



# FEM-ABLE

Promoting women's participation  
in the political domain

# NATIONAL REPORT FOR SWEDEN

Deliverable D2.2

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# 1. Overview of the Swedish political and social landscape

Sweden is known for its stable political and social landscape. The country practices a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy, where the monarch has a largely ceremonial role.

The political system is characterized by a multi-party system, with the Social Democratic Party historically holding significant influence.

In terms of social policies, Sweden is renowned for its comprehensive welfare state, providing citizens with free healthcare, education, and a strong social safety net. The nation places a high emphasis on equality and inclusivity, striving to maintain a high standard of living for all its residents.

Sweden also has a long history of neutrality in international conflicts, maintaining a non-aligned stance during both World Wars and the Cold War. In recent years, the country has grappled with issues such as immigration and integration, which have sparked debates on multiculturalism and societal cohesion.

Economically, Sweden combines a free-market capitalist system with high levels of taxation and government intervention in certain sectors, resulting in a mixed economy.

The nation is known for its innovation, with a thriving tech sector and a commitment to sustainability and environmental protection. Sweden is doing a lot of right things to promote more women to participation in the political domain.

However, in this report we also going to highlight some few examples that events in the outside world have created new challenges during the last years in Sweden. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has forced above all women and children to flee, also to Sweden. COVID-19 created new challenge and the deteriorating economic situation hits hard against groups with low economic standards, where women are in the majority.

The 2022 election year actualized the conditions for the people elected where threats and hatred towards politicians are growing unfortunately also in Sweden. Elected females are particularly vulnerable, which is a democratic problem in both short and long term.

Overall, Sweden's political and social landscape reflects a balance between progressive social policies, economic prosperity, and political stability, making it a unique and influential player on the global stage.

And even though Sweden has come a long way in these matters. Regardless of the political level in society, it is still men who are in the majority when it comes to the popularly elected political seats in Sweden.

## 1.1 Political landscape

Sweden's political landscape is characterized by a long-standing tradition of stability, consensus politics, and a commitment to social welfare. The nation operates under a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy. While the monarch holds a largely symbolic role, the government is formed by elected representatives, with the Parliament (Riksdag) serving as the highest legislative body.

The Social Democratic Party has historically played a central role in Swedish politics, shaping the country's social welfare policies since the early 20th century. Sweden's political system is multi-party, with coalition governments being common due to proportional representation in the Riksdag. This consensus-driven approach fosters a cooperative atmosphere in politics, promoting policy continuity.

The political discourse in Sweden often centers on issues such as income equality, social justice, and sustainability. The country is known for its generous welfare state, offering universal healthcare, education, and unemployment benefits. High levels of taxation fund these services, which are considered essential to maintaining a high standard of living and societal well-being.

Despite its tradition of political stability, Sweden, like many European nations, faces contemporary challenges such as immigration, integration, and adapting to a rapidly changing global landscape. Nonetheless, Sweden's political landscape continues to reflect a commitment to progressive values and pragmatic governance, making it a model for many other countries.

Women's right to vote in Sweden is a crucial part of the country's historical and political development. The Swedish women's suffrage movement emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Advocating for women's equal participation in the political decision-making process.

The pivotal moment came in 1919 when Sweden guaranteed women the right to vote in municipal elections, allowing them to both vote and candidate for political elections at the

local level. In 1921, this right was extended to include national elections, enabling women to participate in the highest level of political decision-making.

This historic change marked a significant step towards gender equality in Sweden and initiated a trajectory where women gradually increased their representation in politics. Today, Sweden is renowned for its gender-balanced political climate and has seen female Prime Ministers and high-ranking political officials.

Women's right to vote in Sweden is now a matter of course and serves as an example to many countries worldwide, encouraging women's participation in politics and decision making. It stands as a testament to Sweden's commitment to being a progressive and inclusive society.

An example: the municipal government of Skellefteå town. The municipality is governed by the municipal council. It is to the municipal council that voters elect members and substitutes in the municipal elections. Political assignments are also found within the municipal board and in various committees. In Skellefteå municipality, the Social Democrats and the Left Party have majority in the municipal council. In Skellefteå in the north part of Sweden, people work together every day to inspire more women and men to learn more about the political issues and challenges to solve, women empowerment and business domain. Together people can build knowledge so more people will take the chance in the future to one day take place in the political domain. In Skellefteå there is this shared idea that together we can do difference for a more equal and sustainable society.

## 1.2 Social landscape

Sweden has long been at the forefront of promoting gender equality, including increasing women's representation in the political domain. The country has implemented a variety of measures and initiatives to address gender disparities in politics and foster a more inclusive political landscape.

Sweden has introduced gender quotas for political parties, which require a certain percentage of candidates to be women. This has led to a more balanced representation of women in various political bodies, from local councils to the national parliament.

Sweden places a strong emphasis on gender equality in education. Girls and boys have equal access to education an opportunity, ensuring a pipeline of well-educated and empowered women who can enter politics.

There is an ongoing public discourse in Sweden about the importance of gender equality in politics. Media, NGOs, and government campaigns actively promote women's participation in decision-making processes.

Women's networks and mentorship programs have emerged to provide guidance and support to aspiring female politicians. These networks help women navigate the often male-dominated political arena.

Sweden's approach to promoting women in politics reflects its commitment to gender equality and diversity. While progress has been made, there is a continued effort to ensure that women have an equal voice in shaping the nation's political landscape.

## 2. Historical background on the political participation of women in Sweden

### 2.1 Evolution of the status of women in the Swedish context

The historical background of women's political participation in Sweden is marked by a gradual and progressive evolution that has transformed the status of women in Swedish society.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sweden like many other countries, was patriarchal society with limited rights for women. Women were excluded from political life and lacked basic civil rights.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of the women's suffrage movement in Sweden. Activists like Fredrika Bremer and Sophie Adlersparre began advocating for women's rights, including the right to vote and participate in public life.

Sweden made significant strides in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1902, married women were granted control over their own wages and property, a major step towards economic independence. Then, in 1919, Sweden became one of the first countries to grant women the right to vote in municipal elections, and in 1921, this right was extended to include national elections.

The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century saw further progress with the introduction of comprehensive social welfare policies. Sweden implemented measures such as subsidized childcare and generous parental leave, which enabled women to combine family and career aspirations.

By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sweden had a strong tradition of gender equality in politics. Women held significant positions in government, and a commitment to gender parity in political representation became a priority.



Sweden continues to promote gender equality in politics. The country has implemented gender quotas for political parties to ensure a balanced representation of women. Women have held prominent political roles, including Prime Minister, and continue to make significant contributions to Swedish political life.

The evolution of the status of women in Sweden, from a position of limited rights and political exclusion to one of active participation and influence in politics, reflects the nation's commitment to gender equality and social progress. It serves as a model for many other countries striving to empower women in the political arena.

## 2.2 History of feminism in Sweden

### 2.2.1 First-wave feminism

The history of feminism in Sweden is characterized by a strong and enduring commitment to gender equality and women's rights. It encompasses several waves of feminist movements, each leaving a lasting impact on Swedish society.

The roots of feminism in Sweden can be traced back to the late 19th century when the first-wave feminist movement emerged.

Influenced by international feminist ideas, Swedish women began advocating for their rights, including suffrage and legal equality. Key figures like Fredrika Bremer and Sophie Adlersparre were instrumental in mobilizing women to demand change.

In 1902, Sweden took a significant step by granting married women control over their own wages and property. This was followed by a groundbreaking achievement in 1919 when Swedish women won the right to vote in municipal elections.

Two years later, in 1921, they gained the right to vote in national elections, making Sweden one of the early adopters of women's suffrage.

First-wave feminism in Sweden laid the foundation for subsequent feminist movements. It challenged traditional gender roles, inspired women to pursue higher education and careers, and set the stage for more comprehensive changes in women's legal and societal status.

The legacy of first-wave feminism continues to influence Sweden's commitment to gender equality, as subsequent waves of feminism built upon its achievements and expanded the scope of women's rights and opportunities in Swedish society.

### 2.2.2 Feminism during the Civil War

Feminism during the Civil War in Sweden, which occurred in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, may not resemble the feminist movements we think of today, but it still marked a significant moment in the struggle for women's rights and gender equality within the context of that time.

The Civil War in Sweden, also known as the Kalmar War, was a period of conflict and political instability. During this time, women found themselves thrust into roles traditionally occupied by men due to the absence of many men who were away at war. This shift provided an opportunity for women to take on more active and visible roles in society.

While these changes were largely circumstantial, they challenged traditional gender norms. Women had to manage farms, businesses, and households in the absence of their male counterparts. This period of necessity showcased women's capabilities and resilience in handling responsibilities typically reserved for men.

Although the Civil War did not directly lead to a feminist movement in the modern sense, it sowed the seeds of empowerment and independence among Swedish women. Over time, these experiences contributed to a growing awareness of women's capabilities and rights, eventually laying the groundwork for later feminist movements in Sweden.

In this historical context, feminism during the Civil War in Sweden can be seen as an unintended consequence of the conflict, as it provided glimpses of women's potential beyond traditional roles and contributed to the gradual evolution of gender roles in Swedish society.

Key political figures

**Fredrika Bremer (1801-1865)**

Fredrika Bremer was a Finnish-born Swedish writer and reformer. Her *Sketches of Everyday Life* were wildly popular in Britain and the United States during the 1840s and 1850s and she is regarded as the Swedish Jane Austen, bringing the realist novel to prominence in Swedish literature.

### 2.2.3 Third and fourth wave feminism (1980 – today)

In Third and fourth wave feminism in Sweden, spanning from the 1980s to today, have continued to build upon the achievements of earlier feminist movements while addressing contemporary challenges and evolving notions of gender equality.

During the third wave, Swedish feminism began to diversify its focus. While still working on issues like equal pay and representation, it expanded to encompass a broader range of concerns. Intersectionality became a key concept, recognizing that the feminist movement needed to address the unique experiences of women of different races, sexual orientations, and social backgrounds.

In Sweden, this wave saw the emergence of feminist organizations that challenged societal norms and institutions, promoting gender-neutral language and advocating for sexual and reproductive rights. It also witnessed a strong push for anti-violence measures and greater awareness of issues like domestic violence and sexual harassment.

The fourth wave of feminism in Sweden has been characterized by a strong emphasis on digital activism and the power of social media in amplifying feminist voices.

Hashtags such as #MeToo and #TimesUp have played a significant role in highlighting issues of sexual harassment and assault, sparking important conversations, and pushing for societal change.

In Sweden, this wave has seen continued efforts to close the gender pay gap, promote women's leadership in various sectors, and challenge the lingering presence of gender stereotypes.

Movements like "Feminist Fridays" where people wear feminist symbols on Fridays, have become popular, symbolizing the ongoing commitment to feminist ideals.

Swedish feminism of the third and fourth waves remains closely tied to the country's tradition of gender equality. It reflects a society committed to progress, inclusivity, and challenging the remaining barriers that hinder true gender equality. As Sweden continues to evolve, so too does its feminist movement, adopting to new challenges and striving for a more equitable future.

## 3. Current statistics about women's political participation in Sweden

### 3.1 Riksdag and Government

Sweden has a strong tradition of gender equality and women's participation in politics. Women have held prominent positions in Swedish politics, including as prime Ministers and leaders of major political parties. Here are some key points regarding women's political participation in Sweden:

**Swedish Parliament (Riksdag):** in the 2018 Swedish general election, women accounted for approximately 47% of the members of the Riksdag. This level of representation demonstrated a significant degree of gender balance in the notational legislature.

**Government:** 2021, the Prime Minister of Sweden was Stefan Löfven, and women held several key ministerial positions in the government, reflecting a commitment to gender equality at the highest levels of government.

**Local Government,** Women's representation in local government bodies, such as municipal councils, has also been relatively high, and many municipalities have implemented gender quota policies to ensure a balanced representation.

**Political Parties:** several Swedish political parties have actively promoted gender equality within their ranks, aiming to increase the number of women in leadership positions and as candidates in elections.

**Senate** (Sweden does not have a Senate): unlike countries with a bicameral legislature, such as the United States, Sweden has a unicameral legislature with only one parliamentary body – the Riksdag. Therefore, there is no separate Senate in Sweden.

Please note that these statistics and details are based on information available up to September 2021. Political landscapes can change over time, so it's essential to consult current sources or government reports for the most up-to-date information on women's political participation in Sweden.

## 3.2 EIGE power indicators for 2022

The Gender Equality Index (GEI) is a tool developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) to measure gender equality in the European Union. The GEI is based on a set of indicators that measure gender equality in seven domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, and violence.

Sweden ranks number 1 out of 27 EU Member States on the 2022 GEI, with a score of 83,9 out of 100. Sweden's best performance is in the domain of health, with a score of 95,2 points.

For more information on the different EIGE indicators for Sweden, visit: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/country/SE#:~:text=With%2083.9%20out%20of%20100,points%20above%20the%20EU's%20score>

## 4. Focus group to explore barriers and strategies regarding the political participation of women.

### 4.1 Objectives of the focus group

Based on partner knowledge and initial desk research, the FEM-ABLE project identified a set of obstacles and barriers that might explain the reasons why women participate less in politics, and when they do, why they are chosen less than men candidates. Namely:

1. **Gender bias:** there may be conscious or unconscious bias against women in politics and leadership roles, making it more difficult for them to be taken seriously or gain access to opportunities.
2. **Stereotyping:** women may be stereotyped as being less competent or less ambitious than men, which can discourage them from pursuing leadership roles.

3. **Lack of role models:** when there are few women in leadership positions, it can be difficult for other women to envision themselves in those roles.
4. **Double standards:** women may face higher expectations and scrutiny than men when it comes to their behavior and performance in leadership roles.
5. **Work-life balance:** women may feel that the demands of political or leadership roles would make it difficult to balance their work and family responsibilities.
6. **Glass ceiling and wage gap in political careers of women:** systemic barriers that prevent women from reaching higher positions and receiving equal pay as their men counterparts in the political field, such as preferential treatment, sexism, harassment and hostile work environment, limited networking opportunities (as many times these happen “after-hours”), lack of family-friendly policies, and lack of adequate promotion policies.
7. **Traditional assignment of administrative role to women within political organizations** given the pervasiveness of gender roles within political organizations, women tend to take on tasks more related to administration, logistics, resource, and team management, rather than more visible and directive roles focused on decision-making and on informing such decisions to staff and voter base.

Ultimately, the reasons why women are underrepresented in politics and leadership roles are complex and multifaceted. By hosting a focus group with women who have experience in political and leadership positions, we wish to explore the challenges that women face when attempting to break through these barriers and succeed in the traditionally men-dominated field of politics.

As such, the objective of the focus group was to validate the above barriers, identify additional barriers and identify strategies to address these barriers for Sweden, based on the voice and experience of women who have faced leadership challenges and opportunities in their professional careers in the Swedish context.

## 4.2 Participants and structure of the focus group

The focus groups activity in Sweden is planning to take part during the period of October 2023 by a two-hour session in both Skellefteå and AWL UMEÅ to reach and to collect information from different people index areas of Region Västerbotten. The session has the planning structured as follows:

- Welcome with snacks; signing of all consent forms and authorizations.
- Presentation of participants
- Discussion focused on barriers for the participation of women in politics.
- Discussion focused on strategies for the participation of women in politics.
- Closing of the session

The session is planning to involve eight participants with experience in politics, including political party members, community leaders and activists. Participants were selected assuring diversity of in terms of age, origin, background, and territorial representation within Region Västerbotten

The session is going to be facilitated by:

- *Lead facilitator:* Annica Simonsson, Region Västerbotten
- *Lead researcher:* Annica Simonsson, Region Västerbotten
- *Rapporteur:* Annica Simonsson, Region Västerbotten

## 4.3 Results of the focus group: barriers, strategies and experiences faced by eight women leaders.

### 4.3.1 Gender bias and stereotypes

Sweden is often described as a pioneering country when it comes to gender equality representation. Since the 1990s, more than 40 percent of the members of the Riksdag have been women and the governments have been largely equal numerically. One however, equal political leadership is not only about the gender distribution of men and women in leading positions (numerical equality), but also about the conditions for achieving and exercising leadership must be equal for men and women. In these respects, the research points to remaining gender equality problems in terms of political leadership in Sweden.

#### **Examples / Experiences:**

- Women have in some respects more difficult to advance to ministerial posts.
- Women may be stereotyped as less competent or less ambitious than men, which may discourage them from pursuing leadership roles
- State grants to women's organizations have almost doubled, from 28 million to 48 million

#### **Strategies / Solutions:**

- To talk more about challenges and situations in everyday work environment and work on these issues
- In Sweden there is significant number of funds available to Women organisations in order to work on such issues
- There is a need for more support from the states to families and promote more to the society that women should have the same obligations and the same career opportunities as men.



### 4.3.2 Role models

Sweden has more and more female role models every year, but still the difference between political and leading man and women is a gap.

#### Examples / Experiences :

- The election of the first woman as prime minister in Sweden, Magdalena Andersson coincides with the year of democracy 2021, in commemoration of the 100 years since both women and men were allowed to vote in elections to the Riksdag for the first time.
- when there are few women in leadership positions, it can be difficult for other women to see themselves in those roles.

### 4.3.3 Work-life balance, hostile work environment and systemic barriers and administrative vs. decision-making roles

- There is the struggle with multitasking, it is difficult to combine job and family with participation in political domain.
- In 2022, women's wages in Sweden were approximately 10 percent lower than men's. And women's disposable income did not reach 80 percent of men's
- Women in political domain are always asked how they combine their multiple roles ( wife, mother, professional) while men are never asked questions like this.
- There is still a significant gender gap in this area based on traditions and conservative ideas

### 4.3.4 Media influence

For participants in the focus group, it is clear that media channels have great importance in relation to the subject of female representation in public and political spheres as they actively contribute to shaping and influencing public's opinion on how public figures are perceived. In connection with the 2022 election, it became clear that politicians' communication with voters is increasingly taking place via social media. At the same time,

hatred and threats on these channels have become more common. While both female and male politicians both are targeted and affected by hate speech and such discourses, studies show that women are exposed to different types of violations and that women are particularly vulnerable due to an accumulation of different factors of oppression. The effects of hatred, threats and sexual harassment for democracy and women's and men's equal opportunities and conditions to participate in politics need to be investigated more. Women's greater vulnerability and thus worse conditions in politics need to be highlighted in ways as to establish measures so that women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

A lot of times media highlight the appearance of women rather than their actual capacities. Media news and updated often discuss about what women politicians are wearing, if they are beautiful, young, etc. while this is rarely the focus when it comes to male candidates. That is, it becomes clear that there is a need to talk more about how to create a more evolved and inclusive society based on competences.

#### 4.3.5 Inclusive and supportive environments

The conclusions which emerged out of the focus group point out that while Sweden has come a long way in this matter, there is still a lot of work to be done, especially in the sub-goals and for significant measures to support and promote women's participation at political level and within the political parties themselves.

After the 2022 election, there will continue to be equal representation of women and men in the Riksdag and in the regional councils. In the country's municipal councils, the combined proportion of women and men is equal, but there are large differences between the municipalities and the parties. The difference between how women and men voted in the 2022 election was the largest measured since the polls began. The gender differences are greatest among the youngest voters. The 2022 election campaign was marked by a strong focus on law and order, migration and energy, areas in which men are traditionally more interested and go in line with the idea of men as providers of security and protection.

In terms of strategies identified, focus group results show the need to raise the issue with the quotas which often result in involving women in political parties and elections for marketing and strategic reasons as to attract female voters and not for women's actual actions and capacities.

Developments in business have stagnated in terms of women's representation on boards and management teams. In 2022, the EU directive was adopted on a 40 percent quota for the underrepresented gender on listed company boards.

## 5 Results of the questionnaire “Perceptions and attitudes on women's political participation”

### 5.1 Structure of the questionnaire and its analysis

As part of the research to further study the barriers and strategies underlying the political participation of women in Sweden, we conducted a questionnaire on “Perceptions and attitudes on women's political participation”. The questionnaire was released during April 2023 through mailings and social networks and was answered anonymously. In this section we present the results of the questionnaire, aimed at understanding voters' perceptions about the participation of women in politics and leadership positions. The study was designed to shed light on the respondents' attitudes towards various aspects of gender equality in the political sphere, including gender bias, role models, work-life balance, and strategies to enhance female representation.

A total of **61** individuals participated in the survey, including a mix of men and women from diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, and political affiliations. The survey comprised a series of 38 questions, where respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), as follows:

- Totally disagree.
- Disagree
- I am not sure.
- Agree
- Totally agree.

We analyzed results based on two focuses:

- By overall responses regarding the different barriers and strategies:
  - Bias and stereotypes (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9)
  - Role models (Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13)
  - Double standards and scrutiny (Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17)
  - Work-life Bbalance (Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21)
  - Other barriers (hostile work environments, media portrayals, cultural norms, etc.) (Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q32, Q33, Q34)
  - Strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38)
- By demographic characteristics of the respondents:
  - All respondents
  - By gender (men / women)
  - By age (under 40 / 40 and over)
  - By education level (non-tertiary education / university degree or higher)
  - By political affiliation (left / non-disclosure or other)

In the analysis by demographic group, questions were grouped into four categories:

- 22 questions with a negative correlation to gender equality (a high score means less gender equality)
- 11 questions with a positive correlation to gender equality (a high score means more gender equality)
- 1 question on perception on leadership style differences between men and women
- 4 questions related to strategies to overcome gender inequality in politics.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked open ended questions about additional barriers and strategies, which were also analyzed to identify additional information relevant to our research.

## 1.2 Demographics of respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were as follows:

- Total Respondents: **61** individuals
- Place of residence: most of all respondents resided in Sweden (1 Luleå, 3 Lycksele, 9 Skellefteå, 1 Sorsele, 1 Stockholm, 2 Storuman, 1 Sundbyberg, 1 Tärnaby, 38 Umeå, 1 Vilhelmina Och 1 Väannes). Övriga; 1 Köln.
- Gender:
  - Men: 11 respondents, making up approximately 18 % of the total participants.
  - Women: 49 respondents, constituting approximately 80 % of the total participants.
  - Non-binary: 1
- Age:
  - The average age of respondents was from 24-75 years.
  - The youngest respondent was 24 years old and the oldest was 75 years old.
  - The median age of respondents was 45 years.
- Education:
  - Primary Education: 0 respondents (~0% of the total participants)
  - Secondary Education: 5 respondents (~8% of the total participants)
  - Post-secondary education (non-tertiary): 7 respondents (~11% of the total participants)
  - Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent: 22 respondents (~36% of the total participants)
  - Master's Degree or Equivalent: 20 respondents (~32% of the total participants)
  - Doctoral Degree or Equivalent: 7 respondents (~11% of the total participants)

Political Affiliation:

- Did not respond: 31 respondents (~50% of the total participants)
- Left: 20 respondents (~32% of the total participants)
- Right: 10 respondents (~16% of the total participants)

It should be noted that the political affiliation question was optional, and therefore, a significant number of respondents (approximately 50%) chose not to disclose their political leanings. The majority of those who did disclose their political affiliations leaned towards the left.

## 1.3 Overall results regarding barriers and strategies

### 5.3.1 Interpretation of results by barrier

Based on the average responses to the questions by all respondents, the following interpretations can be made:

**Bias and stereotypes (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9).** On average, respondents seem to recognize that gender bias and stereotypes negatively impact women in politics, with a strong agreement that stereotypes about women's abilities (Q1: 52%), perception of women as emotional decision-makers (Q2: 60%), and the need for women to downplay their femininity (Q3: 67%) hinder their progress in politics. However, they also showed strong agreement that women are as capable as men in political leadership roles (Q4: 91%), and that diverse representation in leadership positions is important (Q6: 86%). The respondents disagreed with the statement that men candidates are usually better qualified (Q5: 65%). Witnessing or experiencing gender bias or discrimination in politics (Q7: 65%) and feeling discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of gender (Q8: 27%) were also acknowledged, but to a lesser extent.

**Role models (Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13).** The presence of women in political leadership roles as a source of inspiration for other women to pursue political careers received strong agreement (Q10: 95%). Respondents somewhat agreed with the availability of women political role models in their country (Q11: 70%) and having had a female role model or mentor in a leadership position (Q12: 63%). The statement that women frequently occupy leadership positions in their workplace or community (Q13: 72%) received moderate agreement.

**Double standards and scrutiny (Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17).** There was strong agreement that women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men (Q14: 80%), and that they are more likely to be criticized for their personal life choices compared to men (Q15: 80%). The respondents also agreed strongly that women are held to higher standards

or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles (Q16: 73%), and that women in leadership face a "double bind" where they are expected to be both assertive and nurturing (Q17: 67%). **Work-life balance (Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21).** There's a moderate to strong agreement that it's challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to other career choices (Q18: 59%), and in comparison, to their male counterparts (Q19: 65%). There's strong support for the implementation of family-friendly policies in political organizations (Q20: 70%), and moderate agreement that respondents have felt they had to choose between family responsibilities and pursuing a leadership role (Q21: 40%).

**Other Barriers (Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q32, Q33, Q34).** On average, the respondents agree that wage disparities exist between men and women politicians (Q22: 47%) and that women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, than their male counterparts (Q23: 77%). There's moderate agreement about witnessing or experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace or politics (Q24: 52%), and strong agreement that women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience (Q25: 63%). There's also substantial agreement that women in political organizations are often limited to administrative roles instead of decision-making positions (Q26: 39%). The highest level of agreement is seen regarding the need for political organizations to actively promote women to decision-making roles to achieve gender equality (Q27: 67%). Respondents tend to agree that they have seen women being talked over or interrupted in meetings or discussions more frequently than their male counterparts (Q28: 73%), and that societal norms and expectations limit women's political aspirations and opportunities (Q29: 67%). Traditional gender roles and expectations discouraging women from pursuing political careers also get substantial agreement (Q30: 70%). On the other hand, respondents are inclined to disagree that the cultural norms in their country support women's participation in politics (Q31: 70%), and there's stronger disagreement that there are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in their community (Q32: 39%). Respondents strongly disagree that the media in their country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately (Q33: 29%), and they moderately agree that media coverage of women in politics often focuses on their appearance rather than their achievements and qualifications (Q34: 57%).

### 5.3.2 Interpretation of results by strategy

The strategies suggested (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38) to increase the representation of women in leadership positions were highly rated by respondents, showing a strong consensus on the need for proactive measures:

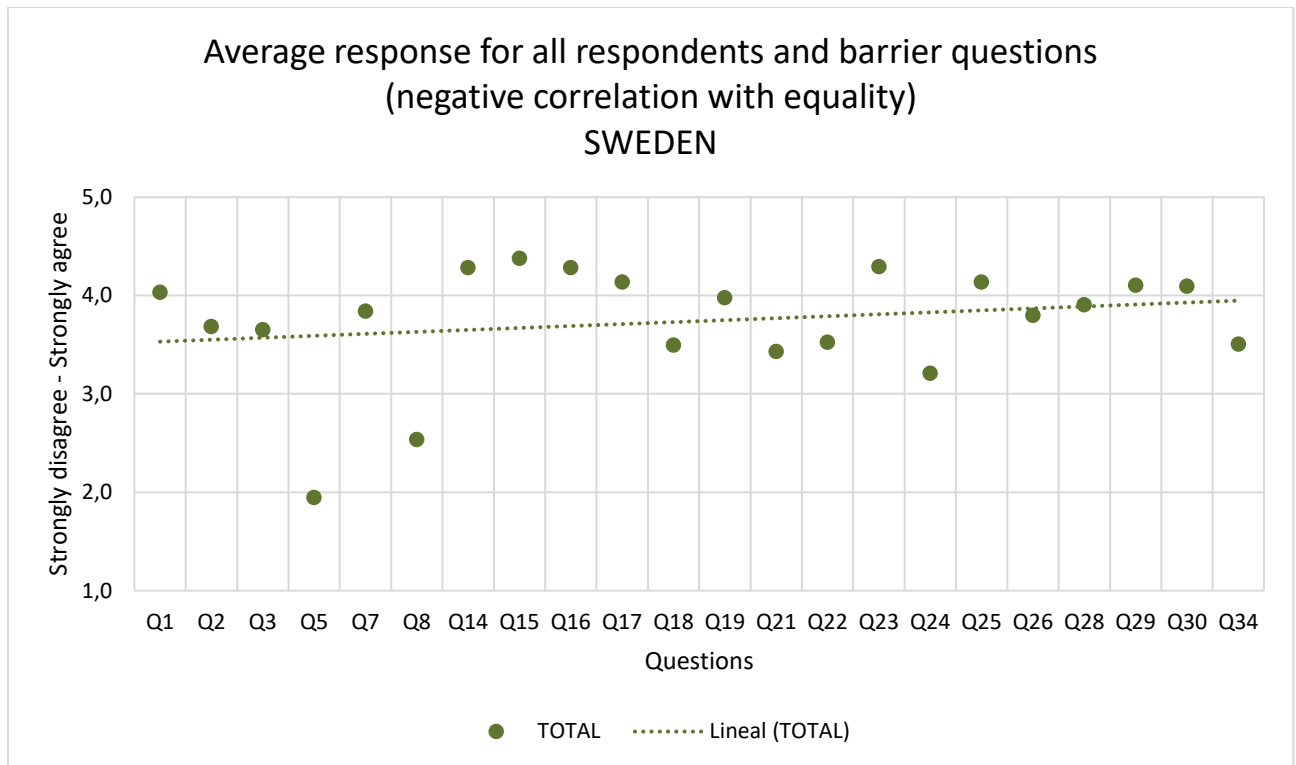
- **Encourage women to pursue leadership roles from a young age (Q35):** With an average rating of 83%, respondents showed strong agreement on the importance of encouraging women from a young age to consider leadership roles. This could potentially counteract societal norms and stereotypes that discourage women from seeing themselves as leaders.
- **Implement diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and in politics (Q36):** This question received one of the highest ratings in the survey with an average of 81%, suggesting a strong consensus among respondents on the need for policy interventions to promote diversity and inclusion. Such policies could include gender quotas, affirmative action, and measures to ensure a safe and supportive work environment.
- **Provide mentorship and support for women in leadership positions (Q37):** With an average rating of 73%, respondents agreed on the importance of mentorship and support systems for women in leadership. This highlights the need for networking opportunities, training programs, and other forms of support that could help women build confidence, acquire necessary skills, and navigate the challenges they may face as leaders.
- **Engage in awareness raising campaigns (Q38):** The average rating of 67% indicates that respondents believe in the effectiveness of awareness-raising campaigns in changing perceptions and attitudes towards women in politics and leadership. This could include campaigns to highlight the achievements of women leaders, challenge gender stereotypes, and promote the benefits of diversity in leadership.

Overall, the data suggests that respondents recognize the existence of gender inequality in politics and leadership and believe in the need for proactive strategies to address this issue. They strongly agree on the importance of early encouragement, policy interventions, mentorship and support, and awareness raising as effective strategies to increase women's representation in leadership positions.

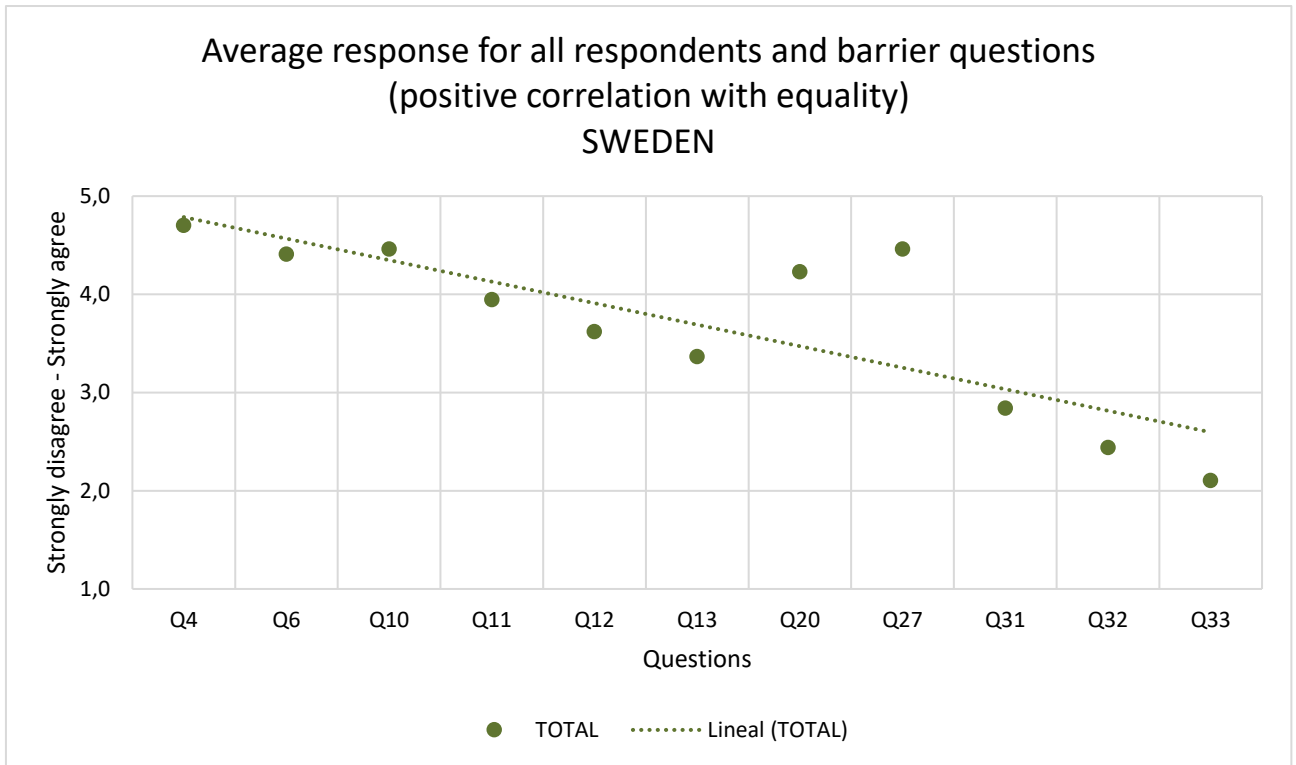


## 1.4 Results by demographic groups

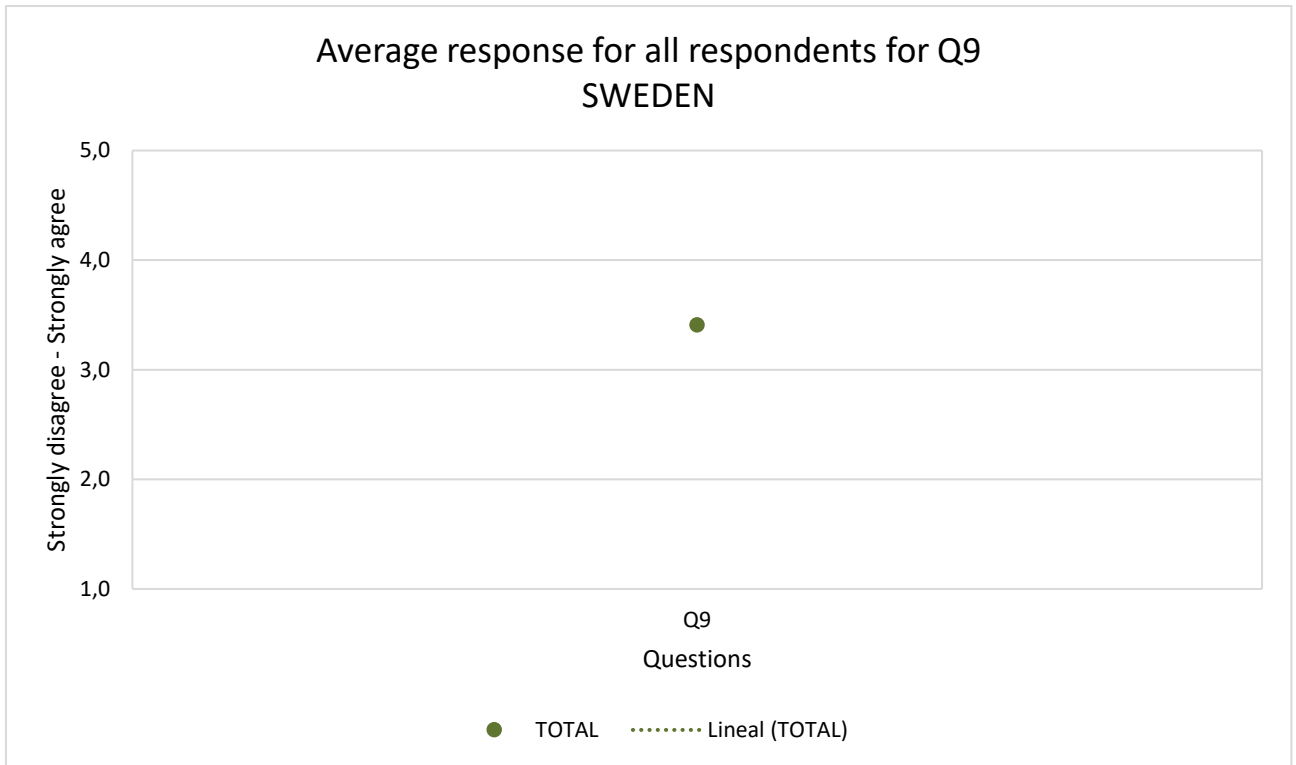
### 1.4.1 Interpretation of results for all respondents



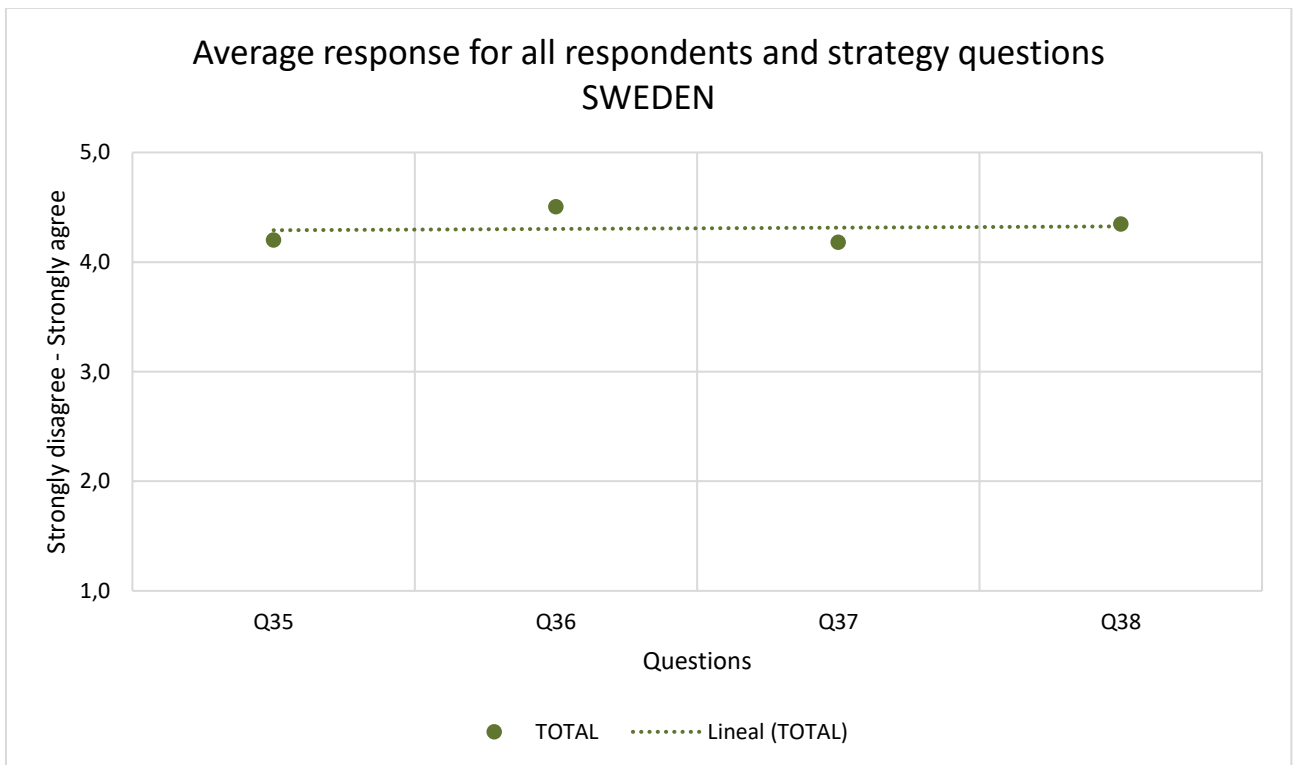
Respondent's answers to barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). The average responses to these questions suggest that the respondents generally recognize and acknowledge the existence of gender bias and inequality in politics. For instance, they agree that stereotypes about women's abilities hinder their progress in politics (Q1:), women politicians are often criticized for their personal life choices compared to men (Q15:), and that women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles (Q16:). However, it's important to note that not all respondents appear to have personally experienced these biases. For example, the responses to Q8 suggest that most respondents have not felt discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of their gender (Q8:).



Respondent’s answers to barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). The responses to these questions show a generally positive attitude towards women in politics and leadership roles. Respondents strongly agree that women are as capable as men in political leadership roles (Q4: ), and that having diverse representation in leadership positions is important (Q6: ). They also generally agree with the notion that more women in political leadership positions would inspire other women to pursue political careers (Q10: ). However, there are areas of concern, particularly with respect to existing conditions. For instance, respondents generally disagreed with the statement that there are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in their community (Q32: ), and that the media in their country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately (Q33: ).

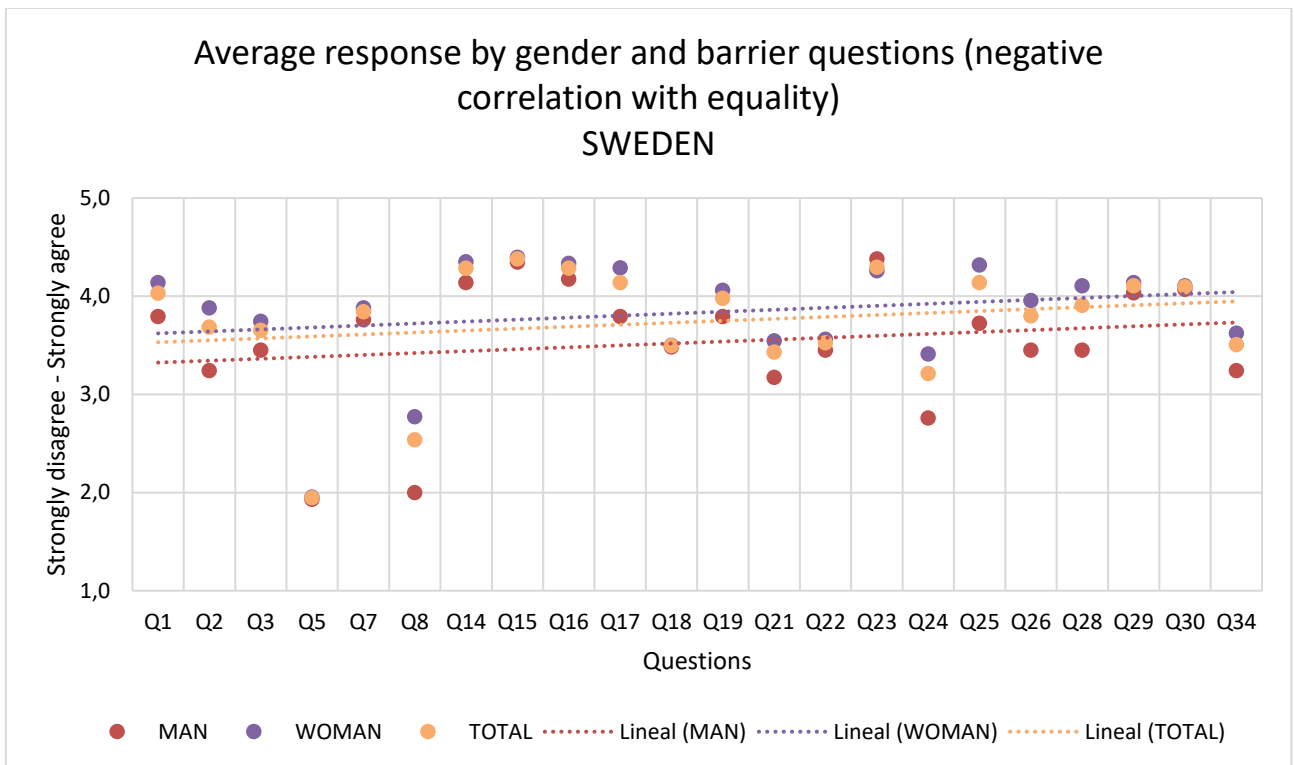


**Respondent's answers to Q9.** The response to Q9, which states that men and women have different leadership styles, is somewhat neutral (3.4). This suggests that respondents are somewhat uncertain or divided about whether gender influences leadership style.



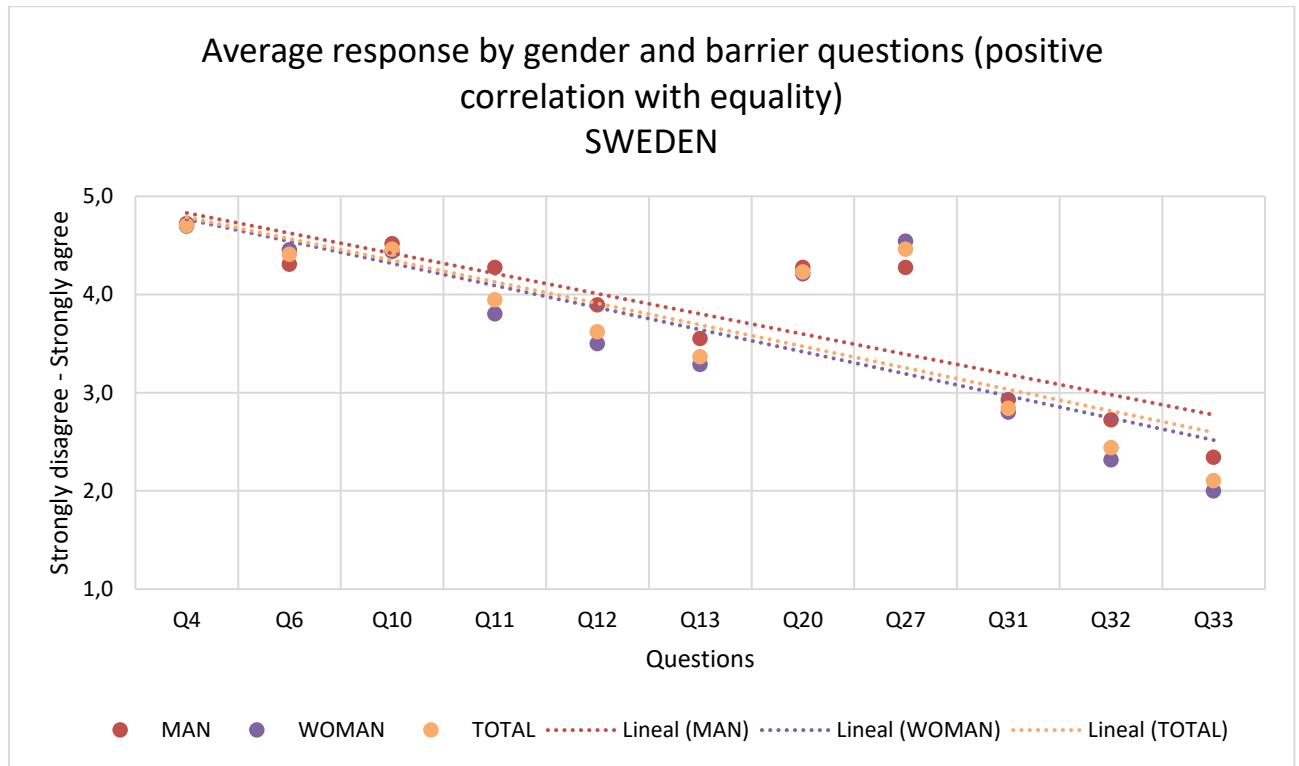
**Respondent's answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38).** The responses to these questions suggest that respondents strongly support measures aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership positions. These include encouraging women to pursue leadership roles from a young age (Q35:), implementing diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and politics (Q36: ), providing mentorship and support for women in leadership positions (Q37: ), and engaging in awareness-raising campaigns (Q38: ). Overall, the survey results suggest a recognition of gender inequality in politics and support for measures to increase women's representation in leadership roles. However, they also highlight perceived barriers and challenges, such as gender bias, media representation, and lack of equal opportunities.

### 5.4.2 Interpretation of results by gender

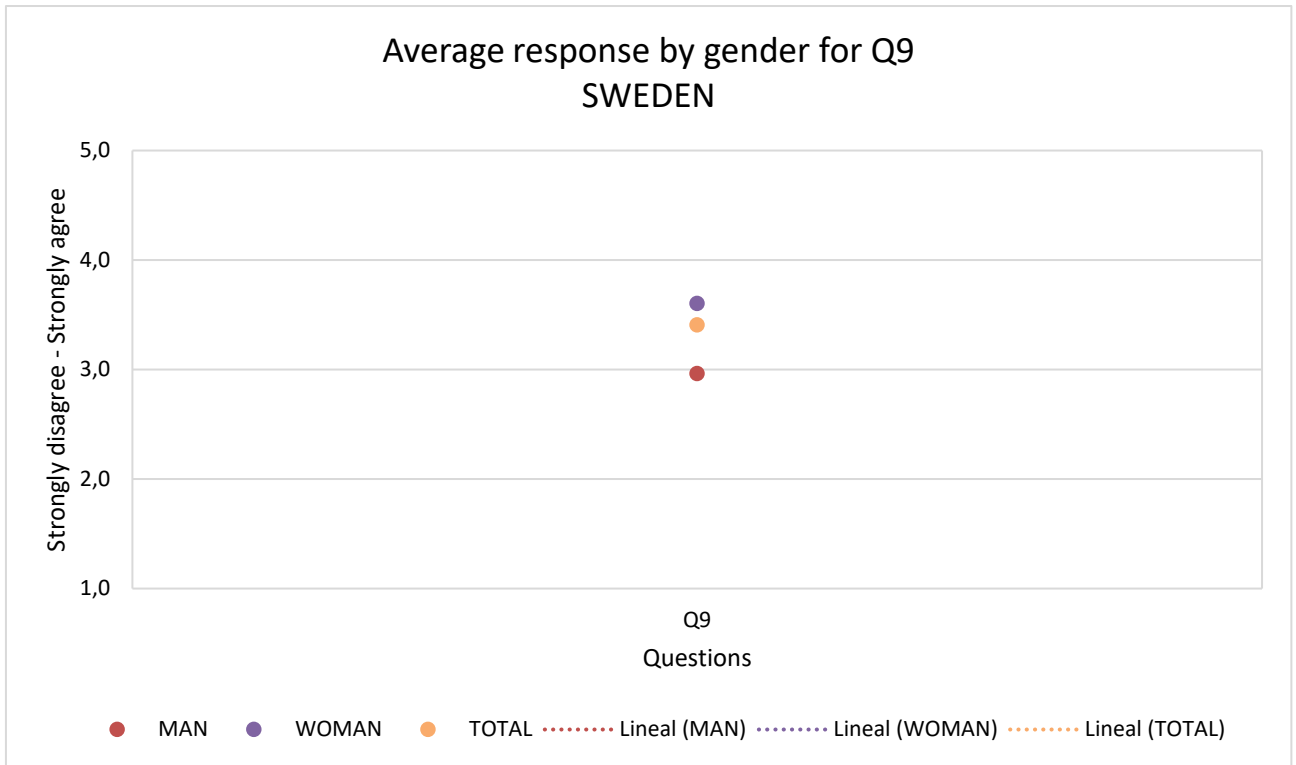


**Barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality:** For questions relating to barriers and biases that hinder gender equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34), women generally expressed higher levels of agreement than men. This could suggest that women are more aware of, or have experienced more, the gender biases and stereotypes prevalent in the political sphere. Notably, the widest gender discrepancies were observed in Q2 (women are perceived as emotional decision-makers: men X, women X) and Q24 (witnessed/experienced

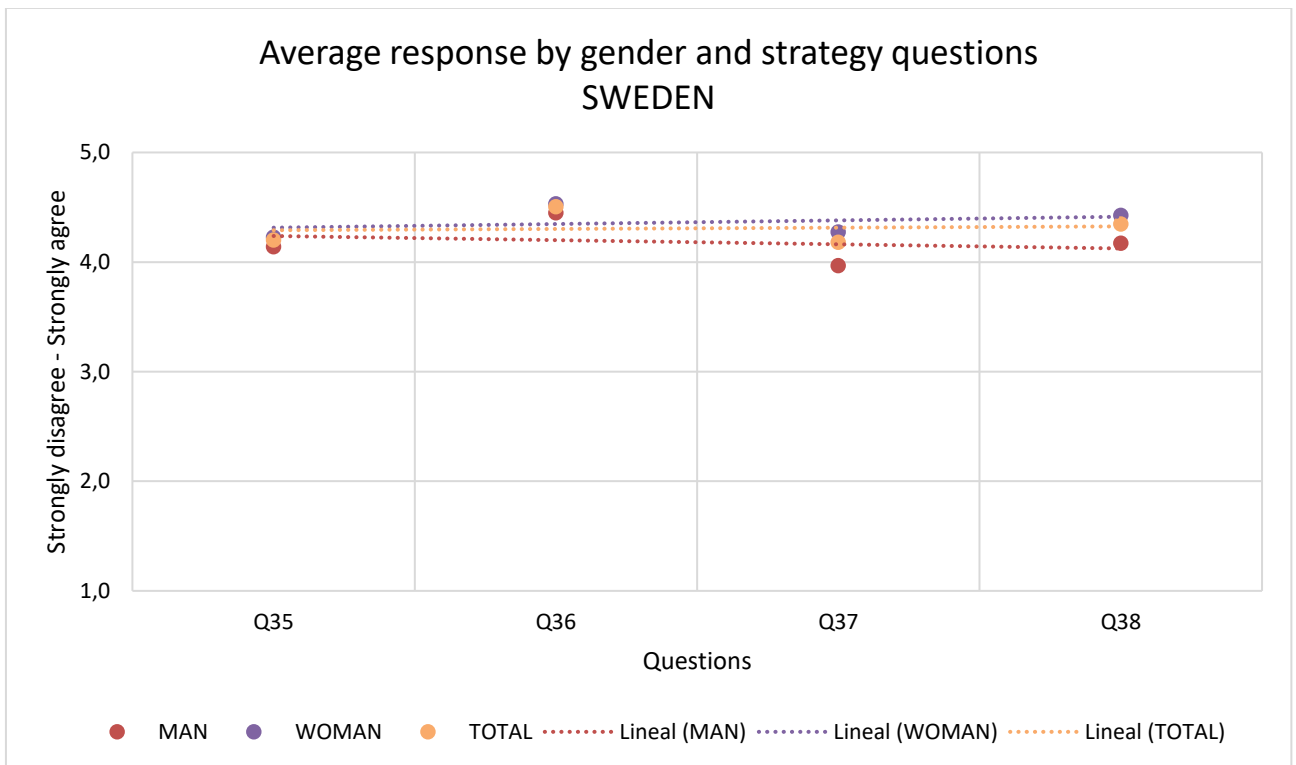
sexual harassment: men X, women X). This divergence might indicate that women perceive these specific issues as more significant barriers than men do.



**Barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality.** For questions highlighting positive aspects or advancements toward gender equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33), both genders generally exhibited high levels of agreement. Interestingly, men appeared more optimistic about the presence of female role models in political leadership (Q11: men X, women X) and their personal experiences with women role models or mentors (Q12: men X, women X). This could imply that men perceive greater gender balance in politics than women do.



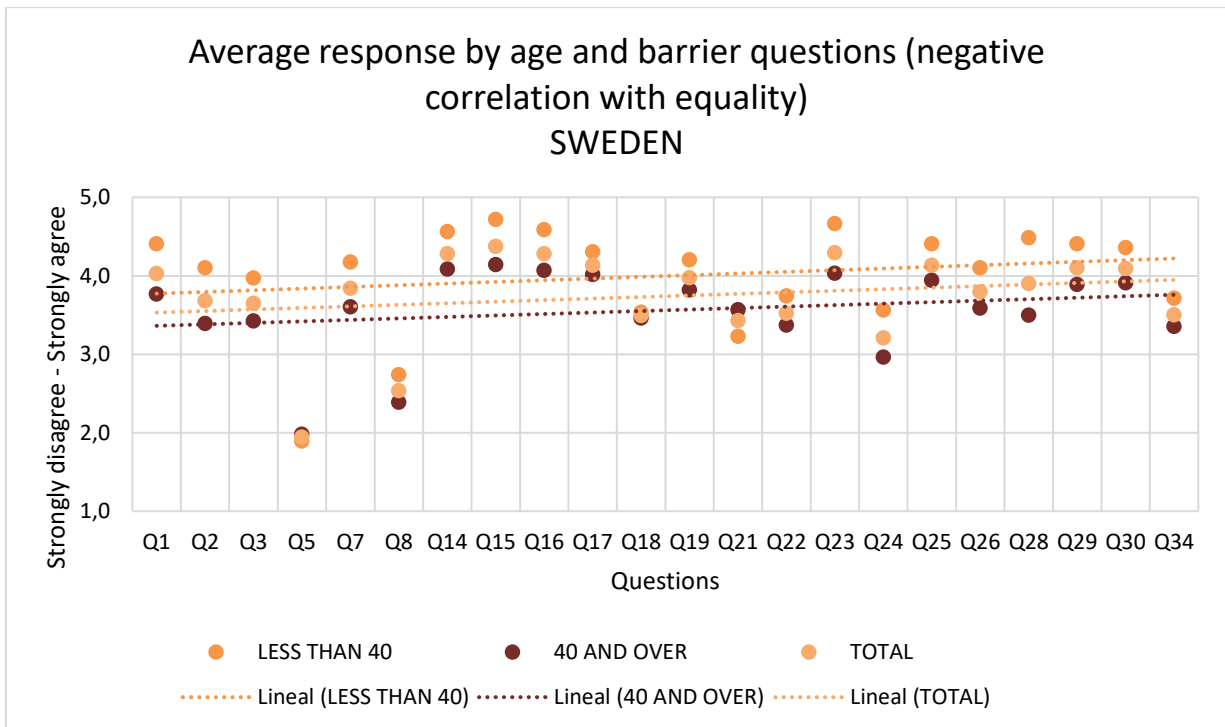
**Perception of leadership styles (Q9).** When asked whether men and women have different leadership styles (Q9), women (X) agreed more than men (X). This suggests that women may perceive more gender-based differences in leadership styles compared to men.



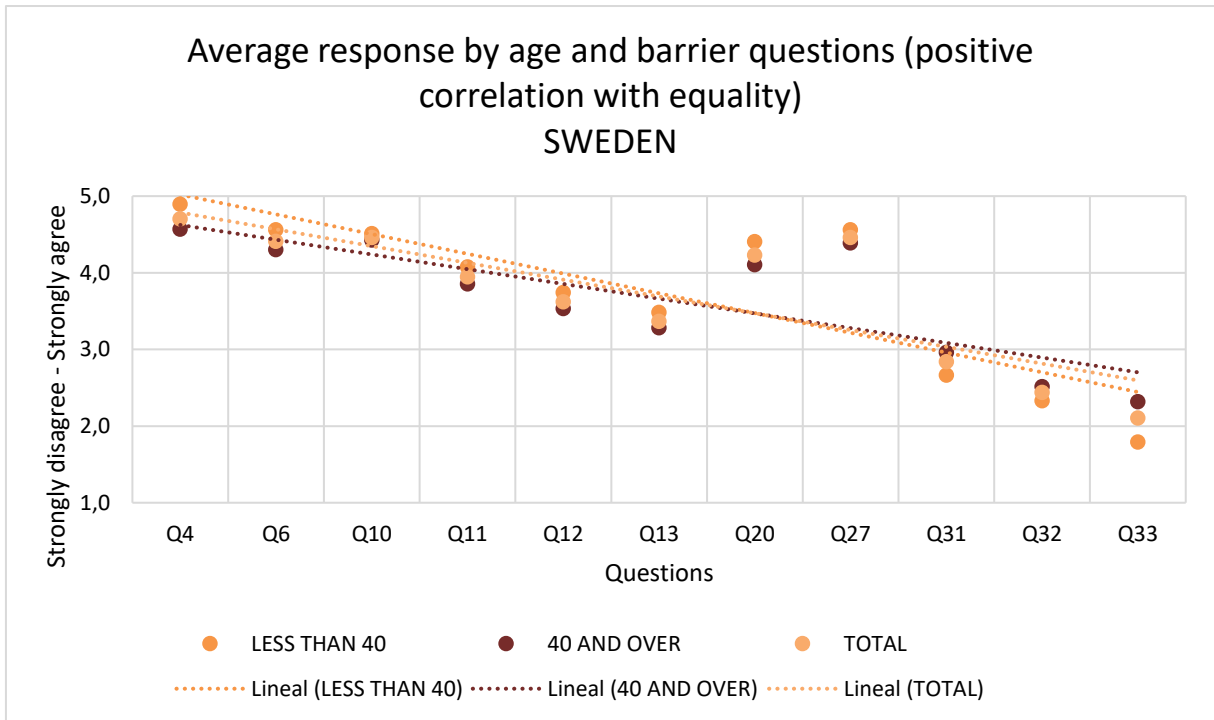
**Strategies to overcome inequality.** In response to strategies for overcoming gender inequality (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38), both genders demonstrated strong agreement, with women marginally more supportive. This indicates a shared understanding of the need for active measures to improve female representation in political leadership.

Overall difference in responses by gender  
 Overall, women tended to score higher in recognizing barriers to equality and supporting strategies for gender balance. This could reflect their personal experiences or heightened awareness of gender biases. Men, while recognizing these barriers, reported a slightly more optimistic view of gender balance in the political sphere.

### 5.4.2 Interpretation of results by age

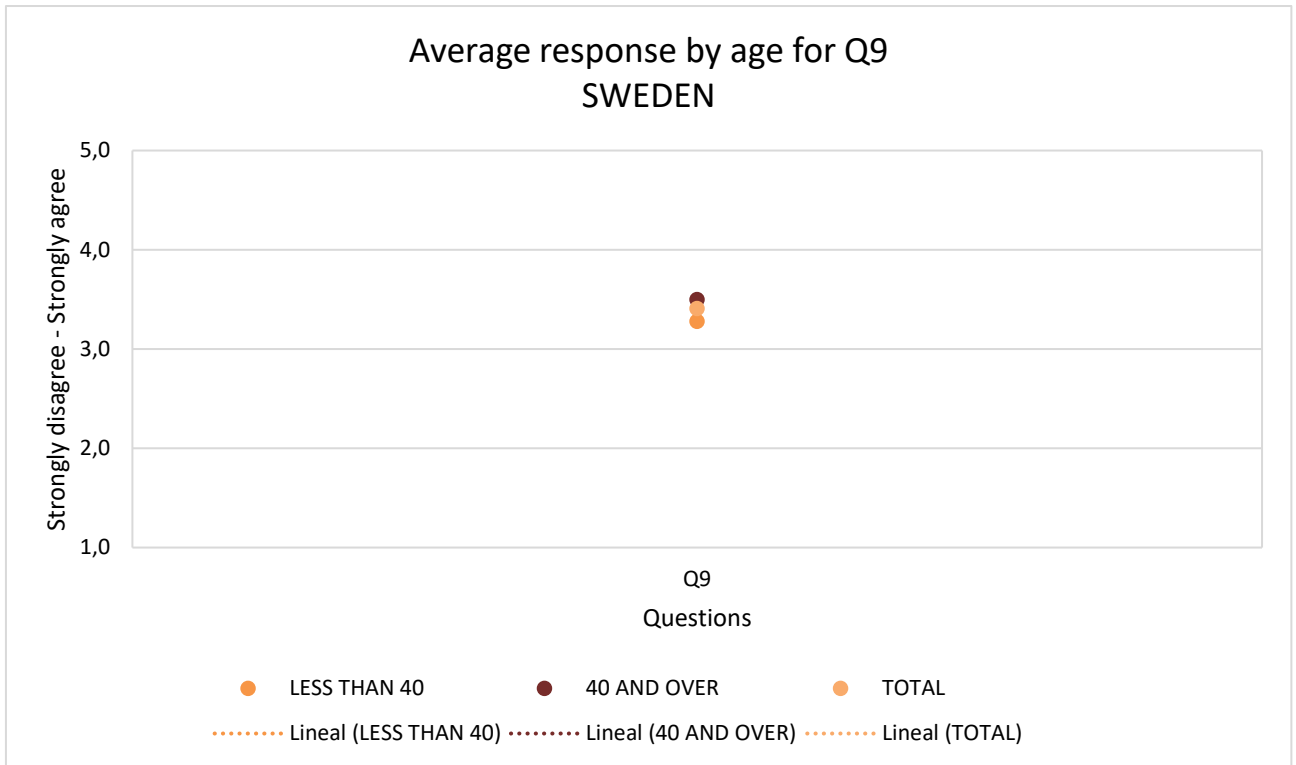


Barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). Generally, respondents under 40 agreed more strongly with these statements, implying they perceive more gender-based bias and inequality in the political field. This could reflect younger generations being more sensitized and aware of gender bias and inequalities. This heightened awareness could also be due to more exposure to social issues through education and digital media.

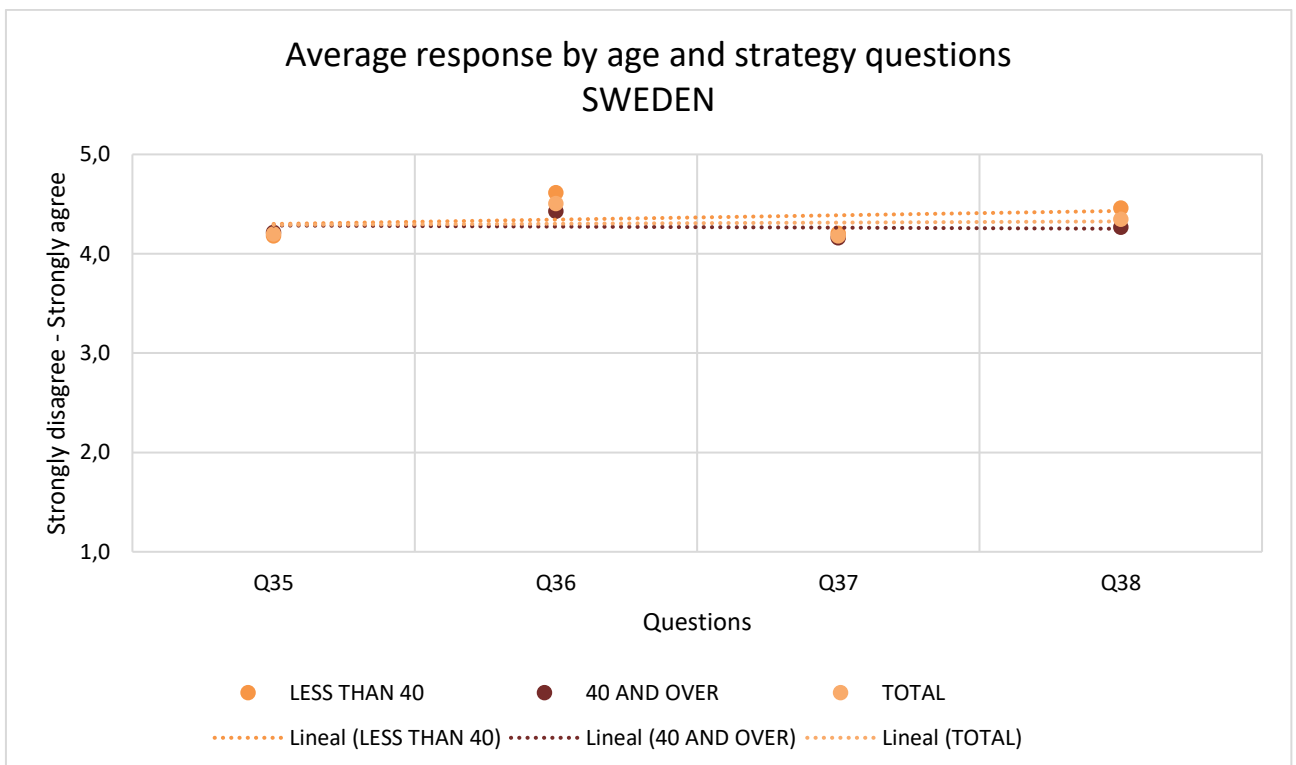


**Barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33).** In contrast to the previous set of questions, respondents under 40 also agreed more strongly with statements positively correlated with gender equality. They showed stronger belief in the capabilities of women in political leadership (Q4), the importance of diverse representation (Q6), the inspiring effect of women in politics (Q10), and the necessity of family-friendly policies in political organizations (Q20). This suggests a greater openness to gender equality and diversity among younger respondents.





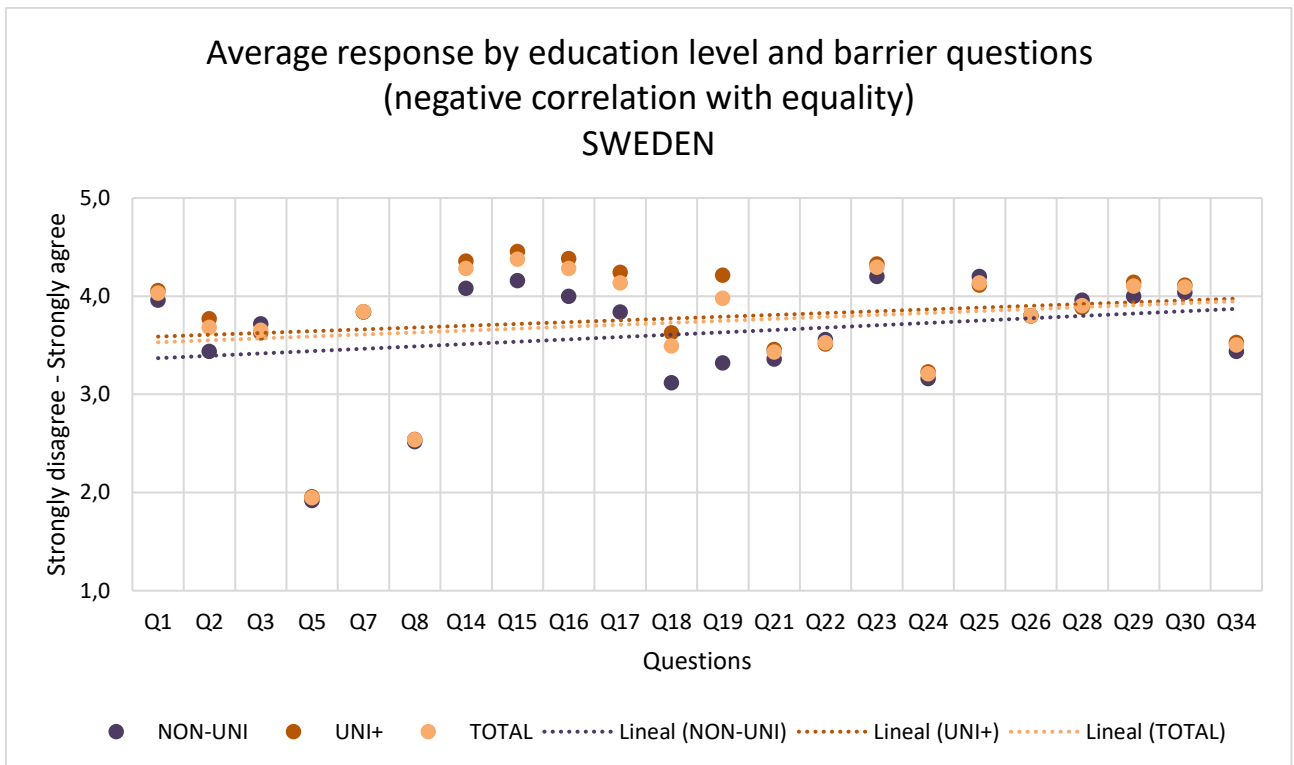
**Respondents' answers to Q9.** There was not a significant difference between the two age groups' responses to Q9. Both groups slightly agreed that men and women have different leadership styles. This suggests that the perception of different leadership styles between genders is not strongly influenced by age



**Respondents' answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38).** Again, younger respondents generally agreed more strongly with the proposed strategies to increase women's representation in leadership positions. This could reflect a more proactive attitude towards achieving gender equality among younger generations.

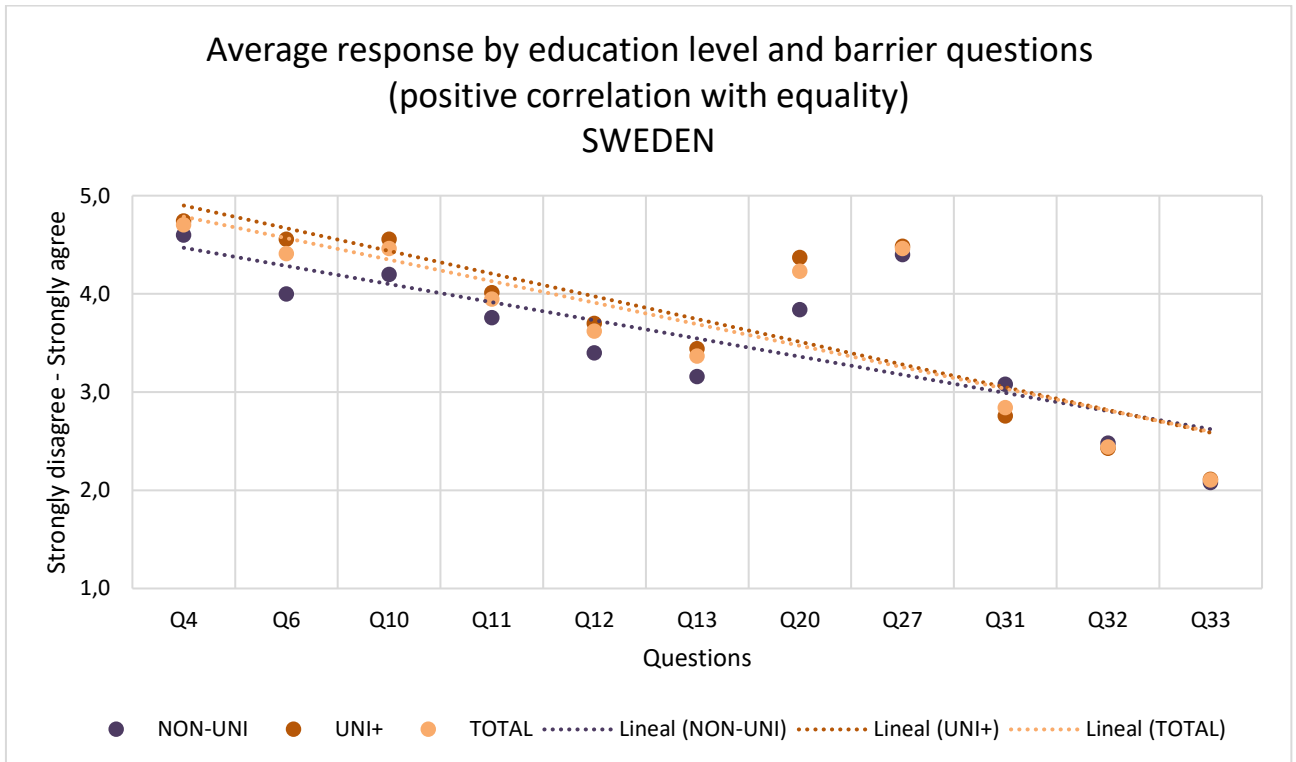
Overall difference in responses by age  
 In summary, younger respondents (less than 40 years old) tend to perceive gender inequality in politics more acutely and are more supportive of strategies to overcome these inequalities compared to older respondents. This difference may be due to a variety of factors, including heightened awareness of gender issues among younger generations, changes in societal attitudes towards gender equality, and the influence of education and digital media.

### 5.4.3 Interpretation of results by educational level

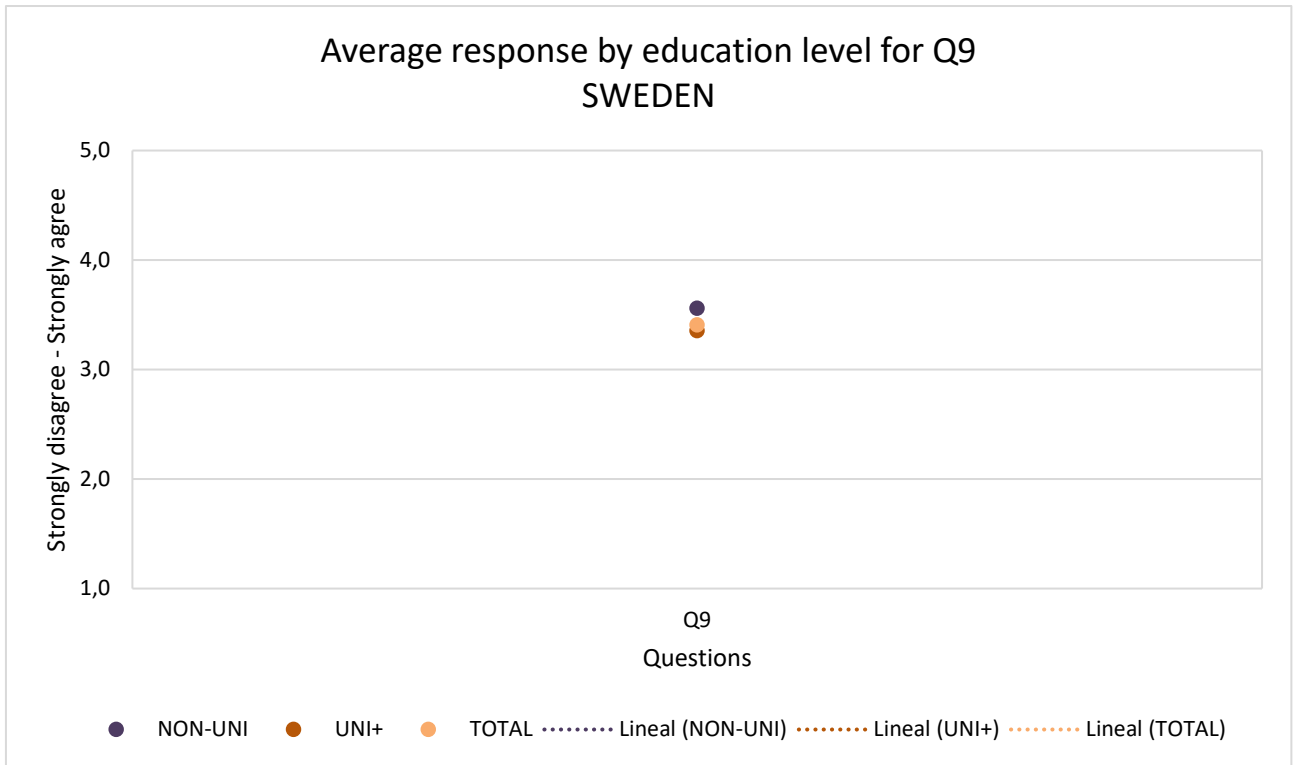


Respondent's answers to barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). For most questions, respondents with university education and above (UNI+) tend to agree slightly more with the statements, indicating a higher perception of gender bias and stereotypes in politics than those with non-university education. For

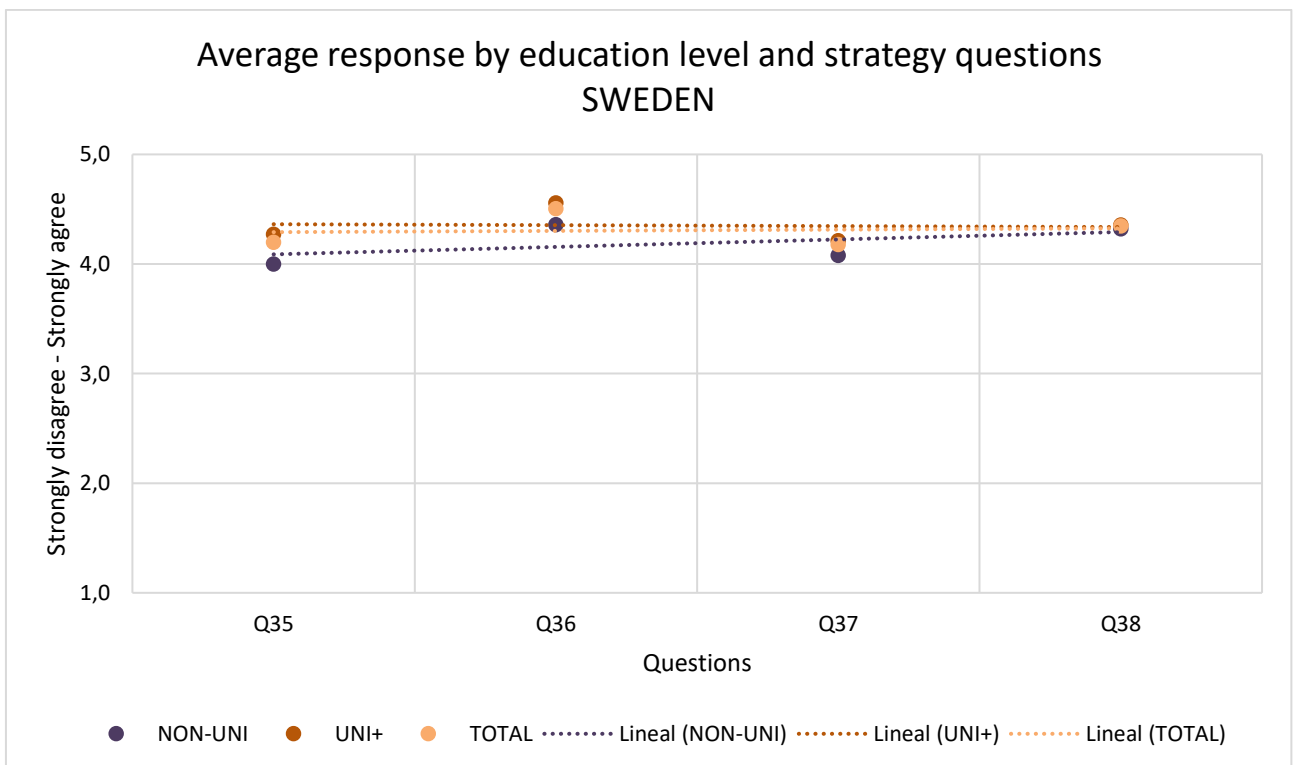
example, for Q1 (stereotypes about women's abilities hinder their progress in politics), the UNI+ group average score was X, while the non-UNI group scored an average of X. This pattern repeats across most of the negatively correlated questions. One of the most significant differences is found in Q19 (It is more challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to their men counterparts) where the UNI+ group scored X, significantly higher than the non-UNI group's X. This could be due to a higher awareness of gender disparities in the UNI+ group.



Respondent's answers to barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). In general, the UNI+ group agreed more strongly with these positively correlated statements, indicating a higher belief in gender equality and the importance of women's participation in politics. For instance, for Q6 (Having diverse representation in leadership positions is important), the UNI+ group average score was X, compared to X for the non-UNI group. This could suggest that the UNI+ group is more conscious of the importance of diversity in leadership roles.



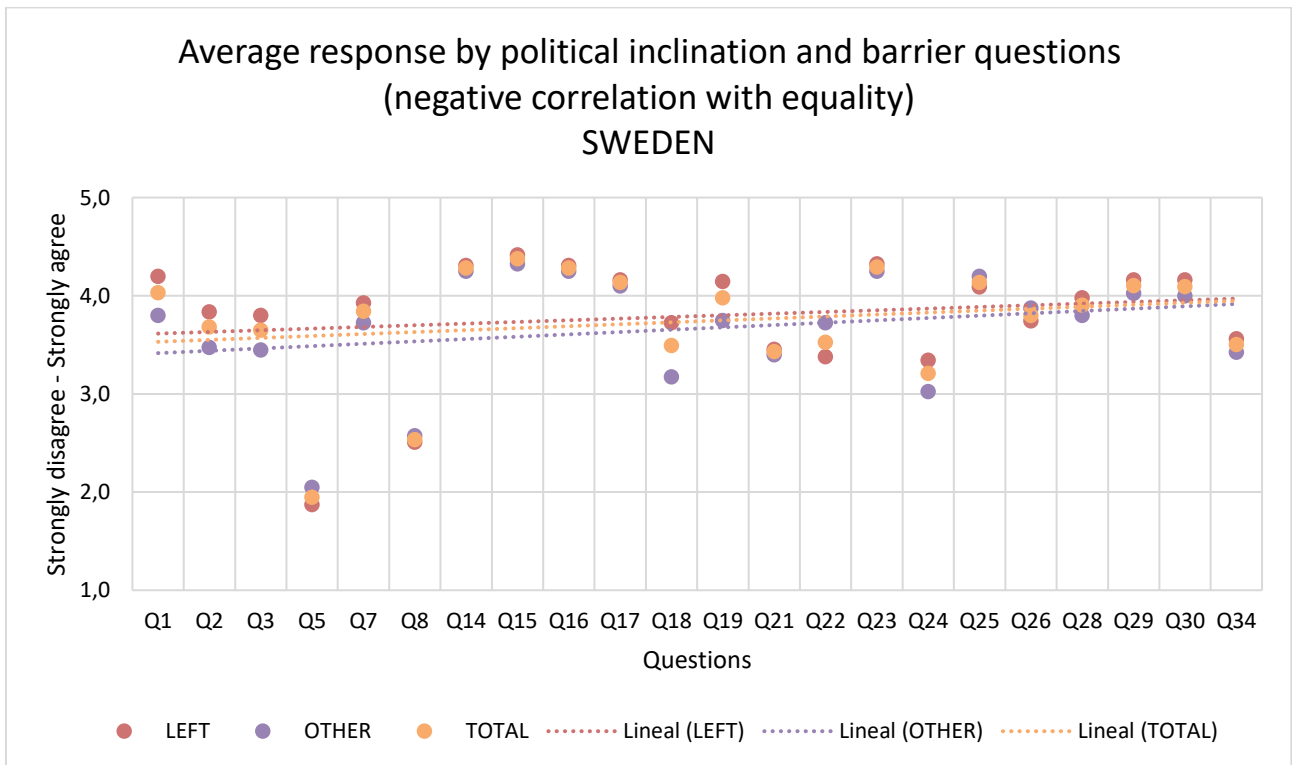
**Respondent's answers to Q9.** Q9 (Men and women have different leadership styles) received similar scores from both the non-UNI (X) and UNI+ (X) groups. This suggests a shared perception across both groups that men and women slightly exhibit different leadership styles.



**Respondent's answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38).** Both groups agreed strongly with the strategies proposed to increase representation of women in leadership positions. However, the UNI+ group generally agreed more strongly. For example, on Q36 (implement diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and in politics), the UNI+ group scored an average of X compared to X from the non-UNI group. This may suggest a slightly stronger belief in proactive measures to promote gender equality among the UNI+ group.

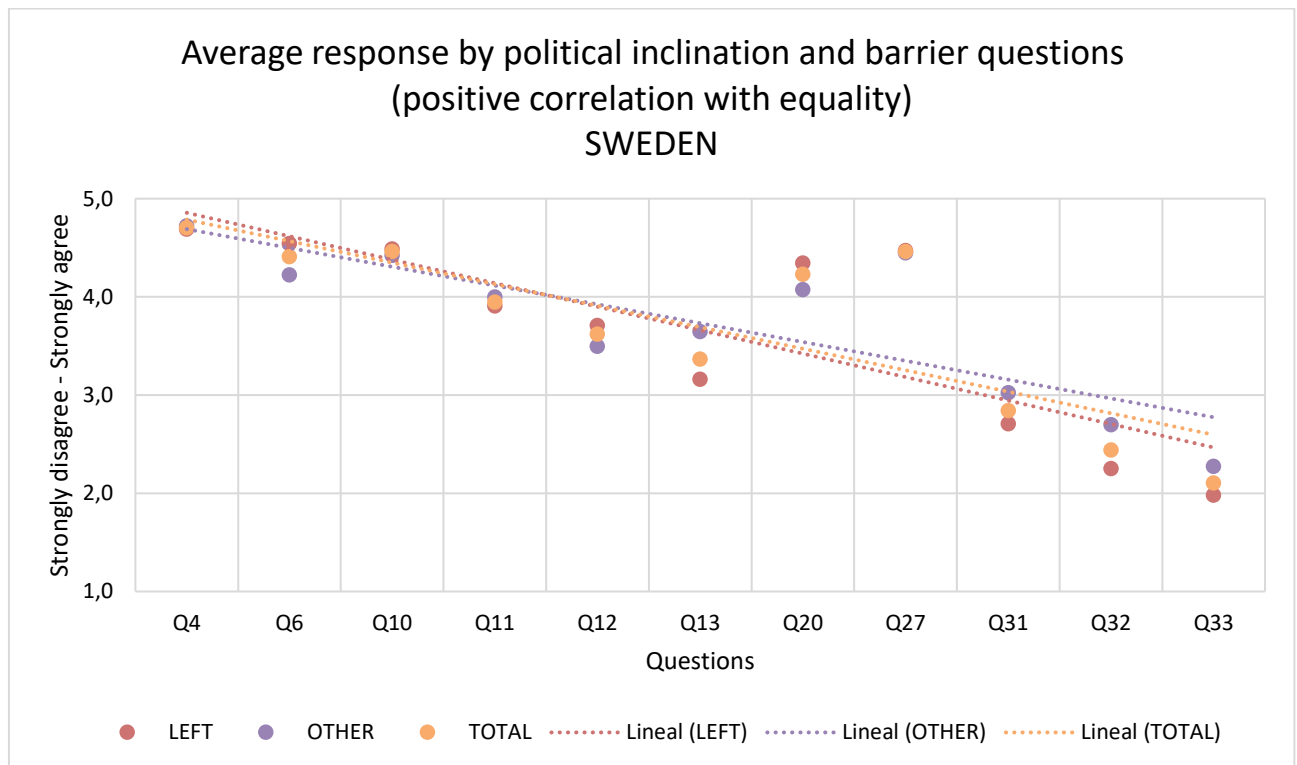
Interpretation of results by political inclination

**Overall difference in responses by educational level**  
 Overall, respondents with university education (UNI+) tended to agree more with both negatively correlated and positively correlated statements about gender bias, stereotypes, and strategies to increase women's participation in politics. This could suggest that those with higher education are more aware of the complexities of gender inequality and the need for active strategies to promote gender equality. Conversely, those with non-university education tended to give slightly lower scores, possibly indicating less awareness or agreement with these issues.

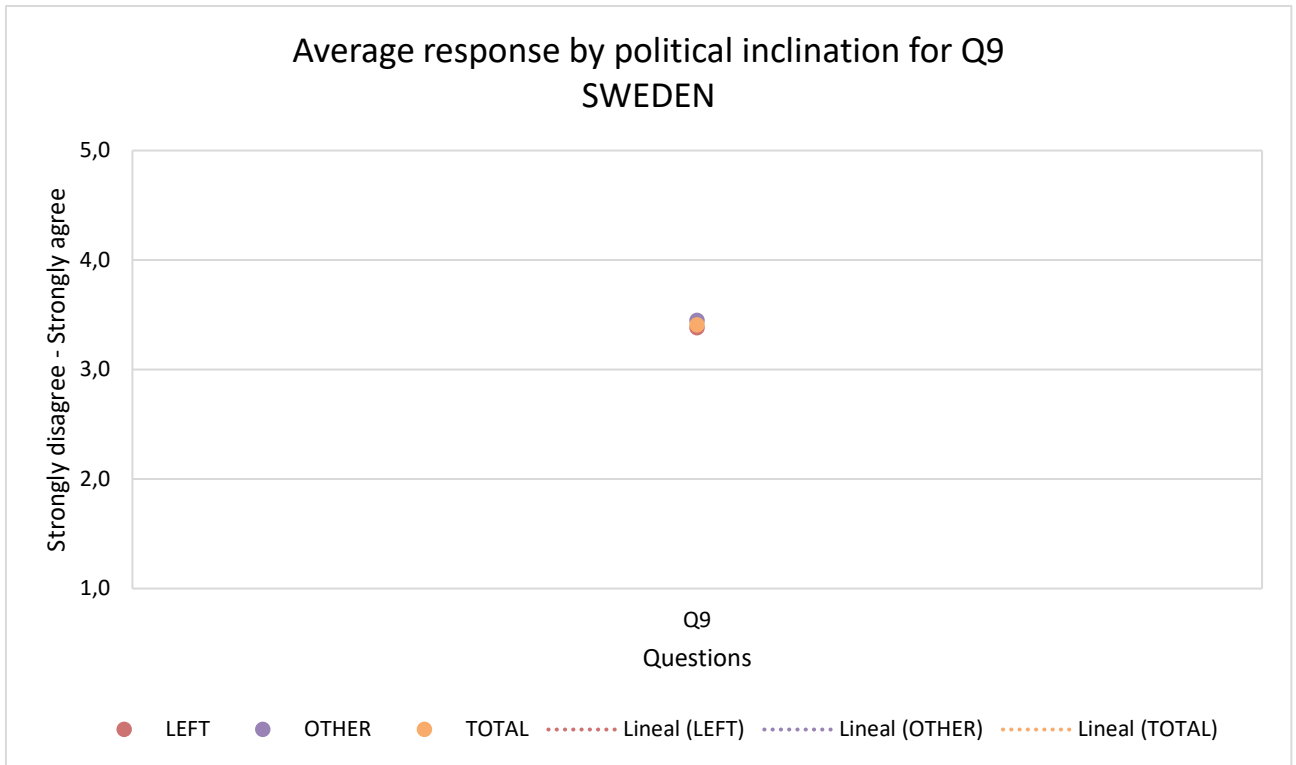


Respondent's answers to barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). The average responses to the barrier-related questions with a negative correlation to equality were generally higher for those who identified as "Left" compared to those who "Did not specify or Other" (other included right-wing, center, and non-right/left inclinations such as independentists). This suggests that the "Left"

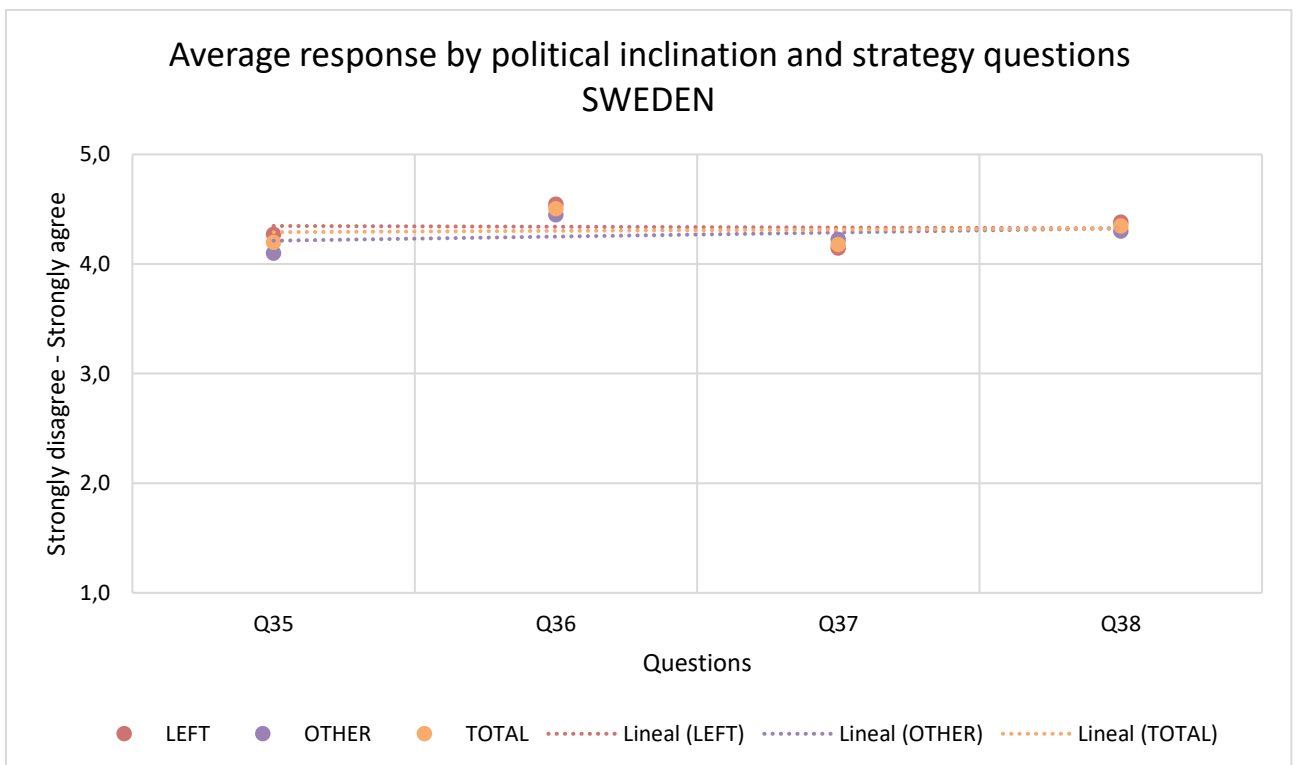
respondents were more likely to recognize the barriers and biases women face in politics, including stereotypes, the impact of personal appearance, and the challenges of work-life balance. The exceptions to this were Q5 (men candidates being better qualified) and Q8 (feeling discouraged from pursuing leadership due to gender), where the responses were slightly lower for the "Left" group. This might indicate that the left-leaning respondents may have a higher recognition and acknowledgment of gender bias issues, possibly due to their political ideology's emphasis on equality and social justice.



Respondent's answers to barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). For questions that had a positive correlation with equality, the average responses between the "Left" and "Did not specify or Other" groups were similar. However, the "Left" group rated slightly higher on Q4 (women being as capable as men in political leadership roles) and Q6 (importance of diverse representation in leadership positions), which could indicate a stronger belief in gender equality among the left-leaning respondents. In contrast, the "Did not specify or Other" group rated higher on Q13 (women frequently occupy leadership positions in their workplace or community), suggesting they might perceive more gender equality in their immediate environments.



**Respondent's answers to Q9.** Responses to Q9 (men and women have different leadership styles) were very similar between both groups, indicating a consensus that there are slight perceived differences in leadership styles between genders, irrespective of political affiliation or lack thereof.



**Respondent's answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38).** Responses to these questions were quite high across both groups, suggesting a common belief in the need for strategies to overcome gender inequality, such as encouraging women to pursue leadership roles from a young age, implementing diversity and inclusion policies, providing mentorship for women leaders, and engaging in awareness-raising campaigns. The "Left" group scored slightly higher on Q35 (encouraging women to pursue leadership roles from a young age) and Q38 (engaging in awareness raising campaigns), perhaps reflecting a greater emphasis on proactive and educational strategies within this political group.

#### Overall difference in responses by political inclination

Overall, the "Left" respondents tended to recognize barriers to gender equality more and had a slightly higher rating on strategies to overcome these barriers. This could be attributed to the traditional left-wing political ideology that often emphasizes equality and social justice. Meanwhile, the "Did not specify or Other" group had slightly higher perceptions of existing gender equality in their immediate environments but were similarly supportive of strategies to improve gender equality in politics.

### 5.4.4 Results of open-ended questions

When asked "Are there any other barriers or challenges that you believe hinder women's participation and election in politics? Please explain." The respondents mentioned a variety of challenges that impede women's participation in politics:

- **Societal Gender Norms:** Sexism and misogyny prevalent in different leadership contexts prevent women from gaining experience in leadership positions, which creates additional pressure in politics.
- **Media Coverage:** Women leaders often receive insufficient or lower quality coverage in the media compared to their male counterparts.
- **Intersectionality:** Factors like race, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic status create additional barriers for women's political participation.
- **Traditional Roles and Responsibilities:** Women often shoulder a disproportionate amount of familial and caregiving responsibilities, which limits their ability to participate in politics.
- **Political Climate:** The dominance of patriarchal, conservative ideologies in the political sphere poses significant challenges to women's political participation.



- **Discrimination within Parties:** Older male members in political parties often restrict opportunities for women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Negative Stereotypes and Bias:** The society's negative stereotypes and biases towards women hinder their political involvement.
- **Hostile Political Environment:** The often aggressive and hostile nature of politics can discourage women from getting involved.
- **Access to Education and Class Gap:** Limited access to education and social class disparities can deter women from political participation.
- **Fear of Outshining Men:** Men's fear of being overshadowed by successful women can lead to women being relegated to lower positions or chosen for less significant roles.
- **Work-Life Balance:** The need to balance work and family life, coupled with a lack of institutional support, can limit women's political participation.
- **Social Pressure and Stereotyping:** Women often face additional pressures and judgments based on their appearance and stereotypes.
- **Structural and Multifactorial Barriers:** The structural and multifactorial nature of the barriers makes the gap in political participation between men and women even larger.
- **Imposed Masculine Leadership Model:** The predominance of an authoritarian, hierarchical masculine model of leadership leaves little room for alternative approaches.
- **Sexual Orientation Discrimination:** Women's sexual preferences are often subject to scrutiny and judgment.
- **Lack of Diversity:** Diverse women, such as lesbians, trans\*, and racialized women, face unique challenges and barriers.
- **Cultural Change Needs:** A need for cultural change to promote non-violent, inclusive, dialogic leadership that aligns with democratic values.
- **Discrediting Women:** Women are often discredited or devalued simply because of their gender.

- Neglect of Care Responsibilities: The current political system neglects the importance of care responsibilities, which are disproportionately shouldered by women.

Open comments have highlighted barriers, ranging from societal norms to structural issues, that combine to limit women's participation in politics. The input from respondents in open-ended questions are highly coincidental with the responses given by focus group participants.

Responses about what can be done to address barriers and promote gender equality in politics were as follows:

- Education and Training: Increased education and training on gender equality across different socialization contexts. This could be achieved through protocols, guidelines, best practices, and constant evaluation.
- Promoting Gender Perspective in Media: Encourage and support media to approach gender-related topics appropriately.
- Incorporate Intersectionality: Promote measures to incorporate intercultural and intersectional perspectives in the organization, promoting diverse women as leaders.
- Visibility and Sensitization: Increase the visibility of women in politics and sensitize society about the importance of gender equality in a positive manner.
- Addressing Domestic Responsibilities: One of the key issues is balancing family responsibilities, which still predominantly fall on women.
- Transform Society: True gender equality in politics can only be achieved by transforming all sectors of society, particularly its mode of production, and eradicating class disparities.
- Awareness Groups for Men: Create awareness groups for men to understand the importance of gender equality.
- Encourage Young People in Politics: Encourage the participation of young people in politics and gradual retirement of older politicians.
- Promote Collaboration: Work together and share knowledge and experiences.

- **Start From Root:** Like all gender inequality, the work starts from the root - childhood. Society needs to work on deconstructing ingrained gender biases.
- **Increase Representation:** Increase the representation of women in politics and give more visibility to women in traditional and digital media.
- **Teach Equality:** Teach equality from the base of education.
- **Co-Education Programs:** Implement co-education programs in educational, institutional, and domestic environments.
- **Extra Support Staff:** Provide extra support staff to help women balance their political careers with family responsibilities.
- **Promote Role Models:** Increase the quantity of female role models in politics, improve the image of women in politics, and ensure equal opportunities in this field.
- **Deconstruct Stereotypes:** Focus on deconstructing stereotypes and social patterns and raising awareness about existing privileges and the over-occupation of spaces.
- **Promote Feminist Approach:** Rather than focusing on 'jumping barriers', the focus should be on developing a new model that promotes a feminist approach.
- **Promote Equality and Respect:** Address equity and respect between men and women in institutes, do a lot of pedagogy among young people.
- **Visibility to Diverse Women:** Make diverse women visible and recognize their value in decision-making spaces.
- **Reformulate Political Structures:** Reformulate political structures and institutions, promote more sustainable work hours, establish more collective forms of governance.
- **Empower Women's Role in Politics:** Promote the role of women in politics and ensure parity on equal terms.
- **Improve and Invest in Education:** Enhance the quality of education and invest more in it.
- **Effective Support:** Provide effective support with measures such as personal assistants for people with disabilities, reinforce public services, home help for the elderly, and distribute work, time, and care.

### 5.4.5 Conclusions regarding questionnaire results

The survey provides a valuable understanding of the barriers and challenges that impede women's participation and election in politics, from both societal and structural perspectives. Respondents identified issues such as societal gender norms, media coverage, intersectionality, traditional roles, political climate, and more. These barriers not only limit women's participation in politics but also underscore the work that needs to be done to ensure equal opportunities and fair treatment for women in the political sphere.

Simultaneously, respondents shared a variety of suggestions to address these barriers and promote gender equality in politics. The proposed solutions ranged from education and training on gender equality, promoting gender perspectives in media, incorporating intersectionality, increasing the visibility of women in politics, encouraging young people's participation, to providing extra support staff for women balancing political careers with family responsibilities.

In analyzing the demographics, differences were observed in perspectives based on gender, age, education, and political inclinations. Women generally recognized more barriers to gender equality and expressed stronger support for strategies to improve gender balance than men. Younger and university-educated respondents were more likely to perceive gender bias and inequality, showing greater support for strategies to overcome these barriers. Left-leaning respondents, too, were more likely to recognize the barriers and biases women face in politics, showing stronger support for strategies to overcome these barriers. These variations highlight the importance of targeted approaches when implementing policies and initiatives to promote gender equality.

In general, the results show strong consensus among respondents about the importance of gender equality, diverse representation, and the positive impact of women role models in political leadership. They agree that implementing diversity and inclusion policies, along with mentorship and awareness-raising campaigns, could help increase women's representation in leadership positions. However, the feedback also underscores the existing disparity in politics, indicating there is much to be accomplished. The low scores on questions related to media portrayal of women politicians, equal opportunities, and the cultural norms supporting women's participation in politics highlight this.

Therefore, this report stresses the need for continued efforts to promote gender equality in politics, which could be achieved through policy changes, education, and awareness initiatives. The findings should prove to be a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and activists striving for a more inclusive political environment for women in Spain.

In conclusion, while the respondents generally recognized the existence of gender bias and inequality in politics and strongly supported measures aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership roles, the data suggests a pressing need for continued efforts to address the barriers women face. Achieving gender equality in politics

will require concerted and sustained action from all segments of society, transcending age, gender, educational level, and political affiliations.

## 2. Summary of key findings and national-specific recommendations

Based on the findings of the questionnaire and the focus groups, the following are recommendations to increase the equality of women and men in politics in Sweden:

- **Education and awareness programs:** Develop and implement educational programs and initiatives to highlight gender equality and the importance of women's political participation. Begin this training from an early age to help break down ingrained gender biases.
- **Media sensitization:** Partner with media outlets to ensure fair and balanced representation of women in politics. Encourage the media to challenge and dismantle negative stereotypes and biases towards women.
- **Policy changes:** Implement policies that advance gender equality within political parties and institutions. Include quotas for female representatives and guidelines for equal opportunities in leadership roles.
- **Support for women in politics:** Provide comprehensive support for women in politics through mentorship programs, training, resources, and additional staff to balance political responsibilities with family life.
- **Promote diverse and equal representation:** Encourage and facilitate the participation of women from diverse backgrounds in politics, acknowledging and addressing intersectionality. Ensure a fair representation of women in decision-making positions, challenging gender-based stereotypes.
- **Transform society's perception:** Launch campaigns to shift societal norms and perceptions regarding women in politics. Celebrate successful women politicians as role models.

- **Promote work-life balance:** Advocate for a political environment that respects and allows for a healthy work-life balance, including flexible work hours and supportive parental leave policies.
- **Legislation and law enforcement:** Enhance laws against gender discrimination and sexual harassment in politics, ensuring these laws are enforced and offenders are held accountable.
- **Youth engagement:** Foster youth participation in politics, provide platforms for expressing views on gender equality, and promote the gradual retirement of older politicians to make way for younger generations.
- **Promote collaboration:** Encourage collaboration among politicians of all genders, fostering an inclusive political environment through knowledge and experience sharing.
- **Safe spaces:** Develop environments where women can share experiences, socialize, and support each other in a discrimination-free setting.
- **Promote intersectionality:** Advocate for a more comprehensive understanding of women's issues, considering factors like race, religion, and cultural backgrounds.
- **Training programs:** Implement training programs to boost confidence and leadership skills among women, using a feminist governance perspective based on positive and alternative experiences from both the Global North and the Global South. Encourage proactive assertiveness through training, by cultivating a culture where women seize initiatives, interact directly with organizations, and confidently strive for power positions.
- **Inclusive environments:** Create environments that value diversity and are free from discrimination and bias, embracing intercultural perspectives, based on organizational trainings, inclusivity training, protocols, and the implementation of measures to assure inclusivity and equal speaking time during discussions.
- **Establish gender protocols:** Implement gender protocols within organizations, promoting open conversations about the challenges women face.
- **Support networks:** Establish a support network among women in politics to enhance confidence, share experiences, and foster a sense of belonging.

- **Engage male allies:** Encourage men to support women in power positions from an early age, challenging traditional gender norms and supporting women in political processes.

Implementing these recommendations requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society, including government bodies, educational institutions, media, and civil society organizations. Together, these efforts can pave the way towards a more equitable and inclusive political environment for women in Sweden.

### 3. References

The information in this report is based on data collected as part of this project as well as previous studies carried out by the Region of Västerbotten and the Swedish national body responsible for monitoring gender policies in the country – The Swedish Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten).

1. Jämställdhetsmyndigheten's rapport, "Steg Framåt och nya utmaningar" 2023:10 utgiven av [Jämställdhetsmyndigheten Göteborg, april 2023 Rapport 2023:10 Dnr: ALLM 2022/169](#), last consulted on 28/9/2023
2. "How Sweden is governed", Swedish government's official website, <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/jamstalldhet/>, last consulted on 28/9/2023
3. Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten) official website <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/nyheter-och-press/>, last consulted on 28/9/2023



## 4. Annex 1: questionnaire items

Q1 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Stereotypes about women's abilities hinder their progress in politics.]

Q2 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in politics are often perceived as emotional rather than rational decision-makers.]

Q3 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women often feel the need to downplay their femininity or adopt more masculine traits to be taken seriously as leaders.]

Q4 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women are as capable as men in political leadership roles.]

Q5 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I usually feel men candidates are better qualified.]

Q6 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Having diverse representation in leadership positions is important.]

Q7 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have witnessed or experienced gender bias or discrimination in politics.]

Q8 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have felt discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of my gender.]

Q9 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Men and women have different leadership styles.]

Q10 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [The presence of more women in political leadership positions would inspire other women to pursue political careers.]

Q11 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I can easily identify women political role models in my country.]

Q12 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have had a women role model or mentor in a leadership position who inspired or supported me.]

Q13 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women frequently occupy leadership positions in my workplace or community.]

Q14 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men.]

Q15 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women politicians are more likely to be criticized for their personal life choices compared to men.]

Q16 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles.]

Q17 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in leadership face a "double bind" where they are expected to be both assertive and nurturing.]

Q18 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [It is more challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to other career choices.]

Q19 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [It is more challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to their men counterparts.]

Q20 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Political organizations should implement family-friendly policies to support women's participation.]

Q21 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have felt that I had to choose between family responsibilities and pursuing a leadership role.]

Q22 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Wage disparities between men and women politicians exist in my country.]

Q23 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, than their men counterparts.]

Q24 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment in the workplace or in politics.]

Q25 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience.]

Q26 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in political organizations are often limited to administrative roles instead of decision-making positions.]

Q27 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Political organizations should actively promote women to decision-making roles to achieve gender equality.]

Q28 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have seen women being talked over or interrupted in meetings or discussions more frequently than their men counterparts.]

Q29 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Societal norms and expectations limit women's political aspirations and opportunities.]

Q30 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Traditional gender roles and expectations discourage women from pursuing political careers.]

Q31 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [The cultural norms in my country support women's participation in politics.]

Q32 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [There are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in my community.]

Q33 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [The media in my country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately.]

Q34 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Media coverage of women in politics often focuses on their appearance rather than their achievements and qualifications.]

Q35 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should... [...encourage women to pursue leadership roles from a young age.]

Q36 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should... [...implement diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and in politics.]

Q37 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should... [...provide mentorship and support for women in leadership positions.]

Q38 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should... [...engage in awareness raising campaigns.]

Open-ended question: Are there any other barriers or challenges that you believe hinder women's participation and election in politics? Please explain.

Open-ended question: In your opinion, what can be done to address these barriers and promote gender equality in politics? Please share your ideas or suggestions.

## 5. Annex 2: focus group questions

Questions to validate hypothesis:

- In what ways do you think gender bias or stereotypes might impact the political careers or aspirations of women?
- How do you think the presence or absence of women role models in politics influences the career choices or motivations of women interested in pursuing a political career?
- Do you believe that women in politics are held to different standards or face more scrutiny than their men counterparts? If so, can you provide examples or share your observations?
- What challenges do you think women might face in balancing work and family responsibilities while pursuing a political career?
- Can you discuss any systemic barriers, such as preferential treatment, hostile work environments (sexism, discrimination, etc.), or wage differences for similar responsibilities, which might limit the career progression of women in politics?
- In political organizations, do you think women are more likely to take on administrative or supportive roles instead of decision-making positions? If so, how do you think this impacts women's overall representation in politics?

Questions for the focus group to identify additional barriers:

- Are there any specific challenges or barriers you have faced in your political career that we have not discussed yet and that you would like to share?
- How do you think societal attitudes or cultural norms in your country impact women's participation in politics?
- In your opinion, what role does the media play in shaping the public's perception of women in leadership positions?
- In your experience, how does access to funding or resources for political campaigns differ between men and women candidates?

Questions to identify strategies to address barriers hindering women's participation in politics:

- In your opinion, what are some effective measures or initiatives that can help challenge gender bias and stereotypes in politics?
- How can political parties or organizations better support and promote women into leadership positions and decision-making roles?
- What type of training, mentorship, or support programs would you find valuable in overcoming the identified barriers in your political career?
- How can we create a more inclusive and supportive environment within political organizations that fosters gender equality and encourages women's participation?
- What role do you think men can play in promoting gender equality in politics and supporting women's political participation?