Exploring women and men attitudes towards the descriptive and substantive representation of their own sex

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ABSTRACT

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Women are underrepresented in politics in most democracies worldwide. There is a substantial literature on the desired, anticipated and actual consequencies of the recent increase in the political representation of women. However, there is little understanding of public attitudes towards female descriptive and substantive representation. Using data from the 87.4 Eurobarometer, combined with country-level characteristics, this paper analyses women and men attitudes towards the political representation of women in the 28 European Union democracies. Our goals are twofold: first, we will determine sex differences in attitudes towards the descriptive representation of women. Second, we will examine women and men differences in attitudes towards the substantive representation of their own sex. Our expectation is that sex differences are conditional upon political ideology and other relevant factors at the individual and country levels, such as the electoral system..

PRESENTATION

1. **Introduction**

2. **Citizens attitudes toward the representation of women**

3. **Hypotheses**

4. **Data, variables and analyses**

5. **Results**

Several mechanisms may provide a linkage between gender quotas and attitudes towards the descriptive representation of women (Fernández y Valiente, 2021):

➡ **Direct mechanism**

➡ **Informational mechanism**

➡ **Normative mechanism**

Several mechanisms may provide a linkage between gender quotas and citizens´befiefs about women´s substantive representation (Franceschet and Piscopo ,2008):

➡ **The "mandate" effect**

➡ **The "label" effect"**

HYPOTHESES on Women´s Descriptive Representation

H1: Women are more likely than men to support more female representation in politics.

H2: Legislated gender quotas will enhance citizens´ support for more female representation in politics.

HYPOTHESES on Women´s Substantive Representation

H3: Women are more likely than men to think that a female political representative can represent their own interests.

H4a: Gender quotas will enhance citizens´ perception that a female political representative can represent their interests. H4b: Gender quotas will diminish citizens´ perception that a female political representative can represent their interests.

DATA

- To test our hypotheses on citizens´ attitudes towards the representation of women in politics, we used two datasets. First, the 87.4 Eurobarometer (2017) provides information about citizens´ attitudes toward the representation of women in politics in the 28 EU countries. Second, we elaborated a dataset on some relevant country-level variables (economic and political). We then combined the datasets.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE (Descriptive representation)

`There should be more women in politics´ (1).
'The current number of women is about right' or 'There should be fewer women' (0).

DEPENDENT VARIABLE (Substantive representation)

A female representative can represent my interests (1).

A female representative cannot represent them (0).

We ran a series of logistic regression models with one-way clustered standard errors by country

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

GENDER	Female (1) and male (0)
AGE	In decades and its quadratic term
EDUCATION	Up to 15 years; 16-19 years; 20 years and older
SOCIAL CLASS	Lower, middle, upper.
IDEOLOGY	Placement on the left-right (1-10-point) scale
POLITICAL INTEREST	Index: 1(not at all)- 4 (strong)
GENDER STEREOTYPES	Index: 1 (low)- high (4)
GENDER QUOTAS	With legislative quotas (1) and no quotas (0)
WOMEN	In national parliament and government
GPD per capita	Logged GDP per capita

Table1. Logistic regression analyses with (one-way) clustered standard errors. Citizens´ attitudes towards the descriptive and substantive representation of women in politics in the 28 EU countries

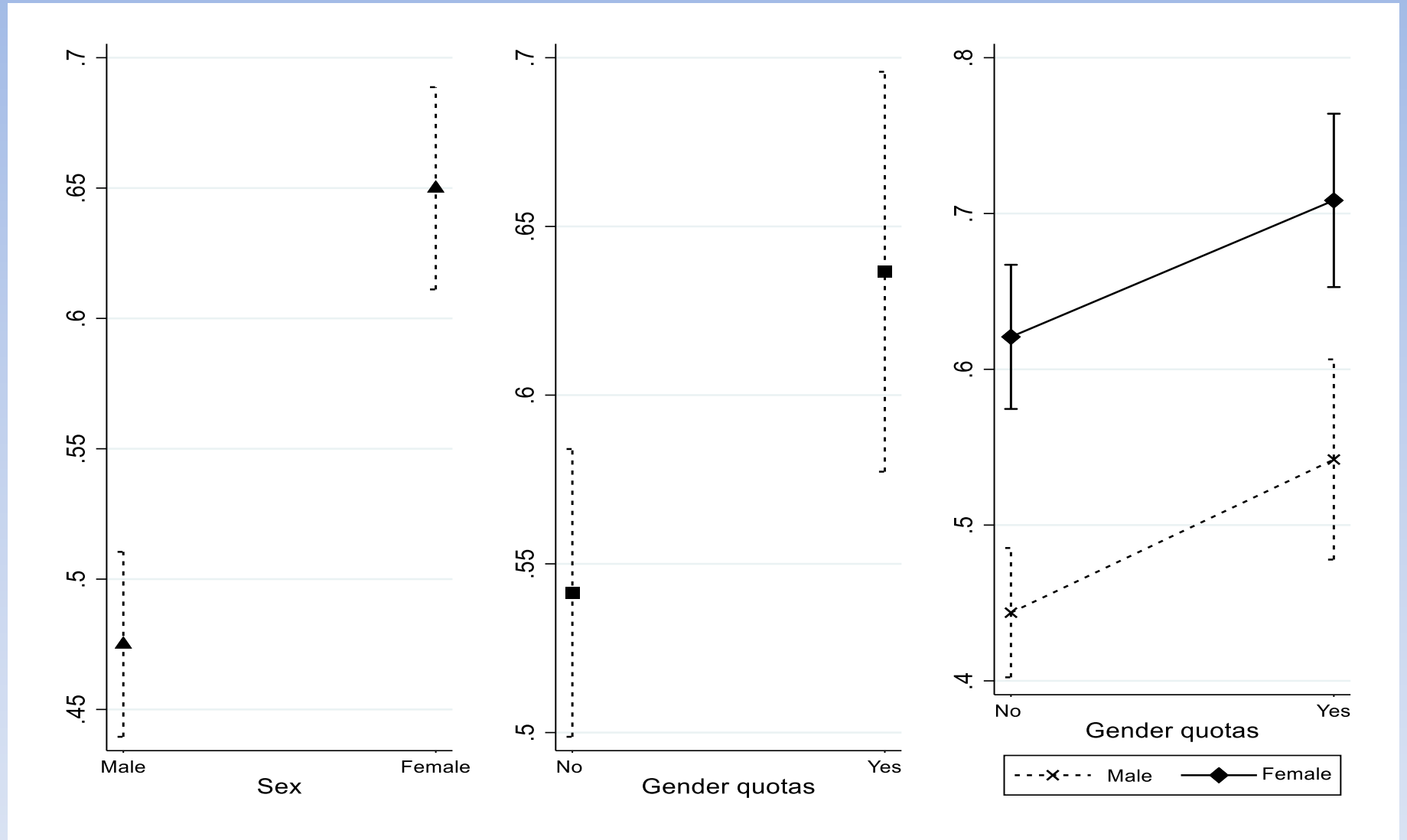|	Descriptive representation		Substative	
	Model (1)	Model (2)	Model (3)	Model (4)
Female	0.719***[0.068]	0.701***[0.087]	0.663***[0.073]	0.662***[0.10
Age	0.029***[0.006]	0.029***[0.006]	0.001[0.008]	0.001[0.008]
Age^2	–0.000***[0.000]	–0.000***[0.000]	0.000[0.000]	0.000 [0.000]
Education	0.076[0.053]	0.076[0.053]	0.336***[0.068]	0.336***[0.06
Social class	–0.100*[0.053]	–0.100*[0.053]	–0.015[0.071]	–0.015[0.070]
Left-Right placement	–0.156***[0.032]	–0.156***[0.032]	–0.002[0.036]	–0.002[0.036]
Political interest index	0.060**[0.026]	0.060**[0.025]	0.062[0.045]	0.062[0.045]
Gender stereotypes index	–0.483***[0.04	–0.483***[0.044]	–0.280***[0.068]	–0.280***[0.0(
Gender quotas	0.395**[0.156]	0.366**[0.146]	–0.251[0.251]	–0.252[0.260]
Women in national parliament	0.060[0.054]	0.060[0.054]	0.108[0.076]	0.108[0.076]
Women in national parliament^2	–0.001[0.001]	–0.001[0.001]	–0.001[0.001]	–0.001[0.001]
Women in national government	–0.071***[0.020]	–0.071***[0.020]	–0.023[0.031]	–0.023[0.031]
Women in national government^2	0.001***[0.000]	0.001***[0.000]	0.000[0.001]	0.000[0.001]
GDP per capita	0.304[0.186]	0.304[0.186]	–0.056[0.247]	–0.056[0.247]
Sex*gender quotas		0.056[0.134]		0.002[0.139]
Constant	–2.258[1.596]	–2.243[1.587]	0.803[2.448]	0.803[2.443]
Pseudo R^2	0.074***	0.074***		0.218
Respondents	19,328	346,315	19,857	346,315
Countries	48	48	48	48

Note: regression coefficients and robust standard errors (in brackets) are shown. ***Significant at >P-value <0.01; ** Significant at P-value <0.05; *Significant at P-value <0.10. Source: own elaboration based on data from the 87.4 Eurobarometer (2017).

RESULTS

H1: We found that women are more likely than men to support more female representation in politics.

H2: We found that legislated gender quotas will enhance citizens´ support for more female representation in politics.

Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of respondents´ sex and legislated gender quotas on citizens´ support for more representation of women in politics
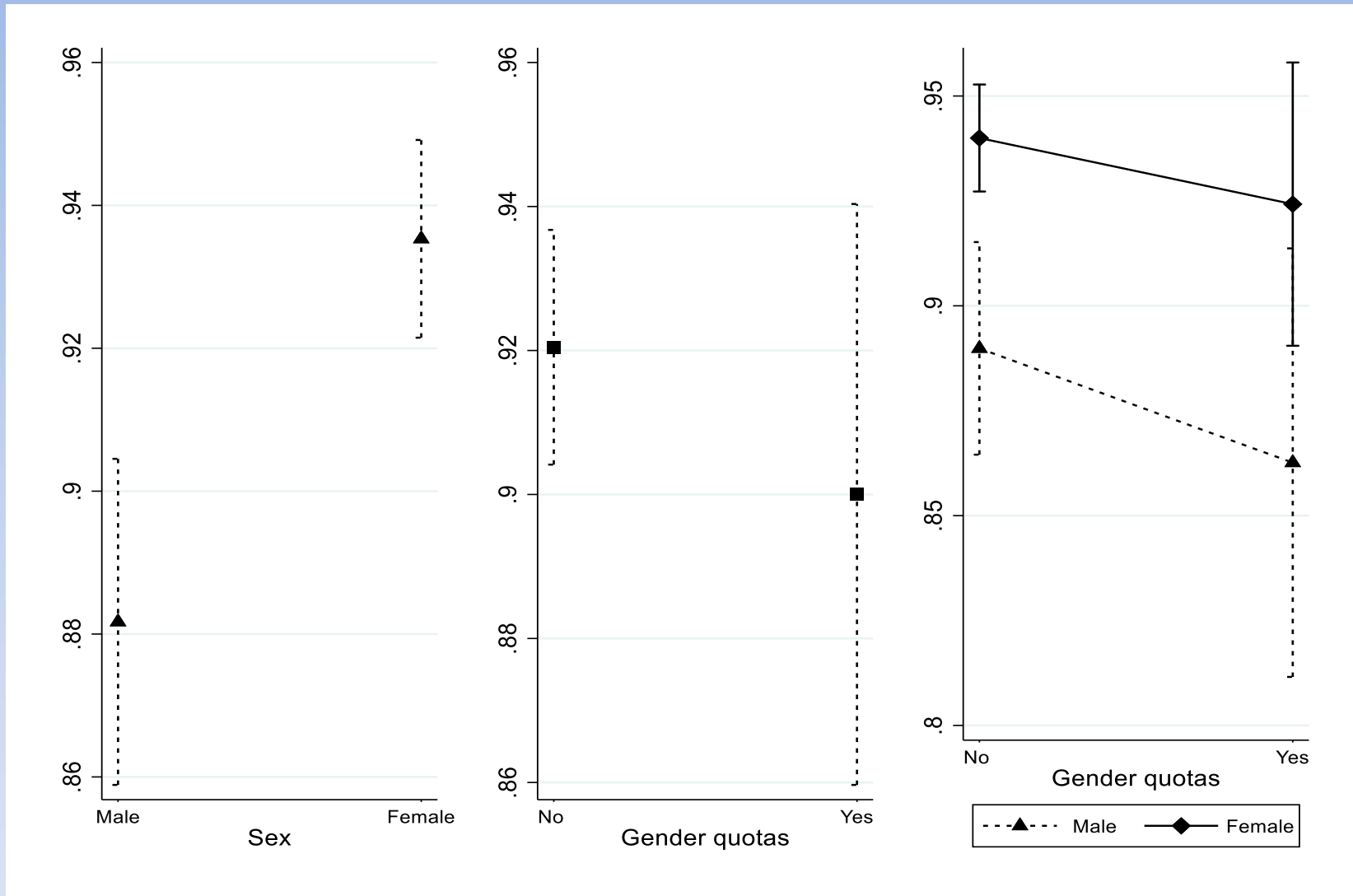

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the 87.4 Eurobarometer.

RESULTS

H3: We found that women are more likely than men to think that a female political representative can represent their own interests.

H4: We found that Citizens in countries with no gender quotas are more likely to consider that women can represent their interests than their counterparts in countries with legislative gender quotas, but the main effect of gender quotas is not significant.

Figure 2. Predicted probabilities of respondents´ sex and legislated gender quotas on citizens´ beliefs that women can represent their interests in politics

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the 87.4 Eurobarometer.