Macroegalitarianism: Gender Equality, Public Opinion, and Dynamic Democracy in Comparative Perspective

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Table of contents

Preface **1**

1. Introduction **3**
1.1. A Scholarship Limited by the Available Data 8
1.2. Advantages of This Research 14
1.3. Plan of the Book 18

2. Dynamic Democracy and Gender Equality **21**
2.1. Democratic Representation: From Public Opinion to Politics and Policy 23
2.1.1. Democratic Representation of Gender Egalitarian Public Opinion 27
2.2. Public Responsiveness: From Politics and Policy to Public Opinion 30
2.2.1. Public Responsiveness to Women in Office and Policies Advancing Gender Equality 34
2.3. The Scope of These Theories 36

3. Macroegalitarianism Around the World **41**
3.1. Source Data on Public Gender Egalitarianism 42
3.2. A Model of Public Gender Egalitarianism 46
3.3. Validation of the PGE Dataset 48
3.4. Public Gender Egalitarianism Around the World 54
3.4.1. Europe 57
3.4.2. Latin America and the Caribbean 60
3.4.3. East Asia and the Pacific 64

3.4.4. The Middle East and North Africa 66
3.4.5. Sub-Saharan Africa 69
3.4.6. Central Asia 73
3.4.7. South Asia 75
3.4.8. North America 78
3.5. Conclusions 79

4. Dynamic Democracy and Women's Election to Office 81
4.1. Macroegalitarianism and Women's Officeholding in National Legislatures 88
4.1.1. A Further Test: Democratic Representation Within Parties 101
4.2. Public Responsiveness to Women's Officeholding 109
4.3. Conclusions 113

5. Dynamic Democracy and Policy Adoption 115
5.1. Policies Advancing Gender Equality in Politics 115
5.1.1. Democratic Representation in National Gender Quota Adoption 117
5.1.2. Public Responsiveness to National Gender Quota Adoption 125
5.2. Policies Advancing Gender Equality in the Workplace . . . 129
5.2.1. Democratic Representation in Policies Advancing Workplace Gender Equality 134
5.2.2. Public Responsiveness to Policies Advancing Workplace Gender Equality 138
5.2.3. A Further Test: Childcare Provision 140
5.3. Conclusions 149

6. Macroegalitarianism and Women as Chief Executives: The Case of South Korea 151
6.1. The Election of Park Geun-hye and Korean Public Opinion 153
6.1.1. Women Chief Executives and Public Opinion 158

6.2. Park's Presidency and Korean Public Opinion 163
6.2.1. Executive Failure, Public Approval, and Macroegalitarianism 166
6.3. Korean Exceptionalism? 173

7. Conclusions **177**
7.1. Implications for the Study of Public Opinion 179
7.2. Implications for the Study of the Politics of Gender 182
7.3. Implications for Activism and Policymaking 183
7.4. Implications for Democracy 185

Appendices **187**

A. Appendices **187**
A.1. Appendix A: Sample of Published Articles on Public Opinion Toward Gender Equality 188
A.2. Appendix B: Survey Items Used to Estimate Public Gender Egalitarianism 193
A.3. Appendix C: Source Data Observations by Country and Year 199
A.4. Appendix D: Polarization in Korean Public Opinion by Demographic Group 200

References **205**

List of Figures

1.1. Countries and Mean Years Observed in Survey Datasets . . 9
1.2. Countries and Mean Years Observed in Prominent Research 10
1.3. Count of Prominent Articles Including Each Country by Region 13

2.1. Dynamic Democracy and Gender Equality 22
2.2. The Cases Examined in This Book: The OECD 39

3.1. Countries and Years with the Most Observations in the PGE Source Data 45
3.2. Pairwise Correlations Among PGE Index and Separate Political and Workplace Egalitarianism Indices 49
3.3. Convergent Validation: Correlations Between PGE Scores and Individual PGE Source Data Survey Items 50
3.4. Construct Validation: Correlations Between PGE Scores and Individual 'Balancing' Gender Egalitarianism Survey Items 51
3.5. Construct Validation: Correlations Between PGE Scores and Indicators of Workplace Gender Equality 53
3.6. PGE Scores Around the World 54
3.7. PGE Scores, Most Recent Available Year 55
3.8. PGE Scores Across Europe, Most Recent Available Year . . 58
3.9. PGE Scores in Europe Over Time 59
3.10. PGE Scores Across Latin America and the Caribbean, Most Recent Available Year 61
3.11. PGE Scores in Latin America and the Caribbean Over Time 62

3.12. PGE Scores in East Asia and the Pacific Over Time 65
3.13. PGE Scores Across the Middle East and North Africa, Most Recent Available Year 66
3.14. PGE Scores in the Middle East and North Africa Over Time 67
3.15. PGE Scores Across Sub-Saharan Africa, Most Recent Available Year 70
3.16. PGE Scores in Sub-Saharan Africa Over Time 71
3.17. PGE Scores Across Central Asia, Most Recent Available Year 73
3.18. PGE Scores in Central Asia Over Time 74
3.19. PGE Scores Across South Asia, Most Recent Available Year 76
3.20. PGE Scores Across North America, Most Recent Available Year 78

4.1. Women's Officeholding in the OECD 83
4.2. Observed Democratic Elections in the OECD 85
4.3. Macroegalitarianism and Women's Share of Legislative Seats in OECD Democracies 87
4.4. Adoption and Reform of National Legislative Gender Quotas in OECD Democracies 90
4.5. The Feminist Movement Index in the OECD 92
4.6. Predicting Women's Officeholding in OECD Democratic Elections 97
4.7. Party-Election Observations in OECD Democracies 102
4.8. Macroegalitarianism and Women's Share of Party Legislative Seats in OECD Democracies 104
4.9. Predicting Women's Share of Parties' Legislative Seats in OECD Democracies 107
4.10. Predicting Women's Parliamentary Representation in OECD Democratic Elections 112

5.1. National Legislative Gender Quotas in the OECD 116
5.2. Macroegalitarianism and National Quotas in the OECD . . 118
5.3. Predicting National Quotas in the OECD 122

5.4. Predicting National Quota Adoption and Macroegalitarianism in OECD Countries 126
5.5. The WBL Policy Index in the OECD 133
5.6. Macroegalitarianism and Policies Advancing Gender Equality in Employment in the OECD 135
5.7. Predicting the WBL Policy Index in OECD Countries . . . 137
5.8. Predicting the WBL Policy Index and Macroegalitarianism in OECD Countries 139
5.9. Enrollment in Early Childhood Education and Care, Ages 0-2, in the OECD 143
5.10. Macroegalitarianism and Enrollment in Early Childhood Education and Care, Ages 0-2, in OECD Countries 144
5.11. Predicting Enrollment in Early Childhood Education and Care, Ages 0-2, in OECD Countries 146
5.12. Predicting Enrollment in Early Childhood Education and Care, Ages 0-2, and Macroegalitarianism in OECD Countries 148

6.1. PGE Scores in Korea During the Park Administration . . . 155
6.2. Trends in Mean Responses to Survey Items on Gender Equality in Korea 156
6.3. Trends in Macroegalitarianism in OECD Countries That Have Had Women Leaders 159
6.4. Trends in Mean Survey Responses on Gender Equality in Politics in OECD Countries That Have Had Women Chief Executives 161
6.5. Korean Presidential Approval During the Park Administration 168
6.6. Executive Approval of Women Leaders in OECD Countries 169
6.7. Macroegalitarianism and Executive Approval by Term for Women Chief Executives 172
6.8. Macroegalitarianism at the Start of Women Chief Executives' Terms in OECD Countries 175

A1. Source Data Observations by Country and Year 199

A2. Trends in Mean Responses to Survey Items on Gender Equality in Politics by Demographic Groups in Korea . . . 201
A3. Trends in Mean Responses to Survey Items on Gender Equality in the Workplace by Demographic Groups in Korea 202

List of Tables

5.1. WBL Policy Index 130

7.1. Summary of Evidence 178

A2. Survey Items Used to Estimate Public Gender Egalitarianism Scores 193

Preface

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1. Introduction

South Korea's 2022 election was the most closely fought presidential race in the country's history. The winner was the candidate of the People Power Party, Yoon Suk-yeol. Yoon had served as the chief of the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office, responsible for overseeing the indictment and prosecution of the first woman to be elected president of Korea, Park Geun-hye, who had been impeached and removed from office after months of protests. Her conviction led Yoon to be named Prosecutor General, a post in which he clashed repeatedly with the country's Minister of Justice, Choo Mi-ae, the second woman to serve in that capacity and the first woman to lead the Democratic Party, the People Power Party's principal rival.

Capitalizing on the notoriety he had gained through his high profile confrontations with powerful women, Yoon made his opposition to policies advancing gender equality central to his campaign, repeatedly denouncing—and pledging to shutter—Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. After initially taking a similar line, the Democratic Party's candidate, Lee Jae-myung, pivoted to championing women's rights, and he ostentatiously celebrated International Women's Day on the eve of the election. Lee's moves were seen as nakedly tactical, but feminist voters rallied to his side nonetheless, turning the election into a referendum on gender equality. The ultimate result was regarded as driven by men who, in reaction to their failures to attract the Korean women who had been making gains in the workplace and in politics, described themselves as involuntarily celibate, that is, as "incels." These men—and, it was believed, most of their mothers—were determined to see the reversal of the country's

halting progress towards gender equality and voted specifically on those grounds.

Yoon's victory raises two questions that go far beyond the Korean case. One has to do with democratic representation. It asks whether parties run greater numbers of successful women candidates and democratic governments adopt more policies that advance gender equality when public opinion favors more gender equality—and, like Yoon's People Power Party, pledge the opposite when public opinion favors less. There is a great deal of theory and empirical research on the politics of gender to suggest that they do. Collective attitudes toward the appropriate roles of women and men in society—whether labeled culture, norms, ideology, or public opinion—constitute one of the primary explanations for the extent of women's inclusion in the traditionally masculine public sphere of the workforce, political power, and policy influence (see, e.g., Paxton, Hughes, and Barnes 2021, 113–14). Still, there are good reasons for doubt. Parties are well understood to be gatekeepers between aspiring women candidates and political power (see, e.g., Caul 1999), and the party elites who control access to viable candidacies appear to frequently underestimate the public's desire to vote for women (see, e.g., Norris and Lovenduski 1995). And the multidimensionality of politics raises the possibility that even parties ostensibly favoring gender equality may nevertheless put measures promoting it behind other issues; the greater power of men relative to women to set the agenda within party organizations only makes this possibility more likely (see, e.g., Htun and Weldon 2012, 553).

Public opinion research, too, is often skeptical of whether democratic representation occurs. Some works contend that it happens only very slowly, on the scale of decades (see, e.g., Caughey and Warshaw 2022). Political institutions including presidentialism, bicameral legislatures, and even, in some circumstances, coalition governments empower political minorities to block the enactment of policies favored by public opinion (see, e.g., Powell 2000; Tsebelis 2002). There is considerable evidence, as well, that it is the preferences of the rich, rather than those of the public as a whole,

that most consistently influence policymakers (see, e.g., Bartels 2008 for the case of the United States; Persson and Sundell 2024 across Europe).

The other question raised by Korea's "incel election" has to do with public responsiveness, whether steps toward—or away from—equality for historically marginalized groups provoke public opinion to move in the opposite direction. Some observers see events like these as episodes of a recurring backlash in the public against women in the public sphere and policy efforts to promote gender equality there. The foundational book, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, argues that shifts in mass attitudes against gender equality in the United States "have always been triggered by the perception …that women are making great strides" (Faludi 1991, xix). Shiran (2024) describes how "moral panics" against women in politics spread after the adoption of gender quotas, the most effective policy for quickly shifting politics in a gender egalitarian direction. Showing perhaps the opposite side of the coin, Wlezien and Goggin (1993) documents how support for women's reproductive rights increased in the United States during the 1980s as successive court opinions and state laws worked to restrict access to abortion.

A prominent line of research suggests that public opinion backlash may in fact be a general phenomenon. The influential theory of thermostatic public opinion contends that policy change triggers the public to revise attitudes in the opposite direction—that as the government provides more of anything, public demand for that thing will become sated and so preferences will shift against additional provision (Wlezien 1995). Arguments for such "self-undermining" feedback, in which policies create opposition to their own continued provision (Busemeyer, Abrassart, and Nezi 2021, 144), are common across the study of public opinion on topics as diverse as budgetary policy (see, e.g., Soroka and Wlezien 2010), marriage equality and gay rights (for an overview, see Bishin et al. 2021, 3–10), and public pension reform (see, e.g., Weaver 2010; Fernández and Jaime-Castillo 2013).

But public opinion scholars have also found that many policies create

their own constituencies, that is, after a policy is adopted, public opinion moves further in its support rather than swinging to oppose it. Drawing on the insight that "new policies create a new politics" (Schattschneider 1935, 288), an extensive literature in public opinion research proposes such "accelerating" feedback (Busemeyer, Abrassart, and Nezi 2021, 144). For example, despite a lingering partisan cleavage, U.S. public opinion toward the Affordable Care Act grew steadily more favorable after its adoption (Jacobs and Mettler 2018; Brodie et al. 2020). Arguments that public opinion toward gender equality in politics and employment reacts positively to the election of women and gender egalitarian policy adoption are common as well (see, e.g., Barnes and Córdova 2016; Lomazzi, Israel, and Crespi 2019; J. Kim and Fallon 2023).

All of this is to say that, despite substantial theorizing, these two questions—the extent of democratic representation of gender egalitarian public opinion and the nature of public responsiveness to developments toward gender equality in politics and policy—remain unsettled. This is surprising given their importance. Democracy itself depends on democratic representation, that a government's policies reflect "the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals" (Dahl 1971, 1). If purportedly democratic countries diverge from these preferences in matters profoundly affecting the lives of half of their populations and scarcely less those of the rest, that fact alone would cast deep doubt on the quality of their democratic institutions. And if electoral results or policy change in favor of equality for women, the largest historically marginalized group in any country, regularly prompt a backlash in public opinion, how can feminist activists or indeed advocates for any disadvantaged group work to advance their cause over the long term (cf. Bishin et al. 2021, 7)?

In the next section, we document that one reason these questions remain open is a severe lack of comparable and longitudinal data regarding public opinion on gender roles in the public sphere of politics and paid work. Remedying this shortcoming of the extant surveys and the existing literature is perhaps the biggest advantage of the research presented in this

book. Doing so allows us to find that, happily for the state of democracy but—as in the case of Korea—not always so for women's rights, the governments of the world's rich democratic countries do represent public opinion with regard to gender equality. Moreover, we find that public responsiveness on this matter follows a pattern of accelerating feedback, in which gains presage additional gains.

But before we go on, we should mention that widely-held attitudes toward gender roles have often been labeled as aspects of ideology or norms or culture. To connect literatures, we will mainly refer to these attitudes, aggregated across the population of a country, as public opinion. Specifically, we will call egalitarian public opinion toward gender roles in politics and the workplace as macroegalitarianism.

Another point of clarification is perhaps warranted. The question of women's representation in all its dimensions is vitally important, and it is the topic of a large and vibrant body of research (see, among recent additions, Betz, Fortunato, and O'Brien 2023; Wang 2023; Kläy et al. 2025). It is not however the exact question we investigate here. We start instead from the scholarship on public opinion and so rather ask about the representation and responsiveness of the public as a whole with regard to gender role attitudes. These inquiries overlap, of course. When women gain elected office is one point that falls into the shared area. The former body of research has generated a great deal of scholarship on this topic, including some studies that directly address how gender egalitarian public opinion matters. But these inquiries also diverge. As a result, we avoid some issues that are central to the study of women's representation. For example, defining and measuring what constitutes the substantive representation of women's interests is a serious and ongoing challenge for research (see, e.g., Weeks and Homola 2022). As Young (1997, 351) observes, "women are everywhere, and differ so vastly along so many dimensions that it seems absurd to suggest" that they agree on some set of interests that could be represented. For our purposes, though, we need not assume that women's interests are served by, for instance, policies advancing gender equality in employment because no such assumption is needed to determine whether

and how these policies reflect the entire public's views. Still, both vantages are crucial to understanding democracy, and we hope readers coming from both perspectives will find that the answers we reach here speak to their concerns.

1.1. A Scholarship Limited by the Available Data

Are the public's views on gender roles in the public sphere represented in what parties and policymakers do? And how does the extent of gender egalitarianism in the public change in response? Much of the reason these questions have yet to be fully answered is that data on the concept of macroegalitarianism is scant. Even a half century after Rule Krauss (1974, 1719) called for more and better data on collective attitudes on gender roles, what we have available to us remains inadequate for fully examining their causes and consequences. In the decades since that call, national and cross-national surveys have included a plethora of relevant questions, but sustained focus has been scant and the variety of these survey items renders the resulting data incomparable. As a consequence, cross-national research has been constrained to study countries at just one or a few time points (see, e.g., Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Alexander 2012; Glas and Spierings 2019) or to rely on proxies such as predominant religion or the percentage of women in office (see, e.g., Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001, 340–41; Claveria 2014; Barnes and O'Brien 2018).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the trade-off in available survey datasets including questions on attitudes toward gender roles between the breadth of country coverage and the number of years available for each country. It plots, for each survey project, the number of countries for which data on gender egalitarian attitudes are available against the mean number of years these data are available per country. Some survey projects ask more than one question on the topic, but here, only the most frequently asked single question on the topic is shown. An 'L' shape is readily evident. Many surveys, clustered in the lower left at the bend in the L, ask questions

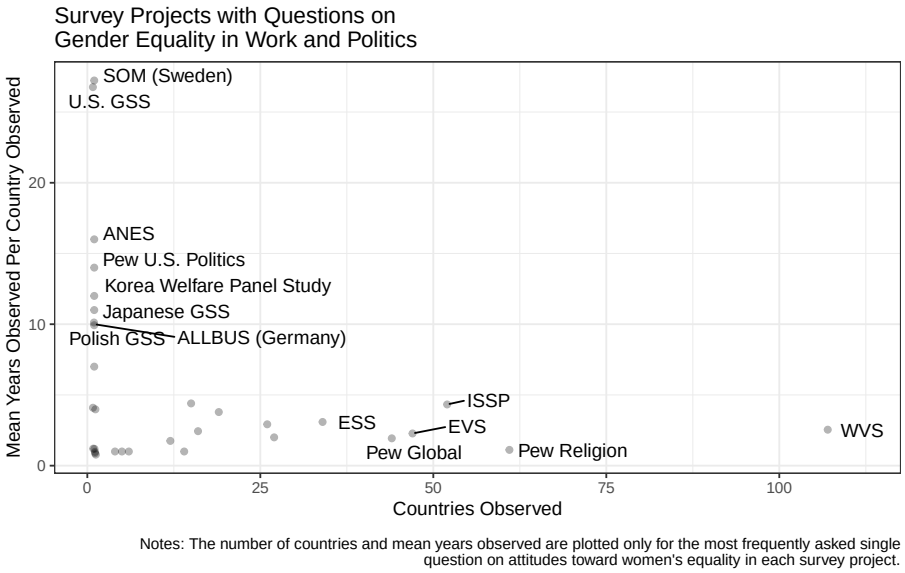


Figure 1.1.: Countries and Mean Years Observed in Survey Datasets

about support for gender equality in only a few different country-year contexts. Some though, such as the U.S. General Social Survey (GSS) and the Swedish Society, Opinion, and Media (SOM) project in the top left, have fielded such questions repeatedly over many years in a single country, although even these efforts fall short of complete annual time series. Others, including the World Values Survey (WVS) and the Pew International Religion Surveys along the bottom and towards the right, provide information about many countries across one or a few years. The International Social Survey Program (ISSP), which surveyed respondents in 52 countries in as many as nine years (mean: 4.3 years) over two decades, provides the most over-time data for the most countries. No single survey combines broad, cross-regional country coverage with longitudinal time-series data.

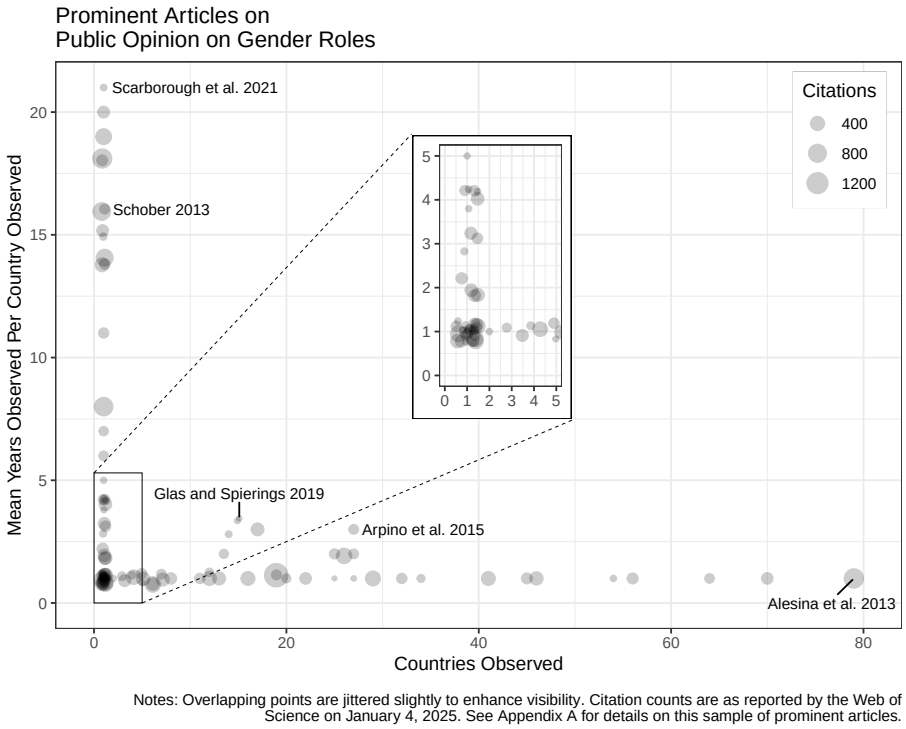


Figure 1.2.: Countries and Mean Years Observed in Prominent Research

Data availability has influenced scholarship on the topic, as can be seen in Figure 1.2. Using the Web of Science, we assembled a sample of prominent published articles on attitudes toward gender equality (see Appendix A for details). These articles were published from 1988 to 2022 (median: 2011) and were cited in the Web of Science from 13 to 1595 times (median: 151.5). We then examined these articles to find the number of countries and years investigated in each. The zoomed inset of the plot highlights that many of these articles might be described as using a case-study research design: just over a quarter of this sample considers only a single year in only a single country.

Among the works that investigate more contexts, the data employed tend to be longitudinal or cross-national, but very rarely both. Arrayed vertically at the left of the figure, more than a quarter of this sample looks only at change over time, examining two or more years of data within just one country. The recent work of Scarborough et al. (2021) employs U.S. GSS data in 21 years from 1977 to 2018 to examine how gender and racial attitudes covaried over this period. Of the studies not using the U.S. GSS, Schober (2013) takes advantage of panel data in 16 waves of the British Household Panel Survey to assess how gender egalitarian attitudes influence changes in time use after parenthood.

Spread horizontally along the bottom of the plot, over a third of the sample considers data from multiple countries in a sole cross-section. Not surprisingly given its position in Figure 1.1, the WVS is the most frequently used source among articles in the lower right of Figure 1.2. The highest number of countries is examined in the much-cited work of Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn (2013), which collapses data from three waves of the WVS for a total of 79 countries into one cross-section to examine whether traditions of plow-based agriculture have a negative influence on the extent of egalitarian gender attitudes.

The observation of four decades ago of Stimson (1985, 914) that "[w]e do comparative analyses across space, dynamic analyses over time, but almost never do we do dynamic comparison," made with regard to political science, also holds true among these discipline-spanning prominent works on attitudes toward gender equality. Research considering data from two or more countries *and* two or more years per country encompass just one-tenth of these articles. Arpino, Esping-Andersen, and Pessin (2015) uses changes in attitudes toward gender equality in the labor market—and the gap between men and women in these attitudes—to predict the total fertility rate in 27 European and North American countries drawing on data from three waves of the combined WVS and European Values Survey. The resulting 81 observations is the largest number of country-years analyzed in any of these prominent works. Pooling data from WVS and Arab Barometer surveys, Glas and Spierings (2019; along with a compan-

ion piece, Glas and Alexander 2020) examined the relationship between feminism and religiosity among Arab Muslims in 15 countries across 51 country-years, an average of 3.4 years observed per country; this represents the greatest over-time variation of any cross-national study in this sample. None of the articles including five or more countries is able to examine public opinion in more than five years in any of the countries included in their analyses.

That these L-shaped distributions in the available datasets and the resulting analyses should limit the confidence any of us can feel in our conclusions should be readily evident. The single-country studies that make up the vertical part of the L, even those over many years, by their nature leave questions regarding the generalizability of their findings to other parts of the world (see, e.g., King, Keohane, and Verba 2021, 210; Pepinsky 2019, 193). The cross-national analyses on the horizontal, with just one or perhaps a few time points to leverage, on the other hand, often raise concerns that differences across countries are being conflated with over-time causal processes (see, e.g., Jackman 1985, 173–74).

This unease is compounded by the fact that this research is geographically concentrated. While Figure 1.2 depicted the number of countries and years in each study in our sample of prominent works, Figure 1.3 takes the opposite perspective and shows the number of these articles that include each country. One hundred eighteen countries are included in the analysis of at least one of the papers. Eight countries are covered exactly once. Considering the countries that are included in any of these works, the median is included just five times. Not surprisingly, the advanced democracies of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are generally better studied in these prominent articles (cf. Wilson and Knutsen 2022, 1025). All but two of a list of the top twenty most-included countries in this sample of prominent works are OECD members, and those non-OECD countries are ranked last (China, tied with four OECD members) and next to last (Brazil) on this list. The median OECD country appears in thirteen articles. Still, there is considerable bias in coverage even among the OECD countries. At one end,

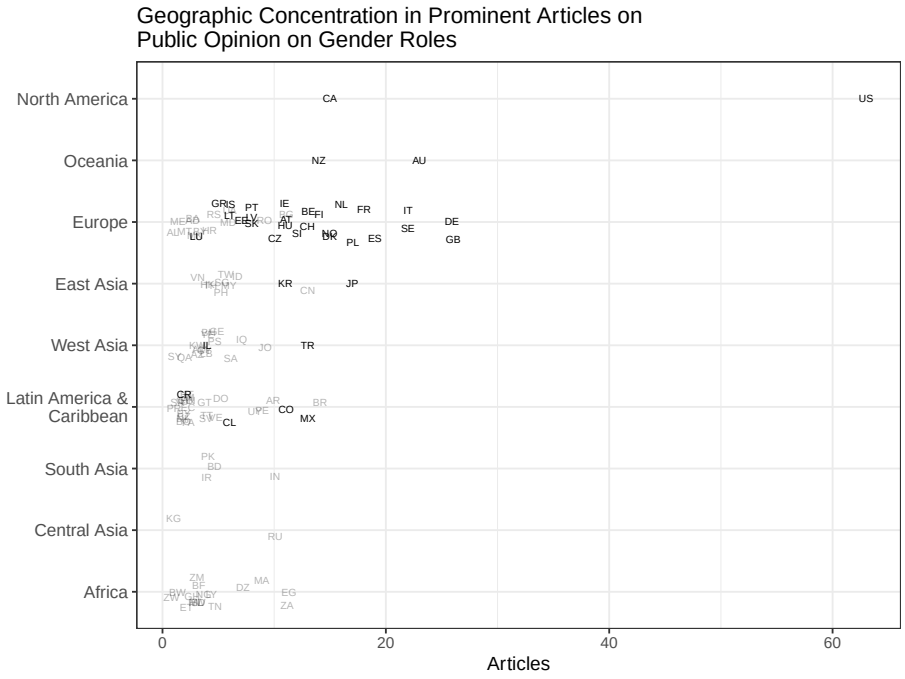


Figure 1.3.: Count of Prominent Articles Including Each Country by Region

Costa Rica, Luxembourg, and Israel appear in just two, three, and four articles respectively. At the other end, the United States is included in 63 works, nearly five times the OECD median and more than twice as many as the next most studied countries, Germany and the United Kingdom. Indeed, among these works, the United States has been the subject of more *single-country* studies—over one-fourth of our sample—than the number of articles even including any other single country. It is a truism that the cases examined influence the conclusions reached (e.g., Geddes 1990), and as Wilson and Knutsen (2022, 1037) points out, geographic bias of the sort

found in this literature makes the scope conditions of even cross-national studies difficult to discern. In sum, a lack of data enabling researchers to look at developments over long stretches of time across many countries has prevented much research on how public opinion, politics, and policy interact with regard to questions of gender equality, and what scholarship exists is further undermined by pervasive geographic bias. That it addresses the absence of cross-national time-series data on attitudes toward gender equality is the first of the advantages of this book.

1.2. Advantages of This Research

The research presented in this book has several advantages over the existing scholarship on public opinion toward gender roles in the public sphere. As just mentioned, the first involves data. Drawing on recent advances in latent variable modeling of public opinion and a comprehensive collection of survey data, we update and expand the Public Gender Egalitarianism (PGE) dataset (Woo, Goldberg, and Solt 2023) to address the need for comparable estimates of macroegalitarianism across countries and over time. The resulting data include information on 126 countries, with a mean number of consecutive years per country of 22.6. In terms of Figure 1.1, the revised PGE dataset lands beyond the right hand border and toward the top, with more countries than any of the surveys and a greater mean number of years per country than all but two single-country surveys: Sweden's SOM and the U.S. GSS. Moreover, the careful attention to the cross-national comparability of the PGE data reassures that a principal weakness of large-n research is mitigated: weak internal validity due to the difficulties of measurement across countries (see Jackman 1985, 161; Pepinsky 2019, 193–94). These new data on macroegalitarianism, based on thousands of surveys conducted in countries around the world, provides a description of macroegalitarianism's levels across countries and regions and its trends over time that is far more comprehensive than any previously available. In turn, this comprehensive dataset allows us to ex-

amine the causes and consequences of macroegalitarianism—for present purposes, public responsiveness and democratic representation—together in comparative and dynamic perspective.

That our perspective is *broadly comparative* is crucial. These new data allows us to take a cross-national, cross-regional comparative approach and examine the experiences of all of the countries around the world to which the theories of representation and responsiveness mentioned above clearly apply (more on this in section Section 2.3). Single-country studies have long been the dominant research design in comparative politics (see, e.g., Munck and Snyder 2007, 22; Schedler and Mudde 2010, 421; Pepinsky 2019, 192), as in the interdisciplinary sample of prominent works on attitudes toward gender roles we presented above, but such works often struggle to address concerns regarding external validity, that is, whether the findings reached in the country studied generalize to anywhere else (see, e.g., Jackman 1985, 164; Lieberman 2005, 441; Findley, Kikuta, and Denly 2021, 381). The same question is raised by even cross-national comparative studies that are regionally concentrated: there is not necessarily reason to suppose that their conclusions hold elsewhere. By allowing us to look at advanced democracies in North America, Oceania, Europe, east Asia, west Asia, and Latin America, the PGE data increases the likelihood that our conclusions regarding macroegalitarianism will not be limited to the context of a single country or region.

The *dynamic* perspective of our analyses is no less important. It has long been understood that cross-sectional associations, that is, those established by looking only across countries at a single time, have several weaknesses that are not ameliorated no matter how broadly comparative the sample may be. If we see that countries where the public holds more gender egalitarian views consistently also have adopted policies that advance gender equality, we still do not know whether the policy adoptions represent public opinion, or public opinion responds to policy change, or both, or neither—policy and public opinion may both result from some other, unobserved cause (see, e.g., Rustow 1968, 48). Because democratic representation and public responsiveness are necessarily processes that un-

fold over time, our evidence for these processes should look over time as well (e.g., Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995, 543; Soroka and Wlezien 2010, 22–23). Pooling data across countries and over time in analyses that are both comparative *and* dynamic has been long recognized as "an extraordinarily robust research design" for drawing causal inferences (Stimson 1985, 916; see also Western 1998; Shor et al. 2007; Bell and Jones 2015; Bell, Fairbrother, and Jones 2019), and given the inability to experimentally manipulate any of our variables of interest—public opinion, women in office, or policy—it provides the best possible evidence of causation.

Moreover, a dynamic perspective examining change over time allows us to consider democratic representation *together with* public responsiveness. For representation to occur, changes in public opinion must be reflected in who is elected and the policies adopted; as macroegalitarianism increases, more gender equality should result. The public's responsiveness involves an arrow running the opposite direction: changes in officeholding and policy influence the attitudes toward gender equality. Previous works tend to look at either one side of this loop or the other. The hazard of such a one-sided approach is the risk of simultaneity bias due to endogeneity. This is a more subtle version of the direction-of-causality problem with cross-sectional work identified by Rustow (1968, 48). If macroegalitarianism rises as a result of a gender egalitarian policy, then considering only whether public opinion causes policy can result in mistaking the former process for the latter. Thanks to the long time series the PGE data make available to us to examine, we are able to disentangle these effects with confidence.

We further bolster confidence in our conclusions with attention to another source of bias. Findley, Kikuta, and Denly (2021, 368) notes that even—and indeed especially—research designs drawing on representative pooled time series may yet fail to yield generalizable findings as a result of variable selection bias, that is, differences between the way variables are operationalized in an analysis and the theoretical concepts of interest. The PGE dataset, our operationalization of the concept of macroegalitarianism, incorporates the broad range of survey items that have been

employed to measure public opinion toward gender roles in politics and the workplace, and we pay careful attention to its measurement validation. And with regard to advancements toward gender equality—which constitute the outcome when assessing the extent of democratic representation and the treatment from the standpoint of theories of public responsiveness—we employ multiple indicators of gender equality in the traditionally masculine public sphere of politics and paid employment (cf. Beer 2009, 217; Bericat 2012, 4). We examine (a) women's election to office in national legislatures, the most commonly used measure of gender equality in politics; (b) the adoption and reform of gender quotas, the policy most closely linked to advancing gender equality in politics; (c) the World Bank's Women, Business, and Law v1.0 policy index (World Bank 2024a), a count of thirty-five policies that advance gender equality in the workplace; and (d) childcare enrollments, a policy outcome closely linked to gender equality in paid employment.[1] The near uniformity of our findings across this diversity of measures provides reassurance that variable selection bias does not undercut the generalizability of our conclusions.

Finally, we complement our expansive cross-national over-time analyses with an in-depth case study. Our research on a single country allows us to assess evidence of additional aspects of the theories on democratic representation and public responsiveness, evidence that is unavailable cross-nationally. That we find consistent results across these nested levels of analysis further bolsters our confidence (King, Keohane, and Verba 2021; Lieberman 2005).

[1]The policies we consider, then, are among those Htun and Weldon (2010, 210, 209) identifies as *non-doctrinal*: they do not "touch upon the jurisdictional conflict between the state and other organizations over the administration of kinship relations, reproduction, and sexuality" and so do not "challenge religious doctrine or the codified tradition of a major cultural group." One benefit of this aspect of the policies we examine is that our analyses do not require a cross-nationally comparable measure of the strength of religious institutions as opponents to reform, a concept we suspect poses particularly steep challenges to cross-cultural measurement.

1.3. Plan of the Book

The book proceeds as follows. In the next chapter, we review the theories and existing evidence on the relationships among gender egalitarian public opinion, women's election to office, and public policies advancing gender equality.

In Chapter 3, we develop our cross-national and longitudinal measure for our concept of macroegalitarianism. After describing how this measure, the Public Gender Egalitarianism scores, is estimated, we use them to show how macroegalitarianism varies across countries and how these attitudes have changed over the past three decades around the world.

Chapter 4 narrows our geographic focus to the countries where theories of representation and responsiveness are most applicable, the advanced democracies that constitute the OECD. There, we explore the implications of these theories for women's officeholding, and in particular, women's success in winning election to national legislatures. Our analyses show that increases in macroegalitarianism predict subsequent gains in women's officeholding and that, in turn, the public responds to more women in office not with a backlash but instead by growing even more egalitarian in their views.

Chapter 5 turns to the adoption of policies advancing gender equality in the public sphere, both in politics and in paid employment. Looking again across the OECD, it finds that governments represent the views of their citizens: when macroegalitarianism increases, laws setting national legislative gender quotas and policies that put women on equal footing in the workforce are more likely to be adopted. Intriguingly, these effects do not appear to work through improvements in women's officeholding: when the public becomes more egalitarian, it seems that both men and women legislators represent their constituents by favoring more policies that advance gender equality. We find some evidence of public responsiveness in this chapter as well. All of this evidence indicates that policymaking and public opinion constitute a virtuous circle, that the adoption of policies

advancing gender equality leads, if anything, to more macroegalitarianism rather than mass opinion backlash.

In Chapter 6, we further examine the relationships between public opinion, women's officeholding, and policy outcomes in the case that motivated our inquiry, South Korea. Taking advantage of the strengths of case study research, the chapter delves into the processes by which gender egalitarian attitudes in the public are, and are not, converted into political outcomes that further gender equality, and how those outcomes in turn shape public opinion.

Chapter 7 concludes the book by reviewing the evidence for dynamic democratic representation and public responsiveness. It considers the implications of our findings of dynamic democracy for political science's understanding of public opinion and of the politics of gender, as well as their implications for activism, for policy, and for democracy.

2. Dynamic Democracy and Gender Equality

Democracy involves an interplay between, on one side, the preferences of the public and, on the other, the identity and policymaking of elected officeholders. This interplay has two components: democratic representation and public responsiveness. In one influential formulation, democracy requires that who holds power must be decided in contested elections with broad suffrage (Przeworski et al. 2000), that is, by the preferences of the public. But it also requires that the *actions taken* by the people in power reflect, to some degree, what the public wants. As Key (1961, 7) observed, "Unless mass views have some place in the shaping of policy, all the talk about democracy is nonsense." Democratic representation, therefore, occurs when these two things—the identity of officeholders and the policies they make—result from public opinion. When public opinion changes, who holds power and what they do should change as well.

But for democracy to function properly also requires the public to respond, not only to shape but to be shaped by politics and policy. If the public pays no attention to political developments—if public opinion does not shift in response to changes in policy—then there is no reward to officeholders for representing the public (see, e.g., Easton 1965; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). This public responsiveness, the feedback of politics and policy to public opinion, although more often overlooked as a component of democracy, is as important as democratic representation.

A crucial aspect of both of these components is that they unfold over time, that they are dynamic (see, e.g., Kuklinski and Segura 1995). This

is fortunate not only as a matter of democratic theory (see Disch 2011), but also from an empirical standpoint, because otherwise a high association between, say, public opinion on an issue and the policy in effect with regard to that same issue may be evidence of either democratic representation or public responsiveness or both. The fact that causes must precede effects in time allows for the two components to be disentangled.

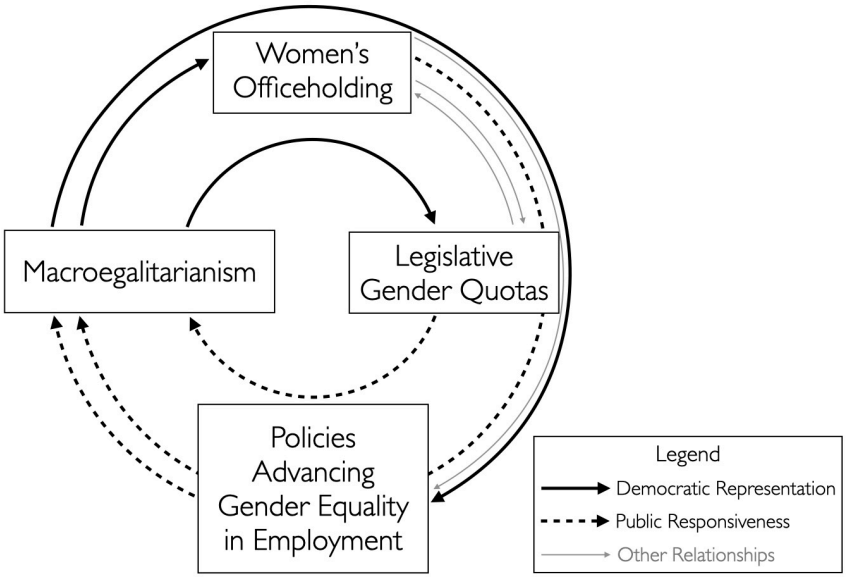


Figure 2.1.: Dynamic Democracy and Gender Equality

With reference to gender equality in the public sphere, dynamic democracy takes the form depicted in Figure 2.1. If democratic representation occurs, macroegalitarianism, our concept of public opinion toward gender equality in politics and the workplace, should drive how many women are elected as legislators and the extent to which policies advancing equality in politics—legislative gender quotas—and in employment are adopted. Public responsiveness entails macroegalitarianism in turn being driven by these political and policy outputs.

In the remainder of this chapter, we discuss in more detail the theoretical arguments involving democratic representation and public responsiveness, both in general and specifically with regard to gender equality; we provide a brief review of existing empirical research on each as well. We start first with democratic representation, the consequences of public opinion for politics and policy.

2.1. Democratic Representation: From Public Opinion to Politics and Policy

Democratic representation is multifaceted, but at its most straightforward it means to make citizens' preferences present in politics and policymaking (Pitkin 1967). In public opinion scholarship, there is considerable debate about the extent to which democratic representation occurs across issues, and while the research on how the public's gender egalitarianism matters in particular is perhaps more sanguine, there are findings that suggest that representation may be limited on this topic as well.

We here understand democratic representation as incorporating both electoral and policy outcomes that correspond to citizen preferences (see, e.g., Powell 2004). Citizens generally agree that those in power should listen to public opinion rather than attempt to lead it, and they pay attention to whether they do (see, e.g., Bowler 2017; Rosset, Giger, and Bernauer 2017). Politicians and parties that stray from public opinion grow increasingly likely to lose control of government and so the ability to make policy (see, e.g., Wlezien 2017). That is, in democracies, free and contested elections provide an institutionalized process to reliably link public opinion to those who hold power and what they do with it (see, e.g., Pitkin 1967; Powell 2004).

Still, there are theoretical reasons to expect that democratic representation with regard to policy may not occur. One reason is that politics is multidimensional. Voters may agree with—and support—a party on one

set of policy issues while disagreeing with it on others. Democratic representation should not be expected on policies that are not prioritized (see, e.g., Powell 2004, 290–91; Costello et al. 2021). Competing issues may be brought forward strategically, what Lukes (1974), following Bachrach and Baratz (1962), calls the second face of power. The wealthy constitute one group often identified as having greater relative power than others to set the agenda in this way (see, e.g., Schattschneider 1960, 105; Pateman 1971, 297–98; Solt 2008, 49; Erikson 2015, 26; Witko et al. 2021). Strategic agenda setting may help explain the findings that the preferences of the rich are better represented in policy than those of their poorer fellow citizens in the United States (e.g., Bartels 2008; Rigby and Wright 2011; Gilens and Page 2014) and Europe (e.g., Giger, Rosset, and Bernauer 2012; Peters and Ensink 2015; Schakel 2021; Persson and Sundell 2024).

Another argument against consistent democratic representation centers on political institutions. To the extent that institutions empower minorities to block the majority, policy should be expected to be less representative of public opinion (see, e.g., Immergut 1992; Huber and Stephens 2001; Tsebelis 2002). Institutions such as presidential executives, bicameral legislatures, and federal systems all generate veto points that empower minorities in this way; coalition governments, common in parliamentary systems with legislatures elected by proportional representation, may as well with regard to some issues.

Still, there is a substantial body of research that suggests that the public does get what it wants. With regard to officeholding, a vast literature on "ideological congruence" finds that the left-right preferences of the public are well represented in national legislatures, especially those elected via proportional representation (see, e.g., Golder and Stramski 2010). It is telling that the debate on this topic is primarily about whether elections held using proportional representation also deliver more democratic representation when the ideology of the government instead of the legislature is considered (see, e.g., Powell 2000; Ferland 2016) rather than whether representation occurs at all. Contested elections prove to be very effective

at generating a body of officeholders that reflect citizen preferences in this regard.

With regard to policy, however, there is much less scholarly consensus. On the one hand, there are prominent studies that conclude that democratic representation of the public's policy preferences is strong. Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993, 80), in a much-quoted finding, reports that the correspondence between opinion and policy in a cross-section of the U.S. states around 1980 was "awesome." Looking at a broad aggregation of policies over time in the United States at the national level, Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson (2002) concludes similarly. In a study of more than three decades in Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) finds that both promises made by chief executives in annual speeches and shares of budgetary spending follow the public's preferences. Soroka and Wlezien (2010) examines budgetary policy with regard to defense and social welfare in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom and finds in each case that changes in spending levels over time represent public preferences. Rasmussen, Reher, and Toshkov (2019) examines 20 specific policy issues in a cross-section of 31 countries and finds a strong relationship between public support for a policy and whether the policy was in place.

On the other hand, there are also many studies indicating that policy representation does not always occur. Page and Shapiro (1983), for one, is more restrained, finding that when U.S. policy changed over four decades, it was twice as likely to move in the same direction as shifting opinion as counter to it, with conservative changes and low-salience policy reforms particularly likely to be contrary to developments in public opinion. Another work looking cross-sectionally at the U.S. states, Lax and Phillips (2009), finds that policy adoptions recognizing specific gay rights were more likely where public opinion was more favorable to those rights but that policy matched the majority preference less than two-thirds of the time. Expanding on this work and pooling across 39 different policies, Lax and Phillips (2012) similarly finds that states where public support for a policy is greater are more likely to have adopted the policy, but that

the chance a state provided the policy with majority support was only as likely as not. The results presented in Brooks and Manza (2006) show that overall welfare state effort from 1988 to 2001 tracked changes in public opinion on government responsibility for providing employment and reducing income inequality in eight European countries with social democratic or Christian democratic welfare states, but that it did not among six countries with liberal democratic welfare states. Matsusaka (2010) examines ten policies across the U.S. states in as many as seven years and finds that policy matched opinion just 59% of the time. Inspecting eight policy domains in 22 countries and four time points, Ferland (2021) finds that citizens agreed that spending should be kept at "about the same level as now" scarcely more than a third of the time. One impressive—and to us, inspirational—work, Caughey and Warshaw (2022) looks across U.S. states over nearly a century and finds democratic representation occurs only incrementally: that is, state policies change in response to changing public preferences but that they can take *decades* to do so. Hooge, Dassonneville, and Oser (2019) considers social spending in 21 European countries over 34 years and finds that it bore no relationship to public opinion at all. The evidence on the extent to which democratic policy representation occurs is decidedly mixed.

A related open question to *if* democratic representation occurs with regard to policy adoption is *how* it happens if it does. Is electoral turnover necessary or do legislators of all stripes respond to the shifting opinion of the public? Caughey and Warshaw (2022, 99) refers to these two alternate mechanisms as 'selection' and 'adaptation.' That work finds that adaptation dominated the link between the preferences of the public and policy adoption "not because party control has no policy effects—they are in fact quite large and robust—but because they are quite weakly related to party control" yet quite strongly related to the ideological positions of both parties found across the U.S. states (Caughey and Warshaw 2022, 109). On the other hand, increased polarization between the parties has intensified the relationship between changes in party control of state governments and changes in policy over time in the states since the turn of the twenty-first

century (Grumbach 2018). Selection, in other words, has become more important to what democratic representation occurs in the U.S. states. As such representation is only incremental, Caughey and Warshaw (2022, 109) speculate that this change may be evident "once we have another decade or two's worth of data." Whether representation occurs primarily via selection or adaptation elsewhere remains to be seen. The conclusion of O'Grady and Abou-Chadi (2019) that "European parties do *not* respond to shifts in their citizens' ideological positions" would indicate that selection is the only means to representation in Europe. Research like the study of seven European countries over three decades presented in Adams, Haupt, and Stoll (2009), which indicates that parties in the center and on the right—but not on the left—shift their policy stances in response to changes in public opinion, suggest that both adaptation and selection are important. The results reported in Dassonneville et al. (2024) that European parties in the twenty-first century have adapted to public opinion on an immigration-nationalism dimension but not otherwise reinforces this conjecture.

2.1.1. Democratic Representation of Gender Egalitarian Public Opinion

With regard to gender egalitarianism, the story of democratic representation is straightforward: at least in democratic countries, when the electorate holds a more gender-egalitarian view of women's roles in the public sphere, parties will run more women, more women will win election, and policies advancing gender equality will be more likely to pass. Conversely, when and where traditional attitudes relegating women to the private sphere of home and children are more dominant, parties will put forward fewer female candidates, fewer women will gain office, and anti-egalitarian public policy will not change. Indeed, Beer (2009, 214) declares that this story is so straightforward that it is in fact tautological—that gender egalitarian public opinion itself "seems to be a very good measure of gender equality."

Yet there are reasons to expect that macroegalitarianism in particular is not represented in terms of either more women in office or the adoption of policies that advance gender equality. The multidimensionality of politics raises the possibility that even parties ostensibly favoring gender equality may nevertheless put measures promoting it behind other issues; the greater relative power of men to set the agenda within party organizations only makes this possibility more likely (see, e.g., Htun and Weldon 2012, 553). And beyond the arguments presented in the previous section, parties are crucial gatekeepers between women and political power (see, e.g., Caul 1999), and the party elites who decide who may run appear to underestimate the public's willingness—or even preference—to vote for women (see, e.g., Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Kunovich and Paxton 2005; Luhiste 2015).[1]

The severe limitations in the available public opinion data that we described in the previous chapter have sharply restricted researchers' ability to test these arguments directly (Paxton, Hughes, and Barnes 2021, 127). Still, what works do exist indicate democratic representation occurs, at least with regard to women in office. Norris and Inglehart (2001) finds

[1]Sapiro and Conover (2001, 7) points out a related but more fundamental issue: the potential for slippage between normative preferences for gender equality and perceptions that equality does not yet exist or endorsement for specific policies to advance it. Across respondents to the U.S. National Election Studies 1991 Pilot Survey, this article finds that gender egalitarian views are consistently but not very strongly correlated with support for government-sponsored child care and anti-discrimination policies. J. H. Kim and Kweon (2022) argues similarly and in a study of Korean attitudes notes considerable differences between patterns of rejection of traditional gender norms and of support for policies advancing gender equality. Analogous slippage has also been pointed out as problematic to works on democratic representation that use left-right ideology as their measure of public opinion (see Rasmussen, Reher, and Toshkov 2019, 414). Reassuringly, though, there is scholarship that finds strong relationships between preferences for gender equality and support for gender quotas across Latin America (Barnes and Córdova 2016), in Ireland (Keenan and McElroy 2017), and in Australia (Beauregard 2018). Still, we acknowledge that given that we conceptualize and measure macroegalitarianism with normative preferences (see Appendix B), the potential for slippage would have complicated the interpretation of a null result had we found one.

that across dozens of democratic and authoritarian countries surveyed at the end of the twentieth century, gender egalitarian attitudes toward political leaders were strongly correlated to the proportion of women in national parliaments (see also Inglehart, Norris, and Welzel 2003; Inglehart and Norris 2003). Paxton and Kunovich (2003) examines a cross-section of 46 countries and finds that where the public's disagreement that men make better political leaders than women was higher, more women were elected to legislatures. Alexander (2012) adds some over-time perspective by looking at 25 countries in two time periods; where gender egalitarianism regarding political leaders increased, so did the share of women in the legislature.

Should we expect the democratic representation of macroegalitarianism to occur via selection or by adaptation? In this context, the selection mechanism involves gender egalitarian voters replacing men in office with women to gain the gender egalitarian policies they prefer. Adaptation would mean men legislators also respond to changes in macroegalitarianism. As noted above, there is some evidence that gender egalitarian public opinion leads to more women in office. And there is also abundant evidence that women legislators matter for the passage of policies advancing gender equality (see, among many, Gerrity, Osborn, and Mendez 2007; Betz, Fortunato, and O'Brien 2020; Weeks 2022; N. K. Kim 2022). Together, these two strands of research suggest that selection is important. But the fact that in the latter works public opinion is measured with weak proxies or, more often, absent entirely raises the possibility that the relationship between women in office and equality-enhancing policy may be spurious. That is, the relationship between women's descriptive representation and policies advancing gender equality may be driven by both being products of public opinion. Were that true, adaptation would be the exclusive mechanism by which democratic representation occurs with regard to gender equality. This seems unlikely. Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005), one work that does include a measure of public opinion along with women's descriptive representation, finds using a structural equation model that opinion influences the adoption of equality-enhancing policies only through its rela-

tionship to more women holding office—that is, through selection only.

Returning to the principal subject of this section, there are in short convincing arguments both for and against expecting democratic representation in this case. To see if and to what extent the composition of legislatures and the content of policy represent the macroegalitarianism of the public, we are going to have to look.

2.2. Public Responsiveness: From Politics and Policy to Public Opinion

How the public responds to policy change is, if anything, an even less settled question. The key point of debate is whether public opinion moves against a policy after it is adopted or rather moves further in its support. Arguments that public opinion reacts negatively to policy change are common. Bishin et al. (2016, 627) points out that the idea of public opinion backlash implies "that on any controversial issue, the public as a whole, or some groups within it, may recoil at challenges to the status quo." And as mentioned in the introduction, the thermostatic model provides a generalized theory of backlash. The argument for thermostatic public opinion is that, as the level of any given political outcome or policy output moves further in a given direction, it will pass the desired level of an increasing share of the public. With their demand sated, some of the people who before this policy change wanted "more" will now want "less," and public opinion as a whole will trend away from the change that just occurred (Wlezien 1995; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). Weaver (2010, 139) notes that the costs of policies may be simply be underappreciated or unforeseen by members of the public before adoption but become manifestly evident afterwards and so "undermine political support for those policies." Acknowledging the differences in the proposed mechanisms, we will follow Busemeyer, Abrassart, and Nezi (2021) in referring to these arguments collectively as describing "self-undermining" feedback to politics or policy.

There is reason, however, to also expect that political and policy outputs pull public opinion further in their own direction. The ways policies treat groups generate characterizations of those groups in public opinion, characterizations that then shape preferences for further policy change (Schneider and Ingram 1993, 334). Policies may redistribute resources, generating constituencies whose preferences shift to protect their new self-interest (Pierson 1994). Even absent such distributive aspects, policies "influence beliefs about what is possible, desirable, and normal" (Soss and Schram 2007). In other words, policies make their own constituencies among the public, and create demand for more of the same. Again following the typology presented in Busemeyer, Abrassart, and Nezi (2021), we will call the dynamic in which policies generate support for additional change in the same direction as "accelerating" feedback.

There is substantial empirical support for self-undermining feedback. Soroka and Wlezien (2010) finds that as spending on defense and on social expenditure went up, public opinion favoring spending in each of these sectors subsequently went down—and as spending went down, demand for spending then went up—in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson (2002) reports that when U.S. policymaking trended in a liberal direction, the response of U.S. public opinion was to grow more conservative, and vice versa. Swedish citizens with more points of contact with the country's comprehensive and universalistic welfare policies had greater support for increasing welfare-state funding, while those who interacted with its targeted and means-tested programs had less (Kumlin 2002, 2004). Looking at 18 politicized policy issues in the United States over at least forty years, Atkinson et al. (2021) found that 13 moved in the opposite direction of the stance of the party in control of the White House. Across 27 European countries, Fernández and Jaime-Castillo (2013) found that support for lowering pension benefits was higher where benefits were higher; support for raising contributions was higher where contributions were lower. A long line of works stretching from Quillian (1995) and Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders (2002) to Claassen and McLaren (2022) argue

that when governments permit more immigration, public opinion swings against immigrants and toward more restrictive immigration policy. Reviewing the literature, Atkinson et al. (2021, 4), calls the thermostatic model "spectacularly successful," the "reigning model" of the process of opinion change in response to policy.

Nevertheless, there is also much empirical support for accelerating feedback.[2] Campbell (2003, 95) documents that "the growth of Social Security over time has met with little backlash from taxpaying nonrecipients" and finds instead that the U.S. public has since its inception consistently favored its expansion. Svallfors (2010) shows that in 1990, attitudes toward the role of government were starkly different in eastern and western Germany, but while attitudes barely changed in the Federal Republic's preexisting territory over the next 16 years, the wholesale policy change toward smaller government in the former East Germany that accompanied reunification triggered a dramatic shift away from preferences for state intervention among people living there. In contrast to its other findings on pension reform in Europe, Fernández and Jaime-Castillo (2013) found that opposition to raising retirement ages was stronger where those ages were already lower. Pacheco (2013) finds that after U.S. states adopted smoking bans in restaurants, public opinion in those states expressed less sympathy for smokers, higher perceptions of the risk of secondhand smoke, and more support for smoking restrictions in other public places. The influence of marriage equality on views toward gay and lesbian people has been extensively studied and repeatedly found to follow this pattern.[3] Flores and Barclay (2016) finds that following the U.S. Supreme Court's

[2]Given our focus, we concentrate here on works that directly consider public opinion, but a related body of research looks at behavior to assess how policy may cause self-reinforcing political mobilization; see Campbell (2012) for a review of this literature.

[3]One exception is Redman (2018), which examined trends in 70 countries and found that public opinion toward gay people did not shift with the adoption of legislation recognizing same-sex couples. The measure of policy employed in this work conflates marriage equality with the recognition of civil unions, two policies found to have opposite effects on public opinion in Abou-Chadi and Finnigan (2019), which may explain this non-result.

legalization of same-sex marriage in 2013, residents of states that had marriage equality introduced with the ruling had the greatest reduction in anti-gay attitudes. Looking across 28 European countries surveyed as many as five times over eight years, Hooghe and Meeusen (2013) finds that levels of anti-gay prejudice were lower when marriage equality had been legally recognized. Abou-Chadi and Finnigan (2019) extends the period of time examined and reaches similar results, as does the analysis of a much broader sample of countries and years presented in Woo et al. (2025, 9). In the United States, state-level bans on same-sex marriage also exhibited accelerating feedback, with public opinion viewing gay and lesbian people more negatively after they were adopted (Donovan and Tolbert 2013).

If the two previous paragraphs seems contradictory, Busemeyer, Abrassart, and Nezi (2021, 138) notes that the works finding evidence of self-undermining feedback and those that point to accelerating feedback "so far have largely ignored each other." There is, of course, a third possibility: that public opinion does not respond to policy change at all. Soss and Schram (2007) finds that the dramatic cuts to benefits for low-income citizens in the United States in 1996 did nothing to change public opinion on welfare policy, welfare recipients, and the poor. Atkinson et al. (2021) finds that U.S. trends in preferences regarding spending on cities, spending on police, legalizing marijuana, and protecting unions bore no relationship to the position of the president's party. That work also identifies six other important issues that were not politicized over the period examined and finds they did not respond in an accelerating or self-undermining fashion either. Intriguingly given present purposes, Atkinson et al. (2021) further argues that gender egalitarian public opinion should not exhibit responsiveness. Instead, attitudes toward gender equality, along with racial equality and gay rights, constitute cultural shifts: "Our explanation for these is that absolute opinion change—that is, permanent opinion change that is not responsive to changes in policy—is going on" (Atkinson et al. 2021, 40). We continue our discussion of the theories and evidence for public responsiveness in macroegalitarianism in the next section.

2.2.1. Public Responsiveness to Women in Office and Policies Advancing Gender Equality

The argument for public opinion backlash against women in office has drawn calls for research (see Sanbonmatsu 2008), but empirical studies on how women in office influence gender egalitarian public opinion is scant (see O'Brien and Piscopo 2019, 59), likely again due to data issues. While there is some suggestive evidence from research looking to women's political behavior (for an overview, see Paxton, Hughes, and Barnes 2021, 131–33), the direct evidence is decidedly mixed. J. Kim and Fallon (2023) examines four waves of the WVS in 87 countries for a total of 187 observed country-years; in multilevel models of individuals with varying intercepts for country-years and countries, it finds strong evidence that women's officeholding positively influences attitudes toward women in politics. Alexander (2012), again working with 25 countries at two points in time, finds that growing women's descriptive representation yielded increases in belief that men are not better political leaders than women *among women* but did not change attitudes among men. On the other hand, Kerevel and Atkeson (2015) finds in a cross-section of Mexican municipalities that the presence of a woman mayor increased disagreement that men make better political leaders *among men* but did not change attitudes among women. Similarly, when the chief councilor position in villages in West Bengal, India, were randomly reserved for women candidates, a vignette experiment revealed that *among men* identical fictional male and female politicians were judged to be similarly effective whereas men in villages that had not experienced female leadership judged the hypothetical male leader as significantly more effective; women in both settings expressed little bias (Beaman et al. 2009, 1500). And a study of a cross-section of 19 Latin American countries finds that in countries with more women in the legislature the public did not exhibit more support for gender equality in politics (Morgan and Buice 2013). There is also evidence that the public opinion supporting gender equality in politics responds *negatively* to women in office if they are revealed to have engaged

in corruption, the routine corruption of male politicians notwithstanding (Woo, Kim, and Osborn 2025). In short, these works indicate that more women in office may yield more egalitarian opinion in the public, only among women, only among men, among no one at all, or indeed in some circumstances it may generate *less* egalitarian opinion.

Research focusing on public responsiveness to policy is more consistent.[4] In a cross-section of 48 democracies, Allen and Cutts (2018) finds that the presence of gender quotas are associated with more gender egalitarian views regarding politics. Fernández and Valiente (2021) finds across 28 European countries that where there are gender quotas, there is more support for increasing the number of women in political decision-making positions. Looking across 87 countries in as many as four years over two decades, J. Kim and Fallon (2023) find that the presence of robust gender quotas—but not weaker ones—are associated with gender egalitarian attitudes toward politics. Barnes and Córdova (2016) finds in a cross-section of 24 Latin American countries that people in countries that have adopted effective gender quota policies express more support for gender quotas. Across 20 Latin American countries, Smith, Warming, and and (2017) report that political gender stereotypes are less common where gender quotas are in place. Banaszak (2006) reveals that the extensive policies encouraging women's employment in the German Democratic Republic have resulted in attitudes supporting women in the workforce that are persistently higher in eastern Germany than in western Germany. In a cross-section of 28 European countries, Lomazzi, Israel, and Crespi (2019) found that people in countries with greater state support for formal childcare at ages zero to three had more egalitarian attitudes on gender roles. Möhring and Teney (2020, 575) examines support for gender quotas on corporate boards across 27 European countries and finds that support for boardroom quo-

[4] Perhaps surprisingly, evidence looking to political behavior runs counter to that which directly examines attitudes. Clayton (2015) finds living in a district randomly reserved for a woman community councilor decreased political engagement among women in Lesotho. Kerevel and Atkeson (2017) found that, in Mexico after the passage of gender quotas, women living in districts in which female candidates ran expressed lower political engagement.

tas is higher in countries that have already enacted such measures. All of these works on policies advancing gender equality in politics and the workplace conclude that they reinforce their own support.

Still, the cross-sectional research designs dominant in these works leave doubt regarding the direction of causation. Indeed, the assumption that gender egalitarian public opinion is simply causally prior to women in office or policies advancing gender equality—the assumption that policy responsiveness is nonexistent—is common in the representation literature we discussed previously (see, e.g., Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005, 416). As with democratic representation, to get answers to whether and how macroegalitarianism in the public responds to political and policy developments, we will have to look.

2.3. The Scope of These Theories

Before we proceed further, we need to define the universe for our study. As always, there are competing concerns. On the one hand, we want to look as broadly as possible: we want to minimize sampling bias that could influence our results and conclusions (see, e.g., King, Keohane, and Verba 2021, 121). The Public Gender Egalitarianism scores we present in the next chapter are motivated by a desire to get beyond research designs that are limited to "just the United States" or "just western Europe"—designs that are all too common, as we found at Section 1.1—that is, by a desire to enable cross-national, cross-regional work (see Wilson and Knutsen 2022). But, on the other hand, we always need to avoid including cases to which the theory simply does not apply. The public opinion theories outlined above presuppose a certain minimum level of democracy—at least the minimal definition of democracy presented by Przeworski et al. (2000, 14–16) as "a regime in which those who govern are selected through contested elections." Countries that do not clear that very low bar, therefore, should

be excluded.[5] And politics works in many developing democracies in ways that suggest that the processes these theories describe may unfold very differently there—widespread clientelism, for example, is thought to work to exclude women from politics at every level (see, e.g, Arriola and Johnson 2014; Franceschet and Piscopo 2014; Benstead 2015; Paxton, Hughes, and Barnes 2021, 156–57). In light of these considerations, we will set aside for future research consideration of the processes of representation and responsiveness in authoritarian or developing countries and focus here on the advanced democracies.

We consider it important, however, to be sure to not interpret "advanced democracies" as simply "Western Europe and North America." There are certainly countries with advanced economies and long-standing democracies that are found beyond those regions. Japan is an obvious example. Yet we do not want to engage in the exercise of picking the countries that compose our sample by hand. For example, should the sample of advanced democracies include Taiwan? Despite its high-tech economy and vibrant democracy, some have argued that it should not on the grounds that Taiwan is "not sovereign" (e.g., Stockemer and Scruggs 2012, 772). What about Hungary or Turkey? Expansive government control over the media and other signs of autocratization has led to much discussion of democratic backsliding in both countries (see, e.g., Nakai 2023). The issue with exercising judgment in this way is that it opens the door to "the garden of forking paths," in which such decisions are accepted or revisited by researchers depending on the results obtained (Gelman and Loken 2013). That is, researchers might choose to include or exclude one or more of these arguable cases, and then, if and only if they find the results of the conse-

[5]This is not to say that governments in authoritarian countries do not at least sometimes work to represent public opinion. In fact, there is reason to think—and evidence to show—that they sometimes do (see, e.g., Tang 2016 on China; Lueders 2022 on the German Democratic Republic; and Miller 2015 on electoral autocracies more generally). Our point here is that the mechanisms through which public opinion may be translated to policy in authoritarian regimes is different from those suggested in the theories outlined above, and so for present purposes we should set those cases aside.

quent analyses to be in some way unsatisfactory, find themselves reversing the decision. Choices like these, also known as "researcher degrees of freedom," and the fragility of the findings that result have attracted growing attention among political scientists in recent years (see, e.g., Wuttke 2019; Breznau et al. 2022; Hu, Tai, and Solt 2025).

Committing to rely on a prior and external determination of which countries are "advanced democracies" minimizes this risk.[6] For this project, the current membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) serves as that prior, external determination. The OECD comprises 38 countries (see Figure 2.2). Those countries do include the usual suspects of most of Europe plus the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, but also Japan and Korea in east Asia, Turkey and Israel in west Asia, and Mexico, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Chile in Latin America. As Figure 2.2 makes clear, there are still many other, unshaded countries to better understand also. But the theories outlined in this chapter apply to the shaded countries, so they will be the subject of this book.

[6] Of course, it does not *eliminate* the risk implied by researcher degrees of freedom, as even this decision may be contingent on the results obtained: taking a single path through the garden does not eradicate its many forks.

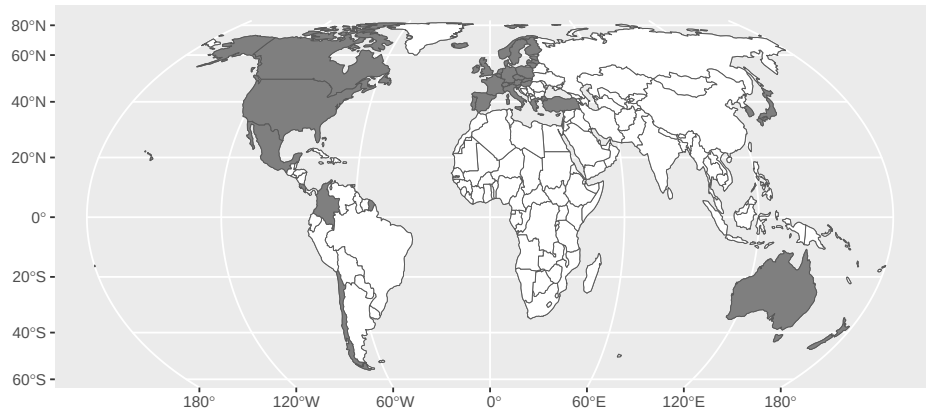


Figure 2.2.: The Cases Examined in This Book: The OECD

3. Macroegalitarianism Around the World

As outlined in the previous chapter, public opinion toward gender roles constitutes one of the primary explanations for women's exclusion from the traditionally masculine public sphere of the workforce, political power, and policy influence (see, e.g., Paxton, Hughes, and Barnes 2021, 113–14). Despite its theoretical importance, the extent to which gender egalitarian public opinion matters for these outcomes has drawn little sustained attention. The reason for this disconnect between explanation and evidence is that, despite a half century of calls for more and better data on these collective attitudes (see Rule Krauss 1974, 1719), what we have available to us remains inadequate for fully examining their causes and consequences. Although national and cross-national surveys have included a plethora of relevant questions, but their concentration has been sporadic and the variety of these survey items renders the resulting data incomparable. As a consequence, cross-national research has been constrained to study countries at just one or a few time points (see, e.g., Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Alexander 2012; Glas and Alexander 2020) or to rely on proxies such as predominant religion or the percentage of women in office (see, e.g., Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001, 340–41; Claveria 2014; Barnes and O'Brien 2018). Cross-national and longitudinal investigation of, for example, the argument that such "attitudes influence both the supply of, and demand for, female candidates" has remained persistently a topic for future research (Paxton, Hughes, and Painter 2010, 47).

This chapter presents the latest version of the Public Gender Egalitari-

anism (PGE) dataset, which is based on the host of national and cross-national survey data available and recent advances in latent variable modeling of public opinion that allow us to make use of this sparse and incomparable data. It provides comparable estimates of the public's attitudes on gender equality in the public sphere of politics and paid work across countries and over time. We show that these PGE scores are strongly correlated with responses to single survey items as well as with measures of women's participation in the workforce and in the boardroom. The PGE data are an invaluable source for studying the causes and consequences of macroegalitarianism over time in countries around the world, and they serve as the measure of our concept of macroegalitarianism in many of the analyses we present in later chapters.

3.1. Source Data on Public Gender Egalitarianism

National and cross-national surveys have often included questions tapping attitudes toward equality for women and men over the past half-century, but the resulting data are both sparse, that is, unavailable for many countries and years, and incomparable, generated by many different survey items. Moreover, not all of those questions may in fact be relevant to our inquiry, which focuses on views toward gender equality in the traditionally masculine public sphere of paid work and politics. The questions we did select are nearly always explicit in comparing men and women, but a few, such as the Eurobarometer item asking responses to the statement "Women do not have the necessary qualities and skills to fill positions of responsibility in politics," leave men's traditional role implicit. Similarly, they nearly always explicitly invoke either paid work or politics, though they may also be broader, such as the Pew Research Center's item that asks, "On a different subject, do you think women should have equal rights with men, or shouldn't they?"

We carefully distinguished these questions from three other categories of questions on gender equality. First, we did not include the small set of

questions focusing on gender equality in the traditionally feminine private sphere of housework and childcare, such as "Men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children," asked (with differing response categories) in the European Values Survey and the European Social Survey. Second, we also excluded questions asking respondents how women should balance opportunities in the public sphere with their traditional duties in the private sphere, such as whether mothers in the workforce can have similarly warm relationships with their children as mothers who are not, asked in the World Values Survey and many others. Given that attitudes that women should prioritize housework and childcare over paid employment and politics—or convictions that there will be negative consequences if they do not—can be expected to lead to less gender egalitarian opinions with regard to these latter, public-sphere activities, this is clearly a very closely related set of items to those we sought, and there are many of them. (It is telling, though not surprising, that the complementary set of questions, on how *men* should balance responsibilities in the private sphere with their traditional roles in the public sphere, is only rarely included in surveys; one laudable example of this mostly unasked sort of question, apparently first included in Australia's 1989 National Social Science Survey and slowly becoming more common, is the item querying respondents the extent to which they agree with the statement, "Family life often suffers when men concentrate too much on their work.") The third and final category of excluded survey items includes respondents' views on various forms of women's domination by men, from whether wives should always adopt their husbands' surnames through the recognition that various forms of sexual harassment are not "flattering" to the justifiability of intimate partner violence committed by husbands. In each case, as the included questions are not *directly* relevant to gender egalitarianism in the public sphere, we concluded that to ensure that the PGE scores tap only a single dimension of attitudes, we would exclude these others.

In all, we identified 54 survey items on gender equality in the public sphere that were asked in no fewer than five country-years in countries surveyed at

least twice; these items were drawn from 148 different survey datasets. The two most common items include one on politics and one on the workplace. The first, included in the World Values Survey, the AmericasBarometer, and others, asked respondents' reactions to the statement, "On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do." The second, included in the European Values Survey and others, asked the extent of their agreement with the claim, "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women." The complete list of public gender egalitarianism survey items is included in Appendix A.

Together, the survey items in the source data were asked in 127 different countries in at least two time points over 50 years, from 1972 to 2022, yielding a total of 2,919 country-year-item observations. Observations for every year in each country surveyed would number 6,350, and a complete set of country-year-items would encompass 342,900 observations. Compared to this complete set of country-year-items, the available data can be seen to be very, very sparse. From a more optimistic standpoint, we note there there are 1,342 country-years in which we have at least *some* information about the public gender egalitarianism of the population, that is, some 47% of the 2,866 country-years spanned by the data we collected. But there can be no denying Claveria's (2014) observation that the many different survey items employed renders these data incomparable and difficult to use together.

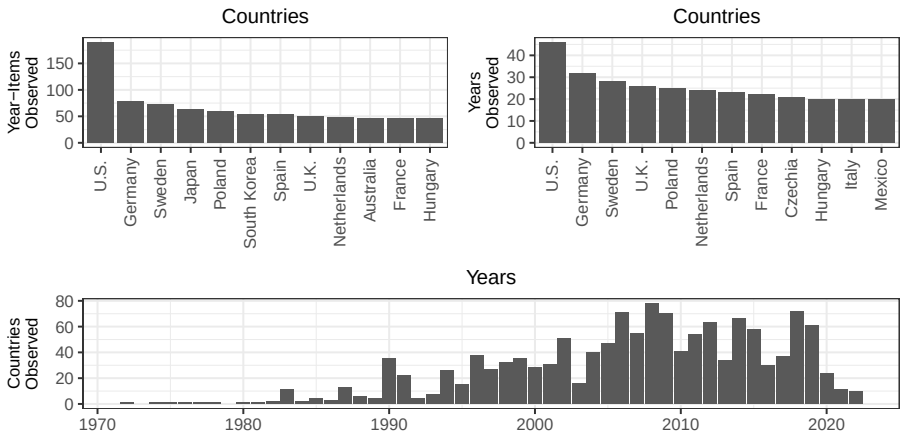


Figure 3.1.: Countries and Years with the Most Observations in the PGE Source Data

Consider the most frequently asked item in these data, which asks respondents whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement "On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do." Employed by the Americas Barometer, the Arab Barometer, the Eurobarometer, the Latinobarómetro, the Pew Research Center, and the World Values Survey, this question was asked in a total of 492 different country-years. That this constitutes only 17% of the country-years spanned by our data—and remember, this is the *most common* survey item—again underscores just how sparse the available public opinion data is on this topic.

The upper left panel of Figure 3.1 shows the dozen countries with the highest count of country-year-item observations. The United States, with 190 observations, is far and away the best represented country in the source data, followed by Germany, Sweden, Japan, and Poland. At the other end of the spectrum, two countries—Nepal and Suriname—have only the minimum two observations required to be included in the source dataset at

all. The upper right panel shows the twelve countries with the most years observed; this group is similar, but with Czechia, Italy, and Mexico joining the list and Japan, South Korea, and Australia dropping off. The bottom panel counts the countries observed in each year and reveals just how few relevant survey items were asked before 1990. Country coverage reached its peak in 2008, when respondents in 78 countries were asked items about gender egalitarianism in the public sphere. In the next section, we describe how we are able to make use of all of this sparse and incomparable survey data to generate complete, comparable time-series PGE scores using a latent variable model.

3.2. A Model of Public Gender Egalitarianism

There has been a recent blossoming of scholarship developing latent variable models of public opinion based on cross-national survey data (see Claassen 2019; Caughey, O'Grady, and Warshaw 2019; McGann, Dellepiane-Avellaneda, and Bartle 2019; Kolczynska et al. 2020). To estimate public gender egalitarianism across countries and over time, we draw on the latest of these methods that is appropriate for data that is not only incomparable but also sparse, the Dynamic Comparative Public Opinion (DCPO) model presented in Solt (2020b). The DCPO model is a population-level two-parameter ordinal logistic item response theory (IRT) model with country-specific item-bias terms. For a detailed description of the DCPO model, see Solt (2020b, 3–8); here, we focus on how it deals with the principal issues raised by our source data, incomparability and sparsity.

The DCPO model accounts for the incomparability of different survey questions with two parameters. First, it incorporates the *difficulty* of each question's responses, that is, how much public gender egalitarianism is indicated by a given response. That each response evinces more or less of our latent trait is most easily seen with regard to the ordinal responses to the same question: strongly agreeing with the statement "both the husband

and wife should contribute to household income," exhibits more public gender egalitarianism than responding "agree," which in turn is more egalitarian than responding "disagree," which is a more egalitarian response than "strongly disagree." But this is also true across questions. For example, strongly disagreeing that "on the whole, men make better business executives than women do" likely expresses even more egalitarianism than strongly agreeing merely that both spouses should have paying jobs. Second, the DCPO model accounts for each question's *dispersion*, its noisiness with regard to our latent trait. The lower a question's dispersion, the better that changes in responses to the question map onto changes in public gender egalitarianism. Together, the model's difficulty and dispersion estimates work to generate comparable estimates of the latent variable of public gender egalitarianism from the available but incomparable source data.

To address the sparsity of the source data—the fact that there are gaps in the time series of each country, and even many observed country-years have only one or few observed items—DCPO uses local-level dynamic linear models, i.e., random-walk priors, for each country. That is, within each country, each year's value of public gender egalitarianism is modeled as the previous year's estimate plus a random shock. These dynamic models smooth the estimates of public gender egalitarianism over time and allow estimation even in years for which little or no survey data is available, albeit at the expense of greater measurement uncertainty.

We estimated the model on our source data using the `DCPO` and `cmdstanr` packages for R (Solt 2020a; Gabry and Češnovar 2022), running four chains for 1,000 iterations each and discarding the first half as warmup, which left us with 2,000 samples. All $\hat{R}$ diagnostics were below 1.02, indicating that the model converged.

The dispersion parameters of the survey items indicate that all of them load well on the latent variable (see Appendix A). The result is estimates, in all 2,847 country-years spanned by the source data, of mean public gender egalitarianism, what we call PGE scores.

3.3. Validation of the PGE Dataset

Before we can use the PGE scores to evaluate whether and to what extent that public gender egalitarianism contributes to women's descriptive representation and to gender egalitarian policy outcomes—and even before we put too much effort into examining how it varies around the world—we must assess the validity of these PGE scores. That is, we must make certain that the PGE scores, as a measure, reflect the concept of the public's gender egalitarianism with regard to the public sphere of politics and the workforce.

Above, we discussed how we distinguished this concept from broader conceptions of gender egalitarianism. Here, we first confirm that our refined concept of public gender egalitarianism is not itself multidimensional—that attitudes toward gender equality in politics do in fact hang together with attitudes toward gender equality in the workplace—a crucial first step in the validation of latent variable measures like the PGE dataset (see, e.g., Hu et al. 2023). We used the survey items listed in Appendix A to estimate two separate indices of gender egalitarianism in politics and in the workplace. As shown in Figure 3.2, these two indices both correlate very highly with the PGE scores and with each other, reinforcing the conclusion that public gender egalitarianism exists as a single dimension across countries and years.

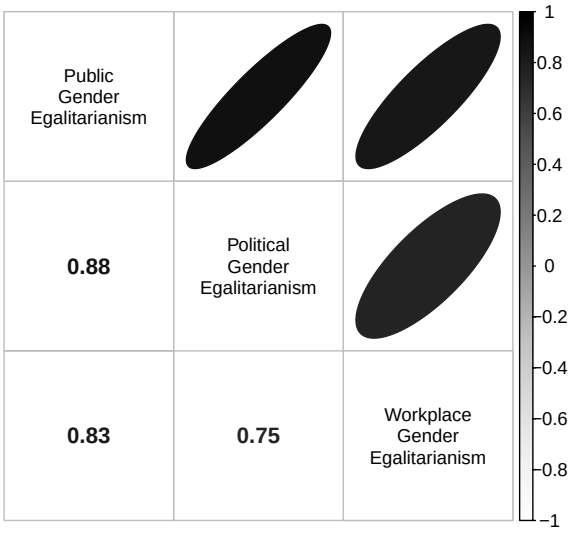


Figure 3.2.: Pairwise Correlations Among PGE Index and Separate Political and Workplace Egalitarianism Indices

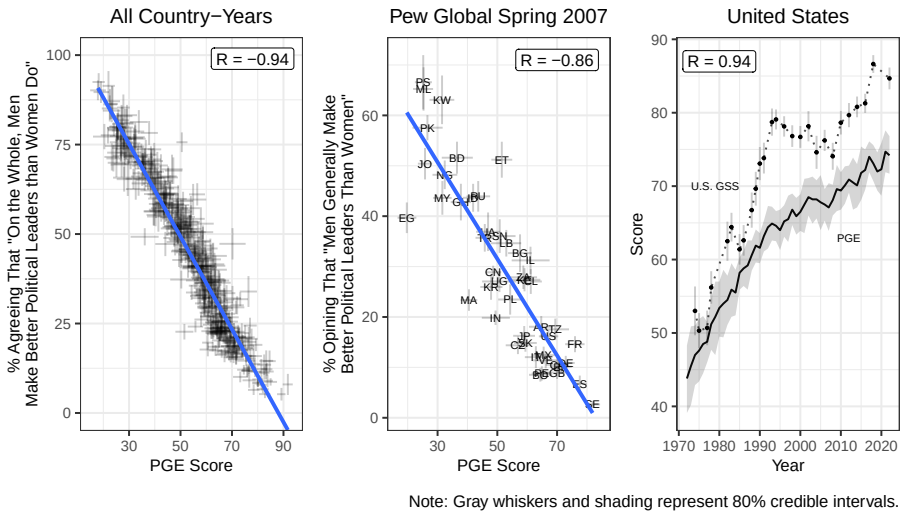


Figure 3.3.: Convergent Validation: Correlations Between PGE Scores and Individual PGE Source Data Survey Items

Like Caughey, O'Grady, and Warshaw (2019, 684–85), we provide evidence of the measure's validity with convergent validation and construct validation. Convergent validation refers to showing that a measure is empirically associated with alternative indicators of the same concept (Adcock and Collier 2001, 540). Here, we compare PGE scores to responses to individual source-data survey items that were used to generate our estimates, that is, we provide an 'internal' validation test (see, e.g., Caughey, O'Grady, and Warshaw 2019, 689; Solt 2020b, 10). In the left panel of Figure 3.3, we examine the four-point question on political leaders mentioned above, the most common item in the source data across all country-years. Then, in the center panel, we look at the question that provides the most data-rich cross-section in the source data, which asked whether respondents felt "men generally make better political leaders than women" and was included in Pew Global's Spring 2007 survey. Finally, in the right panel, to evaluate how well the PGE scores capture change over time, we

focus on the item with the largest number of observations for a single country in the source data, which asked respondents to the U.S. General Social Survey whether they agreed or disagreed that "most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women." In every case, the correlations—estimated taking into account the uncertainty in the measures—are in the expected direction and very strong.[1]

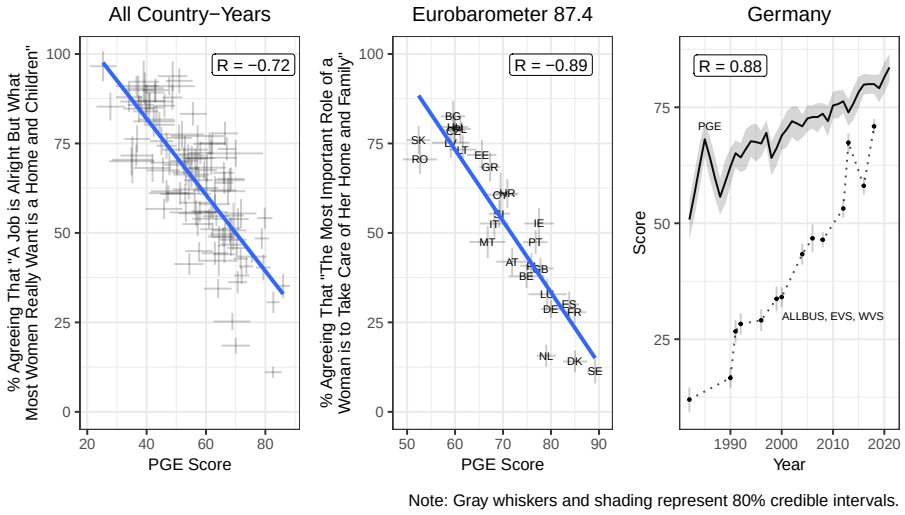


Figure 3.4.: Construct Validation: Correlations Between PGE Scores and Individual 'Balancing' Gender Egalitarianism Survey Items

We continue, then, to construct validation, which refers to demonstrating, for some *other* concept believed causally related to the concept a measure

[1]The uncertainty in the PGE score and in the percentage in the population who would agree with the item does not substantially affect the correlation with the political leadership question, but failing to account for this uncertainty would overstate the correlation with the Pew item, at R = -0.88, and the U.S. GSS item, at R = 0.97. We take up the issue of the importance of taking uncertainty into account when working with the PGE data in a subsequent section.

seeks to represent, that the measure is empirically associated with measures of that other concept (Adcock and Collier 2001, 542). In Figure 3.4, we look to individual survey items not included in our source data but tapping a related category of gender egalitarianism, namely questions that ask how women should balance opportunities in the public sphere with their traditional duties in the private sphere. Assuming that attitudes that women should prioritize housework and childcare over paid employment and politics—or convictions that there will be negative consequences if they do not—will lead to less gender egalitarian opinions with regard to these latter, public-sphere activities, evidence for this theoretical relationship will provide construct validation for the PGE scores. Exemplars of such items across all available country-years ("a job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children" from the WVS and EVS), in cross-section ("the most important role of a woman is to take care of her home and family" from the Eurobarometer 87.4), and in time series ("a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works" from the German ALLBUS, WVS, and EVS) all show strong correlations with the PGE scores.

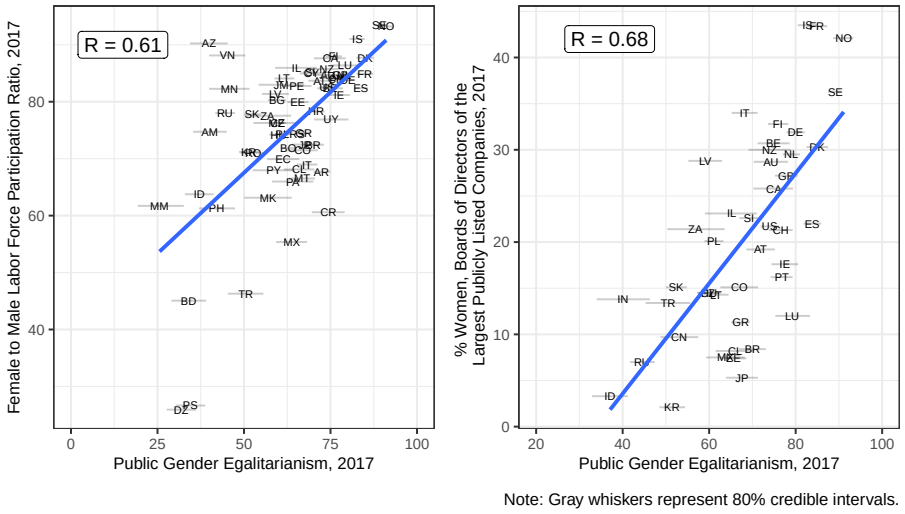


Figure 3.5.: Construct Validation: Correlations Between PGE Scores and Indicators of Workplace Gender Equality

Finally, Figure 3.5 shows additional tests of construct validation. As attitudes toward gender egalitarianism in the public sphere plausibly both cause and are caused by women's gains in the workplace, strong relationships between the PGE scores and measures of workplace gender equality provide construct validation for our measure. In the left panel of Figure 3.5, we compare the PGE scores to the ratio of women's to men's labor force participation rates in 67 countries in 2017, drawing on data compiled by the Statistics Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2020). In the right panel, we plot the PGE scores against the percentage of women on the boards of directors of the largest publicly listed companies in 43 countries, also in 2017 (see OECD 2020). Both correlations are strong. Together, this evidence of construct validation and convergent validation attests to the validity of the PGE scores as measures of public opinion towards gender equality in the public sphere.

3.4. Public Gender Egalitarianism Around the World

Attitudes toward gender equality in the public sphere vary greatly across countries. Figure 3.6 and Figure 3.7 display the most recent available PGE score for each of the 126 countries and territories in the dataset. Together, they underscore the geographic breadth of the PGE dataset, which allows the study of countries and regions too often neglected in political science research (see Wilson and Knutsen 2022).

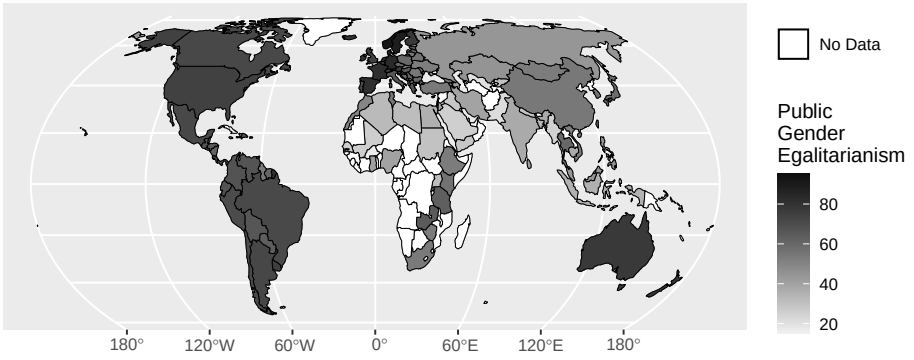


Figure 3.6.: PGE Scores Around the World

Figure 3.7.: PGE Scores, Most Recent Available Year

Figure 3.7 shows that the Scandinavian countries and Germany are at the top of this list, along with Puerto Rico, which has had women of both of its major parties serve as chief executive and as recently as 2020 had a woman from each party holding the two most prominent elected offices on the island. The latest scores for Burkina Faso, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Saudi Arabia have them as the places where public opinion is least favorable to gender equality in the public sphere. The PGE scores vary considerably across countries. Next, we examine this variation more closely in each of the world's regions.

3.4.1. Europe

We turn first to Europe, the region with the largest number of countries in the PGE database. Figure 3.8 depicts how the point estimates of the most recent PGE score for each country vary across the region. The map reinforces that the public in many northern and western European countries have some of the most egalitarian views toward women in politics and the workforce in the world. Led by Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, nearly all of these countries have PGE scores of 75 or higher in the most recent available year. Gender egalitarianism tends to be lower in the countries to the east and southeast. The lowest levels of gender egalitarianism in Europe were observed in Ukraine, Slovakia, and Moldova. It should be noted, however, that the point estimates of the most recent available PGE scores in even these latter countries still attained or approached 50, indicating that roughly half the population holds egalitarian views. Gender egalitarianism is generally a widely held attitude among European publics.

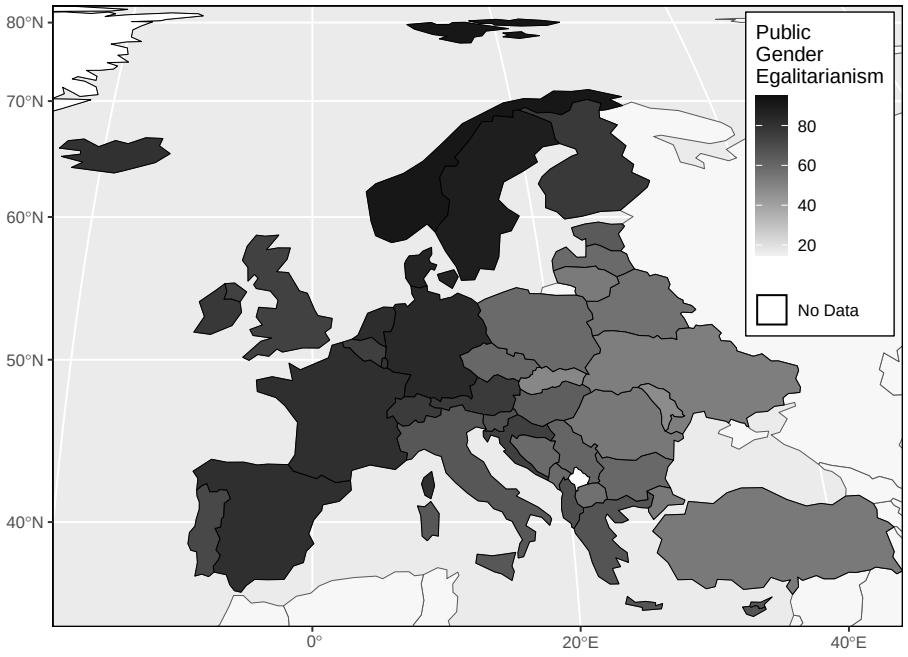
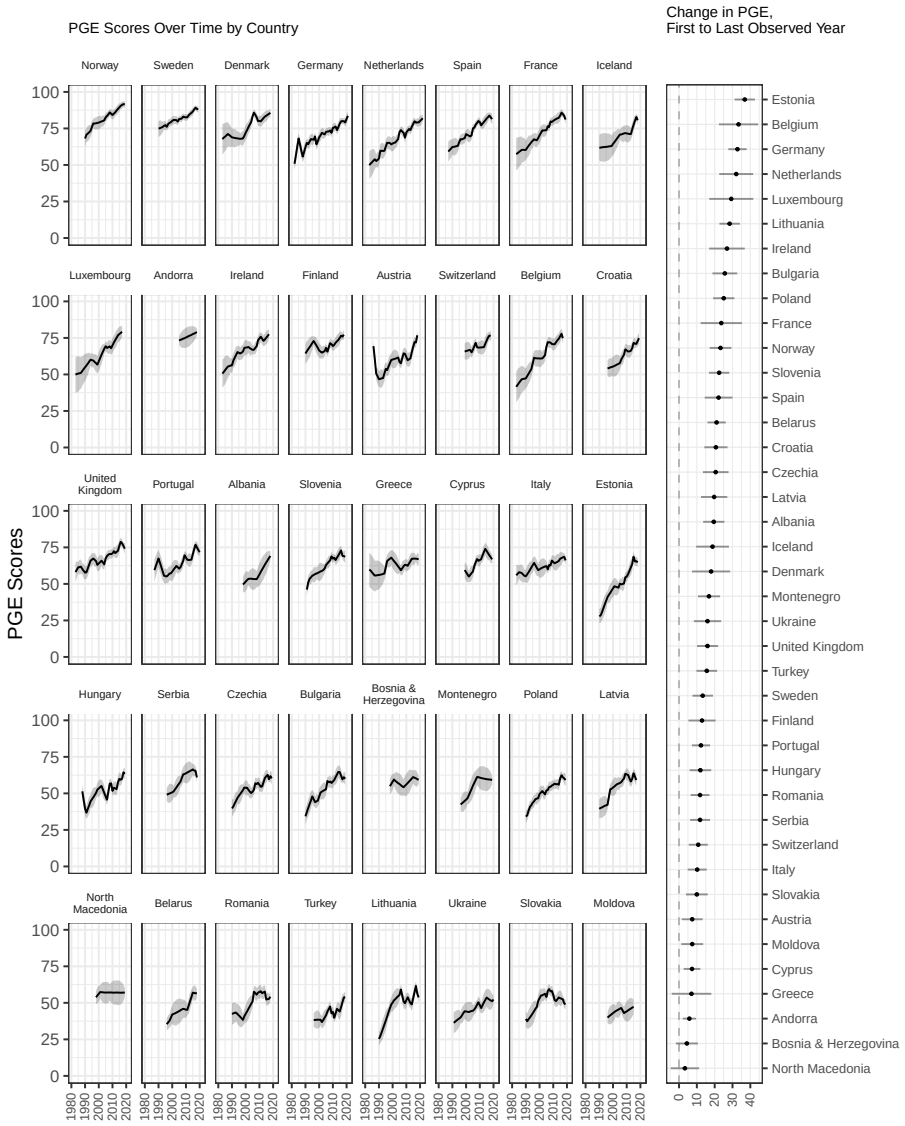


Figure 3.8.: PGE Scores Across Europe, Most Recent Available Year

Figure 3.9 displays how PGE scores have changed over time in the forty European countries for which estimates are available. The biggest changes in gender egalitarianism over the observed years occurred in Estonia, Germany, and the Benelux countries of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The PGE scores in each of those countries were estimated to have increased by 30% or more of the measure's theoretical range. On the other hand, shifts over time in the public's views toward gender equality were indiscernible in Moldova, Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia. Although some temporary declines are easily seen in this figure, and egalitarianism dips recently in a few, none of the countries of Europe exhibited lower levels of public gender egalitarianism in the most recent observed year than in their first observed year.



Note: Countries are ordered by their PGE scores in their most recent available year; gray shading and whiskers represent 80% credible intervals.

Figure 3.9.: PGE Scores in Europe Over Time

3.4.2. Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean encompass the next largest number of countries and include one of the places with the world's most gender egalitarian attitudes with regard to politics and the workplace, Puerto Rico. Figure 3.10 shows the most recent PGE scores, as point estimates, for the region. It shows that public opinion in Latin America has generally become favorable to gender equality in the public sphere. In addition to Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Costa Rica have PGE scores of 75 or higher in the most recent available year. Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil—countries with three of the four biggest populations in the region—also exhibit gender egalitarianism scores nearly that high. The Latin American countries with the lowest levels of gender egalitarianism are Guyana and Haiti, but as with the least egalitarian countries in Europe, even these countries' most recent PGE scores are around 50, putting them not far below the median of all countries.

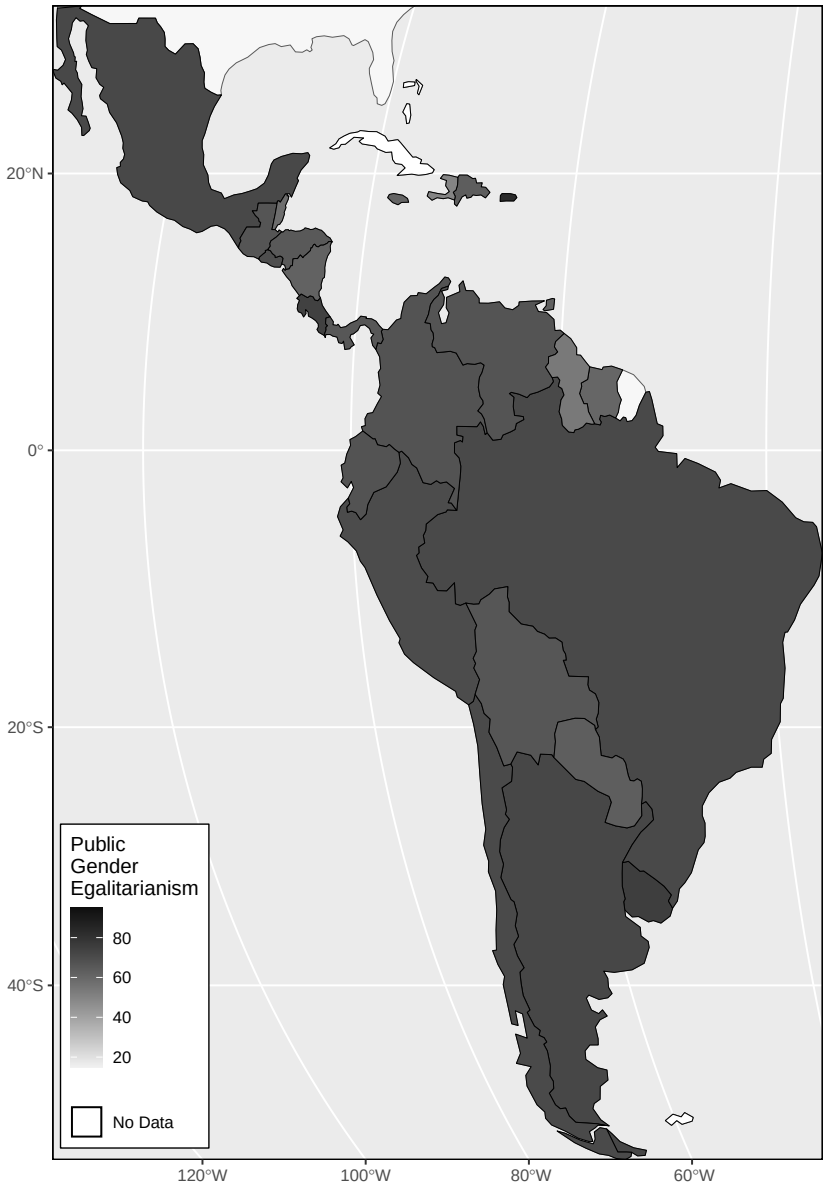


Figure 3.10.: PGE Scores Across Latin America and the Caribbean, Most Recent Available Year

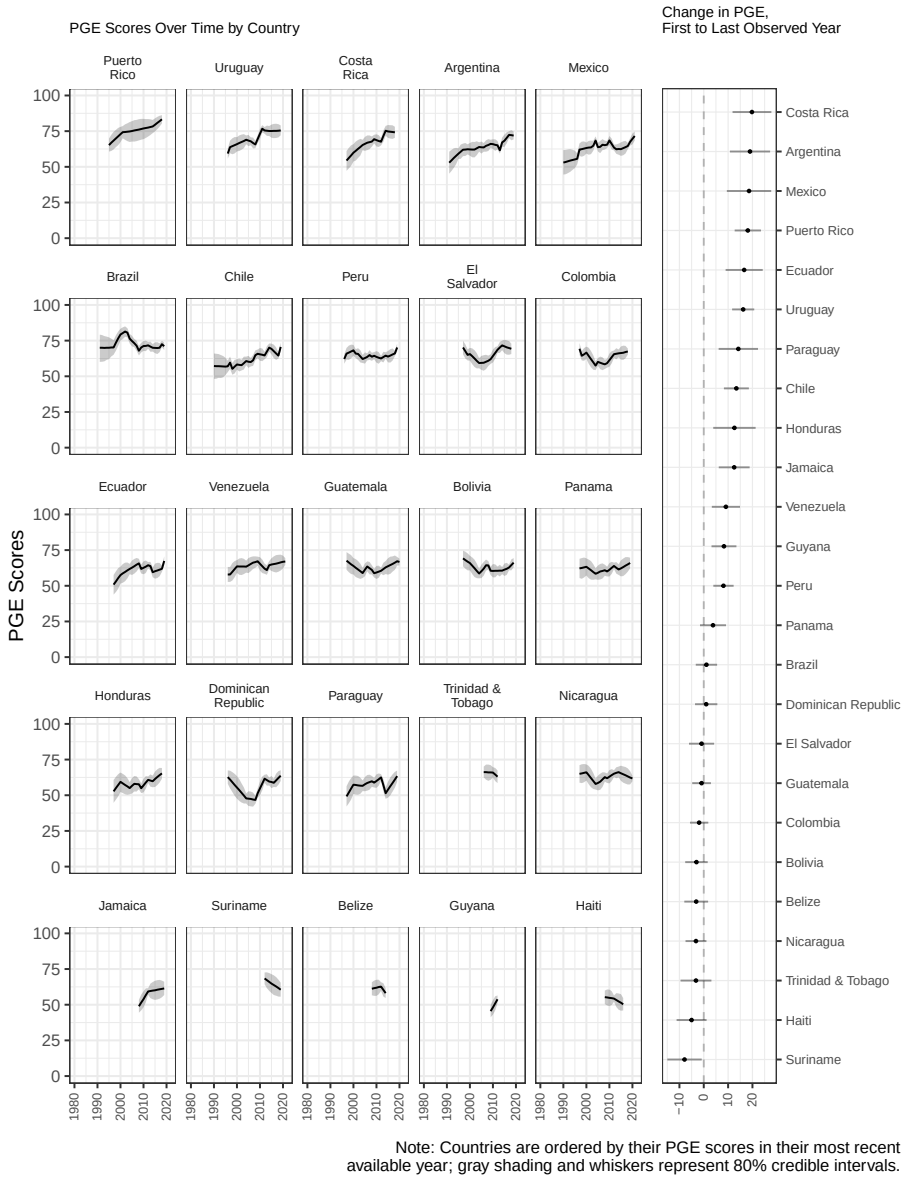


Figure 3.11.: PGE Scores in Latin America and the Caribbean Over Time

How PGE scores in Latin America and the Caribbean have changed over time is shown in Figure 3.11. Attitudes shifted the most in Costa Rica, Argentina, and Mexico, moving about a fifth of the theoretical range of the measure over the years spanned by our observations. But in nearly half of the region's countries, the difference in the estimated level of public gender egalitarianism from the first observed year to the last observed year is indistinguishable from zero. These countries are listed, from Panama to Suriname, towards the bottom of the rightmost pane of Figure 3.11. Still, only in Suriname did the public's views grow decisively less gender egalitarian, at least according to the 80% credible interval, over the observed time span.

3.4.3. East Asia and the Pacific

The countries of East Asia and the Pacific exhibit more variation than the countries of either of the two regions discussed above. Figure **??** shows the point estimates of the most recent PGE scores for each territory in the region. In New Zealand and Australia, these PGE scores exceed 75 in the most recent year available. On the other hand, attitudes remain decidedly opposed in gender equality in politics and the workplace in Myanmar. South Korea, where a PGE score just above 50 indicates the public is nearly evenly split in its views, constitutes the median of the region, with Japan and China close to either side.

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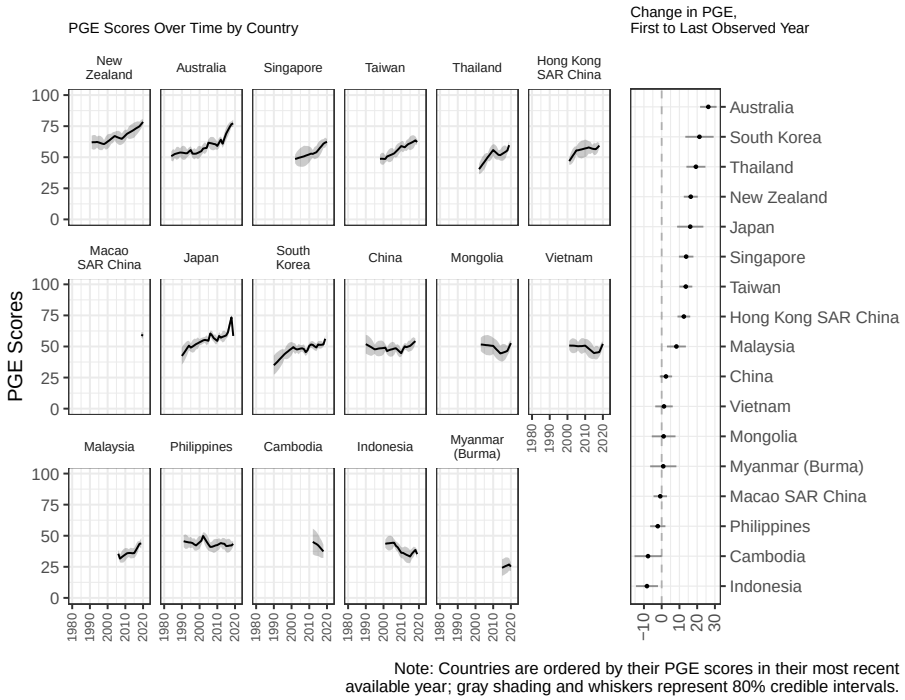


Figure 3.12.: PGE Scores in East Asia and the Pacific Over Time

Figure 3.12 shows how attitudes toward gender equality have evolved over time in the region. Comparing the first observed year to the last, nine of the seventeen countries and territories saw gains in public gender egalitarianism whose 80% credible intervals exclude zero, with the biggest increases occurring in Australia, South Korea, and Thailand. In six places—China, Vietnam, Mongolia, Myanmar, Macao, and the Philippines—the change from the first to last observed year is not distinguishable from zero. The public in both Cambodia and Indonesia registered a relatively small but statistically discernible decline in gender egalitarianism over the time observed.

3.4.4. The Middle East and North Africa

The available survey data described in the first section of this chapter allows us to estimate public gender egalitarianism in fifteen countries across the Middle East and North Africa. The most recent point-estimate PGE scores that resulted in these countries are mapped in Figure 3.13. Attitudes are most egalitarian at the western end of the Mediterranean, exceeding .6 in both in Lebanon and in Israel. Public gender egalitarianism scores of over .5 are found in Tunisia and Morocco. Views toward equality between women and men at work and in politics are more negative in the rest of the region, particularly in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Yemen. The most recent PGE score is roughly 25 in each of these last three countries.

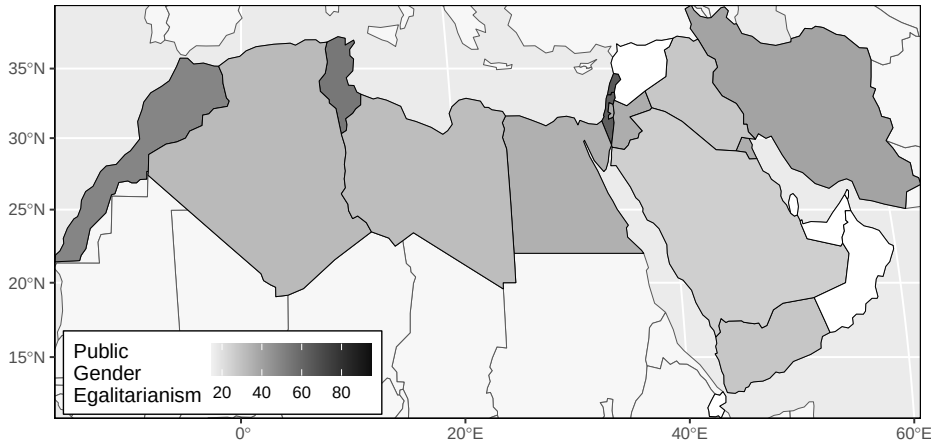


Figure 3.13.: PGE Scores Across the Middle East and North Africa, Most Recent Available Year

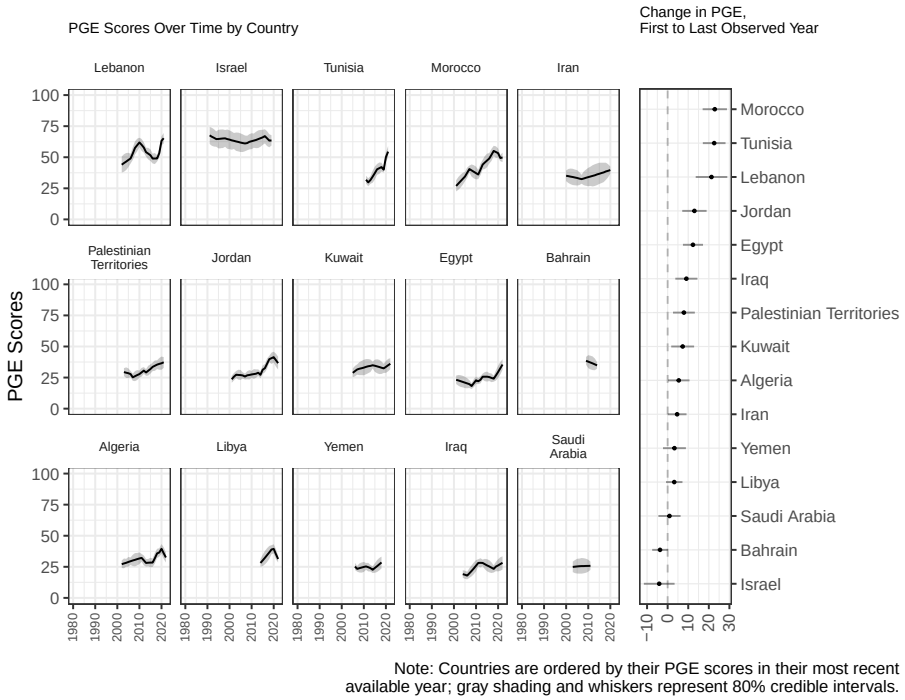


Figure 3.14.: PGE Scores in the Middle East and North Africa Over Time

The trend over time in how the public considers gender equality in each of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa is plotted in Figure 3.14. Most of the countries for which data are available have seen some increase over the time observed, and indeed in Morocco, Tunisia, and Lebanon, these increases exceeded a fifth of the entire theoretical PGE scale. Gains in gender egalitarianism were not distinguishable from zero in Algeria, Yemen, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. Public gender egalitarianism was estimated to decline over the years observed in Bahrain and Israel, though only in the former country does the 80% credible interval of this drop

exclude zero.

3.4.5. Sub-Saharan Africa

Although sub-Saharan Africa is a large region encompassing over forty countries, it is also among the parts of the world most neglected by survey research. Moreover, the premier survey of the region, the Afrobarometer, unfortunately does not include questions regarding gender equality in politics or work. As a result, even the PGE dataset includes only fourteen countries in the region, and generally over relatively short time periods. Still, these fourteen countries include eight of sub-Saharan Africa's ten most populous, missing only Congo-Kinshasa and Angola, and together the included countries account for nearly two-thirds of the region's total population.

Figure 3.15 maps the point estimates of the most recent PGE scores of these countries. Zambia and Tanzania are the countries where public opinion is the most gender egalitarian, with scores over 60, in the region. Kenya, South Africa, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe score at or above 50 in the most recent available year. Of these countries, attitudes toward gender are least egalitarian in Sudan, Senegal, Mali, and particularly Burkina Faso. The most recent point estimates for Burkina Faso are the lowest of all of the countries in the PGE dataset (see Figure 3.7).

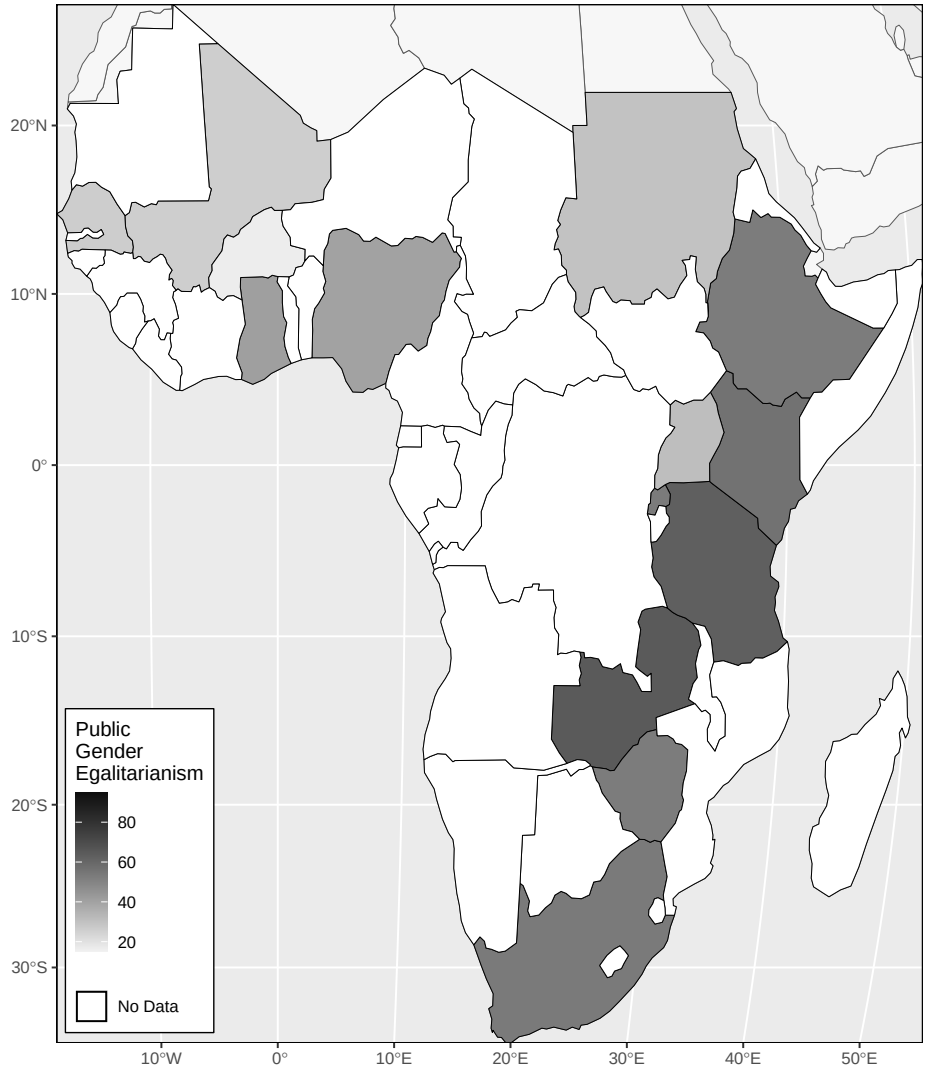


Figure 3.15.: PGE Scores Across Sub-Saharan Africa, Most Recent Available Year

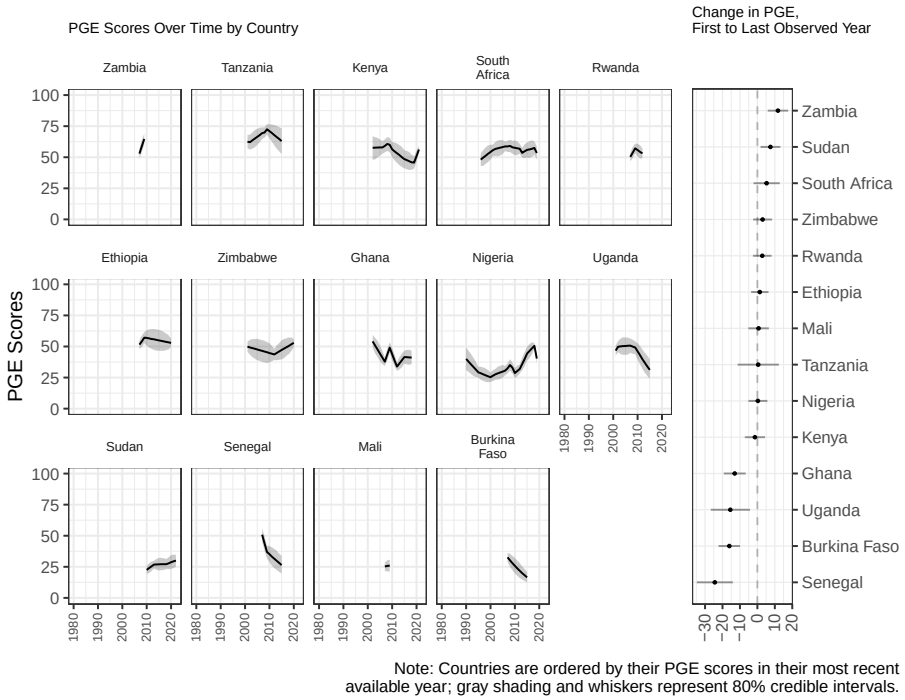


Figure 3.16.: PGE Scores in Sub-Saharan Africa Over Time

Figure 3.16 shows how the public's views on gender equality in the public sphere have changed over time, and the differences across sub-Saharan countries are stark. The sparse data on attitudes in Zambia, covering only the three-year period from 2007 to 2009, indicates there was a small but sharp uptick in egalitarian views during that time. Of the fourteen countries included in the PGE data, only Sudan also saw an increase in public gender egalitarianism from the first observed year to the last, albeit a small one and from a very low base. Attitudes shifted considerably over time in Tanzania and Nigeria, but ended up roughly where they began in both of these cases. Trends in Ghana, Uganda, Burkina Faso, and Senegal

all exhibit well-estimated declines in gender egalitarian public opinion.

3.4.6. Central Asia

The availability of relevant survey data allows better coverage of the countries of Central Asia than of sub-Saharan Africa, with only Tajikistan and Turkmenistan excluded from the PGE dataset for want of surveys. The most recent year of PGE point estimates available in the region is mapped in Figure 3.17. Only in Georgia does this score exceed 50, and there only barely: gender egalitarian views are not widespread in this part of the world. Across the region, public opinion is least favorable to gender equality in the public sphere in Uzbekistan. The point estimate of the most recent PGE score, that is, putting aside uncertainty, is scarcely above 20 in that country, making it one of the least gender egalitarian countries in the PGE dataset (see Figure 3.7).

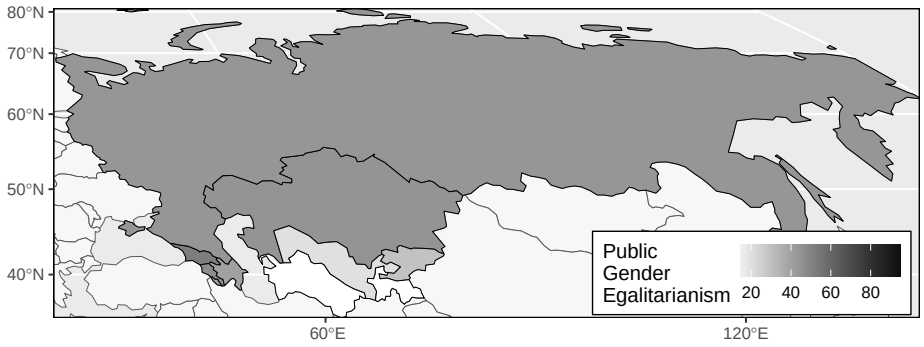


Figure 3.17.: PGE Scores Across Central Asia, Most Recent Available Year

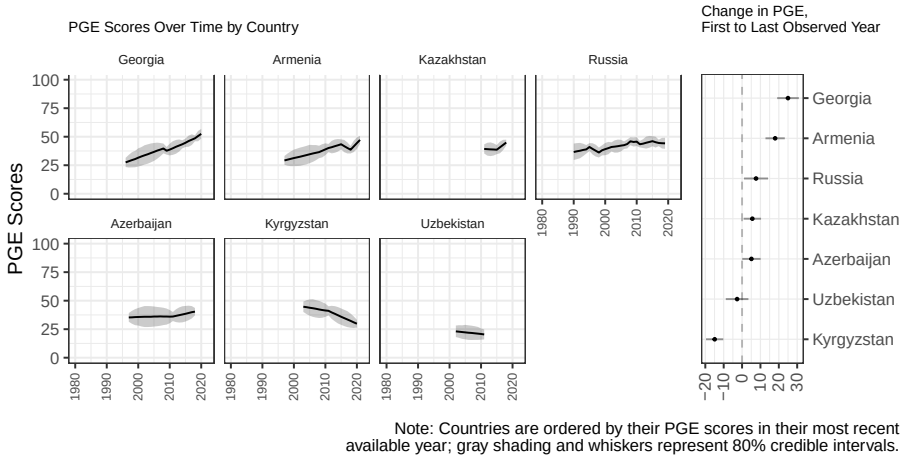


Figure 3.18.: PGE Scores in Central Asia Over Time

How PGE scores have changed in Central Asia over the years is depicted in Figure 3.18. Georgia and Armenia have seen attitudes toward gender equality trend upwards over the past quarter-century by roughly a fifth of the PGE scale's range or more. Public gender egalitarianism has increased slightly and slowly from the first to last observed year in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan. Uzbekistan saw little change. But according to the PGE data, public opinion regarding gender equality declined considerably in Kyrgyzstan.

3.4.7. South Asia

Across South Asia, the available survey data allows us to estimate PGE scores for only five of the region's seven countries; there are no estimates for Afghanistan or Bhutan. The top panel of Figure 3.19 provides a map showing the most recent score, as a point estimate, for each of the remaining countries. These estimates are below 50 for all of the South Asian countries: indeed, only for Sri Lanka does 50 even fall within the 80% credible interval. The public in each of these countries is, in the aggregate, opposed to gender equality in politics and in the workforce. This is particularly true in Pakistan, where the most recent PGE score is estimated to be below 25, among the lowest in the PGE database (see Figure 3.7).

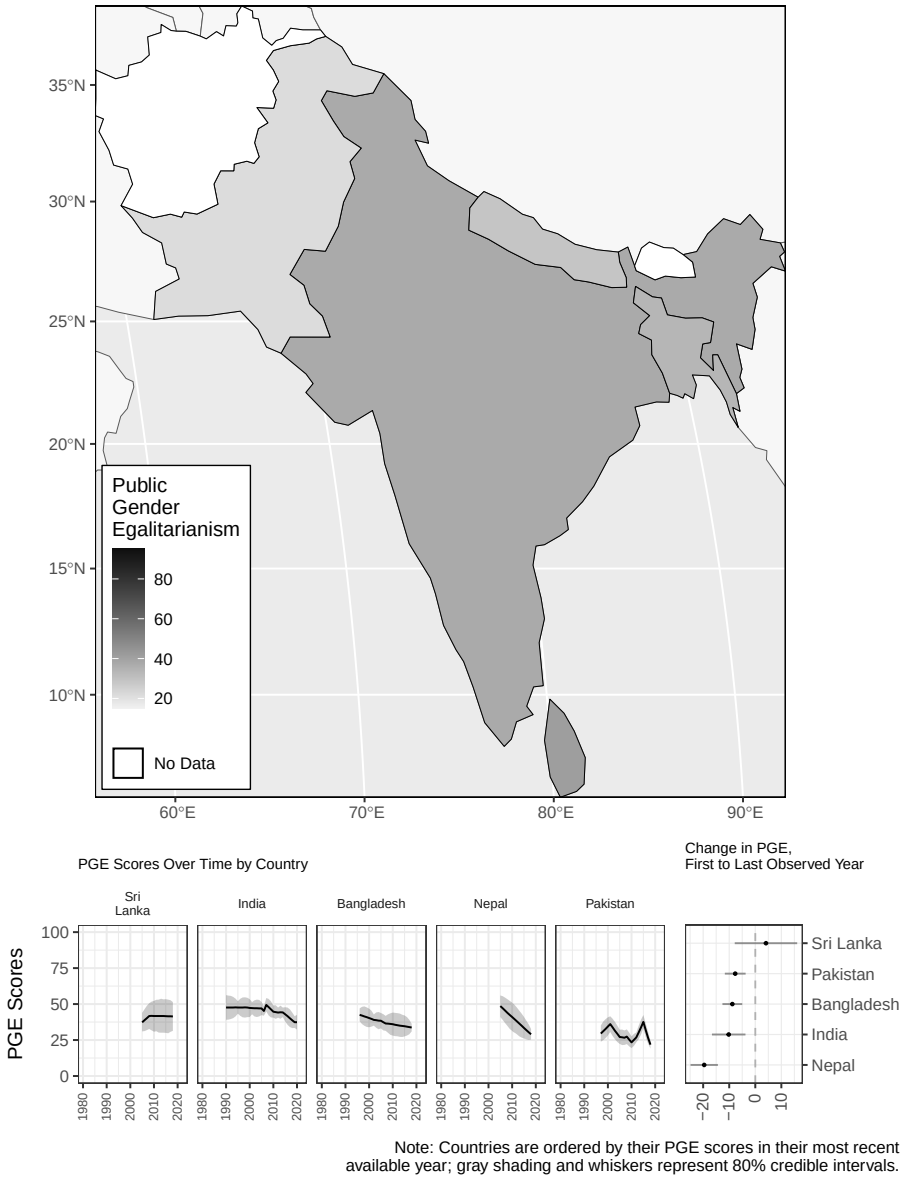


Figure 3.19.: PGE Scores Across South Asia, Most Recent Available Year

Moreover, as shown in the trends over time are shown at the bottom of the figure, public attitudes toward gender equality in most of these countries have been veering downward. Only in Sri Lanka do the available data suggest that views have remained unchanged since the first observed year, 2005. In Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India, PGE scores appear to have declined by roughly a tenth of the index's full range, and in Nepal they have fallen by approximately twice that amount.

3.4.8. North America

Canada and the United States comprise the last region of our survey of public gender egalitarianism around the world. As shown in the top panel of Figure 3.20, the point estimates of both countries' most recent PGE scores are fairly high. Each is around the 75 mark, comparable to such countries as Austria and Croatia in central Europe, Costa Rica and Mexico in Latin America, and Australia in the Pacific, but substantially lower than the most egalitarian countries of northern and western Europe, Puerto Rico, or New Zealand (see again Figure 3.7).

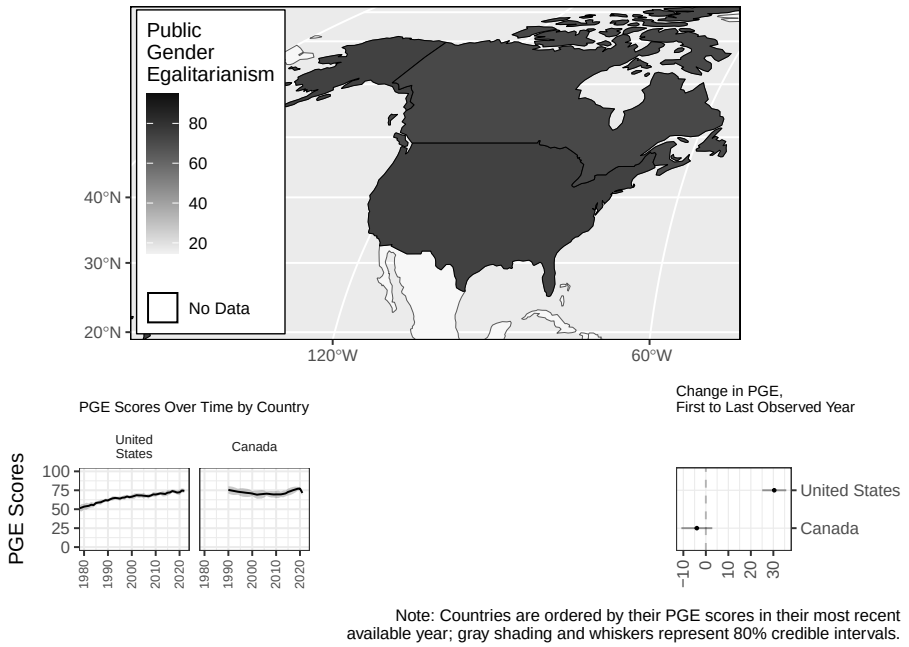


Figure 3.20.: PGE Scores Across North America, Most Recent Available Year

Their similar recent scores notwithstanding, the lower panels of Figure 3.20 show that public gender egalitarianism in Canada and in the United States followed very different trajectories over the past three decades. In the United States, PGE scores have climbed slowly but rather steadily over this time. In fact, although this time frame does not entirely appear on the plot, the public's views toward gender egalitarianism in work and politics have grown more positive in this fashion since 1972, gaining some 30% of the full theoretical range of the PGE index since then. Canadians' attitudes, on the other hand, were already quite gender egalitarian in 1990, the first year for which PGE scores in the country are available. In the intervening years, egalitarianism may have fallen slightly, only to recover in the latter half of the 2010s and then again decline somewhat after 2020. The difference between the first and last observed years in Canada cannot be distinguished from zero.

3.5. Conclusions

Despite ample theorizing on the role of public opinion regarding gender equality in politics and the workplace—that is, macroegalitarianism—empirical evidence has been limited, consisting of studies of one or a few cross-sections or based on dubious proxies. The reason for this regrettable outcome is the want of data on this concept that is comparable both across countries and over time. The PGE dataset addresses this need.

It does so by compiling the available survey data on the subject and estimating a latent variable model built to take into account the both the differences in the items asked—i.e., their incomparability—and the variation across countries and years in the number of these items that are available—that is, their sparsity. The result is a set of complete time-series in countries around the world, a comparable measure of the public's attitudes toward equality for women and men in the public sphere, the traditionally male domain of politics and paid employment, along with quantified uncertainty in this measure. The PGE dataset covers nearly

3,000 country-years, almost six times as many as provided by the most commonly asked single survey item.

We take advantage of this new measure of macroegalitarianism to address the dynamics of the long-standing questions on the interplay between collective attitudes on gender roles and the actions of parties and governments. In the next chapter, we consider the influence of macroegalitarianism on the election of women to national legislatures (see, e.g., Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Alexander 2012), and examine whether women legislators in turn shape attitudes.

4. Dynamic Democracy and Women's Election to Office

In the traditional view, politics is a man's game. From this perspective, the public sphere, both politics and the workplace, is unsuited to the participation of women, and elected office is considered to be a position for men only. Nonetheless, around the world in the rich democratic countries of the OECD, women have succeeded in winning election to seats in the national legislature. Such successes were once rare. In ten of these rich democracies, no more than one in twenty members of the lower house of the national legislature were women into the 1980s or even later. And success in gaining office remains uneven. At this writing, gender parity—equal numbers of men and women—has been achieved in the lower legislative houses of only two of these countries, Mexico and New Zealand. But women continue to number fewer than one in five legislators in twice as many of these rich democratic countries.

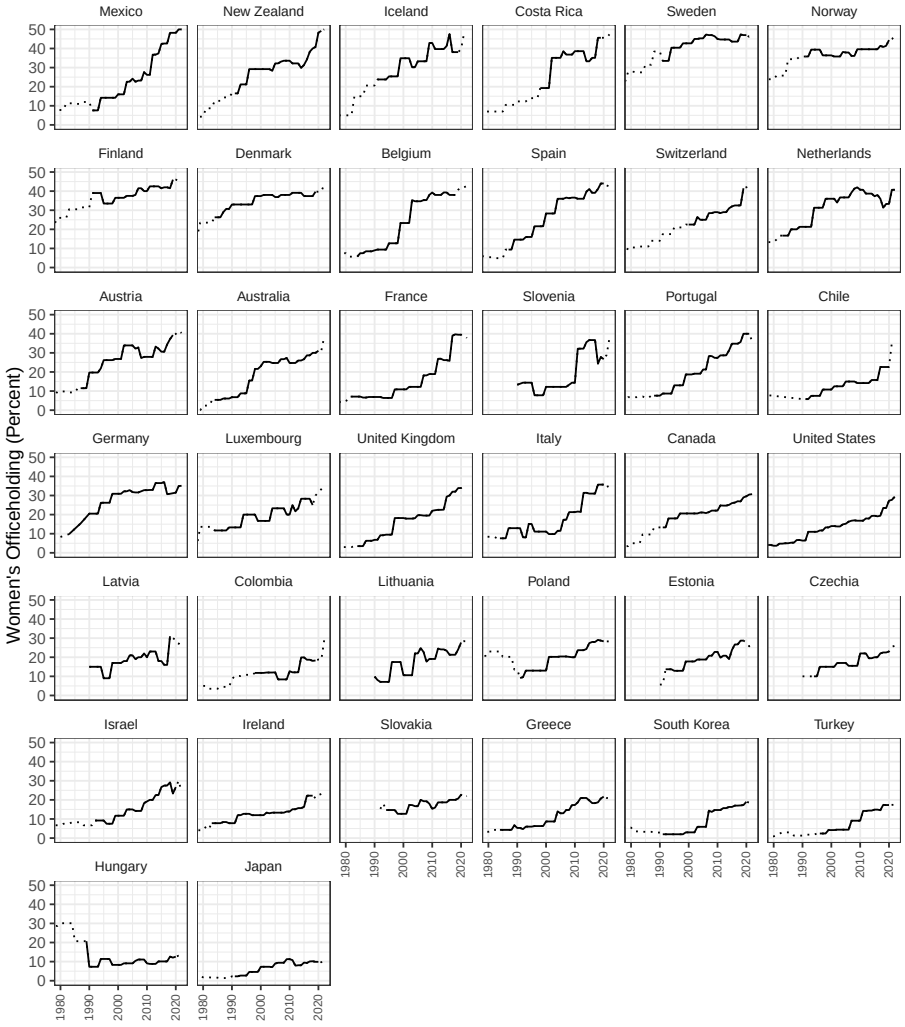
A note before continuing: the large and productive body of scholarship on women's officeholding, following Pitkin (1967), speaks in terms of women's *descriptive representation*. It does so, in part, to facilitate engagement with the study of officeholding by members of other historically disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic minorities (see, e.g., Mansbridge 1999; Wolak 2018) and the working class (see, e.g., Carnes 2016). We eschew that term here in the hope of avoiding confusion with our interest in *democratic* representation—whether the preferences of the public are made present in who holds office—which in Pitkin's typology is better classified as an

example of "substantive representation."[1]

Trends in the share of women elected to the lower houses of the legislature, the most commonly studied measure of women's officeholding, across the OECD countries over more than forty years can be found in Figure 4.1. The data are drawn from the Quota Adoption and Reform Over Time (QAROT) dataset (Hughes et al. 2019), supplemented with information provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2023). The OECD countries appear in order of women's percentage of legislative seats in the most recent available year. The differences are stark. Across much but not all of western Europe, women politicians have made rapid and substantial gains. These trends are perhaps most striking in Belgium and Spain. In the Nordics—Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark—parity has been relatively close, if yet unattained, for most or all of the twenty-first century. Along with Mexico, the Latin American countries of Costa Rica, Chile, and Colombia have seen sharp increases in the share of women in the legislature in their most recent elections, albeit from a range of previous values. On the other hand, any movement toward gender equality in legislative officeholding has been slow and halting in a number of countries, from Ireland and Greece to South Korea and Japan.

These differences across countries in women's officeholding have been closely studied. Case studies and cross-national work alike have found support for the elite-led theory described in Chapter 2. Both ways in which this theory suggests the supply of women candidates may be increased appear to work. Countries that employ electoral systems that include party lists have been found to elect more women than those without, evidence that party lists provide better opportunities for feminist activists to convince party leaders to run more female candidates—or indeed to supplant those leaders and do it themselves (see, e.g., Rule 1994, 18; Matland 2005, 101–5; Paxton, Hughes, and Barnes 2021,

[1]We thank Stephan Haggard for raising the concern for this confusion at the 2024 International Conference on Inequality and Social Policy in South Korea, hosted by the Korea Inequality Research Lab on the campus of Yonsei University in Seoul, August 19 and 20, 2024.



Note: Solid lines trace trends over the years covered in this chapter's analyses; dotted lines extend to years that were not included. Sources: Hughes et al. (2019); Inter−Parliamentary Union (2023).

Figure 4.1.: Women's Officeholding in the OECD

164–69). And the national quota laws advocated by these activists that, when adopted, require all parties to put forward a minimum share of women as candidates, likewise have been found generally to increase the share of women elected, if not typically by the amount their mandated candidate shares would perhaps lead one to expect (see, e.g., Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005; Schwindt-Bayer 2009; Paxton and Hughes 2015).

The role in this process of public opinion has attracted much less attention. Again, this is not because scholars do not think that the public is important. They certainly do. In the rich democracies that we are concerned with in this book, after all, the public is the electorate, and the mass-public theory described in Chapter 2 argues that the public is very important. But the limitations in the measures of public opinion available to researchers has constrained them to study countries at just one or a few time points (see, e.g., Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Alexander 2012) or to rely on very loose proxies such as predominant religion or the percentage of women already in office (see, e.g., Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001, 340–41; Claveria 2014; Barnes and O'Brien 2018). Cross-national and longitudinal investigation of, for example, the argument that such "attitudes influence both the supply of, and demand for, female candidates" has remained persistently a topic for future research (Paxton, Hughes, and Painter 2010, 47). Equipped with the PGE data, this chapter takes up the question of the role of public attitudes in the election of women to legislative office in the rich democratic countries.

To quickly review, the theory connecting gender egalitarianism in the public sphere with women's officeholding is straightforward. Where the public holds more egalitarian views toward women in politics and the workforce, voters will be more willing to elect female candidates running for office, and party gatekeepers will be more willing to allow women to run. In other words, more egalitarianism should be expected to increase both demand for and supply of women candidates, with the consequence that more women will win office.

Although women's share of the legislature does vary somewhat in the

course of most legislative terms—officeholders retire and are replaced, for example—those fluctuations are not really relevant to the explanations for officeholding that we have discussed, all of which focus on what happens in elections. Therefore, we examine only election years. Combining the data on women legislators presented in Figure 4.1 with the PGE database gives a substantial number of elections to study. In fact, across the 38 countries, there are 319 elections, for an average of more than eight elections per country. The sample is unbalanced, however: some countries hold elections more often than others, of course, but there are also longer series of PGE data for some countries than others.

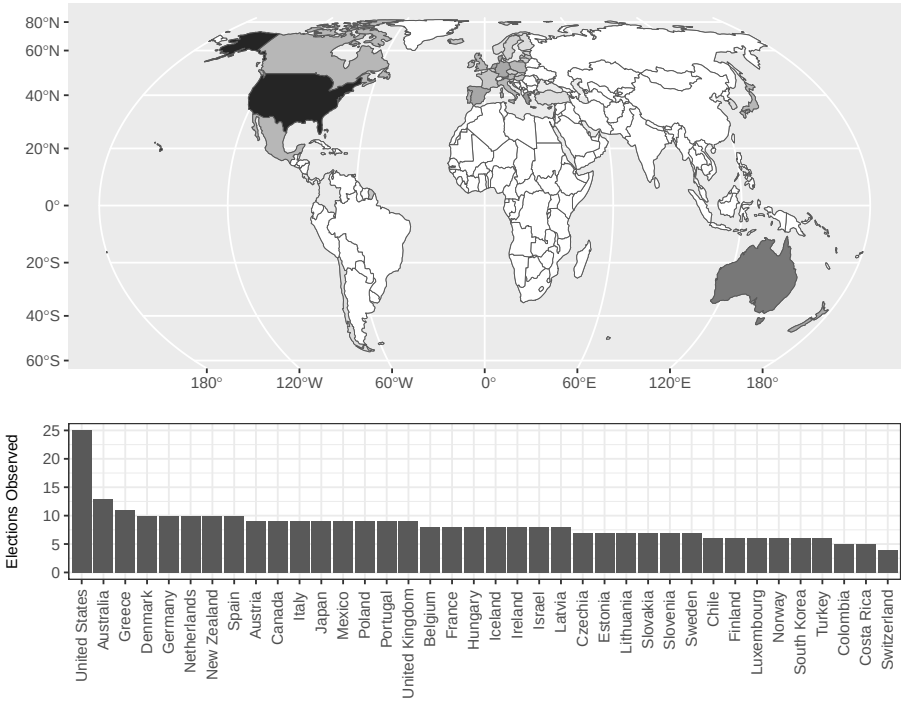


Figure 4.2.: Observed Democratic Elections in the OECD

The number of elections available for our analyses in each country are depicted in Figure 4.2. Our scale here runs from light to dark: the darker the country the more observed elections we have. The United States, with its short two-year terms to the House of Representatives and a series of PGE scores spanning a half century, has the most elections to examine, followed at considerable distance by Australia. Colombia and Costa Rica are observed in just five elections, and Switzerland in only four. Still, a solid majority of our countries, twenty-six of the thirty-eight, have been observed in at least eight elections, giving us some confidence that we have adequate data to capture not only the differences between the countries in which many women are elected and those with much smaller numbers of women in office but also and perhaps more importantly the dynamics of change over time. We will start, though, by looking at the raw bivariate data.

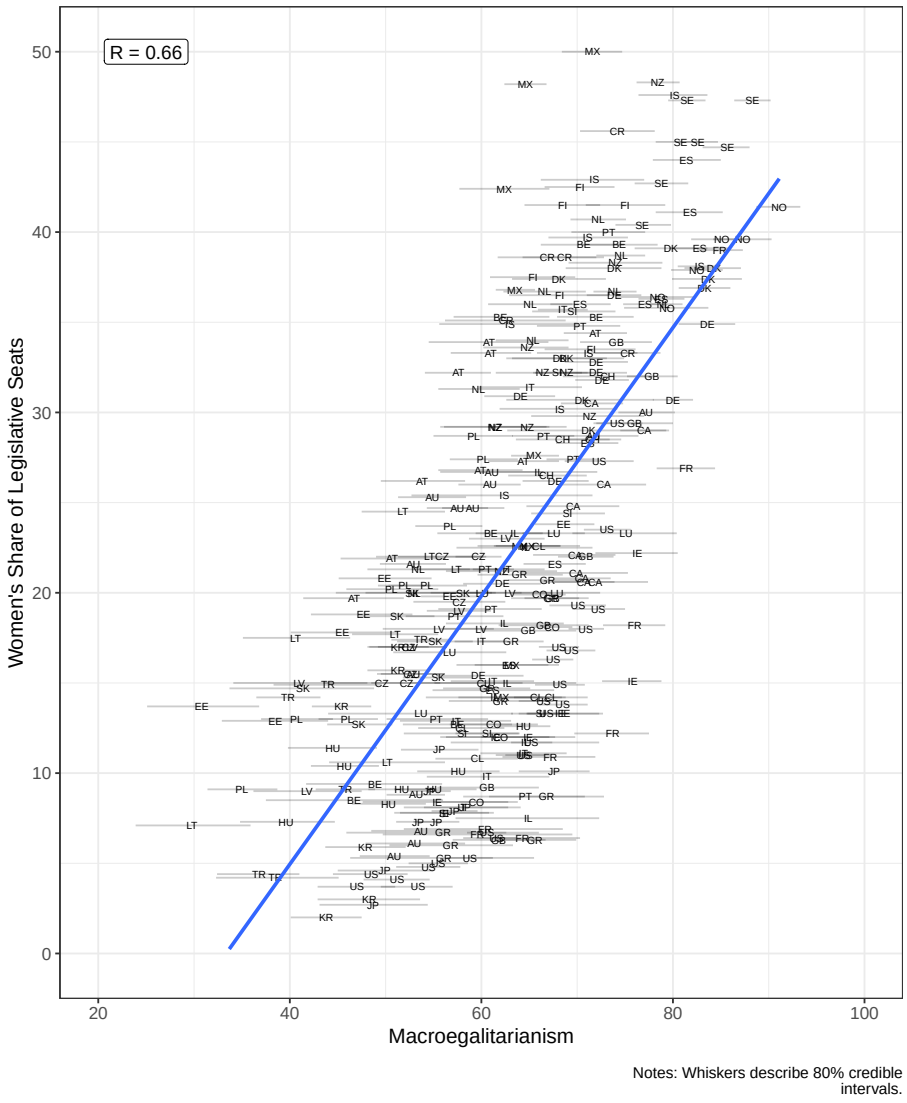


Figure 4.3.: Macroegalitarianism and Women's Share of Legislative Seats in OECD Democracies

Are macroegalitarianism and women's officeholding related? Every point in Figure 4.3 represents an election in a particular country, and each is labeled with that country's two-character codes assigned by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The figure's x-axis presents the country's macroegalitarism, as measured by its PGE score, in the year the election was held. And because the PGE scores are estimated with uncertainty, each point is shown with horizontal whiskers tracing its 80% credible interval. The plot's y-axis depicts the percentage of seats won by women in each election to the lower house of the national legislature in that election. There is a strong positive relationship between the two. Taking the uncertainty in the PGE scores into account, the bivariate correlation is .66. This is promising evidence for the mass-public theory, but there are many potential explanations for a strong correlation besides the theory that more egalitarian views among the public cause more women to win office.

4.1. Macroegalitarianism and Women's Officeholding in National Legislatures

To better assess whether macroegalitarianism in public opinion influences women's officeholding, we need a more sophisticated analysis. To start, we will need to take into account other potential explanations for when more women are elected to office, in particular, those offered by the elite-led theory. After all, public opinion may simply reflect cues provided by the activists and party leaders who play a central role in the elite-led theory. If that is the case, the strong relationship seen in Figure 4.3 would result from both public opinion (through these cues) and officeholding (through their successes in getting national quotas enacted and women candidates on party lists) being consequences of the strength of feminist activists. To rule out this potential source of spurious association, we control for the strength of any national legislative quotas for women and the presence of

an electoral system that includes party lists as well as a direct measure of the strength of the feminist movement.

Data on whether a country's electoral system contains at least a party-list component comes from the Democratic Electoral Systems Around the World dataset (Bormann and Golder 2022). Elections held under list proportional representation, mixed-member proportional, and mixed-member majoritarian electoral rules are coded one for this variable, while all other elections are coded zero. Some 77% of the elections in our sample were held with such rules.

Data on national quotas are drawn from the QAROT database and updated with information from the Gender Quotas Database maintained by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2023). Hughes et al. (2019), which presents the QAROT data, provides an exceptionally good measure of quotas, the de facto threshold. The de facto threshold is based on "a country's stated quota threshold and the breadth of a quota's actual reach" (Hughes et al. 2019, 225). It is the combination of these two factors that determine the mandated minimum share of women on the ballot. For example, South Korea requires 50% of candidates on each party's list to be women. However, this quota applies exclusively to the proportion of the legislature that is elected from party lists, which, under the country's mixed-member electoral system, is only about a sixth of the National Assembly. For the remaining roughly five-sixths of the seats that are elected from single-member districts, only 30% of the candidates are required to be women. Taking these quota levels and their respective breadths of application together, the de facto threshold in Korea is about one-third of each party's candidates. There are other important aspects of national legislative quotas, such as whether and how they are enforced or if the position of women on an electoral list is specified. Still, the de facto threshold provides a straightforward measure of the share of women candidates that is required to appear on the ballot, and we use it as our measure of national legislative gender quotas here.

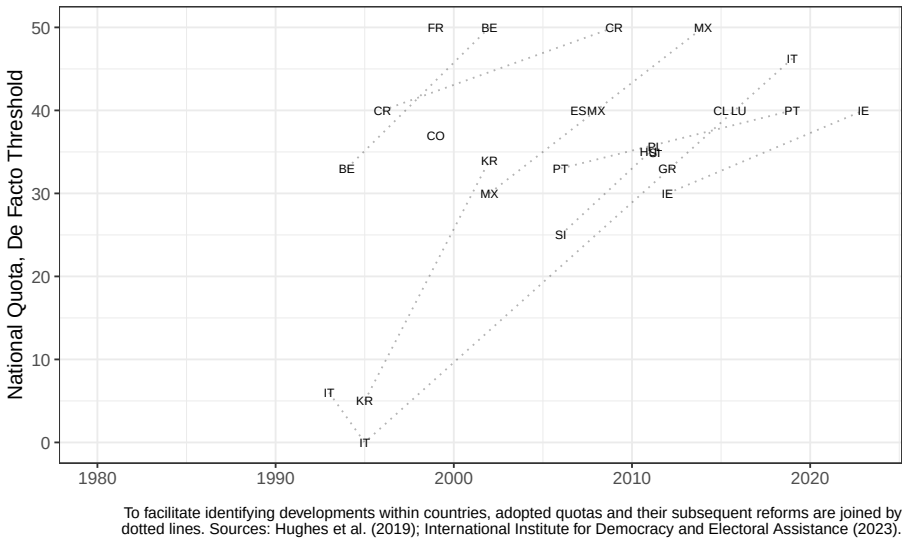
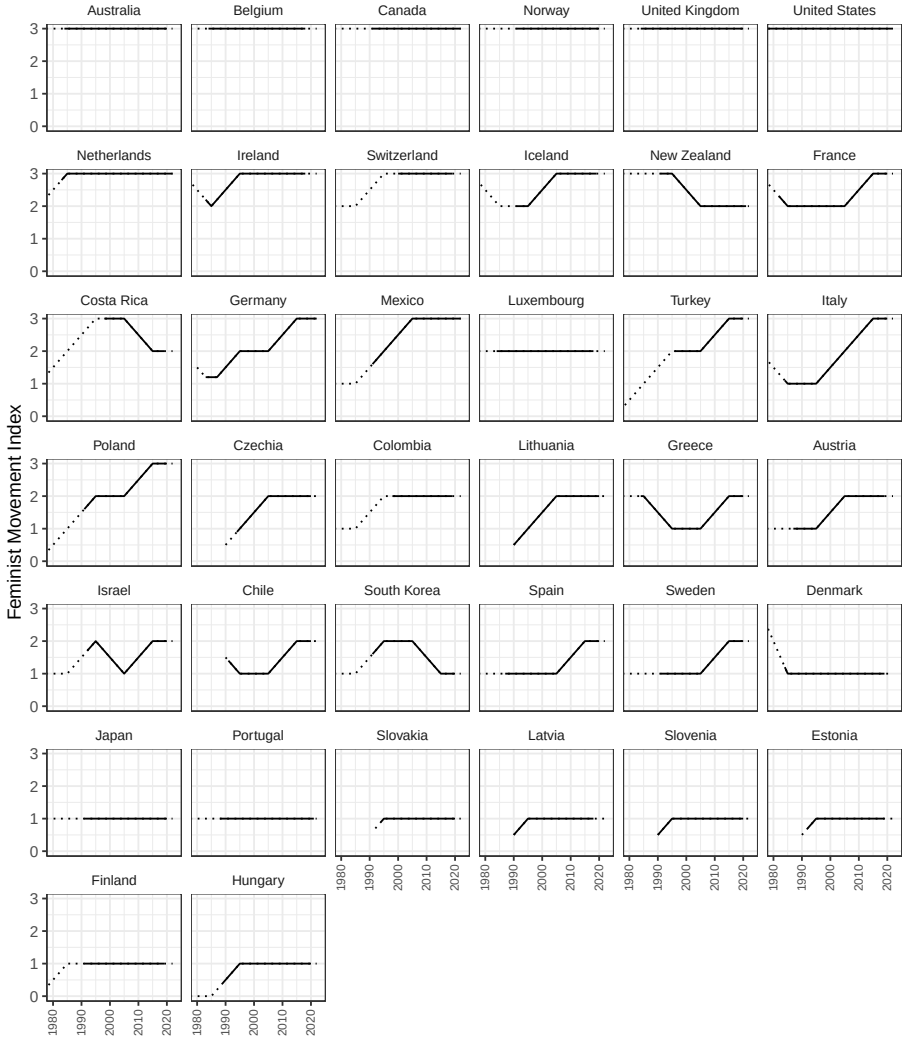


Figure 4.4.: Adoption and Reform of National Legislative Gender Quotas in OECD Democracies

Figure 4.4 shows the adoption and reform of national legislative gender quotas over time in the rich democratic countries of our study. Italy in 1994 was the pioneer among these countries, but its small quota was abolished just two years later. In later years, those quotas that have been adopted have been more demanding, and, as the dotted lines linking quotas and their subsequent reforms demonstrate, many countries that adopted quotas strengthened them over time. Belgium, Costa Rica, and Mexico, which along with France now have de facto quotas requiring that women make up half of all candidates, had earlier adopted lower quotas, and when Italy adopted a quota for the second time in 2019, its de facto threshold was nearly as strong at 46.25%.

Finally, the Feminist Movement Index (FMI), first presented by Htun and Weldon (2012) and updated in Forester et al. (2022), serves as our measure

of the overall strength of the feminist movement. Among the advanced democracies we consider here, FMI scores range from one to three. A score of one represents a feminist movement that is either weak or not independent from male-dominated organizations. Movements scored two are both stronger and autonomous from male-dominated organizations. The strongest autonomous feminist movements are scored three. How the FMI has changed over time across the OECD countries during the elections included in our analyses is shown in Figure 4.5.



Note: Solid lines trace trends over the years covered in this chapter's analyses; dotted lines extend to years that were not included. Source: Forester et al. (2022).

Figure 4.5.: The Feminist Movement Index in the OECD

With these data in hand, we can turn to how best to use them to test our theories. The dataset includes a series of time points representing years with democratic elections for each of the thirty-eight OECD member states. Pooling these time series and analyzing them together has two long-appreciated benefits (see, e.g., Stimson 1985, 916). On the one hand, examining changes over time can provide strong evidence of causality for even questions involving concepts like public opinion and women in office that are not subject to manipulation by researchers and so are ill-suited to experimental research. On the other, examining many countries can provide strong evidence that our conclusions are general and not specific to a particular, possibly exceptional, context. These are powerful advantages. But certain statistical difficulties associated with pooling time series have been long recognized as well (see, again, among others, Stimson 1985).

Shor et al. (2007) demonstrates that two of the difficulties with pooled time series are best addressed using a Bayesian multilevel model that includes varying intercepts for both space and time. Such models take into account the distinctive structure of our data as comprised of observations of a particular country in a particular year. They incorporate the fact that what we see in an observation is influenced by *where* we are looking. All observations of Spain, for example, may share distinctively Spanish traits. If these distinctive traits are unknown and ignored, our model will consistently under- or over-estimate women's officeholding for all of our Spanish observations over time.[2] But these distinctive traits can be modeled by including a varying intercept for each country, a parameter that shifts our prediction of the outcome for all observations from that country by the same amount. Together, the country parameters avoid the problems caused from those national traits for which we do not have data or otherwise omit from our analysis. These models also recognize that what we observe is also influenced by *when* we are looking; to give an instance, all observations from 2020 may share peculiarities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and other events felt around the globe that

[2]This problem is a form of *heteroscadisticity*, a violation of the assumption of regression analyses that error variances are equal.

year.[3] These distinctive temporal characteristics are similarly modeled with a varying intercept for each year. The year parameters shift our predictions for all observations from a particular year equally to account for whatever 'time shocks' operated on all countries simultaneously at that point in time (Shor et al. 2007, 171–72).

Another persistent concern with in the analysis of pooled time-series data is that cross-country differences can be confused with over-time changes. Change in our explanatory variable followed in time by change in what we seek to explain provides strong evidence of causation. That our proposed cause and effect covary across countries, on the other hand, *may* reflect potentially different long-running and historical causal processes, but it may also reflect other, unmodeled cross-national differences. We follow Bell and Jones (2015) and employ the 'within-between random effects' specification to take into account the difference between change over time and differences across countries. To do this, we separate each time-varying predictor into its mean value for each country, which does not vary over time, and the difference between its value in a given year in a country and this country mean. The latter, time-varying difference variables capture the short-term causal effects of the predictors. The former, time-invariant country-mean variables reflect their often different long-run, historical effects as well as any country differences that would otherwise cause omitted-variable bias (Bell and Jones 2015, 137).

Yet another complication occurs when the processes observed are dynamic. That is, empirically, that past values predict current values and, theoretically, that there reasons to think that the past matters to the present. As in most events that unfold over time, that is true in this case. Here, in the present election, women serving in office in the just concluded legislative term may on the one hand enjoy the benefits of incumbency, but on the other they may be held to higher standards of conduct than their male peers. Either way, the extent of women's officeholding in the preceding

[3] Such contemporaneous correlation violates the regression assumption that, conditional on the model, the errors in our predictions are independent.

term can be expected to influence the extent of representation in this one. Given these circumstances, we include as a predictor the lag of the variable to be predicted, that is, its value at the time of the last election (see Keele and Kelly 2006).

One last source of problems is measurement uncertainty. As described in the previous chapter, our measure of macroegalitarianism, the PGE scores, are estimated with uncertainty as a result of the sparsity and incomparability of surveys addressing the topic. Because measurement uncertainty in a latent variable like the PGE scores can bias our the results of our analyses, to ignore it is to run the risk of drawing incorrect conclusions from the data (see Tai, Hu, and Solt 2024). We therefore incorporated the measurement uncertainty in the PGE scores into our analysis. The model was estimated using the `brms` R package (Bürkner 2017) with noninformative priors.[4]

Figure 4.6 presents the results. The shaded regions represent the posterior probability distributions; the higher the shading, the more likely that what each region depicts—here, one regression coefficient—takes on that value conditional on these data and this model. The dots mark the median values of these distributions, so half of the probability falls to either side. The whiskers trace the 80% credible intervals; that is, there is an 80% probability that the regression coefficient falls within that range, again, conditional on these data and this model. The bottom panel shows, as expected, that officeholding is dynamic: the percentage of legislators who are women after the previous election strongly predicts the percentage of legislators who are women after this one. In other words, incumbency matters. But the unstandardized coefficient is less than one, which suggests that absent the actions of elites and the support of the public as considered in the model, officeholding would decline rather than grow over time.

[4]By default, `brms` assigns linear regression coefficients improper flat priors over the real numbers. That means that, before considering the data and model, the probability that a coefficient takes on any value, from negative infinity to positive infinity, is assumed to be equal. Weakly informative priors—for example, normal(0, 2)—yield substantively similar results for all of these analyses.

This provides suggestive evidence that women in office are held to a higher standard than their male colleagues.

The regression coefficients for the variables suggested by the elite-led and public opinion theories appear in the top panel of the figure. For the variables regarding electoral lists, these coefficients are scaled to the values of zero (the electoral system does not include party lists) and one (the system does have party lists). The coefficients of the other variables are each multiplied by a factor of two times the variable's standard deviation; this puts all of the coefficients on the same scale for easy comparison of their magnitudes (see Gelman 2008).

Continuing to work up the plot's y-axis, consider the variables about the presence of a party list component in a country's electoral system. The coefficient for the country mean of this variable indicates that in countries with party lists women make up 2.4 percentage points more of the legislature, with an 80% credible interval of 1.3 to 3.6 percentage points, than in countries without party electoral lists. Again, this is the difference in women's officeholding *between* these two groups of countries, those with lists and those without, in a single election. Because the women who win office in one election then shape women's officeholding in future elections, this difference compounds over time. Taking into account the dynamics of the model through the lagged value of women's officeholding, over time, the total effect of this difference is estimated to reach 14.6 (80% c.i.: 8.6 to 20.6) points. However, while this may be the long-term historical effect of electoral system differences on women's officeholding, it may also reflect unobserved differences between these countries that correlate with their electoral systems. Therefore, although this coefficient provides some evidence for the electoral-list aspect of the elite-led theory, it should not uncritically understood as evidence that party lists *cause* more women to be elected.

Our best evidence for causation comes instead from the variable labeled as the *difference* in the presence of an electoral list. This variable allows us to estimate the difference between having a list and not having a list over time

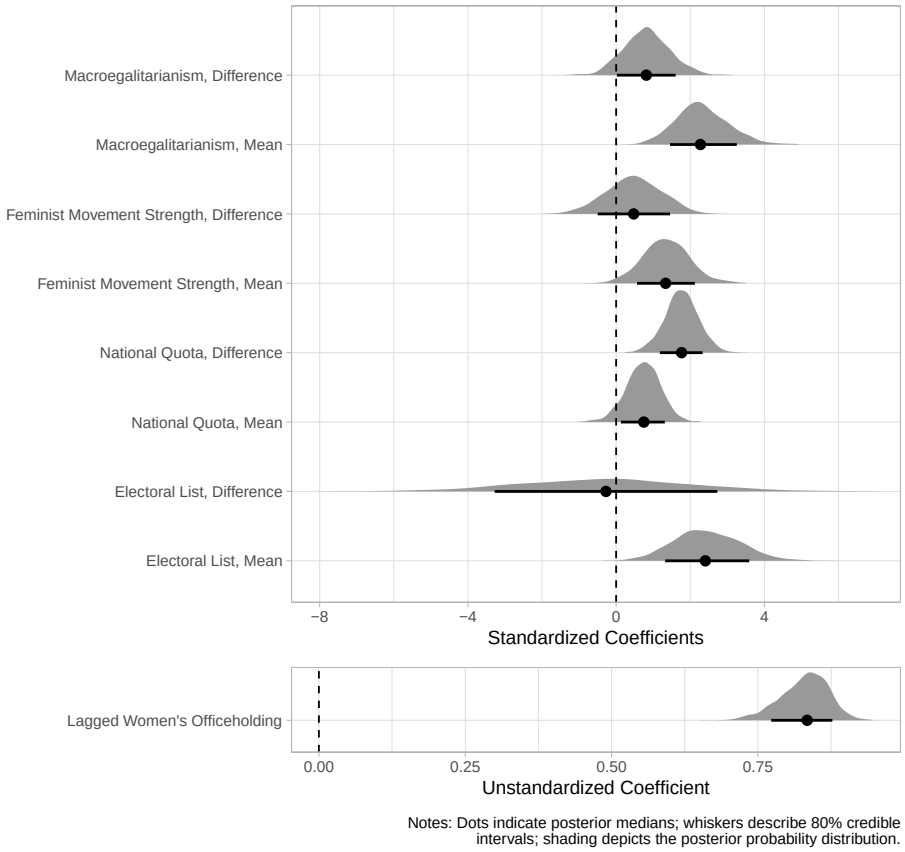


Figure 4.6.: Predicting Women's Officeholding in OECD Democratic Elections

within the data for a single country. As looking within a country holds so many possible but unobserved alternate causes constant, the grounds for considering the estimated coefficient for this variable evidence of causation are considerably more solid. Unfortunately for the purposes of estimation, in this case only three countries in our dataset—New Zealand, Japan, and France—adopted electoral-system reforms that changed whether there was a party list over the elections we observe. Further, in each of these countries, the reform came after only the first observed election. As a result, there is little leverage in these data to precisely estimate a causal effect, and indeed the range of credible values is very wide, from -3.3 to 2.7 percentage points. Because this range includes zero (marked in the figure with the dashed vertical line), these data and this model provide no support for a short-run effect on women's officeholding of party-list electoral systems at all.

The findings with regard to national legislative gender quotas, on the other hand, are much stronger. The difference in women's officeholding *between* a country that never had a quota of female candidates and a country whose de facto threshold required an average, over all of its observed elections, of 22% of each party's candidates to be women (that is, two standard deviations higher on this variable) is 0.7 (80% c.i.: 0.1 to 1.3) percentage point in one election, reaching 4.4 (80% c.i.: 0.6 to 9.2) points over time. And across elections *within* a country, as national legislative gender quotas increase, women's officeholding also increases. From an election when the national quota was ten points below the country's observed mean to one when the quota was ten points above its mean (again a two standard-deviation difference), women's officeholding is estimated to increase by 1.8 (80% c.i.: 1.2 to 2.3) percentage points immediately, and this effect compounds to 10.3 (80% c.i.: 6.9 to 15.5) points over time. The within-country estimate is strong evidence of a causal process. Consistent with earlier research on this elite-led argument, this model shows that the hard work of women's organizations and feminist activists to win passage of national legislative quotas for women pays off in more women in office, albeit at rates of perhaps little better than half of the required share of

candidates on average.

We next turn to the direct effect of the strength of the feminist movement, net of the opportunities granted by electoral lists and success in enacting national quotas. Compared with countries with a mean feminist-movement index score one standard deviation lower than average, in countries whose feminist-movement index score was one standard deviation higher than average the share of the legislature held by women was 1.3 (80% c.i.: 0.6 to 2.1) percentage points higher in one election and 7.9 (80% c.i.: 3.3 to 13.1) points higher over time. Changes in the strength of the feminist movement over time, moreover, are less consistently associated with gains in women's officeholding. A one-point increase in the FMI index is estimated to yield a short-run 0.5 percentage-point increase in women's officeholding, but with an 80% confidence interval from -0.5 to 1.5 points, or 2.8 (80% c.i.: -3.1 to 8.8) over time. It appears that—net of the other variables in the model—the strength of feminist movements has only a limited and inconsistent direct influence on women's officeholding.

At last, we reach the top rows of the plot, where we find the coefficients for macroegalitarianism. Once more, the country mean of this variable captures the differences between countries. Compared to a country like Czechia or Latvia with a mean PGE score of about 54, a standard deviation below the OECD average for this variable in our dataset, a country like Canada or Iceland with a mean PGE score of about 72, a standard deviation above, is estimated to elect women to 2.3 (80% c.i.: 1.5 to 3.3) percentage points greater share of the national legislature in a single election. Given that officeholding is dynamic, with gains in one election persisting in future elections, this difference grows to 13.7 (80% c.i.: 10 to 17.4) percentage points over time. As was the case with our other country-mean variables, this result may reflect historical processes over the long term; it may reflect some degree of reverse causation, in which women in office shape the public's views of gender equality; and it may also simply be due to other country-level factors correlated with public opinion that have yet to be identified, measured, and included in the model. This ambiguity is not actually a problem, as this result's utility is not really in a causal

interpretation. The true importance in this model of the result for the country-mean of macroegalitarianism is that it isolates the consequences of changes in egalitarian public opinion over time.

And the topmost row of Figure **??** shows the posterior probability distribution for the difference in PGE over time within each country. With this dataset and model, this distribution indicates that there is a 90.45% chance that this variable has a positive effect on women's officeholding. Compared to an election held when egalitarian public opinion is a standard deviation below the country's mean, an election held when egalitarian public opinion is a standard deviation above that value will yield 0.8 (80% c.i.: 0 to 1.6) percentage points more women in the national legislature, compounding over time to 4.9 (80% c.i.: 0 to 8.7) percentage points.

This result provides strong evidence that the public's views on gender equality in the public sphere of politics and work actually does shape the extent to which women gain an equal share of officeholding. But it suffers two problems. The first problem is that there is a disconnect between the theory of democratic representation and this evidence. With regard to officeholding, that theory concerns processes that largely or entirely take place within political parties. It is *political parties* that react to an increasingly egalitarian public by running more women candidates in races they can win. But the observations in the foregoing analysis are of countries' entire legislatures. At that level, we cannot really see what going on within political parties, really not at all. And if rising macroegalitarianism coincides with, for example, greater success of green and left parties that are committed to gender equality, then the results just described may be the consequence of aggregation bias. If it is the ideology of the parties elected to the legislature that actually drive women's officeholding, looking across all parties at once as we just did may generate mistaken conclusions.

The second problem is that all of this focuses on just one component of dynamic democracy: it has ignored public responsiveness. Although it looks at change over time within countries, there remains some perhaps minute possibility that the associations underlying our findings reflect the

share of legislators who are women influencing gender egalitarian public opinion rather than the public's gender egalitarianism influencing the share of women elected to the legislature.

In the following sections, we address each of these two problems directly. First, to ensure that our findings are not clouded by aggregation bias, we collect and analyze data at the party level. And second, both to confirm that our assessment of democratic representation is not clouded by reverse causation and also to test the theories of public responsiveness, we explicitly incorporate the effect of the extent of women's officeholding achieved in an election on the public's subsequent gender egalitarianism.

4.1.1. A Further Test: Democratic Representation Within Parties

One critique of the foregoing is that the theories outlined in Chapter 2 work through the actions of parties, and that therefore they are most appropriately tested using data measured at the party level. We compiled data on women's share of each each party's legislative representation after each election, drawing on the datasets employed in Weeks et al. (2023) and Adams et al. (2023) and supplementing with national sources. The resulting data comprises over 1400 observations.

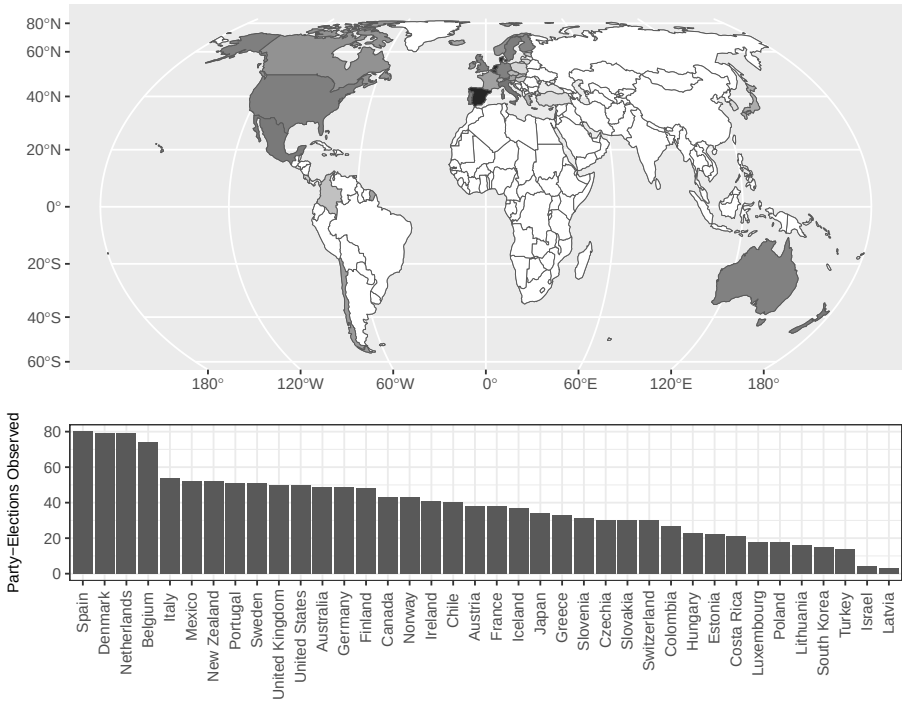


Figure 4.7.: Party-Election Observations in OECD Democracies

Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of these party-election observations across countries. Spain, Denmark, and the Netherlands have the most party-elections observed, while Israel and Latvia have the fewest. The United States, although observed over many more elections than other countries as shown in Figure 4.2, has only two parties represented in Congress, so it is no longer an outlier in terms of the number of observations when party-elections are the unit of analysis.

Because some political parties in a country have many elected women among those who sit in the legislature and others have few or none, the

bivariate relationship between national public opinion on gender equality and women's officeholding within parties is fairly noisy, as Figure 4.8 reveals. Compared to when both concepts are measured at the country-year level, as in Figure 4.3, the correlation falls by nearly half. The points in this plot are faded by the parties' share of the legislature: the largest parties appear darkest and the smallest are very light. (Parties whose delegations in the lower house of the national legislature are mostly women tend to be smaller, but otherwise there is little apparent relationship between party size and women's officeholding; across all observations, the bivariate correlation R is just -0.16.) In any event, the much looser relationship between public opinion and officeholding seen here reinforces the concern that difference between the units observed in the analysis first presented and those at which the theories are thought to operate may influence our conclusions.

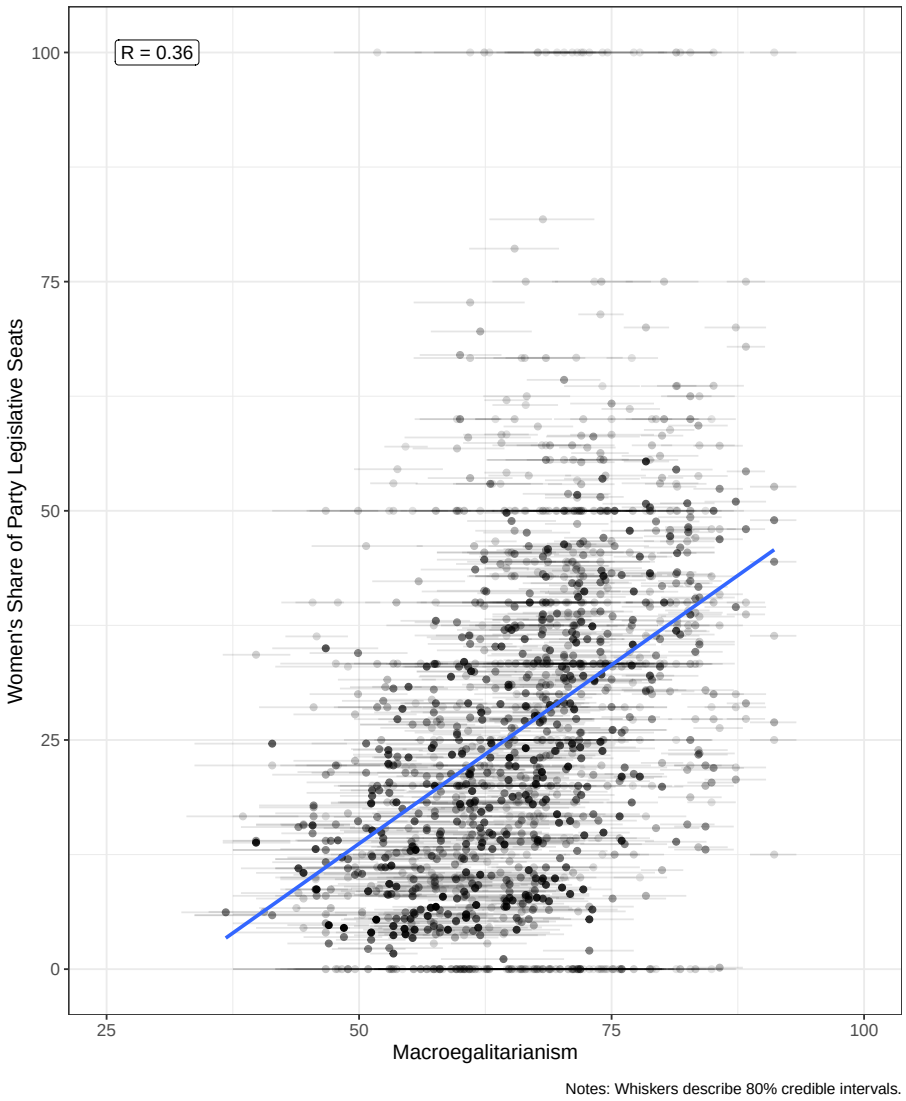


Figure 4.8.: Macroegalitarianism and Women's Share of Party Legislative Seats in OECD Democracies

Indeed, previous research finds that little explains women's share of party legislative delegations. Weeks et al. (2023, 434), for example, examined women's representation in 175 parties across 30 European countries over an average of 3.5 elections. The only variable to emerge from that paper's analysis of this party-level evidence was the lagged value of women's share of the legislature: in countries where a greater share of women was elected to the last legislature, parties are predicted to elect a greater share of women to the next one. There was no evidence that countries' electoral systems had systematic effects, nor did a variety of party characteristics. Even the hypothesis that national legislative quotas lead to a greater share of women legislators within parties found no support.

Regardless, as in the previous analysis, we include information about the country-mean and the difference from this mean for the feminist movement index created by Forester et al. (2022) and the presence of a party list in the electoral system drawn from the the Democratic Electoral Systems Around the World dataset dataset (Bormann and Golder 2022). We refine our measure of gender quotas to incorporate information regarding parties' voluntary quotas. The gender quota variables for a party are based highest quota applicable to a party's legislative candidates, whether set by national legislation or by its own internal rules. The "within-between" specification of the model here employs the mean value of this variable for each party and the difference from that mean. The model also accounts for the complex hierarchical structure of these data. As our party-election observations are cross-classified in the histories of parties and in country-elections, both being of those levels nested in countries, and country-elections are nested in years, the model also includes varying intercepts for each party, country-election, country, and year.

One factor supported in prior scholarship is party ideology. Caul (1999, 88) finds that, at three time points in the 1970s and 1980s, among parties in eleven European democracies and the United States, those with greener ideologies and those more to the left had larger shares of women among their elected legislators (see also, e.g., O'Brien 2018). Among more recent work, O'Brien (2018) examines parties in a dozen rich democracies from

1980 to 2013. That research finds that socialist and social democratic parties on the left—and especially green parties—elected more women than the liberal and agrarian parties of the center, the Christian democratic and conservative parties of the right, or the nationalist parties of the extreme right. We therefore also control for parties' memberships in these ideological groupings.

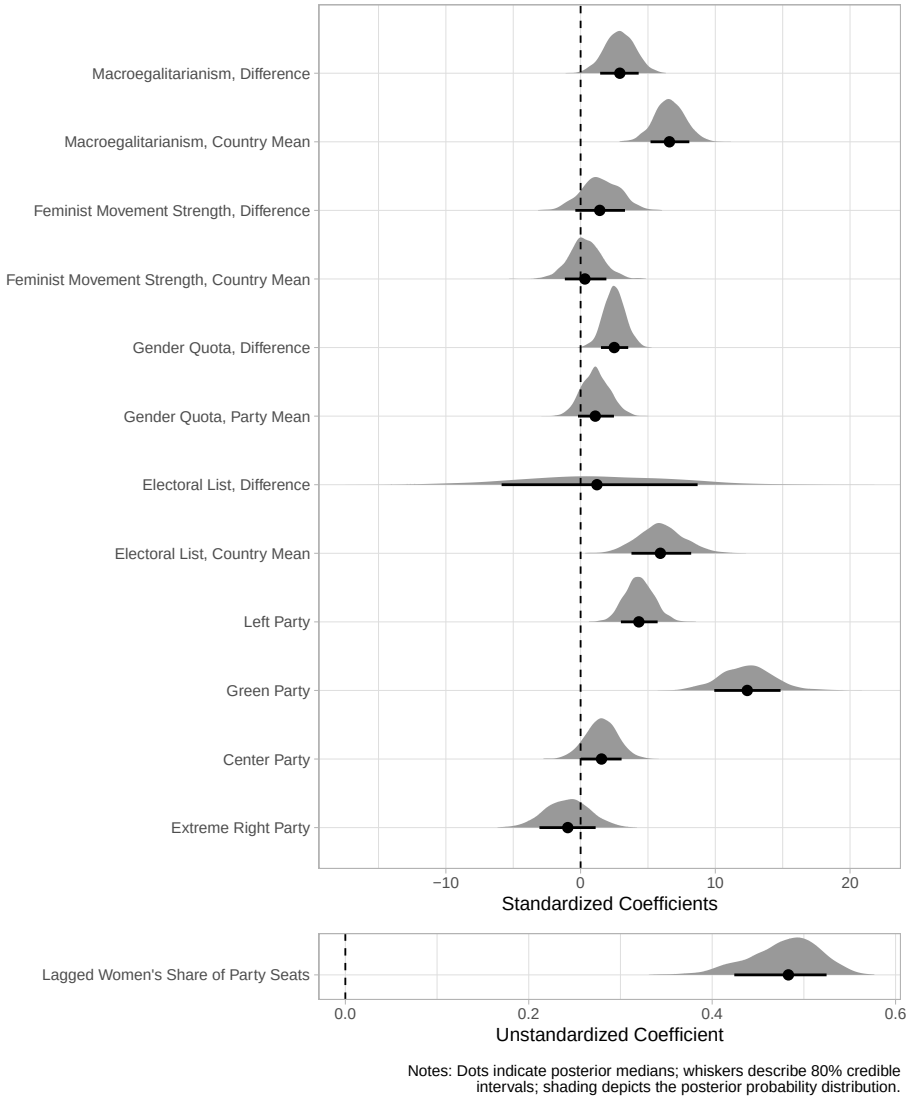


Figure 4.9.: Predicting Women's Share of Parties' Legislative Seats in OECD Democracies

Figure 4.9 shows the results of this model of women's share of seats within parties' legislative delegations. They reinforce several of the conclusions reached when looking only at the legislature as a whole. There is consistent divergence, estimated to be 5.9 percentage points (with an 80% credible interval of 3.8 to 8.2 points), between countries with and without party lists in their electoral systems. Given the dynamics of women's officeholding, the long-run estimate of this divergence is 11.4 (80% c.i.: 7.3 to 15.5). The few episodes of electoral-system differences over time in our data, however, again fail to support the conclusion that changes in the presence of lists have immediate effects. Gender quotas, both parties' mean de facto thresholds (by an estimated 1.1 points with an 80% credible interval of -0.2 to 2.5 over two standard deviations of that variable) and the differences from these means over time (2.5 points; 80% c.i. 1.5 to 3.5), are found to increase the share of women in parties' legislative delegations. The estimates grow to 2.1 (80% c.i.: -0.4 to 4.8) points and 4.8 (80% c.i.: 2.9 to 6.7) points, respectively, over time as current values of women's officeholding influence future values. Intriguingly, this model of parties shows somewhat stronger evidence for the hypothesis that stronger feminist movements are more successful in gaining office for women than the country-level model. Although countries with stronger average movement strength do not differ significantly from countries with weaker average movement strength—this estimate is 0.3 (80% c.i.: -1.2 to 1.9) points—a one-point increase on the three-point scale of the Feminist Movement Index yields an immediate increase of 1.4 (80% c.i.: -0.4 to 3.3) percentage points in women's share of parties' seats, growing to 2.8 (80% c.i.: -0.8 to 6.4) points over time.

In line with previous findings, the posterior probability distributions for the variables representing green and left parties are large and positive. Compared to in right-wing parties, women's share of elected representatives is 12.4 (80% c.i.: 9.9 to 14.8) points higher in green parties and 4.3 (80% c.i.: 3 to 5.7) points higher in parties of the left. Women's shares of parliamentary delegations of parties of the ideological center were found to be 1.6 (80% c.i.: 0 to 3) points larger as well, but extreme right parties

are no different from other parties of the right.

Most importantly for present purposes, training our focus on parties within elections and taking into account party ideology do not change our findings with regard to public opinion. Here, too, there is strong support for democratic representation: greater macroegalitarianism appears to yield more women in office. Consider first the cross-country findings. Parties in a country where public opinion is a standard deviation above the sample mean elect 6.6 (80% c.i.: 5.2 to 8.1) points more women representatives within their delegations than those in a country where public opinion is a standard deviation below. And over time *within* a country, a two-standard deviation increase in macroegalitarianism is found to yield on average a 2.9 (80% c.i.: 1.5 to 4.3) point increase in the extent to which parties send women to the legislature. Taking the dynamics into account, the estimated effect of country-mean differences grows to 12.7 (80% c.i.: 10.1 to 15.3) and that for over-time differences from these means to 5.5 (80% c.i.: 2.9 to 8.2) points. The conclusions reached in our analysis of entire legislative elections are not an artifact of aggregation; if anything, analyzing the arguably more theoretically relevant unit of party-elections provides even stronger evidence of public opinion's importance to women gaining office. Whether we look at entire legislatures or party delegations, when the public holds more egalitarian views, more women gain office.

4.2. Public Responsiveness to Women's Officeholding

But what about the other component of dynamic democracy: how does the public respond to changes in women's officeholding? Does women candidates' success lead to those opposed to gender equality to mobilize on these grounds and work to tilt public opinion in an anti-egalitarian direction? Or do women legislators instead stand as role models and cues,

providing in their work convincing examples of women's competence in the traditionally male domains of politics and work?

Getting answers to these questions is important not only substantively, but also methodologically. Despite our care in model construction, if public opinion is shaped by women's officeholding in either direction, the association that underlies our conclusions may not evince macroegalitarianism's effect on officeholding. It may instead reflect causation that runs only in the opposite direction, from women's officeholding to public opinion.

That when the public sees more women in office it adopts more gender egalitarian opinions is more than plausible. Recall that it has in fact been found in previous research to have empirical support. Alexander (2012) employs a seemingly unrelated regression model and aggregate data of a cross-section of twenty-five countries included in two waves of the World Values Survey. It finds that increases in women's presence in parliaments over the decade between WVS waves predicted greater belief that men are not better political leaders than women in the second wave, even when beliefs in the first wave were taken into account. J. Kim and Fallon (2023) examines four waves of the WVS in a broad sample of 87 democratic and nondemocratic countries for a total of 187 observed country-years. In multilevel models of individuals with varying intercepts for country-years and countries, that work finds strong evidence that women's officeholding influences attitudes toward women in politics.

Even if its mix of democracies and nondemocracies gives some pause—public responsiveness is after all theorized here as a component of dynamic *democracy*—the larger evidential base in J. Kim and Fallon (2023) provides more confidence than the very smaller sample used in Alexander (2012). In terms of modeling strategy, though, J. Kim and Fallon (2023) represents the converse of the analyses presented in this chapter so far: it looks only at one side of this potentially reciprocal relationship and concludes that all of the association observed to remain after controlling for other observed variables flows on this side. As J. Kim and Fallon (2023, 17) itself notes, "Perhaps the biggest concern is that preexisting egalitarianism

skews results," a concern the study could not address in its model due to the limited observations available over time in the WVS data. This of course is the counterpart of our concern for our findings of democratic representation, only coming from the opposite direction. The combination of building a single model that explicitly incorporates both hypotheses, as in Alexander (2012), and estimating its parameters with a large dataset, as in J. Kim and Fallon (2023), would be the "ideal" approach to disentangling these relationships (J. Kim and Fallon 2023, 22 at endnote 21).

Fortunately, the dataset used in this chapter, built around the extensive PGE dataset on gender egalitarian public opinion, allows us to proceed along exactly these lines. We return to examining country-elections to match the level at which both public opinion and women's officeholding can be measured. As before, we estimate the within-between specification of a Bayesian multilevel model with varying intercepts for each country and year. What is new is that we model the potentially reciprocal relationships using a pair of equations, one for women's officeholding and one for macroegalitarianism, within a multivariate simultaneous equations model. That means that gender egalitarianism and officeholding are each used to predict the other and that the varying intercepts for each country and year are correlated across the two equations.

Figure 4.10 presents the results, with the equation predicting women's officeholding in the left-hand panel and the equation predicting macroegalitarianism in the right-hand panel. Both the conclusion reached earlier in this chapter that opinion affects representation and the finding of J. Kim and Fallon (2023) that representation affects opinion are supported, reinforcing our confidence in each. The evidence for the relationship we are most interested in here, from gender egalitarian public opinion to women's officeholding in national legislatures, is if anything strengthened by controlling for the potential for reverse causation. The posterior probability that increasing PGE over time within a country leads to an increasing percentage of women legislators, conditional on these data and this model, is 96%. The magnitude of this estimated effect is substantial: a two-standard-deviation increase in within-country PGE before one election is

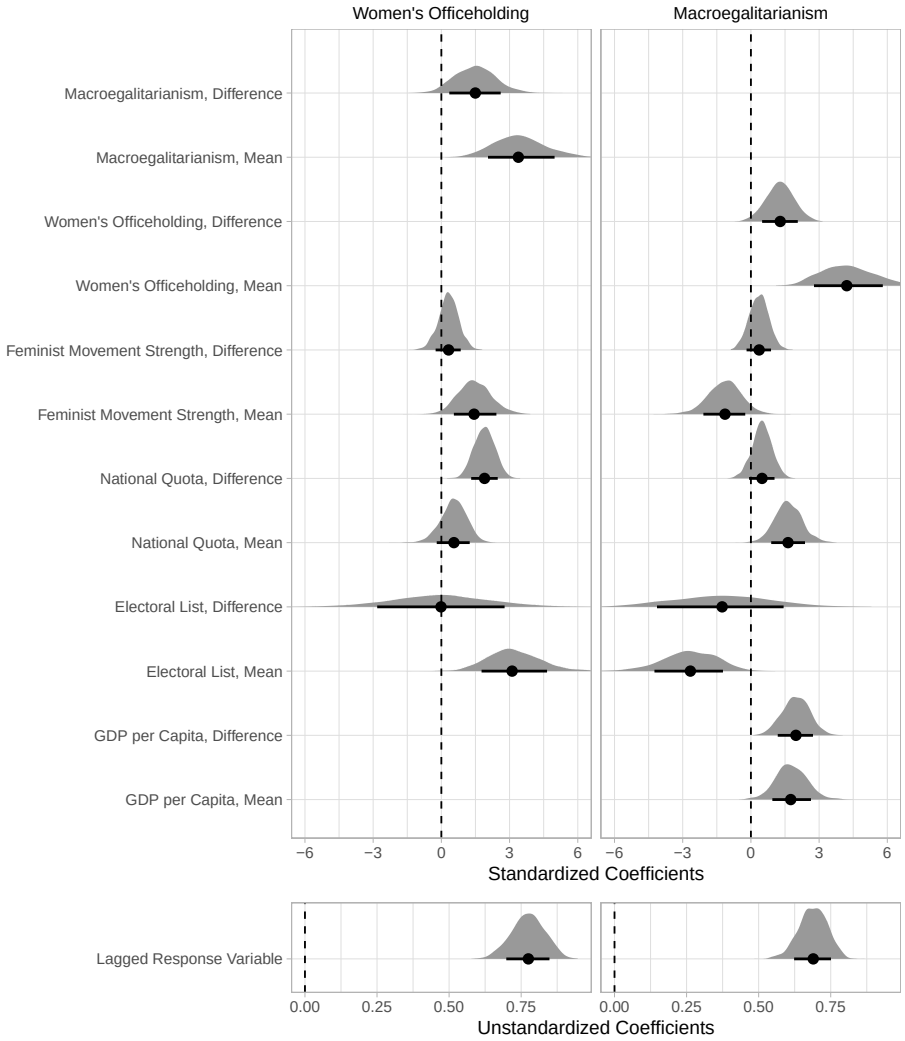


Figure 4.10.: Predicting Women's Parliamentary Representation in OECD Democratic Elections

estimated to yield an increase of 1.49 (80% c.i.: 0.3 to 2.6) percentage points in women's officeholding in that election and 6.6 (80% c.i.: 2 to 10) percentage points over time. This is similar to the estimated consequences for officeholding of the adoption of a national quota requiring 20% of each party's candidates to be women.

4.3. Conclusions

The role of gender egalitarian public opinion in the election of women to national office has been a cornerstone of theory on how women gain office. Evidence, though, has been thin, particularly in comparison to that marshaled in support of arguments regarding women's organizations working within political parties in pushing toward gender equality in positions of power. If women's success in winning office were the result only of the tireless efforts of feminist activists working within parties, the public would not actually influence these outcomes at all. Instead, these accounts would have it, the public would be an onlooker to the events that matter. And if its opinions were simply the consequence of a culture shift, women's election to office would have little bearing on increases in its positive views toward women in politics.

This chapter presents strong evidence that the public does in fact matter to the extent to which women gain office. When public opinion towards gender roles in the public sphere of politics and the workplace shift toward egalitarianism, more women are elected. Democratic representation of macroegalitarianism occurs. And, fears of backlash notwithstanding, public attitudes respond positively to the extent to which women hold positions of power. Public responsiveness does too. Taking macroegalitarianism into account is important to understanding women's officeholding. In the next chapter, we examine whether the patterns of dynamic democracy hold with regard to the adoption of policies advancing gender equality.

5. Dynamic Democracy and Policy Adoption

In this chapter, we consider policies that advance gender equality, first in politics and then in the workplace. **more intro**

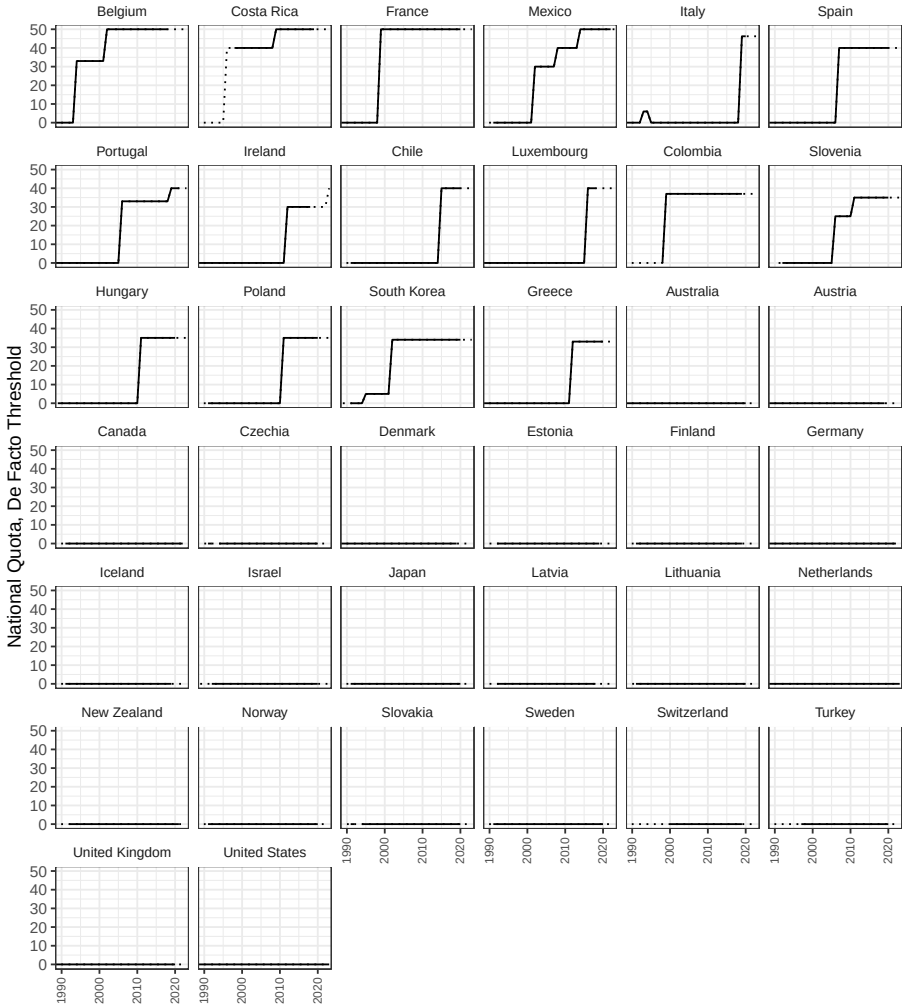
5.1. Policies Advancing Gender Equality in Politics

One of the most-studied policies advancing gender equality is the adoption of gender quotas for candidates running for legislative seats. National gender quotas—that is, candidate quotas instituted by law—mandate that women constitute a specified minimum share of each political party's candidates for the national legislature. As we saw in the previous chapter, legislated national quotas have proven to be effective policies for increasing the share of women in office.

To measure the adoption and reform of quotas we again employ the data on the de facto threshold provided by the excellent QAROT database (Hughes et al. 2019) updated with information from International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2023).[1]

Recall that our measure of national quotas, first presented in the previous chapter, is the de facto threshold, which combines "a country's stated

[1]There are other important aspects of national legislative quotas, such as whether and how they are enforced or if the position of women on an electoral list is specified (see, e.g., Piscopo and Vázquez Correa 2024), but we leave these characteristics aside in this analysis.



Note: Solid lines trace trends over the years covered in this chapter's analyses; dotted lines extend to years that were not included. Sources: Hughes et al. (2019); International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2023).

Figure 5.1.: National Legislative Gender Quotas in the OECD

quota threshold and the breadth of a quota's actual reach" (Hughes et al. 2019, 225). Figure 5.1 shows the trends in the adoption and reform of these national quotas over time. Out of the thirty-eight countries of the OECD, four now have parity quotas, that is, half of the candidates run by each party must be women and half must be men: France, Belgium, Costa Rica, and Mexico. Twelve additional countries have quotas with lower de facto thresholds, ranging from Italy's requirement that women comprise 46.25% quota of each party's candidates across all legislative seats to Greece's 33% mandate. The remaining twenty-two OECD countries have no national legislative candidate quota at all. In addition to these contrasts across countries, Figure 5.1 shows that even the countries with parity quotas arrived at them via distinctively different routes. France went from no quota at all to parity at once in 1999. Belgium and Costa Rica adopted their 50% requirements in two steps, previously requiring 33% and 40% of parties' candidates to be women respectively, while Mexico took three, with earlier laws requiring 30% and then 40%. Clearly quota adoption and reform has varied greatly across countries and over time.

5.1.1. Democratic Representation in National Gender Quota Adoption

Does macroegalitarianism help us to explain these policy differences? The bivariate relationship between the PGE scores and national legislative quotas in our data, depicted in Figure 5.2, is only weak. Many countries, even those whose publics hold relatively egalitarian views on gender roles in the public sphere, have never adopted national gender quotas for legislative candidates; the dark, heavy line of observations across the bottom of the plot makes this clear. However, to better assess whether these attitudes in the public make quota adoption more likely, we need to take into account other potential explanations.

A first factor often considered likely to influence the adoption of national legislative quotas is the extent of officeholding women have already

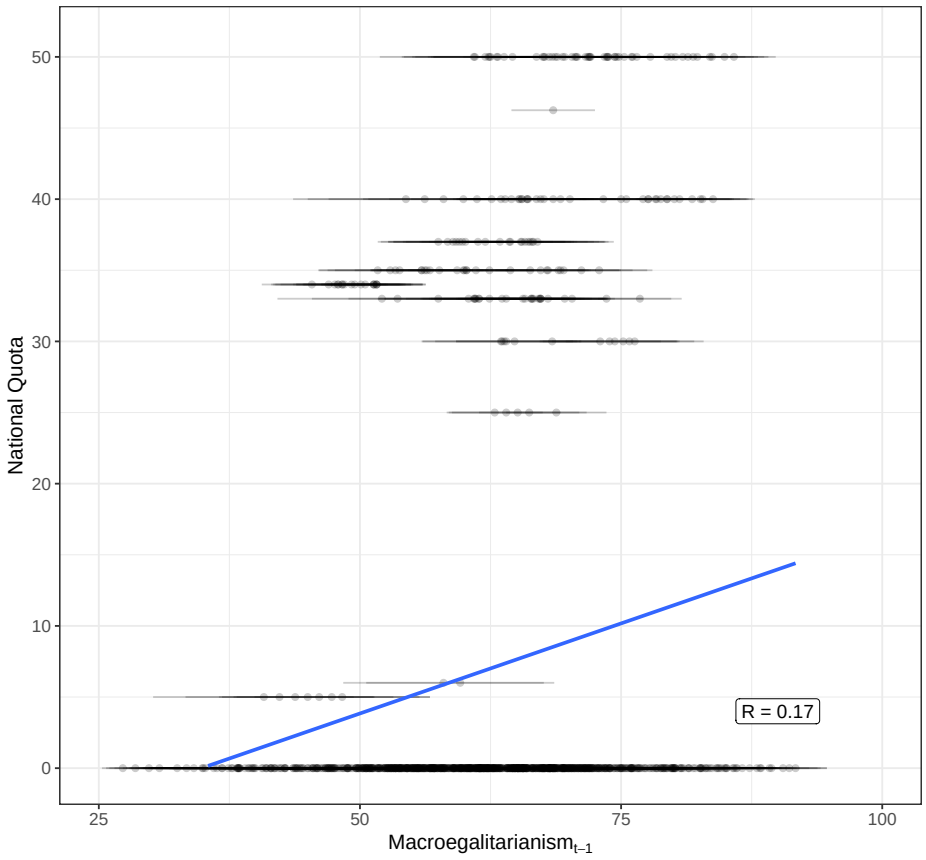


Figure 5.2.: Macroegalitarianism and National Quotas in the OECD

achieved. There are conflicting arguments, however, regarding *how* women's officeholding shapes quota adoption. From one perspective, as more women are elected to the legislature, they will be more likely to successfully push for quotas to be adopted and reformed (see, e.g., Krook 2009, 21–22; Piscopo and Vázquez Correa 2024). An opposing view holds that more officeholding by women works instead to undermine the sense of urgency that underpins the adoption of gender quotas (see, e.g., Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005; Hughes, Krook, and Paxton 2015). To measure women's officeholding here, we use the same data from QAROT and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2023) on the percentage of legislative seats held by women that we employed in the previous chapter (see Figure 4.1).

Two other potential influences on legislative quota adoption and reform are also familiar from our previous chapter: feminist movement strength and electoral lists. Feminist movements are frequently argued to be important to the success of the adoption and reform of national quotas (see Paxton, Hughes, and Barnes 2021, 196). As before, we rely on the Feminist Movement Index (FMI, Forester et al. 2022) as our measure of the strength of these movements (see Figure 4.5). And consistent with arguments that electoral systems with at least a party-list component are more "woman-friendly" (Rule and Zimmerman 1994, 27) and provide better opportunity structures for feminist activists, such electoral systems may make quota adoption and subsequent strengthening more likely as well (Paxton, Hughes, and Barnes 2021, 195–96). We again draw data on whether elections are held with a list component from the Democratic Electoral Systems Around the World dataset (Bormann and Golder 2022).

Our approach to modeling the adoption of gender quotas here is similar in several ways to the methods we employed in the previous chapter to model women's officeholding. As in those analyses, we use a Bayesian multilevel model that includes varying intercepts for both space, which capture the idiosyncratic distinctiveness of each country, and time, which capture those shocks that operate on all countries in each year (see Shor et al. 2007). And also as in those analyses, we separate each of our time-

varying predictors into its mean value for each country and the difference between its value in a given year and this country mean so as to avoid confusing the former, cross-country, differences with the over-time changes that provide the best evidence of causation (see Bell and Jones 2015). Another commonality with the models used in the last chapter is that we again incorporate the measurement uncertainty in the PGE scores into our analysis to avoid drawing conclusions that are not supported by the data (see Tai, Hu, and Solt 2024).

The fact that we are now seeking to explain policy adoption—and in particular the adoption of a gender quota—does, however, require a few differences in our modeling strategy. The standard approach to modeling policy adoption is event history analysis (EHA) of pooled time series, popularized in political science by Berry and Berry (1990). Event history analysis, in this context, typically involves a logistic regression of a dichotomous dependent variable observed annually in each country as a series of zeros followed by a one at the time the policy of interest is adopted. Once a country adopts the policy, it is no longer part of the 'risk set'—that is, the country is not 'at risk' of adopting the policy a second time—and observations for that country in years subsequent to adoption are then dropped from the dataset (see Berry and Berry 1990, 398).

However, the general EHA approach is flexible (see Boehmke 2009). The first reason this flexibility is important is that, as Piscopo and Vázquez Correa (2024) explains and as the stair-step pattern often evident in Figure 5.1 illustrates, many countries have not simply adopted quotas requiring a specified share of the candidates each party puts forward to be women but have also raised this share, sometimes repeatedly, to reach or at least more closely approach parity. Removing a country from the analysis after its first quota adoption, as in the standard EHA approach described above, would prevent us from analyzing the 'steady path' (see Piscopo and Vázquez Correa 2024) by which quotas are sometimes reformed. We consider the adoption of a parity quota, one that requires 50% of a party's candidates across all seats to be women, to be the quota policy that maximally advances gender equality, and so a country leaves the risk set—and

so further observations of the country are excluded from the data—only after it has adopted a parity quota.

A second reason this flexibility is important is because as seen above national legislative gender quotas and reforms are not all the same, either present or absent. Recall that some countries—specifically France, Belgium, Costa Rica, and Mexico—now have quotas that require parity in the number of women and men each party puts forward as candidates across all legislative seats. Other countries have adopted quotas that, although requiring parties to nominate *some* women candidates, do not require parties to run equal numbers of women and men. Still other countries, many in fact, have no mandatory legislative gender quota at all. We therefore treat the adoption or reform of a quota as a continuous rather than dichotomous variable (see Boehmke 2009, 237).

In a final modification of the standard EHA approach, we take into account the dynamic nature of quota adoption and reform. That is, we account for how the quota in force in the present depends on any mandated share of women candidates that was in force in the past by including the lagged value of the quota as a predictor.

Figure 5.3 presents the results. Starting with the bottom panel, we see that quota laws are strongly dynamic: not surprisingly, even accounting for the other variables in the model, the extent to which the law requires parties to run women candidates for the national legislature this year is strongly influenced by the state of the law last year. The adoption of new quota policies and the reform of old ones are relatively rare.

Moving upward, we next see the estimated coefficients for differences between electoral systems with a party list component as compared to systems that include only personalized races run by candidates within districts. Countries in which all of the observed legislative terms were held with electoral systems with a list component enacted quota laws mandating that 0.8 (80% c.i.: 0.2 to 1.5) percentage points more candidates are women in one year than those that have never held elections with party lists, with a posterior probability that—conditional on these data and this

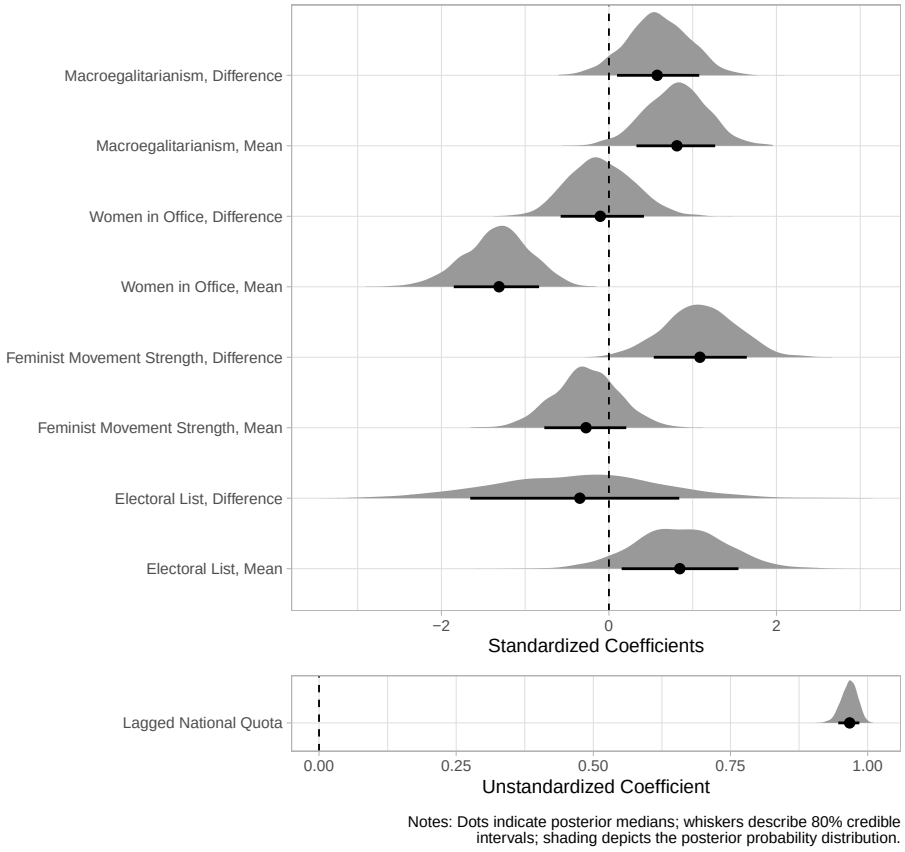


Figure 5.3.: Predicting National Quotas in the OECD

model—that this estimate is positive of 94%. Given the strongly dynamic nature of quota laws, with differences this year persisting into the future, this seemingly small estimate stretches to 0.8 (80% c.i.: 0.2 to 1.5) points over time. While this result provides some evidence that electoral systems have long-run effects, we cannot rule out unobserved confounding variables correlated with these mean scores. And the coefficient for the *difference* in electoral lists within a country provides no evidence that adopting a party-list electoral system yields a higher quota of women candidates in the short run. A causal interpretation of the association between electoral lists and gender quota adoption remains unsupported.

We turn then to the strength of the autonomous feminist movement. Countries that have experienced higher mean scores on the Feminist Movement Index are estimated to be little different from those with lower mean FMI scores. In any event, the best evidence that stronger feminist movements lead to more demanding gender quotas comes from the estimated coefficient for changes in the strength of the feminist movement over time. A one-point increase in the FMI index over time within a country is estimated to yield a subsequent increase in the country's legislative quota of 1.1 (80% c.i.: 0.5 to 1.6) percentage points immediately and 33.3 (80% c.i.: 14.6 to 71.9) over time. This is powerful evidence that when feminist movements grow stronger they are more successful in their advocacy for higher quotas.

As to the debate regarding whether more women in office creates more or less pressure for legislative quotas, this evidence falls more on the latter side. A countries with a mean level of women's officeholding a standard deviation above the overall mean is estimated to have a mandated share of women candidates that is on average 1.3 (80% c.i.: 1.9 to 0.8) points *lower* than a country with mean women's officeholding a standard deviation below the overall mean. This decline grows with time to 40.5 (80% c.i.: 82.5 to 21.9). Increases in women's officeholding within a country over time, on the other hand, appear to have little impact on quota adoption either way.

The top two rows of the panel display the evidence in support of the argument that gender egalitarian public opinion shapes the extent of success in enacting legislative candidate gender quotas. This evidence is strong. A country with mean PGE scores two standard deviations higher, for example New Zealand as compared to Poland, is estimated to enact quotas requiring 0.8 (80% c.i.: 0.3 to 1.3) percentage points more women candidates, a difference that grows dynamically to 24.35 (80% c.i.: 8.5 to 56.4) points. As we have been careful to note previously, cross-country estimates like this one provides some evidence of an effect—in this case, of a more egalitarian public on legislative quota adoption—over the long term, but they could also reflect other differences among countries correlated with the predictor, here public opinion, that we are unable to measure and include in our model. That is, such estimates could be the result of omitted-variable bias. Therefore, although suggestive of causal effects, the real work of this estimate is to isolate the consequences of changes in public gender egalitarianism over time.

This estimate, the coefficient for within-country changes in PGE over time, is shown in the top row of the figure. A two-standard-deviations increase in this variable—equivalent to about a twelve-point change in the PGE score from the start of one legislative term to the beginning of the next—is estimated to yield a 0.6 percentage-point increase in a country's legislative candidate quota in the following year, with an 80% confidence interval from 0.1 to 1.1 points. Over time, this increase is estimated to grow to 17.6 (80% c.i.: 2.5 to 45.7) points. This is strong evidence that when the public of a country grows more egalitarian in its views of gender roles in politics and the workplace, lawmakers respond by enacting higher legislative candidate quotas. Macroegalitarianism matters to electoral policy adoption.

As we saw in the previous chapter, when and where the public holds more gender egalitarian views, women are more successful in gaining elected office. By including women's officeholding, the share of women legislators in office, in our model we effectively partition off that potential causal path. In other words, the positive effect of public opinion on gender quota adoption just described does not work through the number of women elected

to office. Instead, these results support the argument that, at least among these rich OECD democracies, both men and women legislators are responsive to growing public demand for gender equality, and they respond with policies that increase the mandated share of women candidates for legislative office. Adaptation, not selection, is the mechanism by which democratic representation works here.

5.1.2. Public Responsiveness to National Gender Quota Adoption

Does quota adoption trigger a backlash? Or do quotas work to help make gender equality salient, as Weeks (2022) puts it, and so increase macroegalitarianism? Or is the public simply unresponsive to policy change, leaving the relationship between opinion and policy flowing entirely from the former to the latter? The extensive data on macroegalitarianism that we presented in Chapter 3, stretching across decades in all of the OECD countries, allows us to investigate these questions.

As in the previous chapter we model the potentially reciprocal relationships between our two variables of greatest interest using two equations, the first for quota adoption and reform and the second for macroegalitarianism, that are estimated together within a multivariate simultaneous equations model. Past macroegalitarianism is used to predict present quotas, and past quotas are used to predict present macroegalitarianism. The varying intercepts for each country and year in the two equations are treated as correlated, which works to tie them both together in a single model.

Figure 5.4 presents the results of this simultaneous equations model. Consider first the left panel of the figure, which shows the estimates of the equation predicting national quota adoption. It provides additional support for the conclusions we drew from the findings presented in Figure 5.3: macroegalitarianism predicts national quota adoption and reform in both the short term, as evidenced by the estimate for its difference, and the long

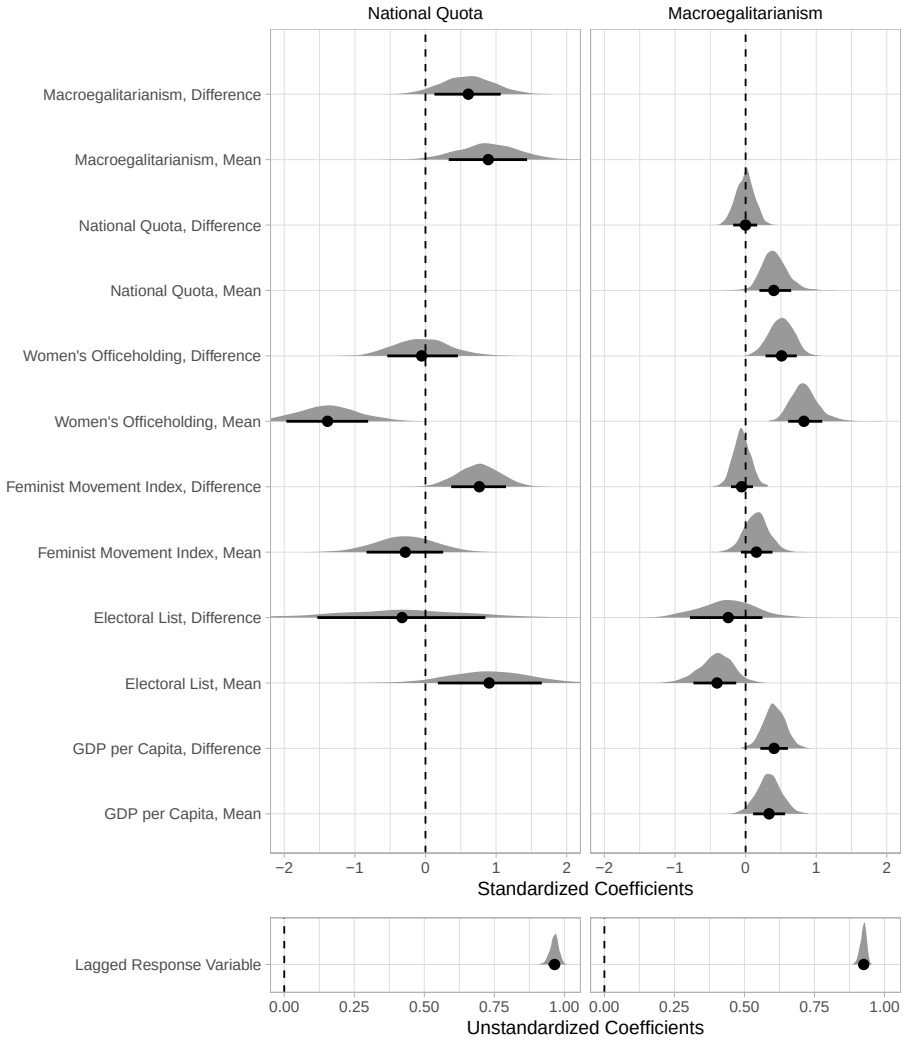


Figure 5.4.: Predicting National Quota Adoption and Macroegalitarianism in OECD Countries

term, as evidenced by the estimate for its mean. Countries with higher mean women's officeholding are less likely to adopt quotas, consistent with the 'incremental track' identified in Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2005). Increases in feminist movement strength appear to prompt higher quotas, and countries with more experience with list electoral systems are found to be more likely to adopt quotas as well. In other words, the results presented on democratic representation above in Figure 5.3 are not markedly influenced by simultaneity bias.

This is reassuring, but it is really the right side of the figure that is now our focus. That side shows the model's results for macroegalitarianism. And so it is that side that speaks to the question of whether quotas 'create their own constituencies' or instead trigger among the public a self-undermining backlash against gender equality. Before we reach that answer, however, we again start at the bottom of the plot with the estimates for our control variables.

After the estimate of the strongly dynamic effect of past values of macroegalitarianism on present values in the bottom right panel, the two bottom rows of the top right panel present the estimates for GDP per capita. As in Figure 4.10 in the previous chapter, these estimates show support for modernization theory (see, e.g., Inglehart and Baker 2000; Inglehart, Norris, and Welzel 2003). Countries with higher GDP per capita exhibit more macroegalitarianism: compared to a country that is a standard deviation below the mean on this variable, a country that is a standard deviation above is predicted to have a PGE score 0.33 (80% c.i.: 0.1 to 0.6) points higher, compounding over time in this dynamic model to 4.4 (80% c.i.: 1.4 to 7.4) points. This evidence from cross-country differences even within the OECD for a long-run effect of economic modernization is matched by the result for within-country differences. A two-standard-deviation gain in GDP per capita from one year to the next is estimated to yield an increase of 0.4 (80% c.i.: 0.2 to 0.6) points in a country's PGE score. This increase then grows to a total of 5.4 (80% c.i.: 2.9 to 8) over time.

Next are the estimates for electoral systems with a party-list component.

As was also seen in Figure 4.10 in the last chapter, net of the other variables in the model, countries that elect at least some legislators via a party list are estimated to have less macroegalitarianism than those with only more candidate-oriented single-member or small multi-member districts. In this model, this difference in PGE scores is estimated as 0.405 (80% c.i. 0.7 to 0.1) points, growing over time to 5.5 (80% c.i. 9.4 to 1.6) points. Whether this is a true long-run effect of list electoral systems or instead the result of some other, unmeasured and omitted variable is unclear. The latter interpretation is perhaps reinforced by the inconclusive posterior distribution for differences over time in such electoral systems, although that distribution is mostly negative and its width is at least partially the product of the near absence in our dataset of changes in this variable within countries. There is no evidence that the strength of the feminist movement has a direct effect on macroegalitarianism in these results. Neither cross-country differences nor within-country year-to-year changes yield estimates that are little different from zero.

As we have seen previously, the same cannot be said for women's officeholding. Countries that have elected more women over the timeframe examined here exhibit higher levels of macroegalitarianism on average than those that have elected fewer women, consistent with a long-term effect. A two-standard-deviation difference in cross-country means is estimated to correspond to 0.83 (80% c.i. 0.6 to 1.1) points higher PGE scores. Thanks to the strong influence of past values of macroegalitarianism on present and future values, this jump up is estimated to grow over time to 11.1 (80% c.i. 8.4 to 13.9) points. Similarly, a two-standard-deviation increase in women's officeholding in one year is estimated to correspond to 0.51 (80% c.i. 0.3 to 0.7) point gain in macroegalitarianism in the next, which increases over time to 6.8 (80% c.i. 3.9 to 9.5) points.

Finally, we arrive at the estimates for national quotas. The results are mixed. On the one hand, countries that have had higher average quotas over the years examined exhibit more macroegalitarianism than countries that had lower average quotas. A country with a mean quota of 9.6%, a value similar to those of Spain and South Korea, is estimated to have PGE

scores 0.89 (80% c.i.: 0.3 to 1.4) points higher than an otherwise similar country that never adopted a national legislative gender quota; over time, this estimated difference grows to 24.9 (80% c.i.: 8.9 to 54) points. So, with all of the caveats that should now be familiar regarding cross-national differences and potential omitted variables, this result points to a positive reinforcement of macroegalitarianism by national legislative quotas. On the other hand, quota adoptions *within* a country's timeline do not appear to influence later macroegalitarianism at all: the dashed vertical line at zero bisects the posterior distribution for this estimate very nearly perfectly. The one conclusion that is safe to draw from these results is that the adoption and reform of national legislative gender quotas do *not* provoke a negative response in the public. There is no evidence whatsoever of anti-egalitarian backlash.

5.2. Policies Advancing Gender Equality in the Workplace

Intro paragraph needed here.

To measure policies advancing gender equality in the workplace, we rely on the World Bank's Women, Business, and Law v1.0 (WBL) policy index (World Bank 2024a). As shown in Table 5.1, the WBL policy index comprises thirty-five policies addressing eight topics meant "to capture inequality in legislation throughout the duration of a woman's working life, from the time she can enter the labor force through to retirement" (Hyland, Djankov, and Goldberg 2020, 476). Each is a provision enhancing gender equality in the law. The WBL policy index's *de jure* rather than *de facto* nature makes the index especially suited for our purposes because it ensures we are considering not policy outcomes but policy outputs. Outcomes, the extent to which a goal is achieved, are clearly important. But democratic representation is better measured not by what governments

achieve—which may after all be influenced by many factors beyond their control—but the steps they take (or fail to take) to reach those goals.

We hasten to add that the WBL policies do appear to get results. Cross-sectionally, in countries with more of these policies, Htun, Jensenius, and Nelson-Nuñez (2019) found that women have greater access to economic resources: more access to bank accounts, higher ownership of firms, more participation in the labor force, and smaller gender wage gaps. Looking across countries and over time, their adoption has been shown to be closely linked to subsequently increased women's labor force participation rates, both in the OECD (Gonzales et al. 2015, 21–23) and beyond (Gonzales et al. 2015, 25–26; Hyland, Djankov, and Goldberg 2020, 478–88). Increases in the WBL policy index also yield narrowing gaps in the wages earned by men and women (Hyland, Djankov, and Goldberg 2020, 478–88). The WBL policies listed in Table 5.1 are not only actionable but also effective.

Table 5.1.: WBL Policy Index

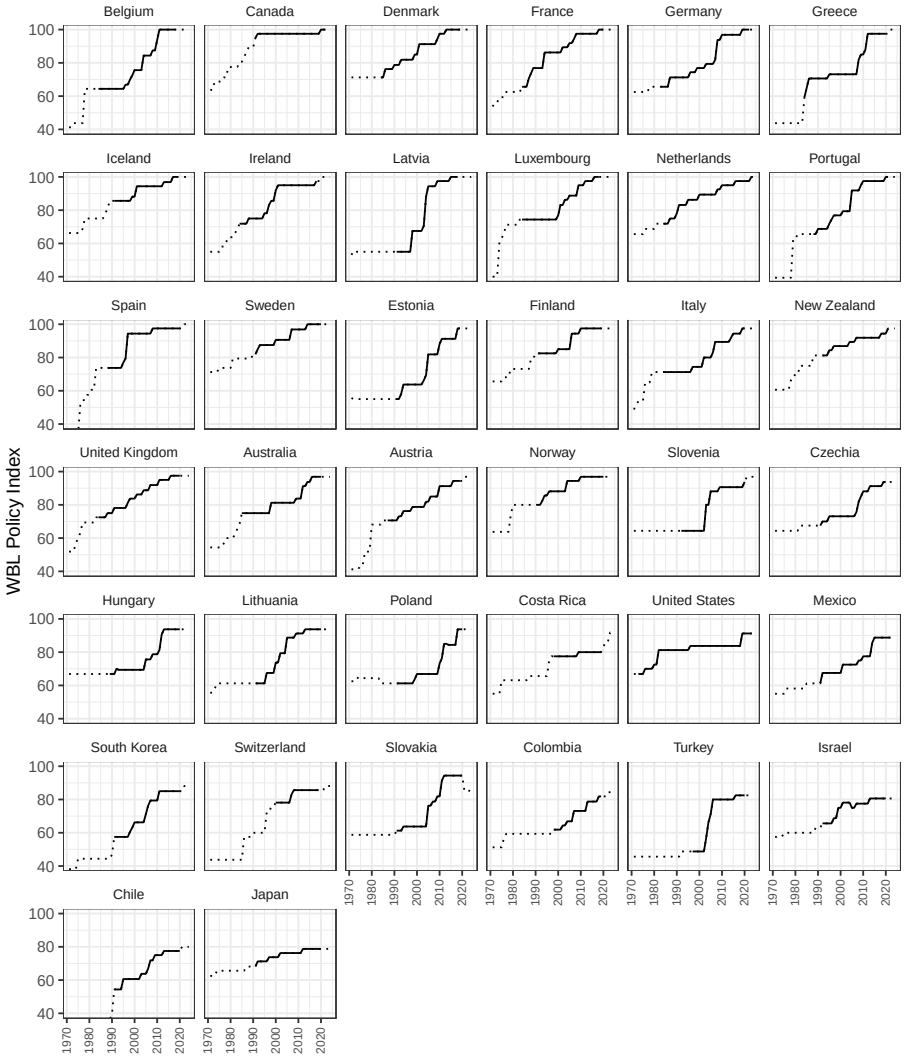
Topic	Laws
1. MOBILITY	1. Can a woman choose where to live in the same way as a man? 2. Can a woman travel outside her home in the same way as a man? 3. Can a woman apply for a passport in the same way as a man? 4. Can a woman travel outside the country in the same way as a man?
2. WORKPLACE	1. Can a woman get a job in the same way as a man? 2. Does the law prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender? 3. Is there legislation on sexual harassment in employment?

	4. Are there criminal penalties or civil remedies for sexual harassment in employment?
3. PAY	1. Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value? 2. Can a woman work at night in the same way as a man? 3. Can a woman work in a job deemed dangerous in the same way as a man? 4. Can a woman work in an industrial job in the same way as a man?
4. MARRIAGE	1. Is the law free of legal provisions that require a married woman to obey her husband? 2. Can a woman be head of household in the same way as a man? 3. Is there legislation specifically addressing domestic violence? 4. Can a woman obtain a judgment of divorce in the same way as a man? 5. Does a woman have the same rights to remarry as a man?
5. PARENTHOOD	1. Is paid leave of at least 14 weeks available to mothers? 2. Does the government administer 100 percent of maternity leave benefits? 3. Is there paid leave available to fathers? 4. Is there paid parental leave? 5. Is dismissal of pregnant workers prohibited?
6. ENTREPRENEURSHIP	1. Does the law prohibit discrimination in access to credit based on gender? 2. Can a woman sign a contract in the same way as a man? 3. Can a woman register a business in the same way as a man? 4. Can a woman open a bank account in the same way as a man?

7. ASSETS	1. Do women and men have equal ownership rights to immovable property? 2. Do sons and daughters have equal rights to inherit assets from their parents? 3. Do male and female surviving spouses have equal rights to inherit assets? 4. Does the law grant spouses equal administrative authority over assets during marriage? 5. Does the law provide for the valuation of nonmonetary contributions?
8. PENSION	1. Is the age at which women and men can retire with full pension benefits the same? 2. Is the age at which women and men can retire with partial pension benefits the same? 3. Is the mandatory retirement age for women and men the same? 4. Are periods of absence due to childcare accounted for in pension benefits?

Source: Women, Business, and the Law Database v1.0 2024 (World Bank 2024).

Figure 5.5 depicts the trends in the WBL policy index in the thirty-eight countries of the OECD from 1970, the first year included in the WBL database, through 2023, when the time series end. A half-century ago, policy in many countries did little to advance gender equality in paid employment and much to stand in its way: the only WBL policy adopted in all of these countries was that women could travel internationally in the same way as men. At that time Denmark and Sweden had the highest scores on the index, having already adopted twenty-five of the thirty-five policies advancing gender equality in access to employment and entrepreneurship, but neither had passed such crucial policies as prohibiting discrimination in employment based on gender or addressing and penalizing sexual harassment at work and domestic violence at home. More recently, twelve OECD member states have adopted every one of the policies listed in Table 5.1 and so reached a score of 100 on the index: Belgium was the first to do so,



Source: World Bank (2024).

Figure 5.5.: The WBL Policy Index in the OECD

in 2010, and the Netherlands the last of these twelve, in 2022. In 2023, even the lowest-scoring OECD countries—Israel, Chile, and Japan, each with an 80 on the WBL policy index—had adopted more equality-enhancing policies than the highest-scoring countries had five decades earlier. Over the countries and years we analyze here, gender equality policymaking progressed the most in Latvia and Estonia, where the WBL index increased by over 40 points, and the least in Canada, where only two additional policies were adopted, and in Costa Rica, where just one was. Both the extent to which these countries have passed these laws and the pace at which they have done so varies considerably.

5.2.1. Democratic Representation in Policies Advancing Workplace Gender Equality

Our first question is whether growing gender egalitarianism among citizens prompts their representatives to adopt policies that enhance gender equality in employment. As can be seen in Figure 5.6, the correlation between macroegalitarianism and the WBL policy index is very strong.

Researchers are wary of drawing conclusions based on such correlations, however. This strong bivariate relationship may be the consequence of spuriousness. N. K. Kim (2022), for example, finds that gains in women's officeholding predict subsequent increases in the WBL policy index, especially in democratic countries. As we have seen in Figure 4.10 in the last chapter and Figure 5.4 in this one, gains in women's officeholding also yield higher macroegalitarianism in the democracies of the OECD. The apparent relationship between gender egalitarianism among a country's citizens and the adoption of policies increasing gender equality may be driven entirely by women in the legislature—or some other variable, like national legislative quotas (see Weeks 2022)—causing both.

So we again construct a model that includes our usual suspects of such spuriousness: national quotas, women's officeholding, feminist movement strength, and the presence of party lists in the electoral system, each

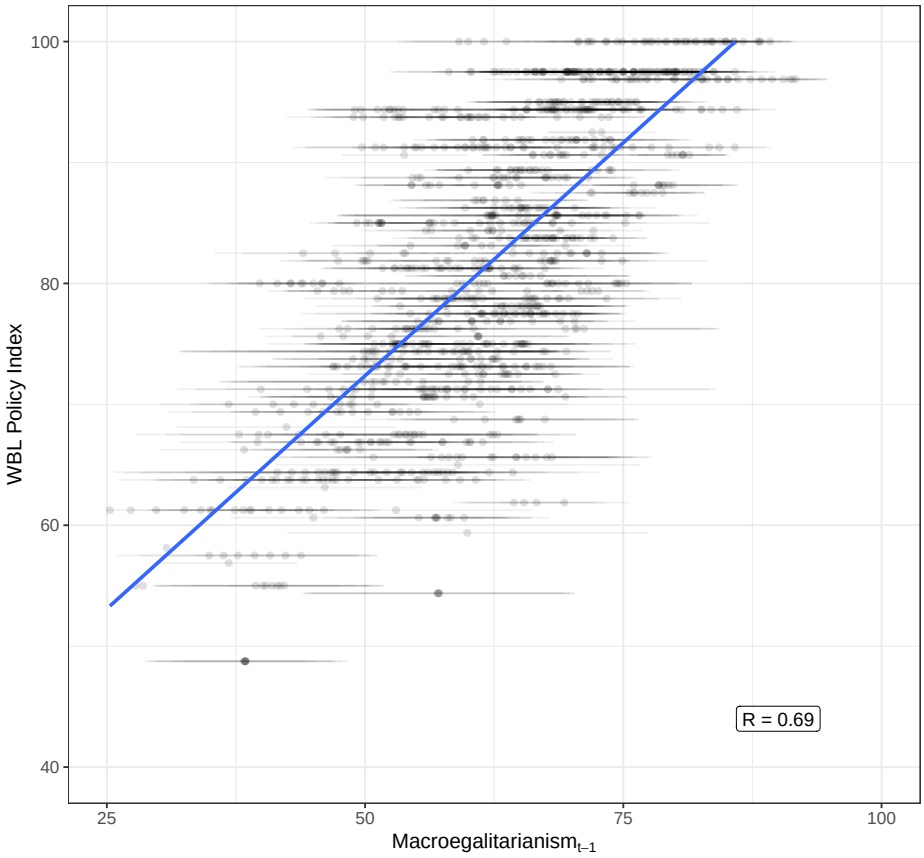


Figure 5.6.: Macroegalitarianism and Policies Advancing Gender Equality in Employment in the OECD

measured as in our previous analyses. And, also as before, we use the within-between specification to parse out cross-country differences from over-time trends in each of our variables (see Bell and Jones 2015) in a Bayesian multilevel model with varying intercepts for both countries and years that capture the distinctive time-invariant characteristics of each country and the global time-varying traits that affected all countries at once (see Shor et al. 2007). Consistent with our now-familiar approach, we also include as a predictor the one-year lag of the WBL policy index to capture the dynamics of policy adoption (see Keele and Kelly 2006) and the measurement uncertainty in the PGE scores (see Tai, Hu, and Solt 2024).

The results are displayed in Figure 5.7. They are perhaps surprising. Even within the OECD, a group of relatively high-income countries, the richer countries score higher on the WBL policy index than the poorer ones, by -0.1 (80% c.i.: -0.3 to 0.2) points immediately, and due to the strong dynamics in the adoption of these policies, -1.2 (80% c.i.: -4.9 to 3) points over time. This may indicate a long-term causal influence, but gains in GDP per capita do not evidence a similar effect so we are careful to not draw strong conclusions.

National gender quotas bear little relationship to the adoption of these equality-enhancing policies in this model. Nor does the average strength of the feminist movement, but *gains* in the Feminist Movement Index increase the adoption of these policies by 0.4 (80% c.i.: 0.1 to 0.7) points in the short run and 6 (80% c.i.: 2 to 10) points compounded over time.

We turn then to the model's estimates of the coefficients for macroegalitarianism on policies advancing gender equality in employment, first considering cross-country differences. A two-standard-deviation difference in PGE scores is found to correspond to an immediate 0.3 (80% c.i.: 0 to 0.6) point difference in the WBL policy index, which grows to 4.3 (80% c.i.: 0 to 8.8) points when the dynamics of the index are taken into account. The posterior distribution indicates that the probability that this estimate is positive is 90%. Again, we treat this result cautiously: it may reflect how

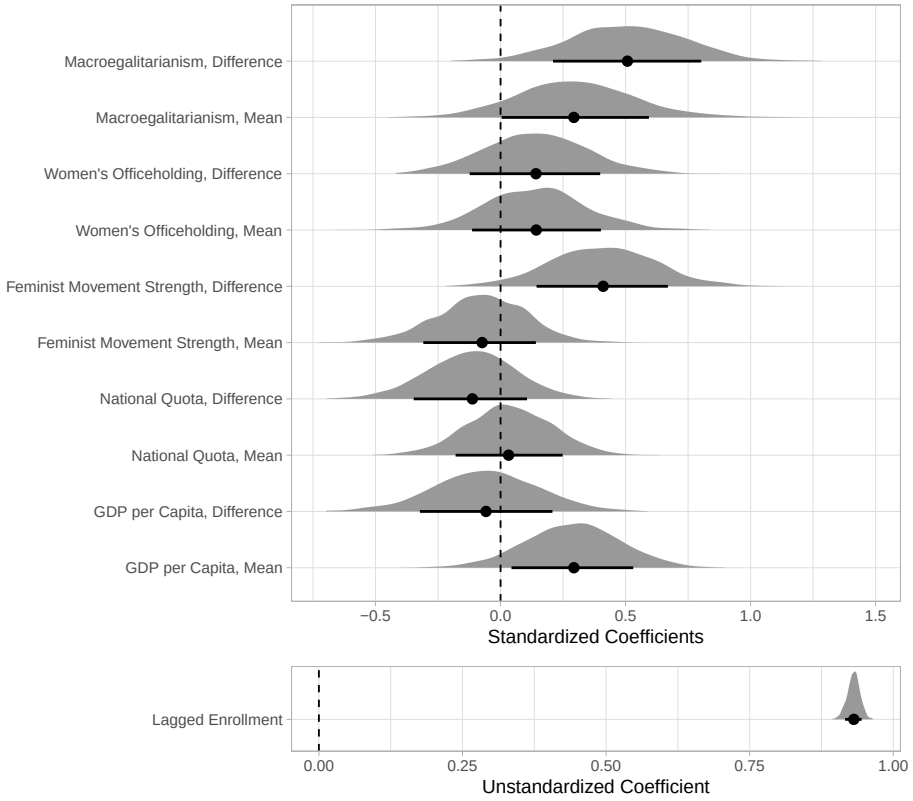


Figure 5.7.: Predicting the WBL Policy Index in OECD Countries

public opinion influences policymakers over the long term, but it may also be the product of differences across countries that remain outside of our model.

We put more weight on how year-to-year changes in macroegalitarianism correspond to subsequent changes in policy. These are not perfect for the purpose of drawing conclusions about causation, but given that the attitudes of the public are not subject to experimental manipulation, they are the strongest evidence available. And, in this case, the evidence is indeed strong. A two-standard-deviation increase in macroegalitarianism in one year within a country is estimated to be followed by a 0.5 (80% c.i.: 0.2 to 0.8) gain in the WBL policy index in the next. Over time, as past policymaking influences future policymaking, this gain increases to 7.3 (80% c.i.: 3.2 to 11.4) points. Just as the models earlier in this chapter indicated that more gender egalitarian public opinion spurs legislators to adopt and raise national gender quotas to advance gender equality in politics, this model indicates that it also induces them to adopt policies advancing gender equality in employment.

5.2.2. Public Responsiveness to Policies Advancing Workplace Gender Equality

That governments respond to gender egalitarianism in the public with policies addressing equality in both politics and work does not necessarily suggest that the public reacts to these policies similarly. That is, even though the public reacts to the election of more women and the adoption of legislative gender quotas by becoming even more egalitarian, it could be that its reaction is different to policies removing barriers to equality in employment. After all, these policies intrude more directly into people's daily lives than the makeup of the legislature does. It would not be too surprising if these more intrusive policies, rather than working to create their own constituencies, instead prompt a self-undermining backlash.

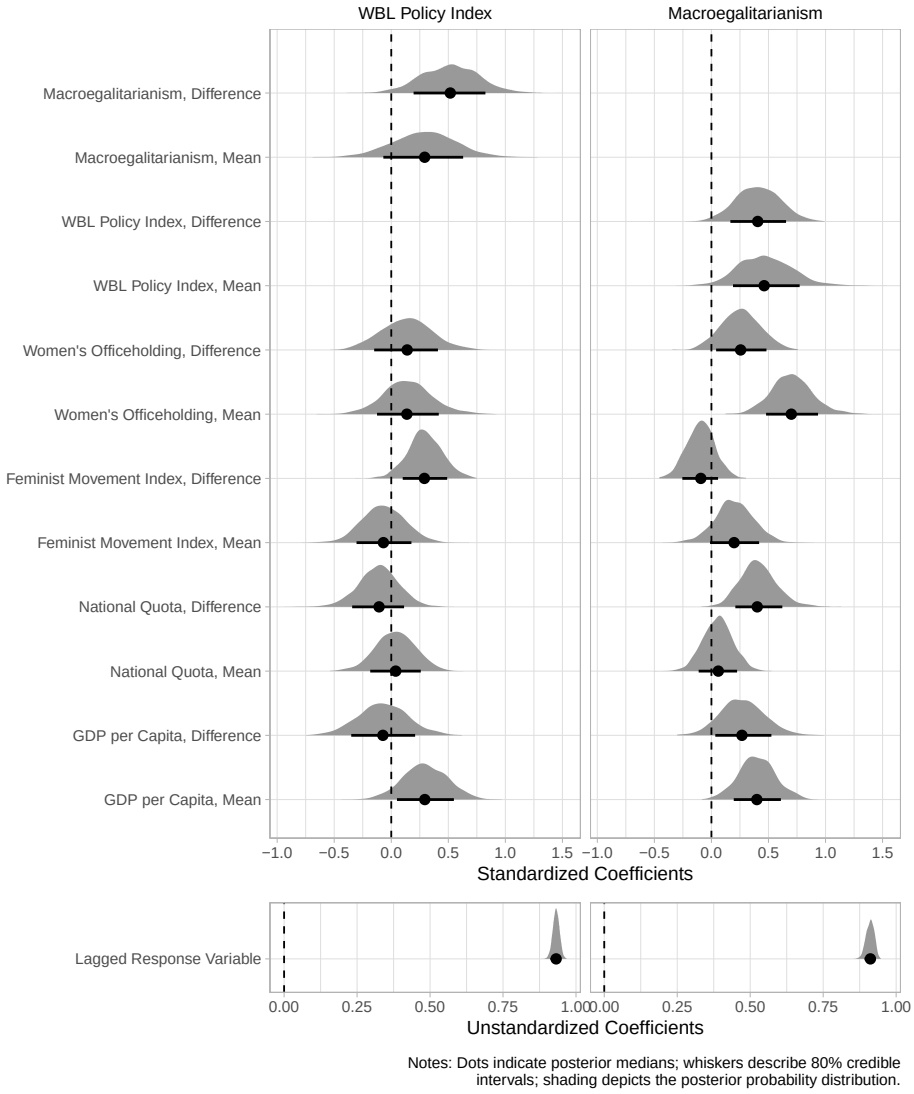


Figure 5.8.: Predicting the WBL Policy Index and Macroegalitarianism in OECD Countries

We test this possibility with a simultaneous-equations model similar to those we have used previously, predicting at once both the WBL index of gender-equality-enhancing policies and the PGE scores of macroegalitarianism. Figure 5.8 depicts the results. The left side of the plot reproduces the findings of Figure 5.7, again providing reassurance that our specification of that model successfully avoided any bias due to endogeneity.

The figure's right side shows the model's estimates for macroegalitarianism. These estimates provide no evidence of a self-undermining effect of increasingly gender-equal policies toward work on public opinion; there is no backlash. Instead, increases in the WBL policy index are followed by increases in public egalitarianism. A two-standard-deviation gain in the former yields an immedidate 0.5 (80% c.i.: 0.2 to 0.8) point gain in the latter, and this gain expands to 7.6 (80% c.i.: 3 to 11.8) points over time.

5.2.3. A Further Test: Childcare Provision

One known shortcoming of the longitudinal WBL data we use here is its exclusion of the single policy most often and closely tied to gender equality in the workforce: childcare. In 2024, the World Bank revised the WBL index to include childcare policy for the first time. Version 2.0 of the WBL dataset includes data on whether there are laws that establish public and private center-based childcare services as well as laws establishing employer-provided childcare.[2] Unfortunately, this newly revised and expanded WBL index is currently available only for a single year. That

[2]The new version also highlights the importance of gender-based violence to gender equality in the workplace, moving and expanding its treatment of laws combating sexual harassment from the Workplace indicator and provisions addressing domestic violence from the Marriage indicator, along with information about laws banning child marriage and criminalizing femicide, to a new Safety indicator (see World Bank 2024b, 25–27). As the WBL index v1.0 does include some information on policies addressing gender-based violence, we leave a more focused analysis of these specific policies to future work.

renders it unsuitable for our purposes for two reasons. Most importantly, the cross-sectional nature of these data prevent the time-sensitive dynamic analyses that we employ to convincingly test the democratic representation of public opinion and the responsiveness of the public to policy change across the high-income democracies of the OECD. But also, as a practical matter, the PGE data as yet extends to within a year of the updated WBL in only two of the thirty-eight countries in our sample. This makes even a cross-sectional analysis unfeasible. We must look elsewhere for data on childcare policy.

Childcare policy is multifaceted, with many potential levers for affecting cost, availability, and quality (Hegewisch and Gornick 2011, 128–29).[3] We therefore consider childcare enrollments, which are an indicator of all three of these aspects of policy. Further, as a policy outcome can also be seen to complement our earlier focus on policy outputs in the WBL policy index. To provide a measure across our countries of interest, we look to OECD data on enrollments in early childhood education and care among the very young, children aged zero to two (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2024).

Figure 5.9 shows how these enrollments have varied across countries and over time. The highest rates are found in the Netherlands in 2020, where nearly 70% of children under the age of two were enrolled in nurseries, day care centers, and the like. Center-based care for very young children was almost vanishingly rare in Slovakia and Turkey, on the other hand. Beyond the differences in levels and trends across countries, the plot reveals that these data are more sparse than others we have considered, covering less than half of the country-years in the OECD from 1999 to 2020. While the data include long time-series for many countries, observations are rarer for

[3]The availability of childcare is seen the most important indicator of policy effort—and more predictive of women's opportunities for employment—than government expenditures and childcare costs (Hegewisch and Gornick 2011, 128–29). In any event, the available expenditures data has validity problems because the it covers older preschool children, whose often 'short-hour' care is associated with more part-time employment among mothers (see, e.g., Korpi 2000, 145).

many others, and for Canada there are no observations at all. Still, an analysis of these data seems a worthwhile check on the conclusions reached by our examination of the WBL policy index.

Figure 5.10 shows the bivariate relationship between gender egalitarianism and these very early childhood enrollments. Enrollment rates in education and care for children aged zero to two are plotted vertically on the y-axis, and PGE scores are plotted horizontally on the x-axis; the horizontal whiskers trace the 80% credible intervals of the PGE scores. The relationship between these two variables is positive and strong: the bivariate correlation, with the uncertainty in the PGE scores taken into account, is .63. Still, a strong correlation is famously insufficient to establish causation. A strong correlation may instead, for example, simply arise due to spuriousness; that is, egalitarian attitudes and early childhood care enrollments may both be driven by some third factor, such as levels of women's officeholding. We need a more sophisticated model to draw firmer conclusions.

First, as ever, we need to account for likely sources of spuriousness. Levels of women's officeholding and the strength of the feminist movement are two variables that plausibly could influence both the public's gender egalitarian attitudes and the constellation of policies that shape the rate of young children's enrollment in education and care. Weeks (2022) finds that national quota adoption worked to shift family policies in the direction of more gender equality among twenty OECD democracies, so taking this factor into consideration is also important. Richer and growing economies may also be expected to be better able to afford to make childcare available, so we include GDP per capita as a control as well.

To model enrollment in early childhood education and care, we use now-familiar tools. We again use a Bayesian multilevel model that includes varying intercepts for each country and each year that capture any distinctive differences across space and any shocks that occur over time and so minimize bias due to heteroskedasticity or from variables omitted from the model (see Shor et al. 2007). We use the 'within-between specification'

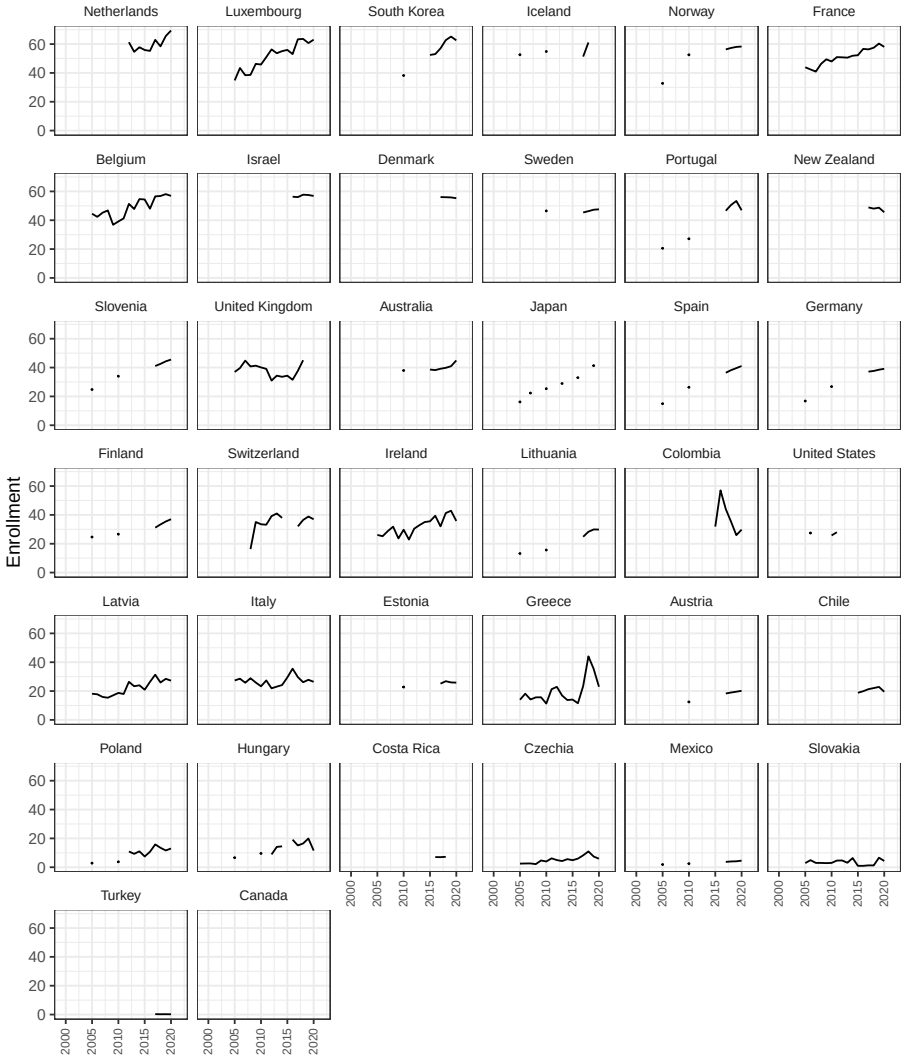


Figure 5.9.: Enrollment in Early Childhood Education and Care, Ages 0-2, in the OECD

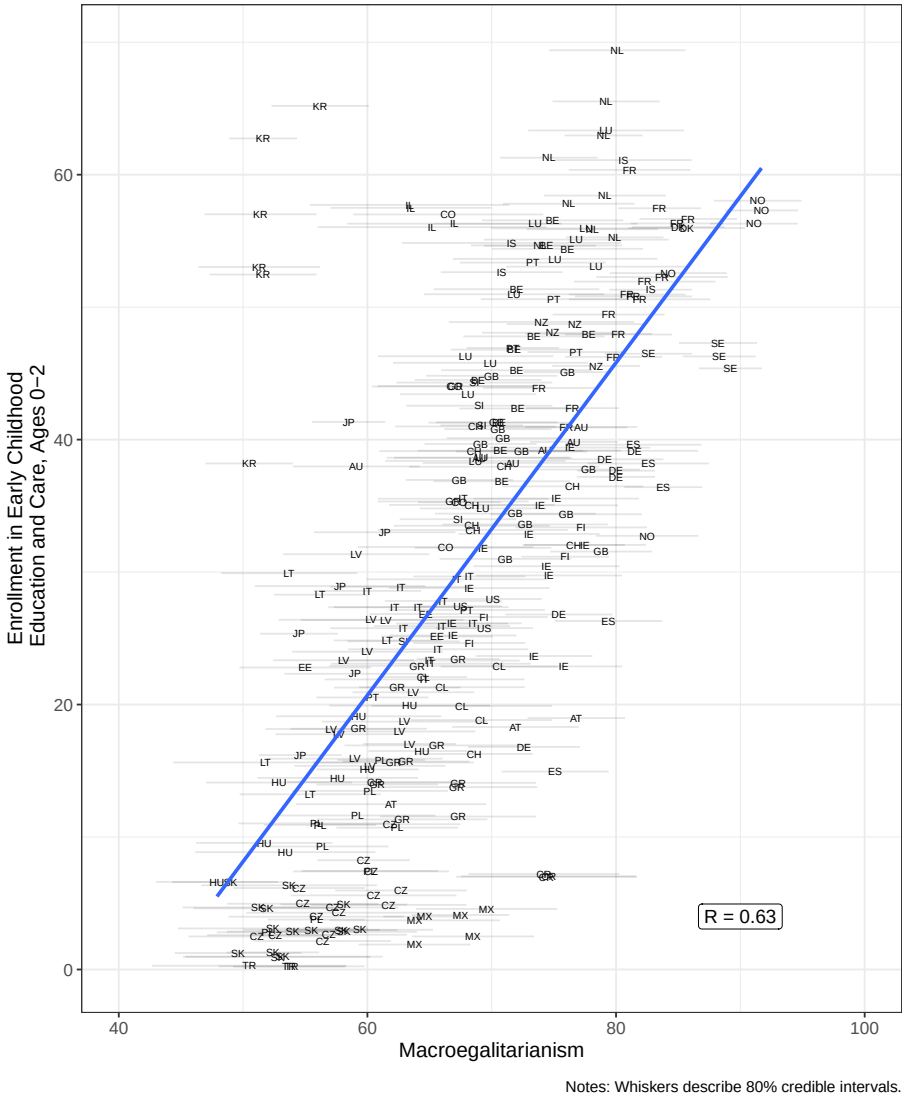


Figure 5.10.: Macroegalitarianism and Enrollment in Early Childhood Education and Care, Ages 0-2, in OECD Countries

to separate time-varying predictors into their mean values for each country and the changes over time, with the latter providing the best evidence of causation (see Bell and Jones 2015). And we of course incorporate the measurement uncertainty in the PGE scores into our model (see Tai, Hu, and Solt 2024). Finally, because past rates of early childcare enrollment should be expected to predict current values, we treat the process as dynamic and include the rate of enrollment in the previous year as a predictor.

In this relatively small dataset, only a few of the posterior distributions of the coefficient estimates exhibit a bulk of their probability far from zero. Countries with higher GDP per capita exhibit higher childcare enrollments among the very young, with a two-standard-deviation difference in the mean estimated to yield 2.2 (80% c.i.: 1.2 to 3.3) points higher enrollments immediately and 35.7 (80% c.i.: 19.6 to 58.3) points over time. Countries with higher mean gender quotas also have higher enrollments, with a two-standard-deviation difference in mean national quota levels corresponding to 0.9 (80% c.i.: 0.1 to 1.8) percentage points more of the under-two population in childcare. The dynamics of the model—the fact that past enrollments strongly predict future enrollments—means this increase grows to 14.8 (80% c.i.: 1.9 to 31.6) points over time.

Most important for our inquiry, when gender egalitarian attitudes increase among the public within a country, subsequent childcare enrollments rise as well. The estimated year-to-year gain in enrollment following a two-standard-deviation rise in macroegalitarianism is 1.8 (80% c.i.: 0.7 to 2.8) percentage points, and this gain compounds to 27.8 (80% c.i.: 11.5 to 53.5) points dynamically. Part of this estimate may well reflect that when egalitarian views grow in the public, more members of the public take advantage of the childcare that is available even in the absence of policy change; this is the precise reason why we sought to focus our inquiry on policy outputs like the WBL policy index rather than outcomes. Still, legislators better representing the views of a more egalitarian public by pursuing policy changes that makes childcare more accessible are likely part of the story as well.

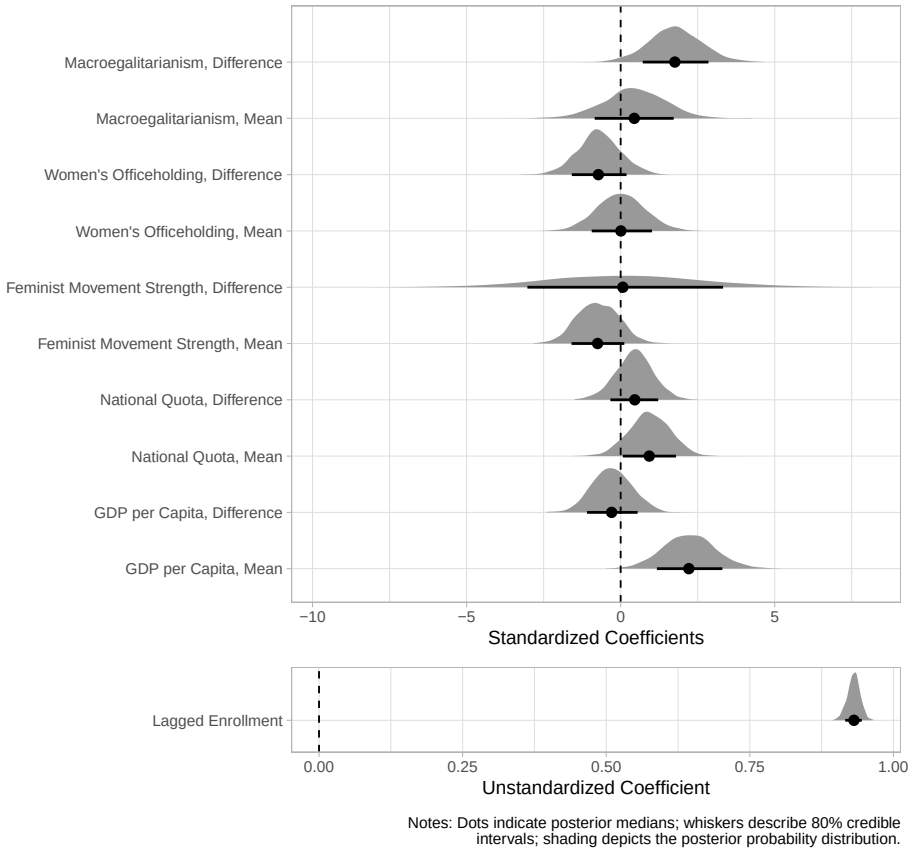


Figure 5.11.: Predicting Enrollment in Early Childhood Education and Care, Ages 0-2, in OECD Countries

And how does the public respond? Sjöberg (2004) argues that institutionalized family policies, particularly the provision of early childhood education and care, promote married women's labor force participation and so reshape the public's attitudes on gender egalitarianism in the public sphere. That is, because these policies "contain normative elements and expectations on the 'proper' role of men as well as women in society and in the family" (Sjöberg 2004, 113), they can be expected to reinforce and increase macroegalitarianism. But a self-undermining reaction, a backlash to increased gender equality in policies like those affecting childcare, also remains a possibility.

Figure 5.12 shows the results of a simultaneous-equations model of childcare enrollments and macroegalitarianism. On the left of the plot, we see that the results of the model of enrollments presented in Figure 5.11 remain substantively unchanged when the potential endogenous relationship between the two variables is included in the model. On the right are the results predicting macroegalitarianism. Looking at the estimates toward the top of that side reveals that countries with higher mean enrollments tend somewhat to have higher levels of macroegalitarianism. A country with an enrollment rate a standard deviation above the overall mean, like those of Belgium or New Zealand, is estimated to have a PGE score 0.39 (80% c.i.: -0.2 to 1.1) points higher than an otherwise similar country with enrollments a standard deviation below the mean, similar to that of Hungary, compounding to 3.5 (80% c.i.: -2.6 to 8.8) over time. The posterior distribution indicates that the probability that this estimate is positive, given this model and these data, is 80%. Changes in enrollment levels within a country over time, however, do not provide evidence for a short-term effect on macroegalitarianism. It would seem that the private choices involved in enrolling one's child in daycare are too opaque to trigger a response in public opinion on a year-to-year basis. In any event, there is no evidence whatsoever that growing enrollments of very young children provoke a self-undermining decline in macroegalitarianism.

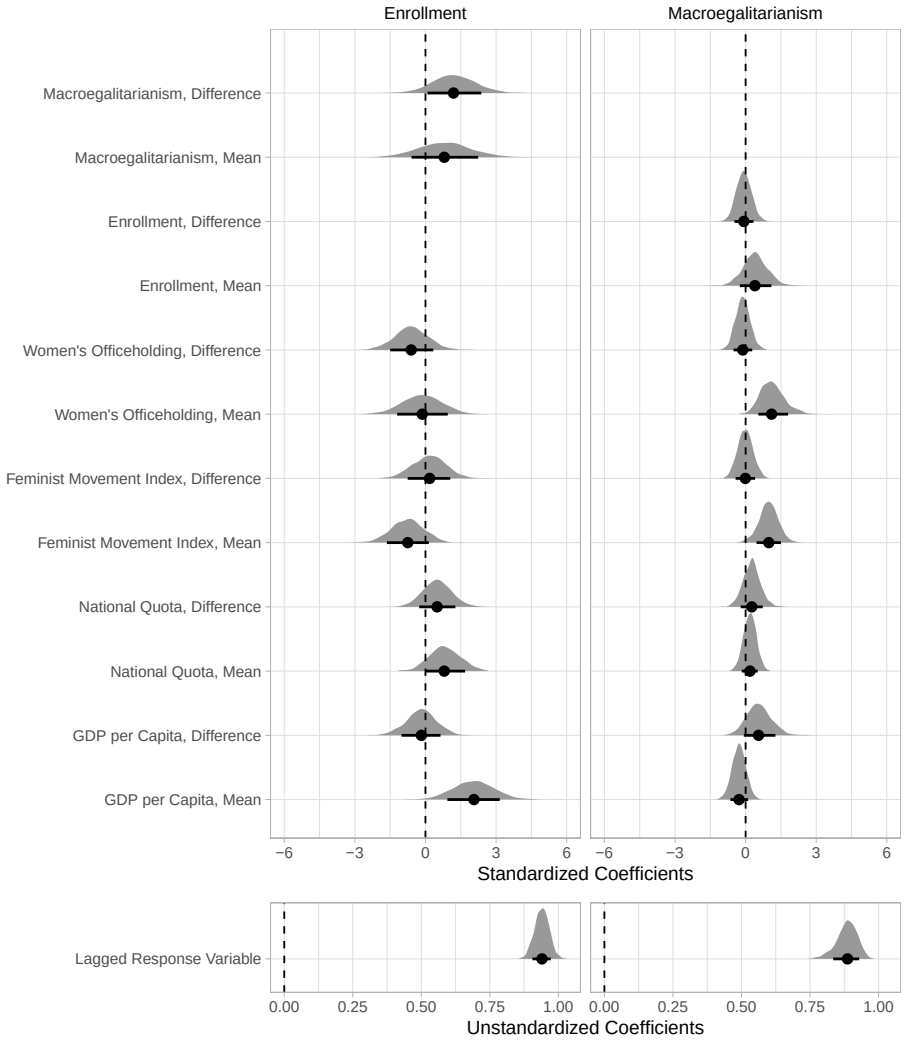


Figure 5.12.: Predicting Enrollment in Early Childhood Education and Care, Ages 0-2, and Macroegalitarianism in OECD Countries

5.3. Conclusions

In this chapter, we examined democratic representation of public opinion toward gender roles in the public sphere in terms of policy as well as the public's responsiveness to policies that advance gender equality. We considered the most common policy focused on gender equality in politics, national legislative gender quotas, and a comprehensive measure of policies enabling gender equality in employment and entrepreneurship, the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law policy index. As a further check on our conclusions, we also examined a policy outcome long understood to be crucial to gender equality in the workplace, enrollments in childcare for children age two and under.

Our findings with regard to democratic representation are unequivocal. As the public adopts more gender egalitarian views, legislators are more likely to pass more demanding mandatory gender quotas, laws that require women to make up a specified share of parties' candidates for the legislature. Such circumstances also make lawmakers more likely to adopt more of the policies that work to place women on equal footing to men in employment. Even enrollments in childcare among the very young—a complex outcome reflecting policies that influence the cost, accessibility, and quality of center-based care as well as the private decisions of parents—respond to shifts in macroegalitarianism. Regardless of the particular policy examined, both differences across countries and changes within countries indicate that dynamic representation occurs in policies advancing gender equality.

The results of our investigation of public responsiveness to policy are less consistent but still allow some conclusions to be drawn. Cross-national differences in the adoption of the gender-equality policies we considered have a positive relationship with differences in macroegalitarianism, suggesting that at least over the long term these policies work to bolster their own support. Year-to-year changes in policies advancing gender equality in employment within countries also appear to generate accelerating

changes in public opinion; gender-quota adoption does not trigger a similar short-term response in our analysis. Further, neither short-term public responsiveness to within-country changes or the signs of long-term public responsiveness in cross-country differences are evident in childcare enrollments, arguably because these are much less visible or tangible to the public. What is clear is that gender egalitarian public opinion does not decline thermostatically in response to policies advancing gender equality. There is no evidence at all of a self-undermining public opinion backlash.

6. Macroegalitarianism and Women as Chief Executives: The Case of South Korea

The perception that moves toward gender equality prompt backlashes in public opinion is widespread, as we noted at the beginning of this book. It would come as no surprise to us if there are, among those reading these pages, some who will find at least some of the conclusions of our two previous chapters on dynamic democracy too good to believe, in particular those regarding public responsiveness. Recall that, across the countries of the OECD over several decades, we found evidence for not only democratic representation, politics and policy reflecting public opinion, but also *positive* public responsiveness to politics and policy, that is, that public opinion responds to women's electoral success and the adoption of more gender egalitarian policies by growing *more* egalitarian. Such accelerating feedback is exactly the opposite of what many observers fear is true.

Korea's recent political history seems to provide a strong basis for the apprehension that public opinion lashes back against women's successes in winning office and against other moves toward gender equality. If public opinion backlash does not occur, how are we to understand events like Korea electing to its presidency Park Geun-hye, the country's first woman to hold that office, and then, just two elections later, choosing Yoon Suk-yeol, a man who built his political ascent around his anti-egalitarian views? At least on its face, this sequence of events appears to contradict our conclusions.

In this chapter, we closely examine Park's presidency and the Korean public's reaction to it. As we noted in the introduction to this book, the prominent literature on attitudes toward gender equality is heavily weighted toward case-study and small-n research designs to the detriment of generalizability and causal inference. We made much of the advantages offered by our broadly comparative and dynamic perspective. Indeed, the prior chapters capitalized on these advantages to disentangle and reveal the processes of democratic representation and public responsiveness with regard to gender equality in the public sphere across the OECD over several decades.

But as is usual in cross-national research, our findings of robust democratic representation by parties and legislators of gender egalitarian public opinion and generally positive, self-reinforcing public responsiveness to advances toward gender equality represent averages across the observed countries and years. In consequence, one response to perceptions of backlash in Korea and elsewhere would be simply to accept the possibility that such self-undermining feedback may sometimes occur, but it is not typical. In other words, if the Korean public did lash back against progress toward gender equality as a result of Park's success in winning the presidency, that response was an anomaly, nothing more. The extent of women's success in winning office merely increases the probability that the public becomes more egalitarian, after all; it does not determine that result (cf. Dion 1998). Occasional exceptions to the rule are just to be expected.

However, leaving it at that—simply sweeping Korea, as an occasional exception, into the error term as it were—is not only unlikely to soothe the concerned, it also misses an opportunity: close study of cases that are poorly explained by existing models offers suggestions for theoretical development (see, e.g., Stephens 1979, XXX; Ragin 1987, 76–80; Seawright and Gerring 2008, 302–3). In particular, a case in which the purported cause is present but the expected outcome is absent can illuminate antecedent conditions the original theory requires to operate (Van Evera 1997, 86). If a woman achieves spectacular success in winning political office in Korea, but the country's public does not respond with growing support for

gender equality in the public sphere as we found elsewhere but instead with backlash, it could be because some condition needed for accelerating feedback to occur is missing—or a condition that prevents accelerating feedback from occurring is present.

One circumstance that clearly distinguishes Park from the elected women whose successes we previously examined is that she was elected to Korea's presidency while those we studied in Chapter 4 were legislators. The greater visibility of chief executives and the differing citizen expectations of legislators and executives (see Sweet-Cushman 2022) could yield a different relationship between women's officeholding and gender egalitarian public opinion. We investigate this possibility in the next section.

6.1. The Election of Park Geun-hye and Korean Public Opinion

Park Geun-hye was nine years old when her father, Major General Park Chung-hee, led the overthrow of South Korea's elected government in 1961. After first heading a military junta, Park Chung-hee narrowly won flawed elections to become president in 1963 and then ruled the country until he was assassinated in 1979 (see, e.g., C.-S. Lee 1980). He is credited as the architect of 'Miracle on the Han River,' an era of rapid economic growth and modernization: real economic growth averaged over 10% per year during his rule (see, e.g., Haggard and Moon 1990; H.-A. Kim 2004). This family background served as Park Geun-hye's foundational political identity. To her supporters in Korea's conservative political party, she was regarded as a symbol of spectacular economic progress; to her liberal opponents, she was a reminder of dictatorial oppression (Y.-I. Lee 2017).

Park Geun-hye had taken on the role of acting First Lady in 1974 when her mother was killed in an attempt on Park Chung-hee's life; in this office, she made public appearances with her father and became involved in government initiatives (Y.-I. Lee 2017, 282). After her father's death and

the process of the democratization of South Korea, Park retreated from the public eye for nearly two decades, maintaining an image of reclusive principle. Her career in electoral politics began in 1998. She entered the National Assembly as a representative for the conservative Grand National Party (GNP) in a by-election for the Dalseong district of Daegu, where she was born; Daegu is part of the conservative heartland (Jung 2021, 75–77). She was quickly recognized as a powerfully symbolic political leader and—like many women in politics (see, e.g., Reyes-Housholder 2020, 542)—established a political persona centered on personal integrity and the virtue of keeping promises (see S. Shin 2020). She served as the party's chair from 2004 to 2006, navigating multiple crises and engineering improbable electoral victories; these feats earned her the moniker 'Queen of Elections' among her supporters (see, e.g., Mun 2015; Y.-I. Lee 2017).

This reputation for success, combined with her father's enduring support among older, more conservative voters, propelled her to the forefront of national politics.[1] After spearheading the GNP's rebranding as the Saenuri (New Frontier) Party, she secured the conservative nomination for the 2012 presidential elections. Park campaigned as a leader "married to the nation" with the goals of restoring the high growth rates of her father's era and—in a break from her party's orthodoxy—delivering on Korea's constitutional mandate for economic democracy. She went on to win the presidential election, becoming the first candidate since 1987 to garner an outright majority of the popular vote (51.56%).

Did Park's success in winning the Blue House as Korea's first woman president prompt a backlash in macroegalitarianism, public opinion toward gender equality in the public sphere? Figure 6.1 plots the evolution of Korea's PGE scores before, during, and after Park's time in office. The years

[1]Familial ties have been important to the election of many women chief executives, particularly in Asia and Latin America (see, e.g., Jalalzai 2008). Among OECD countries, however, Park is unique as a dynastic heir. The only other leader of an OECD country identified as having familial ties to politics by Jalalzai (2008) is Chile's Michelle Bachelet, whose father was an Air Force Brigadier General and, in 1972-1973, a member of President Salvador Allende's cabinet.

during which Park held office are shaded in pale gray. The PGE scores provide no clear evidence of a decline in gender egalitarian attitudes in Korea during these years. When Park started her term in 2013, the country had a PGE score of 50.1 (80% credible interval: 46.2 to 52.2); at the end of her presidency, Korea's PGE score was estimated to have *risen* to 51.3 (80% c.i.: 48.1 to 54.5).

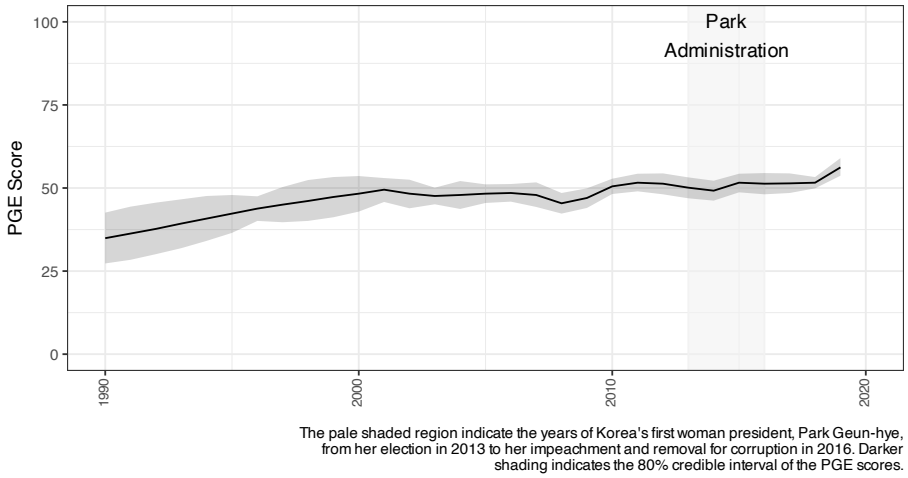


Figure 6.1.: PGE Scores in Korea During the Park Administration

But neither do these data show clear evidence of the *increase* in macroegalitarianism that the cross-national results on women's legislative officeholding we presented in Chapter 4 would lead us to expect to occur during a time when the highest political office in the country was held by a woman. While estimated to be positive, the difference in PGE scores over these years—1.2 points—is not credibly different from zero (80% c.i.: -1.0 to 4.0).

We can dig even deeper, though. One advantage of our focus on Korea in this chapter is that it facilitates looking at individual survey items in ways that are not possible when taking the broad comparative perspective

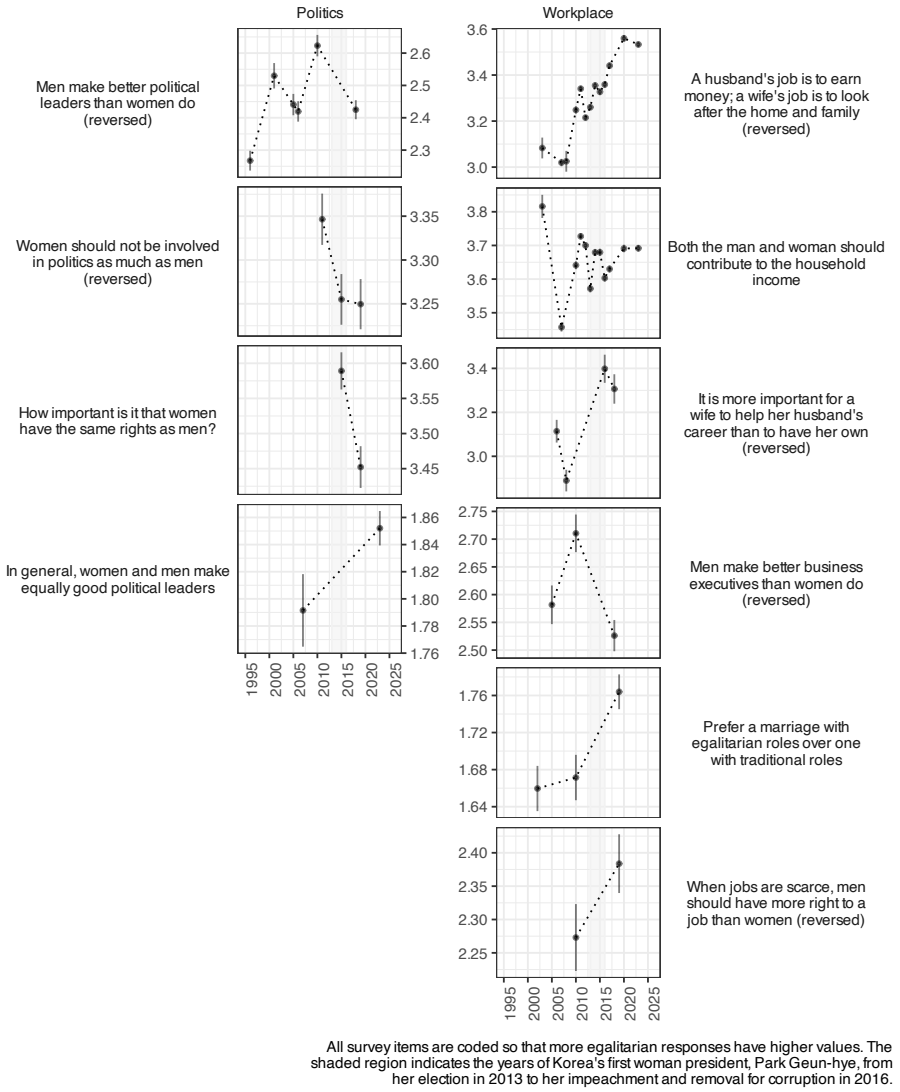


Figure 6.2.: Trends in Mean Responses to Survey Items on Gender Equality in Korea

that we employ elsewhere in this book. Figure 6.2 displays the trends of mean responses to the survey questions on gender egalitarianism that were used to create the PGE scores for Korea, with the items regarding equality in politics in the left column and those on equality in the workplace on the right. The years that Park held the presidency, 2013–2016, are again shaded in pale gray. Among the questions on equality in politics, all but one suggest a decline during Park's term; among the questions on equality in the workplace, all but one do *not* evince a decline during those years—if anything, they typically show a drop before Park took office followed by a recovery during her term.

Before exploring further, it is worth pausing a moment to recall that this pattern is distinctly atypical. Remember, we found in Chapter 3 that public opinion about equality in politics and in the workplace are usually tightly bound to each other (see, for example, Figure 3.2). That they are not in this case suggests that something unusual—and potentially interesting—is going on.

We also pause to note that the two exceptions appear upon closer examination to be perhaps not that exceptional. With regard to political equality, the only item that intersects with Park's years in office that shows an increase is "in general, men and women make equally good political leaders." The upswing in agreement with this item, however, is evidenced only in 2023, some seven years after Park was replaced in office and at least four years later than the last observations of the other political-equality items.[2] And with regard to equality in the workplace, the only item for which egalitarian responses declined over Park's term was "men make better business leaders than women," which is also the only workplace item that implicates women's leadership. It would seem on the basis of this evidence that Park's presidency negatively affected the Korean public's views specifically of women *in politics and positions of power*, if only in

[2]Indeed, the survey on which this observation is based, Pew Research Center's 2023 East Asian Societies Survey, was so much later that its release was too recent for it to be included in the PGE scores employed in this book.

the relatively short run.

One additional point often raised by observers of Korean politics with regard to Park's presidency is that it ushered in a period of intense political polarization, a time in which the views of men and women, young and old, and those with more and less education moved in opposite directions (see, e.g., Cheong and Haggard 2023, 1219). If this is true, by looking at *average* responses as we have, we may be overlooking additional signs of backlash against gender equality that are limited to particular Korean demographic groups and, within the entire public's opinion, counterbalanced by the views of other groups. Appendix D breaks down the responses to the available survey items on gender equality in Korea by gender, generation, and education. It shows that responses generally move very similarly across these groups. There are few signs of an increased polarization that worked to obscure a backlash against gender egalitarianism in Korea.

6.1.1. Women Chief Executives and Public Opinion

In the previous section, we found that the Korean public's general attitudes toward gender equality in the public sphere did not decline over Park's presidency, but that its views toward women's roles in *politics and leadership* specifically did fall during those years. Moreover, these patterns, if evidently fairly short-lived, were broadly shared across men and women, young and old, and those with more and less education (see Appendix D).

Did the election of women to the presidency or premiership provoke negative movements in macroegalitarianism in other countries? Looking more broadly across the OECD allows us another opportunity to test the hypothesis that women chief executives, in contrast to the legislators we examined in Chapter 4, trigger public opinion backlash. Although women's successes in winning the chief executive's office remain decidedly the exception rather than the rule, they have been growing more frequent over time across these countries. Including Park, our dataset includes PGE

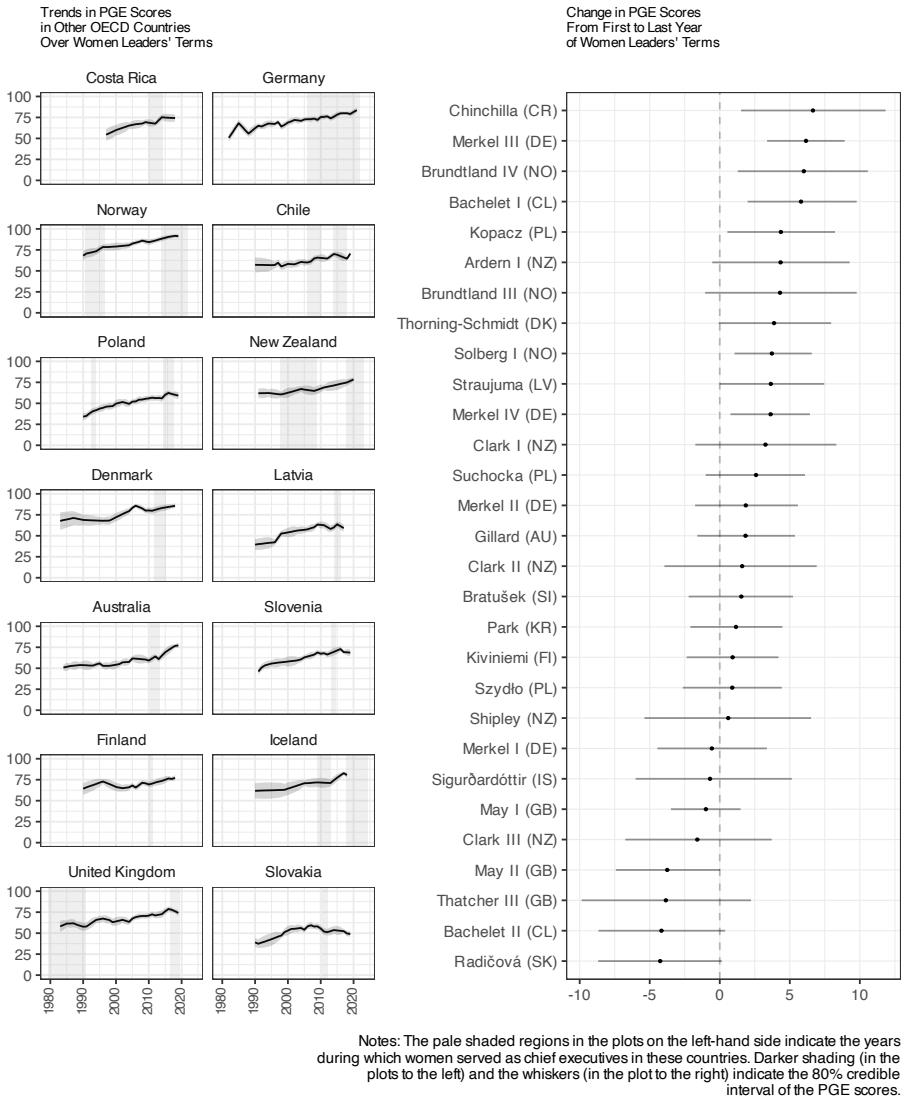


Figure 6.3.: Trends in Macroegalitarianism in OECD Countries That Have Had Women Leaders

scores during the time in office of 21 women leaders who governed in Korea and fourteen other OECD countries. Trends in macroegalitarianism in these additional countries are depicted on the left side of Figure 6.3.[3] The pale gray shading indicates the years during which a woman served as chief executive in each of these countries.

The right side of Figure 6.3 shows how attitudes toward gender equality in the public sphere changed over the terms in office of women chief executives in the OECD for which we have PGE scores. During these 29 terms in office, the change is estimated to be positive—that is, macroegalitarianism was higher at the end of the term than at its start—more than twice as often as it is negative (21 versus 8 times). Calculating the difference between two quantities measured with uncertainty results in even more uncertainty, however: only 7 of these changes are credibly positive with 80% confidence. On the other hand, the 80% credibility intervals indicate that none of the changes with negative point estimates are credibly different from zero. Taken as a whole, then, the evidence from the PGE scores across the OECD, like that for Korea, does not support the hypothesis that the mere election of a woman to a country's highest office works to trigger a backlash against gender equality in the public sphere among the members of the public. Macroegalitarianism has increased during the terms in office of many women chief executives.

But as we saw in Korea during Park's presidency, the public's views on women in politics and positions of leadership may diverge from its general views on gender equality in the public sphere when a women serves as chief

[3]Israel, where Golda Meir was prime minister from 1969 to 1974, and Portugal, where Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo was prime minister from 1979 to 1980, are excluded from the figure because these terms in office predate our earliest PGE scores for those countries. Because the PGE scores are measured at the annual level, Kim Campbell's four-month term as Canada's prime minister in 1993 and Anneli Jäätteenmäki's two months as Finland's prime minister in 2003 are too short to observe changes in this variable; these leaders' terms are excluded as well. A number of additional OECD countries have elected women chief executives after the last year for which data on macroegalitarianism is currently available. Regrettably, we cannot include these leaders in our analysis here either.

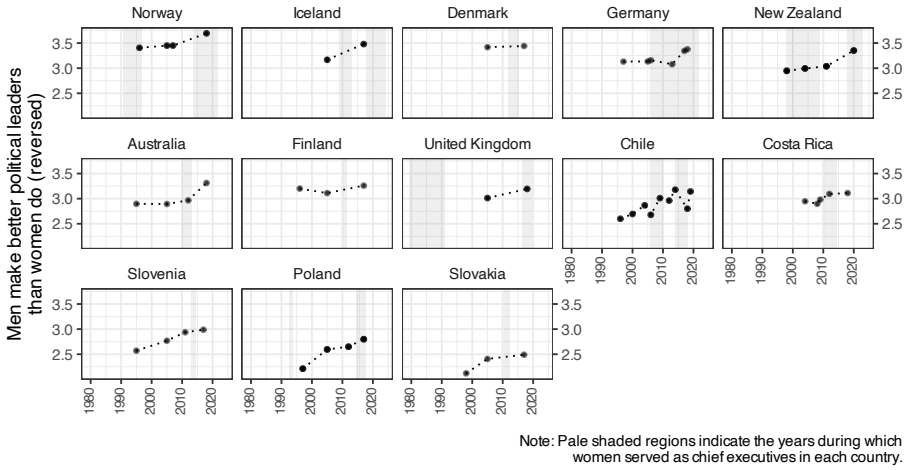


Figure 6.4.: Trends in Mean Survey Responses on Gender Equality in Politics in OECD Countries That Have Had Women Chief Executives

executive. Figure 6.4 shows how mean disagreement with the statement "men make better political leaders than women" changed over time in the eleven countries for which these series intersected with the terms of women chief executives. Although this is the survey item on gender equality in politics with the greatest overlap with women leaders, these data are very thin—recall that in Chapter 3, we explained that the sparsity of the existing data was an important motivation for creating the PGE scores. Still, what data we have show very little evidence of declines in egalitarian views during the years in which women held office.[4]

There is one exception: Michelle Bachelet's second term as president of Chile, 2014-2018. Bachelet, a physician who also earned a graduate degree in military strategy, served first as Minister of Health and then Minister of Defense before being elected Chile's first woman president in 2005. In her first term, from 2006 to 2010, Bachelet avoided scandal and achieved a number of policy successes, notably including the expansion of state childcare (see, e.g., Reyes-Housholder 2019). Barred by law from serving consecutive terms, she ran and won again in Chile's late 2013 general elections and began her second term in 2014. The average disagreement of Chileans with the statement that men make better political leaders than women fell by more than a tenth of the item's range after Bachelet's second election, returning to levels typical of the period before Bachelet's first term.

As in Korea, however, it appears this decline was short-lived. Figure 6.4 also shows that in 2019, a year after Bachelet left office, average disagreement with this item had rebounded to a score indistinguishable from its previous high, reached the year before Bachelet was elected to the pres-

[4]Among the surveys we used in Chapter 3 to generate the PGE scores, there are five other country-items asking about gender equality in politics that intersect with the time in office of women chief executives: three items of one country each, and a fourth with two countries. All but one of these country-item series consist of just two time points, and the other has only three. None of these five very short series exhibit discernibly declining levels of gender egalitarianism in the public during women's terms as chief executive.

idency for the second time. Still, even these two episodes of apparent backlash, brief and limited though they may be, contradict the findings we presented earlier.

6.2. Park's Presidency and Korean Public Opinion

A closer look at Park's presidency suggests a possible explanation: that women chief executives who are mired in scandal and policy failure change the public's views about women in politics and positions of power (cf. Woo et al. 2025). Park's economic policy disappointed many of her supporters. Upon taking office, Park abandoned her campaign-trail promises to deliver economic democratization and a universal welfare state, pivoting instead to support for the 'creative economy' and further deregulation (see, e.g., Kwon 2017; Choi 2018; J.-W. Shin 2018). Hopes for a return to the spectacular economic growth of the Park Chung-hee era were similarly unfulfilled: GDP grew at annual rates of at most 3.2% during Park's presidency.

Most dramatically, Park's five-year term in office was cut short by the 'Choi Soon-sil Gate' scandal. Choi Soon-sil is a long-time friend of Park Geun-hye and the daughter of the controversial cult leader, Choi Tae-min, who became a mentor to Park Geun-hye after her mother's death. Even though Choi Soon-sil held no formal position within the government or the ruling party, the scandal revealed that she wielded astonishing influence over Park's policy decisions, personnel appointments, and even her daily wardrobe. Choi Soon-sil was found to have received drafts of confidential presidential speeches and documents and to have influenced high-level government decisions, personnel appointments, and state affairs without any legal authorization or security clearance. This influence was widely viewed as a severe breach of constitutional order and a profound betrayal of public trust (H.-K. Kim 2016).

The scandal began to unfold in mid-2016 with allegations concerning suspicious donations to two non-profit foundations, Mir and K-Sports, ostensibly dedicated to promoting Korean culture and sports (see, e.g., Seo 2021). Investigative reporting by a conservative television station revealed that these organizations were fronts controlled by Choi Soon-sil (Jhee and Park 2019, 579). Park and Choi had both pressured Korean conglomerates to make contributions to these organizations (H.-K. Kim 2016); the straightforward details that Choi had leveraged her relationship with the president to gain her daughter acceptance at a prestigious university despite her mediocre high school grades and then later a more compliant academic advisor at that university gained the convoluted scandal continued public attention (Seo 2021). In October 2016, other reporting disclosed the contents of a discarded tablet computer belonging to Choi Soon-sil and finally broke the public's trust irrevocably. The device contained evidence that Choi Soon-sil had received and edited dozens of classified, sensitive state documents, including advance drafts of presidential speeches and state policy papers; Park's first public apology, delivered the following day, did nothing to quell public outrage (Min and Yun 2019, 7).

The public reaction was overwhelming. Millions of South Koreans took to the streets bearing candles each Saturday evening to demand the president's ouster (see, e.g., Doucette 2017; Hwang and Willis 2020; Cho and Hwang 2021). A special counsel investigation into Park was opened in November 2016, the National Assembly voted to impeach her that December, and with the massive protests in their twenty-third week, the Constitutional Court of South Korea unanimously upheld the impeachment in March 2017, citing Park's gross abuse of power, her violation of her constitutional duty to protect the public's life, and her actions that severely harmed the principles of representative democracy.

The Constitutional Court's ruling triggered a sequence of events. Park had already been removed from office provisionally upon her impeachment, and this ruling ended her presidential term. She was subsequently arrested; indicted on eighteen criminal charges including bribery, coercion, and abuse of power; and then convicted and sentenced to a decades-long

term in prison. Additional trials added even more years to her sentence.[5] Park's time as Korea's first woman president unequivocally constituted a scandal-ridden failure.

What about Michelle Bachelet, the other woman president to see declines in public opinion toward women in politics? Like Park's presidency, Bachelet's second term was marked by both policy failure and scandal. During her second campaign, Bachelet proposed an ambitious reform agenda: to increase corporate taxes, to end Chile's market-oriented educational system, and to rewrite the constitution inherited from Chile's authoritarian regime (Silva 2016, 197). Although she managed to quickly push through tax reforms, changes to the educational system were seen by many Chileans as falling short of the promised transformation of the sector (see Torres 2022, 156–57). Bachelet's efforts to replace Chile's dictatorial constitution were severely constrained by the agreements that had provided the foundation for Chile's transition to democracy, and the process she outlined ultimately failed to gain the needed support in the legislature (see Siavelis 2016; García 2024).

Moreover, just under a year after Bachelet retook office, and while she was away from the capital on vacation, scandal erupted. The breaking story centered on a company half-owned by her daughter-in-law, which had struggled to complete a land deal. Banks seemed unwilling to lend the needed funds, but on the day after her second election victory, a meeting with a Banco de Chile executive that her son attended finalized the required loan. Just after the company completed the purchase, rezoning went into effect that permitted the parcels to be developed, and the land was quickly resold for a multi-million dollar profit (Salaberry 2015a, 2015b). Bachelet was slow to respond to the story, but amid accusations of influence peddling and misuse of privileged information, she leaned on her reputation as an "honest mother"—an identity she had campaigned

[5]The presidential election was brought forward from December to May 2017, and the candidate of Korea's liberal Democratic Party, Moon Jae-in, won decisively against a fragmented field. With Park's health failing after serving nearly five years in prison, Moon pardoned her near the end of his term [see, e.g., Shin2021].

on—to express her concern while also proclaiming she had no knowledge of her son and daughter-in-law's actions. Opposition politicians seized on the scandal to raise a series of heavily gendered criticisms: that Bachelet as a mother must have known about her son's presumed misdeeds and so was lying to the Chilean public, that by not insisting on her son's immediate resignation from his ceremonial position she put her role as mother ahead of her role as president, and that by crying over the matter in press conferences she acted without the rationality and strength the situation—and her office—demanded (see Silva 2016, 198–99; Reyes-Housholder 2020, 544–45). The scandal and this discourse dogged Bachelet for the rest of her term.

These patterns suggest some support for the view that when a woman holds a country's chief executive office, her high visibility in what is among the most traditionally masculine domains *may* trigger a distinctive negative response in gender egalitarian public opinion. However, the case of Park in South Korea as well as that of Bachelet in Chile suggest that public opinion backlash is not triggered by women making "great strides," as Faludi (1991, xix) puts it. Rather than showing that the public lashes back against gender equality when women chief executives succeed, these cases instead indicate that it does so only when they fail.

6.2.1. Executive Failure, Public Approval, and Macroegalitarianism

To assess this possibility, we turn to executive public approval, a crucial measure of leaders' success. Public approval, it turns out, is a particularly good measure of the success of leaders who are women: scandals and policy failures have been found to have especially strong negative effects on the macro-approval of women presidents relative to men presidents (see, e.g., Carlin, Carreras, and Love 2020; Reyes-Housholder 2020). Specifically, we use the data provided by the Executive Approval Project (Carlin et al. 2025), which combines "numerous disparate public opinion sources" that

include various assessments "into a single unidimensional series capturing the public's view of the executive" in each country (Carlin, Carreras, and Love 2020, 1366).

Figure 6.5 shows Park's net presidential approval—that is, the difference between her approval rating and her disapproval rating—for each month of her time in office. Park, like most newly elected leaders, began her term with positive net approval; considerably more of the public approved than disapproved her performance during her first year in office. However, her honeymoon with the public was clearly at an end with the sinking of the Sewol ferry in April 2014 (Son 2021, 774). That tragedy resulted in the loss of 304 lives. It also exposed the extent of regulatory capture that had persisted since the state corporatism of Park's father, Park Chung-hee (You and Park 2017). In August 2015, North and South Korea exchanged artillery and rocket fire across the demilitarized zone. No casualties were reported, but this clash triggered a "rally 'round the flag" effect in Park's approval ratings (Hur and Choi 2023, 505; on these rally effects more generally, see Mueller 1970, 21–22) that briefly returned her net approval to positive territory. By spring 2016, however, her net approval had fallen to its earlier deeply negative levels. Then, in late October, with the revelations of the extent of Choi Soon-sil's involvement in government decision making, Park's net public approval fell off a cliff. The widespread protests that followed evidenced the public's anger. By the time of her impeachment by the Korean National Assembly in December, Park's disapproval rate exceeded her approval rate by more than fifty points. The tight relationship between Park's failures and declines in her public approval reinforces the view that public approval is a good measure of executive success.

Figure 6.6 shows the quarterly net public approval of the other women chief executives for whom data are available from the Executive Approval Project. The panels are ordered by the average net approval for each executive. The deeply negative approval ratings of Park's time in office and of Bachelet's second term are matched or exceeded by those of only three other women chief executives. The trends in their public approval

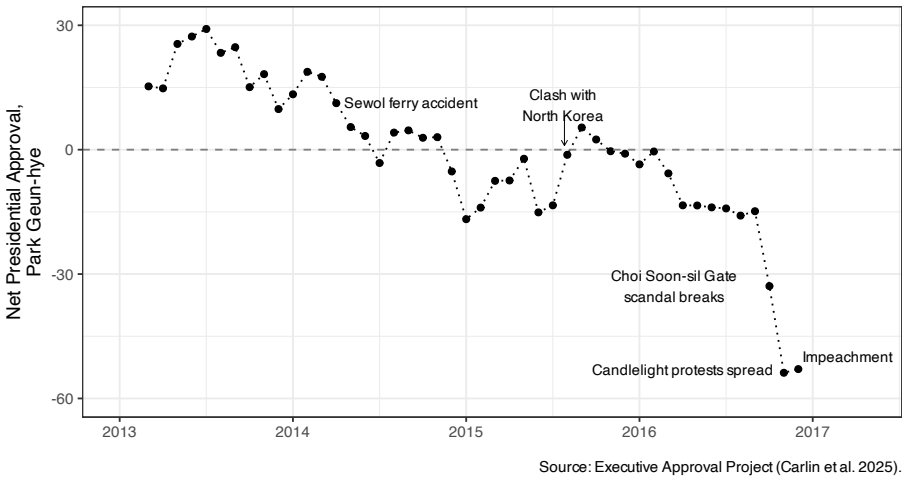


Figure 6.5.: Korean Presidential Approval During the Park Administration

appear in the bottom row of the plot, along with those over Bachelet's two terms.

Do these very negative net approval ratings reflect poor performance on the part of these women in chief executive office? In short, yes. Public approval of Theresa May as prime minister of the United Kingdom comes closest to Park's disastrous ratings. After the narrow victory of the Leave campaign in the Brexit referendum, May was charged with the unenviable responsibility of negotiating the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union, a predicament memorably analogized as being tasked by a slender majority of the electorate to "build a submarine out of cheese" (Rifkind 2018). With roughly half of the public opposed to the project from the start and the remainder unlikely to be satisfied with the necessarily shabby results, this inevitable policy failure pulled May's approval ratings under water for her entire time in office (see, e.g., Byrne, Randall, and

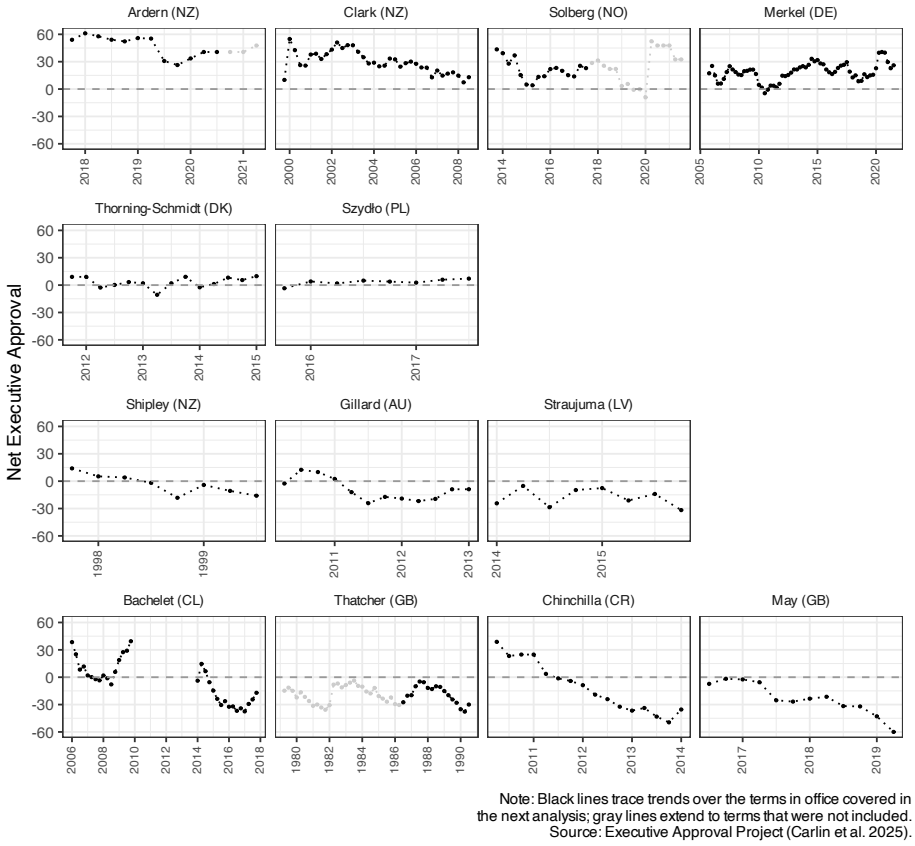


Figure 6.6.: Executive Approval of Women Leaders in OECD Countries

Theakston 2021).[6]

Another woman chief executive to experience public approval in the same range as Park and Bachelet is Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica's center-right National Liberation Party. Chinchilla was elected to the presidency in 2010 on a platform of fighting crime, raising taxes to lower the national debt, and completing several major infrastructure projects. Numerous scandals—including Chinchilla repeatedly flying on planes owned by drug cartels; tax evasion among cabinet members, including the treasury minister; and corruption in contract awards—thwarted all of these policy goals (see Hand, Zutz, and Rodríguez 2020, 121–25). Her central campaign promise to dramatically expand state childcare also came to naught for insufficient funding, cementing perceptions of "widespread mismanagement and corruption within Chinchilla's administration" (Hand, Zutz, and Rodríguez 2020, 125).

Finally, Margaret Thatcher's public approval ratings in her third term match the dismal record of Bachelet's second. Thatcher famously pursued a series of policies that were deeply unpopular with much of the public of the United Kingdom over her three terms as prime minister; the combination of parliamentary government, legislative elections in single-member districts, and a divided opposition allowed her to pursue her expansive free-market agenda in the face of public disapproval despite the Conservative Party never winning more than 44% of the vote under her leadership (see, e.g., Crewe and Searing 1988; Norpoth 1992). Although it is likely accurate that her consistently low public approval generally reflects her success in achieving goals the majority of the British public simply did not share, Thatcher's lowest public approval at the end of her premiership corresponded to her failure to forge a consensus position on Europe's Exchange Rate Mechanism among her fellow Conservatives (see, e.g., Matthijs 2014,

[6] In the end May's successor, Boris Johnson, was only able to achieve his promise to 'get Brexit done' "by agreeing that Northern Ireland would continue to follow the EU's rules and regulations on goods trade" and being "economical with the truth" (Brusenbauch Meislová and Bujard 2024, 275, 281): in other words, by accepting that the Brexit cheese submarine would never actually be seaworthy and lying about it.

94). This same failure lost her the confidence of Parliament and saw her removed from office.

Conversely, Figure 6.6 also shows that women chief executives who avoid scandal and achieve policy successes are rewarded with high public approval. New Zealand's Helen Clark and Jacinda Ardern, Norway's Erna Solberg, and Germany's Angela Merkel were all widely viewed as successful leaders during their years in office, and they maintained positive net public approval over their time as chief executives with brief if any exceptions.

Given then that public approval is a valid measure of the executive success, we can turn now to the question of whether the failures of women chief executives correspond to backlash against women in the public sphere. Again with the caveat that the number of women chief executives in the OECD for which we have the necessary data do not allow for more sophisticated analyses of the sort we presented in prior chapters, the available evidence provides tentative support that they do. The bivariate relationship between the change in PGE scores during a term of a woman chief executive and her mean net approval during that term is displayed in Figure 6.7. Even with the large uncertainties in the change in PGE scores and the limited number of observations—the Executive Approval Project includes data on net approval for only 21 terms of women chief executives who served at least two years in office—a positive relationship is evident. High positive net approval ratings for women chief executives are associated with increases over their terms in the public's gender egalitarian attitudes. Negative net approval ratings are associated with flat or perhaps declining levels of macroegalitarianism. If gender egalitarian public opinion ever declines in response to a women chief executive, it would appear it does so in the rare instance of her failure, not on the more common occasion of her success.

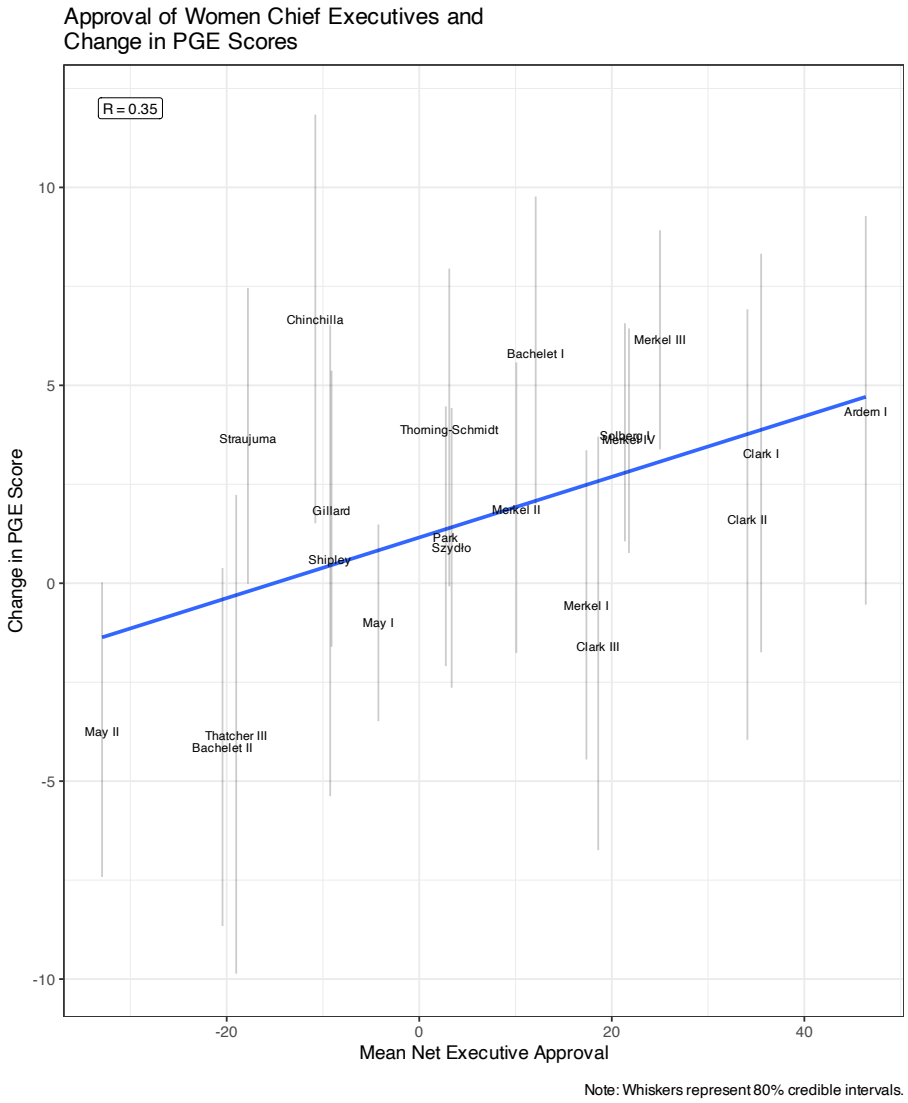


Figure 6.7.: Macroegalitarianism and Executive Approval by Term for Women Chief Executives

6.3. Korean Exceptionalism?

The turnabout between the election of Korea's first woman president in 2012 and the "incel election" of 2020 challenges the findings of positive public responsiveness to gender equality that we presented in previous chapters. Is this turn of events paradigmatic of the manner in which the public lashes back against the movement toward gender equality constituted by the election of a woman to a country's highest political office? Here, we have pushed the limits of the available data in search of evidence that contradicts our earlier conclusion. There is little sign that macroegalitarianism—attitudes toward women in the public sphere generally—consistently declines when women hold chief executive office. Indeed, the opposite is much more often the case.

We do find hints of support for a more limited and conditional argument based on the Korean experience: views on gender equality in politics and women in leadership may fall in the short run when women chief executives are implicated in scandal or suffer policy failure. Higher rates of public approval are associated with larger increases in macroegalitarianism during the terms of women chief executives. It would seem that public opinion does hold a woman's failure in high office against women in politics generally for as long as a few years before rebounding, though great caution is appropriate given this pattern is evinced in just a handful of observations beyond Korea: the second terms of Bachelet and May and the third of Thatcher.[7] Chinchilla's scandal-wracked presidency of Costa Rica is a trenchant reminder on the latter point: despite her numerous policy failures and scandals and her subterranean levels of executive approval, the increase in macroegalitarianism during her term is estimated to have been greater than that for any other woman leader (see Figure 6.3).

[7]Iveta Radičová's scandal-shortened two-year term as prime minister of Slovakia (see Wolchik 2017, 247)—during which the estimated decline in macroegalitarianism was the largest observed during any woman's term (see Figure 6.3)—likely fits the pattern as well, although the lack of executive approval data prevented its inclusion in the analysis presented in Figure 6.7.

With relatively few woman chief executives and even fewer examples of their abject failure, the evidence for public opinion backlash against gender equality in the public sphere in even these circumstances cannot be considered conclusive.

The turnabout between the election of Park Geun-hye as Korea's first woman president and the election of an avowed opponent of efforts to advance gender equality, Yoon Suk-yeol, was dramatic. But it was not necessarily a sign of a backlash against the success of women in the public sphere, the limited and conditional retrenchment in gender egalitarian public opinion we observe in this chapter notwithstanding. Korea has some of the lowest levels of macroegalitarianism found in the OECD. In fact, as Figure 6.8 shows, when Park became president, Korea had the lowest PGE score of any woman chief executive's country at the start of her term. Park ran and won not so much as a woman candidate—an aspect of her candidacy that her campaign emphasized only in the final stretch before the election (Y.-I. Lee 2017)—but instead as a continuation of her father's political legacy, and the Korean public largely viewed her in that way (Y.-I. Lee 2023). Although she gained votes among those who felt it was time for a woman president, her "political foundation was her partisan support by conservative" voters (Hur and Choi 2023, 501) and the strongest predictor of voting for Park was voters' feelings for her father and his record (Kang 2018).

It is not surprising, then, that Yoon's arguments against efforts to advance gender equality gained significant traction among much of the Korean public: demand for gender equality in Korea had been relatively low before Park's election and it remained relatively low after her impeachment. What is in fact unusual about the Korean case is that, given public opinion toward women in the public sphere, a woman was able to win the country's highest political office at all. Park, the 'princess of the nation' and the single woman with dynastic ties elected to chief executive office in the OECD, was likely the only woman able to achieve the feat.

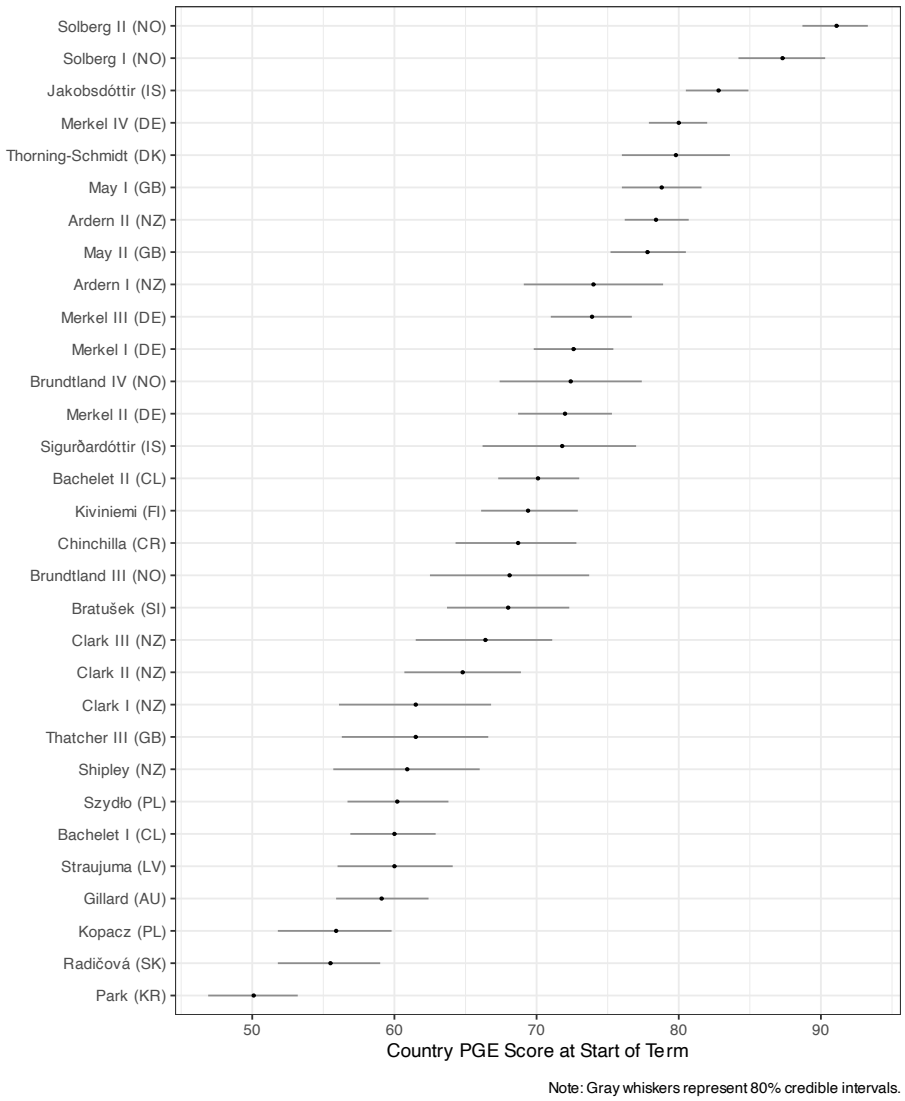


Figure 6.8.: Macroegalitarianism at the Start of Women Chief Executives' Terms in OECD Countries

7. Conclusions

In this book, we have taken up two questions that have remained, despite their manifest importance, the subject of much debate in the scholarship of both public opinion and the politics of gender. Do politics and policy represent public opinion with regard to gender equality in the public sphere? And how does public opinion respond to politics and policy in this traditionally masculine domain? These questions have remained unsettled due in no small part to the available survey data, which provides observations of public opinion in either many years in one country or many countries in one or a few years.

Our first contribution, then, was to use recent advances in latent variable modeling of public opinion and a comprehensive collection of the survey data on gender egalitarian attitudes in politics and employment to generate estimates of public opinion across many countries and years. These new data on the concept of macroegalitarianism allowed us to conduct a broadly comparative study of all thirty-eight countries of the OECD that maximizes the advantage of external validity enjoyed by such cross-national and cross-regional work. They also permitted us to look over time, crucial to an effective investigation of dynamic processes such as democratic representation and public responsiveness. Finally, these data allowed us to inquire into both of these phenomena together and so avoid the problems of simultaneity bias that arise in research that looks at one side or the other of this loop in isolation.

Table 7.1.: Summary of Evidence

	Democratic Representation	Public Responsiveness
Women's Officeholding	++	++
Legislative Gender Quotas	++	+
Laws Advancing Equality in Employment	++	++
Early Childcare Enrollments	++	0

Table 7.1 reviews our findings. No matter which aspect of politics or policy we examined—women's officeholding, national legislative gender quotas, laws advancing equality in employment, or enrollments in early childhood education and care—we found strong evidence for democratic representation. Our analyses indicate that within-country changes in macroegalitarianism, the public's support for gender equality in the traditionally masculine public sphere of politics and employment, are followed by changes in each of these variables, providing the best possible evidence of causation. Despite substantial reasons for doubt raised by scholars working in both public opinion and the politics of gender, democratic representation occurs with respect to these public attitudes.

We find similarly strong evidence for public responsiveness in the form of positive accelerating feedback for two of these four variables: women's officeholding and laws advancing gender equality in employment. Differences in mean national legislative gender quotas across countries are associated with higher levels of gender egalitarian public opinion, but within-country changes are not. This result suggests longer term effects of quotas on public opinion, but the possibility of omitted variable bias cannot be excluded. Enrollments in early childhood education and care showed no relationship with macroegalitarianism at all in our analyses. Taken as a group, then, these advances toward gender equality create a positive public response: gender equality generates more support for gender equality. There is no ev-

idence at all for self-undermining feedback, no sign of either thermostatic response or public opinion backlash.

These findings have implications for the study of public opinion, for the study of the politics of gender, for activism and policymaking, and—at a time when democratic institutions are under sustained attack in many countries—for democracy. They also highlight questions that continue to remain unanswered on these topics. We review these points in each of the four topics below.

7.1. Implications for the Study of Public Opinion

In addition to providing another example in favor of democratic representation in at least some circumstances, our findings here provide some light on ongoing debates on which issues it should be expected to occur while leaving others yet unlit. Scholars of public opinion have long argued that democratic representation depends on the *salience* of the issue, that is, "its importance to the public and its prominence in public discourse" (Lax and Phillips 2012, 157; see also, e.g., Page and Shapiro 1983). Wlezien (2004, 8) argues instead that, "[f]rom the point of view of representation in different domains, what matters is importance" alone rather than salience—and that an issue's importance is demonstrated by whether the public responds to policymakers' actions addressing it. In light of the fact that representation may occur through adaptation as well as by selection (per Caughey and Warshaw 2022, 99), it would seem as a matter of theory that there is no need to expect an issue's representation to depend on its politicization by parties and a resulting prominence in political discourse so long as the issue is in fact important to the public. When, as with gender equality, the public attends to officeholders' actions, officeholders have an incentive to attend to the public's views.

Our findings do not weigh in directly on the salience versus mere importance debate: we made no attempt to incorporate into our models the

extent to which matters of gender equality are politicized. However, all three of our analyses of policies advancing gender equality—legislative gender quotas, the WBL index collecting policies advancing gender equality in employment, and early childcare provision—indicate that *adaptation* is the mechanism by which democratic representation occurs on this issue. While in this instance adaptation occurs within men in the legislature, rather than within parties, this fact is nevertheless at least suggestive that the politicization of gender equality, the second half of salience, may not be necessary to democratic representation on this issue. Additional research will be needed to support this conjecture.

One might add that neither do our findings of democratic representation of macroegalitarianism actually directly address the influential argument that it is the preferences of the wealthy, rather than those of the public as a whole, that are represented in policymaking (see, e.g., Schattschneider 1960; Pateman 1971; Gilens 2005, 2012; Bartels 2008; Solt 2008). This is because, like much work on public opinion, our analyses do not allow for, "or explicitly address, the impact of such variables as the preferences of wealthy individuals …which may independently influence public policy while perhaps being positively associated with public opinion—thereby producing a spurious relationship between opinion and policy" (Gilens and Page 2014, 565). Even this evidence would not entirely undermine the economic-elites thesis: great wealth allows even just a few of its owners the ability to shape public opinion (see, e.g., Domhoff 2006; Solt 2008), as the actions of the multi-billionaire owners of newspapers and social media platforms have underscored in recent years. And as Winters (2011, 1) notes, the "existential motive of all oligarchs is the defense of wealth," and all other issues, including questions of gender equality, may be permitted to be decided by public opinion so long as they do not pose a challenge to continued wealth defense. There is much work remaining to be done on questions at the intersection of gender inequality and economic inequality.

Our findings of public responsiveness with regard to gender equality also go some distance to a better understanding of the conditions when the

public will respond to the actions of parties and policymakers. Soss and Schram (2007, 121) suggests that public responsiveness in the form of accelerating feedback should be expected when policies are both (a) visible rather than obscure and (b) tangible in people's lives as opposed to distant in geographic, social, or temporal terms. Women in office and policies advancing gender equality are the opposite of obscure: they attract attention by challenging the masculine status quo of the public sphere in very visible ways that provoke a response (cf. Weeks 2022). Highly tangible policies are those most citizens personally experience on a recurrent basis. Such policies define target populations by expanding or protecting citizens' rights; educate the public about what is socially acceptable by reshaping norms; and, by clearly linking the policy's effects to government action, generate additional support for analogous policies (Pacheco 2013, 716–18). In a world in which the public sphere is traditionally dominated by men, policies advancing gender equality in politics and employment are undoubtedly tangible in this sense as well. Our results neatly align with the prediction that positive feedback should occur in these circumstances.[1]

Still, a reversal on this point can be imagined. It could well be that the public's response to more officeholding by women, to higher national legislative quotas for women, and to measures that improve women's roles in the workforce may eventually be self-undermining—but only once these work to the absolute, rather than merely relative, disadvantage of men. For example, it would not be surprising for even a very egalitarian public to view a quota that required *more* than 50% of legislative candidates to be women as 'too much' (see Paxton, Hughes, and Barnes 2021, xvi). Of

[1]It should also be noted that Soss and Schram (2007, 122), while briefly alluding to the possibility of "more complicated feedback dynamics," mainly contrasts the potential for accelerating feedback with *no* feedback, not self-undermining feedback. Although we find support for accelerating feedback here, we agree with Busemeyer, Abrassart, and Nezi (2021) that a better understanding of the conditions that structure the existence and nature of public responsiveness will depend on more work pulling together both research traditions and considering the full range of potential outcomes.

course, were such a policy adopted, we would again be speaking of policies of gender *in*equality. In any event, as yet few countries have even parity quotas, and—for worse or better—there is no sign of policies designed to allow men less than an equal share of descriptive representation in any countries. As a practical matter, then, the findings reported here suggest that there is no reason to think that public opinion will ever consistently lash back against gender equality.

Note that the word *consistently* is doing some work in that last sentence. In our investigation we have only looked at average effects. Whether the public responsiveness we find in this book vary with such features as institutional arrangements (see, e.g., Powell 2000; Soroka and Wlezien 2010) or socioeconomic structure (see, e.g., Solt 2008, 49; Erikson 2015, 26) remain questions for future investigation.

7.2. Implications for the Study of the Politics of Gender

The processes of democratic representation of macroegalitarian public opinion documented here constitutes a confirmation of theories long put forward by scholars of gender politics. Whether labelled culture, ideology, or attitudes, these scholars have pointed to the importance of collective views on gender roles to politics and policy for many decades.

Nevertheless, the lack of appropriate data has led to the exclusion of macroegalitarianism from much empirical work. This can be problematic. For example, the finding of N. K. Kim (2022) that greater women's descriptive representation yields the adoption of more policies advancing gender equality in employment appears, in light of our findings, to be spurious. Changes in women's share of the national legislature are predicted by changes in gender egalitarian public opinion (see Figure 4.6). These trends in macroegalitarianism also predict policy adoption, even when women's share of officeholding is controlled, while women's officeholding does not

(see Figure 5.7). These results suggest a very different mechanism through which policies advancing gender equality are adopted. These policy gains are not achieved by women legislators working alone, but rather by both women and men legislators seeking to bring policy into better alignment with the egalitarian views of the public: adaptation, not selection, dominates in this case. More generally, they suggest that the close relationships among these variables means that well-grounded conclusions can only be reached when all of them are included in our analyses.

It is worth noting, though, that we have focused our inquiry on politics and policy in relatively rich democracies, the members of the OECD. This choice was based in long-standing theory that the pressure on parties and legislators to represent public opinion is most pervasive where access to power depends on success in contested elections. That is, the countries of the OECD collectively constitute a 'most likely case.' Whether our findings hold in other contexts remains an open question. Whether women's officeholding and policies advancing equality depend dynamically on macroegalitarianism across democracies among developing countries or in autocracies are promising lines of future inquiry.

7.3. Implications for Activism and Policymaking

Warnings to historically marginalized groups against triggering public opinion backlash by pushing 'too hard' to win office or gain policies advancing equality are common, and those who offer these admonitions—whether earnest or disingenuous—are quick to claim vindication at the first sign of setback. Looking across women's officeholding and a broad range of policies advancing gender equality in the public sphere, however, we find no evidence at all for self-undermining feedback in public responsiveness. Public opinion backlash with regard to gender egalitarianism is as much a myth as public opinon backlash against gay rights (see Bishin et al. 2016, 2021). Instead, with the exception of early childcare enrollments—which, as the outcome of individual decisions as

well as policy, are less easily linked to government action and so less tangible (cf. Pacheco 2013)—we find *accelerating* feedback. Rather than a thermostatic response, policies that advance gender equality work to help create their own constituencies.

Our advice to activists, then, echoes that offered by Bishin et al. (2021, 191) to the gay rights movement: "organize, mobilize, legislate, and litigate." Continue to push forward in as many venues as possible. Fight for candidacies within parties, success in elections, and policies that recognize and enable an equal role for women in politics and the workplace at every level of government. The costs in terms of public support and success in the longer run are overstated; in fact, gains in these areas produce public support for additional gains.

This is not to say that these efforts will meet no opposition, or that opposition to gender equality will not continue after some success or other is achieved. Backlash occurs in many forms. Elites opposed to women's equality in the public sphere can use their money to mobilize other opponents in the wake of women's successes, and their reactions can escalate even to violence. This cannot be discounted. But it is important to distinguish their actions from the attitudes of the public as a whole. Our findings indicate that successes lay the groundwork in the public for more successes.

We offer a final point regarding scholarship on this topic. Research that incorporates the roles of both social movements and public opinion in any field is relatively rare. Burstein (1998) concluded that social movements only succeed in gaining policy change through influencing public opinion. Our findings are that increases in both feminist movement strength and macroegalitarianism yield policies advancing gender equality. One implication of our work is that, as with research on the consequences of women's officeholding, studies seeking to understand the impacts of social movements should be sure to incorporate public opinion in their analyses.

7.4. Implications for Democracy

Our findings also speak to recent concerns for democracy. Evidence that public opinion leads to democratic deepening or prevents democratic backsliding has been scant. The finding presented in Claassen (2020) that public support for democracy in the abstract plays this role, for example, has been demonstrated to depend on ignoring the uncertainty in estimating that aspect of public opinion (Tai, Hu, and Solt 2024). The unrealized ideal of democracy, that citizens are "considered as political equals" (Dahl 1971, 1), suggests that the public's gender egalitarianism with regard to the public sphere—widespread beliefs that women and men are political equals, what we have called macroegalitarianism—may play this role. Our findings of democratic representation and public responsiveness indicate that macroegalitarianism is at least part of the story of how public opinion reinforces democracy once it is established. Whether it is sufficient alone to bring about greater democratization or to forestall backsliding, or if it works only as a component of a broader syndrome of "self-expression" (Inglehart, Norris, and Welzel 2003) or "emancipative" (Welzel 2013) values, or in fact plays little or no role at all in explaining regime transitions remains an open question.

Intriguingly, the Korean experience suggests that it does. At the time of Yoon Seok-yeol's historically narrow victory in the "incel election" of 2022, the level of macroegalitarianism in South Korea indicated the country was evenly split. But attitudes favoring gender equality had been rising steadily over the previous three decades, and the ground continued to shift under Yoon's feet. In 2018, the year Yoon made his name by winning the criminal conviction of Park Geun-hye, just 48% of Koreans disagreed with the statement, "Men make better political leaders than women."[2] This setback in public opinion triggered by the dramatic downfall of Korea's first woman president (Woo, Kim, and Osborn 2025) would prove quite brief, however. By 2023, a year into Yoon's five-year presidential term,

[2]World Values Survey, Wave 7.

over 80% disagreed with that statement.[3] In the 2024 elections Korean voters sent a record number of women to the legislature, and Yoon's People Power Party suffered a resounding defeat, winning just 108 of the 300 seats in the National Assembly.

In the aftermath of the legislative election, Yoon pledged to "be the first to listen carefully to the public sentiment" (H. Lee 2024). But with his public approval continuing to fall, Yoon declared martial law on December 3, 2024. It was a grave misjudgment of what the Korean public would by then accept. The declaration shocked the country, and protesters flooded the streets. Opposition lawmakers rushed to the National Assembly to vote to rescind Yoon's decree and succeeded, despite Yoon's orders to the military and police to stop them. Yoon was subsequently impeached and removed from office for his attempt to overthrow democracy.

[3]Religion and Spirituality in East Asian Societies, Pew Research Center. This survey, unfortunately, was released too recently to be included in v1.1 of the PGE dataset, and so is not part of this book's analyses.

A. Appendices

A.1. Appendix A: Sample of Published Articles on Public Opinion Toward Gender Equality

To generate a sample of published articles on gender egalitarianism, we searched the Web of Science. Web of Science topic searches return articles in which the search terms appear in the title or abstract. We executed the following search: `TS = (("public opinion" OR attitudes OR culture) AND ((women* OR gender) AND (equal* OR egalitarian*)))`. After filtering the many false positives—articles that do not include a measure of public attitudes toward gender equality or gender roles—the hundred most cited empirical research articles returned compose our sample. Each of the articles was then consulted to identify its number of countries and mean years observed per country. This information is listed in Table A1 below.

A.1. Appendix A: Sample of Published Articles on Public Opinion Toward Gender Equality

Table A1: Prominent Research Articles on Public Opinion Toward Gender Roles

Article	Countries Observed	Mean Years Observed per Country	Country-Years Observed	WoS Citations
Glick and Fiske 2001	19	1	19	1595
Alesina et al. 2013	79	1	79	963
Eagly 2007	1	18	18	940
Thornton and Young-Demarco 2001	1	8	8	864
Bolzendahl and Myers 2004	1	15.9	16	748
Eagly et al. 2020	1	14	14	662
Glick and Fiske 1997	1	1	1	630
Sears and Henry 2003	1	1	1	575
Cotter et al. 2011	1	19	19	554
Haar et al. 2014	6	1	6	534
Norton and Herek 2013	1	1	1	530
Fortin 2005	26	1.9	49	516
Laumann et al. 2006	29	1	29	468
Craig and Mullan 2011	4	1	4	436
Pedulla, Thébaud 2015	1	1	1	396
Glick et al. 2004	16	1	16	383
Charles and Bradley 2002	12	1	12	382
Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004	1	14	14	374
Hentschel et al. 2019	1	1	1	341
Craig and Mullan 2010	5	1	5	340
Paxton and Kunovich 2003	46	1	46	329
Archer 2006	11	1	11	307
Joy and Kolb 2009	7	1	7	303
Amato et al. 2003	1	2	2	299
Knight and Brinton 2017	17	3	51	296
Mason and Lu 1988	1	2	2	277
Spence and Hahn 1997	1	4	4	275
Sidanius et al. 2000	6	1	6	261
Livingston and Judge 2008	1	1	1	259
Wilcox and Nock 2006	1	1	1	253

(continued)

Article	Countries Observed	Mean Years Observed per Country	Country-Years Observed	WoS Citations
Fan and Marini 2000	1	3	3	243
Kaufman 2000	1	2	2	240
Reichelt et al. 2021	3	1	3	234
Scarborough et al. 2019	1	20	20	229
Corrigall and Konrad 2007	1	15	15	223
Batalova and Cohen 2002	22	1	22	215
Inglehart et al. 2002	70	1	70	212
Hicks and Lee 2006	1	1	1	210
Hannum et al. 2009	1	1	1	206
Grunow et al. 2018	8	1	8	200
Bryant 2003	1	2	2	193
Jejeebhoy 1998	1	1	1	181
Minkov 2018	56	1	56	178
Donnelly et al. 2016	1	18	18	170
Terkildsen and Schnell 1997	1	1	1	168
Marks et al. 2009	1	1	1	157
Cunningham et al. 2005	1	3	3	156
Harris and Firestone 1998	1	14	14	154
Baxter and Kane 1995	5	1	5	149
Vespa 2009	1	4	4	147
Lyness and Judiesch 2014	32	1	32	146
Wilkie 1993	1	11	11	143
Rizzo et al. 2007	11	1	11	142
Begeny et al. 2020	1	1	1	140
Alexander 2012	25	2	50	137
Schoon et al. 2010	1	1	1	129
Kaufmann 2002	1	4	4	128
Yoder et al. 2011	1	1	1	127
Schober 2013	1	16	16	126
Morgan and Buice 2013	19	1	19	123
Shu 2004	1	1	1	121
Hald et al. 2013	1	1	1	120
Arpino et al. 2015	27	3	81	119

A.1. Appendix A: Sample of Published Articles on Public Opinion Toward Gender Equality

(continued)

Article	Countries Observed	Mean Years Observed per Country	Country-Years Observed	WoS Citations
Skewes et al. 2018	2	1	2	119
Röder, Mühlau 2014	27	2	54	118
Ashkanasy et al. 2002	7	1	7	115
Bauernschuster and Rainer 2012	1	6	6	110
Kroska and Elman 2009	1	2	2	108
Campbell et al. 2010	1	7	7	102
Bettinsoli et al. 2020	23	1	23	100
Nitsche and Grunow 2016	1	5	5	98
Spierings and Zaslove 2015	7	1	7	98
Ferragina, Seeleib-Kaiser 2015	18	2	36	94
Treas and Tai 2016	19	1	19	88
Knudsen, Wærness 2001	3	1	3	78
Glas et al. 2018	12	1.2	14	67
Teti et al. 2019	4	1	4	44
Burns and Gallagher 2010	1	15	15	39
Devroe and Wauters 2018	1	1	1	38
Kage et al. 2019	1	1	1	35
Sharrow et al. 2018	1	1	1	34
Jennings 2006	1	3	3	32
Beauregard 2018	1	1	1	30
Glas et al. 2019	14	2.8	39	28
Lee and Hosam 2020	1	1	1	28
Pereira and Porto 2020	1	1	1	28
Scarborough et al. 2021	1	21	21	26
Beauregard and Sheppard 2021	1	1	1	25
Cao et al. 2017	1	4	4	25
Wood and Ramirez 2018	1	1	1	24
Jakobsson et al. 2013	2	1	2	23
Voicu and Tufis 2012	1	4	4	23
Chon 2015	54	1	54	21
Fuszara 2005	1	5	5	20
Htun and Jensenius 2022	1	4	4	20

(continued)

Article	Countries Observed	Mean Years Observed per Country	Country-Years Observed	WoS Citations
Sapiro and Conover 2001	1	1	1	20
Bjarnegård, and Melander 2017	5	1	5	18
Glas and Alexander 2020	15	3.4	51	17
Glas and Spierings 2019	15	3.4	51	14
Möhring, and Teney 2020	27	1	27	14
Smith et al. 2017	25	1	25	13

A.2. Appendix B: Survey Items Used to Estimate Public Gender Egalitarianism

Table A2.: Survey Items Used to Estimate Public Gender Egalitarianism Scores

Survey Item Code	Country-Years	Question Text	Dispersion	Difficulties	Survey Dataset Codes*
polileader4	492	On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do	0.50	-0.18, 1.00, 2.44	wvs, pewrel, amb, evs, eb, lb, arabb
tradroles5	263	A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family	0.68	-0.46, 0.74, 1.48, 2.75	issp, usgss, eb, kgss, koweps, nsss
income4	235	Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income	1.14	-3.63, -1.13, 1.82	evs, wvs, eb, issp
busiexecutive4	204	On the whole, men make better business executives than women do.	0.60	-0.55, 0.76, 2.45	wvs, evs
job5	191	When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women	0.39	-0.02, 0.94, 1.47, 2.52	wvs, ess, evs
job3a	163	When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women	0.85	0.15, 1.06	evs, wvs
job4	123	When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.	0.56	0.24, 1.11, 1.90	pewrel, pew, jgss
income5	118	Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income	0.70	-2.22, -0.69, 0.25, 2.13	issp, kgss, koweps, nsss
tradroles2	86	What kind of marriage do you think is the more satisfying way of life, number 1 or number 2?	1.23	-0.07	usgss, pew
tradroles4	79	It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.	0.50	0.53, 1.67, 2.82	usgss, eb, allbus, jgss, pgss
equalright4b	75	For each of the following things, how important is it to have this in our country? women have the same rights as men	0.80	-2.22, -1.11, 0.38	pew, uspew

Table A2.: Survey Items Used to Estimate Public Gender Egalitarianism Scores *(continued)*

Survey Item Code	Country-Years	Question Text	Dispersion	Difficulties	Survey Dataset Codes*
tradroles4a	72	It is preferable that a woman concentrates on the home and a man on his work	0.74	-0.19, 1.06, 2.62	lb
unqualified4	54	At the present time, in the European Union, women are less likely than men to hold positions of responsibility. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements on this subject: Women do not always have the necessary qualities and skills to fill positions of responsibility	1.10	-1.74, 0.23, 2.14	eb
poliequal3	52	Which one of the following statements comes closest to your opinion about men and women as political leaders? Men generally make better political leaders than women; In general, women and men make equally good political leaders; Women generally make better political leaders than men	0.84	0.17, 3.81	pew
politicianecon3	44	If a politician is responsible for running the national economy, who would do a better job, a man, or a woman or does it not matter?	0.88	-0.49, 1.12	amb
politics4	39	Women should not be involved in politics as much as men	0.41	-0.64, 0.29, 1.34	asianb
samework4	33	There should be restrictions on men and women being employed in the same workplace.	0.44	-0.30, 0.75, 1.79	pew
equalright2	28	On a different subject, do you think women should have equal rights with men, or shouldn't they?	0.55	-0.63	pew
righteq4	28	Equality between men and women is a fundamental right	0.77	-2.09, -1.12, 0.91	eb

Table A2.: Survey Items Used to Estimate Public Gender Egalitarianism Scores *(continued)*

Survey Item Code	Country-Years	Question Text	Dispersion	Difficulties	Survey Dataset Codes*
equalwage4a	28	In some circumstances, a woman is paid less than a male colleague for the same job. Do you think this is acceptable?	0.85	-1.78, -0.33, 1.17	eb
unqualpol4	28	Women do not have the necessary qualities and skills to fill positions of responsibility in politics	0.59	-0.34, 0.72, 1.89	eb
emopoli2	27	Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women.	0.68	0.80	usgss
equality5	27	Proposal: Strive towards a society with greater equality between women and men	1.09	-2.24, -1.37, 0.76, 2.52	som
womenmp4	27	In the European Union, women represent on average approximately one out of four national MPs. In general, do you think that this should be treated...?	1.08	-0.77, 1.45, 3.70	eb
businessleader4	27	Given equal competence, women should be equally represented in positions of leadership in companies.	0.90	-2.18, -0.67, 1.43	eb
jobs7	23	Changing the subject again, some say that when there is not enough work, men should have a greater right to jobs than women.	0.43	0.17, 0.57, 1.00, 1.38, 1.66, 1.98	amb
politics4a	22	It is sometimes said that "politics should be left to men." How far would you agree with this?	1.06	-1.50, -0.09, 1.15	eb
quota7	22	ballot quotas for women	0.78	-0.77, -0.34, 0.19, 0.88, 1.55, 2.19	amb
helpmeet4	21	Role of wife is to help husband's career, not have her own	0.25	0.16, 1.09, 2.08	usgss, jgss
household4	21	The best thing for a woman to do is to take care of the house	0.69	0.11, 1.41, 2.31	cdcee

Table A2.: Survey Items Used to Estimate Public Gender Egalitarianism Scores *(continued)*

Survey Item Code	Country-Years	Question Text	Dispersion	Difficulties	Survey Dataset Codes*
earn2	19	Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?	1.19	-0.24	usgss, cmlic, cbsnyt
president2	19	If your party nominated a woman for President, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?	0.75	-0.29	usgss
office2	19	Why there are not enough women in public charges: That is not their place	0.86	-1.61	lb
poliwork7	16	Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government. Others feel that a women's place is in the home. Where would you place yourself on this scale or haven't you thought much about this?	0.68	-0.70, -0.34, 0.05, 0.76, 1.06, 1.52	anes
homecountry2	16	Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men.	0.76	0.32	usgss
businessleader3	15	Here is a list of occupations and responsibilities that men or women can have. For each of them, please indicate whether you think that they should be more for men, more for women, or for either a man or a woman. Chief Executive	0.55	0.80, 4.79	eb
job2	15	When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women	2.26	3.41	eb

Table A2.: Survey Items Used to Estimate Public Gender Egalitarianism Scores *(continued)*

Survey Item Code	Country-Years	Question Text	Dispersion	Difficulties	Survey Dataset Codes*
polileader3	15	Here is a list of occupations and responsibilities that men or women can have. For each of them, please indicate whether you think that they should be more for men, more for women, or for either a man or a woman. Head of Government	0.43	0.96, 4.48	eb
return4	14	Women should return to their traditional roles in society	0.80	-0.29, 0.68, 1.76	uspew
govtact5	13	The government should increase opportunities for women in business and industry	0.43	-0.78, 0.23, 1.32, 2.46	issp, aes
equalright4a	12	Insuring equal rights between men and women	0.22	-2.12, -1.17, 0.02	arabb
earn4	10	If the husband has enough income, the wife should not have a job	0.76	-0.22, 1.14, 2.73	jgss
equalwork4	10	Men and women should have equal work opportunities.	0.46	-2.11, -0.67, 0.79	arabb
job4a	9	A married woman should not work if there are not enough jobs to go around and her husband is also in a position to support the family.	0.44	0.60, 1.52, 2.48	allbus
jobpref5	9	Women should be given preferential treatment when applying for jobs and promotions	0.75	-0.02, 1.84, 3.24, 4.09	nsss, aes
supervise4	8	A man will lose face if he works under a female supervisor.	0.15	-0.24, 0.38, 1.34	asianb
equaljob4	7	Men and women should have equal job opportunities and wages	0.49	-1.85, -0.50, 0.96	arabb
equalwage4	7	Men and women should receive equal wages and salaries	0.48	-2.21, -1.18, 0.52	arabb
equaljob5	6	Men and women should have equal job opportunities and wages	0.18	-2.06, -1.29, -0.61, 0.69	tcmeg
polileader5	6	On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do	0.22	-0.09, 0.75, 1.12, 1.98	tcmeg
rightvote5	6	A woman should have the right to vote and to be a member of parliament	0.21	-2.05, -1.44, -0.77, 0.74	tcmeg

Table A2.: Survey Items Used to Estimate Public Gender Egalitarianism Scores *(continued)*

Survey Item Code	Country-Years	Question Text	Dispersion	Difficulties	Survey Dataset Codes*
politics3	6	Attitudes towards Participation of Women in Politics	0.51	-1.01, -0.04	amb
earn5	5	I approve of a married woman earning money in business or industry even if she has a husband capable of supporting her	0.26	-0.48, 0.38, 0.84, 2.00	nsss, wvs
work4	5	Like men, women should have freedom to go out and work	0.41	-1.69, -0.86, 0.63	sasianb

* Survey dataset codes correspond to those used in the DCPOtools R package (Solt, Hu, and Tai 2019).

A.3. Appendix C: Source Data Observations by Country and Year

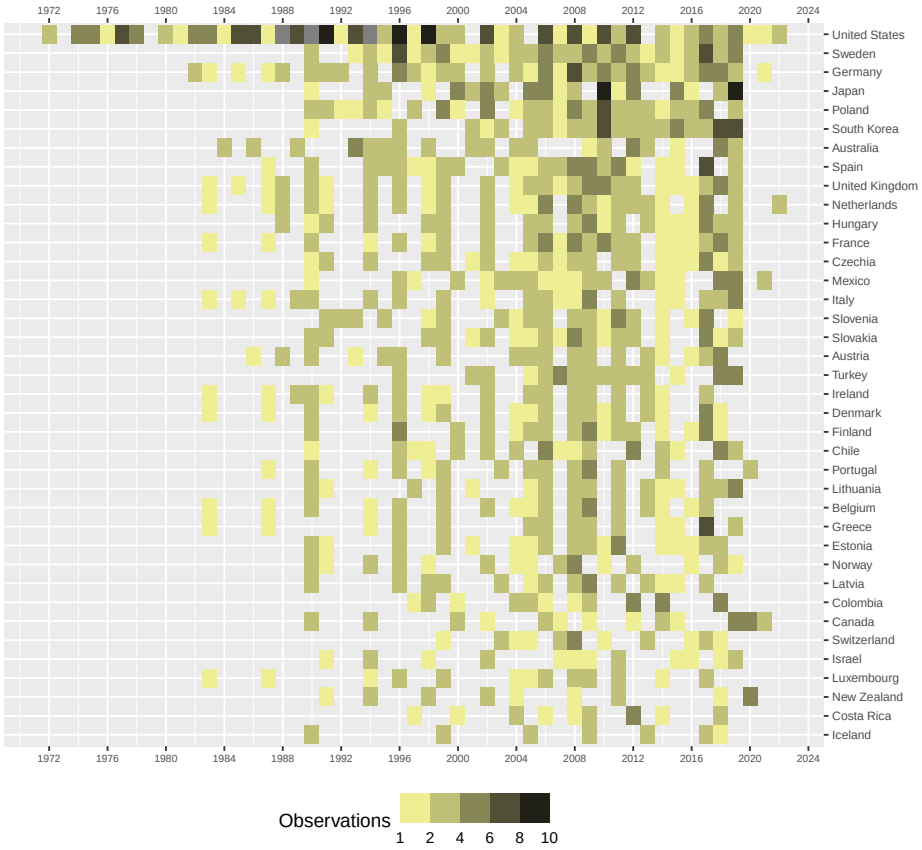


Figure A1.: Source Data Observations by Country and Year

A.4. Appendix D: Polarization in Korean Public Opinion by Demographic Group

One point often raised by observers of Korean politics with regard to the presidency of Park Geun-hye is that it ushered in a period of intense political polarization, a time in which the views of men and women, young and old, and those with more and less education moved in opposite directions. If this is true, the average responses we examine in Chapter 6 may overlook additional signs of backlash against gender equality that are limited to particular Korean demographic groups and, within the entire public's opinion, counterbalanced by the views of other groups.

We investigate this possibility in Figure A2. Its plots breaks down the responses to the four survey items on gender equality in politics by gender, generation, and education, with darker lines representing women, younger cohorts, and those with university educations, respectively.[1] There are few signs that polarization is working to obscure backlash within these groups. Instead, responses to most items tend to move similarly across groups.

A possible partial exception to the lack of evidence of polarization is the item, "Women should not be involved in politics as much as men," and shown in the second row of the figure. This item was asked in the third wave of the AsianBarometer, fielded in Korea in 2011, two years before Park's election; its fourth wave, fielded in 2015, two years into her term; and its fifth wave, fielded in 2019, two years after Korea's Constitutional Court confirmed her impeachment. For that item, women's views did not decline much over this time (0.06 points on the item's four-point scale; 80% c.i.: 0.01 to 0.12). Men, on the other hand, were sharply less likely to disagree with the statement in 2015 (by 0.16 points; 80% c.i.: 0.10 to 0.21) and 2019 (by 0.13 points; 80% c.i.: 80% c.i.: 0.08 to 0.19) than in 2011. But even this item showed more convergence than divergence across

[1] Following popular and scholarly practice in Korea, younger adults—millenials and members of Generation Z—are combined here into "Generation MZ" (see, e.g., Koo, Yoon, and Lee 2024).

A.4. Appendix D: Polarization in Korean Public Opinion by Demographic Group

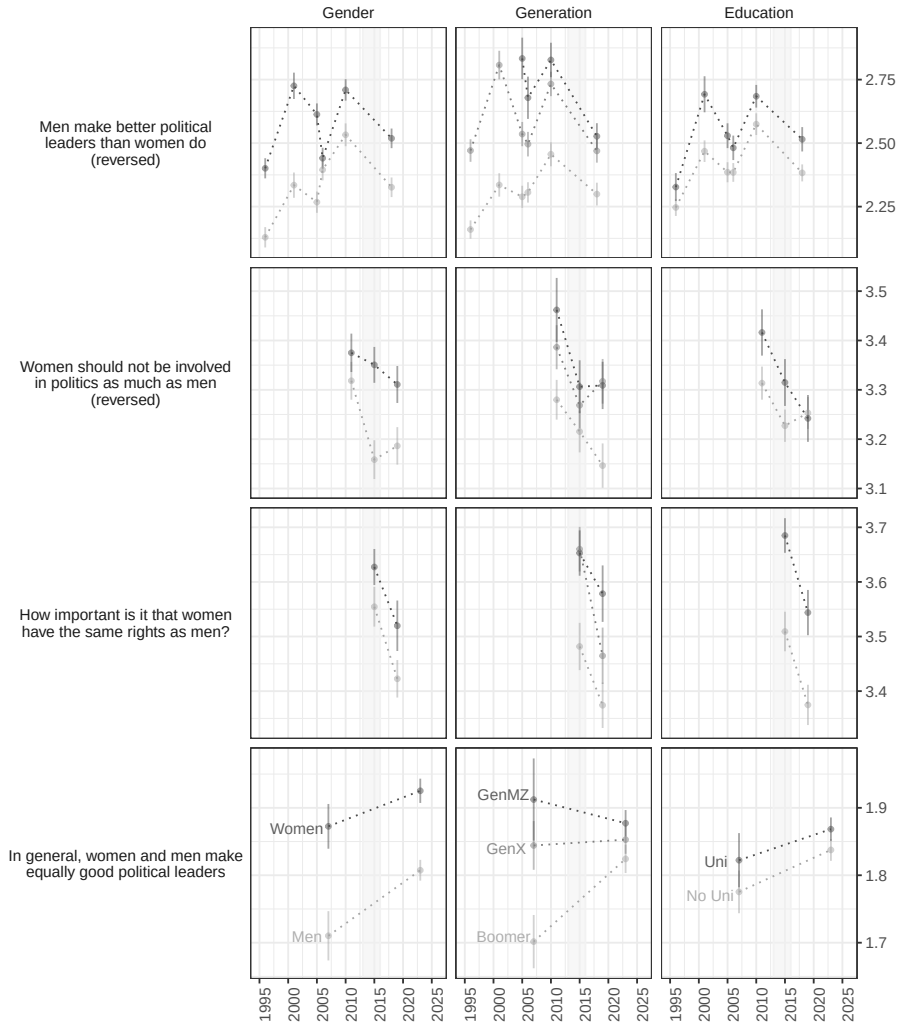


Figure A2.: Trends in Mean Responses to Survey Items on Gender Equality in Politics by Demographic Groups in Korea

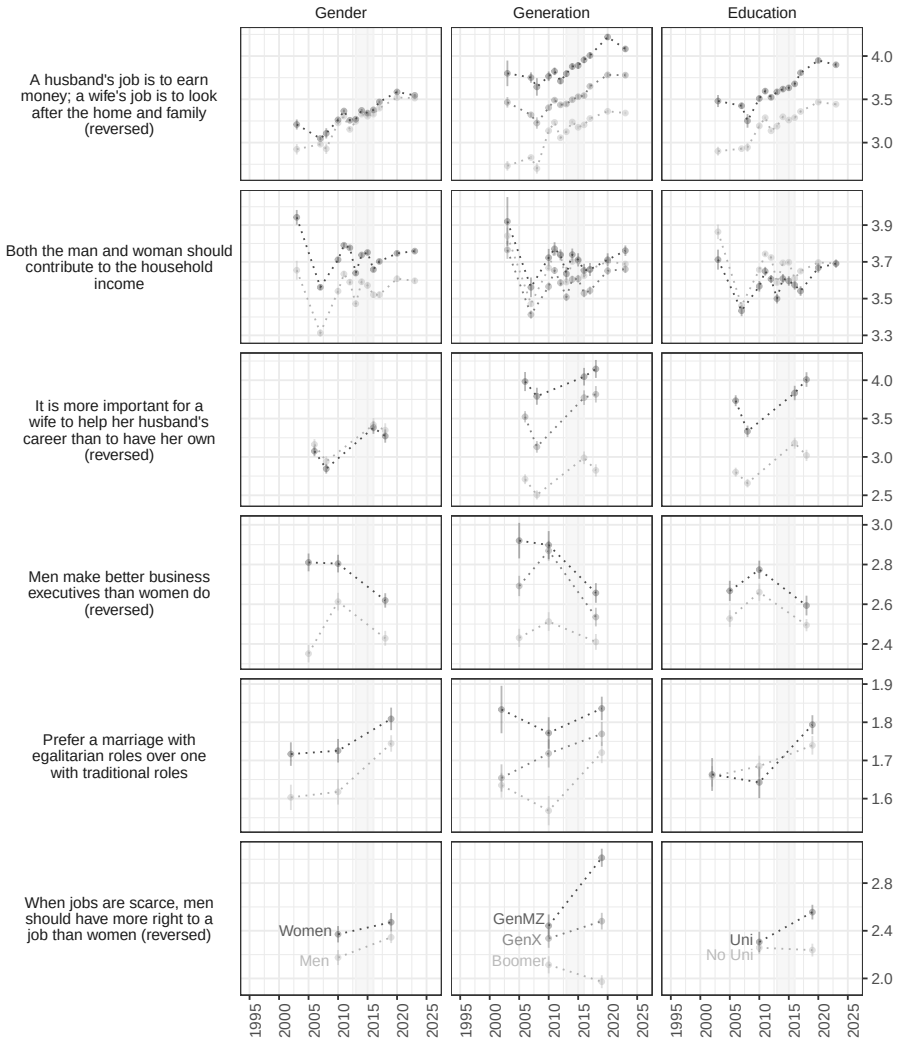


Figure A3.: Trends in Mean Responses to Survey Items on Gender Equality in the Workplace by Demographic Groups in Korea

generations (in the center column) and levels of education (on the right-hand side). And, in any event, it was not necessary to look separately at men's and women's responses to see a decline in the public's gender egalitarianism on this item; this decline is already visible in Figure 6.2.

Figure A3 provides hints of backlash that were not previously visible by expanding this analysis to groups' responses to survey questions on gender equality in the workplace. Here there are a few signs that polarization concealed backlash in some subsets of the entire public. First, the hint of a decline in egalitarian responses from 2016 to 2018 to the statement "it is more important for a wife to help her husband's career to have her own," when all respondents are considered in Figure 6.2 is revealed in the third row of this plot to have been the combination of steeper falls among baby boomers and those without university education and modest rises within people in other demographic groups. And second, baby boomers were less likely to disagree that "when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women" (in the bottom-most row) by 0.14 points on that question's four point scale (80% c.i.: 0.05 to 0.23) in 2019 than in 2010, a decline in egalitarianism that is outweighed by the increases among younger cohorts. Some negative reactions to Park's presidency are evident, then, particularly among groups that disproportionately supported Park's election. But it does not appear that there was a widespread backlash to gender equality triggered by Park's presidency that was hidden by polarization in the public's views.

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