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Assessing the effectiveness of gender quotas in open-list proportional representation electoral systems

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Abstract:

Objective. Gender quota laws are an increasingly popular method of addressing the legislative underrepresentation of women. It is unclear, however, if quotas will result in a notable increase in the percentage of women elected in countries that employ open-list proportional representation. Methods. We analyze Chilean municipal election data to explore the effect of the percentage of women candidates on the percentage of women elected. Results. While the percentage of women candidates has a robust overall effect on the percentage of women elected, there is a diminishing rate of return as the percentage of women candidates increases. Conclusions. The adoption of quotas in open-list proportional representation systems will not have as positive an effect on the percentage of women elected as has been the case in many closed-list proportional representation systems. Furthermore, larger quotas (e.g., 40% instead of 25%) are unlikely to be significantly more effective, suggesting that advocates should opt for smaller quotas, which will meet less legislative resistance.

KeyWords Plus:

WOMENS REPRESENTATION, ELECTION, NORWAY

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