

#DataStories

Women's Leadership in Central Banks: Trends and Impact

Authors: Arjun Tandon and Shravani Prakash



- Women's presence in central bank leadership has risen in recent years, with 30 female governors and 32% of senior leadership roles held by women (as of 2024).
- Gender diversity in Central Bank leadership has been to greater fiscal discipline, resilience, and organizational reform, while effects on monetary policy stance remain mixed.
- Best practices from Central Banks highlight diversity targets, mentorship, bias-free recruitment, and transparent reporting are drivers of growing inclusion in the monetary policy ecosystem

Central banks are pivotal to the economic policymaking of any country, and therefore, warrant a diverse panel of experts to make informed decisions. There is increasing empirical evidence supporting the benefits arising from inclusivity and diversity in leadership.

Gender diversity among decision-makers in monetary policy has steadily advanced, driven by institutional commitment to diversity. The following charts show the current gender representation among the world's central banks, extracted from the recent report on the Gender Balance Index (GBI) by the Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum (OMFIF), which highlights the state of gender inclusivity in major financial institutions.

The report shows that the number of female governors at central banks across the world has increased over the last decade, with 30 banks currently having women leaders (as of 2024) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Number of Central Banks with Female Governors

Source: OMFIF GBI 2025

A comparative assessment of senior female leaders in the staff of central banks reveals that North America, Europe, Eastern Asia, and Australia have a relatively high female participation, whereas most of Northern Africa and parts of Central Asia have low female representation (Figure 2).

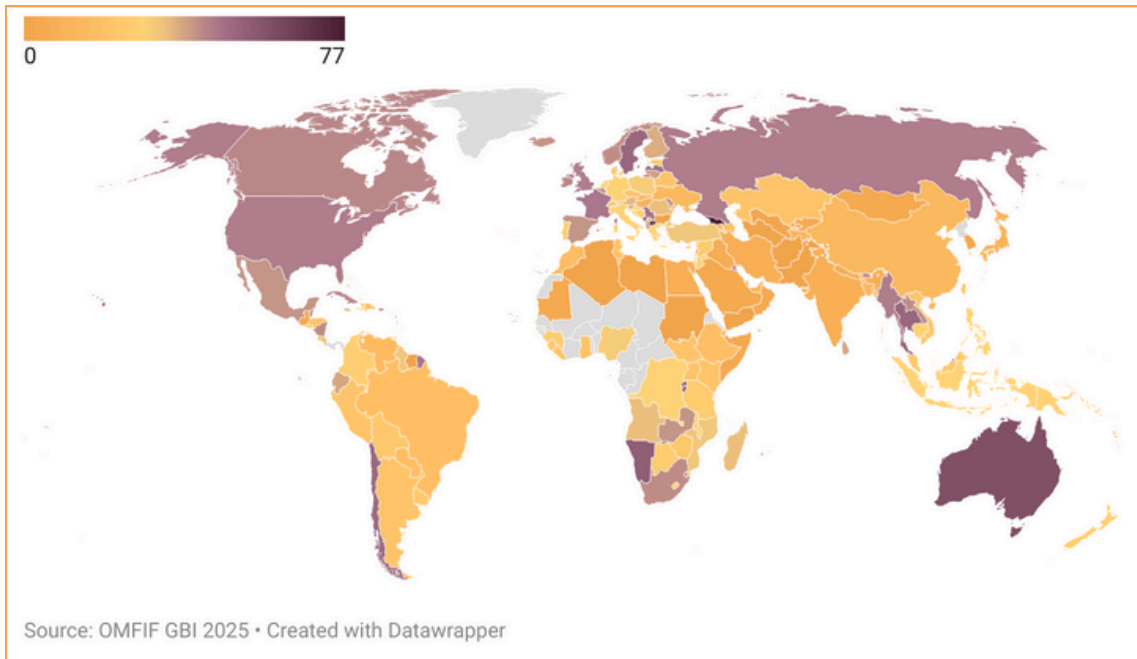
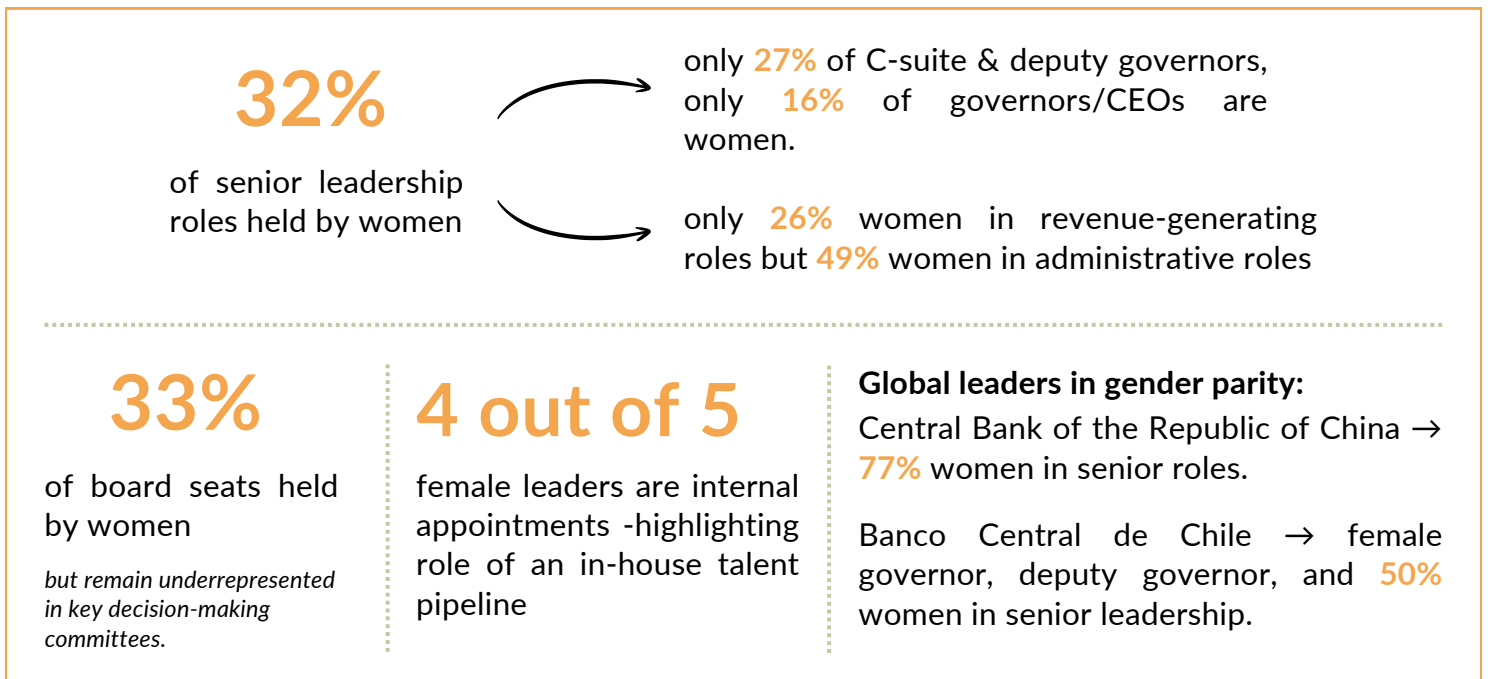


Figure 2: Percentage of female senior staff in Central Banks

Source: OMFIF GBI 2025

While there is a marked rise of women in leadership of Central Banking staff, they remain underrepresented in key decisionmaking roles (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Women in Central Bank Leadership: Key Trends



Source: OMFIF GBI 2025

Impact of women leaders on policy-making at Central Banks: Research Insights

Monetary Policy Stance: Hawkish or Dovish – The impact on monetary policy stance of females in senior and leadership roles like Chairpersons, Deputy governors or members of Monetary Policy Committees in central banks, shows mixed results. Some studies (Diouf & Pépin 2017; Masciandaro et al. 2023) link higher representation to more hawkish policies (greater emphasis on inflation control and interest rate hikes). The Riksbank's voting records also suggest that women are more likely to dissent in favour of higher rates. By contrast, Bodea and Kerner (2021) associate women leaders with a more dovish stance, prioritising growth and employment. These findings suggest that gender alone is an insufficient parameter for predicting policy stance; outcomes also reflect factors such as educational background, institutional orientation, and personal experience.

Greater fiscal prudence - Recent studies demonstrate that central banks are more likely to appoint women during periods of sovereign debt crises, with appointment probabilities rising from 14.9% to 39.6% (Kern et al, 2025). Notably, female leadership in central banks was associated with a statistically significant reduction in money supply and lower government budget financing, suggesting that women at the helm reinstate central bank autonomy and promote fiscal prudence.

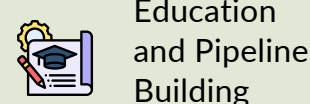
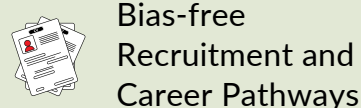
Less bureaucratic, more resilient - Female leaders have been credited with reducing bureaucratic inertia and catalysing transformative organizational change. Ainsley (2019) and Bisbee et al. (2025) suggest that female leaders weaken the influence of the established bureaucratic networks and signal a shift in internal power dynamics. Pereira & Fernandez-Vazquez (2022) and Waylen (2021) show that, due to the transformational, empathetic, resilient, inclusive, and less corruptible leadership style of women, they are more likely to take far-reaching reform measures and implement significant organisational changes.

Best Practices from Central Banks for Building Diversity in Leadership

To be able to mimic the growth in inclusive representation by Central Banks across the world, it is essential to examine some of the best practices undertaken by them:

- **The Central Bank of Chile** has prioritised gender diversity and inclusion through strategic planning, measurable targets, and robust mentorship programs aimed at boosting women's representation in leadership and throughout the institution. Policies include ensuring gender-balanced internship programs, fostering inclusive work environments, training to address unconscious bias, and supporting work-life balance for all employees.
- **The Central Bank of Ireland** does regular reporting of the gender wage gap and other measures that track the progress of gender equity.
- **The European Central Bank** sets explicit diversity and gender representation targets. The Bank offers scholarships specifically for women pursuing postgraduate studies in economics and related quantitative fields to help close the gender gap in economics and central banking careers.
- **The Bank of England** has name-blind recruitment policies which minimize any gender bias in the process has also set clear gender diversity targets for leadership (40-44% female leaders by 2028, up from the current 38%). The Bank also runs tailored sponsorship and mentorship programs aimed at supporting women's career progression. They have also hosted international conferences in collaboration with other central banks to advance gender inclusion.
- **The Federal Reserve Banks in the U.S.** have launched initiatives like the Centre for Advancing Women in Economics (AWE), which mentors women economists, promotes their research, and seeks to increase retention and advancement of women in macroeconomics and monetary policy roles. They have also introduced flexible work models and hybrid systems to support women's career progression.

BEST PRACTICES



Apart from learning from these best practices, it is also important to work on changing the perception of women in central banking. Research (Bodea and Kerner, 2022) shows female central bank leaders face bias, with men less likely to trust their messages or feel optimistic about their guidance on inflation. This undermines their authority and credibility, regardless of expertise. National leadership should both spotlight women's achievements in central banking and ensure more women are promoted to top roles, helping shift perceptions over time as their presence becomes normalised.

References

- Ainsley, C. T. (2019). The consequences of gender diversity at the Federal Reserve: An empirical analysis of FOMC voting and discourse. Unpublished Working Paper, 1-33.
- Bodea, C., & Kerner, A. (2022). Gender Bias and Central Bank Communication: Do Americans Trust Female Policy Makers? Available at SSRN.
- Bodea, C., Ferrara, F. M., Kerner, A., & Sattler, T. (2021). Gender and economic policy: When do women speak with authority on economic issues? evidence from the euro area. Evidence from the Euro Area (July 2, 2021).
- Bisbee, J., Fraccaroli, N., & Kern, A. (2025). "Yellin'at Yellen": Hostile Sexism in the Federal Reserve Congressional Hearings. *The journal of politics*, 87(4), 1365-1382.
- Diouf, I., & Pépin, D. (2017). Gender and central banking. *Economic Modelling*, 61, 193-206.
- Kern, A., Reinsberg, B., & Romelli, D. (2025). Empowering women in central banking. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 32(7), 1746-1779.
- Masciandaro, D., Profeta, P., & Romelli, D. (2023). Women and governance: Central bank boards and monetary policy. Forthcoming, *American Law and Economics Review*, Trinity Economic Papers (TEP) Working Paper, (1123).
- Pereira, M. M., & Fernandez-Vazquez, P. (2023). Does electing women reduce corruption? A regression discontinuity approach. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 48(4), 731-763.
- Waylen, G. (2022). Gendering global economic governance after the global financial crisis. *Review of International Political Economy*, 29(4), 1007-1026.