

Abstract

Female political representation differs significantly between countries. Patriarchal structures and gender biases that hinder women's representation are pervasive and can be identified in seemingly progressive governments, challenging claims of increased gender equality in the global North. This thesis explores the differences in female political representation in parliament between two popularly deemed progressive European countries: the Netherlands and Finland. It does so by adopting a novel approach and engaging with the top-down personal perspective of politicians within parliament. Using semi-structured elite interviews, this thesis focuses on the causes for the gap in female political representation between these countries while also discussing what the interviewees envision as possible improvements. The parliamentarians provided unique insights into how gender stereotypes, gatekeeping, and unpaid care work determine the level of women's political representation. The results indicate that female parliamentarians, next to having more role models, centred childcare and parental leave at the core of the policies to address the disparity in female representation between the Netherlands and Finland and increase female political representation overall. This thesis thus contributes to gender and political studies.