# Why does a good woman lose?

## Barriers to women's political representation in Indonesia



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# Acknowledgments

# Disclaimer

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**Cover image**
A woman at a polling booth on the day of Indonesia's 2019 national elections. Photo: Edward Aspinall

# Introduction

The April 2019 election in Indonesia saw the proportion of seats won by women in the People's Representative Council (DPR)—Indonesia's national parliament—rise from 17.3% to 20.9%. While still well below the aspirational target of 30%, this in fact represents a high point so far in women's parliamentary representation in Indonesia. It also brings Indonesia a step closer to the (strikingly low) global average of 24.3% women in parliaments worldwide.

While researchers and advocates have welcomed the rise in women's representation, their celebrations have been muted. Indonesian women are still under-represented: a record number of 3200 women stood as DPR candidates in a field of 7985 candidates, meaning women made up 40% percent of candidates.

In 2003, Indonesia introduced a candidate quota requiring parties to 'give consideration' to nominating 30% of women on their candidate lists for legislative elections. Over the years, the quota design has been strengthened: the quota has become compulsory and a placement mandate of one woman in every three candidates was added. Electoral authorities also enforce the quota more strictly than previously. Even so, Indonesia's rate of female representation remains relatively low by international standards, especially if we compare it to other countries with a gender quota. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), countries with a 30% (or higher) mandated quota like Indonesia average 27.7% women's representation in single and lower chambers.[1]

There is continuing frustration among women's movement activists and researchers that Indonesia's quota is not promoting greater progress. Activists acknowledge the rise in the quantity of women elected, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as 'descriptive representation'—i.e. the degree to which an elected body contains representatives who are women (or who are drawn from other groups such as ethnic minorities). But some activists have raised questions about the quality of many of the women candidates who were elected, and whether they are able to advance the interests of women by promoting female-friendly policies and budgetary allocations—a phenomenon often described as 'substantive representation'.

The critics point to the increase in the number of women who were elected on the basis of strong ties to political elites, their membership in powerful political families, or as a result of their celebrity status. While some strong women candidates who are committed to advancing women's issues were elected in the 2019 elections, many others were not. Those who failed to win a seat included high-profile candidates like the PDI-P's Eva Kusuma Sundari, a prominent advocate of women's rights. Moreover, there are still parts of the country where women's representation is woefully inadequate: seven of Indonesia's 34 provinces failed to send a single female DPR member to Jakarta.

To examine the barriers to women's representation, and the opportunities for women candidates, colleagues at the Australian National University worked with research partners in Indonesia to explore why high-quality women candidates often struggle to be elected. Collaborating with Gadjah Mada University, we worked with a team of researchers who conducted qualitative research on women candidates in 13 locations around Indonesia. We also worked with Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI) to conduct a nationally representative survey of 1220 respondents about attitudes to women in politics after the election.

In conducting this study, we built on research about Indonesia conducted by other analysts, such as Ben Hillman[2] and Ella S. Prihatini.[3] We also drew on a framework provided by the political scientists Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski in their classic study of the British parliament: the supply and demand model of candidate selection.[4] Accordingly, we examine factors that impact upon the supply of 'good' women candidates, as well as the demand for them from the parties responsible for selecting candidates (only registered parties can field candidates in Indonesia's legislative elections). We also argue that far greater attention needs to be paid to what Norris and Lovenduski label the 'outcome' of candidate selection: how voters themselves respond to female candidates. In Indonesia, as we discovered through our survey, voter prejudices against women as political leaders still affect voter preferences. If more is not done to persuade voters that electing women is important for the quality of Indonesian democracy, Indonesia will continue to lag behind much of the world in terms of women's representation. ■

1        Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019. 'Women in parliament in 2018: the year in review'. Report, available at: https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2019-03/women-in-parliament-in-2018-year-in-review

2        Benjamin Hillman, 2017a. 'The limits of gender quotas: women's parliamentary representation in Indonesia'. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48(2): 322–338 and 2017b. 'Increasing women's parliamentary representation in Asia and the Pacific: the Indonesian experience'. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 4(1): 38-49

3        Ella S. Prihatini, 2019. 'Women's views and experiences of accessing national parliament: evidence from Indonesia'. *Women's Studies International Forum* 74: 84-90

4        Pippa Norris & Joni Lovenduski, 1995. *Political recruitment: gender, race and class in the British parliament.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

# 3

# Good women, bad results



A female Golkar candidate's billboard during the 2019 election campaign, Southeast Sulawesi. Photo: Sally White

What do we mean by a 'good' woman candidate? It is difficult to measure the quality of candidates without detailed knowledge of them as individuals. Here we are using the term to refer to candidates who have political experience (whether in the DPR or at lower levels of representation or within political parties), and/or who have a strong base of community support through leadership in organisations of various sorts, and who are motivated to serve their communities through political participation. Our analysis of why such good women lose is not based on quantitative data concerning the qualifications of the some 3082 women DPR candidates who were not elected, but rather on media reports of prominent women who did not win (most of whom were incumbents with impressive records) and on the fieldwork carried out as part of our research project. We, and the researchers involved in this project, met many inspiring, talented and committed women candidates, many of whom were running for the second or even third time. The vast majority of them were not elected.

Of course, not everyone can win—indeed, the bulk of candidates in Indonesian elections do not. No doubt plenty of high-quality male candidates were not elected. Further, not all women (or men) enter the race in order to win. Some candidates run simply to gain experience for future elections, others are there—in the context of Indonesia's open-list proportional representation system—to attract additional votes and boost their party's chance of winning a seat. Yet others are there to help the party fulfil its 30% quota of female candidates.

Even so, the rate at which women win their seats remains significantly below that for men. Researcher Ella Prihatini has calculated that whereas the winning rate for women was 3.69% in 2019 (down from 3.93% in 2014), it was 9.55% for men, or 2.6 times higher.[5] Evidence from elsewhere in the world suggests that there is no significant difference in quality between men and women candidates,[6] and indeed women candidates are often of better qualified than their male counterparts because women typically have lower confidence than men do (and so tend to be better qualified when they decide to enter a race). While it is no doubt true that not all women

5      Ella S. Prihatini. 'Electoral [in]equity'. Inside Indonesia, 8 March 2019: https://www.insideindonesia.org/electoral-in-equity
6      Kathleen Dolan, 2014. *When does gender matter? Women candidates and gender stereotypes in American elections*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

candidates in Indonesia are of high quality, the same can be said about men. So why are the winning rates still so different?

## THE SUPPLY SIDE

The 'supply and demand' model of candidate recruitment was put forward by the political scientists Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski in their foundational work on the British parliament in 1995.[7] They developed this tool to analyse where and how discrimination against women and other groups, such as ethnic minorities, happens during each stage of the electoral process. According to Norris and Lovenduski's framework, 'supply' concerns the pool of potential candidates. Problems at the supply stage concern whether there are enough 'good' or qualified women who put their names in the ring as being willing to stand. Many qualified women might lack confidence to nominate, or feel that they will be discriminated against if they do. The 'demand' stage concerns political parties' willingness to nominate women who do step forward, and thus concerns actual discrimination on the part of party selectors. There is much discussion in the literature on whether it is supply or demand that is the most critical barrier to women's representation internationally.

Echoes of this debate are apparent in Indonesia. Party leaders often blame supply factors: they complain that they would like to choose more women as candidates, but there are not enough qualified women who are willing to run, as Ella S. Prihatini's research into legislators' views on why women are underrepresented in parliament shows.[8] Advocacy groups talk in terms of demand: they say that many qualified women candidates do put their names forward, but parties do not choose them as candidates.

To turn to supply first, Norris and Lovenduski see the determinants of supply as being whether potential candidates have the resources (time, money and experience) and motivation (willingness, drive) to stand. One particular challenge in Indonesia concerns the introduction of open-list proportional representation in 2009. This system allows voters to choose individual candidates, and places the main axis of competition between candidates from the same party, rather than between parties. This system has made elections much more onerous for individual candidates: they now have to raise their

own money to fund their campaigns and build personalised campaign teams. The system has also encouraged money politics and clientelism, dramatically increasing the costs of campaigning.[9] The impact of this shift on women candidates has been disproportionately large, because on the whole women in Indonesia have less access to financial resources than men. As a result, it is likely that many women who would otherwise be qualified do not put their names forward because of the prohibitive cost.

One factor in Indonesia that increases the supply of women candidates is the quota. Quotas are generally analysed in terms of the effect they have on demand for women candidates, but they also have an impact on supply. Candidate quotas increase willingness and motivation among potential female candidates by changing their perceptions of possible success. Female incumbency and increasing numbers of female role models multiply this effect, so that over time, the pool of qualified women candidates will increase—and it has in fact already increased since the beginning of the Reformasi period.

## DEMAND FOR WOMEN CANDIDATES

Turning to demand from party selectors, quotas work by creating an artificial demand for women candidates. In Indonesia, if a party wants to compete for legislative seats (at any level) in a particular electoral district, 30% of its candidates must be women. This rule is obviously positive for women's representation because it means that women have greater chances of being selected to run. Unfortunately, as many have pointed out, if parties are still dominated by male elites who are not interested in substantive aspects of women's representation, the quota does not necessarily mean parties will choose the best qualified women candidates. Demand is thus a critical issue.

But the problem is not quite like the traditional supply and demand model, where discrimination—either individual and direct discrimination ('women do not make good candidates') or imputed discrimination ('the electorate is not ready to elect a woman')—reduces the number of women selected as candidates. The issue in Indonesia is not the number of women chosen as candidates, but who gets chosen and what resources they get.

In the classic Norris and Lovenduski model, parties have relatively transparent systems of

7       Norris and Lovenduski, *Political recruitment*.
8       Ella S. Prihatini. 'On the same page? In Indoneisa, some male lawmakers are sceptical of quotas for women in politics'. *The Conversation*, 21 June 2018: https://theconversation.com/on-the-same-page-in-indonesia-some-male-lawmakers-are-sceptical-of-quotas-for-women-in-politics-90824
9       Edward Aspinall and Ward Berenschot, 2019. *Democracy for sale: elections, clientelism and the state in Indonesia*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

candidate recruitment. This does not apply to most Indonesian parties, where commentators often talk about the 'black box' of candidate selection. Party elites typically make decisions without thinking about candidate quality and often they do not look within the party for the most talented candidates. Instead, they often look outside the party to recruit women they think have a greater chance of winning large numbers of votes. In the open-list system, parties have an interest in recruiting vote-getters of this sort: such candidates contribute their individual tallies to the party vote total in their electoral district, whether or not they win a seat individually.

In Indonesia, the introduction of the quota led to an increase in women with dynastic connections (i.e women tied by blood or marriage to powerful local or national political families) being selected to run as candidates. These women have an advantage because they typically have access to finances through their families, and they can rely on the political networks and connections of powerful male relatives to organise their campaigns. According to research from the Centre for Political Studies at the University of Indonesia (Puskapol), of the women who won DPR seats in the 2019 election, 41% had dynastic connections, up from 36% in the 2014 election.[10] Though some women with dynastic connections are capable and talented politicians, many are there not as a result of their own attributes, but purely as a result of their family connections. The outcome may be that just as women's descriptive representation in the national legislature is improving, women's substantive representation is declining.

Some talented women who put themselves forward as candidates to parties lose out to these family-connected candidates. More importantly, parties will often place talented female candidates in electorates that are difficult to win, or put them on low positions on party lists, which also makes winning more difficult. According to the University of Indonesia scholars who were part of our project, Sri Budi Eko Wardani and Valina Singka, parties make little effort to protect women incumbents, nominating female newcomers with dynastic connections to run in the same electoral districts. The parties are more interested in harvesting the maximum possible number of votes, paying little heed to the quality of the incumbents whose re-election is threatened. The

challenges women candidates face are thus part of a broader trend of personalisation of Indonesian party politics.

Over time, it can be hoped that the number of women with dynastic connections will decrease. Recent research by researchers Olle Folke, Johanna Karen Rickne and Daniel M. Smith shows that when a quota is introduced, it produces a 'shock' to party selectors because they do not have enough information about potential female candidates to make decisions on the basis of merit as they do with potential male candidates.[11] They thus turn to proxies to judge the quality of women candidates, and one of these proxies is a woman's relationship to a powerful man. A gender imbalance opens up where more women candidates have dynastic connections than men candidates about whom more is known.

No doubt in Indonesia direct and imputed discrimination also play a role in candidate selection. Party selectors may believe that women candidates are unable to win unless they have other attributes, such as ties to important male politicians, that mitigate against this risk that the electorate will not accept a woman candidate. However, Folke, Rickne and Smith's research demonstrates that in other countries the dynastic gender imbalance disappears over time, as more women move into parliament and women become a known political entity. ■

10      Puspakol, 2019. 'Analis perolehan kursi pemilu DPR dan DPD RI tahun 2019: kekerabatan dan klientelisme dalam keterwakilan publik [Analysis of DPR and DPD seat results in the 2019 elections: relationships and clientelism in popular representation].' Media release, 27 May: https://www.puskapol.ui.ac.id/press-release/rilis-media-analisa-perolehan-kursi-pemilu-dpr-dan-dpd-ri-tahun-2019-kekerabatan-dan-kliental-isme-dalam-keterwakilan-politik.html

11      Olle Folke, Johanna Karen Rickne and Daniel M. Smith, 2019. 'Gender and dynastic political recruitment'. Available at SSRN: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2985230&download=yes

# Social obstacles

A female candidate from the United Development Party advertised in Jakarta, 2019 elections. Photo: Liam Gammon

et's imagine a strong woman candidate makes it past the supply and demand obstacles in candidate selection. She makes it through the recruitment process, and is placed relatively high on her party's candidate list. She campaigns tirelessly, typically with little support from her party, but with the backing of social or religious networks to which she belongs. She has access to the funds to run her campaign, including to engage in vote-buying should she believe voters expect that in her district. And yet, on voting day, she fails to win enough votes to win a seat. Why?
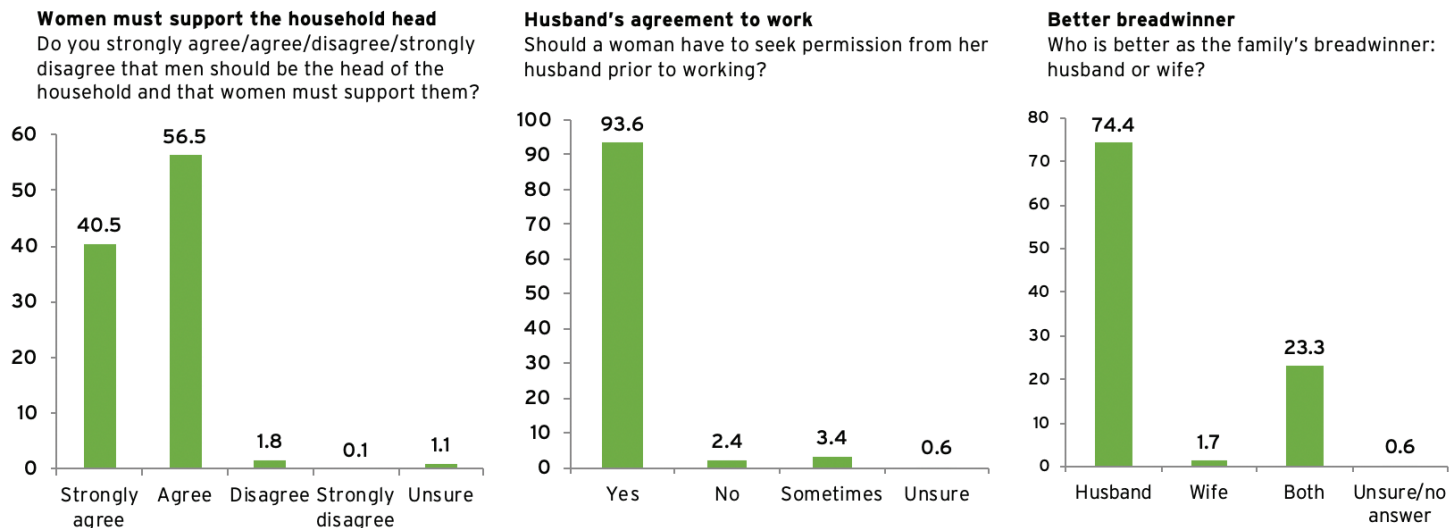
There might be all manner of explanations. For example, perhaps she was running with a party that did not win enough votes to meet the high threshold required for a party to win seats in the national legislature (4% in 2019). (This was the case with many well-known female activists who stood with the Partai Solidaritas Indonesia, which secured only 1.85% of the vote nationally).

But the most likely explanation is the most simple one: many good women candidates lose because voters do not vote for them. In many cases, no doubt this is a matter of bad luck: many female candidate run against one or more particularly wealthy or popular candidates. But the fact that women fail at a higher rate than men suggests that they also face systemic obstacles, and that at least some of these are rooted in social attitudes.

To investigate these obstacles, we can turn to the results of our post-election survey of Indonesian voters, which we conducted in partnership with Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI). This survey reveals a stark reality: many Indonesians hold deeply patriarchal values that represent a significant impediment to women candidates. These attitudes start in the private sphere (**Figure** 1). For example, when asked whether they agreed with the statement 'men should be the head of the household and women should support them', fully 96.5% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. Similarly, 93.6% of those surveyed agreed that a woman had to ask for her husband's permission to work; 74.4% said that it was better that the husband provide for the family, compared to 23.3% who said both husband and wife should be responsible.

These patriarchal attitudes carried over into the political sphere. For example, when asked about the statement 'In general, men are more capable of being political leaders', 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while only 19.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed (the remainder were neutral). When asked about the statement 'Men not women must be the heads or leaders of the community, and women must support them', 78.2% agreed or strongly agreed, versus only 17.6% who disagreed or strongly

## Figure 1 Attitudes about gender roles

**Women must support the household head**
Do you strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree that men should be the head of the household and that women must support them?

**Husband's agreement to work**
Should a woman have to seek permission from her husband prior to working?

**Better breadwinner**
Who is better as the family's breadwinner: husband or wife?



disagreed. On these and similar questions, women respondents were mostly, unsurprisingly, more likely to provide favourable views of female political leadership, but not by dramatically higher margins: in response to the first of these two statements, 20% of women disagreed or strongly disagreed, versus 18% of men; in response to the second, the figures were 19% of women versus 16% of men. In short, the view that politics is a male rather than female domain seems to be broadly supported by a large majority of Indonesians.

There was also evidence that women are disadvantaged in politics by other aspects of popular views about gender roles. For example, when we asked whether it would be appropriate for a married woman with small children to hold political office, 34% said it would be inappropriate, against only 8% saying it would be inappropriate for a man in the same situation (**Figure 2**).

We also asked about what is referred to in the comparative literature as 'issue competency': whether men or women are seen as being better suited at handling particular social or political issues (**Figure 3**). It was only on three topics— women's issues, financing and budgeting, and health—that more respondents said women were more capable than men. In the nine other areas we asked about—everything ranging from the environment to security and defence—men had the advantage (though many respondents also felt gender made no difference). Men even enjoyed a slight edge in education, an area where women are seen as more competent in many countries.

The same goes for candidate attributes (**Figure 4**). Our survey shows that women are seen as possessing certain traits more than men (for example, 46% of respondents associated 'approachability' more with women, while only
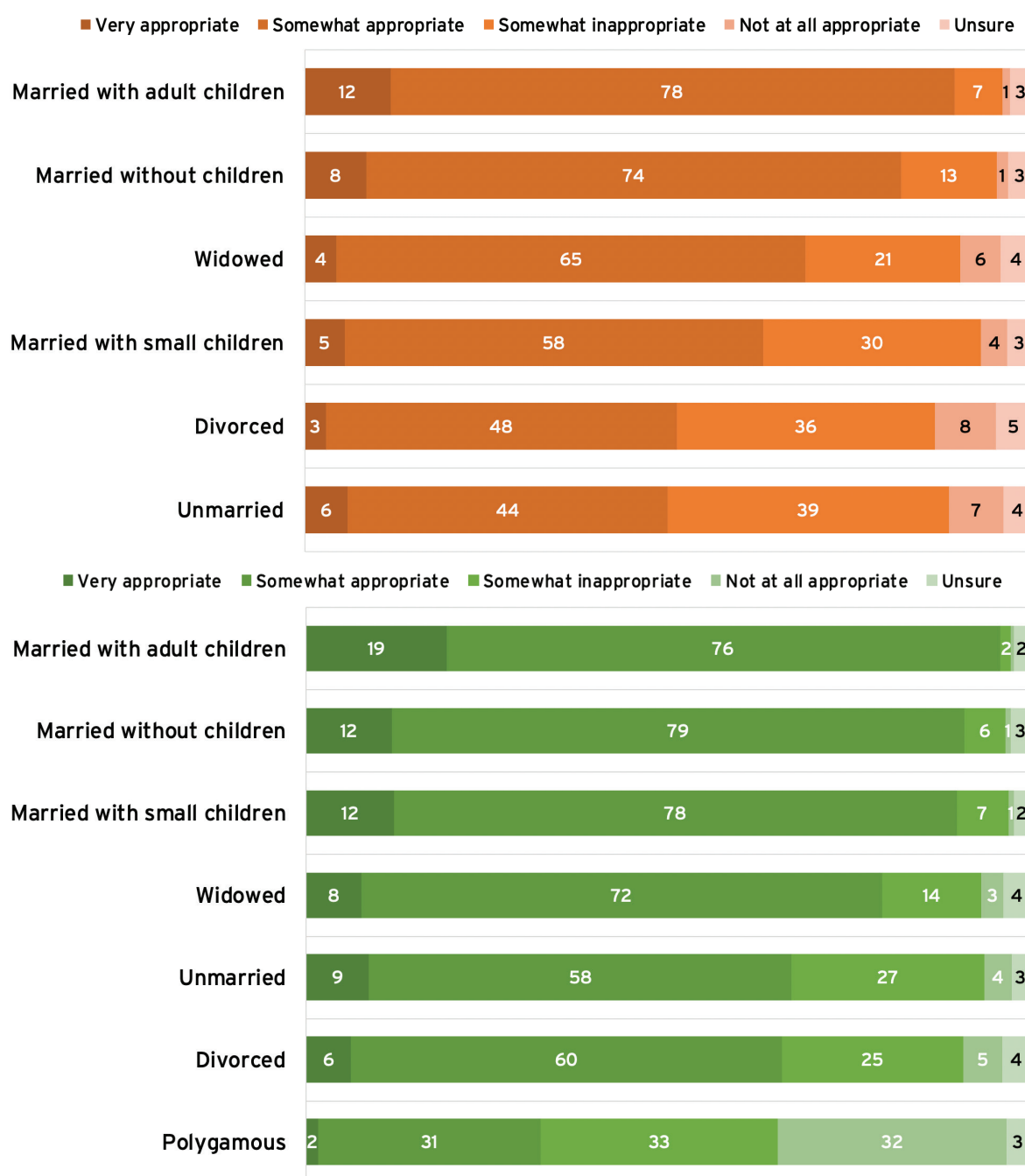
20% associated it more with men). But men had a striking advantage when it came to many of the attributes associated with the world of politics and public affairs. For example, 69% of respondents associated 'being firm' (*tegas*) with men, compared to 3% who associated it with women; 60% associated 'being authoritative' (*berwibawa*) with men, versus 5% for women; 45% associated 'being responsible' or 'being accountable' (*bertanggung jawab*) with men, while only 4% associated it with women. Overall, when it comes to the competencies and attributes associated with politics, male candidates seem to have an advantage.

Not everything is negative: for example, when we asked whether the country would be better or worse with more female political leaders, more responded that it would be better or much better (31.1%) than said it would be worse or much worse (22.9%) (the largest group, 44.6%, said it would make no difference) (**Figure 6**). Likewise, our survey revealed there is generally high support for the 30% quota for female candidates: for example, 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the quota helped women candidates overcome discrimination, and 65% agreed or strongly agreed that it helped women achieve equal representation (**Figure 5**).

On the other hand, it does not seem that informing Indonesian voters about the low level of women's representation actually increases their support for the quota. Suspecting this might be the case, we ran a survey experiment, dividing respondents randomly into two groups. In the treatment group, we told respondents that only 18% of DPR members were women (the figure for the 2014–2019 period) and then asked them about their support for the quota, and about whether they would support increasing it to 50%. We asked the other respondents (the control group) about their support without

## Figure 2 Candidates' personal status

Q: How appropriate or inappropriate would it be to elect a **woman**/**man** with the following status to parliament?

Legend (woman): ■ Very appropriate ■ Somewhat appropriate ■ Somewhat inappropriate ■ Not at all appropriate ■ Unsure

| Status | Very appropriate | Somewhat appropriate | Somewhat inappropriate | Not at all appropriate | Unsure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Married with adult children | 12 | 78 | 7 | 1 | 3 |
| Married without children | 8 | 74 | 13 | 1 | 3 |
| Widowed | 4 | 65 | 21 | 6 | 4 |
| Married with small children | 5 | 58 | 30 | 4 | 3 |
| Divorced | 3 | 48 | 36 | 8 | 5 |
| Unmarried | 6 | 44 | 39 | 7 | 4 |

Legend (man): ■ Very appropriate ■ Somewhat appropriate ■ Somewhat inappropriate ■ Not at all appropriate ■ Unsure

| Status | Very appropriate | Somewhat appropriate | Somewhat inappropriate | Not at all appropriate | Unsure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Married with adult children | 19 | 76 | 2 | | 2 |
| Married without children | 12 | 79 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| Married with small children | 12 | 78 | 7 | 1 | 2 |
| Widowed | 8 | 72 | 14 | 3 | 4 |
| Unmarried | 9 | 58 | 27 | 4 | 3 |
| Divorced | 6 | 60 | 25 | 5 | 4 |
| Polygamous | 2 | 31 | 33 | 32 | 3 |

providing them with the information. There was no statistical difference in support for either the existing or increased quota between the two groups, suggesting that improving public awareness about the low level of women's parliamentary representation by itself will be unlikely to drive change. On the other hand, when asked whether they would support a 50% quota, slightly higher numbers in each group supported an increase rather than opposed it.

There are also hints within the survey that lead us back toward the supply and demand constraints already touched upon above. We were interested to see what Indonesians saw as the main reasons why there were far fewer women in politics than men, and so we asked them to agree or disagree with a series of statements concerning reasons why women's participation might be lower than men's (**Figure 7**).

Most of these statements corresponded with those posed in US research for a Pew Research Center report, *Women and Leadership 2018*, although we added some statements specific to the Indonesian context.[12] Remarkably, almost similar numbers of

12    Kim Parker, Juliana Horowitz & Ruth Igielnik, 2018. *Women and leadership 2018*. Pew Research Center, 20 September.

## Figure 3 Issue competency

Q: Who is more capable in the following fields: men or women?

Legend: ■ Women  ■ No difference  ■ Men  ■ Unsure/did not answer

| Field | Women | No difference | Men | Unsure/did not answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Women's issues | 46.9 | 35.0 | 13.1 | 5.0 |
| Finance and budgeting | 31.7 | 46.8 | 19.6 | 1.9 |
| Healthcare | 29.2 | 60.3 | 9.5 | 1.0 |
| Environmental management | 20.8 | 52.2 | 25.2 | 1.8 |
| Education | 12.0 | 68.1 | 18.9 | 1.0 |
| Economy and development | 6.0 | 48.5 | 43.8 | 1.8 |
| Foreign affairs | 5.3 | 46.7 | 43.5 | 4.4 |
| Upholding human rights and democracy | 5.1 | 51.2 | 39.7 | 4.0 |
| Religious affairs | 4.8 | 53.3 | 40.7 | 1.3 |
| Preventing and eradicating corruption | 4.0 | 44.5 | 48.5 | 3.0 |
| Law enforcement and eradicating crime | 1.9 | 30.2 | 66.0 | 1.9 |
| Security and defence | 1.2 | 22.6 | 75.1 | 1.1 |

## Figure 4 Candidate attributes

Q: Are the following characteristics more associated with men or with women?

Legend: ■ Women  ■ No difference  ■ Men  ■ Unsure/did not answer

| Characteristic | Women | No difference | Men | Unsure/did not answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Approachable | 46.0 | 32.8 | 19.7 | 1.4 |
| Empathetic | 42.5 | 40.2 | 16.3 | 1.0 |
| Patient | 39.0 | 48.4 | 11.8 | 0.8 |
| Honest | 20.9 | 69.9 | 8.2 | 1.0 |
| Free from corruption | 20.7 | 61.6 | 12.8 | 4.9 |
| Trustworthy | 19.1 | 65.6 | 14.1 | 1.1 |
| Religiously observant | 11.9 | 70.9 | 16.8 | 0.4 |
| Ambitious | 11.0 | 32.6 | 55.0 | 1.3 |
| Opinionated | 8.5 | 49.6 | 40.8 | 1.1 |
| Smart/broad-minded | 6.4 | 66.7 | 25.7 | 1.2 |
| Authoritative | 4.9 | 35.2 | 58.7 | 1.2 |
| Responsible | 4.2 | 50.3 | 45.0 | 0.5 |
| Firm | 3.0 | 28.0 | 68.5 | 0.5 |

Americans and Indonesians (around 60%) believe that women have to work a lot harder than men to prove themselves in politics. But that is where the similarities end: Indonesians were much more likely to agree with supply-side explanations about women's capacity and willingness than those in the US. Such explanations included that women do not have the experience needed for politics (49.6% vs 20%); that women are uninterested in political office (48.3% vs 27%); that family responsibilities make it difficult for women to enter politics (47% versus 36%); and even that women are not tough (kuat) enough for politics (40.7% versus 8%). American respondents viewed discrimination against women, and lack of support from parties (both demand-side explanations), as more important reasons for unequal representation than Indonesian respondents did. Answers to this question also revealed that a majority of Indonesians agree that a woman's place is in the home (60.2%), and that according to religious teachings, women may not become leaders (56.1%).

Nevertheless, despite holding strongly discriminatory views about women in politics, when it comes to whether these views influence voting behaviour, the evidence is less clear cut.

For example, we asked respondents whether they had voted for a woman at any of the three levels of parliamentary elections (38.5% said they had) and then followed up with those who said they had not done so, asking why they had not chosen a woman (**Figure 8**). By far the most common explanation was that they did not know any of the female candidates (56.7%) while only 6.5% agreed that 'in general, it is not appropriate for women to become leaders' or cited 'religious reasons' (3.7%).

So how do we interpret this apparent contradiction? It may be that voters face the same information shortfall that Folke, Rickney and Smith[13] identifed for party selectors, whereby women candidates are less known in the political realm than men, and lack the financial and network resources to promote their candidacies. Because voters are risk averse, they choose a male candidate. It is possible to read this response positively: as women candidates build the networks and experience they need to become known by voters, many voters may support them despite professing support for patriarchal attitudes. Even so, the fact remains that over 60% of respondents did not vote for a woman candidate at any level of representation.
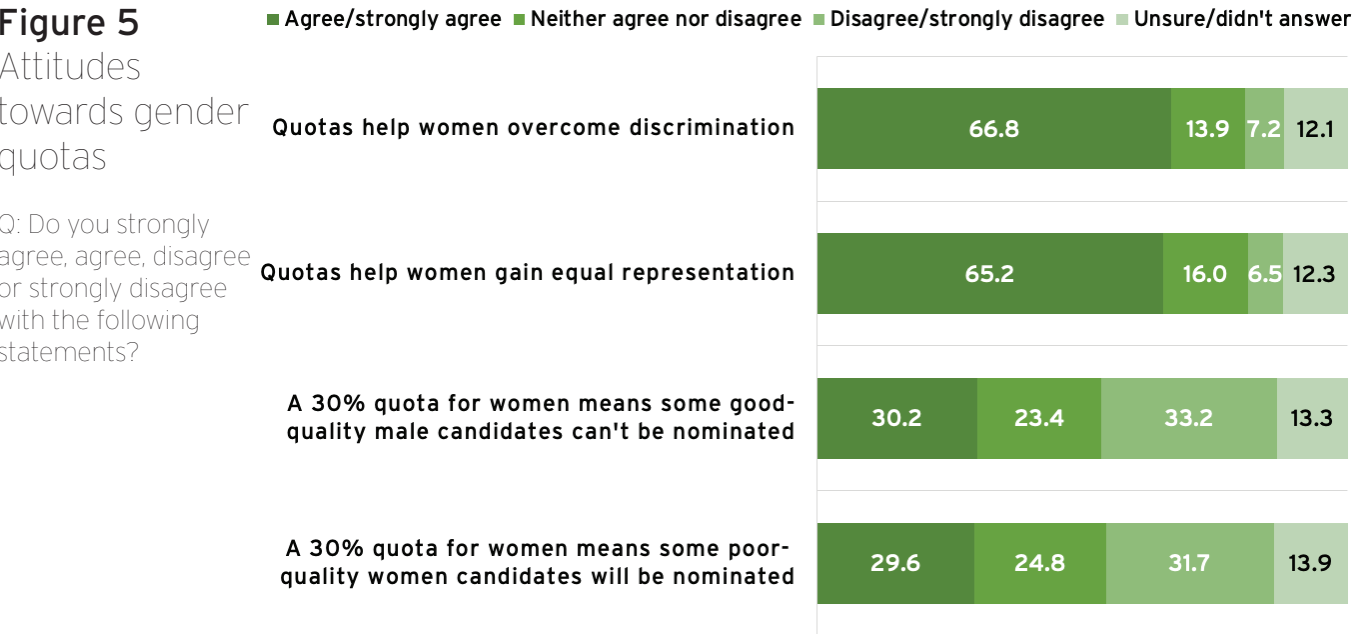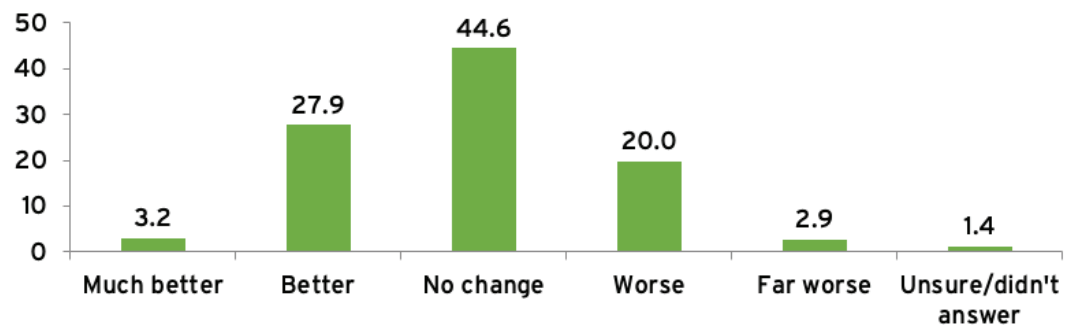
There are also regional factors in operation when

**Figure 5**

Attitudes towards gender quotas

Q: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements?

■ Agree/strongly agree  ■ Neither agree nor disagree  ■ Disagree/strongly disagree  ■ Unsure/didn't answer

| Statement | Agree/strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree/strongly disagree | Unsure/didn't answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quotas help women overcome discrimination | 66.8 | 13.9 | 7.2 | 12.1 |
| Quotas help women gain equal representation | 65.2 | 16.0 | 6.5 | 12.3 |
| A 30% quota for women means some good-quality male candidates can't be nominated | 30.2 | 23.4 | 33.2 | 13.3 |
| A 30% quota for women means some poor-quality women candidates will be nominated | 29.6 | 24.8 | 31.7 | 13.9 |

13      Folke et al, *Gender and dynastic political recruitment.*

## Figure 6
### Evaluation of quota effects

Q: Will the country become much better, better, not change, become worse, or become far worse if more women become public officials?



## Figure 7 Explanations for women's under-representation
Q: Do you strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree with the following statements?



it comes to women's representation. Though our survey was nationally representative, our sample size was not sufficiently large to capture province-level differences. But these are reflected in the election results. As we noted earlier, seven provinces did not elect a woman to the DPR; ten electoral districts outside those provinces also failed to do so. Bali, for example, elected nine DPR members, not one of whom was a woman. Not only that, but one party, PDI-P, received six of those nine seats, meaning that given that every third candidate on the list has to be a woman, in Bali we see the phenomenon of 'voting around' female candidates. In other words, voters are choosing male candidates ahead of women who are

placed higher on the candidate list. Bali has elected only three women to the DPR in the post-Suharto era, and none since 2004, so clearly there exist deeply ingrained cultural and structural obstacles to women's representation in this majority-Hindu part of Indonesia. Another region where women's representation presents particular challenges is Aceh, where a woman was elected to the DPR for the first time since 2004. ■
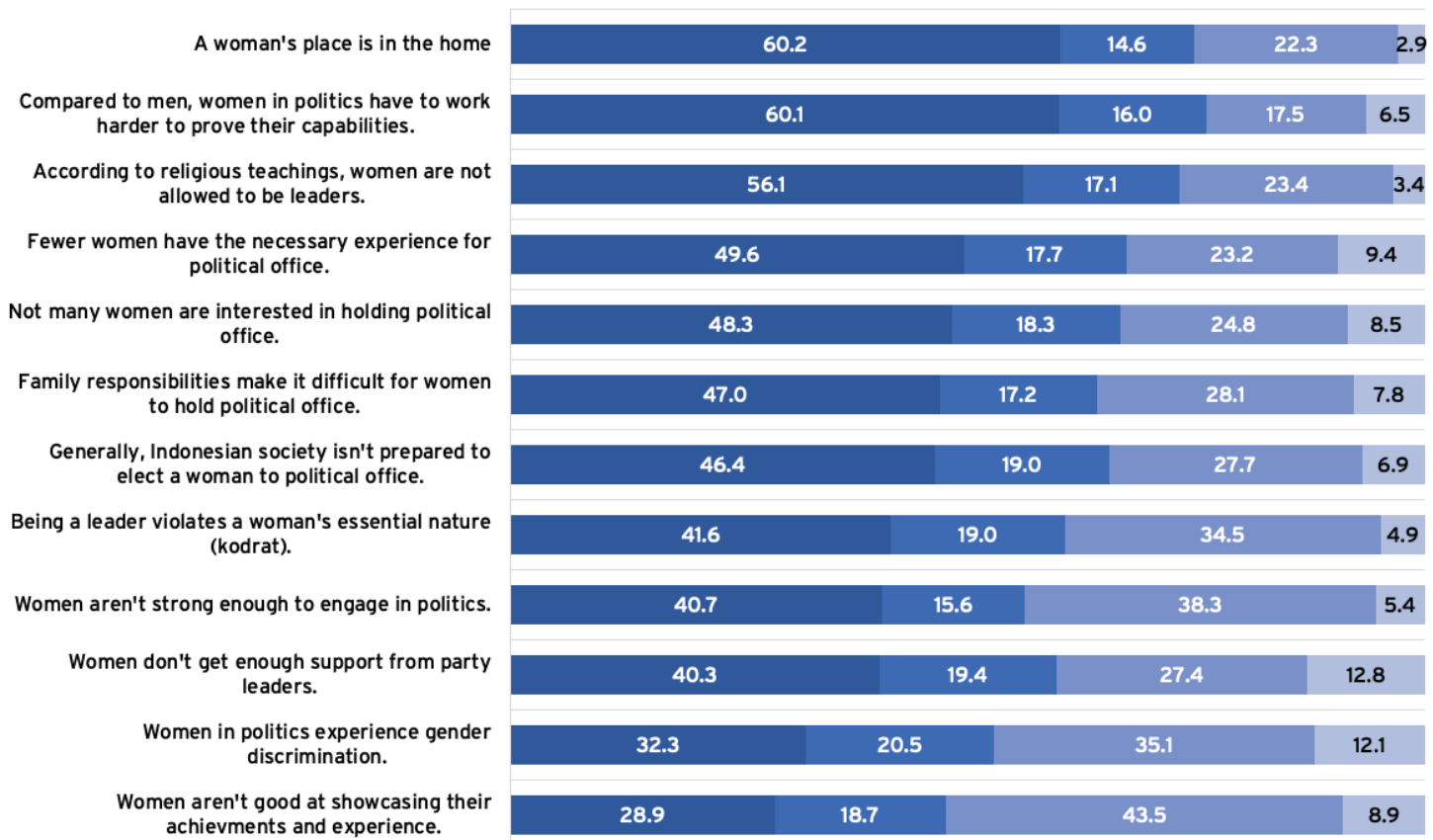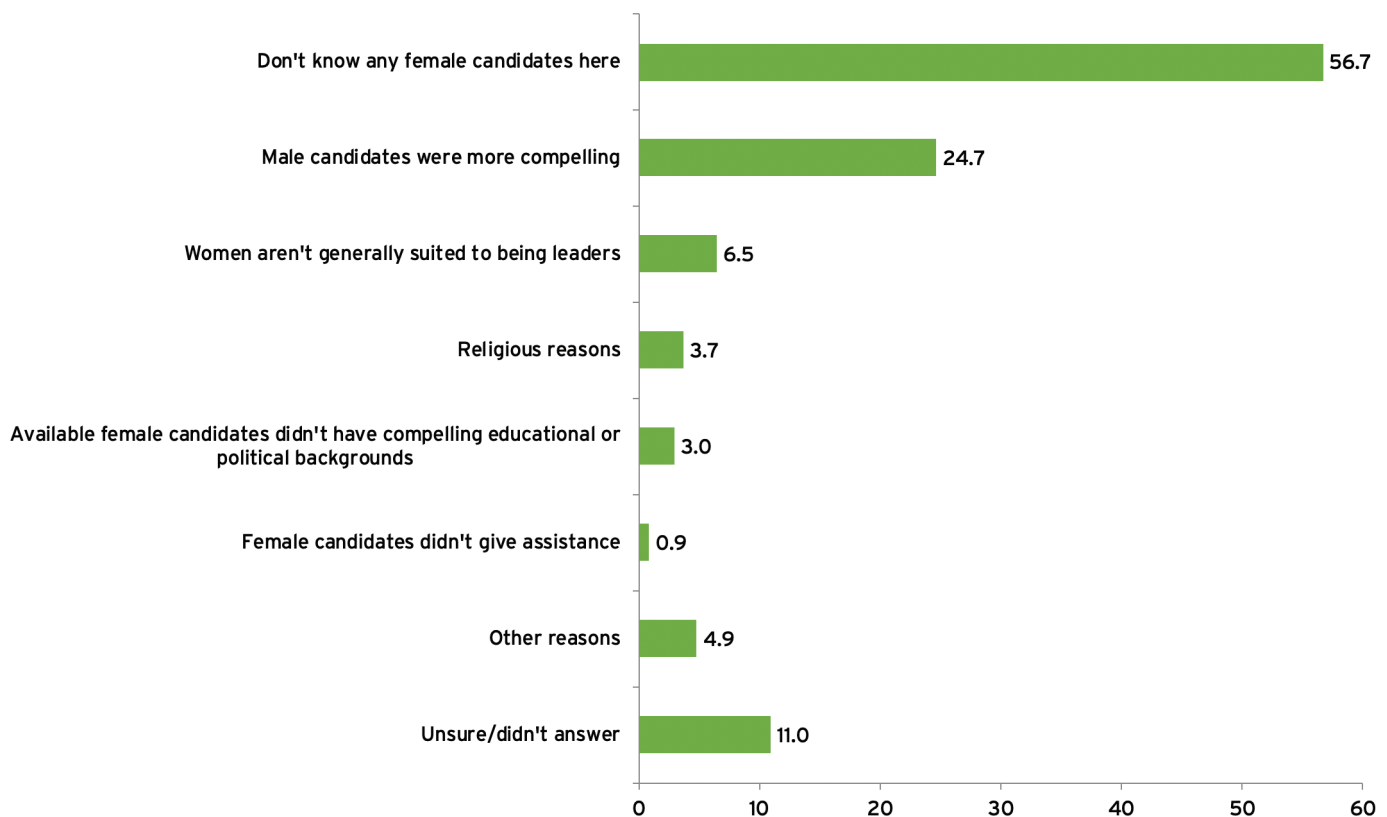
**Figure 8** Reasons for not choosing a female legislative candidate

Q: If you didn't choose any female candidates in the legislative elections, what were your reasons for not doing so?

(*Cumulative: respondents could choose more than one option)



## About the survey

As part of the research project on which this paper draws, the authors partnered with Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI, Indonesia Survey Institute) to measure Indonesian voters' attitudes towards women in politics. As part of this national survey, 1,220 eligible Indonesian voters were selected via multistage random sampling for face-to-face interviews with LSI enumerators. Interviews were conducted between 11 and 16 May 2019. Respondents were 49.8% female/50.2% male and were selected proportionately from all of Indonesia's 34 provinces. The survey's margin of error is +/- 2.9% at a 95% confidence interval.

# Options for change



The national parliament building in Jakarta, December 2015.
REUTERS/Darren Whiteside

Our study helps to illuminate the challenges faced by women candidates in Indonesia. Patriarchal attitudes towards women in politics, discrimination by (mostly) male party elites, the soaring cost of running as a candidate, and the preference given to women candidates with dynastic connections all combine to narrow the space for suitably qualified women from non-elite backgrounds who are motivated enough to run for office. What can be done about the barriers facing women candidates to increase both the quantity and quality of women representatives at all three levels of parliament? There are measures that can be undertaken to increase the number of women representatives. Given that there are regions where no woman representative, good or bad, sits in parliament, such measures remain essential to fixing the problem of gender imbalance. The most effective step would be to return to closed-list proportional representation.

In a closed-list system, candidates are elected according to their position on the party list, not on the basis of the number of individual votes they attained. A closed list with a placement mandate of one in three or even one in two is the surest way to increase women's representation as there can be no 'voting around' women candidates.

However, if the open list is to remain, there are still reforms that can be undertaken to the design of the quota that will increase women's chances of election. Currently Indonesia has a placement mandate whereby one in every three candidates must be a woman; some activists have suggested that the placement mandate be strengthened so that a party has to have a woman listed in first position in at least one third of electorates. Though 'voting around' would still be feasible, placing more women in the top position would presumably be read by many voters as an endorsement of their quality by party elites.

Changes at the institutional level can help address the imbalance in numbers of women and men representatives, but they can also help to address in part the issue of the quality of women representatives elected. A shift back to the closed list, by removing the need for candidates to compete as individuals against their own party mates, would reduce money politics and clientelism, strengthen parties, and arrest the drift to personalistic politics. Such a move would help to level the playing field for women candidates who would no longer need to personally raise large sums of money to campaign. Changes to the campaign financing system could involve rewarding parties that achieve a target quota of women elected.

But the patriarchal values and attitudes held widely across Indonesia will remain a barrier, no matter what institutional changes are introduced. It is time for Indonesia to embark on a properly resourced large-scale campaign to change attitudes and convince voters that everyone benefits when more women are elected to representative bodies. And this needs to happen far in advance of the next election—if part of the aim is to convince good women candidates that they have a future in politics. ◼

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## DISCLAIMER