnt from the experience of Mexico, which demonstrates how women's political gains must be reinforced by robust institutional protections against gendered violence. Without explicit legal recognition of VAWP and VAWE, empowered electoral authorities, and sustained cultural transformation, progress in representation remains fragile, leaving women leaders vulnerable to harassment and intimidation.

For ASEAN, this underscores the need for a coordinated regional approach; one that integrates gender-sensitive monitoring, harmonised data systems, and peer accountability mechanisms to strengthen transparency, comparability, and evidence-based reform.

Reflections

The analysis of women's political participation and leadership and the rising trend of VAWP and VAWE across Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos reveal a complex interplay of institutional, cultural, and political barriers. Weak enforcement of gender quotas, male-dominated party systems, limited access to resources, and deeply rooted gender norms continue to restrict women's political roles and create hostile environments for their participation.

In Indonesia, for instance, the 30-percent quota is undermined by loopholes in electoral regulations and inconsistent oversight. In Malaysia and Thailand, where quotas are voluntary, political parties exercise broad discretion, often resulting in **tokenistic inclusion without structural support**. In some cases, women have even been dismissed or replaced after being elected—reflecting the fragility of their political standing.

Male-dominated party systems further entrench exclusion. Women are frequently placed in unelectable positions, denied access to campaign financing, and sidelined from strategic decision-making. These practices not only limit their advancement but also expose them to greater risks of harassment and violence. Deep-seated gender norms—such as expectations around morality, motherhood, and submissiveness—are routinely weaponised to delegitimise women in public life. This is especially evident in the rise of online abuse, where sexualised disinformation and smear campaigns are used to intimidate and silence women political leaders.

VAWP and VAWE do not occur in a vacuum. They are enabled and sustained by institutional inaction and political tolerance. Parties, legislatures, and electoral bodies often lack clear mandates, complaint mechanisms, or codes of conduct to address gender-based violence in political spaces. Violence is frequently normalised as part of political competition, while victims remain reluctant to report due to fear of retaliation or lack of trust in institutions. This culture of impunity reinforces existing inequalities and obstructs progress toward gender parity.

Intersectional vulnerabilities—such as religion, ethnicity, marital status, and age—further compound the risks faced by women in politics. These identities are often exploited to discredit women, question their legitimacy, or limit their mobility. In Laos, for example, where political space is tightly controlled, women's participation is shaped by state narratives that prioritise conformity over contestation, narrowing the scope for gender-inclusive governance.

Addressing these challenges requires more than legal reform. It demands a transformation of political culture. Institutional actors must adopt gender-sensitive frameworks, enforce accountability, and actively dismantle the norms that sustain exclusion and violence. Without such systemic change, women's political participation and leadership will remain constrained, whereas VAWP and VAWE will continue to serve as tools to silence women and preserve patriarchal power structures.

Building on this analysis, five inter-related issues highlight the persistent structural weaknesses and policy gaps that undermine gender equality in political life across the four countries:

1. **Institutional frameworks matter**. Quota policies can increase women's candidacy and representation, but only when supported by strong enforcement mechanisms and meaningful placement rules in party lists.
2. **Conversion gaps persist**. Even where quotas exist, they often fail to translate into seats due to tokenistic compliance and entrenched party gatekeeping. Male dominance across cabinets, election management bodies, and senior bureaucratic posts limits women's pathways into decision-making roles.
3. **Local-level representation remains the weakest link**. Across all four countries, women are significantly underrepresented in local assemblies and executive offices, limiting grassroots leadership opportunities and career sustainability.
4. **VAWP and VAWE are evolving threats**. Online harassment, disinformation, and gendered attacks are increasingly common, while verbal abuse, intimidation, and reputational slander remain normalised as "given" cost of politics. Systemic underreporting persists due to stigma, weak institutions, and ineffective complaint mechanisms.
5. **Policy and legal gaps remain glaring**. None of the four countries has a dedicated legal framework addressing VAWP and VAWE. Existing laws on gender equality, elections, or sexual harassment only partially apply and rarely cover party processes, campaign periods, or online disinformation. Enforcement and remedies remain weak.

Overall, the persistence of VAWP and VAWE and the slow, uneven gains in women's political participation and leadership point to an urgent need for Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Laos—and ASEAN more broadly—to close institutional and legal gaps. Stronger enforcement of quotas, alignment between election laws and gender policies, and the establishment of safe reporting and complaint mechanisms are critical. Without them, progress achieved through electoral reforms will remain fragile, as intimidation and abuse continue to deter women's full participation in politics.

Lessons from Other Contexts

Several countries have already taken steps towards addressing VAWP and VAWE further than others. In the United States, several states have introduced protective measures for vulnerable groups in electoral contexts. This includes, for instance, California's Senate Bill No. 1131 (2022), which allows survivors of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and stalking, as well as election

workers, to request confidentiality of address to protect their personal information. This places an important safeguard in a context where voter data are publicly available.[1]

In Bolivia, VAWP and VAWE are regulated under Law No. 243 of 2014 on the Prevention of Political Harassment and Violence against Women. The law provides detailed definitions and categories of political violence and harassment, outlines mechanisms for reporting, and mandates institutional accountability. Victims may pursue both administrative and criminal procedures, and perpetrators holding public office are required to resign. The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights oversees implementation, while electoral officials are legally obligated to report incidents.

In Mexico, a comprehensive legal architecture now addresses gender-based political violence. Key instruments include the 2020 Federal Reform Decree, the General Law on Electoral Institutions and Procedures, the "*3 de 3 contra la violencia*" (three out of three against violence) initiative, and the National Register of Sanctioned Persons (RPNS). These laws and mechanisms collectively require gender-sensitive electoral processes, sworn declarations that candidates have no history of gender-based or sexual violence, and commitments from electoral bodies to sanction offenders through measures such as funding cuts or disqualification.[2]

Table 1. Mexico's comprehensive VAWP and VAWE policy framework

Aspects	Legal Framework
Definition	Defines gender-based political violence against women as "any action or omission, including tolerance, based on gender and exercised within the public or private sphere, which has the purpose or result of limiting, annulling, or undermining the effective exercise of women's political-electoral rights."
Subjects of Protection	Women individuals or collective (pre-candidates, candidates, elected, or appointed officials).
Scope of Violence	Public and private spheres.
Forms of Violence	Physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and symbolic acts that obstruct women's political rights.
Duty Bearers	General Council (highest authority), local and regional EMBs, Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Committee, Technical Electoral Litigation Unit, and Attorney General's Office.
Sanctions	Public sanctions, including up to 50 percent reduction of party funding, suspension of media access, public apologies, or cancellation of party registration in severe or repeated cases.

[1] "Senate Bill No. 1131," California Senate, 2022, https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB1131.
[2] Serena Eréndira Serrano Oswald, "Gender based political violence against women in Mexico from a regional perspective," Asia-Pacific Journal of Regional Science 7, 29 December 2022, p. 135–157 https://doi.org/10.1007/s41685-022-00271-6.

Prevention and civic education	The General Council conducts civic education programmes on gender equality and women's rights.
Candidacy requirement	Mandatory sworn declaration of no history of gender-based or sexual violence.
VAWE and VAWE Database	RPNS maintains an open access database listing all individuals sanctioned for gender-based political violence against women.

Mexico now stands among the most advanced countries globally in institutionalising protections against political and electoral violence targeting women. Over the past decade, it has moved from treating VAWP and VAWE as a matter of political ethics to embedding it squarely within its legal and electoral systems. This evolution contrasts sharply with ASEAN, where women's representation has expanded but protective frameworks remain weak or non-existent.

Mexico's approach is holistic: electoral law explicitly recognises gender-based political violence, empowers EMBs to investigate and sanction violations as well as political parties to establish internal gender protocols, and frames public campaigns on women's political safety as a pillar of democratic integrity. Together, these elements create a dual foundation—legal accountability and cultural transformation—from which ASEAN can draw valuable lessons.

The following are key lessons learnt for ASEAN:

1. **Legal recognition of VAWP and VAWE**: Mexico was among the first countries to explicitly define gender-based political violence in law. The law bars candidates convicted of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and/or child support evasion from running for office. It reframes such violence not merely as misconduct but as a violation of human rights and electoral integrity.
2. **Institutionalised complaint mechanisms**: Mexico's National Electoral Institute and Electoral Tribunal are mandated to receive, investigate, and adjudicate complaints. Cases may be filed during campaigns or while in office, therefore ensuring accessible, impartial due process outside party control.
3. **Comprehensive typology of violence**: Mexico recognises that political violence extends beyond physical attacks to include psychological, economic, and symbolic harm—such as reputational defamation, digital harassment, or denial of resources.
4. **Mandatory party responsibility**: Mexico obliges political parties to establish internal complaint systems and gender protocols, with sanctions imposed for non-compliance. This requirement embeds accountability at the organisational level.
5. **Public awareness and cultural change**: Mexico complements legal reforms with national education campaigns and civic training programmes that portray VAWP and VAWE as threats to democracy rather than isolated women's issues.

Overall, Mexico's model demonstrates that progress on women's representation must go hand in hand with legal and institutional protection against VAWP and VAWE**.** Without explicit legal definitions, empowered institutions, and cultural change, women's political participation remains fragile and vulnerable to intimidation. For ASEAN, adopting elements of the Mexico model, particularly integrating VAWP and VAWE into election laws, would be a transformative step toward safeguarding democracy and enhancing WPPL in the region.

Recommendations for ASEAN Gender Observatory

To advance gender equality in political life and respond to the rising threat of VAWP and VAWE, ASEAN must move beyond fragmented national initiatives and adopt a coordinated regional approach. Despite formal commitments such as the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework and the Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, gaps persist in data collection, monitoring, and protection mechanisms.

An ASEAN Gender Observatory could provide a strategic platform to enhance women's political participation and leadership while addressing VAWP and VAWE more systematically. By standardising indicators, consolidating data, and fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, such a mechanism would not only strengthen transparency and accountability but also promote policy coherence and regional solidarity in advancing women's political rights.

To operationalise this vision, five interlinked actions are essential:

1. **Standardise indicators**: ASEAN member states should adopt a shared set of indicators measuring women's candidacy, representation, leadership, and experiences of political violence. Harmonised metrics will enable reliable cross-country comparisons and evidence-based benchmarking of progress.
2. **Consolidate national data**: Countries should integrate fragmented data from EMBs, parliaments, political parties, civil society organisations, and research institutions into publicly accessible national databases that are regularly updated. These can then feed into the regional observatory to create a unified knowledge base.
3. **Enable early warning and accountability**: The observatory should produce annual regional monitoring reports to identify emerging risks, track progress, highlight best practices, and recommend policy reforms. This would enhance both preventive and corrective mechanisms for addressing gendered political violence.
4. **Support policy harmonisation**: Member states should align national legal frameworks with ASEAN's broader commitments on gender equality, democracy, and human rights. Such alignment would create a stronger foundation for regional cooperation and accountability.
5. **Build multi-stakeholder partnerships**: Governments should work collaboratively with civil society, academia, and digital platforms to strengthen survivor-centred reporting, improve online and offline safety, and promote public awareness campaigns. These partnerships are crucial for sustaining national-level gender observatories and institutionalising VAWP and VAWE protection mechanisms.

In sum, the establishment of an ASEAN Gender Observatory represents not only a technical solution to data fragmentation but also a political commitment to gender parity in democracy. By turning information into accountability and solidarity, ASEAN can lead the way in ensuring that women's participation in politics is not only possible—but safe, valued, and protected.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is the UK public body dedicated to supporting democracy around the world. Operating internationally, WFD works with parliaments, political parties, and civil society groups as well as on elections to help make political systems fairer, more inclusive and accountable.

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