Women Heads of State

The Institute for Women's Leadership is committed to increasing the number of women in decision-making and leadership positions across all sectors and positions. Our series of Women's Leadership Fact Sheets is designed to increase awareness of women's current underrepresentation. Of the 197 self-governing countries in the world[i], 22 (11.2 percent) have women heads of state or government in the form of a president or a prime minister. This means that 88.8 percent of the countries in the world are lead by men. In comparison, 6.8 percent of monarchies have women royal leaders.

Women Presidents and Prime Ministers

Country	Head of State or Government	Office and Beginning of Mandate
Argentina	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	President since December 10, 2007
Australia	Julia Eileen Gillard	Prime Minister since June 24, 2010
Bangladesh	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	Prime Minister since January 6, 2009
Bermuda	Paula Cox	Premier since October 29, 2010
Brazil	Dilma Rousseff	President since January 1, 2011
Costa Rica	Laura Chinchilla	President since May 8, 2008
Croatia	Jadranka Kosor	Prime Minister since July 6, 2009
Finland	Tarja Halonen	President since March 1, 2000
	Mari Kiviniemi	Prime Minister since June 22, 2010
Germany	Angela Merkel	Chancellor since November 22, 2005
Iceland	Jóhanna Sigurdardóttir	Prime Minister since February 1, 2009
India	Pratibha Patil	President since July 25, 2007
Ireland	Mary Aleese	President since November 11, 1997
Kyrgyztan	Roza Otunbayeva	President since April 7, 2010
Kosovo	Atifete Jahjaga	President since April 7, 2011
Liberia	Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	President since January 2006
Lithuania	Dalia Grybauskaite	President since July 12, 2009
Mali	Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé	Prime Minister, April 2, 2011
Peru	Rosario Fernández	Prime Minister since Mach 19, 2011
San Marino	Maria Luisa Berti	Captain Regent since April 1, 2011
Sint Maarten	Sarah Wescott Williams	Prime Minister since October 10, 2010
Switzerland	Micheline Calmy-Rey (President of the Swiss Federal Council)	Member of the Swiss Federal Council since January 1, 2003
	Doris Leuthard	Member of the Swiss Federal Council since August 1, 2006
	Simonetta Sommaruga	Member of the Swiss Federal Council since November 1, 2003
	Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf	Member of the Swiss Federal Council since January 1, 2008

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Trinidad and Tabago	Kamla Persad-Bissessar	Prime Minister since May 26, 2010

Women Royal Leaders

Of the 44 monarchies[ii], in the world 3 (6.8 percent) have women royal leaders, which means that 93. 2 percent of all monarchies are lead by men.

Kingdoms and External Territories	Monarch and Succession Date
Denmark, The Faero Islands and Greenland	Queen Margrethe II (Margrethe Alexandrine Thórhildur Ingrid) since January 14, 1972
The Netherlands, Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Saba, Saint Eustatius and Sint Maarten	Queen Beatrix (Beatrix Wilhelmina Armgard) since April 30, 1980
United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Jamaica, Barbados, the Bahamas, Grenada, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis	Queen Elizabeth II (Elizabeth Alexandra Mary) since February 6, 1952

Appointed Women Governor Generals of British Overseas Territories[iii]

Of the 15 British Overseas territories, 4 (26.6 percent) have women governor generals, which means that 73.4 per cent of the former colonial territories have men governor generals.

British Overseas Territories	Governor General	Beginning of Mandate
Antigua and Barbuda	Louise Lake-Tack	July 17, 2007
Australia and Australian Antarctic Territory, Christmas Islands	Quentin Alice Louise Bryce	September 5, 2008
Pitcairn Island	Victoria Treadell	March 17, 2010
Saint Lucia	Pearlette Louisy	September 17, 1997

Sources:

"The Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments (May 2011)." *World Leaders- World Fact Book*. n.p. Web. May 2, 2011. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/pdf-version/pdf-version.html. Retrieved May 2011.

Kendall, Diana. *Sociology of Our Times*. Wadsworth Publishing, 2007.

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[i] This figure represents the 197 countries that are recognized by the U.S. as self governing (*Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments. A Directory*, CIA Directorate of Intelligence, May 2011).

[ii] A monarchy is a political system and a form of government in which political power resides in one person or family and is passed down from generation to generation to an individual known as a monarch (Kendall 2008, 459).

[iii] Of the former colonial empires only the British Crown has appointed women Governor Generals of overseas territories.

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