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Gender Bias and Selection Bias in House Elections

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Abstract

We demonstrate that female incumbents areof higher average candidate quality than maleincumbents. This quality difference is the result ofbarriers to entry faced by potential femalecandidates, although the observed effects of thisquality differential on vote share are partiallymasked by the fact that female incumbents are alsomore likely to be opposed or to be opposed by highquality challengers. Using data from House electionsfor 1984–1992, we estimate that the gender-baseddifferential in candidate quality yields an extra sixpercentage points of vote share for femaleincumbents.

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