

Violence against Women in Indonesia's 2024 Elections

Women Research Institute

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Abbreviations

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| APK | Campaign attributes |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| Bawaslu RI | Elections Oversight Agency of the Republic of Indonesia |
| DPD RI | Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia |
| DPR RI | House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia |
| DPRD | Regional Legislative Council |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FPAR | Feminist participatory action research |
| GAC | Global Affairs Canada |
| GBV | Gender-based violence |
| Komnas Perempuan | National Commission on Violence against Women |
| KPU RI | Elections Commission of the Republic of Indonesia |
| KPPI | Indonesian Women's Political Caucus |
| KPPRI | Indonesian Women's Parliamentary Caucus |
| MPR RI | People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia |
| NDI | National Democratic Institute |
| Ormas | Mass organisation |
| Parpol | Political party |
| Pemilu | General elections |
| Pilkada | Subnational government elections |
| TFGBV | Technology-facilitated gender-based violence |
| TPKS | Sexual violence crime |
| UU | National Law |
| VAW | Violence against Women |
| VAWE | Violence against Women in Elections |
| VAWP | Violence against Women in Politics |
| WFD | Westminster Foundation for Democracy |
| WPL | Women's political leadership |
| WRI | Women Research Institute |

Context

Violence against women in politics (VAWP) is not an unfamiliar issue, yet it remains poorly understood in Indonesia. Despite its profound impact on the quality of democracy and women's political participation, there has been a glaring lack of systematic analysis regarding its prevalence, forms, and effects—particularly during elections. This knowledge gap has significant consequences as it leads to limited public and policy awareness of the urgency of addressing VAWP. Such ignorance also perpetuates the perception that tackling the issue is insurmountable.

VAWP is often misinterpreted as an inevitable byproduct of elections, even normalised as a “price to pay” for women who dare enter the political arena. High tensions and rivalries are frequently used as excuses for gender-based violence (GBV). Criticism, intimidation, and verbal abuse directed at women are dismissed as mere challenges of political rivalry rather than recognized as acts of violence. This bias diminishes and trivialises the experiences of GBV victims, disproportionately comprised of women who are targeted simply for their gender identity. They are often subjected to derogatory remarks and insults about their physical appearance and domestic roles.

In the context of this research, we view VAWP as a tool to uphold patriarchal structures in a male-dominated political environment. Drawing on the experiences of women candidates in the 2024 elections, this our research examines VAWP through the lenses of gender and intersectionality; uncovering how patriarchal systems, power imbalances, and systemic issues intersect with one another.

Our analyses offer strategic recommendations to: (1) prevent and address VAWP in democratic processes, (2) reform institutions to create an inclusive, gender-responsive political system, and (3) strengthen policy framework and implementation to better protect women in politics. By challenging the assumptions that obscure the true extent of VAWP in political contestation, we can work towards building a more transparent and equitable system for women politicians in Indonesia, ultimately fostering an inclusive and strong democracy.

Violence against Women in Politics (VAWP)

The alarming scale and impact of violence against women in politics (VAWP) has long plagued politically active women in Indonesia. In 2021, a study by the [Westminster Foundation for Democracy \(WFD\)](#) revealed a staggering 88% of women in politics having experienced violence and sexual abuse during their political activities.¹ The research involved interviews with 45 women leaders from diverse backgrounds across Indonesia and several Southeast Asia countries, further highlighting that women at the grassroots level were particularly vulnerable to VAWP, with 94% reporting such experiences, compared to 82% of women politicians.² These findings align with a previous study by the [National Democratic Institute \(NDI\)](#), which found 44% of politically active women globally had faced threats of murder, rape, beatings, and/or kidnapping.³

VAWP inflicts not only physical and psychological harms but also deters them from assuming leadership roles and advocating for crucial issues on behalf of their constituents. The WFD study underscored VAWP as a significant barrier for women in Southeast Asia striving to enter and sustain political roles. While women’s political participation in Indonesia has gradually improved since 2004, supported by a 30% legislative quota for women candidacy, this progress has paradoxically led to an increase in violent incidents. Women politicians often face pressure to conform to male-dominated norms, adopting behaviours traditionally associated with men to navigate the political landscape.⁴

Addressing and combating VAWP needs a multi-dimensional approach that does involves all stakeholders, not just women. Key corrective actions include institutional reform, cultural transformation, and economic empowerment. These measures are essential to fostering a long-term commitment to eradicating VAWP. Furthermore, WFD outlined key initial steps to combat VAWP. These include reinforcing affirmative policies, providing gender sensitivity training (particularly for social media use), and applying pressure from civil society and the international community.

Combating VAWP could foster a more inclusive democracy, creating a safe and supportive environment for women to participate in politics, assume leadership roles, and drive change. In Indonesia, VAWP manifests in various forms of abuse—physical, psychological, economic, sexual, and semiotic. These are often employed to deter women from entering politics or to undermine their effectiveness.⁵ VAWP remains a significant barrier to women’s political participation and leadership, as evidenced by our findings from the 2024 elections, which further underscore the urgent need for action.

VAWP is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures and unequal power dynamics within Indonesia’s political landscape. This not only undermines women’s leadership but also perpetuates the unjust notion that politics is a male domain.⁶ Political parties often avoid addressing these issues, and limited resources further exacerbate the challenges.

Practices such as vote-buying and “dawn attacks”⁷ by candidates with substantial financial resources frequently overshadow women candidates who rely on organic support bases.⁸ The high cost of politics also further discourages women from entering the system, favouring those with greater capital over individuals with ideas, integrity, and proven track records.⁹ A holistic approach is essential in addressing this paradox. This includes transforming political culture, strengthening protection mechanisms, and promoting public education on gender equality, especially in the wake of a WFD study published in November 2024 which confirmed that high cost of politics disproportionately impacted women more significantly than men, highlighting the need for a systemic change.¹⁰

Violence against Women in Indonesia’s 2024 Elections (VAWE)

VAWP in Indonesia’s 2024 elections highlighted systemic gender disparities deeply rooted in patriarchy, disinformation, weak legal frameworks, and the marginalisation of women. Meanwhile, the established political power structures continue to uphold male dominance, restricting meaningful women’s political participation.

According to the 2023 Global Gender Gap Report, Indonesia ranks 92nd out of 146 countries, with women’s empowerment in politics scoring a mere 0.0181—far below the global average.¹¹ While women’s representation in the House of Representatives (DPR RI) has grown from 8.8% in 1999 to 21.9% in 2024, it remains below the global average of 24.6% and only slightly above the Asia’s average of 20.1%. In terms of representation in parliament, Indonesia’s women political participation lags Southeast Asian neighbours like Vietnam, Singapore, and the Philippines.

A significant root cause of VAWP lies in the patriarchal culture that relegates women to subordinate roles, severely limiting their political involvement. Power dynamics, often reinforced by faith-based ideologies, create opposition to improving women’s political participation and implementing gender quotas. Additionally, an inadequate legal framework—evidenced by the passing of 441 discriminative policies—¹² further hinders women’s political participation. Despite growing attention to VAWP as an obstacle, there remains a lack of assertive documentation of its impact, therefore perpetuating its normalisation and leaving many incidents unreported.¹³

According to [Kalyanamitra](#), a Jakarta-based women's rights organisation, there has been a significant escalation in GBV cases, including those occurring in political spaces. However, many incidents remain unreported due to the normalisation of VAWP¹⁴ and a lack of gender sensitivity. This underscores the need for further research to decode the correlation between VAWP and women's participation in Indonesia. While this study highlights the prevalence of VAWP, the reality may be even grimmer due to (1) the absence of clear reporting mechanisms, leading to inaccurate data collection, (2) a lack of collective understanding of VAWP, and (3) imbalances in power relations among men and women in politics.

Overall, our findings shed light on the structural and cultural barriers to women's political participation, particularly during elections, as follows:¹⁵

- **Patriarchal culture** significantly contributes to GBV and discrimination. It not only it curtails women's political participation but also exacerbates violence during elections. Indonesia's [National Commission on Violence against Women \(Komnas Perempuan\)](#) has documented a correlation between VAWP and domestic violence, resulting in women facing double threats in both their private and public lives.¹⁶
- **Policy frameworks** can either support or hinder women's political participation and leadership, depending on how they are enforced.¹⁷
- **Women's political representation** remains low, despite women making up nearly half (49,5%) of Indonesia's population.¹⁸ While affirmative policy exists for the candidacy phase, women candidates only won 21.9% (127 out of 580) of the DPR RI seats.
- **Voter perceptions** highlight the urgency of addressing VAWP. Our survey of 100 voters from diverse backgrounds revealed that 38.1% viewed VAWP as a serious issue influencing their political choices.
- **Election cycles** often see a rise in VAWP cases.¹⁹ Documented instances of violence, intimidation, and discrimination against women candidates hinder their participation and success in securing legislative seats. The Indonesian Women's Parliamentary Caucus (KPPRI) has called for the eradication of VAWP²⁰ but emphasises the need for collective action among all political parties to:
 - Ensure **strong and effective rules and law enforcement**.
 - Encourage the adoption of **gender-responsive policies and practices**.
 - Raise **public awareness about the importance of equal political rights**.
 - Promote the **participation of male allies in combating VAWP**.
- **Comprehensive strategies** are essential to combat VAWP, which range from establishing clear case handling protocols, enhancing the capacity of elections management bodies, ensuring equitable access to resources, and strengthening the accountability mechanisms within political institutions.

¹ Aim Sinpeng and Amalinda Savirani, *Women's Political Leadership in the ASEAN Region*, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (November 2022), <https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/womens-political-leadership-asean-region>.

² Sinpeng and Savirani, *Women's Political Leadership in the ASEAN Region*.

³ #NotTheCost: *Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics: A Renewed Call to Action*, National Democratic Institute (2016), <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NTC%202021%20ENGLISH%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁴ Mona Lena Krook, *Civic Engagement as a Political Scientist: Tackling Violence against Women in Politics*, *Politics & Gender* (2023), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/article/civic-engagement-as-a-political-scientist-tackling-violence-against-women-in-politics/C5509FD1AD4ED07A4DCA32FE27230D95>.

⁵ Mona Lena Krook, *Violence against women in politics is rising – and it's a clear threat to democracy*, London School of Economics and Political Science (2017), <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2017/08/12/violence-against-women-in-politics-is-rising-and-its-a-clear-threat-to-democracy>.

⁶ Lilijana Čičkarić, *A Contribution to the Study of Violence against Women in Politics*, *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* (2024), 19 (1), <https://eap-iea.org/index.php/eap/article/view/1232>.

⁷ Dawn attack (colloquially known as “*serangan fajar*” in Indonesian) is a term used in the context of elections to describe the practice of vote-buying carried out just before polling begins, typically at dawn on election day. This practice involves distributing

money or goods to voters with the aim of influencing their choice to favour a particular candidate. Although illegal and contrary to the principles of clean democracy, it remains a common feature in Indonesia's elections.

⁸ Edward Aspinall, *When Brokers Betray: Clientelism, Social Networks, and Electoral Politics in Indonesia*, *Critical Asian Studies* (2014), 46 (4), 545–570, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14672715.2014.960706>.

⁹ Edward Aspinall and Ward Berenschot, *Democracy for Sale: Elections, Clientelism, and the State in Indonesia* (2019), Cornell University Press.

¹⁰ Ella Syafputri Prihatini and Sri Budi Eko Wardani, *The Cost of Politics in Indonesia*, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (November 2024), <https://costofpolitics.net/asia-and-the-pacific/indonesia>.

¹¹ *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, World Economic Forum (20 June 2023), https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf.

¹² Fransiska Novita Eleanora and Edy Supriyanto, *Violence against Women and Patriarki Culture in Indonesia*, *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* (2020), 7 (9), <https://ijmmu.com/index.php/ijmmu/article/view/1912/1636>.

¹³ Ajid Fuad Muzaki, *2024 Elections: Threats of Violence and Challenges of Women's Representation*, Rumah Pemilu (2024), <https://rumahpemilu.org/en/2024-elections-threats-of-violence-and-challenges-of-womens-representation>.

¹⁴ *Kekerasan Berbasis Gender dalam Pemilu 2024 di Indonesia: Mengungkap Fakta yang Tersembunyi*, [Gender-Based Violence in Indonesia's 2024 Elections: Uncovering Hidden Facts], Kalyanamitra (2024).

¹⁵ Sinpeng and Savirani, *Women's Political Leadership in the ASEAN Region*; Ashilly Achidsti, *Jangan Tinggalkan Isu Perempuan dan Anak dalam Pilpres 2024*, [Do Not Neglect Women and Children in 2024 Presidential Elections], Kompas (15 Januari 2024), <https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2024/01/14/jangan-tinggalkan-isu-perempuan-dan-anak-dalam-pilpres-2024>; Muzaki, *2024 Elections: Threats of Violence and Challenges of Women's Representation*.

¹⁶ *Catahu 2018: Tergerusnya ruang aman perempuan dalam pusaran politik populisme – Catatan Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan Tahun 2017*, [2018 Year-End Report: Diminishing safe space for women in populist politics – Notes on Violence against Women in 2017], Komisi Nasional Anti-Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan (2018), <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/catatan-tahunan-detail/catahu-2018-tergerusnya-ruang-aman-perempuan-dalam-pusaran-politik-populisme-catatan-kekerasan-terhadap-perempuan-tahun-2017>.

¹⁷ See **Appendix 1** for a list of policy frameworks that are relevant to women's political leadership in Indonesia.

¹⁸ As of 11 June 2024, Statistics Indonesia (BPS) recorded women population in Indonesia reached 137.9 million (49.5%) out of 278.7 million total population. See: <https://www.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/3>.

¹⁹ Sinpeng and Savirani, *Women's Political Leadership in the ASEAN Region*.

²⁰ Ravi Patra and Sekar Panuluh, *Indonesian parliament calls for urgent action to end violence against women in politics*, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (30 November 2022), <https://www.wfd.org/press-releases/indonesian-parliament-calls-urgent-action-end-violence-against-women-politics>.

Key Findings

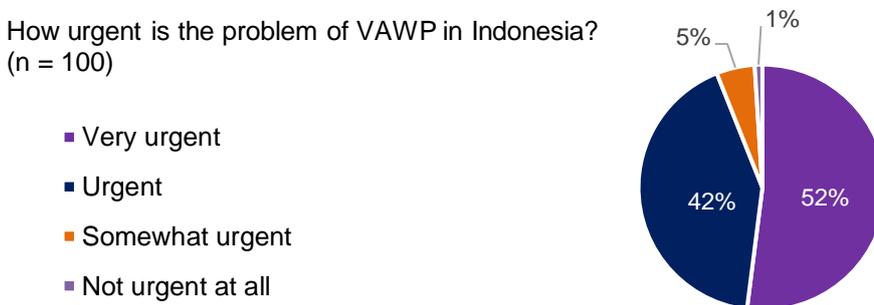
In conducting this research, we employed a mixed-method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively analyse the phenomenon of violence against women in politics during the 2024 elections (VAWE). In addition to conducting literature reviews, we carried out surveys with 100 women politicians, focus group discussions (FGDs) involving 60 women politicians, in-depth interviews with 10 politicians, and a survey of 100 voters. To ensure a broad and inclusive perspective, we applied feminist participatory action research (FPAR) methodology, capturing insights from a diverse range of stakeholders, including members of parliament, political party executives, legislative candidates, experts, and voters.

To spotlight some real-life stories captured during the research process, we have documented several “Women’s Stories” in this section, which recounts the experiences of some women candidates in Indonesia’s 2024 elections. For reasons of privacy, dignity, and safety, the identities of the names in these stories have been obscured.

Our findings reveal that women in politics possess a strong awareness of the violence that degrades, isolates, and humiliates them, stemming from systematic gender-based discrimination. This underscores the importance of adopting a structural approach to addressing violence against women in politics (VAWP), rather than examining it on a case-by-case basis.

Regrettably, gender equality remains undermined within Indonesia’s political institutions. This is evident in the numerous discriminatory policies against women and the ineffective actions that prevent them from achieving substantive political leadership roles. As gatekeepers, political parties have failed to provide women with equal access, often relegating them to non-strategic positions within party organisations and legislative bodies. Their roles are frequently confined to areas traditionally associated with women and child-related matters, despite their potential to contribute significantly across all sectors. Consequently, women’s participation is often perceived as a token gesture for the present moment, deemed unnecessary until the next occasion arises.

Figure 1. Perspectives of women politicians on VAWP in Indonesia



VAWP is a sinister tool used to intimidate and silence women’s voices, perpetuating a public-private dichotomy that limits their roles in political spaces. Social and cultural norms reinforce gender bias, further restricting women’s mobility and access to political resources.

An overwhelming 94% of women politicians recognise VAWP as a critical, multi-dimensional, and systemic issue. It is imperative to foster solidarity among women politicians to address this

collective challenge and promote gender equality in politics through effective and comprehensive strategies. These efforts must encompass party reforms, legal protections, the renewal of gender norms, network strengthening, and expert assistance. Surprisingly, 6% of women politicians appear to downplay the significance of VAWP, viewing it as less critical. Our assumption is that these represent those who did not have personal experience with or possess limited understanding of VAWP extending beyond its physical form. These findings underscore the urgent need to educate the public about gender equality and to conduct deeper studies on VAWP in Indonesia.

In this section, we delve deeper into the 8 (eight) key findings that illustrate the devastating impact of VAWP on women's participation in Indonesia's 2024 elections.

Finding 1: Verbal and emotional abuse is an integral part of women's political participation

Verbal and emotional abuse have been identified as the most prevalent forms of violence against women in politics (VAWP). Tragically, these behaviours are deeply normalised within patriarchal culture; half of voters have either witnessed or heard about violence against women in elections (VAWE). Our survey reveals that 40% of voters observed such incidents, with verbal and emotional abuse accounting for 63.7% of reported cases. Social media has become a breeding ground for this toxic behaviour, with 50% of reported cases occurring online.

Women politicians, particularly younger and newer entrants, are the most vulnerable to these forms of violence. Their experiences often include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, and insults. Verbal abuse, frequently accompanied by laughter from colleagues,¹ underscores the objectification of women. During campaign periods, intimidation becomes a systematic tool to silence them.²

The harsh reality for women in politics is the constant emotional abuse they endure, as they are perpetually compared to male politicians. This exacerbates existing gender stigma and reinforces the dominance of masculinity in politics. Unrealistic standards force women to endure immense pressure for their political survival, eroding their confidence and often discouraging them from continuing their political journey. This abuse not only degrades women but also creates an unsafe and hostile work environment. On a broader scale, it silences women's voices, diminishes their participation in politics, and, in the worst cases, drives them out of the political arena altogether.

Figure 2. Verbal abuse during the 2024 elections

Have you ever experienced a situation where your political competence and capacity are undermined or dismissed by other politicians?
(n = 100)

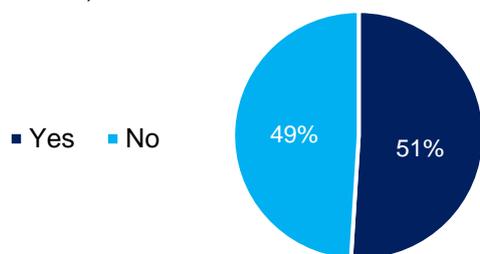


Figure 2 highlights a concerning statistic: 51% of respondents reported experiencing verbal abuse that undermined their skills and competence in politics. This figure underscores how verbal abuse has become entrenched and normalised within Indonesia's political culture. Gender stereotypes

that question women's leadership capabilities are further exacerbated by the lack of preventive mechanisms and sanctions for verbal abuse. Women are often forced to 'wait' for violence to escalate to physical harm before it garners attention.

This form of VAWP is not merely an individual issue; it reflects a systemic power structure that discriminates against women. Addressing this requires a seismic shift in societal structures, which can be achieved through institutional reforms, strengthened protection mechanisms, and changes in social norms and gender-biased political culture.

Women's Stories: "More Like an Entertainer"

My name is Lina. I was harassed by my colleagues after announcing my candidacy for a legislative position. The audacity of one of them, who said I was "more like an entertainer than a politician," cut me deeply. What they thought was a joke insulted my integrity as a woman striving to contribute to politics. It was deafening for me to endure the misogyny.

I held my head high. I actively attended numerous public events, which increased my popularity. However, that popularity came at a cost. Other candidates felt threatened and resorted to spreading false rumours and mocking me. These rumours questioned my ability to serve society, solely because of my gender. Statements like, "*She's only pursuing her own ambitions,*" or "*A woman like her doesn't even have time for family—how will she manage an office?*" were circulated to tarnish my reputation.

A colleague of mine, Sinta, faced even worse harassment. Being unmarried, male candidates frequently mocked her marital status. On one occasion, a member of a male candidate's campaign team said, "*Let's see if she will still be so outspoken once she finds a man,*" to embarrass her publicly. She was often shamed for being single, as though it had any relevance to her political competence.

I also experienced similar sentiments regarding my marital status. Insults like, "*This is not the place to look for a man,*" or "*How can you find a good man if you campaign until late at night?*" were not uncommon. What frustrated me most was how these attacks distracted me from the issues I was fighting for. To make matters worse, the pressure came not only from my political rivals but also from the public, which still views women as less suitable and unfit for politics.

What Sinta and I endured is only a fraction of what many women experienced during the last elections. We were forced to accept harassment and pressure as the price of participating in political competitions. However, it is no longer the time to remain silent. I must speak out louder about the need to create safer and more inclusive spaces for women in politics. With strong solidarity and greater awareness, I believe we can transform Indonesia's political culture into one that is fair and equal.

Finding 2: Threats of physical violence create a collective chilling effect among women in politics

Physical VAWP cannot be understood on a case-by-case basis because it has far-reaching consequences for women's political participation and the integrity of democracy. It has a profound impact by instilling fear and curtailing women's political participation. Threats, whether verbal or physical, are often wielded to uphold patriarchal dominance.³ Even when these threats do not materialise into actions, they alone are enough to deter women's political participation. Consequently, the unsafe and hostile environment drives many women away from politics. Numerous women interviewed for this research even went so far as to express a reluctance to appear in public due to fear of such threats.⁴

Consider this: a woman politician faces threats and intimidation simply for performing her duties. One individual recounted a harrowing experience of being intimidated by a so-called 'ormas' (mass organisation), which served to obscure the true perpetrator and complicate legal proceedings. This

is just one of many examples of the violence and abuse women in politics endure. Vandalism of campaign materials⁵ also contributed to instilling fear and insecurity among women politicians. Furthermore, the absence of standard mechanisms within political parties to specifically protect women has left them reliant on personal support networks or informal connections to navigate dangerous situations.⁶

It is apparent that most instances of physical VAWP remain unreported, and as such the true scale of its impact is likely far greater than what is currently understood. To address this, comprehensive measures are essential, including legal actions and stricter controls during the elections period. There is a pressing need for an accessible reporting mechanism for women politicians. Such a system must involve collaboration across all sectors, including party members, election organisers and supervisors, civil organisations, and law enforcement officers.

Women's Stories: "Shut up or We Will Shut You Up"

My name is Karina. I entered politics to champion issues that are often overlooked, such as women's rights and budget transparency. But my journey has been far from smooth. Most days felt like walking on thin ice. After speaking out about the misuse of the women's empowerment budget and discriminatory treatment towards women, I began receiving physical threats from anonymous sources., like "*Shut up or we will shut you up,*" which did not just frighten me, but also terrified my family, who feared for my safety if I continued to speak out. These chilling threats were designed to silence me.

The intimidation escalated during the election period. While campaigning in a remote area, I was confronted by an unknown man. "*If you come back again, see what happens,*" he said. When I reported this local law enforcement, their response was deeply disappointing. They dismissed the threats as common incidents in politics and took no action to protect me.

Even my own party failed to support me. "*Stay strong,*" and "*Toughen up,*" were the advice I received as they brushed off my complaints, leaving me feeling neglected and unappreciated. Instead of standing by me, they perpetuated the belief that men are more competent than women, ignoring the reality that women often face severe threats simply for wanting to campaign safely.

Despite these challenges, giving up was never an option. I sought support from civil organisations and women's communities. Together, we built a solidarity network to combat the intimidation and threats faced by women in politics. I firmly believe that women have the power to change this situation. Our collective voice can and will rise above this biased system.

Finding 3: Economic inequality and high cost of politics are weaponised to keep women out of politics

Economic violence presents a significant structural barrier for women participating in Indonesia's political landscape. Expensive elections, limited access to funding, and voter expectations for political "favours" create systemic challenges for women.⁷ The "battle for money" highlights a stark imbalance in financial resources between men and women candidates.⁸ While men often have the means to run fully resourced campaigns, women are left struggling just to remain in the race.⁹

Deeply entrenched patriarchal norms exacerbate this issue, not only perpetuating the perception that women are unfit for politics but also restricting their access to economic opportunities.¹⁰ Despite some progress in women's economic participation, many challenges remain unresolved. Patriarchy within political structures worsens the exploitation and manipulation of party systems, forcing women to choose between pursuing their political aspirations and ensuring economic security. Women politicians often describe male candidates' financial power as a "bulldozer"¹¹ that effortlessly flattens their efforts to build voter bases. Proposals such as increasing campaign

funding for women or reducing nomination fees have yet to address the systemic funding imbalance effectively.¹² A holistic approach is essential to enhance both political and economic opportunities for women, ensuring a more equitable playing field.¹³

Economic VAWP is a multidimensional issue. It encompasses limited access to financial resources, manipulation of public perceptions, exploitation of economic vulnerabilities, and structural dependence—all of which drive women candidates away. This highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive strategy to address gender-based economic imbalances. To start with, strengthening regulations on campaign funding is essential to create a fairer and more equitable political arena.

Women's Stories: "Campaign on Cheap Talk"

My name is Dina. I am actively involved in 'dasawisma' (empowerment groups for housewives), 'posyandu' (integrated health service), religious studies, and various other social activities. My volunteering work made me well-known in the community. In almost every election season, political parties would approach me to run as their candidate, which I always declined.

That was until the 2024 elections. A senior politician in my district convinced me to take the leap, assuring me that the party would cover all costs. Initially, I was reluctant and turned him down, but his persistent persuasion eventually won me over. After consulting with my family and friends back in my hometown, I decided to give it a try. I assembled a dream team, and the villagers were incredibly supportive, hoping I would advocate for their rights and the interests of our village.

However, things quickly took a turn for the worse. The party initially promised me the number 3 spot on the ballot but later demanded funds which I could not afford. The financial support they had initially promised to get me on their party list never materialised. Instead, I was mocked for my lack of resources. Comments like, "How can you campaign without bringing anything? Look at Pak Mul—he always brings gifts," became all too common.

The ridicule hurt deeply, and I began to withdraw from the community I had tirelessly served. Money had never been an issue in my previous contributions, but after the elections, everything changed. Insults like "You shouldn't have run if you had no money," or "You can't campaign on cheap talk," left my campaign team frustrated while I felt cornered and disheartened. Once respected for my contribution through social work, I am now dishonoured for simply not being able to fund a campaign like others do. Nowadays, I feel like I must distance myself from the very community I had worked so hard to support. That is what pains me the most.

Finding 4: Political parties have not provided a safe space for women in politics

The patriarchal structure within Indonesia's political parties significantly hinders women's representation and leadership by perpetuating gender discrimination and limiting access to political opportunities. Although women's representation in DPR RI increased to 21.9% (127 out of 580 seats) in the 2024 elections, cultural norms and institutional practices continue to uphold male dominance.¹⁴

Structural VAWP is deeply rooted in institutionalised gender inequality. According to our respondents, "internal policies within political parties are massive and structured,"¹⁵ which reflect why many party officials often deride the 30% quota policy which stems from entrenched patriarchal culture and inconsistent implementation.¹⁶ Within religious-leaning parties, informal conventions that perpetuate gender biases can even override formal rules,¹⁷ as seen in cases of unfair distribution of party resources, ballot list positions, and witness funds.¹⁸

To make matters worse, gender stereotypes continue to hinder women's representation in politics.¹⁹ Many women are viewed merely as “tokens” to meet the 30% quota requirement, avoiding disqualification for failing to fulfil administrative criteria.²⁰ Nepotism poses another significant obstacle. A common scenario involves new cadres with influential family ties being granted strategic positions and favourable number on the party ballots.²¹ Women are also often assigned to electoral districts that are unfit with their strategic positioning, which effectively reduces their chances of winning a seat. “*I was assigned to a district where they had no voters base at all, so I never had a chance,*” shared one respondent.²² In other cases, some even reported being “*banned from canvassing in their established voters base.*”²³

This finding highlights that political parties have yet to become safe and inclusive spaces for women. Addressing this issue requires a deeper understanding of power dynamics to effectively tackle problems and transform the organisation's fundamental structures. Without such an approach, proposed solutions will fail to address the root causes.

Women's Stories: “Even when you win, you lose”

Call me Anna. The 2024 elections marked my second attempt running as a legislative candidate for DPR RI in the same electoral district. In my first attempt in 2019, while I was aware that my nomination was intended to merely fulfil the 30% women's candidate quota, I campaigned earnestly to introduce myself to voters and understand their expectations of their parliamentary representative. Eventually, I secured the second-highest number of votes but failed to win a seat because my party only secured one seat in the district.

My electoral district is known to be very tough to win due to dominant elite political families who have held power for generations. Meanwhile, I was not even considered a “local” in the district. Leading up to the 2024 elections, I maintained strong ties with my constituents. I was promised the top spot on the candidate list by the local party leaders but was ultimately demoted to the second spot to accommodate a candidate directly recommended by the party's central leadership.

Despite these setbacks, I remained steadfast. As a woman, I knew I had to fight for policies that could bridge the gender gap. Hard work, determination, and the unwavering support of my husband and family helped me secure the highest number of votes for my party in the district. This result was validated by election organisers at both provincial and national levels, and I even participated in training sessions for elected DPR RI members. However, shortly before my inauguration as a member of parliament, the party revoked my membership dishonourably on allegations of vote inflation. This decision was made internally without giving me the opportunity to defend myself. I refused to be silenced and took the matter to court, which ruled in my favour, declaring me innocent. Yet, the party stood firm in its decision to dismiss me, preventing me from being sworn in as a member of parliament despite my legitimate victory in the elections.

Today, I struggled to find a platform to seek justice. All my efforts to build a strong voters base and campaign diligently were undone by an opaque process. Now, I cannot help but feel that the party views women's political participation merely as a tool, rather than a genuine effort to promote equality.

Finding 5: Sexual violence perpetuates toxic masculinity in politics

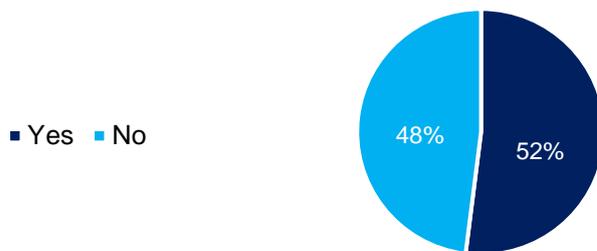
Sexual VAWP represents an extreme manifestation of systemic control and exploitation, rooted in a toxic combination of power imbalances, traditional gender roles, and patriarchal ideology. This systemic inequality not only restricts women's access to political spaces but also forces them into impossible choices: safeguarding their integrity or preserving the autonomy of their bodies.²⁴ Women's bodies have become a battleground in this struggle.

Sexual threats and harassment have significantly curtailed women’s political participation, serving as tools to silence their voices.²⁵ One respondent revealed that women had been subjected to sexual assaults by male candidates during meetings and campaigns.²⁶ Such acts not only violate personal integrity but also blatantly undermine the right to fair and balanced political participation. Sexual violence in politics is often accompanied by verbal abuse that objectifies women as mere subjects of sexual fantasies. This is in line with global trends, as even in countries like Canada, sexual harassment remains a persistent issue for women in legislative roles.²⁷

Our research also uncovered that forced sexual encounters are sometimes used as bargaining tools in politics. One respondent disclosed being promised a strategic position on the party ballot in exchange for a sexual favour by a party figure.²⁸ This phenomenon highlights the prevalence of sexual exploitation in politics, despite the relatively low number of reported cases. This underreporting is likely due to the absence of proper mechanisms for reporting and addressing such incidents to political parties, electoral organising bodies, or law enforcement agencies.

Figure 3. Prevalence of sexual violence against women in the 2024 elections

Did you witness or hear any sexual violence or harassment incidents experienced by other women candidates? (n = 100)



Our gender-based analysis reveals that sexual violence in politics functions as a control mechanism to maintain male dominance by:

- **Creating unsafe environments** that restrict women’s participation in politics.
- **Reducing women** to sexual objects.
- **Controlling women** by exploiting their sexuality as a bargaining tool.

Most women in politics (52%) reported witnessing or hearing about sexual violence and harassment among their colleagues. This prevalence closely mirrors the rate of verbal VAWP cases (51%), highlighting a systemic pattern of gender-based violence (GBV) within Indonesia’s political landscape. These findings suggest that various forms of violence against women (VAW) often occur simultaneously in a political environment that lacks inclusivity.

In a broader context, sexual violence in politics is not merely a series of isolated incidents but a manifestation of a repressive system. One respondent even went so far as to say that “*parties do not care about their cadres,*” which underscores the failure of political parties to protect their women candidates. Furthermore, the lack of effective protection and control mechanisms has normalised sexual violence within the political sphere.

Women's Stories: "Too Stiff and Not Sociable"

Call me Risa. As a student activist, my idealism drove me to enter the political arena through the youth wing of a prominent political party. Upon joining, senior figures showered me with support and a flurry of promises. However, I was never given the chance to apply my skills in a real political setting despite their assurances. Senior women in politics barely acknowledged my presence, leaving me to create my own activities and programmes.

When I was offered the opportunity to run as a candidate in the 2024 elections, I was presented as a strong contender for victory, thanks to my credentials across various sectors. Promises flowed—strategic ballot numbers would be mine if I actively engaged with the party. However, this involvement required attending numerous late-night meetings. The deeper I immersed myself in the party, more challenges also emerged for me as a young woman candidate. "How can you win if you're too stiff? You need to be more sociable to win in politics," one senior remarked, implying that my refusal to attend late-night meetings or spend the night in hotel rooms somehow made me less fit to be a legitimate politician.

The pressure to stay close to senior party members was relentless. Declining such demands risked affecting the ballot number I would receive on nomination day. On multiple occasions, I overheard my fellow women candidates sharing that rejecting offers to share rooms or spend time meant forfeiting important support from influential seniors. Sweet promises of protection, strategic ballot positions, and campaign support came with the unspoken expectations of attending late-night meetings and staying overnight with them.

Physical harassment was alarmingly normalised—unwanted and non-consensual touches and hugs were common. If I showed any discomfort, they would again call me too stiff and not sociable. Many other women had endured worse too, receiving explicit demands to "serve" in exchange for strategic positions and support.

This pervasive harassment left me furious and deeply concerned. Yet, it seemed entirely normalised within the party, with no cautions or support. As an idealistic young woman with a vision for reform, I often felt out of place and disillusioned. When the candidate nominations were announced, I was devastated to find myself given an unwinnable position on the ballot. But I refused to give up, and with the unwavering support of friends and communities who believed in my vision, I launched a modest campaign which carried a profound and meaningful purpose. Despite all these, my resolve remains strong, and I remain committed to creating safe and inclusive spaces within politics where merit—not manipulation—is the determinant of success.

Finding 6: The political elites sustain and benefit from symbolic violence

Structural VAWP continues to be upheld by social and political systems dominated by patriarchy. The marginalisation and de-politicisation of VAW often go unnoticed and unaddressed.²⁹ One woman candidate in the 2024 elections reported the immense difficulty of challenging the dominance of political dynasties and the influence of male candidates with close ties to party leaders. Even gender quota policies, intended to promote women's participation, have inadvertently created new forms of violence.³⁰

Structural violence becomes even more apparent when political parties favour male candidates based on their connections rather than their competence or ability to campaign and secure votes. Cases such as the dismissal of elected candidates after winning elections occur among both men and women. However, it cannot be denied that women face distinct power dynamics that further disadvantage them in such situations.

The stereotype that women must “obey” and follow party leaders’ orders puts them in the position of having to comply with any decision without resistance. Addressing GBV in politics requires policies that not only protect women’s rights but also ensure transparency and transform the political culture. Achieving this is impossible without first reforming the organisational structures of political parties to ensure decision-making processes are conducted transparently and in accordance with proper procedures.

Finding 7: VAWP is rampant in the digital space

Sophisticated technology and social media platforms may benefit most politicians in building their image and brand. However, women in politics often face a starkly different reality. Cases of digital violence against women are on the rise, with death threats, sexual harassment, and defamation becoming increasingly common. Black campaigns are frequently used to tarnish reputations online. Instead of serving as a space to empower women and strengthen their political involvement, social media has become a battlefield that exacerbates gender-based discrimination.

Women’s Stories: “Self-Righteous Woman”

My name is Mira. As I geared up to represent my electoral district, I joined several online chat groups comprising community leaders, religious study groups, school alumni, activists, party cadres, and the public. These groups were particularly active in discussions leading up to the elections, providing valuable insights and support.

However, some of these groups turned into breeding grounds for conflict. Discussions that began normally often devolved into exchanges of attacks among supporters and even the candidates themselves. These attacks frequently took the form of images and memes that objectified women’s bodies and criticised their clothing, accompanied by harassing captions. I recall receiving a meme in one of these groups that read, “Vote for women who support polygamy.”

I immediately voiced my protest in the group chat, noting that the memes were unethical and inappropriate. In return, I was attacked as one of my photos was turned into new memes with captions like, “Don’t vote for self-righteous woman politicians,” accompanied by comments such as, “She’s upset because her photo isn’t attractive to us.” I eventually left the group chat but then learned that the members continued mocking and degrading me for days afterward.

My colleague, Vira, had a similar experience. A photo of her and her husband, posted on social media, was edited with the caption, “Don’t vote for woman with a Chinese husband.” This provocative image was circulated in chat groups, sparking discriminatory comments against Chinese Indonesian ethnic group, accusations of betraying religious values, and claims that voting for Vira meant putting the nation up for sale. Political opponents band wagoned on these attacks. Despite Vira’s efforts to counter the narrative during her campaign, many in her electoral district had already been swayed by the provocation.

Another colleague, Lisa, fell victim to digital manipulation. A recording of her conversation with another politician was doctored to make it sound as though she held a critical view of the popular, incumbent government and accusing election commission members of receiving bribes. As a result, her credibility was constantly questioned, leaving her anxious about speaking or writing publicly.

I, too, was targeted by a black campaign that spread misleading narratives claiming I was not a native of my electoral district, aiming to erode public trust in me. Despite my best efforts to clarify the truth, the narrative spread rapidly in digital spaces. Unfortunately, when my women colleagues and I reported these experiences to our political party, we received no meaningful response or support. We felt abandoned to face these challenges alone, even though the harassment and attacks were clearly rooted in gender bias within politics.

Like most politicians, our respondents used social media to enhance their political activities.³¹ Yet, instead of gaining traction and voter support, many became targets of verbal harassment and black campaigns. One respondent shared how a black campaign questioned her local identity, eroding public trust and reinforcing the stereotype that women are unfit for politics.

Digital VAWP is not an isolated issue. It is part of a broader pattern of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). One respondent revealed that she had been targeted by a black campaign initiated by a rival politician, which included false rumours about her background. “An incumbent from my party, a rival, disseminated false information that I am not a native of my electoral district, which created doubts of my ingenuity,”³² she shared while recounting the profound impact this single disinformation had on her campaign.

Many woman politicians admitted feeling pressured to limit their digital activities and online presence due to harassment that often involves the manipulation of public opinion, causing both personal and professional harm.³³ But despite its damaging effects, digital violence has received insufficient attention. Political parties provide no support, and there are no specific regulations to hold perpetrators legally accountable. This underscores the urgent need for protective reforms, including clear regulations, accessible reporting mechanisms, collaborations with social media platforms, and public education on the dangers of digital violence. Implementing these measures would not only protect women politicians but also foster the emergence of a more inclusive, violence-free political culture.

Finding 8: VAWP is an iceberg phenomenon

Most women in politics (82%) reported an increase in VAWP during the 2024 elections compared to previous ones. Only 2% observed a decline, while 16% stated there was no change or were unsure in their response. This highlights that the collective understanding of VAWP remains superficial, failing to address its root causes.

Figure 4. VAWP levels in the 2024 elections compared to previous ones

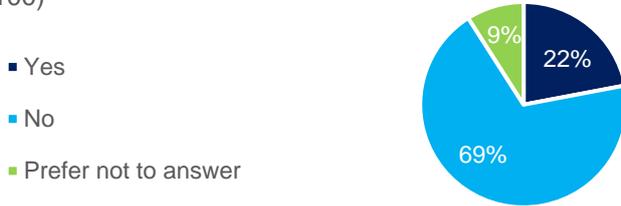
How did you observe the levels of VAWP in the 2024 elections compared to previous ones?
(n = 100)



The increasing risks and challenges faced by women in politics clearly have a chilling effect. This explains why most victims and witnesses are reluctant to report their experiences, which further complicate the efforts to eradicate VAWP. This troubling trend aligns with WFD’s 2022 study findings, which identified VAWP as a systemic problem exacerbated by poor and ineffective handling mechanisms. Moreover, the dominant perception of higher levels of incidents (82%) and lack of resolutions (12%) highlights the failure of existing measures to establish a safe, equal, and inclusive environment for women in politics free from violence.

Figure 5. Reported cases of VAWP in the 2024 elections

Did you report the VAWP incidents you experienced?
(n = 100)



Our findings reveal concerning figures regarding the low level of VAWP reporting during the 2024 elections. A striking 69% of respondents chose to remain silent, compared to only 22% who reported their experiences. This finding illustrates the iceberg phenomenon in VAWP, where reported cases represent only a fraction of the actual cases.

This alarming trend demonstrates that many women choose to suffer in silence rather than report their cases, fearing the systematic challenges and greater risks involved. This imbalance is particularly troubling, as 82% of respondents reported an increase in VAWP during the 2024 elections, yet only 22% of 100 respondents reported their cases.

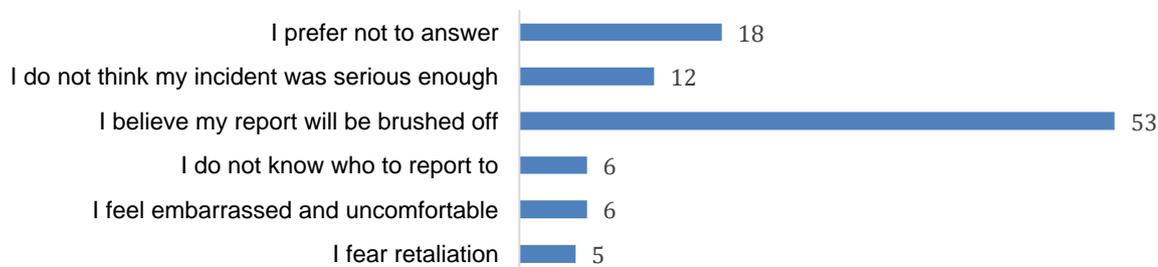
The data also highlights structural challenges, with 9% of respondents declining to answer the survey due to fears of reprisal. This raises the concerning possibility that current data on VAWP prevalence may not accurately reflect the reality on the ground.

Several factors discourage women from reporting their cases:

- The **normalisation of violence** against women in politics.
- A **lack of commitment from political institutions** to establish effective reporting and handling systems.
- The **absence of security and safety assurances**, leaving women in vulnerable positions.
- **Fear of retaliation** from more powerful rivals, especially in the absence of proper reporting and handling mechanisms.
- **Frustration and hopelessness** due to the lack of significant progress in addressing VAWP and eroded public trust in political institutions and actors, which further undermine efforts to create a fairer, equal, and inclusive system.

Figure 6. Why women politicians did not report their VAWP cases during the 2024 elections

What is your reason for not reporting VAWP incidents? (n = 100)



Our comprehensive data shed light on the complexity of VAWP tracking, reporting, and handling. Most respondents (53%) believed their reports would fall on deaf ears, revealing a deep distrust in systems and institutions that should serve as their protection. One respondent admitted she was *“hesitant to report since she believed it would not receive an appropriate response, and the*

solutions offered would always end up costing money.”³⁴ This was echoed by another respondent, who stated, “our parties never respond to it, so [if we report] there will be no end to it anyway.”³⁵

Equally troubling is that 12% of respondents downplayed the seriousness of their VAWP incidents, perceiving them as not severe enough to report. This points to the normalisation of VAWP, where power imbalances influence women to minimise the impact of the violence they endure. Additionally, the fear of discomfort and embarrassment (6%), coupled with fears of retaliation (5%), highlights the compounded effects of normalisation and the impact of a lack of proper mechanisms for reporting VAWP cases.

While these figures may appear small, they underscore significant psychological and structural barriers within the reporting system. Furthermore, the 6% of respondents who were unaware of reporting procedures reflect the lack of outreach and accessible mechanisms, which are often designed without adequately addressing the needs of women. Meanwhile, the high percentage of non-respondents (18%) suggests deep-seated trauma and fear among women politicians. For many, remaining silent and dismissing the incidents may feel like the safest course of action.

¹ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

² VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

³ Mona Lena Krook and Juliana Restrepo Sanín, *The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians*, Perspectives on Politics (2020), 18 (3), p. 740–755, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/cost-of-doing-politics-analyzing-violence-and-harassment-against-female-politicians/997569433135FA170B2789C88A48DD17>.

⁴ Karina Kosiara-Pedersen, *Single ladies and freedom of speech: gendered explanations for, and effects of, violence in politics*. *European journal of politics and gender* (2023), p. 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821x16777808903018>.

⁵ Anonymous woman politician, interview by WRI, 31 October 2024.

⁶ Anonymous woman politician, interview by WRI, 30 October 2024.

⁷ Aida Fitria Harahap, Tanya Jakimow, Asima Yanty Siahaan, and Yumasdaleni, *Is money an insurmountable barrier to women's political representation in transactional democracies? Evidence from North Sumatera, Indonesia*, Politics, Groups, and Identities (2022), p. 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2022.2041442>.

⁸ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

⁹ Nurbaiti Prastyandanda Yuwono, *Perempuan dalam Kungkungan Budaya Politik Patriarkhis*, [Women in the Shackles of Patriarchal Political Culture], Muwazah: Jurnal Kajian Gender (2018), 10 (2), <https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v10i2.9906>.

¹⁰ Rian Ismi Wardana and Lince Magriasti, *Analisis Ekonomi Politik dan Gender: Studi Kasus Peran Perempuan dalam Pembangunan Ekonomi di Indonesia*, [Gender Political Economic Analysis: Case Study on Women's Roles in Economic Development in Indonesia], Multiverse: Open Multidisciplinary Journal (2024), 3 (1), p. 40–46, <https://doi.org/10.57251/multiverse.v3i1.1381>.

¹¹ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

¹² Harahap, Jakimow, Siahaan, and Yumasdaleni, *Is money an insurmountable barrier to women's political representation in transactional democracies? Evidence from North Sumatera, Indonesia*.

¹³ Annamaria Milazzo and Markus Goldstein, *World Development Report 2017: Governance and women's economic and political participation – Power inequalities, formal constraints, and norms*, The World Bank, documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/506661497953688370/pdf/WDR17-BP-Governance-and-Womens-Participation-Milazzo-Goldstein.pdf.

¹⁴ Evi Novida Ginting Manik and Fredrick Broven Ekayanta, *Women's Representation in Political Development in Indonesia: Examining Gender Discrimination and Patriarchal Culture*, *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture* (2024), p. 228–241, <https://doi.org/10.70082/esiculture.vi.683>.

¹⁵ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

¹⁶ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

¹⁷ Juwita Hayyuning Prastiwi and Andy Ilman Hakim, *Women's Representation in Islamic Mass-Based Political Parties in Indonesia*, *Politicon* (2024), 6 (2), p. 207–234. <https://doi.org/10.15575/politicon.v6i2.33934>.

¹⁸ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

¹⁹ Baharudin, *Perempuan dalam kepemimpinan politik di Indonesia*, [Women's political leadership in Indonesia], *Harakat An-Nisa* (2024), 7 (2), p. 65–72, <https://doi.org/10.30631/72.65-72>.

²⁰ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

²¹ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

²² VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

²³ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

²⁴ Lina Aissa and Mourad Mkinsi, *Sexual violence as true weapon of male dominance and control: A review of the literature*, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science Studies* (2024), <https://doi.org/10.32996/jhsss.2024.6.4.8>.

²⁵ Dubravka Simonovic, *Violence against women in politics*, United Nations (2018), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1640483>.

²⁶ VAWF FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

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- ²⁷ Tracey Raney, Cheryl N. Collier, Grace Lore, and Andrea Spender, *Democracy During #MeToo: Taking Stock of Violence against Women in Canadian Politics*, Toronto Metropolitan University (2023), <https://doi.org/10.32920/23992578>.
- ²⁸ VAWE FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.
- ²⁹ Lijana Čičkarić, *A Contribution to the Study of Violence Against Women in Politics*, *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* (2024), 19 (1), <https://eap-iea.org/index.php/eap/article/view/1232>.
- ³⁰ Juliana Restrepo Sanín, *Violence against women in politics as an unintended consequence of democratization*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (2022), 24 (1), p. 16–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2021.2014343>.
- ³¹ Anonymous woman politician, interview by WRI, 6 September 2024.
- ³² Anonymous woman politician, interview by WRI, 6 September 2024.
- ³³ Anonymous woman politician, interview by WRI, 10 August 2024.
- ³⁴ VAWE FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.
- ³⁵ VAWE FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

Conclusion

Impact of VAWP on women’s participation in elections

Violence against women in politics (VAWP) is a form of gender-based violence (GBV) in political spaces, deeply rooted in discriminatory gender stereotypes. This phenomenon not only obstructs women’s participation and representation but also undermines democratic structures and social order.¹ Recent studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between VAWP and weak women’s political participation, both in formal and informal roles.²

“I once witnessed vandalism against my own campaign attributes (APK), but [to be honest] I would do the same to prevent my rivals from getting high votes, especially because I am a woman. A woman with high votes is a threat, and that’s why they vandalised my APKs.”³

VAWP is a common factor that demotivates women’s political participation. It could also lead to political apathy and reluctance to pursue another candidacy in future elections. As a coping mechanism, many women ultimately mimic the behaviours of men politicians, mimicking their aggressive tactics at times subconsciously.⁴ Regrettably, this perpetuates the cycle of violence within a system that has long been unsafe for women.

Figure 7. Impact of VAWP on the performance of women politicians during the 2024 elections⁵

How significant was the impact of VAWP on your campaign and political performance? (n = 100)

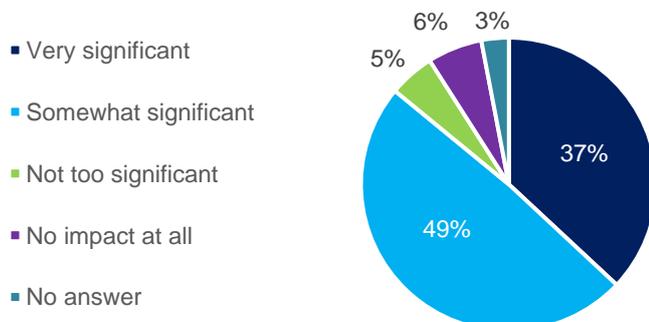


Figure 7 reveals that most women in politics perceive VAWP as having a very significant (37%) or somewhat significant (49%) impact on their campaign and political performance. This highlights a concerning reality in which VAWP serves as a major barrier to women’s political participation. Our FGD with women politicians reinforced this finding, with many expressing disappointments in the system, its mechanisms, and the organisation of the 2024 elections. Some admitted losing motivation to the point of considering withdrawing from candidacy altogether. Others felt embarrassed that, despite efforts to speak out, they ultimately lost due to their inability to provide financial incentives to sway voters’ decisions.⁶

Our survey further emphasises this: 43.1% of respondents consider VAWP as a critical issue that influences their choices and trust in the political system. These findings underscore the far-

reaching impact of VAWP, not only on women's political perception but also the overall public perception on the democratic process.

VAWP response mechanism

Women politicians involved in this study demonstrated diverse responses to VAWP, reflecting the gender dynamics and structural challenges they face. Our findings reveal several patterns of response that seem to be preferred by women politicians to cope with VAWP:

- **Family:** Women with strong domestic networks often confide in their families and relatives. Since this is an informal method, it does not provide a systemic solution.
- **Women's organisations:** Many respondents turn to women's organisations in recognition of their high level of awareness and solidarity with women's issues.
- **Social media:** Women politicians view social media platforms as accessible alternatives to voice their frustration when legal measures fail them, although the use depends on individual digital literacy and socio-economic status.
- **Political parties:** Formal complaints like political parties are viewed as largely ineffective due to the entrenched patriarchal cultures among the elites.
- **God:** Many women express hopelessness and seek comfort by praying to God, further underscoring the general distrust towards formal channels and mechanisms.

When confronting VAWP, women are often forced to endure and navigate a spectrum of mechanisms, ranging from informal to formal approaches, rather than relying on concrete, final solutions. Statistics reveal that most women initially turn to their families for support. When this fails, they seek help from women's organisations or utilise social media.

Formal mechanisms such as political parties and legal actions are the least likely to be chosen. Not only is it frequently ineffective and hostile, but it also comes with an expensive price tag as well as lengthy and challenging procedure, which leave women often choosing to live with the consequences than pursuing justice.

Entrenched patriarchal culture within political parties and legal systems renders formal mechanisms far from being gender responsive. Meanwhile, informal options such as turning to social media or women's organisations tend to be more responsive but come with greater risks. Victims may face further violence, including intimidation, stigma, or criminalisation through defamation, hate speech, false accusations, and victim blaming.⁷

Other factors, including social class, education, seniority, economic status, and cultural background influence, significantly influence women's choices when deciding how to respond to their VAWP incidents. This highlights the need for multi-dimensional and intersectional approaches to understanding VAWP in Indonesia:

- **Women from middle to lower social backgrounds** often turn to family members or social media due to their limited access and resources.
- **Women with a background on gender activism** are more likely to seek support from women's organisations.
- **Women with sufficient economic resources** tend to pursue legal actions with professional assistance from lawyers.

Challenges and needs in addressing VAWP

The lack of a support network remains one of the greatest challenges for women in politics. Yet, this is merely the tip of the iceberg. Other contributing factors, such as financial constraints, lack of party support, socio-cultural barriers, and psychological pressures further curtail women’s political participation, making the journey towards true gender equality in politics a long, arduous one fraught with obstacles. Women from marginalised backgrounds face even greater challenges. Our survey reveals that patriarchal culture (63.1%), lack of party support (50.6%), and the double burden of balancing domestic and professional responsibilities (41.9%) are among the most significant barriers they encounter. It is evident that systemic transformation is urgently needed to address these structural and social challenges and create a more inclusive political environment.

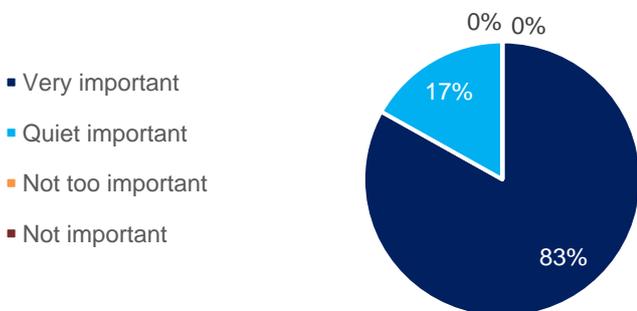
Without precise procedures to answer these challenges, gender gap in politics will continue to prevent the establishment of an inclusive democracy in Indonesia. To encourage women’s political participation, it needs equal participation from women in the decision-making processes, which starts from the internal of political parties. Our survey indicates strong support for the involvement of women survivors in designing VAWP prevention and handling policies. 83% of women politicians believe survivor involvement is very significant, while the rest consider it quite significant. No response says otherwise.

Without clear procedures to address these challenges, gender gap in politics will continue to hinder the establishment of an inclusive democracy in Indonesia. Encouraging women’s political participation requires, first, an equal opportunity to be involved in decision-making processes, most importantly within the internal management of political parties. Our survey highlights strong support for the involvement of women survivors of VAWP in designing policies to prevent and respond to incidents. An overwhelming 83% of women politicians consider survivor involvement to be of very significant importance, while the remaining 17% of respondents view it as quite significant. No respondents think policies and mechanisms should be designed without involving VAWP survivors.

Our findings affirm how critical it is to involve survivors in designing VAWP responses and mechanisms. This reflects a collective awareness of the need for a participatory and inclusive approach that moves beyond the traditional top-down policy models. Furthermore, this poses a challenge to the stereotype of women as victims that do not have agencies of their own.

Figure 8. Participation of VAWP survivors in designing prevention and response mechanisms⁸

How important is it to involve survivors of VAWP in designing proper mechanisms to prevent and respond to VAWP? (n = 100)



¹ See **Appendix 3** for a summary of the forms of VAWP identified in the 2024 elections.

² Mona Lena Krook and Juliana Restrepo Sanín, *The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians*, *Perspectives on Politics* (2020), 18 (3), p. 740–755, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/cost-of-doing-politics-analyzing-violence-and-harassment-against-female-politicians/997569433135FA170B2789C88A48DD17>; Rebecca Kuperberg, *Intersectional violence against women in politics*, *Politics & Gender* (2018), 14 (4), p. 685–690, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/article/intersectional-violence-against-women-in-politics/857778003CD6AB6448FC30DBC1F34416>.

³ Anonymous woman politician, interview by WRI, 9 September 2024.

⁴ Christine M. Lehane, *Male and Female Differences in Nonconscious Mimicry: A Systematic Review*, *Journal of European Psychology Students* (2015), 6 (3), <https://jeeps.efpsa.org/articles/10.5334/jeeps.de>.

⁵ See **Appendix 2** for a summary of the impact of VAWP.

⁶ VAWE FGD Participant, organised by WFD and WRI in Jakarta, 7 August 2024.

⁷ Nurul Nur Azizah, *5 Pasal Revisi Kedua UU ITE Ini Bisa Ancam Perempuan*, [Five Provisions in the Second Amendment of ITE Law That Endanger Women], *Konde* (21 December 2023), <https://www.konde.co/2023/12/5-pasal-revisi-kedua-uu-ite-ini-bisa-ancam-perempuan>.

⁸ See **Appendix 4** for a summary of the challenges and needs to address VAWP.

Recommendations

Women politicians involved in this study have spoken out, and their message is unequivocal in recommending several policy actions forward to support structural reforms aimed at enhancing women's political participation. These recommendations emphasise the urgent need for inclusive, gender-responsive, intersectional, and equitable policies to address all forms of VAWP. Based on our survey, the top priorities include policy and legal reforms (67.3%), stronger law enforcement (62.4%), and capacity-building for all stakeholders (38.6%). More than a list, these priorities represent a call to action.

Our survey on voters underscores the importance of educational background and integrity in legislative candidates. Many voters chose honesty (78.1%) and educational background (63.1%) as the top two qualities that they seek in candidates, with gender having much less significant influence. This highlights the need for strategic policies to overcome structural challenges and boost women's political participation.

While the survey focuses primarily on legal reforms and enforcement, there is a growing recognition of the need for a multi-dimensional approach to addressing VAWP. This includes public awareness campaigns (31.7%) and involving community leaders (16.8%). Most critically, the survey reveals a concerning reality that there is a lack of support for victims of VAWP (14.9%) despite ongoing efforts, shedding light on the urgent need for short-term solutions alongside long-term strategies.

Women politicians involved in this research have actively championed the importance of multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral collaboration. Their recommendations include strengthening partnerships with civil organisations (11.9%) and improving VAWP monitoring and reporting (10.9%) to create sustainable change. These steps aim to bolster collective efforts to combat gender-based violence in politics, fostering a transformation towards a more inclusive system.

To create an inclusive political landscape, women politicians proposed the following key actions:

- Develop and implement inclusive, gender-responsive, and women-friendly political party policies by **decentralising decision-making processes** and ensuring women's participation at every stage within political parties.
- Strengthen affirmative action to guarantee at least **30% representation of women in legislative bodies**, serving as a foundational step towards more inclusive policymaking.
- Enhance the legal framework governing electoral processes to be gender-responsive, thereby **reducing the prohibitive cost of politics** that often disadvantage women.
- Establish an independent body to **oversee and evaluate the implementation of affirmative policies** supporting women in politics.
- **Provide targeted funding** to support women's political participation by considering their diverse backgrounds.

Table 1. Recommendations to address VAWP

| Actor | Recommendation | Reference |
|--|--|---|
| Political parties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement guidelines to combat VAWP. • Organise gender-responsive training programmes for all party cadres. • Establish a dedicated unit to address and manage VAWP. | <p>The UK’s Labour Party established internal guidelines for addressing sexual harassment, including clear procedures for victims to report incidents.¹ They also implemented policies focused on the prevention and handling of sexual harassment cases.²</p> |
| Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact laws focused on prevention, deterrence, and equipping civil apparatus for handling VAWP. • Integrate gender perspectives into all policies and public services. • Create a VAWP reporting system involving Komnas Perempuan and civil society to ensure transparency and accountability. • Foster collaboration between ministries, government bodies, and political parties to develop practical guidelines for preventing GBV in politics. • Establish specialised, cross-agency task force to address VAWP. • Allocate dedicated funding to support victims of VAWP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolivia enacted Law 243 (2012) to address VAWP. The law identifies 17 forms of political violence and imposes both administrative and criminal sanctions, making Bolivia the first country to penalise VAWP. • Canada’s Department for Women and Gender Equality established a gender observatory to collect and analyse data on women’s political rights. The data is utilised to monitor compliance with gender equality standards, support representative and participatory democracy, and serve as a national hub for research, best practices, and policymaking references to combat GBV. |
| DPR RI DPD RI DPRD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise institutional codes of ethics to explicitly ban GBV and VAWP along with sanctions for perpetrators. • Create a special task force to address, investigate, and recommend sanctions for GBV perpetrators. • Conduct training programmes to raise awareness and ensure the implementation of the codes of ethics, fostering a GBV-free work environment. • Develop a secure, confidential, and supportive internal reporting mechanism for victims of VAWP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French National Assembly’s Rules of Procedure outline regulations for members exhibiting aggressive, abusive, provocative, or intimidating behaviour.³ These procedures mandate the creation of an anti-violence unit, involving psychologists and advocates, to support and manage cases referred to the ethics committee.⁴ • European Parliament’s Rules of Procedure require members to treat their colleagues with respect as well as refrain from using derogatory language, engaging in gender discrimination, and committing sexual or psychological assaults. Sanctions for violations include the revocation of speaking rights, formal reprimands, or suspension from parliamentary activities for periods ranging from two to sixty days.⁵ |
| KPU RI Bawaslu RI DKPP RI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate election regulations to address the prevention and management of VAWP. • Provide training for electoral organisations on effectively handling VAWP cases. • Monitor and compile VAWP incidents data during elections to ensure accountability and transparency. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mexico’s National Electoral Institute implemented special protocols to address VAWP during elections. • Elections Canada offers specific guidelines aimed at preventing the harassment of political candidates.⁶ • The Inter-Parliamentary Union developed a monitoring system that provides guidelines for tracking and addressing VAWP.⁷ |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Komnas Perempuan</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop comprehensive guidelines on VAWP and publish annual reports on the progress and effectiveness of VAWP control measures. • Establish and sustain reporting centres dedicated to addressing and documenting VAWP cases. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Mexico, a VAWP observatory regularly documents and reports cases.⁸ • In Tunisia, Law No. 2017-58 on the elimination of VAW establishes a framework to address VAWP, including the creation of a dedicated unit and an integrated reporting system for such cases. |
| <p>Media</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise responsive and gender-sensitive journalistic reporting. • Provide training for journalists on gender-responsive media reporting. • Ensure media coverage of VAWP cases. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Australia, journalist training programmes improve the quality of VAWP reporting by incorporating social contexts, expert insights, and resources for survivors.⁹ • In Brazil, laws and legislative proposals in the Congress promote media coverage of VAW, increasing public awareness and fostering policy discussions.¹⁰ |
| <p>Civil society organisations</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build solidarity and advocacy networks to support actions against VAWP. • Increase public awareness of VAWP through campaigns and educational initiatives. • Ensure access to legal assistance for victims of VAWP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Guerrero, Mexico, feminist activism such as the Regional Nodes has successfully prevented political violence, improved access to justice for women, and strengthened their political rights and participation. • The #MeToo movement has driven policy changes and legislative reforms addressing VAW by providing survivors with a platform to share their experiences, challenge societal norms, and demand accountability. In Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Mexico, the movement played a pivotal role in advocating for laws criminalising VAWP.¹¹ |

¹ *Sexual Harassment Complainant Guidance*, The Labour Party, <https://labour.org.uk/resources/sexual-harassment-complainant-guidance>; *Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure*, UK Labour Party (2021), <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SH21-Sexual-Harassment-Policy-and-Procedure-2021.pdf>.

² *ALP National Policy for Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response*, Australian Labour Party, <https://www.alp.org.au/media/3447/policy-for-sexual-harassment-prevention-and-response-14.pdf>.

³ *Règlement de l'Assemblée nationale* [National Assembly Rules of Procedure], French Assemblée Nationale, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/divers/texte_reference/02_reglement_assemblee_nationale#D_Article_7_7.

⁴ *Création de la cellule de lutte contre le harcèlement* [Creation of Anti-Harassment Unit], French Assemblée Nationale, <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/actualites-accueil-hub/creation-de-la-cellule-de-lutte-contre-le-harcèlement>.

⁵ Ionel Zamfir, *Violence against women active in politics in the EU A serious obstacle to political participation*, European Parliament (February 2024), 11, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/759600/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)759600_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/759600/EPRS_BRI(2024)759600_EN.pdf).

⁶ Tracey Raney, *Addressing Violence and Harassment in Canada's Senate: Critical Actors and Institutional Responses*, Toronto Metropolitan University (2023), <https://doi.org/10.32920/23992626>.

⁷ Mona Lena Krook, *Violence against Women in Politics*, Oxford Academic (2020), <https://academic.oup.com/book/36672>.

⁸ Serena Eréndira Serrano Oswald, *Gender based political violence against women in Mexico from a regional perspective*, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Regional Science* (2022), 7 (1), p. 135–157, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41685-022-00271-6>.

⁹ Patricia L. Easta, Annie Blatchford, Kate Holland, and Georgina Sutherland, *Teaching Journalists about Violence against Women Best Reportage Practices: An Australian Case Study*, Social Science Research Network (2021), <https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.3791766>.

¹⁰ Helen Rabello Kras, *Rearranging the News Agenda: State Action and News Media Reporting on Violence against Women in Brazil*, *Comparative Politics* (2023), 55 (3), p. 425–447, <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041523x16632537506848>.

¹¹ Tracey Raney, Cheryl N. Collier, Grace Lore, and Andrea Spender, *Democracy During #MeToo: Taking Stock of Violence against Women in Canadian Politics*, Toronto Metropolitan University (2023), <https://doi.org/10.32920/23992578>.

Appendix 1: Policy Frameworks

Table 2. Relevant policies on VAWP response

| Policy | Relevance | Note |
|--|-----------|--|
| Law No. 12/2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes (UU TPKS) | High | The law provides protection for women against sexual violence, which often hinders their political participation. This legal safeguard ensures women feel secure to actively engage in politics. |
| Law No. 7/2017 on Elections (UU Pemilu) | High | The law governs elections in Indonesia, with its relevance hinging on the ability of organising bodies to prioritise gender-sensitive procedures. This includes providing equal opportunities for women candidates, such as fair access to candidacy, campaign resources, violence-free political spaces, and effective legal protection during elections. |
| Law No. 12/2003 on Elections (UU Pemilu) | High | The law outlines regulations for elections, emphasising the importance of women's representation in parliament from every political party. |
| Law No. 2/2011 on Political Parties (UU Parpol) | High | The law plays a crucial role in promoting women's political participation, as political parties serve as the primary avenue for electoral candidacy. |
| Law No. 23/2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (UU PKDRT) | High | Domestic violence can hinder women from engaging in politics, making this law essential for safeguarding them against threats of violence. |
| Law No. 13/2019 on MPR RI, DPR RI, DPD and DPRD (UU MD3) | High | The law outlines the functions, powers, and structures of legislative bodies, including provisions for leadership roles that ensure gender representation across various fields and sectors. |
| Law No. 6/2020 on Subnational Elections (UU Pilkada) | Moderate | The law governs regional elections, addressing gender-discriminatory practices and empowering women to pursue public office. |
| Law No. 6/2023 on Jobs Creation (UU CK) | Moderate | The law replaces previous employment legislation, regulating multiple aspects of the workplace. However, it requires further development to enhance protections for women in the work environment, aligning with the broader goal of achieving gender equality in politics. |
| Law No. 13/2022 on the Formation of Legislation (UU P3) | Low | While the law primarily focuses on legislative drafting procedures, which are not directly linked to women's participation, incorporating a gender perspective into the policy framework remains vital. |

Appendix 2: Summary of VAWP Impact in the 2024 Elections

Table 3. Impact of VAWP on the 2024 elections

| | |
|--|---|
| Declining women's political participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of VAWP refrain from running in future elections. • Victims of VAWP become apathetic due to the numerous challenges and systemic harm they have endured within the political landscape. • Discrimination, money politics, and manipulative ballot practices severely undermine women's chances of electoral success, further entrenching the perception that their political participation is unwelcome and remains tokenistic. |
| Psychological and emotional trauma | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VAWP leads to trauma, social pressures, and enduring stigma for women. • Verbal assaults, intimidation, threats, and discriminatory actions undermine women's confidence to compete in politics. • The combined pressures of the electoral process and societal dynamics contribute to heightened anxiety and stress among women politicians. |
| Less inclusive political strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To navigate the political landscape, many women adopt traditionally aggressive political styles often associated with men. This perpetuates a culture of violence in politics, hindering the development of an inclusive political system. • To avoid confrontation and criticism of their capabilities, women politicians often restrict their focus to women-related issues, which diminishes their presence in broader political context. |
| Economic and financial burdens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an unequal economic system, the 2024 elections disproportionately caused financial harm to women, particularly those lacking sufficient support from their political parties. • The social stigma stemming from VAWP may limit the opportunities available to women candidates outside of politics following the election cycle. |
| Social and cultural pressures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative experiences in political processes can strain family relationships, particularly for women politicians without strong support systems from their families or relatives. • Women who have faced violence often endure stigma, which harms their public reputation and diminishes their influence. |
| Diminishing trust in political systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of VAWP lose faith in political parties as a safe and inclusive space. • Systematic VAWP eroded women politicians' confidence in the integrity of the electoral system and processes. |
| Declining quality of democracy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decline in women's political participation leads to imbalanced representation in political bodies, adversely affecting the quality of public policies and democratic processes in the long term. • The absence of women in policymaking processes, driven by VAWP, excludes their perspectives and silences their voices. |
| Stronger women's solidarity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a positive note, VAWP incidents during the 2024 elections heightened awareness among women about the importance of solidarity to ensure their meaningful participation in politics. • Many women channel their negative experiences from the elections into a driving force that inspires them to advocate for democratic reforms. |

Appendix 3: Summary of VAWP Manifestation in the 2024 Elections

Table 4. Manifestation of VAWP in the 2024 Elections

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Psychological violence</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women politicians often face verbal abuse, as they are perceived as incapable of leadership and are intimidated to withdraw from candidacy. In some cases, this intimidation is delivered through intermediaries or anonymous letters. • On social media, women politicians frequently endure cyber harassment and insults, often as part of black campaigns designed to tarnish their reputations. • Within their parties, women politicians are rarely assigned to strategic roles, leaving them with little to no influence in key decision-making processes. • Among political cadres, women are often underestimated, viewed merely as “quota fillers” and stereotyped as only suitable for household duties. • Many women politicians lack adequate support from their families and relatives for their political activities, adding to their psychological burden. • The processes of electoral redistribution and ballot number allocation are often opaque and discriminatory, leaving women politicians disheartened and discouraged. • Intense competition makes it challenging for women to build supportive networks, even among fellow women politicians. |
| <p>Physical violence</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women politicians often face threats of aggressive violence and physical abuse during campaigns, particularly from parties that perceive their participation as a threat. • Campaign attributes (APK), such as billboards, banners, and posters, are frequently destroyed, and vehicles or equipment belonging to campaign teams are sabotaged. • Women politicians encounter restricted access to certain areas in their electoral districts, with disruptions to their campaigns or meetings with constituents. • Stereotypes about women’s physical endurance often led to assumptions that they cannot visit electoral areas or conduct door-to-door campaigns. Safety concerns are frequently cited to block their access to certain areas. • Political events are often scheduled at unsafe times or locations for women, such as late-night meetings or remote areas lacking proper safety measures. • Women frequently experience physical contact or boundary violations in public spaces. |
| <p>Social and cultural violence</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender stereotypes reinforce the belief that women belong in domestic roles, while politics is seen as an exclusive domain for men. Politically active women often face stigma for defying social norms, forcing them to juggle dual roles. • Social norms restrict women’s activities, fostering negative perceptions of those who participate in late-night events or interact freely with men. This limits their political engagement and networking opportunities. • Families and relatives often view women’s political participation as unconventional, leading to intimidation even within their personal spaces. Women are stereotyped as being solely responsible for their roles as wives and mothers. • Gender-biased interpretations of religious texts are frequently misused to justify restrictions on women’s political participation, further entrenching their subordination in social structures. • Stigmas questioning women’s competence in leadership roles foster scepticism about their decision-making and policy-making abilities. Expectations that women prioritise domestic responsibilities portray their political activities as disruptive to family welfare. • Money politics disproportionately favour male candidates, who typically have greater access to economic resources. • Masculine dominance in political systems marginalises women, excluding them from key communications and networking opportunities. |

Economic violence

- The gender gap in economic access makes it challenging for women candidates to secure the financial resources needed for political campaigns, limiting their ability to reach more voters.
- Political parties often fail to provide sufficient, fair, and proportional financial support to women compared to their men counterparts.
- Distrust in women's financial capabilities forces many women candidates to meet additional requirements, such as disclosing their bank statements, which are not equally demanded of men.
- Financial support for male candidates is typically greater than that for women, undermining women's efforts in politics.
- Patriarchal norms double the economic burden on women, as they must balance political participation with managing household finances, while campaign demands require significant resources and time.

Symbolic and structural violence

- Opaque political practices and discriminatory actions in electoral redistributions often disadvantage women candidates (regardless of seniority and experience), resulting in non-strategic electoral district and ballot placement.
- Parties make unilateral decisions, such as assigning women candidates to districts misaligned with their political activity locations, altering electoral districts, or changing ballot numbers without their consent.
- The 30% women's quota is often treated as a mere formality, with many women nominated solely to meet the requirement, rather than being taken seriously as candidates.
- Political parties fail to address the gender gap when allocating resources for women candidates.
- Law enforcement agencies do not adequately address cases of violence against women.
- Political parties are lenient towards members who perpetrate violence against women and lack proper reporting mechanisms to protect victimised women.
- Structural inequalities disproportionately affect women from marginalised or minority backgrounds, such as Papuan women.
- Distrust in women's capabilities leads parties to assign them to non-strategic roles, resulting in limited involvement in decision-making processes and strategic work.
- The patriarchal and male-dominated political system fosters an unfriendly work environment for women, reducing their representation to mere statistics rather than substantive participation.

Digital violence

- Women politicians frequently endure derogatory remarks, sexist jokes, and defamation on digital platforms, aimed at damaging their reputations.
- Accusations on social media often claim that women do not belong in the political arena, with black campaigns targeting their personal backgrounds, families, or intellectual capabilities.
- Social media is used to spread bias and fake rumours about women candidates, undermining public trust in them.
- Harassment on social media includes being labelled as "complimentary in politics" or "quota fillers," perpetuating gender stigma.
- Women politicians receive direct threats through personal messages, emails, or public comments, designed to instil fear and silence them.
- Coordinated attacks by anonymous accounts or bots are common during campaign periods, aiming to make damaging rumours go viral and increase their vulnerability.
- Manipulated stories or rumours about women's personal lives frequently surface online, creating significant social pressure.
- Disinformation campaigns twist facts about women's work, policies, or reputations, severely harming their public credibility.

Sexual violence

- Women frequently endure sexually suggestive comments and jokes, including inappropriate questions about their personal or sexual lives, as well as propositions for affairs.
- Unwanted physical contact, such as hugs, pats, or kisses without consent, is a common issue faced by women.
- Women are often subjected to threats and coercion to engage in sexual activities as a condition for receiving political support.
- Certain parties deliberately spread sexual rumours to tarnish the reputations of women politicians.

Appendix 4: Summary of Challenges and Needs in Responding to VAWP

Table 5. Challenges and Needs in Responding to VAWP

| Challenges | Needs |
|--|---|
| Structural and Institutional Dimensions | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political parties often lack confidence in women candidates' abilities, excluding them from strategic decision-making processes. • Decision-making within political parties is typically authoritative and centralised, with little to no involvement from regional cadres, particularly women. • Women candidates are frequently assigned non-strategic ballot and electoral district placements. • Neither law enforcement bodies nor political parties have established clear or effective mechanisms to address VAWP. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political parties should provide specialised training to rebuild women's confidence and actively involve them in strategic decision-making processes. • Gender dynamics must be considered when determining ballot and electoral district placements in elections. • Intersectional factors cannot be overlooked, as women's life experiences differ significantly from men's due to societal gender gaps. • Political parties must implement inclusive policies that support women and ensure fair distribution of resources to women candidates, regardless of their social, economic, or political backgrounds. • Law enforcement agencies and political parties should establish clear and effective mechanisms to address and respond to VAWP cases. |
| Economic and Financial Dimensions | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women often face limited economic and financial resources, making it difficult to maximise their outreach to potential voters during campaigns. • Women politicians frequently receive disproportionate financial support from political parties, with disparities evident between older and newer cadres, as well as between incumbent candidates and challengers. • Money politics, predominantly practised by male politicians, undermines women's efforts to connect with voters through the promotion of ideas and policies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political parties must ensure proportional and fair funding, including operational support for women candidates, particularly those new to politics. • Women expect substantial backing from political parties for campaigning and visibility-enhancing activities. Insufficient support for campaign facilities often hinders women's ability to compete with men, who typically receive greater internal party support. |
| Psychological Dimension | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women politicians often lack the confidence to compete in the electoral arena due to the hostile environment they face. • Women are frequently subjected to violence in politics, including intimidation, threats, sexual harassment, and negative stigma, all of which make their political efforts significantly more challenging. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant stakeholders must provide moral and emotional support to women politicians by advocating for and strengthening accountability mechanisms, ensuring they feel safer in public spaces. • Political parties should allocate resources and offer adequate protection to women cadres, helping them engage in political activities without fear of violence. |

Social and Cultural Dimensions

- Traditional views restrict women's participation in public spaces, demanding they prioritise domestic responsibilities and perpetuating the belief that they are unsuited for leadership roles.
- Many women lack support from their families and relatives to actively engage as political actors.
- Women face a double burden, balancing domestic responsibilities alongside building their political careers.
- Weak solidarity among women results in the absence of strong collective support networks.
- Support from organisations or prominent women figures often comes with conditions, further limiting women's performance and potential.
- Communities, party organisers, cadres, election bodies, law enforcement agencies, and other relevant organisations should undergo comprehensive education on gender equality in politics. This would enhance their understanding of women's political rights, campaign strategies, and effective handling of VAWP.
- Women's organisations and leaders should establish robust support systems to advocate for balanced and inclusive political rights, offering alternative assistance to women in politics.
- All stakeholders must foster solidarity, particularly among women politicians, to ensure mutual support across diverse social classes, economic statuses, and political affiliations.
- Men should take on more active roles in domestic responsibilities, such as household chores and management, to alleviate the double burden faced by women politicians.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is the UK public body dedicated to supporting democracy around the world. Operating internationally, WFD works with parliaments, political parties, and civil society groups as well as on elections to help make political systems fairer, more inclusive and accountable.

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