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# Gender Bias and Selection Bias in House Elections

| Published: October 2000

| Volume 105, pages 41–59, (2000) [Cite this article](#)[Public Choice](#)[Aims and scope](#) →[Submit manuscript](#) →[Jeffrey Milyo](#)<sup>1</sup> & [Samantha Schosberg](#)<sup>1</sup> **480** Accesses **69** Citations **2** Altmetric [Explore all metrics](#) →

## Abstract

We demonstrate that female incumbents are of higher average candidate quality than male incumbents. This quality difference is the result of barriers to entry faced by potential female candidates, although the observed effects of this quality differential on vote share are partially masked by the fact that female incumbents are also more likely to be opposed or to be opposed by high quality challengers. Using data from House elections for 1984–1992, we estimate that the gender-based differential in candidate quality yields an extra six percentage points of vote share for female incumbents.

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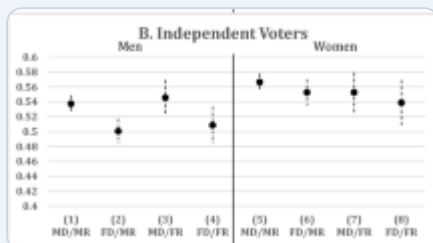
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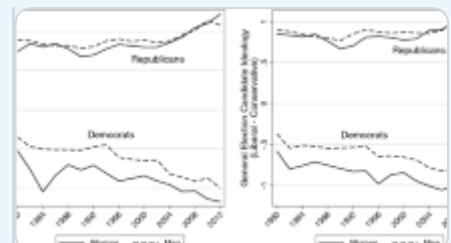
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Favorability rating among the public	70%	54%
Position on immigrants	Favors giving citizenship or guest worker status to undocumented immigrants	Opposes giving citizenship or guest worker status to undocumented immigrants
Party affiliation	Republican Party	Democratic Party
Position on abortion	Abortion is not a private matter (pro-life)	Abortion is a private matter (pro-choice)
Position on government deficit	Wants to reduce the deficit through tax increases	Wants to reduce the deficit through tax decreases
Salient personal characteristics	Really cares about people like you	Really cares about people like you
Position on national security	Wants to cut military budget and keep the U.S. out of war	Wants to maintain strong defenses and increase U.S. influence
Gender	Female	Female
Policy area of expertise	Education	Foreign policy
Family	Single (divorced)	Married (no child)

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## Author information

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### Authors and Affiliations

**Department of Economics, Tufts University, Medford, MA, 02155, U.S.A.**

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### Cite this article

Milyo, J., Schosberg, S. Gender Bias and Selection Bias in House Elections. *Public Choice* **105**, 41–59 (2000). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005198906982>

Issue date

October 2000

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005198906982>

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