

Gender and Political Representation

Session 6: Institutions

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What we did last week...

- conceptualization of culture
- empirical focus on cultural transmission of gender norms
- learning how to structure the content of academic papers

Plan for today

In the next couple of sessions, we will shift our focus from the roots of gender norms to the contemporary causes of female under-representation in politics. Today, we will...

1. ...understand the meaning of institutions in politics
2. ...learn how the candidate selection is gendered

What is an institution?

What do we mean when we talk about institutions?

What is an institution?

“Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction” (North 1990, p. 1).

They differ in various aspects...

- formal vs. informal (written vs. customs)
- created vs. evolving (Constitution vs. common law)

Institutions are not organizations (groups of individuals pursuing similar goals) but they shape how organizations function.

Institutions and Gender

How to alleviate unequal patterns of participation? One institutional solution: **compulsory voting**

- “compulsory voting is a particularly effective method to achieve high turnout-in spite of generally low penalties (comparable to a fine for parking violations), lax enforcement (more lenient than the enforcement of parking rules), and the secrecy of the ballot which means that an actual vote cannot be compelled in the first place.” (Lijphart 1997, p. 2)

Could compulsory voting also affect the gender gap in turnout?

Institutions and Gender

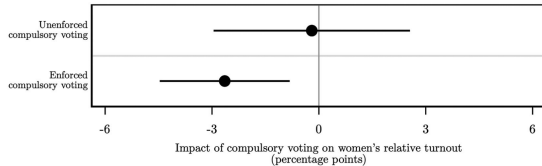


Figure: Effect of compulsory voting on turnout by enforcement mechanism (Singh 2025)

How can we explain this?

Question by Celine: What alternative measures could be implemented to reduce gender disparities in voter participation without reinforcing existing biases?

Institutions and Gender

The electoral system can also reduce the gender gap in voting.
Why?

Institutions and Gender

FIGURE 1 Means and Densities of Women's Percentage of the Votes Cast by Treatment Group and Election Year

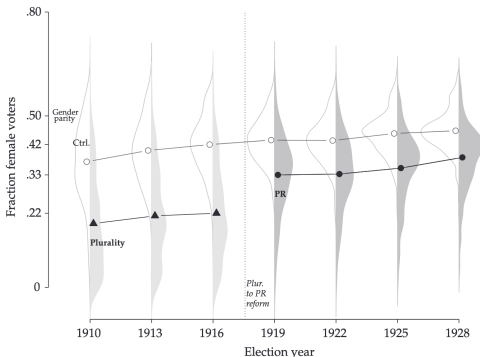


Figure: Female turnout after the PR reform in 1919 (Skorge 2023)

Institutions and Gender

Mechanisms?

- In plurality systems, there are many uncompetitive races
- PR systems frequently increase electoral competitiveness
- parties have incentives to appeal to unmobilized groups → this applies to women, but potentially also other marginalized groups
- in addition: PR system might increase the perception of self-efficacy of the female constituency

Survey on the reading



Gender politics of executive candidate selection and reselection

Before we start summarizing the paper, please form pairs. Go through each paragraph of the introduction. Which function does it take?

Gender politics of executive candidate selection and reselection

We'll stay in pairs, we are following the same scheme as last week, but this time we go through it step by step:

- **Research Question:**
- **Main Argument:**
- **Data and Method:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Research Question

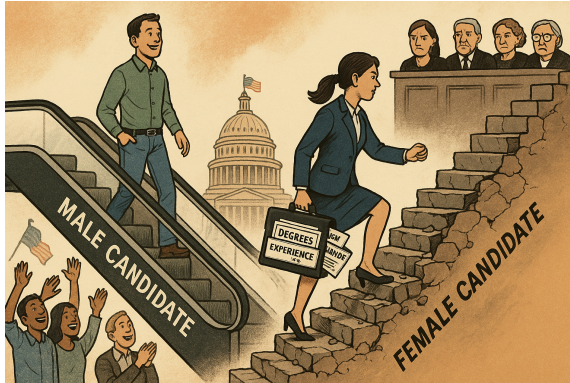
- **Research Question:** Does female candidate selection depend on individual, party-level and institutional factors?
- **Main Argument:**
- **Data and Method:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

(Despite the research focus on regional level) can Angela Merkel be seen as a 'sacrificial lamb' (especially in the first election against Gerhard Schröder in 2005) or other top candidates like Annalena Baerbock 2021 or Alice Weidel 2025?

Argument

- **Research Question:** Does female candidate selection depend on individual, party-level and institutional factors?
- **Main Argument:**
- **Data and Method:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Argument



Which factors shape the male/female paths to political candidacy?

Argument

Verge and Astudillo (2019) identify several potential determinants, grouped into three categories:

- **individual traits:** political experience
- **party-level factors**
 1. political ideology
 2. candidate selection procedure
 3. composition of political office
- **institutional factors**
 1. competitiveness of election
 2. feminised environment

Question by Celine: How might the intersection of gender and political ideology shape the selection of female executive candidates in both left-wing and right-wing parties?

Argument

Female candidates also face more challenges regarding **re-selection**:

- usually, candidates benefit from their incumbency
- for women, these returns are less pronounced

Data and Method

- **Research Question:** Does female candidate selection depend on individual, party-level and institutional factors?
- **Main Argument:** Women's chances of being nominated should not be regarded in isolation to men's opportunities.
- **Data and Method:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Data and Method

Verge and Astudillo (2019) compile a new dataset on executive candidates

- four countries: Austria, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom (→ what's their selection strategy?)
- time span: 1990-2016
- scope: candidates for executive offices from the centre-right and -left

Which challenges for inference come with the sample?

Data and Method

Main variables being used:

- Dependent variable: Female candidate selected
- Several independent variables
 - experiences in regional politics (dummy variables and continuous experience in years)
 - party ideology
 - selection procedure (open vs. closed)
 - competitiveness of the election (at which time?)
 - feminised political environment: share of females in regional parliament

Findings

- **Research Question:** Does female candidate selection depend on individual, party-level and institutional factors?
- **Main Argument:** Women's chances of being nominated should not be regarded in isolation to men's opportunities.
- **Data and Method:** Cross-country data on female executive candidates and their biographies
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

Findings

Table 3. The determinants of candidate selection

	M1	M2
Local public office	0.0379 (0.478)	
Regional public office	0.323 (0.488)	
National public office	1.065 ⁺ (0.592)	
Regional party office	0.478 (0.452)	
National party office	0.400 (0.411)	
Regional party leader	-1.211 ^{***} (0.407)	-1.027 ⁺ (0.464)
Seniority in public office (years, logged)		0.409 (0.415)
Party ideology	-0.096 (0.435)	-0.242 (0.427)
Primaries	-0.505 (0.655)	-0.593 (0.712)
Number of former female party leaders	1.134 ^{***} (0.326)	1.067 ^{***} (0.312)
Party electoral strength (logged)	-0.974 ^{***} (0.401)	-1.110 ^{***} (0.423)
Electoral competitiveness (logged)	-0.547 ⁺ (0.286)	-0.500 (0.304)
Share of women MPs in the regional parliament	0.056 ^{***} (0.017)	0.061 ^{***} (0.016)
Number of former female prime ministers in the region	1.264 ⁺ (0.492)	1.312 ^{***} (0.457)
Age	-0.026 (0.019)	-0.030 ⁺ (0.018)
Childless	1.050 ⁺ (0.510)	0.935 ⁺ (0.515)
Marital status	-2.054 ^{***} (0.682)	-2.069 ^{***} (0.726)
Constant	3.121 ⁺ (1.813)	3.598 ⁺ (1.969)
N	255	254
Number of clusters	45	45
Pseudo R ²	0.3305	0.2988

Notes: Logistic regression. Dependent variable: (1) female candidates, (0) male candidates. ^{***} p < 0.01; ^{***} p < 0.05; ⁺ p < 0.1. Robust standard errors (clustered on region) in parentheses.

Figure: Main results (Verge and Astudillo 2019, p. 730)

Let's try to read some of these coefficients together...

Do they tell us anything about the gendered pipeline to power?

Findings

No, for those, we need interactions between the explanatory variables and gender:

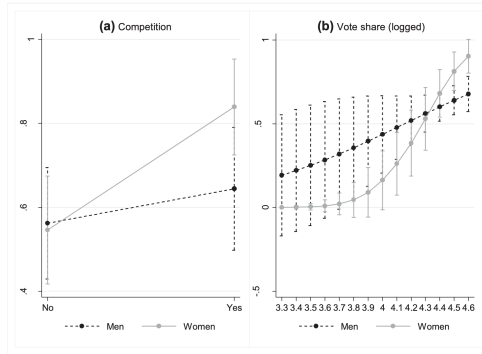


Figure: Gendered effects of candidate selection (Verge and Astudillo 2019, p. 730)

Findings

What are the main effects?

Findings

Female executive candidates were...

- ...less often regional party leaders before
- ...not influenced by candidate selection or party ideology
- ...chosen in competitive and less promising races
- ...more often appointed in feminised political environments

Can we make any claims about causal relations?

Findings

Remember,

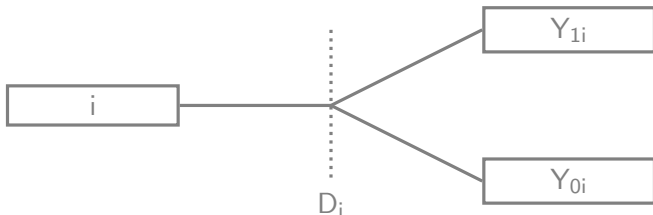
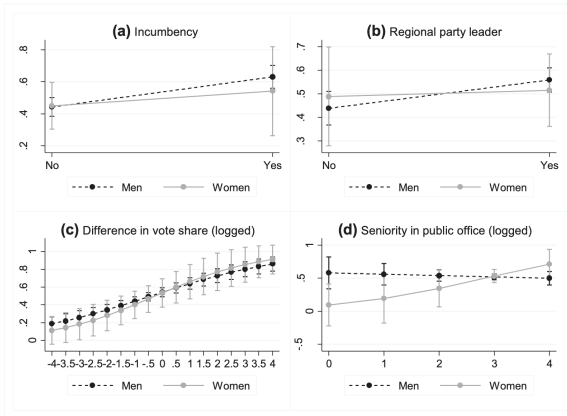


Figure: Potential Outcomes

Verge and Astudillo (2019) do not have a causal identification strategy. Most of the effects could be true for the reverse causal direction.

Findings

The politics of reselection...



Implications and alternative explanations

- **Research Question:** Does female candidate selection depend on individual, party-level and institutional factors?
- **Main Argument:** Women's chances of being nominated should not be regarded in isolation to men's opportunities.
- **Data and Method:** Cross-country data on female executive candidates and their biographies
- **Results:** Women need more political experience and a favorable party as well as institutional environment to become (re)selected for political candidacy
- **Implications:**

Implications and alternative explanations

Party choices and the institutional environment shape women's successful entrance in politics. But:

- ...we don't know whether these effects are causal
- ...the analysis is only about successful candidates, there is a selection bias in the sample

Implications and alternative explanations

A different story to tell? **Question by Theresa:** (Despite the research focus on regional level) can Angela Merkel be seen as a 'sacrificial lamb' (especially in the first election against Gerhard Schröder in 2005) or other top candidates like Annalena Baerbock 2021 or Alice Weidel 2025?

It's a wrap...

- **Research Question:** Does female candidate selection depend on individual, party-level and institutional factors?
- **Main Argument:** Women's chances of being nominated should not be regarded in isolation to men's opportunities.
- **Data and Method:** Cross-country data on female executive candidates and their biographies
- **Results:** Women need more political experience and a favorable party as well as institutional environment to become (re)selected for political candidacy
- **Implications:** Female candidates face a gendered pipeline to power.

Interim evaluation

We have already completed (almost) half of the seminar. What's your verdict?

- How do you find the content covered so far?
- Were you able to follow the class?
- How did you like the teaching activities?
- What should we continue, what should be adjusted?

Interim evaluation



What we've learned today...

- we defined institutions...
- ...and discussed examples on how they might matter for gender equality
- ...before turning to an empirical paper on various determinants of the candidate selection procedure

To prepare for next week...

- we'll discuss the role of the voters, the demand side, on gender inequalities in political representation
- Main reading:
 - **Anderson-Nilsson G and Clayton A (2021)** Gender and Policy Persuasion. *Political Science Research and Methods* 9 (4), 818–831. ISSN: 2049-8470, 2049-8489. DOI: [10.1017/psrm.2021.4](https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2021.4)
- Complementary readings

To prepare for next week...

- **Alexander A, Charron N, and Off G (2024)** For Every Action a Reaction? The Polarizing Effects of Women's Rights and Refugee Immigration: A Survey Experiment in 27 EU Member States. *European Journal of Political Research* 63 (4), 1557–1577. ISSN: 1475-6765. DOI: [10.1111/1475-6765.12664](https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12664)
- **Breyer M (2024)** Backlash or Progressive Mobilization? Voter Reactions to Perceived Trajectories of Women's Representation. *Comparative Political Studies*, 00104140231223745. ISSN: 0010-4140, 1552-3829. DOI: [10.1177/00104140231223745](https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231223745)

To prepare for next week...

- **Bauer NM and Carpinella C (2018)** Visual Information and Candidate Evaluations: The Influence of Feminine and Masculine Images on Support for Female Candidates. *Political Research Quarterly* **71** (2), 395–407. ISSN: 1065-9129, 1938-274X. DOI: [10.1177/1065912917738579](https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917738579)

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature



Alexander A, Charron N, and Off G (2024) For Every Action a Reaction? The Polarizing Effects of Women's Rights and Refugee Immigration: A Survey Experiment in 27 EU Member States. *European Journal of Political Research* **63** (4), 1557–1577.








Anderson-Nilsson G and Clayton A (2021) Gender and Policy Persuasion. *Political Science Research and Methods* **9** (4), 818–831.



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-  **Lijphart A (1997)** Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma. *The American Political Science Review* **91** (1), 1–14. JSTOR: [2952255](#).
-  **North DC (1990)** *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.
-  **Singh SP (2025)** Compulsory Voting Increases Men's Turnout Most. *American Journal of Political Science* **n/a** (n/a).
-  **Skorge ØS (2023)** Mobilizing the Underrepresented: Electoral Systems and Gender Inequality in Political Participation. *American Journal of Political Science* **67** (3), 538–552.

Literature



Verge T and Astudillo J (2019) The Gender Politics of Executive Candidate Selection and Reselection. *European Journal of Political Research* **58** (2), 720–740.