

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Women's Representation in the U.S. Congress

A case study of the 2018 elections

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Abstract

233 years after the Founding Fathers created the U.S. Congress, women are still very much underrepresented in both houses of Congress, with 28.3 % in the House of Representatives and 24% in the Senate. But throughout the years, there have been some increases in the number of women serving these chambers, especially in 1992 and 2018. In both these elections, we found out that the political context had had a real impact on the number of women who filed their candidacy and who were elected. We focused on the context around the 2018 elections, which included Trump's presidential elections, Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Supreme Court, the #MeToo movement and women's activism, and political retirements leading to more open seats. All these were motivational factors for women to run for office that year. Then, we wanted to understand this underrepresentation of women in U.S. politics. We focused on four obstacles that they were facing: gender discrimination, sexual harassment, structural barriers (incumbency, fundraising, media coverage, less infrastructures), and family responsibilities. To analyse these concretely, we chose a well-known group of progressive women of colour elected in 2018, *The Squad*, to determine whether they overcame these barriers or not. Results will show that every member has at least overcome one of these barriers.

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Introduction

For a very long time, women have not been represented at all in the United States Congress, only men were elected to Congress and women were not even allowed to vote until the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920. Indeed, although, this legislative institution was created in 1789 by the Founding Fathers, we had to wait until 1916 for a first woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and until 1920 for the U.S. Senate. It thus took more than 120 years for women to start being recognized as able to represent their constituents and states, just like men did.

Even though the first women were elected in the first half of the 21st century, prior to 1992, their number in the Houses of Congress never exceeded more than two serving at the same time in the U.S. Senate, out of 100 senators (2%) and 29 in the U.S. House, out of 435 representatives (6.7%). In the year 1992, eventually called the Year of the Woman, a first surge of women candidates and women elected was observed. During that 103rd Congress, seven women served the U.S. Senate and 47 were House Members. From these women, Senator Dianne Feinstein still holds her Democratic seat for California at the time of writing, just like Patty Murray does, a Democrat for Washington.

The political context around the 1992 elections very much provoked this surge of women candidates for office and the number of women who got elected to the U.S. Congress. First of all, due to political retirements and redistricting, there were more open seats than usual. 51 House members and six Senators retired that year, while 12 House members and two Senators ran for another office. In addition to that, 26 new districts were created in 1990, for which new seats were open to candidates. Finally, there were lots of talk about sexual harassment and gender roles in that period. That was mostly due to the confirmation of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court while he had been accused by Anita Hills of having sexually harassed her at work. Some candidates declared that they were running for office because of how Anita Hills had been treated.

Along with the first women elected to Congress, these women elected in 1992 made up history as women are now a common part of the U.S. political landscape. However, their

representation is still very much inferior to men's. Today, in the 117th Congress, they are 24 in the U.S. Senate and 123 in the U.S. House, for a total of 27.5% in Congress.

In this study, we decided to focus on the 2018 elections. In that year, there was another surge of women candidates and elected, and, bearing similarities with the 1992 elections, some even called it, Year of Woman 2.0. Keeping this in mind, we have two main questions, each having sub-questions as well, which we would like to answer:

- Why has there been another surge of women candidates during the 2018 elections? Was it, like the 1992 elections, provoked by the political context surrounding the elections?
- Why are women underrepresented in U.S. politics? What are the obstacles that women are facing and how did a specific group of women elected in 2018 overcome these barriers?

To answer these questions, we divided the work in three sections, starting with a general context, going on to the 2018 elections and ending with the obstacles that women are facing. In that first section, as our spotlight will be the 2018 elections to Congress, a brief overview of the U.S. government and its separation of powers will be provided. Then, we will trace the history of women's representation in the U.S. Congress, starting with the Nineteenth Amendment allowing women to vote, the first elected women in the House and in the Senate, going on with a more general part on the evolution in the number of women serving, and ending with a focus on their current representation in the 117th Congress. In the following section, an in-depth report of the 2018 elections will be delivered, setting the political context of these, and bringing *The Squad* into focus, which is a group of progressive women of colour who were elected in that period. The last section will concentrate on the obstacles that women are facing to enter U.S. politics and on which barriers did the members of the above-mentioned group overcome.

Finally, in the discussion we will try to address these research questions, but first let us make some hypotheses based on some research mainly conducted by the *Pew Research Center*¹ and the *Barbara Lee Family Foundation*².

First thing first, let us present our hypothesis on the first research question, which purpose was, as a reminder, trying to understand why a new surge of women candidates, breaking records set the previous years, was observed in the 2018 elections and whether it was linked to the particular political context of that period.

The 2018 elections bearing similarities with the 1992, we assume that its political context did play a role in having more women who filed their candidacy to run for Congress and who were elected. Indeed, we know that many Democrats, and especially women, felt outraged by Trump's presidential election in 2016. The business man having already been accused of having sexually harassed and assaulted women, having such a man as their president could have pushed more women to run for office aiming at either trying to impeach him or just trying to preserve women's rights which were threatened by Trump's administration, such as reproductive rights. We thus mostly count on Donald Trump's presidential election as a motivational factor to run for Congress in 2018.

Regarding the response as to why women are underrepresented in U.S. politics, we expect to come across obstacles such as gender discrimination and family responsibilities. Indeed, it is of common knowledge that people's views on women's roles change slowly. Women have long been considered as having to get married, and to take care of their children and the home while their husband went to work and supported themselves. As divorcing is more and more frequent, people's views on the traditional family are evolving, but voters might not yet be ready to see a woman in a leadership position.

¹ "Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world. We conduct public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research. We do not take policy positions." (*About*. (n.d.). Pew Research Center. Retrieved August 6, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/about/>)

² "The Barbara Lee Family Foundation advances women's equality and representation in American politics and in the field of contemporary art. Our work in both our program areas is guided by our core belief that women's voices strengthen our democracy and enrich our culture." (Barbara Lee Family Foundation. (2018, August 7). *About Us*. Retrieved August 6, 2022, from <https://www.barbaraleefoundation.org/about/>)

List of abbreviations

U.S.: United States

U.S.A.: United States of America

Rep.: Representative

NAWSA: National American Women Suffrage Association

NY: New York

D: Democrat(s)

R: Republican(s)

MN: Minnesota

MA: Massachusetts

MI: Michigan

AOC: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

ICE: Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Dem.: Democratic

PAC: Political Action Committee

WOW: Women Organizing Women

HRC: Human Rights Campaign

DFL: Democratic Farmer-Labour

Section 1: General context

Chapter 1: The U.S. government

When the Constitution of the United States of America was ratified in 1788 by nine of the thirteen states, the Founding Fathers wanted to secure individual freedoms and avoid abuse. This is why the Constitution establishes three branches of power in the U.S. government, each with its own capabilities and with a system of checks and balances to ensure that no one body would dominate the other two. As can be seen in *Figure 1*, the three branches of the government are: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial branch. As Congress is the focus of our study, we will be mostly focusing on the legislative branch, but we will briefly describe the other two branches below.

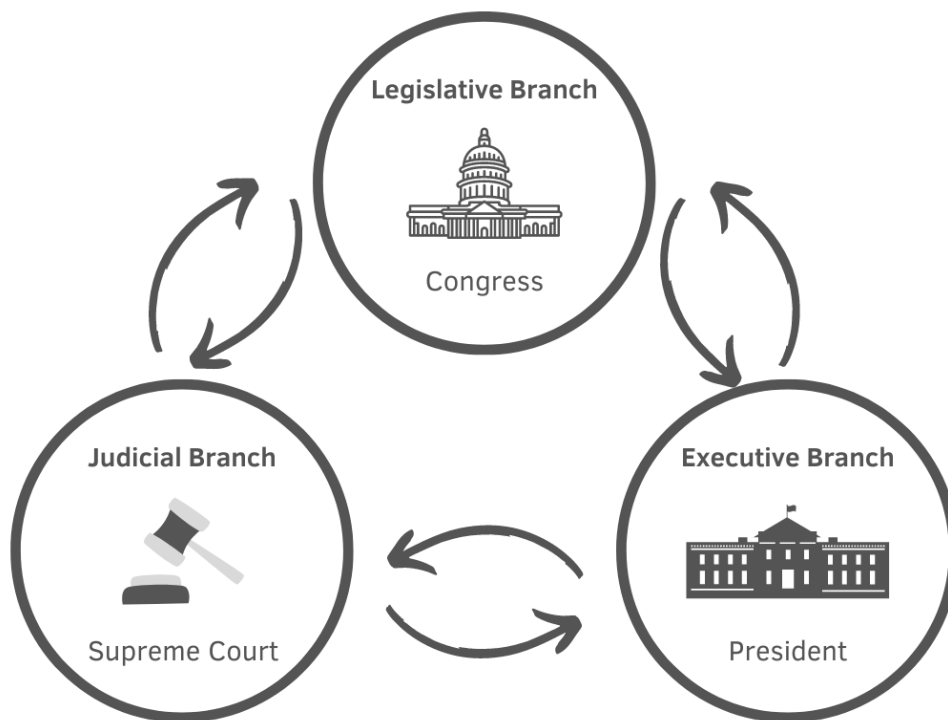


Figure 1: Separation of powers in the U.S. Government.

The Executive Branch is specified in the second article of the Constitution. The leaders of this governing body are the president and the vice president. To run for the presidency, there are, in addition to the election process, some requirements to be met: being a U.S. natural born citizen of at least 35 years old and having lived in the country for at least 14 years. Regarding the presidential election, the U.S. Chief Executive is not directly elected by the American

people, but by the Electoral College³. To become a president, a candidate needs 270 votes out of 538.

During his four-year term, he will be assisted by the Cabinet, an advisory board, in taking all his decisions. It is the president's duty to appoint these government officials as well as the supreme court and federal court judges. However, this power will be checked by the Senate who has to confirm or reject these presidential appointments.

As president of The United States of America, the head of state obviously has work to do. His main responsibility is to execute the laws that the Congress makes by signing these, - hence the title of Chief Executive -, but he also has the right to veto these laws. As mentioned above, the Chief Executive appoints the supreme court justices and federal court judges, but he can also pardon people and grant them clemency, and refuse to execute court decisions.

The third branch of the U.S. government is described in the third article of the Constitution and is represented by the U.S. Supreme Court. Its main and biggest power, the Judicial Review, is to interpret legislative acts and executive actions and determine their constitutionality. Unlike presidency or Congress membership, a justice does not have any eligibility requirements and their terms are not limited: they serve until death, retirement or removal by Congress through impeachment.

The U.S. Court System might seem complicated at first glance. It is divided into several courts, either on the state or on the federal level. As illustrated in *Figure 2*, there are two federal courts, the district courts and the courts of appeals, four state courts and above all, the U.S. Supreme Court, being the most powerful one. However, the judicial branch as well as the executive branch are counterbalanced by the legislative branch, which will be discussed in the next point.

³ A group of electors who votes for the President and the Vice President of the United States. They are appointed by each state and their number equals 538 since 1964: 435 House representatives, 100 senators and 3 electors from the district of Columbia.

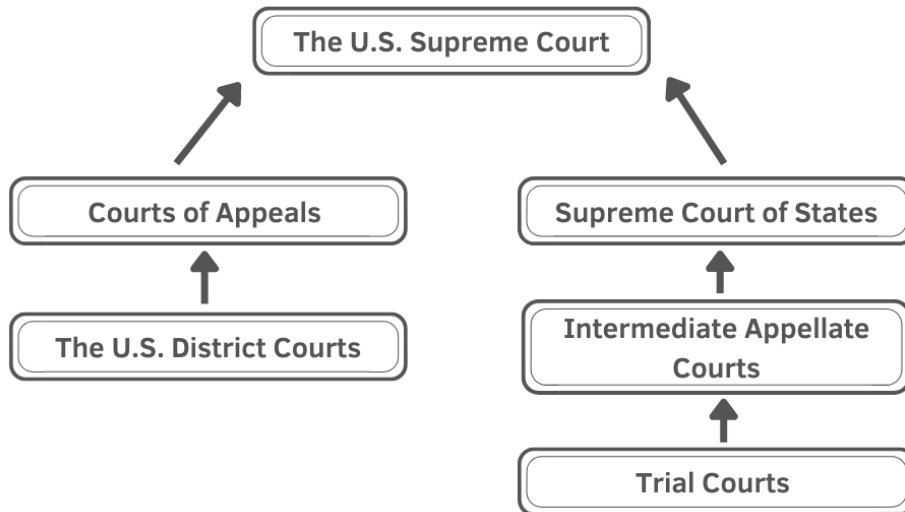


Figure 2: The U.S. Court System.

The Legislative Branch

The Legislative Branch is described in the first Article of the U.S. Constitution and is the longest article. This partly explains why the legislature is considered by many people as being the most important authority in the U.S. government, but this is not the only reason. Indeed, it is also believed to be powerful because of its greatest number of checks on the other branches. Checks have been adopted to limit the power of each part of the government, which creates a balance between these three separate bodies.

The legislature is represented by the Congress, which consists of two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. These two houses were created by the framers of the Constitution because states had different interests, some wanted a proportional representation, others felt a need for equal power. Both parties were listened to and an agreement, The Great Compromise, was reached: the two chambers were established. Practically speaking, as one house can limit the power of the other, this intra-branch check also ensures that the Bicameral Congress does not exert too much authority.

a. The Senate

The U.S. Senate, also called the federal house or the upper house, was originally established to be more aristocratic. Indeed, senators chosen by the state legislatures tended to be politically prominent members of the society in their own state. However, the 17th Amendment (*Appendix*

1), ratified in 1913, declares that senators should now be directly elected by their people, just like House representatives.

Being created on the basis of equality, each state elects two senators for a six years term. Every two years, elections are held for one thirds of the senate. To be eligible to campaign to become one of the 100 U.S. senators, one must be at least 30 years old, have been a U.S. citizen for at least nine years, and be a legal resident of the state they hope to represent. To serve in the Senate, you therefore need to win an election, and to be a good candidate running for office, a clean record and the ability to raise money for campaigns are key. Indeed, conducting a campaign is highly expensive. Spending an average of 5 million dollars is typical for a senatorial candidate, making one third of the upper chamber millionaires⁴. Of course, being an incumbent⁵ is also a considerable advantage when running for office because of their record of winning election(s) and their deep knowledge in the functioning of the Congress.

Besides making laws, the House of Representatives and the Senate have more specific roles in the congressional life. We will mention the main functions of the federal house, being powerful checks on the executive branch of the government:

- With a two thirds of vote, senators can remove the president from office during an impeachment trial. However, this has never happened yet.
- The Senate approves or rejects the ratification of presidential Treaties⁶ with a two thirds vote.
- The confirmation power allows senators to confirm or reject the presidential appointments of executive officers, as for instance, the cabinet secretaries or the federal judges.

These last two functions of the upper house are also known as the Advice and Consent power and are two of the strongest checks on the president.

⁴ N. RAGONE, *The Everything American Government Book*, pp. 53-54.

⁵ Incumbent: "One who already holds a political office. Usually, in US politics, the word incumbent refers to the sitting official who is running for re-election." (Goddard Media (2022). *incumbent*. Political Dictionary. Retrieved June 21, 2022, from <https://politicaldictionary.com/words/incumbent/>)

⁶ "Treaties are binding agreements between nations and become part of international law." (*U.S. Senate: About Treaties*. (2021, March 3). United States Senate. Retrieved June 21, 2022, from <https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/treaties.htm>)

b. The House of Representatives

Composed of 435 members representing individual districts, the House of Representatives has a proportional representation, which means that the number of representatives of a state depends on how many people live in that state. Each state has at least one representative, with California being the biggest state and therefore counting 53 representatives. Every ten years, on April 1, the United States Census Bureau calculates how many residents live in each state to determine its total number of seats to the U.S. House of representatives. The latest count was done in 2020.

To serve in the House, one must be at least 25 years old, have been a citizen of the United States for at least seven years and be a legal resident of the state in which resides the district they hope to represent. Winning the election to the House is one of the toughest tasks. Just as the Senate, the House also has incumbents: “In fact, since World War II, House members have enjoyed a whopping 92 percent re-election rate, which is nearly 20 percent higher than their Senate counterparts. [...] Very few novices are elected to the House of Representatives.”⁷ However, once member of the House, it is quite common for a representative to then become part of the Senate.

The most influential member of the House is its Speaker, who stands second in line in presidential succession. Since 2007, Nancy Pelosi has been chairing the House as its 52nd Speaker and first woman to occupy this position, but we will focus more on her history in the next chapter when discussing the representation of women within the Congress.

As the Senate, the House also has specific functions and checks on the other two branches of government, here are the main ones:

- Representatives can impeach the president or other federal officials to bring them to trial in the Senate. This trial will then be presided over by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, which ensures a representation and control of the three separate powers. To date, only three presidents have been impeached: Andrew Jackson, Bill Clinton and Donald Trump, who was even the only

⁷ N. RAGONE, *The Everything American Government Book*, p.44.

president to have been impeached twice, but none of them has been removed from office.

- If during a presidential election, no candidate gets a majority of votes, it is the lower house who can decide.
- Another of its considerable competence is ‘The Power of the Purse’, which states that any bill passed with the aim of raising taxes shall start in the House.

Unlike the Senate, the House of Representatives was established to be more democratic. Being often referred to as “The People’s House”⁸, its mission is to stand for the people. Representatives are elected every two years by the people during their district elections. Serving the office for only two years means that they have to be more accountable to the popular opinion if they want to be re-elected. One way of doing that is by representing their constituents’ views in Congress through votes, but also by keeping them informed on new legislations, projects, etc. through newsletters, town hall meetings, office hours in their district or even media appearances. Yet, the latter tends to be challenging for new members, because it is a full-time task and journalists are not very responsive to House members who are not yet in a leadership position.

Chapter 2: History of women’s representation in the U.S. Congress

Now that we have a good understanding of the three branches of the U.S. government, let us dive more deeply in the representation of women in Congress. We will start with a discussion of the first elected women in the House of Representatives as well as in the Senate. Then, we will describe the evolution and the current representation of women in both chambers. However, one cannot discuss women’s representation without first referring to the Nineteenth Amendment. Thus, we will begin this chapter with a discussion of this crucial part of the U.S. Constitution.

The Nineteenth Amendment

For many years, women have fought for their right to suffrage to become a federal amendment. Even though it was not written in the U.S. Constitution, several states were already granting voting rights to women before the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in

⁸ N. RAGONE, *The Everything American Government Book*, p. 36

1920, such as Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Washington, California, Montana, and New York. These were either allowing women's suffrage in state and national elections, or limiting them to vote on local matters. When the amendment was ratified, there were only 21 states out of 48 in which women's right to vote had not yet been granted.

In fact, President Wilson was opposed to women's suffrage as a federal amendment and believed voting rights were a state-level issue. Yet, in the beginning of 1917, his stance became more and more difficult to keep. The brand-new House Committee⁹ on Women Suffrage wasted no time to pass a bill on women's voting rights in January 1918, with 274 in favour to 136 votes against, but the Senate voted against the Resolution¹⁰ in October 1918.

In May 1919, however, President Wilson finally declared that women's suffrage was one of the urgent matters which needed to be on the House Calendar. H.J. Res. 1. was thus debated in the House and a vote of 304 in favour to 89 against sent the bill to the Senate, where it passed with 56 against 25 votes. Nevertheless, the fight was not yet put to an end, as it took almost fifteen months to have three-fourths of the states (36) to ratify the amendment. After years of struggle, the Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the right to vote, was officially included in the U.S. Constitution on August 2, in 1920, by U.S. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby. It was extremely short, but ground-breaking (*Appendix 2*):

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on the account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

⁹ "The House's committees consider bills and issues and oversee agencies, programs, and activities within their jurisdictions." Examples of committees are: Budget, Education and Labour, Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, ... (*Committees*. (n.d.). United States House of Representatives. Retrieved July 5, 2022, from <https://www.house.gov/committees>)

¹⁰ "Joint resolutions may originate either in the House of Representatives or in the Senate. There is little practical difference between a bill and a joint resolution. Both are subject to the same procedure, except for a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution. On approval of such a resolution by two-thirds of both the House and Senate, it is sent directly to the Administrator of General Services for submission to the individual states for ratification. It is not presented to the President for approval. A joint resolution originating in the House of Representatives is designated "H.J.Res." followed by its individual number. Joint resolutions become law in the same manner as bills." (*Bills and Resolutions*. (n.d.). United States House of Representatives. Retrieved July 5, 2022, from <https://www.house.gov/the-house-explained/the-legislative-process/bills-resolutions>)

Even though one woman had already been elected to the U.S. House before the ratification of the 19th Amendment, it is only afterwards that more and more women started to be elected to the U.S. Congress. In fact, the amendment also outlined who could serve in Congress. In the following section, we will discuss the first women who served in Washington.

The first elected women

It is only after the Nineteenth Amendment that women started to be elected in Congress. Before that, only one woman, Jeannette Rankin, whom we will discuss below, had been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. And, another woman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had run for the House in 1866 as an Independent from New York and had obtained 24 votes out of 12,000. Until the end of the 1970s, women very often entered Congress by succeeding their late husband or father. They were either elected or appointed as House representatives or senators and kept their seat for only a term or two. However, before that, some women made their first entrance in the U.S. House or Senate by being directly elected by the people. We will mention and present some of the first elected women below, beginning with the House of Representatives and ending with the Senate.

a. The House

In 1789, the U.S House of Representatives was created, but it is only more than a 100 years later that a woman served in the lower chamber. As Jeannette Rankin, the first woman in the House, said: "I may be the first woman member of Congress, but I won't be the last."¹¹ And she was right, 351 women have been member of The House to date¹².

The women discussed in this section were selected because they were among the first to be elected to the U.S House of Representatives:

- Jeannette Rankin was the very first woman member of the House,
- Patsy Takemoto Mink was the first woman of colour and Asian-American woman to be elected,
- Shirley Anita Chisholm was the first African-American woman in the House,

¹¹ Representatives, O. H. U. S., & Administration, C. O. H. (2006). *Women in Congress 1917–2006* (Vol. 108). U.S. Government Printing Office.

¹² Year 2022

- Nancy Pelosi was the first female Democratic House leader and the first woman Speaker of the House.

Let us now discover the political journey they made.

i. Jeannette Rankin

As mentioned above, Jeannette Rankin was the first woman ever elected to Congress. She was elected as a Republican Representative of Montana in 1916, only two years after her state allowed women to vote and four years before the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified. Her tenure was brief, - she only served two terms in the 65th and 77th Congress-, but memorable.

Rep. J. Rankin marked both her terms in several ways. She was a pacifist and the only congressperson who refused to vote for the United States' involvement in both World Wars. She fought to improve working conditions for labourers and health care for women and infants, but her main fight was for women's rights. As legislative secretary of the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA), she managed to allow women's suffrage in her native state in 1914. Even when she lost the Senate election in 1918 and was not part of the 66th Congress, she kept fighting for women's rights and will be remembered for that.

ii. Patsy Takemoto Mink

Elected in 1964, Patsy Mink was the first woman of colour and Asian-American woman elected to Congress. She represented Hawaii as a Democrat for thirteen Congresses, from the 89th until her death during the 107th in 2002, with a break between 1977 and 1988. Democratic Rep. P. Mink already had some experience in politics as she had been member of the House of Representatives and of the Senate in Hawaii.

Being one of the few women serving in Congress, Patsy felt the need to voice the concerns of her own district as well as of women from the whole country. During all her terms, she was a fervent defender of women's issues and equal rights and managed to pass the Women's Educational Equity Act in 1974, though this was not her only fight. In fact, she also was against the involvement of the U.S. in the Vietnam War and she backed a universal health care plan.

iii. Shirley Anita Chisholm

As the single new woman entering Congress in 1969, Shirley Chisholm was the first African-American Congresswoman to be elected to the House. She represented New York as a Democrat until 1982, when she refused to run for re-election to spend more time with her family. Just like Patsy Mink, the Honourable Shirley Chisholm had previous experience in politics when elected to the NY state legislature and was against Vietnam War.

Before making her entrance into politics, she worked as a teacher and then as the director of day-care centres, which explains why she advocated for education, day-care facilities and families income. During her seven terms as a House representative, she also fought for women's and minorities issues. When she left the House, she even cofounded the National Political Congress of Black Women¹³ with Dr. Cynthia Delores Tucker, the first African-American woman Secretary of State.

iv. Nancy Pelosi

Since her election as Speaker of the House in 2007, Nancy Pelosi has been one of the few powerful women that America has known so far. She is the first woman to be second in the presidential line of succession. She started her climb in politics in 2001, when she was elected Democratic Whip¹⁴ for the 107th Congress. For the next two Congresses, she became the first female Democratic leader¹⁵. This position was interrupted by her two consecutive terms as Speaker of the House, but in 2011, she returned to this function until she was re-elected Speaker in 2018.

¹³ For over 35 years, The National Congress of Black Women Foundation (NCBWF) has been an instrumental link in connecting people Black community members that include but is not limited to people from Africa, the Caribbean, Canada and America. The organization continues to promote and facilitate activities and programs that foster the advancement, recognition, health and education of female/female identifying people of African descent and their families. (Sabellano, A. G. (2022, February 1). *History of the Foundation*. National Congress of Black Women Foundation. Retrieved July 8, 2022, from <https://www.ncbwf.org/about/history/>)

¹⁴ The responsibilities of the Majority Whip are counting votes and persuading Members to support the Democratic Caucus position on votes. (*House Democratic Leadership Positions*. (n.d.). Congressional Institute. Retrieved July 8, 2022, from <https://www.congressionalinstitute.org/house-democratic-leadership-positions/>)

¹⁵ The Majority Leader, the second most senior official in the House, is by recent practice the day-to-day manager of business on the House Floor. (*House Democratic Leadership Positions*. (n.d.). Congressional Institute. Retrieved July 8, 2022, from <https://www.congressionalinstitute.org/house-democratic-leadership-positions/>)

Nancy Pelosi's fights are mainly social and health related. She actively participated in passing the Affordable Care Act¹⁶ in 2010 and keeps fighting for lower health care costs. As most other Democrats, she wants to put gun violence to an end with tougher gun laws and combat climate change. The 111th Congress, under Pelosi's leadership, is often considered as one of the most productive in the history of Congress, but what about the Senate?

b. The Senate

Just like the lower House, the Senate exists since 1789. In total, there have been 1,994 U.S. Senators, including only 58 women which is less than 3%. The first woman who served in the upper house was Rebecca Latimer Felton, appointed in 1922, more than 130 years after this chamber was created.

Again, we have selected some women to highlight as they stand out by being among the first to serve in the U.S. Senate:

- Rebecca Latimer Felton, as mentioned above, was the first woman appointed to the U.S. Senate,
- Hattie Ophelia Wyatt Caraway was the first woman ever elected to the Senate,
- Margaret Chase Smith, who was the first woman elected to the upper chamber without having first been appointed, was also the first woman to serve in both chambers of Congress.

Like for the House of Representatives, we will now portray these women in more detail.

i. Rebecca Latimer Felton

Rebecca Felton was a Georgian Democrat senator during the 67th Congress. She was chosen to fill a vacancy caused by the sudden death of Senator Thomas Edward Watson, until a successor was found. As the first woman to be appointed to the Senate, her one-day tenure was purely symbolic. As she said: "The biggest part of this appointment lies in the recognition of women

¹⁶ The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, referred to as the Affordable Care Act or "ACA" for short, is the comprehensive health care reform law enacted in March 2010. (Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA). (2022, March 16). *About the Affordable Care Act*. HHS.Gov. Retrieved July 7, 2022, from <https://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/about-the-aca/index.html>)

in the government of our country.”¹⁷ Indeed, although appointed on October 3, 1922, she only took the Oath of Office¹⁸ end of November, when a successor had already been elected.

Like most of her counterparts, Rebecca Felton had experience in politics through the management of her husband’s successful campaigns and terms for the House. However, it was through her writings that Felton became known in this world. She mostly wrote about women’s suffrage, Prohibition¹⁹ and public education.

ii. Hattie Ophelia Wyatt Caraway

After her husband’s death in 1931, Hattie was appointed to the Senate to replace him until the election. To the surprise of many, she herself ran in this election and won the seat, making her the first woman to be elected to the Senate in January 1932. After her first term, she decided to run for a second term and again won with 90% of the vote. In 1943, the Vice President and the President pro tempore being absent, she became the first woman to chair the Senate. Her tenure ended in 1944, when she lost the Primaries, which have the objective of narrowing the number of candidates by selecting a nominee for each political party before the general election are held.

As Democrat Senator from Arkansas, she opposed the Prohibition and big businesses, and supported workers. Even though nicknamed ‘Silent Hattie’ for her lack of participation, she was the first woman to propose the Equal Rights Amendment on the upper house floor.

iii. Margaret Chase Smith

Margaret Chase Smith was the first woman to be elected in both chambers of Congress. Her political career began when elected to replace her late House representative husband. She was then re-elected for the next four Congresses as the Republican representative of Maine. In

¹⁷ FELTON, Rebecca Latimer. (n.d.). US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives. Retrieved July 3, 2022, from <https://history.house.gov/People/Detail/13054>

¹⁸ "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States." At the beginning of a new term of office, senators-elect take their oath of office from the presiding officer in an open session of the Senate before they can begin to perform their legislative activities." (*U.S. Senate: Oath of Office*. (2020, March 30). United States Senate. Retrieved July 9, 2022, from https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Oath_Office.htm)

¹⁹ "Prohibition, legal prevention of the manufacture, sale, and [transportation](#) of alcoholic beverages in the [United States](#) from 1920 to 1933 under the terms of the [Eighteenth Amendment](#)." (Wallenfeldt, J. (n.d.). *Prohibition | Definition, History, Eighteenth Amendment, & Repeal*. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved July 9, 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/event/Prohibition-United-States-history-1920-1933>).

1948, she became the first woman elected to the Senate on her own right and served for 24 years.

As Senator, Margaret did not want to limit herself to gender issues and mostly stayed clear of women's affairs. She will be remembered for showing the American people that a woman can handle politics. In fact, to respond to criticism, she drew the following comparison:

"Women administer the home. They set the rules, enforce them, and mete out justice for violations. Thus, like Congress, they legislate; like the Executive, they administer; like the courts, they interpret the rules. It is an ideal experience for politics."²⁰

In 1973, she lost the election to the 93rd Congress and retired in Maine where she died in 1995.

Even though women started to be elected more at the beginning of the 20th century, as we will see in the next chapter, the representation of women in U.S. politics remained extremely low until the 2018 elections, when it began to considerably increase.

The evolution in the number of women serving the U.S. Congress

Now that we have a better understanding of who the first women to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate were, let us further consider the evolution in the number of women who served in both chambers of the U.S. Congress, before diving into their current²¹ representation.

In *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*, the evolution in the number of women serving in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives is respectively depicted, and is illustrated by number of seats in Congress. The first Congress in which a woman was elected to one of the chambers was the 65th (1917-1919), we thus took this Congress as a reference for the graphs until the 117th Congress, being the current one at the time of writing. For a complete table compiling each Congress and its dates, see Appendix 3. These graphs allow us to provide a

²⁰ *First Woman Elected to Both Houses of Congress*. (n.d.). United States Senate. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://www.senate.gov/about/origins-foundations/electing-appointing-senators/first-woman-both-houses.htm>

²¹ The word 'current' here refers to the year 2022 and the 117th Congress.

complete overview of how many women served in the legislative branch of the U.S. government from the 65th Congress to the 117th.

Figure 3 shows what seems to be a huge rise in the number of women serving in the U.S. Senate from 1917 to 2021. However, we must take into consideration that this number only went from one to 25 in 100 years and that they are 100 U.S. senators. Even though the evolution looks huge, in 2019, women's representation still only accounted for 25%. What also stands out is that we can observe two phases in this graph. The first one occurred from the 67th Congress (1921-1923) to the 101st Congress (1989-1991) and did not exceed two women serving at the same time. It is only during the second stage, from the 102nd (1991-1993) onwards, that the proportion started to grow faster. In that same phase, the number of women serving in the U.S. Senate started at four to reach 25 women in the 116th Congress (2019-2021), a four times increase. We will talk about that specific period of time after having analysed the evolution of the number of women in the U.S. House of Representatives, as we will see that the same peak occurred at the same time.

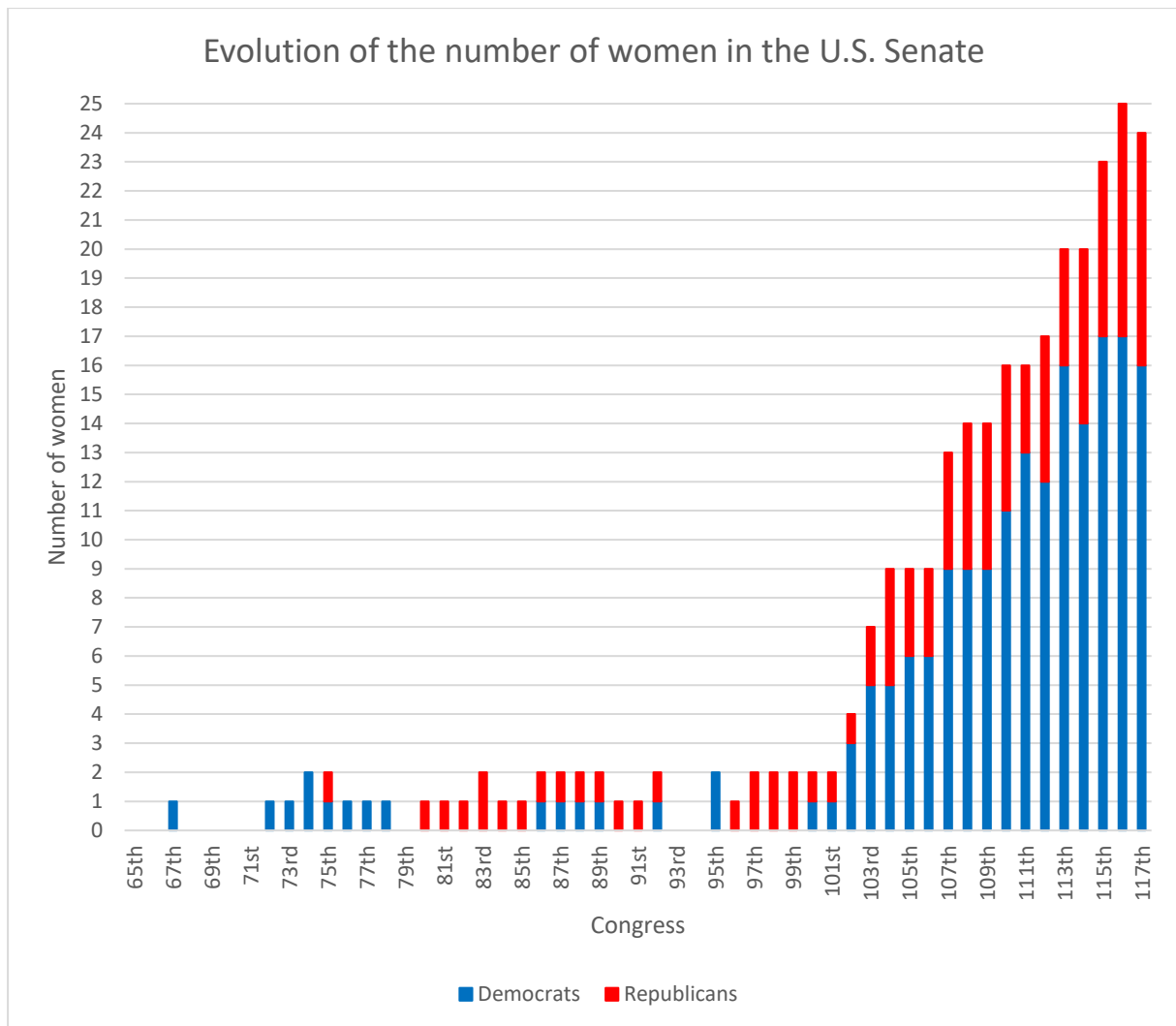


Figure 3: Evolution of the number of women in the U.S. Senate from the 65th Congress to the 117th.

Although these two graphs seem to have the same tendency, we must draw your attention on the fact that *Figure 4* scale ranges from 0 to 125, while *Figure 3* only goes from 0 to 25. The first woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives was, as previously mentioned, Republican Jeannette Rankin in the 65th Congress. Just like for the Senate, we notice a two-stages evolution from the 65th to the 102nd Congress and from the 103rd to the 117th Congress. The first phase never exceeded 29 women members of the House at the same time during the 101st Congress. Then, we saw an increase of 18 women in four years-time until it reached a peak of 123 women serving the U.S. House in the 117th Congress. As a reminder, there are, in total, 435 House members, this means that, as we will discuss in the next chapter, women’s representation in the U.S. House currently accounts for 28.3% and that there is still considerable progress to make before achieving gender parity.

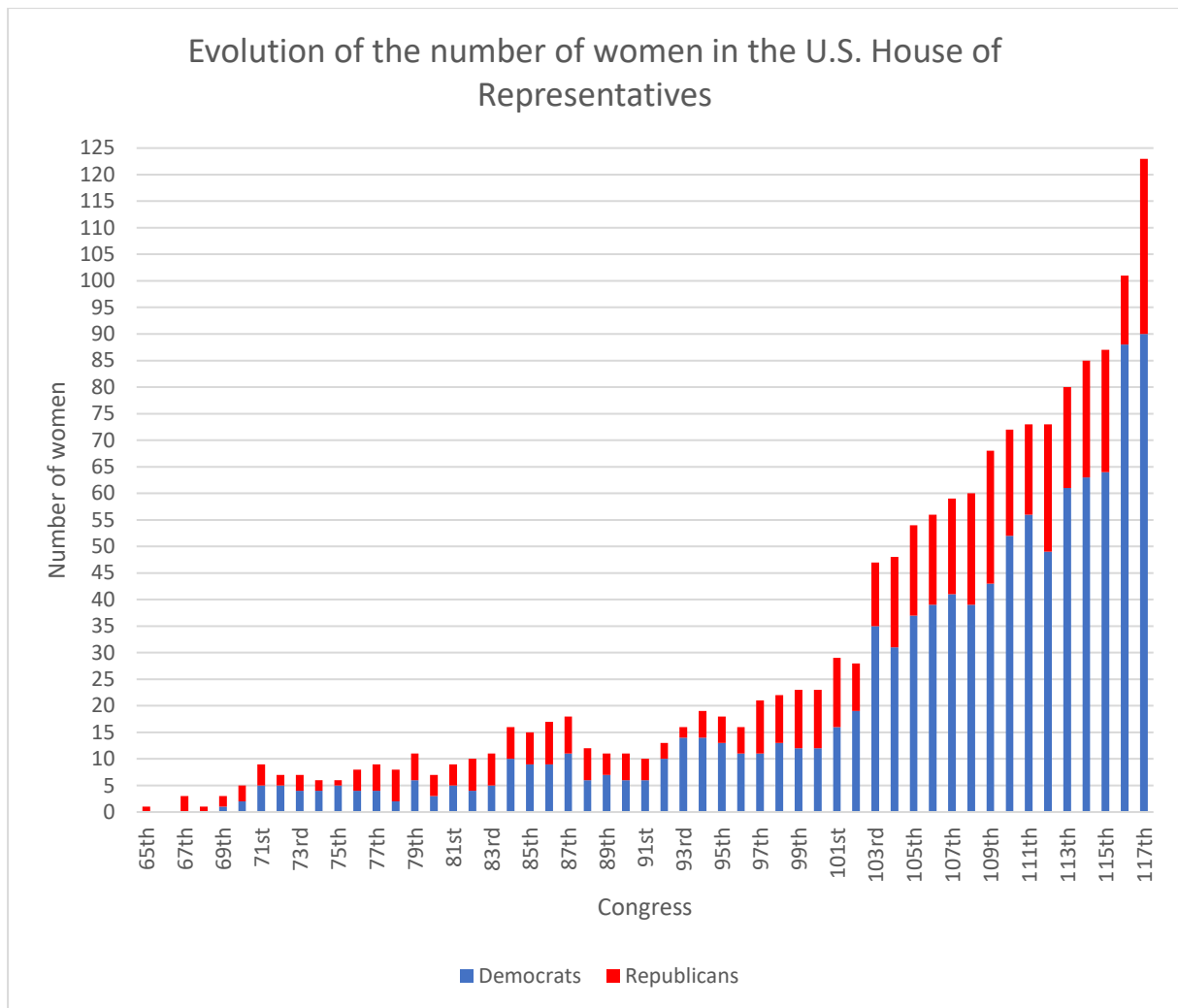


Figure 4: Evolution of the number of women in the U.S. House of Representatives from the 65th Congress to the 117th.

To conclude, we can notice a similar trend in the evolution in the number of women in both chambers of Congress. Indeed, before the 103rd Congress, their representation did not exceed 6.6% in the U.S. House and 4% in the U.S. Senate. In fact, it is only after the 1992 elections that we saw an increase in women’s proportion in the Congress. In the 103rd U.S. Congress, there was an increase in the number of women of, respectively, 4.4% and 3% in the House and Senate. In the 117th Congress, a peak was reached with 28.3% of women representatives, while the peak was reached in the 116th Congress for the Senate, with 25% female senators.

As clearly illustrated by the above graphs, the 1992 elections have been a momentous year regarding women’s representation. As mentioned earlier, that year is particularly known as “The Year of the Woman” because it saw a record-breaking number of women who ran for

office and won. As a matter of fact, four new women were elected to become U.S. senators and 24 first-timers to become House members. These numbers seem ridiculously low nowadays, but at the time, it was considered a huge increase.

Women's representation in the 117th U.S Congress

Now that we have a more complete overview of the evolution of the numbers of women in the U.S. Congress, let us consider their current representation²² in both chambers. At present, there are 147 women in Congress, with 106 Democrats and 41 Republicans. With a total of 535 occupied seats, women's proportion accounts for 27.5%. Yet, minorities are still underrepresented in both houses. From these 147 women:

- 10 define themselves as Asian-American or Pacific Islander;
- 26 as Black women;
- 15 as Latina;
- 1 as Native American, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian;
- 1 as Middle Eastern or Northern African;
- And 96 as White women.

Let us zoom in on both chambers, starting with the representation of women in the 2022 U.S. Senate. In *Figure 5*, the proportion of women serving in the U.S. Senate is depicted state by state. The figures in blue represent the number of Democrat female senators in the state and the red ones represent the Republican female senators. Keeping in mind that there are in total 100 U.S. Senators, 24 women are currently holding a seat in the upper house, 16 being Democrats and 8 being Republicans. Out of the 50 states, 30 do not have any women serving the Senate at the moment. What also stands out is that, while there are four states with two Democrat female Senators (Washington, Nevada, Minnesota and New Hampshire), there is no state with more than one Republican female Senator. In fact, only eight states have a Republican female Senator against 12 for the other party, while 28 states have at least one Republican Senator and 27 have at least one Democratic Senator.

²² Year 2022.

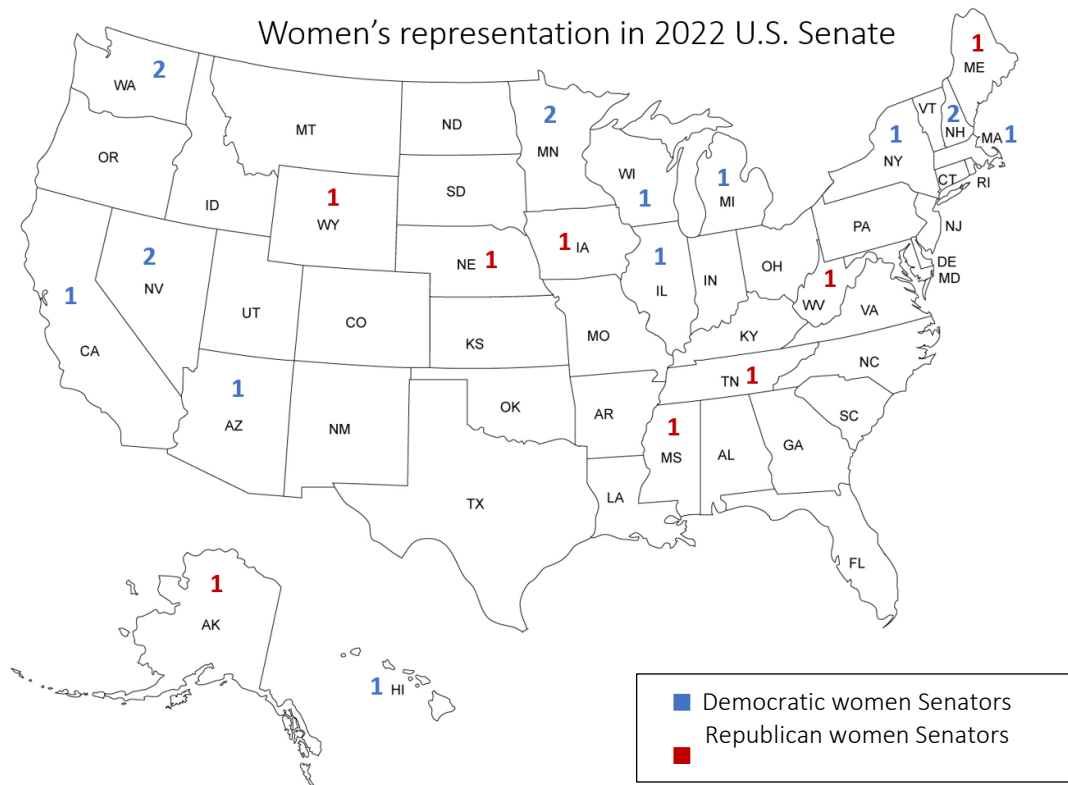


Figure 5: The representation of women in the 2022 U.S. Senate.

As for the representation of women in the 2022 U.S. House of Representatives, let us take a look at *Figure 6*. The figures in black are the total number of representatives per state and the blue and red figures are respectively the number of Democrat and Republican female representatives. At the moment, there are 123 women in the current House, with 90 being Democrats and 33 being Republicans, thus women occupy 28.3% of the 435 seats. When analysing *Figure 6*, one can notice a considerable difference between the proportion of women who are Democrats versus those who are Republicans. Indeed, there is no state in which there are more than three Republican female representatives, while there are 17 Democrats in California and seven in Florida. In Washington, Iowa, New Mexico, Wyoming and Connecticut, the percentage of women serving in the House reaches more than 50. Compared to the U.S. Senate, there are only fourteen states in which there are no female representatives in the 117th Congress. To date, there is only one state which has never had a woman elected to the U.S. Congress and this is Vermont.

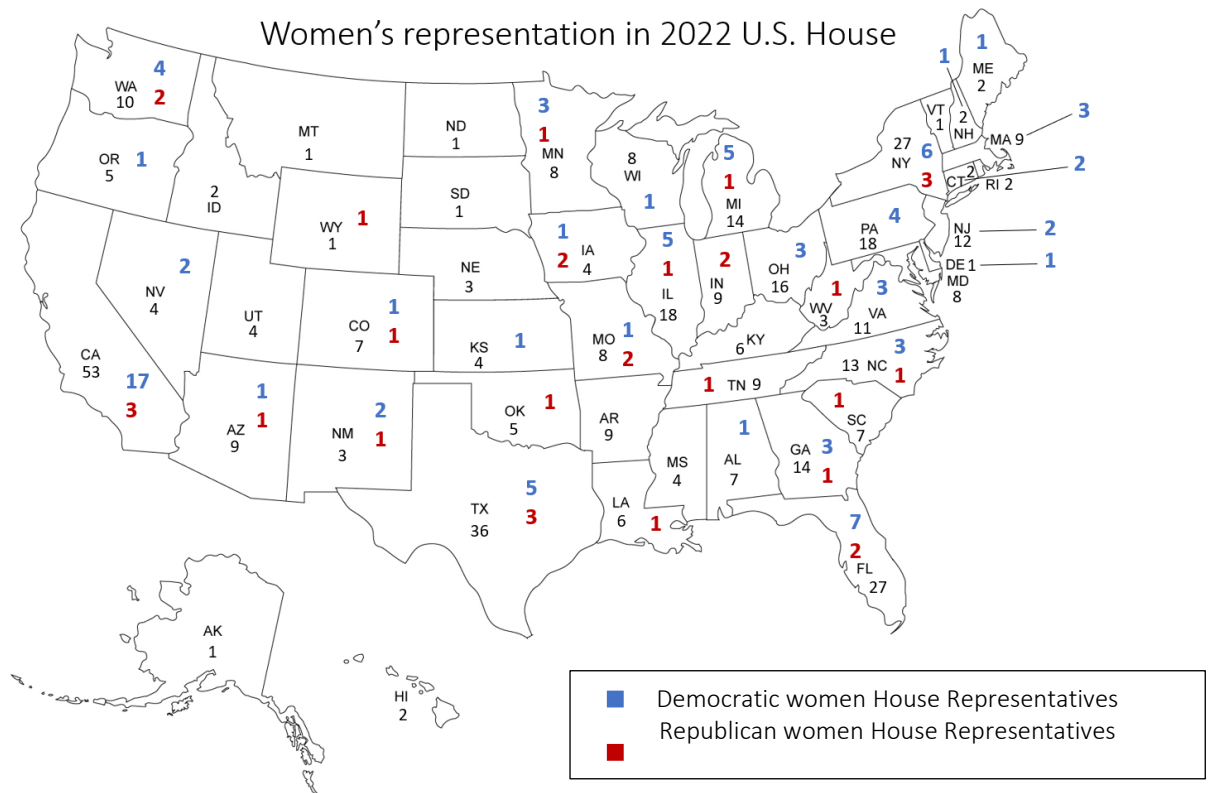


Figure 6: The representation of women in the 2022 U.S. House of Representatives.

As we have seen throughout this whole section, the number of women in Congress keeps increasing, and that is a good sign that gender parity might perhaps, one day, be reached in U.S. politics. Between the 1992 ‘Year of the Woman’ and the 2018 elections, which we will analyse in the following section, some debates are taking place to determine whether we are now experiencing a ‘Year of the Women 2.0’ or not. As a matter of fact, we will see that a considerable number of records have been broken during the elections for the 116th Congress, just like for the 103rd Congress.

Section 2: The 2018 elections for Congress

In the 2018 elections, a record-breaking number of women candidates ran for Congress. Indeed, 476 women ran for the U.S. House of Representatives and 53 for the U.S. Senate. Both these numbers beat records set the few years before. In total, 126 women were elected to serve the 116th Congress, including 102 to the House and 24 are serving in the Senate. From these 126 women, 36 representatives and 13 senators were non-incumbent, which, for the first time since 1992, breaks the record of 24-newcomers to the House.

Even though the representation of women in the U.S. government is gradually increasing, these percentages remain low and women are still underrepresented in U.S. politics. In the 2019-2021 Congress, their proportion still only accounted for 23.6% in total, with 23.4% in the House and 24% in the Senate, which is far below gender parity.

However, a variety of reasons seem to explain this sudden surge of women running for office. One of these is that they feel more and more concerned about politics, especially after Trump's presidential election in 2016. Indeed, several rights were being threatened by the Trump administration, such as health care and reproductive rights.

In the next chapters, the context that led to this rise in women's candidacies in the 2018 elections will be further detailed, including a more-in-depth report of the elections. We will then focus on a special group of first-time Representatives, called 'The Squad', who served the 116th Congress and were re-elected in 2020.

Chapter 1: The political context

There were several reasons which pushed more women to campaign to serve in the 116th U.S. Congress and we will focus on four of these: political retirements, the Trump presidency, Judge Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court and the #MeToo movement.

Retirement

As in 1992, – called 'The Year of the Woman' because of the record 54 women elected to the 103rd Congress – several members of the U.S. House of Representatives decided not to run for

re-election, but to retire or to run for another office. In 2018, as illustrated by *Table 1*, 18 Democrats and 34 Republicans did not seek re-election to the House and 3 Republicans to the Senate. In total, 55 Congressional seats were open for the 2018 elections compared to 67 in 1992, which seems to be the only unbroken record for the 116th Congress.

Party \ Chamber	Democrats	Republicans	Total
U.S. Senate	0	3	3
U.S. House	18	34	52
Total	18	37	55

Table 1: Number of Congress members no seeking re-election in 2018.

Of course, this situation created a considerable political opportunity for non-incumbents in the U.S. Congress to wage successful campaigns. The number of first timers entering the U.S. House in 2019 was by far the largest since 24 non-incumbents served the U.S. House in 1992. Indeed, as can be seen in *Table 2*, 36 new women served as U.S. House representatives in the 116th Congress, including 35 Democrats and one Republican. This shift in elections allowed the Democratic Party to regain control of the U.S. House of Representatives, by winning 42 seats.

Party \ Results	Democrats	Republicans	Total
Won open seats	20	1	21
Defeated incumbents	15	0	15
Total	35	1	36

Table 2: Number of non-incumbent women entering the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018 either by winning an open seat or by defeating an incumbent.

Trump's presidency

Another main reason for this increase in women's candidacies for office in 2018 was Trump's presidency. His election was rather unexpected and provoked an even greater division in the United States. The share of people who disapproved most of the Republican businessman's presidential election was of course Democratic, and especially Democratic women between the ages of 18 and 35.

Soon after Donald Trump took the Oath of Office in January 2017, women's activism against the president and his administration started to gain traction. Indeed, the day after his inauguration, the first Women's March took place in Washington D. C., where hundreds of thousands of women activists demonstrated to express their opposition to the policy agenda of Trump and his cabinet. At the same time, other marches occurred in the United States and throughout the globe to show their solidarity.

In addition to this rise in activism, a surge in Democratic women's candidacies for the next Congress was also observed as a response to Trump's plans for his four-year term. Driven by emotions like anger, urgency or threat, people felt more motivated to be involved in politics to oppose the president and his party. A reason for that was that basic rights, such as reproductive rights or health care, were threatened by his administration. As the Republican party controlled the Presidency, the Congress, an increasing number of governorships and statehouses, as well as having several opportunities to appoint conservative judges to the federal and Supreme Court, Democrats mobilised to win back Congress to offer a better representation to their supporters. This desire particularly emerged among Democratic women and women of colour.

As Lawless and Fox (2017) reported, this rise in women's candidacies as a response to Trump's presidency warrants our consideration. Indeed, the two professors analysed the so-called 'Trump Effect' thanks to a survey among more than 2,000 potential candidates for office. These respondents were college-educated men and women between the ages of 25 and 64 who worked on a full-time basis, this category of people being the most likely one to run for office. In their study, they found out that Democratic women held the most negative feelings towards Donald Trump, which was more likely to increase their involvement and interest in U.S. politics. About 30% of the participants, from which more women than men and more Democrats than Republicans, declared that they had signed a political letter or petition in the last six months, and another 30% said they had used social media to communicate about politics. That same percentage of respondents mentioned that since the 2016 presidential election, they were three to four times more likely to be active in matters related to politics. Political activism was thus greatly increasing among all Democrats, and especially among women.

Despite this, when it comes to (seriously) considering to run or taking at least one concrete step to run for office, the research indicates less actual engagement among the respondents. Only 23% of women and 38% of men thought about filing their candidacy for Congress, which shows that, even though women seemed more involved, they remained less active than men. Regarding the proportion of female respondents who seriously considered running, it is even worse: 3% of Democratic women and 4% of Republican women thought about it, which is not at all representative as we now know that Democratic women were more likely to run in the 2018 elections than Republicans. In fact, this survey dates back from May 2017 and we think that people might have changed their mind until the candidate filing deadline in 2018.

Indeed, in one year, a lot happened. To begin with, on August 12, 2017, during a demonstration in Charlottesville, Virginia, against the removal of a Confederate statue, a White nationalist drove a car into a crowd of people counterprotesting, killing a 32-year-old woman and injuring 19 others. Donald Trump's response to this event was quite controversial. At first, he condemned violence on both sides in a tweet, without mentioning the nationalists, then he made a televised statement two days later blaming racism and racist groups in particular. But a few days later, during a press conference the president added: "You had some very bad people in that group. You also had some very fine people on both sides."²³ In addition to that, during his whole presidential term, Trump criticised democratic institutions, such as free press, the federal judiciary and even the electoral process and was very known for his fake news. News and fact-checking organisations have proved thousands of his allegations throughout his whole tenure to be false or wildly inaccurate. And on top of that, on July 9, 2018, as discussed below, the former president appointed Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court while he was accused of sexual assault. These events, which took place in 2017 and first half of 2018, only served to mobilise more women in the Democratic camp to run for office.

²³ ABC News. (2018, August 9). What to know about the violent Charlottesville protests and anniversary rallies. ABC News. Retrieved July 16, 2022, from <https://abcnews.go.com/US/happen-charlottesville-protest-anniversary-weekend/story?id=57107500>

Judge Brett Kavanaugh's nomination

To replace the retired Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, Donald Trump nominated federal appeals court Judge Brett Kavanaugh. He portrayed him as “one of the finest and sharpest legal minds in our time²⁴”. When the president announced his nomination, Chuck Schumer, the Senate Democratic leader, made clear that he would do anything to oppose it. Indeed, Brett Kavanaugh had quite a conservative record and a close relationship with the Republican party. His appointment to the Supreme Court would threaten lots of precedents, such as *Roe v. Wade*²⁵, and strongly affect the partisanship representation of the highest U.S. Court.

This nomination was highly controversial and reminded us of the year 1991, when law professor Anita Hill accused Judge Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment. Soon after Kavanaugh's nomination by the president, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford claimed that he had sexually assaulted her in high school during a house party. She sent a confidential letter to a Democratic Congresswoman explaining her ordeal in detail. Judge Kavanaugh was with his friend, Mark Judge, who were both very drunk at the time and Kavanaugh was trying to take off Ford's clothes and bathing suit while putting his hand over her mouth when she tried to scream. His friend was watching and at some point, jumped on the bed, allowing the presumed victim to escape and lock herself in the bathroom before fleeing from the house. She remained silent for years until 2012 in couples' therapy with her husband. Of course, the future Justice denied the whole story, even though Ford passed a polygraph test by a former FBI agent.

Despite this accusation, four months after his nomination, Kavanaugh was confirmed to the Supreme Court by the Senate with 50 senators voting in favour and 48 opposed. Naturally, protests were organised at Capitol Hill and the Supreme Court to voice anger at this confirmation.

²⁴ Landler, M., & Haberman, M. (2018, July 10). Brett Kavanaugh Is Trump's Pick for Supreme Court. *The New York Times*. Retrieved July 11, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/09/us/politics/brett-kavanaugh-supreme-court.html>

²⁵ “In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade* recognized that the decision whether to continue or end a pregnancy belongs to the individual, not the government. *Roe* held that the specific guarantee of “liberty” in the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which protects individual privacy, includes the right to abortion prior to fetal viability.” (Center for Reproductive Rights. (2022, June 30). *Roe v. Wade*. Retrieved August 15, 2022, from <https://reproductiverights.org/roe-v-wade/>)

#MeToo movement and activism

During Donald Trump's tenure, there was a lot of discussion around gender and sexual harassment. In 2017, actress Alyssa Milano asked people on Twitter to reply "me too" if they had already been sexually harassed or assaulted and thousands of women followed her path and told their own story. Civil rights activist Tarana Burke from New York was the first one ever to use the #MeToo in 2006.

Originally, this movement was launched to raise awareness around sexual harassment and assault and how widespread it is in society. But, it quickly developed into accusations of sexual misconduct against powerful men from well-known Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, who was sentenced to 23 years of prison, Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, as mentioned above, to Donald Trump, who was accused among others, by Rachel Crooks, an Ohio state House candidate of kissing her in a lift without her consent. These allegations spread rapidly on social media and in newspapers and brought international attention to sexual misconduct.

Many women decided to run for office as a response to the movement, such as Katie Muth, now Pennsylvania State Senator. She remembers that when Trump won the 2016 presidential election, she thought "I'm going to wake up every day and realise there is a sexual predator in the White House²⁶". Even during their campaigns, women candidates used the #MeToo to tell their stories as a sign of strength and motivation to prevent it from happening again.

To conclude, except for political retirements, Donald Trump's presidency, Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court and the #MeToo movement ignited heated discussion about women's rights and protection and provoked anger, especially among women. As we mentioned before, strong emotions like anger, urgency or fear are a source of motivation to political activism and may very well have led to this surge in women's candidacies for the 116th Congress.

²⁶ Seitz-Wald, A. (2018, July 24). *Meet the women candidates taking #MeToo to the ballot box*. NBC News. Retrieved July 19, 2022, from <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/meet-women-candidates-taking-metoo-ballot-box-n894106>

Chapter 2: The 116th Congress

The 2018 elections for Congress broke a lot of records among women candidacies and elections. As the previous chapter highlighted, Democratic groups and organisations had several incentives to recruit candidates who could be able to defeat established politicians or at least disturb the current status quo. *Justice Democrats* and *Brand New Congress* were one of such groups with the goal of removing corrupt politicians from Congress by electing working people who would refuse corporate money. In 2018, they said 81% of Congress consisted of men, most of whom were millionaires and/or lawyers. The timing of their recruitment drive was right, not only were there more open seats than usual to the 2018 elections for Congress due to political retirements, but there were also many Democratic women running for the first time and challenging incumbents.

As illustrated by *Table 3*, there were in total 126 women elected to the 116th U.S. Congress. At a glance, one can see that the number of Democratic women was always far higher than Republicans, which confirms what was said before, that Democratic women were more motivated to be involved in politics after Trump’s presidency than Republicans. Even though these numbers seem high and break previous records set in 2016 with 23 women serving the U.S. Senate and 85 women serving the House, women’s representation still only accounts for 23.5%. But, let us have a closer look at the 2018 elections and results within the two chambers of Congress.

Party \ Chamber	Democrats	Republicans	Total
U.S. Senate	17	7	24
U.S. House	89	13	102
Total	106	20	126

Table 3: Number of women serving in the 116th Congress by Political Party.

The U.S. Senate

As clearly shown in *Table 4*, the number of Democratic women was always higher than Republicans throughout the whole election process. Only three Republican women were elected to the U.S. Senate in 2018, compared to eleven Democrats. Combined with the ten

female Senators who were already serving the Senate, the upper chamber was composed of 24 women in 2019.

Election	Party		
	Democrats	Republicans	Total
Candidates	31	22	53
Lost Primary	16	14	30
Won Primary	15	8	23
Elected	11	3	14

Table 4: Details of the 2018 elections of women in the U.S. Senate.

When looking at women’s representation in the previous election, 40 women filed their candidacy in 2016, of which there were 28 Democrats and 12 Republicans. In total, 23 women were serving the Senate in 2017. Thus, the 116th Congress broke records when it comes to women’s representation.

Regarding the number of incumbents in the 2018 elections, eleven (nine Democrats, two Republicans) women won re-election to the U.S. Senate, while two Democrats were defeated. In total, there were thus three first timers (two Democrats, one Republican), of which two won an open seat (Marsha Blackburn, Republican for Tennessee and Kyrsten Sinema, Democrat for Arizona) and one defeated an incumbent (Jacky Rosen, Democrat for Nevada). Again, we can observe that the proportion of Democrats is higher than Republicans.

That year, two states elected their first female Senator to the U.S. Congress: Arizona with Kyrsten Sinema and Tennessee, with Marsha Blackburn. To date²⁷, 17 states have still never elected a woman to the U.S. Senate, these are: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Virginia.

The U.S. House of Representatives

As Table 5 indicates, the number of Democratic women was also higher than Republicans during the elections to the U.S. House. In total, 476 women filed their candidacies to become

²⁷ Year 2022

a House member, with 356 being Democrats. From these, 89 Democrats and 13 Republicans were elected to the 116th Congress. This allowed the Democratic Party to regain control of the U.S House.

Election \ Party	Democrats	Republicans	Total
Candidates	356	120	476
Lost Primary	169	68	237
Won Primary	183	51	234
Elected	89	13	102

Table 5: Details of the 2018 elections of women in the U.S. House of Representatives.

As far as incumbency is concerned, never has there been more non-incumbent women elected to the House of Representatives than in 2018. 35 Democrats and one Republican served the U.S. House for the first time, from which 21 (20 Democrats, one Republican) won open seats and 15 Democrats defeated established politicians. As mentioned before, the only time there had been such a surge in first time House members was in 1992 with 24. Indeed, during the election to the 116th Congress, 52 seats were open and four incumbents were defeated during primary.

If we compare these numbers to the 2016 elections, 67 more women won primaries, 17 more women served the House in the 116th Congress and the number of Republican women fell by ten seats. In addition to all of that, there also was an increase of one percent of immigrants or children of immigrants, with 52 in the U.S. House and 16 in the U.S. Senate. From these 68, 57 are Democrats, the majority (22) has European roots and 15 come from Latin America. Another record that was broken concerns women of colour, 43 were elected, compared to the previous record of 34. In 2018, 13 Democratic new women of colour entered Congress and we will focus on four of them in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The Squad

From the 126 women elected to serve the 116th Congress, a group of four progressive women of colour stands out: Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) and

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY). Since AOC posted a picture of themselves on Instagram with the label saying 'Squad', they go by the name of *The Squad*.

All four women began serving the House of Representatives in January 2019 and are very popular among progressive Democrats. Their main ideas are:

- Affordable healthcare with Medicare for all
- Protection of immigrants by abolishing ICE
- Greater education accessibility with debt-free college
- Better working conditions with a raise of the minimum wage to \$15 an hour
- Tackling climate change

Because of their so-called socialist ideology, they have been sharply criticised by Donald Trump and his party, who tweeted they should “go back and help fix the totally broken crime infested places from which they came.”²⁸

Ilhan Omar

Ilhan Omar was elected on August 14, 2018 to represent the 5th Congressional district of Minnesota, that is Minneapolis and its surrounding suburbs. She became the first Somali-American member of Congress and, along with Rashida Tlaib, the first Muslim woman as well.

Born in Somalia, the new Congresswoman had to flee her country with her family in 1991 when the civil war started there. She was only eight and lived four years in a refugee camp in Kenya before moving to America. It was only in 2000 that she was granted the American citizenship, when she was 17.

When elected to the U.S. Congress in 2018, Omar was not a complete novice in politics. Indeed, two years before, she had been elected to the Minnesota House to represent District 60B. At the time she was already the most important Somali-American U.S. politician. Like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar ran her campaign with the help of *Justice Democrats*. In addition to the above-mentioned main ideas of *The Squad*, she often made herself heard about Donald Trump and stood up for Palestinians. She was even strongly criticized after claiming that

²⁸ Sullivan, K. C. (2019, July 16). Who are the squad? Here are the 4 congresswomen known as “The Squad” targeted by Trump’s racist tweets - CNNPolitics. *CNN*. Retrieved May 5, 2021, from <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/15/politics/who-are-the-squad/index.html>

the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was donating money to the Republican Party and therefore had to apologise for her allegation.

Rashida Tlaib

On Aug. 7, 2018, Rashida Tlaib was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives for Michigan's 13th Congressional District, including half of western Detroit and suburbs. As the eldest of the 14 children born to her Palestinian immigrant parents, she is the first to graduate from high school and college and went to Law school. She was also the first Palestinian-American woman to serve in Congress.

Just like Ilhan Omar, Tlaib was one of the first Muslim women to be elected to the U.S. Congress, and already had some experience in politics as well. In 2008, she also became the first Muslim woman to be elected to the Michigan State Legislature as she represented the 6th and 12th districts.

As a member of the Democratic Party and affiliated to the Democratic Socialists of America, she, like the other members of *The Squad*, stands for the progressive ideas mentioned earlier. She had the intention of impeaching Trump and made it clear throughout her campaign, and she said during an event after her election: "we're gonna go in there and we're going to impeach the motherfucker"²⁹.

Ayanna Pressley

Ayanna Pressley is often compared to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (often referred to as AOC) as they both defeated long-time incumbents during the Democratic primaries. On September 4, 2018, Pressley won the primary election against the 20-year incumbent Massachusetts Representative Mike Capuano. Two months later, she was elected to represent the 7th Congressional District in the U.S. House.

²⁹ O'Neil, L. (2019, January 20). "We're gonna impeach the motherfucker": the Democrats' new street fighters. *The Guardian*. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jan/04/democrats-congress-trump-impeach-rashida-tlaib>

As a Democrat, the now Congresswoman has long been considered as a future woman of influence. Like the first two members of *The Squad* presented above, Pressley had already been involved in politics since 2009 when she was elected to the Boston City Council as the first woman of colour. When elected to the U.S. House, she also became the first Black woman to represent her state.

Running for office was an obvious choice as public service was part of her DNA. Indeed, inspired by her mother's volunteer work in churches, with the homeless, the elderly, the youth, etc., she decided to tackle these issues from the source and ran for the city council. Her motto was: "The people the closest to the pain should be closest to the power." Throughout her mandates at the city council and her first term in the U.S. House, she fought against poor conditions for immigrants, civil and women's rights, and mental health.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

AOC is the most popular member of *The Squad*, and the youngest one. Well known for her strong presence on social media, at only 29 years old, she ran for the U.S. House to represent New York's 14 District, eastern Bronx and northern Queens, making her the youngest woman to have been elected to Congress. In addition to that, on June 26, 2018, she defeated Dem. Representative Joe Crowley at the Primary election by winning 57.13% of the vote against 42.5%, after a long tenure of 10 terms and 14 years without any primary challenger. In addition, not only had Joseph Crowley held the office for two decades, but he also was the fourth most powerful Democrat in the House of Representatives, by being chairman of the House Democratic Caucus. Five months later, she then won the General Election by winning 78% of the vote against her Republican opponent Anthony Pappas.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was a waitress who was, thus, used to working under pressure. She was the daughter of Puerto Rican parents and was born and raised in the Bronx. She worked hard to go to Boston University where she double-majored in international relations and economics and served as an intern for U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy on foreign affairs and immigration matters. It is her little brother, Gabriel who sent her application to *Brand New Congress*. This group was looking for people to run for office. They then called *Justice*

Democrats so that AOC could get a proper media and policy training to prepare her for campaign.

During her campaign, she and her volunteers worked very hard to collect the 10,000 signatures needed to be able to get on the ballot. Obviously, Crowley had a major financial advantage over AOC, but she never lost her faith and said: “You can’t really beat big money with more money. You have to beat them with a totally different game.”³⁰ And that is what she did. Throughout the whole electoral process, she always knew there was a possibility that she would win. Indeed, she was always talking to the members of her community and she had never seen Crowley do so, neither had the people she spoke with. Moreover, the party seriously miscalculated her influence and was not prepared for her. That was her biggest chance.

Along with Rashida Tlaib, Ocasio-Cortez was the first woman Democratic Socialist to be elected to Congress. Her motto being: “No person in America should be too poor to live”, she views health care as a human right, and is a strong believer in LGBTQ equality. These views are in line with the other main ideas that *The Squad* shares. During her first term in the House, she proposed the Green New Deal Resolution to fight climate change and poverty. Like the other three women, she was re-elected to the 117th Congress.

Now that we have provided the context of the 2018 elections, in the next section, we will develop the theory on why women are still underrepresented in U.S. politics and what are the barriers that they are facing. Finally, we will analyse whether the four members of the Squad have overcome these barriers or not.

³⁰ Chávez, A., & Grim, R. (2018, May 22). A Primary Against the Machine: A Bronx Activist Looks to Dethrone Joseph Crowley, the King of Queens. *The Intercept*. Retrieved August 8, 2022, from <https://theintercept.com/2018/05/22/joseph-crowley-alexandra-ocasio-cortez-new-york-primary/>

Section 3: The barriers to women's political career and *The Squad*

Even though the number of women in the U.S. Congress has been significantly increasing over the past few years, the representation of women senators and House representatives still remains considerably low, with only 27.5% in the 117th Congress – less than a third. To understand why women are so underrepresented as elected officials in the U.S.A., and more generally, in leadership positions, we need to analyse the barriers that they are constantly facing. There are several reasons why women are underrepresented in Congress, but we will only focus on gender discrimination, sexual harassment, structural barriers and family responsibilities. Finally, we will analyse each of them to determine whether the Squad did overcome these to become part of the U.S. government or not.

Chapter 1: The barriers

Gender discrimination

Unsurprisingly, gender discrimination is the main barrier that women are facing while running for office and even when elected. To prove that, surveys have been carried out by the Pew Research Center (September 2018³¹) on gender and leadership. This chapter, explaining the position of American people on gender discrimination and women leadership, will be mainly based on this study.

First of all, while 21% of Americans mentioned that electing more women to high political offices would not do much to make their life better and 10% said it would not change anything at all, the majority of the people interviewed thinks it would do *a lot* (29%) or *some* (40%) to improve it. Still, in 2018, 45% of voters considered themselves as being not yet ready to elect a woman, compared to 37% in 2014 – a slight decrease.

When asked about the number of women serving in high political offices, the percentage goes up a little: 59% of American people said the number was too low, that includes 69% of women against 48% of men, and 79% of Democrats versus 33% of Republicans. As clearly illustrated here, women and Democrats are more aware of the overrepresentation of

³¹ Horowitz, J. M., Igielnik, R., & Parker, K. (2018b, September). *Women and Leadership 2018*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/09/20/women-and-leadership-2018/>

white old men that takes place in U.S. politics. While slightly over a third of the respondents estimated this number as being the right one, only 6% thought too many women were serving in office.

As was proved earlier, women's underrepresentation is real and we will mention some reasons which were stated in the study previously referred to. A first argument was that it would be more difficult for women to be elected to top leadership political positions, and 67% of the surveyed thinks so. From that percentage, it was observed that women younger than 50 tend to be more likely to find it easier for men to get elected to high political offices than for women. Indeed, 80% of the women between 18 and 49 who took part in the surveys versus 68% of the women ages 50 and older said that it was easier for men. When it comes to partisanship, we again notice a difference in opinion between Republicans and Democrats: 48% of Republican men against 60% of Republican women find it easier for men, while about 75% of Democratic men and 80% of Democratic women said so.

As second argument, a question about the standards that men and women are expected to meet was raised and showed that 61% of Americans say women have to do more to prove that they can enter U.S. politics, that includes 72% of women against 48% of men, and 73% Democrats versus 45% Republicans. As Paula Jean Swearengin, a candidate in West Virginia running for a seat in the U.S. Senate, claimed: "We work harder in these races just 'cause we're women. We're not rich, white dudes in suits."³² Swearengin was competing with incumbent senator Joe Manchin, but was defeated by 39% on the first big primary day. Higher standards for women than men would thus be a major reason for women's underrepresentation in high political offices.

A final reason for the low percentage of women being elected to top leadership positions that was mentioned in the survey on gender and leadership is gender discrimination in general. About half of the Americans who were interviewed admitted that gender discrimination might be one of the major obstacles for women to enter U.S. politics. However, this time, less women agreed with this statement than with the other ones, with 59% against

³² *Knock Down The House*. (2019, January 27). [Documentary]. Netflix. <https://www.netflix.com/be-fr/title/81080637>

36% of men. Again, we see a considerable difference in the opinions between genders, but also between parties, with 64% Democrats and 30% Republicans pointing gender discrimination as an obstacle.

Based on these figures we can conclude that the two groups which are more likely to recognize potential differences between men and women in U.S. politics are women and Democrats. A hypothesis could be that voters are not feeling ready to elect women and are expecting these to meet higher standards than men because they are only used to seeing men serving in these high political offices. As we all know, it will take quite a long time before we can observe a real shift in mentality. However, optimism was welcomed by a last question that was asked to the surveyed people. Although opinions on this matter seem controversial, slightly above half of Americans say that gender parity in high political offices is only a matter of time.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment was identified as another major obstacle for women entering U.S. politics. According to the same survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (September 2018), more than a third of the respondents declared that it is harder for women to establish themselves in a political career because of sexual harassment.

In another study, carried out by the Barbara Lee Family Foundation (April 2018³³), we found out that voters too assess sexual harassment as being a serious problem which needs to be properly tackled and that they will take that into consideration when going to the ballot box. Indeed, a bit more than half of the respondents asserted that they would never cast their vote for a candidate who is being accused of sexual harassment and 30% mentioned that, because of the political context, they would be more likely to vote for a woman. In these percentages, it was observed that millennial women in particular were more influenced than others by sexual harassment in casting their vote. However, women are not the only ones who are concerned by this issue as we see that 53% of men as well would never vote for a candidate incriminated for having sexually harassed someone. In general, the results of this survey demonstrated that voters do take sexual harassment into consideration when casting their vote.

³³ Barbara Lee Family Foundation. (2018a, April). *New Research: Voters, Candidates, and #MeToo*. <https://www.barbaraleefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Memo-How-Voters-Feel-About-MeToo.pdf>

When it comes to candidates openly talking about sexual harassment, research from the Barbara Lee Family Foundation (May 2018³⁴) analysed the impact of the #MeToo movement and the resulting candidates' and voters' behaviour, but also how voters responded when candidates were talking about sexual harassment in their profiles.

Of course, talking about sexual harassment during a candidate's campaign might feel new to many as that has not been discussed since the Anita Hill hearings in 1992, when she accused Clarence Thomas of having sexually harassed her. Back in 2018, when the research was conducted, regardless of partisanship, a candidate talking about sexual harassment in their profile automatically received more positive responses from voters. Even better, when that same candidate makes it clear that they want to combat sexual harassment, they were even more popular. This is true across the gender spectrum of the voters. Of course if a voter leaning more Democratic has to choose between a Republican woman candidate and a Democrat woman candidate who are both referring to sexual harassment in their profile, they will definitely choose for the Democrat one and either way. On the other side, a candidate who does not support the #MeToo movement and who wonders about the pertinence of sexual harassment will not get the support of a clear majority of voters in return.

This might lead us to believe that it could be the case that women are feeling afraid of entering U.S. politics because they know they might encounter sexual harassment within the institutions, but also outside of it by becoming a well-known woman.

Structural barriers

Another obstacle for women to enter U.S. politics is the number of structural barriers that they are facing, whether it is for raising campaign funds or for incumbency advantages, or even for media coverage. In this paragraph, we will describe all these obstacles together.

Overall, there seems to be more infrastructures that were established to help Democratic women than there are for Republican women, resulting in more women candidates

³⁴ Barbara Lee Family Foundation. (2018b, May). *#MeToo: An Issue that Transcends Party*. <https://www.barbaraleefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/MeToo-An-Issue-that-Transcends-Party-Barbara-Lee-Family-Foundation-Research.pdf>

and officeholders on the Democratic side. According to many scholars and practitioners, considerable efforts need to be made on the conservative side to recruit and support more women candidates. There are more organisations helping Democratic women fundraise for campaigns than there are for Republicans. Indeed, since the 1970s, women's Political Action Committees (PAC) have supported women running for Congress by recruiting, training and funding them. As we know, running a campaign costs a lot of money in the U.S.A. and PACs, like *EMILY's List* for Democrats – which is one of the most well-known organisations -, are assisting candidates in their fundraising. Other organisations exist, such as *Run for Something*, the purpose of which is to recruit first-timers under the age of 35 to run for office, or *Emerge America*, which trains Democrat women candidates for office.

Although there are some infrastructures supporting women in fundraising for campaigns, it is still significantly more difficult for women than for men to amass the needed money to run for office. Women often have less resources than men and that is mainly due to their inability to develop their networks. Unlike their male counterparts, women do not surround themselves sufficiently with people likely to donate regularly to their campaigns. Moreover, the fact that women's representation is very low in U.S. politics does not strongly motivate donors nor political parties to support them financially. Whenever women do receive contributions to their congressional campaigns, it is far more often in the form of smaller donations equalling less than \$200 rather than larger contributions accounting for more than \$750, with the opposite being true for men.

Another structural problem, which is mentioned by many scholars as an obstacle for women candidates, is incumbency, which is also related to fundings at the same time. Incumbents have more advantages when it comes to raising money thanks to their experience and recognition, which makes it difficult for challengers to defeat them in races. Of course, historically, most incumbents are men, so women have to mainly rely on open seats to run for Congress. However, it was observed that, even when there are open seats, the number of women candidates remains low compared to that of men. By that, we thus need to understand that incumbency is not the main factor for the low representation of women in Congress, but rather one of the factors which exacerbates the problem.

As a final structural barrier that will be analysed here, we chose to mention media coverage. Some early studies found out that male candidates were given more media coverage than female candidates. Even worse, whenever they managed to gain attention, it was mostly to talk about their appearance, personality and family. Thankfully, more recent studies have showed that it had improved over time, even though it still remains a challenge for women to receive proper media coverage.

These three structural barriers are in fact obstacles for women to run a campaign for Congress, might it be because of their lack of funds and/or media coverage, or because of the number of incumbents in the Houses.

Family Responsibilities

In research carried out by the Barbara Lee Family Foundation (2017)³⁵ analysing the Modern Family, we notice a radical change in the definition of the word family in America. In the 1960s and before, a family was considered as a two-parent household, the parents being a woman and a man who were married. Less than 25% of women worked outside the home while being married and having children. Nowadays, this concept of the term family has evolved. A family can also be a single or unmarried woman, two women or two men together, and both parents working. However, despite these societal changes, the traditional gender roles are mainly left unchanged and motherhood is still considered as a central role for women. In fact, voters seem to be perfectly aware that they held different expectations for women and mothers than men and fathers, but they still continue to do so.

In that same trend, research, conducted by the Pew Research Center (2018), analysed the obstacles for women in leadership and showed that family responsibilities are considered by many as a barrier for women to enter politics. Indeed, among the 4,587 respondents who took part in these monthly surveys, slightly more than one quarter thinks that women should only have children when being well-established in their career. About half of them says that, if

³⁵ Barbara Lee Family Foundation. (2017, March). *Modern Family: How Women Candidates Can Talk About Politics, Parenting, and Their Personal Lives*. https://www.barbaraleefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/BL_Memo_Final-3.22.17.pdf

a woman wants to reach high political office, it would be better for her to have children before entering politics and nearly one fifth recommends to not have any children at all.

As demonstrated by these two studies, many people feel concerned about a woman running for or being elected to office. Voters cannot help but wonder how women could take care of their constituents and their family simultaneously and feel more worried about candidates and elected women having young children. Ultimately, during campaign discussions, voters will ask questions to female candidates about their role as a mother. And, if the candidate is neither a mother nor married, voters will express their concerns about her ability to fully appreciate the interests of families. Male candidates do not typically get these kinds of questions nor is it raised as a concern.

According to the above-mentioned Barbara Lee Foundation research, women candidates are uncertain about the way they should respond to questions about their personal lives and families and whether they should even talk about it. Here are some pieces of advice given by the paper on how a woman running for office should answer to voters' questions. Candidates should:

- Not reveal too much about their personal life
- Demonstrate how their experiences can help them doing their work and understanding their constituents
- Not be too defensive or negative
- Show that they understand how hard it is to manage a family and work at the same time by giving concrete examples of their personal life
- Acknowledge that they are being helped to take care of their children
- Remind voters of the work they have already done and what they will continue to do on their behalf

Now that we have a good understanding of these specific barriers that women are facing while running for Congress, we will analyse whether the members of *The Squad* have been able to overcome these obstacles or not.

Chapter 2: Focus on The Squad

Ilhan Omar

Regarding gender discrimination, Ilhan Omar has been extremely clear on the fact that she supports LGBTQIA+ rights: “I will fight for LGBTQIA+ rights in Washington D.C., and together, we will raise our voices against those who seek to divide us with hate and bigotry.”³⁶ As she says, far too many LGBTQIA+ members are still facing discrimination at school, at work, when looking for housing, and in many other situations, and more than 25 states still not provide them with any protections. Omar specifically wants to end any type of discrimination against that community by strengthening and enacting new legislations for them.

She also made clear that, as a member of the House of Representatives, she will continue to work hard for equal rights. In fact, she is an ardent advocate for marriage equality and the Equality Act, which, if passed, would definitely ban any type of gender discrimination in the U.S.A.:

“This bill prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in areas including public accommodations and facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system. Specifically, the bill defines and includes sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity among the prohibited categories of discrimination or segregation.”³⁷

After having been elected to the U.S. Congress, she said in a speech³⁸ that she had been interviewed by a reporter on the fact that women’s representation now accounted for about 27% in Congress, asking her how she felt about it and she declared: “I’m not excited. [...] To me, it will be exciting when we have equal representation in Congress. It will be exciting when we have more than that.” Omar also advocates for women’s rights, and more precisely for women’s reproductive rights. She worked for the Women Organizing Women (WOW) Network

³⁶ HRC Endorses Ilhan Omar for U.S. Congress (MN-05). (2018, October 18). *Human Rights Campaign*. Retrieved August 5, 2022, from <https://www.hrc.org/news/hrc-endorses-ilhan-omar-for-united-states-congress-mn-05>

³⁷ *H.R.5 - 117th Congress (2021–2022): Equality Act*. (n.d.). Congress.Gov | Library of Congress. Retrieved August 8, 2022, from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5>

³⁸ NowThis News. (2019, February 11). *Why Rep. Ilhan Omar Isn't Too Excited About All the Women in Congress* | NowThis [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK3arzFutNg&ab_channel=NowThisNews

as the director of policy & initiatives since September 2015. This organisation aims to recruit East African women to leadership positions.

Although, we might suppose that many women in U.S. politics have already been facing gender discrimination, it is well-known that Omar has been facing discrimination herself, but not on the basis of her gender. She has been fiercely criticized for wearing a hijab and thus, it necessitated changing the rules of the House. In fact, thanks to this change of dress code, she is the first member of the U.S. Congress to have been allowed to wear a religious headscarf while sitting in Congress. The wearing of any kind of headwear had been prohibited for 181 years in the chamber, which was initially aimed at preventing representatives to wear hats on the House Floor: “Every member shall remain uncovered during the sessions of the House.”³⁹ In November 2018, Omar proposed to change the rule along by Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California and Rep. Jim McGovern of Massachusetts to allow the wearing of religious head coverings. Ilhan Omar celebrated in a tweet (Appendix 4) the ban lift, which was passed in a rules package with a 234-197 vote on Thursday 3rd of January 2019 and reads as followed:

“Religious Headdress. Subsection (x) clarifies and maintains the existing prohibition on wearing hats in the Hall of the House, while making express that this prohibition does not include religious headwear. The language for this clarification is modeled on the statutory provision providing for proper decorum during the Pledge of Allegiance, 4 U.S.C. 4.”⁴⁰

When it comes to sexual harassment, as far as we know, Ilhan Omar has never been vocal about it except in October 2017, when she shared a tweet (Appendix 5) from Women’s March by retweeting: “If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet. #Metoo” letting us wonder whether she has ever been sexually harassed or assaulted herself.

³⁹ *The Ban on Hats on the House Floor.* (n.d.). US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives. Retrieved August 9, 2022, from <https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1800-1850/The-debate-over-the-rule-to-ban-hats-on-the-House-Floor/>

⁴⁰ *H. RES. 6 ADOPTING THE RULES FOR THE 116th CONGRESS SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS.* (2018, December). <https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20181231/116-HRes6-SxS-U1.pdf>

Rep. Ilhan Omar worked on her campaign for the 2018 elections with the help of the *Justice Democrats*, and was endorsed by many other organisations which helped her raising funds to run for the U.S. House, such as Human Rights Campaign (HRC) or *MoveOn*, but also by the Democratic Farmer-Labour Party (DFL). Her election as representative of District 60B, two years before, to the Minnesota House, probably facilitated her recognition in the field. Running for an open seat made campaigning an easier task than it could have been. Indeed, Keith Ellison, the previous Democratic incumbent was seeking election as Minnesota Attorney General instead of re-election to the U.S. House. Regarding fundraising, she was able to raise \$1,073,812 for her campaign compared to \$23,354 for her challenger, Jennifer L. Zielinski.

In general, Ilhan Omar has not been very vocal about her personal life and family on the campaign trail. A lot of that was discovered in her book *"This Is What America Looks Like: My Journey from Refugee to Congresswoman"* and in her documentary *"Time for Ilhan"*. As a refugee child who lost her mother at two and who is now a mother of three, she is very much aware of what real life looks like. Before being forced to flee her native country, Somalia, and to live in a refugee camp in Kenya for four years, she lived a peaceful life with her middle-class family. When she arrived in the United States with her father in 1995, he had to work hard to take care of her. In 2002, she married her first husband in a religious ceremony, Ahmed Abdisalan Hirsi, with whom she had three children: Adnan, Isra and Ilwad. From 2009 to 2011, they temporarily ended their relationship and married a British citizen, Ahmed Nur Said Elmi, who was alleged of being her brother and to have married her to get an easier path to U.S. citizenship. These allegations have been later denied.

Rashida Tlaib

Rashida Tlaib most probably faced less discrimination on the basis of her religion than Ilhan Omar. Both are the first Muslim women to serve the U.S. Congress, but contrary to Omar, Tlaib does not wear a hijab. The latter has a Muslim Palestinian heritage, her parents were immigrants, she does not hesitate to talk about her faith, but this is not the main part of her speech. In fact, the district she represents, Michigan's 13th Congressional District, is mostly inhabited by African-American and Christian residents and voters.

When it comes to sexual harassment and assault, Tlaib was among the group of women who accused the Michigan director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Imad Hamad, of having sexual harassed and/or assaulted them. Hamad had been working for 17 years for the committee and resigned in 2013 following these accusations. Rashida told the Detroit Free Press how relieved she felt that “Imad won’t be in a position where he might hurt more women.”⁴¹ Three years later, she and a group of women had the opportunity to go to a rally where Donald Trump presented himself as a candidate to the Detroit Economic Club. She explained that “every two minutes a woman was standing up asking about his stance on sexual harassment.”⁴² Tlaib herself stood up and asked him “Have you ever read the U.S. Constitution? You need to read the U.S. Constitution.”³⁴ And actually got detained for that. This is how she stood up for women’s rights and against sexual harassment before her election.

During that period of time, Rashida Tlaib served the Michigan’s Legislature, where she was also the first Muslim woman. She served three terms there until 2014 when she reached the term limits. She then worked as an attorney and advocate at the Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice. When she decided to run for office to replace former Rep. John Conyers who resigned because of allegations of sexual harassment, many voters knew her already as she lived in that district and had represented some of its areas while serving in the Michigan Legislature. That was her force against her many opponents which included among others:

- Ian Conyers, the former Congressman’s grandnephew and a Michigan State Senator
- Brenda Jones, the president of Detroit’s City Council
- Bill Wild, the Mayor of a city in the 13th district

Still, Tlaib seemed to be the favourite in this race as Zaki Barzinji, the former White House liaison to American Muslims said: “She’s a perfect example of how to systematically build political power. She’s not just jumping into a congressional race out of nowhere, she literally

⁴¹ Kelly, E. U. T. (2018, August 10). Six things about Rashida Tlaib, who will likely become first Muslim woman in Congress. *USA TODAY*. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/08/08/rashida-tlaib-michigan-democrat-muslim-woman-congress/933253002/>

⁴² CNN. (2018, July 2). She’s making history as a Muslim woman. *CNN*. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2018/07/02/rashida-tlaib-muslim-woman-running-for-congress-vstat-orig-jm.cnn/video/playlists/midterm-election-historic-firsts/>

spent more than a decade working her way up.”⁴³ Moreover, she has been endorsed by many, including the party’s progressive wing, *People for Bernie, Justice for Democrats, Democracy for America, the Greater Detroit Democratic Socialists of America*, and was a member of the *Democratic Socialists of America*.

Rashida Tlaib thus ran for and won an open seat and was almost certain to not have to face a Republican candidate in the general election since Michigan’s 13th Congressional District is known for being a blue district. As she was already sort of a celebrity in her district, she is one of the few members of *The Squad* who gained media attention before the primary election. The coverage was mostly local, with *The Detroit News, Detroit Free Press* and *Michigan’s Radio*, but she also appeared on *CNN, The Times* and *NBC News*. In addition to that, she was able to raise \$1,625,783, compared to the less than one million raised by the other candidates.

Regarding her family, she was the oldest daughter of 14 brothers and sisters and of course played a major role in raising them. As she said in an interview with the *Detroit Metro Time* in 2014, that helped her prepare for her political career:

“You know, I was the third parent growing up, and it did make me a very overly responsible adult. I’m constantly working, and I’ve earned everything that I’ve been able to achieve on my own, and that’s what being the eldest of 14 taught me. ... I think every constituent’s issue that I’ve had to deal with for my residents, at some point, I’ve dealt with [through] my brothers and sisters. [Because I’m the eldest] ... I am usually the first call they make, especially since both of my parents are immigrants from Palestine. My dad grew up in Nicaragua in his teenage years then immigrated to the United States. ... Yeah, now, looking back, it’s been a blessing because it has really prepared me for what I’m doing now.”⁴⁴

As a single mother of two sons, Adam and Yousif, she made it clear that she was being greatly helped by her former husband, who she described as a great father for them.

⁴³ Daniel Burke, CNN Religion Editor. (2018, August 7). She could be the first Muslim woman in Congress. She has to defeat Detroit’s Democratic establishment first - CNNPolitics. *CNN*. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/03/politics/rashida-tlaib-congress/index.html>

⁴⁴ Felton, R. (2022, June 5). Rashida Tlaib talks politics. *Detroit Metro Times*. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://www.metrotimes.com/news/rashida-tlaib-talks-politics-2144390>

Ayanna Pressley

In 2011, Ayanna Pressley revealed that she had been raped several times during her childhood and at Boston University back when she was a freshman student there, but she confessed to never having reported it because she felt socially isolated and ashamed. At the time she made it public, she was already part of U.S. politics, having been elected to the Boston City Council in 2009. In the anthology *“Believe Me: How Trusting Women Can Change the World”*, written by Jessica Valenti and Jaclyn Friedman and released in January 2020, when talking about her experience, Pressley stated: “I want a world where survivors are believed and validated and supported. I also want a world where within a generation the number of those impacted by sexual violence plummets.”⁴⁵

As a survivor of that traumatic experience, Ayanna Pressley has made sexual harassment and assault a top issue of her fight. As she asserted in an interview by the *Jamaica Plain News*: “Dealing with bullying and harassment in the workplace is an incredibly important issue. First and foremost, I want survivors of bullying, harassment, and assault to feel heard, seen, and believed. [...]”³³. While working at the Boston City Council, she made it clear that she would fight for victims of sexual assault and human trafficking and that it was time to propose new policies to fully address these issues and to start talking about it. She kept her promise as in 2013 she formed the *Elevate Boston* coalition made up of advocates, organisations, residents and community activists. The coalition having three areas of focus: health equity, economic equity, and safe communities for all. Her goal with that coalition was to make sure that urgent matters like women and girls, and the LGBTQ community would be part of the debate for the 2013 Boston mayoral race.

She is the only member of *The Squad* whom we know for sure has had to endure this awful trauma or who at least, has been publicly talking about it. That period of her life was really harsh, as the next year, she had to stop Boston University. Her mother, Sandra Pressley, lost her job so Ayanna had to start working to support her and had multiple jobs at the same time, so she knows what it is to work hard.

⁴⁵ Ayanna Pressley. (2021, April 13). Biography. Retrieved August 6, 2022, from <https://www.biography.com/political-figure/ayanna-pressley>

Ayanna's mother has been a true example for her, she was the only child of her parents, and it is her mother who took care of her as her father, Martin Terrell, was fighting his heroin addiction and spent several years in prison. As previously mentioned, it is her mother who made her want to do public service.

Her political career started in college when she worked for Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy II for two years. She first worked as an intern and then as a staffer who was helping seniors to access their social security benefits. After that and for the next 13 years, she worked for former Senator John Kerry and took on several jobs from volunteer coordinator for his campaigns to political director. "Ayanna was a force", Kerry said, "She had enormous focus and drive, a wonderful, outgoing personality, and believed in public service."³³ It is in 2009 that Pressley retired from Kerry's office to start her own campaign for Boston City Council and got elected. While serving, she launched the Committee on Healthy Women, Families and Communities whose purpose was to "spotlight stable families, reduce violence and poverty, and promote women's issues."⁴⁶

When it comes to the structural barriers that we have developed in the previous chapter, Pressley surely overcame the barrier of incumbency. Indeed, she challenged the Democrat and 20 years incumbent Michael Capuano who held the same liberal and progressive views as her and actually defeated him in the 2018 primary elections on September 4. To add her specialty to the race, she made it clear that she wanted to work more with the community, just as she has done her entire life. During a speech she declared⁴⁷:

"I am running for Congress against the wishes of many good Democrats. I've been told to wait my turn. I've been accused of naked ambition. I've been called a traitor for challenging an incumbent, told simply this isn't the way things are done here in Massachusetts."

⁴⁶ Ertischek, D. (2018, March 9). Q&A: Ayanna Pressley on Running for Congress, How She Varies from Capuano, #MeToo and Human Trafficking. *Jamaica Plain News*. Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://www.jamaicainnews.com/2018/03/09/qa-ayanna-pressley-on-running-for-congress-how-she-varies-from-capuano-metoo-and-human-trafficking/31068>

⁴⁷ Jonas, M. (2019, February 14). Pressley: "I can't and won't wait my turn." *Commonwealth*. Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://commonwealthmagazine.org/politics/pressley-cant-wont-wait-turn/>

Far from being a novice in politics, she seems to have been more covered by the media than the other members of *The Squad* when she announced that she was running for congress and challenging Capuano and was cited on Boston's list of the city's most powerful people in 2015. That same year, she also won the *Award of Rising Star* on the *EMILY's List*.

Regarding the family responsibilities obstacle, she does not have a child of her own, but has a stepdaughter, Cora, whom she considers as her own daughter. In 2014, she married Conan Harris, father of Cora and manager of *StreetSafe Boston*, an anti-violence initiative. As she said on Twitter in 2019: "There is no distinction in my heart and she is without question my child." (Appendix 6).

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

In an interview for *The Intercept* in June 2018, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was very vocal about how sexual assault should be dealt with. For her, the existing structures are not very helpful for victims of sexual assaults and "we need to have a culture where we believe people when they say these very serious things, but we also need to make sure that due process is held."⁴⁸ Throughout her campaign, Alexandria never revealed that she had been a victim of sexual assault herself and only confessed it, without telling her story, when explaining the trauma she went through during the attack on Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021. In one of her Instagram lives, she recounted her what she went through when the rioters entered the U.S. Capitol. She had to hide while they were looking for her and she truly feared for her life. She linked the aftermath of both these traumatic experiences as people were telling her to move on as if it was easier. Even if she had used the #MeToo on several occasions, this was the first time she ever publicly revealed that, so that obviously did not play a role in her 2018 campaign for office.

As we mentioned before, Trump's presidency, the confirmation of Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, as well as the #MeToo movement profoundly shaped the 2018 elections. On October 5, 2018, one month before the general elections, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, in response to Kavanaugh's allegations of sexual assault, tweeted: "We're saying it loud and clear:

⁴⁸ Scahill, J. (2018, June 27). *An Interview With Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the Young Democratic Socialist Who Just Shocked the Establishment.* *The Intercept.* Retrieved August 6, 2022, from <https://theintercept.com/2018/06/27/an-interview-with-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-the-young-democratic-socialist-who-just-shocked-the-establishment/>

On Nov. 6th, if you are an elected official that minimizes, covers for, or ignores sexual assault, then we will replace you by electing survivors to office. #MeToo #CancelKavanaugh Let's go: <http://Ocasio2018.com> (Appendix 7). This was one of her ways to show her support to sexual assault victims.

On gender discrimination, she explained to Ben Shapiro, a right-wing political commentator, what patriarchy meant by replying to his tweet about his daughter "already been victimized by the patriarchy" (Appendix 8). It is unclear whether Ben was trying to make fun here or trying to ridicule Democrats condemning patriarchy, but Ocasio-Cortez responded:

"Patriarchy isn't about staying home with your kids. It's about women not having control over their lives. When corporations pay women less & childcare costs more, women+families don't have the luxury of choosing between home or work. They HAVE to do one or the other."

In July 2018, John Cardillo, a conservative TV host and commentator, tried to undermine Alexandria's claims about her background (Appendix 9). She immediately replied to him how hard her mother worked so that they could be able to live in that town, Yorktown Heights, demonstrating him how wrong he was by attacking her and ridiculing him.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez had been working as an intern for late Senator Ted Kennedy and was a volunteer organizer for the 2016 presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders. She was recruited by the progressive organisation *Brand New Congress* who wanted her to run for Congress, which she had never even thought about before that. Ocasio-Cortez was endorsed by many organisations and personalities, from the *Democratic Socialists of America* and *Black Lives Matter* to former president, Barack Obama. The latter declared in a statement: "Our incredible array of candidates up and down the ticket, all across the country, make up a movement of citizens who are younger, more diverse, more female than ever before."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Wise, J. (2018, October 1). Obama announces endorsement for Ocasio-Cortez. *The Hill*. Retrieved August 8, 2022, from <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/409294-obama-announces-endorsement-for-ocasio-cortez/>

Incumbency was not met as an enormous challenge by Ocasio-Cortez. In fact, she never lost her hope and always thought there was a possibility that she would win since she knew her community as opposed to her 20 years incumbent, Joseph Crowley. Her hope was fuelled by the fact that she did not receive much attention by the Democratic Party or by the media until she actually defeated Crowley. Indeed, compared to Crowley's \$3,219,073 fundraising and the one million dollars he added from his own fortune, she was only able to raise half of it. One of the largest donations she received was \$2,000 and she is the House member who received the smallest individual contributions, meaning less than \$200. As she knew in advance it would be a daunting task to raise more money than her primary opponent, she worked harder to talk to the members of her community, listen to them and be there for them. She also demonstrates her closeness by her extensive use of social media channels. On her Instagram account, she would often do live feeds while making dinner to answer questions on policies or to debate with her followers, which no other member of Congress was known to do.

Regarding her family responsibilities, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has always been very discrete about her private life, except for her background. The fact that she had a boyfriend, Riley Roberts, since she was a student at Boston University was still unknown to many people before the Netflix documentary *Knock Down The House*. Not so long ago, in May 2020, they got engaged, but they never expressed the desire of being parents. In fact, AOC has even questioned whether having a child was still morale nowadays due to the changing climate conditions.

To conclude this section, the members of *The Squad* are quite similar on certain points, such as being women of colour and being the first woman to have done something specific in Congress, but at the same time they have been quite different on the way they ran their campaign. Even though, Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez were both helped by *Justice Democrats*, they did not face the same barriers, like incumbency for instance. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib are both Muslim women, but were not talking about their religion in the same manner. When talking about sexual harassment, they all have the same regard, but Ayanna Pressley and AOC, which we later learned, both have endured more than sexual harassment. In the next part, we will analyse these findings more deeply to clearly determine which barriers they have or not overcame to finally answer our second research question.

Conclusion

Discussion of the results

Before answering the second research question, let us address the first one, which, as a reminder, was trying to understand why there was another surge of woman in the 2018 elections and whether it was a consequence of the specific political context. We predicted that this rise in women's candidacies would be linked to Trump's presidential election in 2016, and that hypothesis was confirmed to be true. However, it was not the only reason.

In fact, just like the year 1992, there was a considerable number of open seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, due to retirements, resignations or members running for another office. From these 52 open seats, one House member resigned to run a presidential campaign, ten ran for the U.S. Senate, eight for Governor and one for State Attorney General. Compared to the 2016 elections, there were ten more open seats in 2018, which allowed 21 women candidates to win these.

Another reason for this surge was the rise in women's activism and the #MeToo movement. During that period, there was a lot of discussion around gender and sexual harassment. Women began to share their stories on social media channels, explaining how they had been sexually harassed and/or assaulted, sometimes accusing someone specifically and revealing their name. This is how famous people, such as Weinstein or Trump were accused of sexual misconduct. Women had had enough of that and felt the need to change things, one way of doing it was by being politically active, and eventually filing their candidacy for office.

The hypothesis of Donald Trump's presidential election as a motivational factor for women running for office having been revealed to be true, there was another reason, linked to Trump, for that surge of women: his nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court to replace retiring Justice Anthony M. Kennedy. This threatened a lot of precedents as well as the partisanship representation of the court. Soon after his nomination, he was accused by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford of having sexually assaulted her when the two were in high school. He strongly denied these allegations while she had passed a polygraph test and he was, despite that, confirmed to the Supreme Court. This was another parallel to 1992, when Judge Clarence

Thomas was confirmed to the Supreme Court as well, even though he was accused by Anita Hill of having sexually harassed her at work.

About the second research question on the barriers and *The Squad*, we found more obstacles to women entering U.S. politics than the two mentioned in the introduction, gender discrimination and family responsibilities. In fact, sexual harassment can be an obstacle if fearing to encounter it while being part of U.S. institutions and becoming well-known, but, unfortunately, it can also help a woman candidate. Indeed, when talking about sexual harassment or assault in their profiles, candidates have more chance to be elected or to receive positive responses from voters. Then, we also observed that some structural barriers existed, such as incumbency which helps in raising money and being covered by the media.

Regarding the first barrier that we chose to analyse, gender discrimination, to our knowledge, no one of the four members of *The Squad* made any remarks about having felt discriminated through their campaign process on the basis of their gender. As a reminder, studies have shown that it is more difficult for women to be elected to top-leadership positions and that higher standards are expected for them compared to men's expectations. In fact, the type of discrimination that they might have encountered was more based on their origins rather than on their gender, as all four women are women of colour. This is especially true for Ilhan Omar, who was, along with Rashida Tlaib, one of the first Muslim women elected to Congress, as she was criticized for wearing a hijab. Unfortunately, if people are not yet ready to see women in leadership positions, they are even less ready to see a woman of colour high on the ladder. However, all four women were clear about fighting for women's rights.

As far as sexual harassment is concerned, we have learned that, when talking about it on the campaign trail, candidates had more chance to receive positive responses from voters than candidates who did not express their view about it, or worse, who questioned it. Rashida Tlaib is one of many women who had to report the director of the Michigan's American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee for sexual harassment. Ayanna Pressley revealed that she had been raped in her childhood and at university and made clear that sexual harassment and assault were top issues for her, even before running for Congress. For both these women, their trauma might thus have had an impact on voters.

Structural barriers have shown to also be an obstacle to women entering U.S. politics. When running for office, money is one of the most important decisive factors to file a candidacy and run a campaign. As was previously explained, on the contrary to men, women often do not have a large enough network which could regularly donate for their campaign. This is also linked to incumbency. As there have historically been more men than women in Congress, incumbents are predominantly men and women have more chance to run for an open seat than to challenge an incumbent. Media coverage is also linked to incumbency: incumbents usually receive more media attention than first-timers as they already have experience and name recognition. *The Squad* has successfully overcome these barriers. All members are Democrats, and we have seen that there are more infrastructures and organisations that are established to help women candidates on the Democratic sides, this obstacle was probably thus easier for them to face than if they had been Republicans. Apart from Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib who were running for an open seat, Ayanna Pressley and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez both defeated a 20-year incumbent in the primary election. For AOC, it is only after having won the primary election that she started to gain media attention. On the contrary, Omar, Tlaib and Pressley all received media coverage before the primary elections, as they were already known in the political landscape, having all been elected to either their state's legislature, or in the case of Pressley, their city council.

As was predicted, family responsibilities also are one of the major barriers that women have to fight to enter U.S. politics, as traditional gender roles are still depicted as a woman taking care of her children and being at home, and as a man working outside home. According to a survey which we previously referred to, one quarter of the respondents estimated that a woman should have children only when she was politically well-established, half of them said it is better for them to have children before entering politics and one fifth declared that not having children was the best option. Each member of *The Squad* did overcome this barrier in her own way. Let us begin with Rashida Tlaib, a single mother of two sons. In that same study, among the recommendations offered to women candidates, acknowledging being helped to take care of their children was one of these, and is what Rashida did. She explained that her former husband, father of her children, was a really great co-parent who was taking care of their children. Next, AOC is the only member who does not have any children, running for the House thus did not cause voters to think about the way she would take care of her children.

Then, Ayanna Pressley is a married woman with a nine years old stepdaughter whom she considers as her own daughter. Finally, Ilhan Omar is the only one who might have been criticized on her family responsibilities as having been quite unstable in her first two marriages.

To conclude, as a response to the first research question, this surge of women candidacies and elections in 2018 was indeed very much influenced by the political context. There were more open seats than usually, and the #MeToo movement, Trump's presidential election and his nomination of Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court provoked a rise in women's activism and motivated many of them to file their candidacy for office. But of course, we must keep in mind that the number of women candidates and elected increases year by year.

To answer the second research question, we have discovered many other obstacles which women have to face to enter U.S. politics, but have only selected four of these: gender discrimination, sexual harassment, structural barriers, and family responsibilities. From these four barriers, gender discrimination is the one which was the most difficult to analyse. Indeed, no member of *The Squad* reported having dealt with this type of discrimination on the campaign trail. Every member of the group has at least overcome one barrier, such as family responsibilities and sexual harassment for Rashida Tlaib, a single mother of two, incumbency for Ayanna Pressley and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez having both defeated a 20-year incumbent, or sexual assault for Ayanna Pressley as well. Regarding Ilhan Omar, she mainly faced discrimination, but that was mostly due to her origin and religion, and her strong statements about Israel.

Further research

Four years after the 2018 elections, other studies could be conducted to investigate a further increase in women's candidacies and elections. Now that we have seen that a tense political context tends to raise the number of women running for office, it might be interesting to carry out the same research, but this time for the 118th Congress, after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in June 2022, stating that abortion is not a constitutional right anymore. Furthermore, taking into consideration the rumours of Trump running for president in 2024, we might observe a new surge of women elected in office every year, it might be useful to do a comparative analysis of the surge of women in the 2018 elections and the 2022 elections.

Besides, with the numerous Black Lives Matter protests which took place in 2020 and 2021, carrying out research on a potential increase in the representation of people of colour in the U.S. Congress could be a future study as well. Finally, the underrepresentation of women of colour in Congress and the challenge that they are facing to enter U.S. politics also needs to be further investigated.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The Seventeenth Amendment

H. J. Res. 39.

Sixty-second Congress of the United States of America;

At the Second Session,

Began and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the fourth day of December,
one thousand nine hundred and eleven.

JOINT RESOLUTION

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution providing that Senators shall be
elected **by** the people of the several States.

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States
of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring
therein), That in lieu of the first paragraph of section three of Article I of the
Constitution of the United States, and in lieu of so much of paragraph two of
the same section as relates to the filling of vacancies, the following be proposed
as an amendment to the Constitution, which shall be valid to all intents and
purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of
three-fourths of the States:*

“The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from
each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall
have one vote. The electors in each State shall have the qualifications
requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State legislatures.

“When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate,
the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such
vacancies: *Provided*, That the legislature of any State may empower the
executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the
vacancies by election as the legislature may direct.

“This amendment shall not be so construed as to affect the election or
term of any Senator chosen before it becomes valid as part of the Constitution.”

Champ Clark,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

J. S. Sherman
Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.

Appendix 2: The Nineteenth Amendment

H. J. Res. 1.

Sixty-sixth Congress of the United States of America;

At the First Session,

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the nineteenth day of May,
one thousand nine hundred and nineteen.

JOINT RESOLUTION

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution extending the right of suffrage
to women.

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States
of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein),
That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution,
which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when
ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States.*

"ARTICLE ————.

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or
abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

"Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate
legislation."

F. H. Gillett

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Thos. R. Marshall

Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.

Appendix 3: The Congresses

Congress	Dates
65 th	1917-1919
66 th	1919-1921
67 th	1921-1923
68 th	1923-1925
69 th	1925-1927
70 th	1927-1929
71 st	1929-1931
72 nd	1931-1933
73 rd	1933-1935
74 th	1935-1937
75 th	1937-1939
76 th	1939-1941
77 th	1941-1943
78 th	1943-1945
79 th	1945-1947
80 th	1947-1949
81 st	1949-1951
82 nd	1951-1953
83 rd	1953-1955
84 th	1955-1957
85 th	1957-1959
86 th	1959-1961
87 th	1961-1963
88 th	1963-1965
89 th	1965-1967
90 th	1967-1969
91 st	1969-1971
92 nd	1971-1973
93 rd	1973-1975
94 th	1975-1977
95 th	1977-1979
96 th	1979-1981
97 th	1981-1983
98 th	1983-1985
99 th	1985-1987
100 th	1987-1989
101 st	1989-1991

102 nd	1991-1993
103 rd	1993-1995
104 th	1995-1997
105 th	1997-1999
106 th	1999-2001
107 th	2001-2003
108 th	2003-2005
109 th	2005-2007
110 th	2007-2009
111 th	2009-2011
112 th	2011-2013
113 th	2013-2015
114 th	2015-2017
115 th	2017-2019
116 th	2019-2021
117 th	2021-2023

Appendix 4: Tweet written by Ilhan Omar celebrating the ban lift on the wearing of hats on the House Floor

Ilhan Omar 
@IlhanMN · [Follow](#)

Yesterday, Congress voted to lift a 181 year ban on headwear to make the **#116thCongress** more inclusive for all.

I thank my colleagues for welcoming me, and I look forward to the day we lift the Muslim ban separating families all over the U.S. from their loved ones.

8:25 PM · Jan 4, 2019 

 43.9K  Reply  Share

[Read 685 replies](#)

Appendix 5: Ilhan Omar's retweet about #MeToo



Ilhan Omar ✓
@IlhanMN



If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet. #MeToo 🙋

[Traduire le Tweet](#)



Women's March ✓ @womensmarch · 16 oct. 2017

Today's #SignOfResistance is by Cleo Wade.

Keep sharing your stories. Keep speaking up. #MeToo 🙋

[Afficher cette discussion](#)

WE MAKE THE WORLD
SAFER WHEN WE
SPEAK UP.

Cleo Wade

ALT

5:23 AM · 16 oct. 2017 depuis Minneapolis, MN · Twitter for iPhone

162 Retweets 52 Tweets cités 696 J'aime

Appendix 6: Ayanna Pressley's tweet about her stepdaughter, Cora



Ayanna Pressley  @AyannaPressley · 28 janv. 2019



Later tonight, [@RepDWStweets](#) will host a dinner for "Moms in the House" 40% of our #116 Congress are women, & many are Moms. In 2019 there are many family models. Whether you are a single mom, (like mine was) bonus or bio mom, 2 mom household or a grandmother raising a grandchild



Ayanna Pressley  @AyannaPressley · 28 janv. 2019

Yesterday, at an event, someone asked me to stop referring to Cora as my stepdaughter. To be clear, Cora has been in my life since she was 2 y/o & being her Bonus Mom is the joy of my life. I love & honor her Bio Mom. We are a healthy blended family, like many today. #wegood Thx!



 42

 122

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Ayanna Pressley ✓
@AyannaPressley



each family determines their own rules & love language. It was inferred that by calling Cora my step-daughter, I am creating a distinction or a step down. There is no distinction in my heart & she is without question my child.

[Traduire le Tweet](#)

3:43 PM · 28 janv. 2019 · Twitter Web Client

18 Retweets 1 Citer le Tweet 419 J'aime



Appendix 7: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's tweet about #MeToo and Kavanaugh



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez ✓
@AOC



We're saying it loud and clear:

On Nov. 6th, if you are an elected official that minimizes, covers for, or ignores sexual assault, then we will replace you by electing survivors to office.

[#MeToo](#) 🙌 [#CancelKavanaugh](#)



Let's go: [Ocasio2018.com](#)

[Traduire le Tweet](#)

3:45 PM · 5 oct. 2018 · Buffer

1 647 Retweets 418 Tweets cités 7 008 J'aime



Appendix 8: AOC explaining Ben Shapiro what patriarchy is



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez 
@AOC



Patriarchy isn't about staying home with your kids. It's about women not having control over their lives.

When corporations pay women less & childcare costs more, women+families don't have the luxury of choosing between home or work. They HAVE to do one or the other.

[Traduire le Tweet](#)



Ben Shapiro 
@benshapiro



I asked my 4-year-old daughter this morning whether she thought it would be more fun to have a job or be a mommy. She said, "To be a mommy, so I can cuddle my babies." Clearly, she has already been victimized by the patriarchy.

5/13/18, 10:10 AM

6:06 PM · 13 mai 2018 · Twitter for iPhone

174 Retweets 7 Tweets cités 755 J'aime



Appendix 9: John Cardillo attacking AOC and her response



John Cardillo ✓ · Jul 1, 2018

@johncardillo · [Follow](#)

This is the Yorktown Heights (very nice area) home @Ocasio2018 grew up in before going off to Ivy League Brown University.

A far cry from the Bronx hood upbringing she's selling.



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez ✓

@AOC · [Follow](#)

Hey John,

1. I didn't go to Brown or the Ivy League. I went to BU. Try Google.

2. It is nice. Growing up, it was a good town for working people. My mom scrubbed toilets so I could live here & I grew up seeing how the zip code one is born in determines much of their opportunity.

7:53 PM · Jul 1, 2018



👍 69.9K 🗨️ Reply ↗️ Share

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