The Impact of the Candidate's Gender: Ecuador's 2014 Local Government Elections

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Abstract

In developing countries, women are underrepresented in elected positions. In Ecuador, although the Constitution of 2008 (Article 116) ratifies parity, alternation and sequentiality between men and women and vice versa in plurinominal lists, there is still an important gap between women candidates and women actually elected. Several studies have analyzed this phenomenon; however, many questions still remain unanswered. Using aggregated data from the 2014 parish councilors elections, we examine the interaction between candidates' votes and the candidates' gender. Results suggest that the deficit of female representation in parish councils is more likely the result of a gender penalty.

1. Introduction

"Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered sustainable development." (Beijing Platform for Action, excerpt from Mission Statement.)

The Fourth World Conference on Women that took place in Beijing in September 1995 was a highlight in the post-Rio sequence of UN-conferences. The objective of the Conference was to review the forward-looking strategies in respect of their world-wide implementation and to work out a Plan of Action for expediting their realization. The Platform for Action is the central document, a comprehensive catalogue of actions to be taken in order to eliminate world-wide discrimination against women. This document identified as one of twelve critical areas of concern Women in Power and Decision-making. For this concern, the platform recommends two strategies: First, "Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making" and second, "Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership." Both strategies are proposed to be addressed by "Governments, national bodies, the private sector, political parties, trade unions, employers' organizations, research and academic

institutions, sub-regional and regional bodies, and non-governmental and international organizations."

The questions that naturally raise are 1) Why is it important women participation in power structures and decision-making? And 2) Why is it important to place women in leadership positions? The evidence shows that female leaders typically have more compassion and a more open and inclusive negotiation style. Women generally share modern ideas of transformative leadership: empathy, inclusiveness and an open negotiation style. A meta-analysis of more than 160 studies of sex-related differences found that women use a more participative or democratic style and a less autocratic or directive style than men do (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). A study of leadership competencies reveal that women, on average, are more aware of their emotions, show more empathy, and are more adept interpersonally (Goleman, 1998). In Canada, Marika (2016), on the impact of women in public service, showed that women have had a clear impact on "policy, programs and operations such as in fisheries, the automotive industry, national security, natural resources, the environment, science, human resources and international relations." This impact arises not only from the inclusion of women's perspectives, but also from leadership styles that are open, collaborative and less hierarchical".

In developing nations, having women at the table impacts how policy resources are spent (Swers, 2002). Women's leadership also helps drive direct change in structural policies including parental leave, child care and pay (Haas, Allard, & Hwang, 2002).

But having more female leaders is also important because it changes the rules about who can lead and the qualities required in leadership roles (Oakley, 2000). Having women leaders is breaking down cultural and structural barriers. In other words, having women in leadership roles helps to improve leadership concepts and it makes evident women capabilities and what they can achieve.

1.1. Women on the political stage

The presence of female representation in countries' legislatures, and in ministerial positions is as important as it is in the corporate boardroom. Research findings show that women on the political stage makes a real difference. Women are more likely to act in a bipartisan manner and are more likely to bring to the policy table new ideas (Swers, 2002). Increasing the number of women in

parliaments can have a positive impact on government transparency and result in policy outcomes more inclusive of the whole population (Stockemer, 2011).

Women are starting to break through in politics and rise. Many initiatives have been implemented to increase the number of women elected and appointed at different levels of public decision-making. Although this number has increased, the goal stated in The Platform for Action of 30 % representation (considered a level of critical mass for women to have an impact) in Parliament have been reached only in 11 countries, according to the review reported in the 49th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in February-March 2005. That's why it is important to keep pushing forward. Fairness and equality are admirable goals in themselves. And women have consistently proven that they are able to benefit policy in important ways.

In several countries around the word women are taking to the center of the political stage. In electoral matters, 2016 was an important year for women across the world. In the United States, Hillary Clinton became the first woman to win a major party nomination for president. While she did not win the election, she did win the popular vote. In Britain, Theresa May became the second woman prime minister after Margaret Thatcher. She took office after David Cameron stepped down. In Australia's recent parliamentary elections, there was a large increase in new women being elected to the parliament. Taiwan elected its first female leader, while Samoa (located in one of the worst places for female political representation, the South Pacific) finally saw women elected into government. In Ecuador, the reform of the election law and the establishment of quotas had led to some 27% women's representation in local elections. Before the quotas, women's representation in the Congress was only 4%. While this is a positive sign, there is still a long way to go.

The extent of women's representation in elected office in any given country is determined by a several factors. Among other we can mention the general progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in public and private spheres, the choice of political and electoral systems, distribution of party resources among candidates, the gender penalty female candidates face as the result of discrimination on the part of voters (OSCE/ODIHR, 2014). Nonetheless, within this complex set of factors, gender penalty is a controversial one. In developed countries, a variety of research has found that women are as likely as men to win, and that voters decide based on a candidate's party (Dolan, 2014), not gender (Roper Center). That doesn't mean there isn't a gender penalty: It is difficult to quantify whether gender costs women vote because

giving a non-sexist answer to a pollster is easy enough. Actually, voting for a female candidate has proven to be a much bigger challenge. Additionally, the secret ballot does not allow to identify voting behavior by gender. In the developing world, female candidates have long faced more resistance, and received less support from men and women alike. People's attitudes toward female candidates are driven by a complex mix of conscious and subconscious sexism.

In Ecuador, the extent to which this gap in female representation is affected by a gender penalty female candidates face as the result of discrimination on the part of voters remains uncertain. In this paper, we estimate the gender penalty in Ecuador's Parish councilors elections using a simple linear regression (SLR) analysis. Using this SLR, we are able to assess whether candidate's sex affected the amount of votes a candidate can obtain.

2. Ecuador's electoral system and parity mechanisms: 2014 local government elections

Ecuador has universal, compulsory voting for citizens between the ages of 18 and 65. That means that all Ecuadorian citizens in that age range are required to vote, or face penalties. Civic participation is voluntary for those 16-18; those over age 65; the disabled; members of the National Police or military; Ecuadorians living abroad or those that cannot read or write.

Local elections were held in Ecuador on February 23, 2014. Twenty-three provincial prefects and vice-prefects (all provinces except the Gálapagos), 221 mayors in every municipality (canton), a total of 1,305 members of cantonal/municipal councils across the country and the 4,079 members of the parish councils in 412 urban and 816 rural parishes[1]. Prefects and mayors are directly elected on uninominal lists, while the members of cantonal and parish councils are elected on plurinominal lists. Prefects and mayors have been limited to two consecutive terms in office since the 2008 Constitution.

The prefects preside over an unelected provincial council made up of the prefect, vice-prefect and all mayors in the province. Prefects are responsible for spatial planning, roads, water management, nature protection and promotion of agriculture and the economy, these tasks are handled by mayors in urban areas. The mayor is the head of the canton and presides over the municipal council. They have similar powers to prefects, but they also have tax-raising powers.

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[1] Parishes are the lowest-level administrative divisions, below cantons.

In this paper, we will focus on parish councilors elections. The parishes councils are autonomous governing bodies ruled by public law, with political, administrative and financial autonomy. These are composed by five or seven members elected for a four-year term. Who wins the most votes is elected president and holds the dissenting vote. Councilors may put themselves forward for re-election. Between others, the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador establish as functions of the parish council the following:

- To approve the Parish development plan and the territorial planning.
- To approve the parish budget, which must be in accordance with the parish development plan.
- To authorize the contracting of loans to finance the execution of programs and projects.
- To Promote the sustainable development of the parish.
- To design policies that promote equity and inclusion and advance in the democratic management of parish action.

The local elections of February 2014 were the second electoral process carried out in Ecuador subject to the new Constitution of 2008 and under the norms of the Organic Law on Elections and Political Organizations of Ecuador, Code of Democracy (2009). The new Constitution introduced the principle of equality (Article 11). Under this principle all persons are equal and enjoy the same rights, duties and opportunities and no one can be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, gender identity, cultural identity, among other attributes. The Constitution and the Code of Democracy also observes the principles of parity and alternation in the formation of public authority.

2.1 Women as candidates

The new reform increases the quota requirement for candidates to 50%, with more stringent rules related to how the quota is implemented (alternating and sequential manner). However, female candidates represented only 42.3% of the total (Table 1), showing a 15.4% difference. This entry gap, definitely, affects women's opportunities to reach leadership positions in politics. The main reason for not having reached 50% of women candidates is the fact that although candidates' lists should take into account alternability and sequenciaity, political parties usually placed men at the beginning of the list.

Table 1: Candidates by dignity and gender

DIGNITARIES	WOMEN		MEN	
	#	%	#	%
Prefects	16	13.8%	100	86.2%
Vice-prefects	100	86.2%	16	13.8%
Mayors	147	12.2%	1054	87.8%
Urban municipal councilors	2608	45.4%	3137	54.6%
Rural municipal councilors	1055	42.8%	1410	57.2%
Parish councilors	8037	43.1%	10616	56.9%
TOTAL	11963	42.3%	16333	57.7%

Fuente: CNE, Elecciones 2014.
Elaborado por autores

2.2 Women elected to local authorities

The results are worrisome since only 25.7% of women were elected while 74.3% of dignities continue to be occupied by men. In other words, for each woman who was elected 3 men were elected. Moreover, if the percentage of women elected (25.7%) is compared, with the percentage of women candidates (42%), questions are raised about how to bring gender equality in politics.

Women's political representation in Ecuador still faces high barriers at the local level. The percentage of women in municipal councils is still low (32%). These barriers are illustrated with even greater clarity with respect to the gender distribution of mayoral posts, more than 85% of which are held by men (Table 2). The new Constitution has not been effective in diminishing the gender gap in politics.

Table 2: Women elected to local authorities by dignity

| DIGNITARIES	WOMEN		MEN	
	#	%	#	%
Prefects	2	8.7%	21	86.2%
Mayors	16	7.2%	205	87.8%
Urban municipal councilors	294	33.9%	573	54.6%
Rural municipal councilors	109	24.9%	329	57.2%
Parish councilors	1023	25.1%	3056	56.9%
TOTAL	1444	25.7%	4184	74.3%

Fuente: CNE, Elecciones 2014.
Elaborado por autores

2.3 Womes as voters

In the 2014 local elections, 50.1% of those eligible to vote were women (Figure 1). Data shows that there were 11,613,270 Ecuadorians eligible to vote, but 9,660,287 voted. That means that 16.8% didn't vote, while 83.2% did. Women have exceeded men in voter turnout, 84.6% voted compared to 81.65% of men.

Figure 1: Voting eligible population by gender
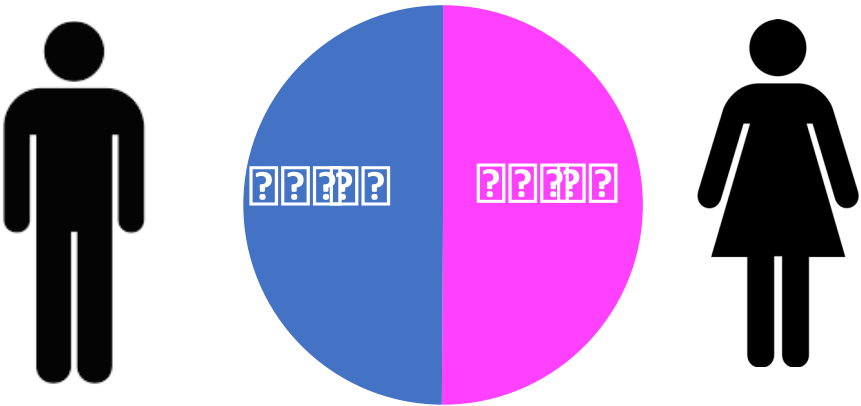
Fuente: CNE, Elecciones 2014.
Elaborado por autores

Table 3: Voter turnout

Gender	Voting Eligible Population Ballots		Voter Eligible Population That Didn't Vote		Voter Eligible Population Total
	#	%	#	%	#
Male	4,727,292	81.6%	1,064,796	18.4%	5,792,088
Female	4,932,995	84.7%	888,187	15.3%	5,821,182
TOTAL	9,660,287		1,952,983		**11,613,270**

Fuente: CNE, Elecciones 2014.
Elaborado por autores

Since voting is mandatory in Ecuador, there are ways to protest. Ecuadorians can "annul" their vote by writing in something in the ballot or casting a vote for two or more candidates. Or they can submit a blank ballot. But by law they must at least show up and cast a vote. Women annul their vote more than men (52.8% vs 47.2%). This may be a sign that women's vote is becoming more critical than ever (Alves & Eustaquio, 2012). On the other hand, women and men have an equal percentage of blank ballot (50%), nationally. This is an indication that the gender variable does not seem to affect this option. Blank ballot is thought to be motivated by indecision or ignorance (Ghirardato & Katz, 2002).

3. Methodology

Regression analysis is the most widely used statistical tool for understanding relationships among variables. It provides a conceptually simple method for investigating functional relationships between one or more factors and an outcome of interest. The relationship is expressed in the form of an equation or a model connecting the response or dependent variable and one or more explanatory or predictor variable

In this paper, we will perform simple linear regression[2] of the candidate's votes against candidate' sex, which is a binary categorical variable. In our data set, initially, candidate's sex was coded Male=1 and Female=2. However, before we begin our linear regression, we need to recode the values of Male and Female. This job need to be done because the codes 1 and 2 are assigned

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[2] The most basic type of regression is that of simple linear regression. A simple linear regression uses only one independent variable, and it describes the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable as a straight line.

to each gender simply to represent which distinct place each category occupies in the variable sex. However, linear regression assumes that the numerical amounts in all independent, or explanatory, variables are meaningful data points. So, if we were to enter the variable sex into a linear regression model, the coded values of the two gender categories would be interpreted as the numerical values of each category. This would provide us with results that would not make sense, because for example, the sex Female does not have a value of 2. We can avoid this error in analysis by creating dummy variables.

A dummy variable is a variable created to assign numerical value to levels of categorical variables. Each dummy variable represents one category of the explanatory variable and is coded with 1 if the case falls in that category and with 0 if not. For example, in the dummy variable for Female, all cases in which the respondent is female are coded as 1 and all other cases, in which the respondent is Male, are coded as 0. This allows us to enter in the sex values as numerical. Because our sex variable only has two categories, turning it into a dummy variable is as simple as recoding the values of Male and Female in sex from 1=Male and 2=Female to 0=Male and 1=Female.

Now, we can work out the effect of candidate's sex on candidates' votes. We start by writing out the fitted regression equation for this model and use it to predict values of candidate's votes (Y) for given certain values of the candidate's sex variable (X).

$$\hat{Y}_i = b_0 + b_1 X_i$$

Knowing that X is a dummy variable, we can get the following:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i = \frac{1}{n} (n_1) = \frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1}$$

$$\bar{x}^2 = \left(\frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1} \right)^2$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i^2 = n_1$$

$$\bar{x}\bar{y} = \frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1} \left(\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i \right)$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i y_i = \sum_{i=1}^{n_1} (1) y_i + \sum_{i=1}^{n_0} (0) y_i = \sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i$$

Using the above information, we can substitute for components of OLS estimation and by simplifying we get:

$$\hat{\beta}^{OLS} = \frac{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})y_i}{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})^2} = \frac{\sum x_i y_i - \sum \bar{x} y_i}{\sum x_i^2 + \sum \bar{x}^2 - 2\sum x_i \bar{x}} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i - \frac{n_1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i}{n_1 + (n)\left(\frac{n_1}{n}\right)^2 - 2\left(\frac{n_1}{n}\right)n_1} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i - n_1 \bar{y}}{n_1 - \frac{n_1^2}{n_0 + n_1}}$$

$$= \frac{\frac{1}{n_0 + n_1}\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i - \frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1}\bar{y}}{\frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1} - \left(\frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1}\right)^2} = \frac{\frac{1}{n_0 + n_1}\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i - \frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1}\left(\frac{1}{n_0 + n_1}\sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i\right)}{\frac{n_1 n_0 + n_1^2 - n_1^2}{(n_0 + n_1)^2}}$$

$$= \frac{\left(\frac{1}{n_0 + n_1}\right)\left[\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i - \frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1}\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n_0} y_i + \sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i\right)\right]}{\frac{n_1 n_0}{(n_0 + n_1)^2}}$$

$$= \frac{\left(1 - \frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1}\right)\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i - \frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1}\sum_{i=1}^{n_0} y_i}{\frac{n_1 n_0}{n_0 + n_1}} = \frac{\frac{n_0}{n_0 + n_1}\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i - \frac{n_1}{n_0 + n_1}\sum_{i=1}^{n_0} y_i}{\frac{n_1 n_0}{n_0 + n_1}}$$

$$= \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} y_i}{n_1} - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_0} y_i}{n_0} = \bar{y}_1 - \bar{y}_0$$

Hence, we conclude that the β_1 coefficient is equal to the means difference between women and men votes.

4. Data

Data containing information about parish councilors elections in 2014 was provided by the Electoral Body of Ecuador. This data set contain information about candidate name, age, gender, ballot gender, province, city, canton, parish, election year, vote share and vote totals. In Ecuador's 2014 local government elections, 43.01% of candidates to parish councilors were women. However, only the 25.55% of them were elected to office. Detailed information by province can be seen in table 4 and 5.

Table 4: Percentage of women candidates on parish councilors elections

Provincia	Candidatos Hombres	Candidatas Mujeres	% de participación de Mujeres
Azuay	1,262	938	42.64%
Bolivar	546	414	43.13%
Cañar	760	560	42.42%
Carchi	448	332	42.56%
Cotopaxi	1,056	764	41.98%
Chimborazo	1076	784	42.15%
El Oro	1,220	970	44.29%
Esmeraldas	1800	1410	43.93%
Guayas	1,078	892	45.28%
Imbabura	764	576	42.99%
Loja	1,782	1,348	43.07%
Los Ríos	542	448	45.25%
Manabi	1,678	1,262	42.93%
Morona Santiago	872	628	41.87%
Napo	482	358	42.62%
Pastaza	452	348	43.50%
Pichincha	1,476	1,150	43.79%
Tungurahua	1330	970	42.17%
Zamora Chinchipe	598	432	41.94%
Galápagos	70	50	41.67%
Sucumbíos	756	554	42.29%
Orellana	636	454	41.65%
Sto Domingo de los Tsachilas	276	204	42.50%
Santa Elena	272	228	45.60%
PROMEDIO			**43.01%**

Fuente: CNE, Elecciones 2014.
Elaborado por autores

Table 5: Percentage of women elected as parish councilors

Provincia	Hombres Electos	Mujeres Electas	% de mujeres electas
Azuay	454	156	25.57%
Bolivar	160	30	15.79%
Cañar	194	66	25.38%
Carchi	194	66	25.38%
Cotopaxi	274	56	16.97%
Chimborazo	330	120	26.67%
El Oro	352	138	28.16%
Esmeraldas	408	162	28.42%
Guayas	190	100	34.48%
Imbabura	258	102	28.33%
Loja	600	180	23.08%
Los Ríos	104	66	38.82%
Manabi	384	146	27.55%
Morona Santiago	374	86	18.70%
Napo	146	54	27.00%
Pastaza	126	44	25.88%
Pichincha	390	148	27.51%
Tungurahua	366	74	16.82%
Zamora Chinchipe	218	62	22.14%
Galápagos	34	16	32.00%
Sucumbíos	200	70	25.93%
Orellana	222	58	20.71%
Sto Domingo de los Tsachilas	78	22	22.00%
Santa Elena	56	24	30.00%
PROMEDIO			**25.55%**

5. Results

Regression coefficients represent the mean change in the response variable for one unit of change in the predictor variable. Since our predictor variable is a dummy variable, the coefficient represents the vote difference between women and men. First, we conduct our estimation using all the observations without any distinction of voter's gender.

Table 6: Regression results without voters' gender distinction

Source	SS	df	MS		
Model	1392864.05	1	1392864.05	Number of obs =	37306
Residual	1.0234e+10	37304	274332.419	F(1, 37304) =	5.08
				Prob > F =	0.0242
				R-squared =	0.0001
				Adj R-squared =	0.0001
Total	1.0235e+10	37305	274362.403	Root MSE =	523.77

VOTOS_CAND~O	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
SEX_CAND	−12.33918	5.476089	−2.25	0.024	−23.07246	−1.605894
_cons	192.6148	3.594538	53.59	0.000	185.5694	199.6602

By pooling station[3], on average, female candidates receive 12 less votes that than male candidates. This coefficient is significant at the 5% level. The R^2 statistic very low at 0.0001. This shows that only 0.01% of the variation in candidates' votes is explained by candidates' gender (0.003 x 100 to give us a percentage). This suggests that there are many other factors that might be affecting a candidates' votes. This comes as no surprise since several factors, such as candidates' characteristics and geographical-areas socioeconomic characteristics, are not being considered in this model.

Table 7: Regression results – men pooling stations

Source	SS	df	MS		
Model	1190545.6	1	1190545.6	Number of obs =	18653
Residual	4.6061e+09	18651	246960.85	F(1, 18651) =	4.82
				Prob > F =	0.0281
				R-squared =	0.0003
				Adj R-squared =	0.0002
Total	4.6073e+09	18652	247011.438	Root MSE =	496.95

VOTOS_CAND~O	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
SEX_CAND	−16.13318	7.347861	−2.20	0.028	−30.53566	−1.730699
_cons	192.0247	4.823181	39.81	0.000	182.5708	201.4786

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[3] Each pooling station had 300 registered voters

When analyzing men pooling stations we observe that, on average, women receive 16 less votes than men (Table 7). While these findings should be viewed with caution, given the small R2, the result demonstrates that men are less willing to vote for female candidates than for male candidates. In other words, the gender of the candidate did create a gender penalty.

Table 8: Regression results – women pooling stations

Source	SS	df	MS		
Model	334001.697	1	334001.697		
Residual	5.6273e+09	18651	301716.445		
Total	5.6276e+09	18652	301718.176		

	Number of obs	=	18653
	F(1, 18651)	=	1.11
	Prob > F	=	0.2927
	R-squared	=	0.0001
	Adj R-squared	=	0.0000
	Root MSE	=	549.29

VOTOS_CAND~O	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
SEX_CAND	-8.545181	8.12169	-1.05	0.293	-24.46443	7.374072
_cons	193.2049	5.331127	36.24	0.000	182.7554	203.6544

We seek to understand whether women voters give an extra edge to a woman candidate because she is a woman, and if so, how large is this edge. In other words, among women, what is the significance of candidates' gender as a predictor of candidates' votes? Our data shows us that, on average, then there is no statistically significant difference between males and females (Table 8). As in all hypothesis tests, if the p-value is less than 0.05, then the variable is significant at the 5% level. That is, we would have evidence to reject the null and conclude that β is different from zero. In this case, t = -1.05 with a corresponding p-value of 0.293[4]. This means that the chances of the difference between males and females that we have calculated is actually happening due to chance is very large indeed. Therefore, we have no evidence to reject the null and conclude that candidates' gender is not a significant predictor of candidates' votes.

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[4] Stata calculates a t statistic and a corresponding p-value for each of the coefficients in the model. These can be seen in the coefficients output table. A t statistic is a measure of how likely it is that the coefficient is not equal to zero. It is calculated by dividing the coefficient by the standard error. If the standard error is small relative to the coefficient (making the t statistic relatively large), the coefficient is likely to differ from zero in the population.

Conclusions

Without a doubt, the new Constitution represents a golden opportunity for women to get involved in politics and to influence the destiny of their communities. Whether or not this will be a law that truly leads to greater female empowerment in politics will depend in large part on how women candidates appeal to the female and male electorate more effectively. Male voters, in particular, need to think about their potential biases against women candidates.

We find that on average men vote less often for female candidates than women do. These findings should be viewed with caution, since our model excludes several variables that might impact candidates' votes.

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