Women in politics
Why are they under-represented? Does it matter?

Pamela Campa

NES Public Lecture, November 13
Persistent under-representation of women in political decision-making. Progress is slow and scattered.
Global Gender Gap Report, overall index and sub-indexes

Overall Index: 68%
Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex: 59%
Educational Attainment subindex: 95%
Health and Survival subindex: 96%
Political Empowerment subindex: 22%

Source: Global Gender Gap Index 2018.
Note: Population-weighted averages. Covers all 149 countries featured in the 2018 index.
Progress on closing the Global Gender Gap

Source: Global Gender Gap Index 2018, World Economic Forum
Share of women in lower house parliaments in Europe - 1999

21.7%
Share of women in lower house parliaments in Europe - 2009

24%
Share of women in lower house parliaments in Europe - 2019

32%
Share of women in municipal councils in Europe - 2011

30.5%
Share of women in municipal councils in Europe - 2019

32.6%
Under-representation larger and progress slower as seniority of position increases
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⇒ The leaky pipeline
Countries with Women Head of Government - 2009

Countries with Women Head of Government - 2019

Source: UN women and Inter-Parliamentary Union
Share of female mayors in Europe - 2011

13.2%
Share of female mayors in Europe - 2019

15.4%
Globally 24.3% of all national parliamentarians were women as of February 2019, a slow increase from 11.3% in 1995.
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As of January 2019, 21% of government ministers worldwide were women. Five most commonly held portfolios by women ministers: Social Affairs; followed by Family/Children/Youth/Elderly/Disabled; Environment/Natural Resources/Energy; Employment/Labour/Vocational Training; and Trade/Industry.

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How about The Russian Federation?
Global gender gap score

Source: The global gender gap report 2018, World Economic Forum
Proportion of Women in Parliament

Ministers of the Russian Federation

4 out of 31 positions are held by women
No woman head of state in the last century.

85 federal subjects in the Russian federation. Only one woman: Governor of Yugra.

Woman Governor of St Petersburg from 2003 to 2011.

Woman speaker of the Parliament.
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Woman speaker of the Parliament
Why are women under-represented in top political jobs?
Supply-side explanation: women less willing to enter politics and climb the career ladder
Women less willing to enter politics and climb the career ladder

Evidence?

Women who share same personal characteristics and professional credentials as men express significantly lower levels of political ambition to hold elective office (Fox and Lawless, 2004).

What explains the gender gap?

Women less likely than men to be encouraged to run for office & to view themselves as qualified to run. Deep cause: political socialization = "parental encouragement, politicized educational and peer experiences, participation in competitive activities, and a sense of self-confidence" (Fox and Lawless, 2014).
Women less willing to enter politics and climb the career ladder. Evidence?
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→ US, survey of potential candidates. Women who share same personal characteristics and professional credentials as men express significantly lower levels of political ambition to hold elective office (Fox and Lawless, 2004).
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What explains the gender gap? A few more candidate explanations:
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- Women more constrained by family and relational considerations (Folke and Rickne, 2018)
Some reflection points on supply-side factors:
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1. Attitudes can be shaped by context…⇒ Campa and Serafinelli, 2019
Figure: Percentages agreement from Churchill’s The Second World War
Germany divided
Figure: *International Women’s Day*
Employment, 1989

Figure: *State-Socialism and gender gap in the labor market*
Job success important, 1990

Figure: State-Socialism and women’s attitudes toward work
Gender specialization in the household, 1996

Figure: State-Socialism and gender-role attitudes
Some reflection points on supply-side factors:

1. Attitudes can be shaped by context... (Campa and Serafinelli, 2019)
2. ... and so are behavioural traits (Gneezy, Leonard, and List, 2005)
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3. Difficult to consider supply in isolation from demand
4. Differences in averages, but maybe what matters is the tail?
Demand-side explanation: voters and/or parties prefer male to female politicians
Are voters biased against female politicians?

Figure: Men make better political leaders than women do, % agreement

Source: WVS, 2010-2014
Are voters biased against female politicians?

Figure: Men make better political leaders than women do, % agreement
WVS does not ask opposite question
Are voters biased against female politicians? Evidence from Economics literature
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- Not much evidence of voters’ bias overall. Bagues and Campa (2019): parties that are “forced” by gender quota to increase their share of female candidates do not experience worse electoral performance
How about parties?
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Esteve-Volart and Bagues (2012) - Spanish parties tend to nominate female candidates to poorer positions on the ballot. Likely party bias, since female candidates attract more votes, and political competition improves quality of positions to which female candidates are assigned.
Why there are so few women in politics?

Overall, based on evidence from the field of Economics, women's lower propensity to run for political positions & parties bias women's under-representation in political institutions. Less evidence for role of voters' bias. Important to keep in mind that supply and demand factors likely feed each other.
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Does it matter?
Three arguments in favor of increased women’s representation in politics (see Bertrand 2019)

1. Equality
2. Efficiency/quality
3. Representativeness
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1. Equality
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Equality argument powerful enough if there is evidence of discrimination
The efficiency argument

Choosing political leaders from a larger pool of talented people makes it more likely that we select the best candidates for the relevant job.

Underlying assumption: talent equally distributed by gender
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What happens if we “oversample” men?
The efficiency argument: what is the evidence?

- Italy:
  * education - women more educated, they displace less educated men (Baltrunaite, Bello, Casarico and Profeta (2014))

- Sweden:
  * competence of male politicians; resignation of male mediocre leaders ("the crisis of the mediocre man") (Besley, Folke, Persson and Rickne, 2017)

- Spain, small municipalities:
  * education (Bagues and Campa, 2018)
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Introduction of gender quotas in local elections. What happens to the quality of politicians?

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(To the best of my knowledge) *no evidence from Western democracies that quota decreases quality.* Decrease in education in Indian villages (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004)
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Note: not obvious what is a good measure of “quality”
The representativeness argument

Are women's preferences adequately represented in male-dominated organizations?
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The representativeness argument: what is the evidence?

Women appear to have different preferences than men. In Spain, survey: women more likely than men to report that unemployment, pensions, education, the status of the health system, drugs, youth problems, violence against women, women's problems in general, and social issues are a main concern to them. Men are significantly more concerned about housing, immigration, work conditions, politics, corruption, the status of infrastructure, environmental degradation, the judiciary system and agriculture, hunting and fishing (Bagues and Campa, 2018).

In Switzerland, reported voting behavior in referenda: women show less support for increasing retirement age, nuclear energy, the military; more support for environmental protection, healthy lifestyle, equal rights for women, assistance to disabled (Funk and Gathmann, 2015).

In the USA, extension of suffrage to women: immediate increases in state government expenditures and revenue and more liberal voting patterns for federal representatives (Lott and Kenny, 1999).
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Do differences in preferences translate into different policy decisions?
2 types of studies:

- Gender quotas
- Woman wins against man by narrow margin
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Evidence is mixed
Gender and policy

India: seat reservation for female head of villages; women prioritize more on areas where female voters are more likely to bring complaints, e.g. drinking water infrastructure (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004)

India: women elected in the State Legislatures, policy changes; caste matters for type of change (Clots-Figueras, 2011)

India: women elected in the State Legislatures, higher education in corresponding districts, only in rural areas (Clots-Figueras, 2012)

India: women elected in the State Legislatures, more public health facilities, increase in antenatal care visits, institutional delivery, and breastfeeding (Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014)
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Spain: candidate gender quotas for municipal councillors, no significant changes in budget and socio-economic indicators (Bagues and Campa, 2018)
Rich evidence from India that gender of policy-makers matters
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Surprisingly little evidence from Western democracies.
Rich evidence from India that gender of policy-makers matters

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Women under-represented in politics. Issue in terms of equality, efficiency, and representativeness.
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What to do?
1. Act on the “supply-side”

Evidence of gender differences in behavioural traits. “Soft measures” might work - e.g. prime other aspects of political jobs, rather than its competitiveness. Role for “schools of politics”?
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Family-relational considerations: reforms probably should start from other labor markets - promote more egalitarian gender roles (paternity leaves? childcare? role models?)
2. “Stimulate demand”
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Quota or not Quota?
In spite of the progress that has been made in terms of female labor force participation and educational attainment, women are still largely underrepresented in political institutions. In the European Union, women account for only 27% of MPs and 12% of prime ministers. To address the scarcity of women in politics, ten EU countries have adopted gender quotas in recent years that regulate the composition of electoral lists. Furthermore, in thirteen other EU countries gender quotas have been adopted voluntarily by some of the main political parties.

Figure: Gender quotas in EU countries

Legislated quotas
Voluntary quotas
No quota

Source: Global Database of Quotas for Women, International IDEA, Inter-Parliamentary Union and Stockholm University. Available at www.quotaproject.org.
What do we know about quotas?

- They tend to increase women's representation in political office if they are properly designed (strategic positioning: “zipper” quota or double-preference system preferable).
- Effects above and beyond the quota mandate? Plausible given recent evidence of “gendered group dynamics”. Mixed evidence from different contexts (India, Italy, Spain, Sweden).
- Important to consider response from voters; it might amplify or diminish the quota impact. No evidence that voters respond to quota (Bagues and Campa, 2019; Besley et al., 2017).
- Policy changes hard to measure. Also not obvious what should be the size of the mandated increase in female representation to achieve policy change. Too little evidence from Western democracies to draw conclusions.
- No evidence that “quality” of politicians deteriorates. On the contrary!
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Quota or not Quota?
Why not. But..
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Important to understand what is the most efficient design, given context - marginal increases? big push? risk of tokenisms? critical mass?
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Candidate quotas unlikely to be “enough” to increase “substantial representation”. To be combined with other measures, which also consider the supply side of the “market” and role of parties.
Other potentially important factor: women seem to be more affected by negative feedback. What happens on social media?
Monitor developments, collect more data and information (technology can help).
Monitor developments, collect more data and information (technology can help).

Do not become easily satisfied with positive developments. Progress not always linear.
A lot of work still ahead of us...
A lot of work still ahead of us...
A lot of work still ahead of us...
A lot of work still ahead of us...
Thank you!

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