

What Makes Some Democracies More 'Women-Friendly'?

By Jill Vickers, FRSC, jill.vickers@sympatico.ca

Chancellor's Professor of Political Science,

Carleton University, Ottawa.

Abstract

Although many gender scholars see states and nationalism as invariably violent, exclusionary and oppressive for women, I argue that organized women sometimes 'got in on the ground floor', when new nation-states are being founded; and before political and state institutions became male bastions. Generally, these women were mobilized by nationalism, which promoted their participation in establishing nation-states. This early entry following (nearly) simultaneous citizenship, also increased women's 'presence' in democratic governments with higher proportions of women earlier and more quickly. Incorporation into (path-dependent) institutions was reinforced by founding discourses which legitimized women's 'presence' because of their contributions to nation-state founding. Similar opportunities may occur when nation-states undergo restructuring" and organized women participate in movements to remake them.

Of the ten 'western' countries I survey, Finland, Norway and New Zealand best fit the profile of 'women-friendly' democracies. They share these characteristics: organized women were active in nation-state founding, or restructuring; participation in national movements established the legitimacy of women's active citizenship; despite their small populations and relative lack of power internationally, they are relatively affluent; they have a significant 'presence' of women in state institutions, including a critical mass of women legislators; they have policies and programs which empower women. The larger, older, more powerful democracies of France, the United States and the United Kingdom, where democratization to include women occurred many generations after nation-state founding, by contrast, share: slow rates of incorporation and a low 'presence' of women in parties and government; feminist alienation from nationalism; relatively poor ratios of health and education expenditures vis-à-vis military spending. Comparisons reveal differences between more and less 'women-friendly' democracies and factors associated with each.

Keywords: 'women-friendly' democracies, gender/ nation relations, 'getting in on the ground floor', women's 'presence', critical mass, nationalism as a mobilizer of women.

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By Jill Vickers, FRSC, jill.vickers@sympatico.ca
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This paper explores the extent of women's mobilization by national movements in ten 'western' democracies, how it affects their incorporation into state and political institutions; and whether the relative 'women-friendliness' of each democracy is a product of women's 'presence' in such institutions.¹ My general hypothesis is that *if women achieve citizenship when men do, and if when they help create founding discourses, and achieve an earlier and higher 'presence' in state and political institutions, the resulting democracy will be more 'women friendly'*. This challenges views that all modern states are *inherently* male-dominated, that nationalisms always provoke violence; and that women mobilized by national movements are pawns soon abandoned without long-lasting benefit when their support is no longer needed.

Certainly, the long association between pre-modern state forms and systematic male dominance made women's exclusion from governing seem natural and proper to Enlightenment-influenced state-builders. And certainly larger, more powerful, modern democracies, especially when heavily militarized, remain resistant to women's active participation and influence in government. But smaller, less powerful, and less militarized democracies often are more open to women's participation, especially where women participated in a nation-state founding, which did not coincide with a bourgeois revolution (Hroch 1985); and where women citizens 'got in on the ground

¹ I employ data drawn from the Gender/Nation project. This is a thirty country study of gender/nation relations over 3 time periods in each. We explore why and how gender/nation relations vary; how women's organizational capacity and degree of engagement with national movements affects their integration into political and state institutions; and how women's 'presence' affects the relative 'women-friendliness' of specific regimes and regime types. Visit the project website at: <http://www.carleton.ca/genderandnation/>

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floor' of new state institutions. For example, Haavio-Mannila believes Finnish women could enter democratic governing before women anywhere else in the world because they entered new structures before they could become male bastions (1979: 351-371). Moreover, they participated through self-organized groups, not as scattered individuals. Integrated earlier in the life of their nation-state than elsewhere, they also became a *critical mass* in government earlier; reaching the 30% threshold over thirty years ago, while seven out of the ten of the other democracies have yet to reach that threshold. If women didn't 'get in on the ground floor' however, they sometimes could rework institutions by organizing and participating in "rounds" of "nation-state restructuring" (Walby 1997); changing the rules, the citizenship regime, or creating new routes for women to enter and make democracies more 'women-friendly'.

In this paper, I overview arguments about how nationalism can mobilize women and promote their entry into democratic politics. I explore two propositions. First, that: *self-organized women who participate in nation-state/founding and/or restructuring by being mobilized into national movements, are more likely to be integrated into political and institutions in democracies than women who were unorganized, excluded or alienated from national projects.* Second, that: *it is women's early integration and participation in such institutions, which increases women's 'presence' gaining them the 'clout' to make democratic governments more 'women-friendly'.* National projects² mobilize more women globally than any other form of politics (Bystydzienski, 1992). While women's participation does not always result in their long-lasting incorporation as citizens in the new nation-states; in some cases it does. Simultaneous male/female citizenship, and empowering images of women in founding or restructuring discourses, have made some democratic governments more open to women's influence (Haavio-

² This includes nationalist and national-liberation movements, nation-state founding and restructuring, nation-building and nation-state consolidation, minority nationalisms seeking independence or greater autonomy and irredentist movements.

Manila 1979; Marcowitz 1996; Walby 1997; Vickers 2000; de Sève 2000). Where women engaged with government and political institutions from the beginning, they proved more likely to be open to women's 'presence', deepening democracy by preventing male exclusivity from becoming a condition of membership in imitation of institutions elsewhere. In such cases, women less often developed '*outsider* attitudes' about state politics. Moreover, by looking at accounts of countries where women now form a critical mass in governments, we can estimate the organizational capacity women needed to influence discourses and enter institutions. They had to be self-organized prior to mobilization; or form women-led organizations within national movements. The best-case scenario is when women's organizations were '*allies*' in the *national cause*, even if only as junior partners. Where nationalist movements dismissed or marginalized women's groups and issues; where nationalists and women were ideologically opposed (Vickers 2006a), and/or women participated only as individuals or in small, isolated groups, they were less able to parlay their participation into political 'clout'. Even in these cases, however, women's participation could be a valuable symbolic resource to empower women more in subsequent restructurings.

In this text, I develop three main concepts: '*women's presence*', '*getting in on the ground floor*', and '*women-friendliness*.' The first two are measured by scales, which let me compare ten 'western' democracies. I also consider if 'women-friendly' democracies primarily involve democratizing institutions through women's 'presence'; or if it also involves implementing an agenda of feminist policies, as theorists' visions of 'women-friendly' polities insist. I conclude that 'women friendly' institutions, in which both women's shared and diverse interests are represented substantively, only become possible if women's 'presence' reaches a critical mass. To develop this argument, I briefly explore debates about childcare in Finland, which Kaplan (1997) claims as the world's most 'women-friendly' democracy. I conclude that a *minimum set of policies* is needed to make women's citizenship as fully realized as men's, and that

women's 'presence' is a political tool for transforming society, not itself the transformation.

How Nationalism Affects Women's 'Presence' in Nation-States

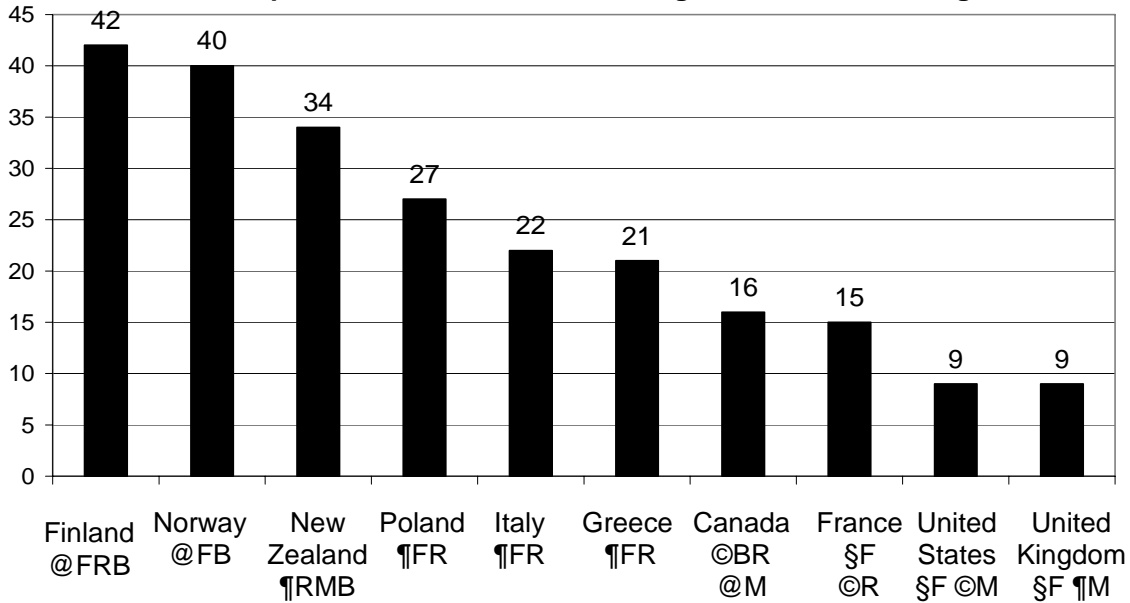
My interest in why some women participate in nationalist movements came from observing feminists aligned with the Québec nationalist movement, as captured in the slogan: "No liberation of women without the liberation of Québec; no liberation of Québec without the liberation of women!" Many English-Canadian feminists also had nationalist sentiments: many rejected the anti-statism and anti-nationalism U.S. radical feminists advocated, choosing instead engagement in the federal government's nation-building, (Vickers, Rankin & Appelle, 1993).³ Hence, in Canada, women were active in national projects, which mobilized them both into movement activism, and into state politics : women's 'presence' in legislatures increased sharply (Vickers and de Sève, 2000). Our involvement in nationalist projects seemed out of step to women who consider nationalism anti-feminist. Texts about women and nationalism often begin with Virginia Woolf's famous dictum: "As a woman I have no country, as a woman I want no country" (1938). Woolf was distancing herself from Britain's imperialist nationalism, but her words are now used to express "second-wave feminism's denial of the importance of nationalism" (Zwicker, 2000: 359). Women in large, nation-states, which formed early, created feminisms which were socialist, internationalist, pacifist and unaligned. Europe's history of nationalists inciting violence, and forcing women to bear more children than they wanted , made alliances between nationalism and feminism seem impossible to most gender scholars (Kaplan 1997). Others explore the kind of nationalism involved before assessing its value for feminists: participation by self-

³ Many First Nations women adopted indigenous nationalism, or joined pan-national , 'red power' movements. Most rejected both of the neo-colonial nation-building projects.

organized women is usually associated with democratic nationalism, as are “feminist nationalisms” (West 1997; de Sève 2000; Herr 2003)).

Nationality is not just another aspect of identity politics because of the role it assumed in founding, legitimizing, and restructuring modern nation-states, when “the national principle” replaced dynasty and religion as legitimizers of political authority (Benner, 2001). State power in representative governments is legitimized by the idea that elites govern in the interests of ‘the nation’ or ‘the people’; and democratization enhanced that legitimacy. Nationhood is very successful at legitimizing and naturalizing nation-states. Like a battery which absorbs emotion, and dispenses it if the legitimacy of state rule is ever challenged, “nationhood... can create and empower a stable, lasting collective subject, without... a frenzy of mobilization, [or specific]... ideological commitments” (Canovan 1996: 74). Consequently, women’s participation in, or exclusion/ alienation from, national movements has long-lasting significance. Those mobilized may get to influence the form institutions take; those outside rarely can. Once established, political institutions are path- dependent and difficult to change.

Figure One: Scores for “Getting in on the Ground Floor” with Correlations to Participation in Nation-State Founding and/or Restructuring



Legend: Nature of Participation

- @ - **Allies:** Autonomous women’s organizations/movements are a part of national movements
- ¶ - **Directed:** Women’s organizations form within nationalist movements, often becoming feminist in orientation. They may become increasingly autonomous.
- © – **Co-opted:** Women’s groups are co-opted and/or controlled by nationalists.
- § - **Individual:** Women incorporated into nationalist projects as individuals or small groups.

Legend: Context of Participation

- F-** Nation-state founding
- B –** Nation-state building
- R-** Restructuring
- M -** Minority Nationalism

For statistical sources, please see bibliography.

If my propositions are correct, the most ‘women-friendly’ democracies⁴ will display the following:

- i) a significant ‘presence’ of women in key decision-making institutions;

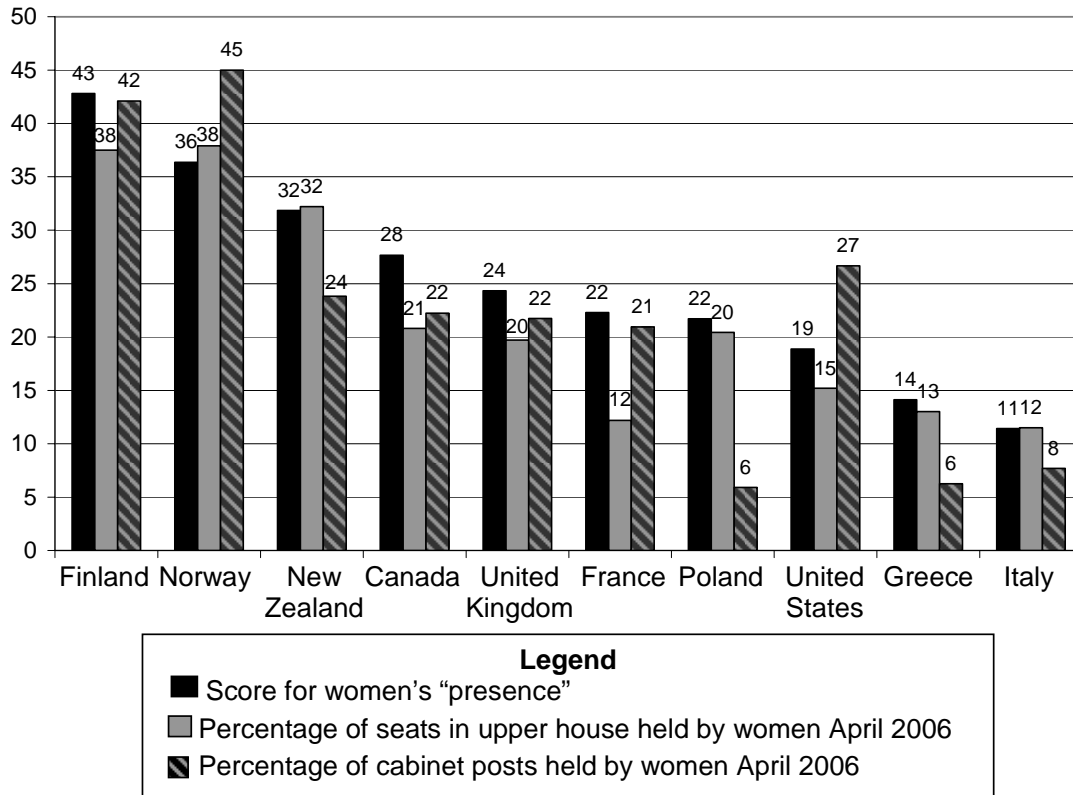
⁴ I am aware of the circularity in my argument. I am attempting to construct the developmental history of ‘women-friendly’ democracies from the characteristics of one democracy widely considered to be ‘women-friendly’, Kaplan argues “Finland ...[now has] the highest employment of women in politics and in the professions...the highest overall employment rate of women...and the most equal pay distribution... and possibly the greatest degree of emancipation among women ” (1997:27). I believe this is a more reliable approach than trying to construct a model of ‘women-friendliness’ purely from theoretical and utopian accounts because it lets me identify the mechanisms whereby women were incorporated into a specific ‘women-friendly’ state; and operationalize ‘getting in on the ground floor’, and ‘presence’.

- ii) a long history of such involvement and;
- iii) evidence of women's participation in nation-state formation and/or restructuring.

Finland and Norway fit this pattern. Well-organized women mobilized to help liberate Finland from Russian rule, before political parties were formed. They were incorporated into democratic institutions before they became male bastions, and ten percent of legislators were women by 1907. In Norway, half the adult women were mobilized to vote in the "women's referendum" approving separation from Sweden: women becoming citizens a year after founding in 1906. Women's incorporation into state institutions was slower, but Norway now rivals Finland in women's 'presence' in government and political institutions. Moreover, on many indicators associated with measuring women's status, such as the Gender Adjusted Human Development Index, Norway outscores Finland, ranking first in the world. And Norway and Finland rank one and two on the Gender Empowerment Index (Appendix A). In my ten democracies, they are the most 'women-friendly' as measured by: women's 'presence' at or above a critical mass of legislators; long-serving women leaders; and sex-equality legislation requiring forty to sixty percent of both sexes in all non-elected public bodies, including cabinets.⁵

⁵ Attempts to measure 'outcomes' as more or less 'women-friendly' using Human Development Indices are problematic, even when gender-adjusted, because they contain measures based on living in wealthy, stable countries. Gender-adjusted indices measure how such benefits are distributed between the sexes. Disentangling 'women-friendliness' as a feature of political systems from measures reflecting a country's relative wealth is a future task. My measures of 'women-friendliness' in the Nordic democracies are not adjusted for the effects of tripartite structures in which management, unions, and governments negotiate major accords. Women remain underrepresented in the first two.

Figure Two: Women’s “Presence” in National Politics and Selected Government Bodies



Women in large, powerful nation-states formed a century or more earlier (the United Kingdom, United States and France) or states with mixed democratic/ authoritarian pasts (Italy, Greece, and Poland) experienced nationalism, politics and government differently. Where women’s citizenship was disrupted by authoritarianism and militarism, government institutions and politics remain strongly masculinized. Jacoby (1999) believes negative experiences with nationalism actually divide western feminists from their ‘third-world’ counterparts, for whom “participation in national projects is often seen as...necessary...for women’s emancipation” (Campbell 2005: 380). My research shows positive *and* negative experiences with nationalism in countries globally [See Figure1]. But not all forms of nationalism are equally open to women’s organized participation, and agency. The citizenship model, introduced in the French and American revolutions, created nations in which only men were active citizens and decision-makers, with women of any affluence or influence privatized as

wives and mothers of citizens (Sluga 1998). Such women lost political clout; for example, the American Revolution resulted “in an absolute loss of political status for colonial women” (Harrison 2003:12). While some individual women and groups were active in these movements, they lacked the organizational capacity, consciousness and clout to prevent passage of laws codifying an inferior legal status for all women. In the late 18th century, most women were illiterate, farm and domestic workers, who could not mobilize across large nation-states, controlled by armies, governments and bureaucracies of men. They were not wanted as citizen-allies in making these nation-states, but as idealized republican wives and mothers, whose labour power and property men commanded. In the slow evolution of the British state, a similar constraining of women happened as a citizenship-regime based on autonomous individuals emerged, while such individuation was virtually impossible for most women. By the end of the 19th century, however, women in small, marginal nations like Norway and Finland were needed as allies in gaining independence; and were well-enough organized to have some impact on the new political systems. The founding national discourses portrayed them as strong and competent makers of the nation-state. Their nationalist-feminism promoted a society based on “equity and the absence of difference of worth” (Markowitz 1996: 56).

How long after nation-state founding before women were incorporated into a country’s political system as citizens clearly matters considerably. In my three ‘women-friendly’ democracies (New Zealand was added recently), all women have been active citizens for over a hundred years, “getting in on the ground floor”; or in an early restructuring. By contrast, French women were not enfranchised for 155 years after the Revolution; and in the U.S., white women waited for 144 years after the Revolution; most black women for 45 years more. In France, no woman was elected for 156 years after the Revolution. Government was associated only with men for many generations. The U.K. case is more complex because women monarchs ruled; but democratization

involved only manhood suffrage for nearly a century after the *Reform Act* (1832). Women also can enter and influence political systems *during rounds of nation-state restructuring* (Walby 1997; 2000; 2001), when the political opportunity structures (POS) are more fluid and open. Restructuring takes different forms; most involve some re-visioned national projects to change the scope of the nation’s membership, or its members’ rights. Where organized women are part of restructuring movements, rapid changes can occur. New Zealand women’s participation in restructuring changed its gender regime: first in 1893, when white and Maori women were the first worldwide to gain the vote in nation-state elections, and a century later, when they achieved rapid increases in the ‘presence’ of both women and Maori through major electoral system reforms (See Vickers 2006c for an account of Canadian restructuring.)

Figure Three: Thresholds in Women’s Citizenship and Presence in State Decision-Making

Country	Majority woman suffrage	First woman in legislature	Year threshold reached in lower house of legislature			Current (04/2006) % of women in legislature	First woman cabinet minister
			10%	20%	30%		
Finland	1906	1907	1907	1970	1983	37.5%	1926
Norway	1907	1921	1973	1977	1985	37.9%	1945
New Zealand	1893	1933	1984	1993	2005	32.2%	1947
Poland	1918	1919	1952	1976		20.4%	1956
Italy	1945	1946	1987			11.5%	1976
Canada	1917	1921	1988	1997		20.8%	1957
France	1944	1945	1995			12.2%	1947
Greece	1952	1953				13.0%	1956
United States	1920	1917	1992			15.2%	1933
United Kingdom	1918	1918	1997	2005		19.7%	1929

A scale was constructed to determine the extent to which women in these ten democracies ‘got in on the ground floor’ of institutions on founding; or increased

women's 'presence' by participating in restructuring (see Appendix A for details of the scale). The scores show that "getting in on the ground floor" correlates with women's level of organized participation in founding nationalist movements. [See Figure 3.] Finnish and Norwegian women were organized and aligned with national movements: they "got in on the ground floor" in government and political institutions. In the U.S, France and the U.K, where women were not a significant organized force in nation-state founding, they were legally excluded from active citizenship for generations; and the institutions developed as male bastions. Excluded women, moreover, created alternate, political arenas of voluntary and advocacy groups through which they sought to shape the nation and influence government, fostering outsider political strategies⁶ . Communist or fascist rule also set back women's incorporation, and polarized them ideologically. Distrust of state institutions and politics characterizes many women's views in large nation-states based on imperialism and colonial rule, and states where fascist and communist regimes interrupted or reversed democratization. Willingness to engage with state institutions, and some measure of trust in government, characterizes women's views in democracies which women helped liberate from foreign rule, were mobilized through nationalism, and were incorporated into state politics early, or through major restructurings ⁷

Gender relations may best be understood as a feature of national distinctiveness and institutional history; indeed Connell describes the "gender regime" of governments and state institutions as "the precipitate of ... social struggles" around gender relations

⁶ The nature of the political system also affects the relative effectiveness of outsider strategies.

⁷ Mainstream social scientists rarely include small, marginal states in developing theory about democracy, believing "the decisive causes of their politics lie outside their ... boundaries" (Barrington Moore cited Hansen & Kopstein, 2005:73). White settler states, late-founded states, and countries with /interrupted democratization patterns are also often excluded . Only, the powerful, first-wave, imperialist and capitalist states are studied because they are considered independent with "the decisive causes of their politics" within their boundaries. The pattern of gender/nation relations, however, and of women's incorporation into democratic institutions suggests problems with this strategy.

(1990: 523). He believes *each nation-state has a gender regime*, which is “the historically produced state of play in gender relations” (1990:523). If so, the gender regimes of these small, marginal democracies, in which women were always citizens, should differ from the gender regimes of large, imperialist nation-states, which democratized slowly and only after many generations of government by men. Where no radical break happens with democratization, institutions and discourses are not opened to change and influence, so will retain exclusionary characteristics. Although many assume the gender regimes of the most powerful democracies are normative, Hansen and Kopstein believe “institutional innovations generally begin...in marginal weak societies ignored by... mainstream stream scholars”.(2005 :90) If so, changes which make institutions more ‘women-friendly’ would develop first in less powerful democracies, especially those open to women’s collective influence because women were allies in national-liberation.

Incorporating Women into Democratic State/Political Institutions

Anthony Smith believes gender is the hardest identity around which to mobilize collective action, because women are “geographically separated, divided by class and ethnically fragmented”. Consequently, “gender ... must be allied to... more cohesive identities [like nationality] ... to inspire collective consciousness and action” (1991:4). If so, it would be common, not unusual, for women to mobilize within other movements, or to piggyback onto them, as often is the case with nationalism. Gender’s power to mobilize is not fixed as Smith assumes, however, but changes with factors like literacy, longer life-spans, education and paid work affecting women’s capacity for self-organization and the clout they can have in mixed-sex movements. This helps explain why self-organized women who participate in national or restructuring movements are more easily incorporated into state and institutions earlier and more fully. I theorize that this also results in the greater ‘presence’ of women in those democracies today. If,

as many feminist theorists argue, states were *essentially* male-dominated, no increase in women's numbers would change them. And the incorporation of women would be moot if those within institutions were all viewed as co-opted, whatever their strength. Historically, how feminists viewed states simply reflected ideology, but it is now also apparent that *which state* women experience also influences how they think.⁸ Where women's movements face less powerful, less militarized governments, where women 'got in on the ground floor', and where their 'presence' in government is significant, regardless of ideology, women will see democracies as potentially 'women-friendly' and worth engaging. The thesis that states are essentially patriarchal overlooks two things. First female power can coexist with male dominance in many institutions: having some power is better than being powerless. Nordic gender scholars believe a *critical mass* of women members --at least a third --is needed to change institutions. Because women are not a homogenous group, however, a critical mass must constitute enough decision-makers who can express both what women share and how they differ (Vickers 2006c). Women's 'presence' in decision-making must be considered legitimate to overcome or avert male-dominance. Even if women are not a critical mass, sometimes they can mobilize successfully, especially if shared interests are at stake. So, how and how well women were incorporated into state institutions matters. The theory that states are inherently patriarchal also ignores cases where women have been incorporated as decision-makers for generations, and where both sexes became citizens together. The idea that 'states are inherently patriarchal' is best tested by observing the effects of a significant 'presence' of women decision-makers.

My concept of women's 'presence' builds on Phillips' (1995) idea that a "politics of presence" promotes "more inclusive democracies". I operationalize women's

⁸ Seeing states as captured by men, but reformable if women gain their share of state power is seen as 'liberal feminism'. Radical and socialist feminists rejected engagement, even within democratic governments, because they considered they represented the interests of capitalism and/ or patriarchy. Radical feminists also portrayed 'the state' as "the big patriarch"; as a "male state" in which violent masculinity and domination are embedded. Anti-statism is also a response to repressive states.

'presence' by measuring their representation in state institutions including legislatures, judiciaries, bureaucracies, and cabinets; and state practices concerning equality (See Appendix B for the measures). Finland and Norway have more than three times the 'presence' of women in state institutions than Italy; and twice the 'presence' of the U.S. and Greece (see Figure 2). New Zealand's scores reflect two big changes from restructuring. The oldest nation-states, and those with fascist pasts, have the weakest scores. The scores of democracies in which organized women participated in national projects, especially as allies, correlate well with the level and speed of women's incorporation into state institutions. The mechanism seems to be that women's participation helps them get into government 'on the ground floor' before institutions become male bastions. Being involved in movements to restructure nation-states, if successful, can have similar results. Although to date all states remain male-dominated, systematic male-dominance is not inherent but historically produced (Connell 1990). Modern nation-states are influenced by the long association between past state forms and patriarchal laws and arrangements; so male dominance seems natural and defended by most political theorists (Vickers 1997). Nonetheless, where women were full citizens of democracies from their founding, they were incorporated more quickly and fully into state institutions. Women were ten percent of Finland's legislature a year after founding, a threshold not reached in the United States until 1992, two hundred years after founding. Finland reached the twenty percent threshold in 1972, and thirty percent in 1983; these thresholds have not yet been achieved in the U.S. Where men legally monopolized institutions for generations, moreover, resistance to women's entry became stronger, persisting after democratization. But where women and men became citizens together, women's inclusion gradually become part of what people believed made their nations distinct.

State power is institutionalized, and because institutions are path-dependent,⁹ setup costs are high and restructuring is difficult; this is in part because ‘deals’ among competing elites are embedded in institutional designs. The longer institutions operate a particular way, the more people expect them to. Over time, self-reinforcing feedback develops and creates a stable equilibrium. Consequently, how institutions are designed originally is of great importance; and because gender regimes are part of institutional design, ‘getting in on the ground floor’ of, and/ or helping shape, institutions promotes women’s incorporation. If women are explicitly *included*, their ‘presence’ is unlikely to be contested; whereas if women were excluded ideas legitimizing male government become part of the feedback loop.

Institutional Thresholds and ‘Women-Friendliness’

How and why does ‘getting in on the ground floor’ affect women’s ‘presence’ in democracies today? In the first-wave nation-states, citizenship was negatively gendered since active citizenship and most civil rights were only accorded to men. When women finally gained active citizenship and some rights, they remained politically marginalized and excluded from most decision-making in still resolutely, male-dominated institutions. Many gender scholars believe “women and men ... [were and are] constituted different[ly] as citizens” (West 1997) because most had two relationships to states (Yuval-Davis, 1997): legally equal as citizens, married women were substantively unequal because of the state’s marriage laws. Finnish women became equal citizens in 1906, but it was not until 1930 that legal disabilities from marriage laws were removed. ‘Women-friendly’ democracies, therefore, require

⁹ The theory of path dependence originated in the work of Douglass North, a Nobel laureate (1993) for economics. North theorized that development projects often fail because decision-makers cannot choose the most rational course. Societies are locked into a matrix of inherited institutions, established either by common agreement in the past, or imposed by powerful interests to perpetuate their power. Pierson (2000:72-92; 2004) believes political institutions are path dependent.

discriminatory laws and policies removed. When women become a significant 'presence' in decision-making, they can promote such changes.

Stein Rokkan theorized four institutional thresholds (cited Berqvist et.al.1999: Ch 1) in integrating new participants into democratic institutions:

- 1) *Legitimization* - when, in the history of state-formation and nation-building, the previously excluded group gained the rights to organize, express their views in public, develop a collective identity, and form organizations;
- 2) *Incorporation* -- marked by gaining the vote, and using it;
- 3) *Political representation* -in elected bodies at various levels; and
- 4) *Executive power* - the group has sufficient clout to gain leadership positions¹⁰.

Louise Chappell, however, believes “the relationship between feminists and political institutions is co-constitutive” (2002: 4); that is, women in movements outside state institutions can create new opportunities to interact with it. In an open, pluralist legislative system with multiple entry points, this seems feasible.¹¹ But this opportunity may be limited to when restructuring makes institutions more malleable. There also is evidence that movements are most successful when they can access institutions via gender-specific sites and women decision-makers.

In the Nordic democracies, women entered governments earlier than in the more powerful democracies, and in sufficient numbers to now exercise considerable legitimate, institutional power. But movements played a role, especially before a critical mass was achieved. Indeed, many Nordic feminist political scientists believe both insider and outsider strategies are needed for women to achieve significant change. Moreover, political parties, especially women’s sections, were key to incorporating

¹⁰ The threshold model assumes path-dependent institutions which newly-mobilized participants enter by bursting through each barrier, without changing the institutions. The sheer size of women as a group, however, may alter the institutions as smaller groups would not.

¹¹ The degree of military involvement may also play a role, since military structures often remain both male-dominated and masculinist in ideology long after women become citizens.

women initially into state institutions in Finland and Norway. They provided sites where women's diverse and common interests were articulated, party positions were hammered out and women representatives chosen. With numerous political parties, the problem of how to represent diversity was resolved structurally. Women representatives are not expected to represent 'women's interests', as an as whole, as they are when only a few token women or a small minority of women are elected. Women legislators represent different political positions about women's diverse interests as developed in the party sections. In Finland, mass mobilization worked through party sections at all stages.¹² When women's sections were abolished elsewhere, Finns retained them and even the new parties formed in the 1990s created new women's sections. Women's sections connected parties to women's communities linking ordinary women to powerful decision-makers.

In Norway, in 1905, 300,000 women (half the adult women), mobilized in six hundred associations, organized a 'women's referendum' on separation from Sweden, gaining citizenship and legitimacy as founders. But Norway remained a "housewife country" so by 1970 less than a quarter of adult women worked outside the home, most part-time. Women's campaign to **increase** quickly their influence in parties, and their 'presence' in government at all levels, was very successful. The twenty percent legislative threshold was reached in four years, and the thirty percent threshold eight years later in 1985. Norway elected the first Nordic woman Prime Minister in 1981 before women were a critical mass in the legislature. She equalized gender 'presence' in her first cabinet. In both Norway and Finland, sex equality laws now require "rough parity" (forty to sixty percent men and women) on all non-elected public bodies including cabinets. Norwegian women's rapid incorporation reflected the legitimacy of their claims

¹² The Finnish Working Women's Federation, formed in 1900, became Social Democratic Women in 1979 and had 20,000 members circa 1999. The newer Centre Party Women's Organization then had 60,000 members. Women's sections also enjoy financial autonomy: since 1975 they receive 7 % of all state funding to the parties.

as founders; and their clout within political parties, which persuaded most party leaders to introduce internal gender quotas. Elsewhere quotas involved leaders choosing a few token women for symbolic representation. Quota-women owed their positions to male party bosses, and had little influence on policy, and less power. Norway's modern quota strategy involved voluntarily adopted *party* quotas to integrate many women quickly into party decision-making. Most parties voluntarily adopted candidate quotas too; electoral competition did the rest, as parties feared voters would punish them for gender 'unbalanced' lists.¹³ Norwegians' acceptance of group representation legitimized the strategy, as did the competitive argument that Norway had fallen far behind other Nordic states in the 'women-friendliness' of its democracy.

In Search of 'Women-Friendly' Democracy

Democracy is both a political system for channelling conflicts over means and ends into non-violent processes; and the ideal of a polity in which citizenship is participatory and empowering, and society is egalitarian. Feminist theorists of democracy point to the failure of existing democracies to achieve such ideals. Some also point to intrinsic weaknesses they see in democratic theory itself. Similar conflicts plague discussions of 'women-friendliness'. Often 'women-friendliness' is portrayed as an ideal, gender-equal polity in which women have been freed from repression and domination. Kathleen Jones (1990), for example, portrays a "women-friendly polity" in which women would not have to repress their emotions, their sexualities or their reproductive lives to be fully empowered citizens. Such an "embodied citizenship", she believes, would require getting rid of pornography and sexual harassment, both of which portray women as bodies to be exploited not as empowered citizens. Ideal-type conceptualizations of 'women-friendliness' share some common features. They focus

¹³ Norway's modern quotas confirm that structural innovations occur first in small, marginal polities. Many other democracies have adopted and adapted the techniques.

on abolishing or restructuring the private/ public divide, seeing it as the basis of male dominance. As a result, they tend to confuse plans for ideal social relations with pragmatic accounts of 'women-friendly' governments women can use to debate such ideals and work toward achievement of those on which agreement is possible. Second, they tend to oppose institutionalized power all together, because they believe institutions inevitably are dominated by men, and used to control and repress women and other marginalized groups.

The Nordic Group on the Study of Women in Politics, conceptualizes 'women-friendliness' more pragmatically as a result of women's incorporation into democratic political institutions; and of institutionalizing their own power, as in women's party sections, and women-controlled sites within states such as the sex-equality councils. They assume women can change democratic political institutions if they enter and engage with them; so they explore specific institutions and practices for their 'women-friendlily' potential'. Hernes (1987) portrays 'women-friendliness' as a *deepening of democracy*. It is not clear, however, the extent to which Nordic routes to 'women-friendliness' could be transferred as easily as quotas. If Connell is correct that gender regimes are the residue of historically-specific gender struggles, influencing democratic institutions of which women were legally members from the beginning would be easier than entering and transforming institutions, that are pre-democratic in origin and from which generations of women were excluded; with that exclusion legitimized by a whole canon of 'democratic' theorists (Vickers,1997).

I operationalize 'women-friendliness' by drawing from both theoretical visions, and analyses of the specific democracies where women's presence is high. Hernes, for example, believes 'women-friendliness' also involves state policies, spending priorities and programmes to help women "have a natural relationship to their children, their work, and public life" (1982:32-40). 'Women-friendly' states, "would not force harder choices on women than on men, or permit unjust treatment on the basis of sex" (1987:15). The

idea that 'women-friendliness' involves states helping citizens balance carework, paid work and political responsibilities invokes complex debates about how to achieve these goals. In Nordic polities, 'women-friendliness' in practice involves state support for carework as a common interest of male and female citizens, but how to achieve the balanced life Hernes invokes is open to debate and conflict among women.

'Women-friendliness', requires as a minimum that women are a significant 'presence'¹⁴ in decision-making sites at all levels with enough 'clout' to influence decisions. For the full range of women's views to be formulated and expressed, they also must be incorporated into structures (bureaucracies, parties) where agendas are set and policy options formulated. Alternately, government decision-making must be open to alternate political structures representing women, such as movements.

Two additional characteristics of 'women-friendly' states can be formulated in relation to their policies. Although debate and conflict are common about how states best can help women 'balance' paid work, carework and political work, there is consensus that some form of state support is needed for women to realize fully their citizenship. In a completely competitive electoral system, women will always be at a disadvantage because they birth and nourish children. Citizens who mother must be 'present', as well as those who do not. There is also consensus that the legal disadvantages women experience require remedy, and possibly compensatory action. Consequently, 'the women-friendliness' of democracies can be measured by their commitment to:

- 1) treating all women fairly; which doesn't always mean treating them the same;

¹⁴ What constitutes a 'significant presence' varies among institutions, and countries. The kind of legislative system, including the extent of executive domination, and party discipline, affects how large a 'presence' actually ensures greater access to power for women. Understanding which structures in specific democracies are "*demos-enabling*" or "*demos-constraining*" (Stepan, 2000) will help us better operationalize how democracies can be made more 'women-friendly'.

- 2) removing discriminatory laws or policies and compensating for their effects;
- 3) supporting carework by both men and women ,facilitating women's paid and political work; and
- 4) addressing issues of particular concern for specific groups of women, especially regarding physical and economic security, and their sexual and reproductive health and self-determination.

In most democracies in my study, citizenship is mostly passive: few women are active in political parties, and only three governments have a critical mass of women, or fairly represent vulnerable minorities. In a more 'women-friendly' democracy like Norway , citizenship is more active: one in every ten women had been elected as a representative to some local, regional, or national body; and one in ten was a party member (circa mid 1990s).This is unthinkable in the larger, more powerful democracies. The political institutions key to active citizenship In Norway or Finland, moreover, are largely moribund in the less 'women-friendly' democracies, except during elections which increasingly are spectator 'sports' run by professionals and followed on TV. Representative democracy legitimizes parties as the structures which link people to governments, which marginalizes most women as political ' outsiders' with outsiders views, because parties remain male-dominated and are very hard to transform. New parties, however, like new democracies, sometimes give women opportunities to 'get in on the ground floor'.

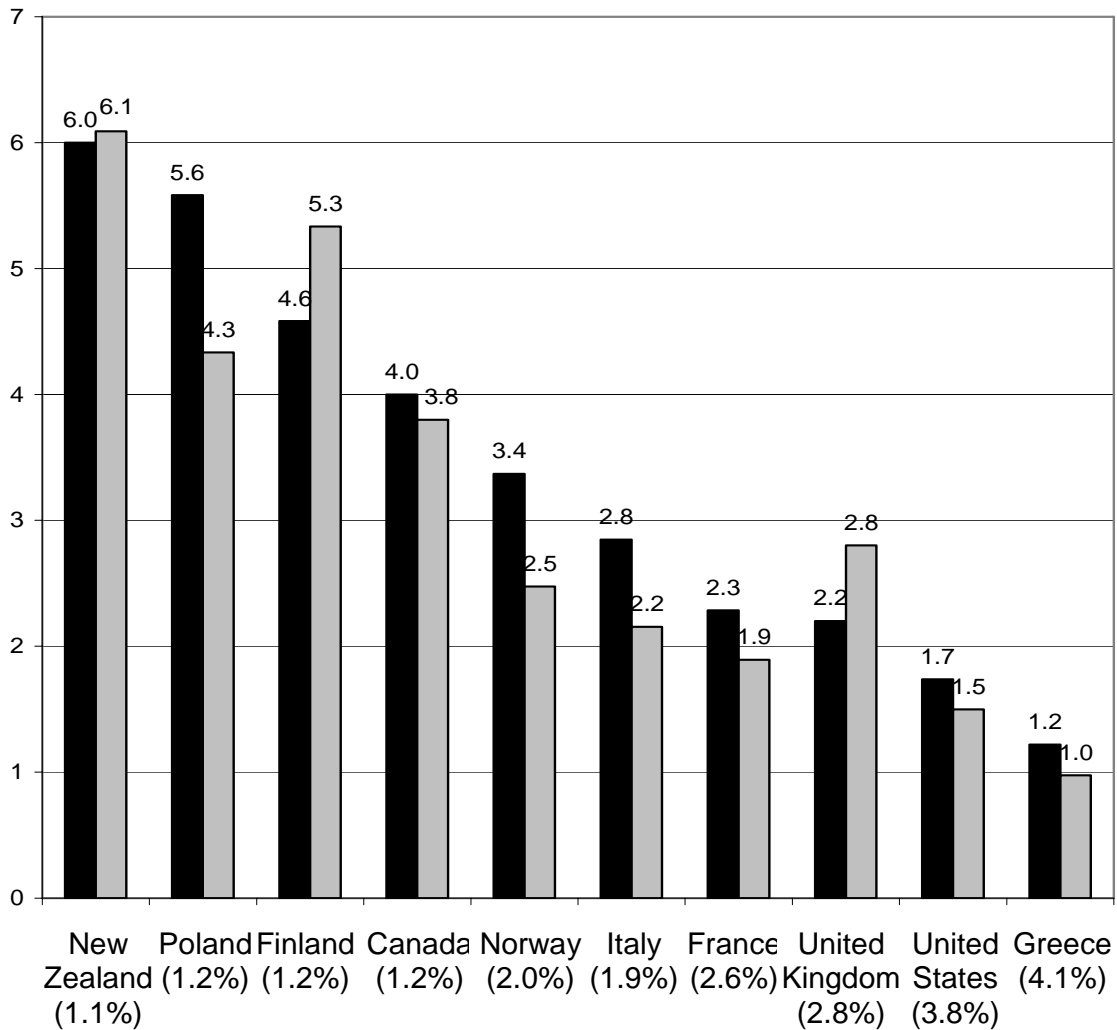
The debate for three decades between advocates of home-care and collective daycare in the Finnish parliament provides a topical example of what 'women-friendliness' means concretely. Between 1966-87, coalition governments of Social Democrats and the Centre Party transformed Finland into a modern welfare-state. In that context, a movement of middle-class women formed demanding daycare. Left-wing parties, pushed by their women's sections, wanted a public childcare system, with

good public employment opportunities and high standards. Right-wing parties supported home-care allowances. In 1972, when women were only 22% of national legislators, the first stormy debates took place. Home-care advocates lacked the votes to stop the coalition from enacting a public childcare programme. But in implementing it, spaces always lagged far behind demand, and since governments prioritized low-income families and single parents for spaces, middle-class women were left without supported childcare. By 1983, when the issue re-emerged, 30% of legislators were women, with most of the increase in centrist parties. The two women Ministers of Social Affairs, a Social Democrat and a Centre Party woman, disagreed about childcare. After many negotiations between the leaderships of the two parties, agreements were reached in 1985 to add a home-care allowance, which also could fund children in non-public childcare. In 1995, as women approached forty percent of legislators, a legal guarantee provided all children under seven an individual right to publicly-supported childcare. In 1996, an alliance of women legislators, working across party lines, successfully fought a proposed delay in funding the programme. They also amended the legislation to guarantee every Finnish child under seven either a place in public childcare, or a home-care allowance.

The transition of the issue from public childcare for poor families and single mums, to an entitlement of each child under seven to the state support needed to provide good quality care in the form his/her parent(s) chose, reflects what a more 'women-friendly' democracy means in practice. Women's increasing presence as legislators and in parties enabled them to substantively represent women's diverse points of view, and women's common interest. But mechanisms to link representatives and cabinet ministers to ordinary women were key, requiring a critical mass of women members in the parties, as well as legislatures. Women working in movements outside the parties and inside the state were not alternatives. Movements can get issues noticed, organizations can articulate interests; but non-state institutions rarely perform

the complex task of democracy, which is weighing common and conflicting views and developing policies to meet diverse needs.

Figure Four: Ratio of Public Health Spending and Public Education Spending to Military Spending with Military Spending as a Percentage of GDP in Brackets



Legend

- Ratio of public health spending to military spending
- Ratio of public education spending to military spending

Education data is the most recent available from 2000-2002. Health spending is as of 2002. Military spending is as of 2003.

Will “women-friendly” democracies produce similar policies? There is evidence that women are supportive of some welfare-state provisions, mainly because more

women depend on state support. But as women's inequality declines, the diversity of their political views will increase. One approach, however, is to compare spending priorities, such as state expenditures on health and education to military spending. Military and economic power is central to states' international stature. Military spending, beyond what is needed to defend against credible threats, is a way of converting economic surplus into political stature for the country and its leaders (and denying use of that surplus to competitors.) But this conversion also affects politics internally: indeed, high levels of military spending are associated with less 'women-friendly' states. Large democracies spend relatively more of their GDP on building military power, compared to their spending on public education and health, and are associated with a weak 'presence' of women and little commitment to 'women-friendly' policies and programmes. This does not mean individual women are not interested in building military capability. It does mean that women's poverty and dependency makes more of them favour public spending on health and education than on military spending.¹⁵ France spent 2.6%, the U.K. 2.8% and the U.S. 3.8% of their GDPs on their military capacities, while the ratios of their health and education spending to military spending were consistently below 3.0.¹⁶ Where women's 'presence' is strongest in state institutions, military spending as a percentage of GDP is much lower: 1.1% in New Zealand, and 1.2% in Finland, while their ratios of health and education to military spending exceeded 4.0. While there is no single 'feminist' scenario of policies and priorities associated with the more 'women-friendly' democracies, the less 'women friendly' democracies consistently spend more on the military and *less public money* on health and education. Where women constitute a critical mass in bodies where

¹⁵ The relationship between eras of great material growth and waves of imperialism is surveyed in Jonathan Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Foreign Policy", *International Security*, Vol 29, no 4 (Spring 2005):112-156.

¹⁶ Norway is an interesting case, however, spending 2% of its GDP on a military into which women are now well integrated after three decades of entry. But Norway's relative spending on health and education still exceeds that in the largest, most powerful democracies.

spending decisions are made, decision-makers may balance spending priorities in a more 'women-friendly' way.

Tentative Conclusions

Organized women can make democracies more 'women friendly' by participating in them, and especially by participating in national founding and restructuring movements when institutions are just forming, or more open to organized women's influences. But where women were excluded for generations from non- or slowly-democratizing institutions, governments and parties are much harder to penetrate than where women's incorporation started at the beginning. 'Getting in on the ground floor' is especially important because changing path-dependent institutions once established is often difficult, and very costly in collective effort. There is no simple recipe for making democracies more 'women friendly', although some structural innovations, such as Norway's modern quota system, have been transferred successfully. Where women engage with powerful institutions which are resistant to their presence, however, it is harder to develop a critical mass of women within them. And without a strong presence, the women elected may just legitimize institutions without empowering other women. Political and state Institutions also are more difficult to enter when great power or status is the prize; and when social power is being converted into military capacity; unless women are integrated into military institutions at all levels. Nonetheless, rejecting institutional power because some institutions are male-dominated is like throwing out the baby with the bath water. Women need to institutionalize their collective power in structures which, like women's party sections in Finland, can mediate among individual women, small groups, state institutions and generations.

Ultimately, women's presence in democratic governments is key to mobilizing them and promoting greater 'women-friendliness' over generations. Where women successfully 'got in on the ground floor' of new political institutions, moreover, they often

did so by piggybacking on other movements. Women's movements must be prepared to consider strategic alliances with other movements, by being open to politics beyond gender issues. In this way, they can develop enough of a 'presence' to promote more 'women-friendly' states.

Appendix A: Elements of the “Getting in on the Ground Floor” Scale

- 1) Years between nation-state founding and majority woman suffrage
- 2) Years between nation-state founding and the first elected woman to serve in the legislature
- 3) Years between nation-state founding and the first woman to serve as a cabinet minister
- 4) Years between nation-state founding and the first woman leader of a major political party
- 5) Years between nation-state founding and the first woman to serve as head of executive branch of the government
- 6) Years between nation-state founding and the first woman to serve as head of legislative branch of government
- 7) Years between majority woman suffrage and universal suffrage
- 8) Years between nation-state founding and the first year in which women held ten percent of seats in the lower house of legislature
- 9) Years between nation-state founding and the first year in which women held twenty percent of seats in the lower house of legislature
- 10) Years between nation-state founding and the first year in which women held thirty percent of seats in the lower house of legislature.

Appendix B: Elements of Women’s Political “Presence” Scale

- 1) Percentage of women serving as cabinet ministers
- 2) Percentage of seats in the lower house of legislature held by women
- 3) Percentage of seats in the upper house of legislature held by women, if applicable
- 4) Percentage of seats in the European Union parliament held by women, if applicable
- 5) Percentage of seats at state/provincial level held by women in federations, if applicable
- 6) Total months in which a woman has been head of the executive
- 7) Percentage of posts in the judiciary that are held by women
- 8) Percentage of bureaucratic positions held by women
- 9) The presence and extent of constitutional guarantees of equality.

Appendix C: Rankings in the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2005

Country	Human Development Index		Gender Development Index		Gender Empowerment Index		Gini Coefficient
	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	
Norway	1	0.963	1	0.960	1	0.928	25.8
Canada	5	0.949	5	0.946	10	0.807	33.1
United States	10	0.944	8	0.942	12	0.793	40.8
Finland	13	0.941	10	0.940	5	0.833	26.9
United Kingdom	15	0.939	15	0.937	18	0.716	36.0
France	16	0.938	16	0.935			32.7
Italy	18	0.934	18	0.928	37	0.589	36.0
New Zealand	19	0.933	17	0.929	14	0.769	36.2
Greece	24	0.912	24	0.907	36	0.594	35.4
Poland	36	0.858	33	0.856	27	0.612	34.1

The Human Development Index is calculated on the basis of a life expectancy index (calculated from life expectancy at birth), education index (which includes the adult literacy rate and the gross enrolment ratio) and GDP index (based on GDP per capita in purchasing power parity US\$).

The Gender Development Index is based on the same indicators, but calculated based on gender-disaggregated data. The status of females and males on each of the indicators is evaluated to produce indices for the equal distribution of life expectancy, education and income.

The Gender Empowerment Measure is calculated based on female and male shares of parliamentary seats, of legislators, senior officials and managers, of professional and technical positions, and female and male estimated earned income.

The Gini Coefficient describes the distribution of wealth in a society. A zero would represent perfect equality; a one would describe perfect inequality.

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