

# Gendered Bureaucracies: Women Mayors and the Size and Composition of Local Governments<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

While women are underrepresented in politics, recent improvements in women's representation in legislative and executive bodies have spurred academic interest in the effects of electing women on a wide array of outcomes. Effects on bureaucracies, however, have received less attention. Do women mayors reform local bureaucracies differently than their men counterparts? We take advantage of rich administrative data from Chile to explore the effects of having a woman mayor on the size and gender composition of municipal bureaucracies. Using a regression discontinuity design in close electoral races, we find that women mayors reduce the size of local bureaucracies while simultaneously increasing the share of women public employees. Our findings thus show that women mayors' approach to bureaucratic reform once in office differs from that of their men counterparts, and contribute to existing research on the consequences of electing women.

**Keywords:** local governments; gender; women mayors; bureaucracy; regression discontinuity

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## Introduction

Women remain underrepresented in politics in nearly all countries. Recent improvements in women's representation in legislative and executive bodies have spurred academic interest in the effects of electing women on a wide array of outcomes. This body of literature has aimed to explain whether women elected officials represent women and women's issues, regardless of whether they are defined in terms of traditional social roles or feminist demands. Indeed, research has consistently found that women in office represent more women's issues than men, primarily through the support for pro-women policies in legislative bodies (e.g., Taylor-Robinson & Heath, 2003; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Barnes, 2016) and the allocation of resources to areas that are thought to favor women's interests (e.g., Bolzendahl & Brooks, 2007; Funk & Phillips, 2019). While the effects of electing women on policy outcomes and spending decisions have received considerable attention, gender dynamics in other areas, such as bureaucracies, have been surprisingly less studied (Meier & Funk, 2017). Therefore, we seek to analyze the effect of electing women on bureaucratic reform. Specifically, we ask: Do women mayors reform local bureaucracies differently than their men counterparts?

We claim that women mayors reform local bureaucracies by reducing the number of public employees while simultaneously increasing the proportion of women in the local government. Drawing on existing research on women's political exclusion, we further argue that this pattern of bureaucratic reform may be due to women's marginalization from formal and informal political institutions (Bjarnegård, 2013; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2014; O'Brien, 2015; Piscopo, 2019). Women may reduce the size of municipal bureaucracies, as they are marginalized from party networks that control private benefits (Goetz, 2007; Bjarnegård, 2013; Esarey & Chirillo, 2013; Bjarnegård, 2018; Stockemer & Sunström, 2019), and are, therefore, less likely to engage in

patronage than their men counterparts. Likewise, gender stereotypes associate women with outsidership and, consequently, with reform once in office (Shames, 2003; Brown, Diekman, & Schneider, 2011; Funk, Hinojosa, & Piscopo, 2019). Thus, it is expected that in political systems in which patronage is the norm, women will bring about change and engage in less patronage than men. Political marginalization may also help explain why women increase the share of women in municipal bureaucracies. First, women mayors tend to have different party networks from those of men (Crowder-Meyer, 2013; Reyes-Housholder, 2016). Since these networks are likely to include more women, women mayors have a higher supply of women to hire as bureaucrats. Second, exclusion leads women to be more aware of gender disparities and, consequently, to be more oriented to improving the representation of women in local bureaucracies (Funk, Silva, & Escobar-Lemmon, 2019). Third, women mayors may share policy preferences to a greater extent with women than men and perceive other women as more loyal (Wilson & Carlos, 2014; Funk, Silva, & Escobar-Lemmon, 2019). Accordingly, women mayors hire more women in order to effectively implement their policy agenda and improve their future electoral performance.

An obvious empirical challenge when assessing the effect of a mayor's gender on bureaucratic reform is that municipalities that elect women might be different in terms of unobserved characteristics from those that elect men. These hidden, municipality-specific features might be correlated both with the gender of the mayor and the policy outcome of interest, and consequently, bias any inference about the effects of electing women local officials. In order to address this problem, we use a regression discontinuity design (RDD) in close electoral races in Chile, comparing municipalities in which a woman narrowly wins over a man to those in which a man narrowly wins over a woman. We take advantage of a rich dataset that provides the annual number of municipal employees by gender, in a country where mayors have discretion to shape

local bureaucracies. We find that women mayors reduce the size of municipal bureaucracies while simultaneously increasing the proportion of women bureaucrats.

This study contributes to existing research on the consequences of electing women. Particularly, our findings provide valuable evidence about whether women reform the bureaucracy differently than their men counterparts. Studying how gender dynamics shape public bureaucracies is important, as these are key institutions in the policy process whose size and composition affect the provision of public goods. This is especially relevant for local governments, which are not only the launchpads for women's political careers but also provide critical public services (Paxton, Hughes, & Barnes, 2020). Additionally, a higher share of women in municipal bureaucracies is linked to better substantive representation and thus to the provision of policies and services that favor women (Keiser, Wilkins, Meier, & Holland, 2002; Meier & Funk, 2017). Therefore, since women mayors increase the proportion of women in local governments, their municipal bureaucracies become more representative and may implement more pro-women policies than those led by men.

### **Women in Subnational Politics: Do They Make a Difference?**

The literature on women elected officials has sought to explain whether having a woman in power makes a difference for women's interests in terms of policy consequences. While some studies find that electing women does not have an effect on policymaking (Ferreira & Gyourko, 2014) or that the effect is conditioned by other variables (Courtemanche & Green, 2017; Clots-Figueras, 2012), most research concludes that women elected officials behave differently than their men counterparts (O'Brien & Piscopo, 2019).

Subnational research on gender politics has tended to focus more on subnational legislatures than executive posts, as women tend to be more represented in the former. In line with national-level research, these studies find that women in subnational governments are more likely to support women and their interests than men politicians. For instance, the presence of women state legislators in the U.S. is associated with increased expenditures on health care for poor children, the elderly, and people with disabilities when the size of these beneficiary groups is large (Courtemanche & Green, 2017). Similarly, women's representation in Indian state legislatures reduces neonatal mortality and improves individual attainment in primary education in urban areas (Clots-Figueras, 2012; Bhalotra & Clots-Figueras, 2014).

Gender differences in policy outcomes also hold for municipal governments. Indeed, there is evidence that having a woman mayor increases funding for welfare programs in Taiwan and the U.S. (Chen, 2013; Holman, 2014), and spending on healthcare, education, and social assistance in Brazilian municipalities (Funk & Phillips, 2019). Likewise, increasing women's participation in Swedish local councils results in a higher allocation of funds for childcare and education (Svaleryd, 2009). Interestingly, Funk and Phillips (2019) find that even in cases where municipalities are led by men, having a higher share of women councilors alters men mayors' spending patterns in ways that favor women's issues.

A considerably less studied, although equally important, effect of having a woman politician in power is the size and composition of bureaucracies (Funk, Silva, & Escobar-Lemmon, 2019; Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2018).<sup>i</sup> Just like in representative institutions, women in subnational bureaucracies tend to be underrepresented and receive lower compensation than men bureaucrats for the same work (Meier & Wilkins, 2002). However, extant literature posits that women politicians engage in reforms that aim to benefit women in bureaucracies. Indeed, as

Saltzstein's (1986) study of U.S. local governments shows, there is a positive association between electing women chief executives and the number of women in municipal bureaucracies. Also focusing on U.S. cities, Kerr, Miller, and Reid (1998) find that although the presence of women mayors leads to an increase in women employees in financial departments.

Other findings substantiate this claim, but focus on different aspects of public employment. Research on Brazilian municipalities, for instance, finds that although women elected officials do not directly increase the number of women in local bureaucracies, they do improve the presence of women in top-level administrative positions which, in turn, indirectly influences the proportion of women employees in the municipal administration (Meier & Funk 2017). Similarly, Funk, Silva, and Escobar-Lemmon (2019) assess whether the presence of women mayors improves women bureaucrats' situation by focusing on wage gaps between men and women. The authors show that while the presence of women mayors does not improve women's numerical representation in municipal bureaucracies, it does benefit women by increasing their wages. More generally, according to Brollo and Troiano (2016), women mayors in Brazil are less corrupt, as they are less likely to be involved in administrative irregularities. Furthermore, their study shows that women mayors are less patronage-oriented, as they hire fewer employees in positions in which mayors have high discretion.

## **Women and Politics in Chile**

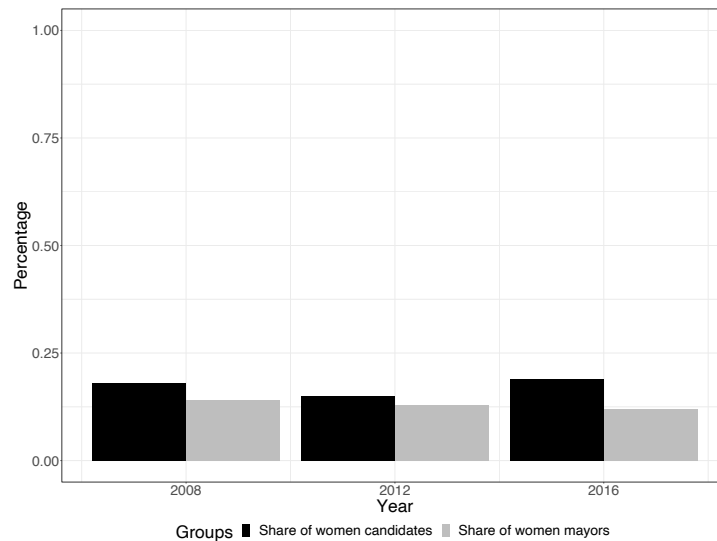
Although women remain underrepresented in Chilean politics, their position has substantially improved in the last two decades. The election of Michelle Bachelet as president was a turning point in this regard, as she emphasized the need to improve gender equality. President Bachelet, for instance, appointed a gender parity cabinet in her first term (2006–2010). Although cabinets

have not achieved gender balance since then, they have been composed of about one third women. Similarly, the presence of women in the national legislature increased after the 2017 elections as a result of the adoption of proportional representation and a gender quota law. Consequently, compared to the 2013 elections, women's representation increased from 15.8% to 22.6% in the lower chamber, and from 15.8% to 23.3% in the Senate.

Despite these improvements, women's participation in party leadership and at the local level have lagged behind. Indeed, very few women in Chile have been elected as party presidents (Franceschet, 2018). In appendix A, we list the presidents of the country's main parties from 2008 to 2016, the period under study, and show that only 4 out of 24 leaders have been women. Likewise, women's representation has experienced the least progress in mayoral elections. Indeed, since the 2004 local elections, the first since mayors began being elected directly, women have never held more than 12.8% of mayoral posts, a percentage that has remained stagnant over time.

The interaction between formal and informal gendered institutions explains this pattern. First, although local elections have been held every four years since 1992, mayors began being elected under plurality rule in 2004. Resultingly, parties name few mayoral nominees and women have to compete for nominations with well-known candidates, who are generally white, middle-aged men (UNDP, 2010; Franceschet, 2018). Second, the informal institutions of candidate nomination reinforce this pattern, as nominations take place at the coalition level, where a men-dominated elite at the supraparty level negotiates the candidacy for mayor (Hinojosa & Franceschet, 2012). Figure 1, which shows data for the proportion of women running for mayor in Chile from 2008 to 2016 alongside the proportion of women mayors, illustrates this bias against women. In effect, between 2008 and 2016, the average proportion of women candidates was only about 17%, whereas women mayors reached a meager average of 12.4% in the same period.

Similar to Chile, the average share of women mayors in Latin America over the same period was 11%, which resonates with previous studies that argue that women are particularly underrepresented in local executives (Escobar-Lemmon & Funk, 2018). While there is no systematic data on the discrepancy between the share of women candidates and the percentage of women mayors (see Paxton, Hughes, & Barnes, 2020 for data on national legislatures), evidence from other Latin American countries suggests a similar trend to that of Chile (4.6%), as women also tend to comprise a higher proportion of the total candidates than the share of mayoral positions. For instance, this discrepancy was 5.3% in Ecuador (2009-2014), 3.8% in Peru (2002-2010), and 2.6% in Colombia (2007-2015), signaling that the return on women candidates in local executives is rather low in Latin America. In appendix A we detail the sources of this data.



**Figure 1:** Gender bias in local elections and governments

The negative effects of this gender bias at the local level are particularly significant, as the municipality is the basic administrative and political unit of the Chilean state and mayors have gradually become important political figures in the last two decades. In effect, despite the fact that



the Chilean state is centralized, several decentralization reforms have increased municipal governments' resources and role in the provision of key public services, including health and education (OECD, 2017).

Chile does not have a proper civil service system at the local level (Fuenzalida, Inostroza, & Morales, 2014). The national civil service was reformed in 2003 following a major corruption scandal that involved clandestine bonus payments to senior executives, leading to the professionalization and modernization of executive bureaucracies across the country. Nonetheless, this reform left municipal bureaucracies largely untouched (Cortazar, Fuenzalida, & Lafuente, 2016). Consequently, Chilean mayors can fill bureaucratic positions at their discretion, which has allowed them to use public employment to their advantage, as a tool to generate a network for voter mobilization in the municipality (Toro, 2016; Corvalan, Cox, & Osorio, 2018). Indeed, municipal bureaucracies exhibit lower levels of professionalization as compared to their national counterparts and particularly high levels of turnover of public employees (Fuenzalida, Inostroza, & Morales, 2014). We thus take advantage of this discretion to examine how the gender of the mayor affects the size and composition of municipal bureaucracies.

## **Women Mayors and Local Bureaucracies**

As in the Chilean case, in political settings in which elected representatives have significant discretion over administrative hiring, women mayors have leeway to reform state bureaucracies, shaping both their size and composition. Specifically, we claim that women mayors are more likely to reduce the size of local bureaucracies while increasing the proportion of women in the public sector than men mayors. These patterns of bureaucratic reform are likely to result from women's status as outsiders in formal and informal political institutions.

Regarding the size of the bureaucracy, women may reduce the number of public employees because they engage in less patronage than their men counterparts (Brollo & Troiano, 2016). Indeed, existing studies have shown that women are generally less likely than men to engage in practices that maximize their private political gains at the expense of social welfare, or at least they are perceived to be less inclined to do so. This is either because women are excluded from the men-dominated party networks that facilitate corruption, or because they are more risk averse or seen as more honest than men politicians (Goetz, 2007; Barnes, Beaulieu, & Saxton, 2018; Barnes & Beaulieu, 2019; Bjarnegård, 2018; Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, 2018). While we draw on the literature on corruption, we distinguish between patronage, an informal practice, and corruption, an illegal practice. We thus believe that the risk aversion argument is more adequate for explaining women's less frequent engagement—actual or perceived—in illegal practices, as they are, or are believed to be, less willing to take the risk of incurring in sanctions if caught since they are expected to be more honest and thus punished more harshly than men for not fulfilling gendered expectations. In turn, we consider the exclusion mechanism from the corruption literature to be relevant for explaining patronage, which is an informal practice that, like corruption, relies on political networks from which women are typically marginalized.

First, exclusion from party networks has relegated women politicians to a disadvantaged position within their parties. Research has shown that women's exclusion from power networks occurs because men party elites systematically prefer characteristics traditionally associated with male stereotypes, turning parties into “old boys’ clubs” (Niven, 1998; Bjarnegård, 2013; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2014; Piscopo, 2019). Indeed, existing studies find that women enter politics through different paths and are excluded from the formal and informal networks that shape the access to critical resources to advance their political careers, especially regarding nomination,

and party leadership and posts (O'Neill & Stewart, 2009; Hinojosa & Franceschet, 2012; O'Brien, 2015). Furthermore, the exclusion of women politicians from men-dominated networks has also limited their participation in informal sensitive exchanges, such as corruption, which require trust, secrecy, and protection (Benstead, 2016; Bjarnegård, 2018; Stockemer & Sunström, 2019). In effect, some studies claim that women are not inherently less corrupt, but rather that they are provided with fewer opportunities to engage in such practices because they are excluded from the men-dominated networks that distribute private goods and corrupt benefits (Goetz, 2007; Bjarnegård, 2013; Esarey & Chirillo, 2013; Bjarnegård, 2018; Stockemer & Sunström, 2019). Thus, when women become part of networks of corruption, there is no observable gender gap (Alhassan-Alolo, 2007). Extending these results to patronage, exclusion from men-dominated party networks may mean that women mayors are less often asked to hire friends of friends or other copartisans' collaborators as part of their municipal staff, and/or less likely to offer municipal posts to members of such networks. This, in turn, is likely to result in smaller bureaucracies.

Second, the fact that women are perceived as outsiders within political institutions and established party networks creates gender stereotypes that associate women with reduced perceptions of corruption and higher levels of trust in political institutions (Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014). Therefore, the presence of women in politics is generally linked with renewal, change, and a break with the status quo (Shames, 2003; Brown, Diekman, & Schneider, 2011). In effect, in contexts of political distrust and public discontent, parties tend to nominate more women in leadership positions and as candidates in order to signal change (O'Brien, 2015; Funk, Hinojosa, & Piscopo, 2019). Furthermore, since voters tend to punish women more than men when they do not fulfill gendered expectations (Reyes-Housholder & Thomas, 2018; Reyes-Housholder 2020), women in power are more likely to engage in reforms that meet those gender

stereotypes. Accordingly, in contexts where patronage is the norm, gender stereotypes that associate women with outsidership and reform are likely to increase expectations that women mayors will break with the status quo. This, added to the fact that women anticipate that they will be punished more severely for not meeting these stereotypes, may explain why women engage in less patronage and, therefore, reduce the size of local bureaucracies.

In addition to reducing the number of public employees, women mayors also hire a higher proportion of women than their men counterparts. Women's status as outsiders in men-dominated political institutions may also help explain why women mayors do this. First, given their marginalization from established party networks, women are likely to have their own separate networks. Thus, women politicians may have more women in their networks and therefore more women to hire as municipal bureaucrats. Indeed, researchers have shown that women party leaders recruit more women candidates than men party leaders, which may reflect the fact that women politicians are in contact with more women, as social networks are largely sex-segregated (Crowder-Meyer, 2013). For instance, focusing on Chile's first woman president, Michelle Bachelet, Reyes-Housholder (2016) argues that her network included a higher proportion of women, which—along with her commitment to gender parity in her cabinet—explains why she appointed more women ministers to her cabinet than her men predecessors. Second, owing to shared experiences of political marginalization, women politicians tend to be more aware of gender disparities in the public sector and, therefore, seek to improve the position of women once in power (Funk, Silva, & Escobar-Lemmon, 2019). For instance, Barnes, Ciocci, and Lopreite (2019) show that women governors in Argentina appoint more women to provincial cabinets, as they are more likely than men to support the political careers of women colleagues. Third, since women are likely to be outsiders, when they enter politics, they are constantly under the spotlight and their

performance is judged to a higher standard than men, leading to a greater risk of being labelled as incompetent (Puwar, 2004). Therefore, women mayors face additional pressure to succeed once in power, and thus need to hire loyal people who want them to do well. Extant research has shown that interactions between women politicians foster mutual perceptions of loyalty and like-mindedness (Reyes-Housholder, 2016). Additionally, women are more likely to share similar interests and policy preferences with other women, and consequently, to be better at implementing the policy agenda of a woman (Wilson & Carlos, 2014; Funk, Silva, & Escobar-Lemmon, 2019). Thus, women mayors may increase the proportion of women in the local bureaucracy hoping that these shared interests and perceived loyalty will allow them to successfully implement their agenda once in office, which will help them improve their future electoral performance.

Drawing on these insights, we propose the following hypotheses regarding the effect of women mayors on bureaucratic reform:

1. We expect that women mayors will be more likely to reduce the size of the bureaucracy than their men counterparts.
2. We hypothesize that women mayors will adopt a gendered perspective when reducing the size of the bureaucracy, increasing the share of women staff in their local governments.

## **Research Design**

Studying the effect of electing a woman mayor is challenging since municipalities that elect women might differ across multiple unobserved characteristics from municipalities that do not elect women mayors. These confounders might explain both the success of women candidates and the size and composition of the local bureaucracy. Therefore, not accounting for these hidden

factors might bias the results. One of the most credible non-experimental strategies to address the omitted variable problem is using an RDD based on close elections.

An RDD takes advantage of the fact that, on many occasions, individuals are assigned to a treatment or a control group according to whether they are above or below a certain cutoff or threshold on a variable or score. For example, scholarships are normally granted to students based on a given GPA threshold. Some students will be eligible as they will be above the cutoff, whereas others will fall below that given GPA and thus will not receive the scholarship. The variable that determines the treatment status, GPA in the example, is referred to as the running variable. An RDD relies on the fact that assignment to a treatment group is uniquely determined by surpassing a particular threshold on the running variable. That is, units cannot sort their position around the cutoff and decide whether they want to be in the treatment or control groups. As a result, all that should change at the given threshold is the probability of receiving the treatment (Cattaneo et al., 2018).

The basic intuition behind an RDD is that individuals just above or below the threshold are highly similar and therefore the difference in outcomes “at the cutoff” can only be attributed to the treatment. In fact, “this notion of comparability between units with very similar values of the score but on opposite sides of the cutoff is the fundamental concept on which all RD designs are based” (Skrovn and Titiunik, 2015: 7). Accordingly, by estimating the discontinuity gap at the cutoff, an RDD identifies the causal effect of the treatment (e.g., receiving a scholarship). It is important to note that because the parameter of interest is estimated at the cutoff, RDD estimates are local treatment effects.

One application of RDDs is to use close elections to make comparisons between barely winners and barely losers. This design is based on the fact that “in very close and fair elections,

there is an element of luck and unpredictability in the outcome” (Dunning, 2012: 77), allowing us to compare both groups of units to estimate the effect of winning an election (Lee, 2008). The main goal in our study is to compare municipalities where a woman won by a small margin over a man with municipalities where a man won by a small margin over a woman. As a consequence, we restrict the sample to cases where the first two most voted-for candidates are a man and a woman. Focusing on these groups of eligible units will allow us to claim that within a narrow bandwidth—the range of the running variable to which we restrict the analysis—electing a woman mayor is “as-if” random.

The running variable in our application is the difference between the vote share of the woman and the man candidate, and the cutoff is equal to zero. Positive values correspond to a woman winning the local election over a man (treatment group) while negative values refer to a man winning the local election over a woman (control group). For example, if the woman obtains 0.49 and the man 0.47, the running variable will be equal to 0.02 (a positive value, so the case will be located above the cutoff and considered as treated). Conversely, if the woman obtains 0.47 and the man 0.49, the running variable will be equal to -0.02 (a negative value, so the case will be located below the cutoff and considered as control). The unit of analysis is the municipality-year since the administrative outcome data is structured at that level. Because the treatment is assigned for an entire mayoral term (4 years), we cluster the standard errors at the mayoral term level.

To estimate the effect of electing a woman candidate (at the cutoff), we use the *rdrobust* package in R (Calonico, Cattaneo, & Titiunik, 2015). We use the software’s default options: an optimal bandwidth to minimize the mean-squared error (MSE) and a triangular kernel to weigh units as a function of their distance from the cutoff. As units move away from the cutoff, they become less relevant for the estimation.

When using a conventional approach to estimate the local effect of the treatment, we could end up with biased results since the optimal bandwidth could be too large including units that are systematically different (Cattaneo, Idrobo, & Titiunik, 2018). Instead of arbitrarily selecting smaller bandwidths than the recommended one (i.e., undersmoothing), we use a robust inference that removes the misspecification bias and adjusts the standard errors to account for the extra variability generated due to the correction processes. This process is generated by an automatic data-driven process, and robust results are valid even for large bandwidths selected via the MSE-optimal choice (Cattaneo, Idrobo, & Titiunik, 2018).

We collected rich administrative data about the number of municipal employees by gender in local governments in Chile. The data was obtained through the National Service of Municipal Information, and spans from 2008 to 2016. In table 1 we show the descriptive statistics of the outcomes studied in this paper for the eligible sample of municipality-years ( $N= 702$ ), which is obtained from municipalities in which a woman was the winner and a man was the runner up, or a woman was the runner up and a man was the winner. For example, let us suppose that in 2008 the municipality of Santiago experienced an electoral race and the two most voted-for candidates were a man and a woman. As a result, this election will give us four municipality-year units: 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 for the outcomes of interest: the size and composition of the bureaucracy. From this 702 municipality-years, the *rdrobust* package selects units that experienced close electoral races to construct optimal bandwidths for each outcome. For instance, the package selects 365 municipality-years when constructing the bandwidth for the outcome proportion of women employees.<sup>ii</sup>

The first three rows in table 1 report the number of employees (total and by gender), and the fourth the proportion of women among them. On average, eligible municipalities have 129



municipal employees, and the average proportion of women across all eligible municipalities is 45 percent. It is important to note, as we show in appendix B, that the entire, eligible, and bandwidth samples are very similar in terms of their observed characteristics.

**Table 1:** Outcomes: descriptive statistics

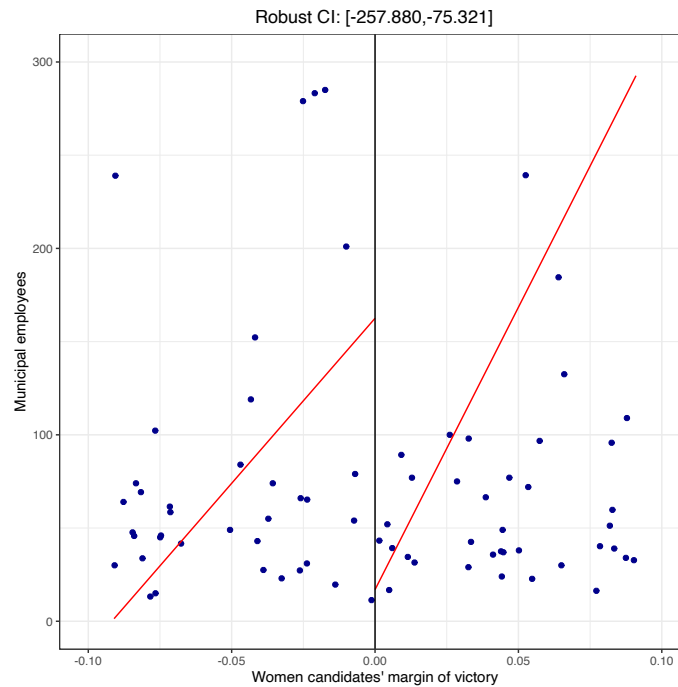
	Mean	St. Dev.	N
Municipal employees	129.26	209.26	702
Women municipal employees	54.95	78.92	702
Men municipal employees	74.31	133.92	702
Share of women municipal employees	0.45	0.09	702

Additionally, we complement our results with evidence collected from semi-structured interviews with mayors selected through purposive sampling, which involves selecting respondents on the basis of certain characteristics that are relevant for the study (Lynch, 2013). In our case, we interviewed both women and men mayors. We use the interviews with women mayors in order to illustrate how they reform bureaucracies once in office. Since this is a non-probabilistic sampling strategy that focuses on key informants, these interviews are not intended to be representative. We also draw on evidence from newspapers to complement our interviews. See appendix C for more information on the interviews.

## Results

Consistent with our expectations, we find that women mayors have smaller bureaucracies than their men counterparts. Figure 2 shows the effects of electing a woman mayor (at the cutoff) on the total number of municipal employees when implementing an RDD using the MSE-optimal bandwidth suggested by the *rdrobust* package (optimal bandwidth: [-0.091, 0.091], observations: 221). The units that are above the cutoff (i.e., where the margin of victory equals zero) are

municipalities with women mayors who narrowly won the election over a man. The units that are below the cutoff are municipalities with a man mayor who narrowly won the election over a woman. Bins are constructed using a default data-driven method in the *rdrobust* package. We report the robust confidence intervals for the effect at the cutoff above each plot.



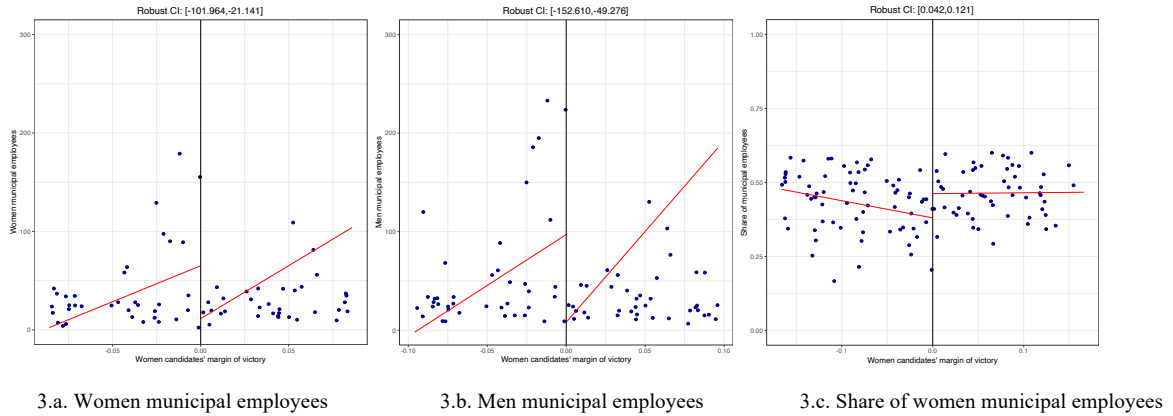
**Figure 2:** RDD plot for electing women mayors on the number of municipal employees

More specifically, our results show that local governments are reduced by 166 employees after the narrow win of a woman candidate over a man candidate, as compared with a narrow loss. The effect of women mayors on the number of workers is significantly different from zero, with a robust 95% confidence interval that ranges from -258 to -75 municipal employees. When standardizing the outcomes, narrowly winning women mayors decrease the number of total public workers by 0.80 standard deviation units (robust 95% confidence interval: [-1.23, -0.36]). To contextualize the results, consider the municipality of Viña del Mar. This is a city with a mid-sized municipal bureaucracy where a woman was barely elected mayor in 2004, and, as a result, it is

located near the cutoff. Since Viña del Mar had a total of 897 employees, a reduction of 166 municipal workers would represent a decrease of 19% of its bureaucracy.

Interviews with current and former women mayors and newspaper reports provide further evidence of women mayors' decisions regarding bureaucratic employment. For instance, one former woman mayor commented that she reduced the size of the bureaucracy because there were positions that were “invisible” or “fictitious”—in other words, employees who had a contract but nobody knew what they did. These types of employees can be exemplified, according to this mayor, by the case of one manager who, in his free time, worked as a consultant for the former (man) mayor, which confirmed her perception that such employees were political appointees. She added that she “did not fill those positions once these people were laid off.”<sup>iii</sup> Another woman mayor asserted, “when I entered office, I fired everyone I could. I had to bring in people who wanted me to do well.”<sup>iv</sup> The example of Cathy Barriga, mayor of Maipu, one of the most populous municipalities in Chile, points in the same direction. Indeed, when she assumed office, Barriga decided to lay off a large number of public employees, claiming that there were “a great number of ghost employees” (*El Mercurio*, 2017).

Additionally, according to our second hypothesis, women mayors increase the share of women in the bureaucracy. In order to illustrate this, figure 3 separates the number of municipal employees by gender, exploring three outcomes: the number of women employees (optimal bandwidth: [-0.086, 0.086], observations: 207), the number of men employees (optimal bandwidth: [-0.096, 0.096], observations: 234), and the proportion of women employees (optimal bandwidth: [-0.166, 0.166], observations: 365).



**Figure 3:** RDD plots for the effect of electing women mayors on the bureaucracy

Figures 3a and 3b show that the number of women and men employees decreased by 62 and 101 after the narrow win of a woman candidate compared with a narrow loss, respectively. Both results are significantly different from zero, with 95% robust confidence intervals ranging from -102 to -21 for women workers and from -153 to -49 for men workers. Figure 3c illustrates that, given that men were laid off at a much greater rate than women, the proportion of women workers increases by 8.2 percentage points, with a 95% robust confidence interval that goes from 4.2 to 12.1 percentage points.

Thus, women mayors tend to favor women employees in the local bureaucracy to a greater extent than their men counterparts. The fact that women tend to have more women in their networks, show a stronger commitment to advancing their interests, and share preferences with them on a number of issues and perceive them as more loyal may help explain these results. As one former woman mayor noted, “women are the first to join [women’s campaigns], while men have more men in their networks.”<sup>v</sup> Consequently, women have more women available to hire as staff once in office. Additionally, another woman mayor commented that she hired her current

Security Director following the recommendation of her former Security Director, a woman who is now working in a different department.<sup>vi</sup>

Women mayors also emphasize their commitment to improving women's positions in the local bureaucracy. One former woman mayor stated that she turned this into a municipal policy, and that "to the best of our ability we put a woman on every team." Consequently, she claimed, "we had to lay some men off."<sup>vii</sup> She also commented that her goal was to have women in decision-making posts as well as in areas commonly reserved for men, such as security and planning. The same pattern is described by another mayor, who claimed that she included women in varied positions, such as security, community development, urban planning, and transportation. Furthermore, she created an Office for Women's Affairs.<sup>viii</sup> Finally, women mayors have stated that women share "a different view about how things work"<sup>ix</sup> and have a "particular style of leadership, which differs substantially from that of men"<sup>x</sup> and translates into common policy preferences and priorities.

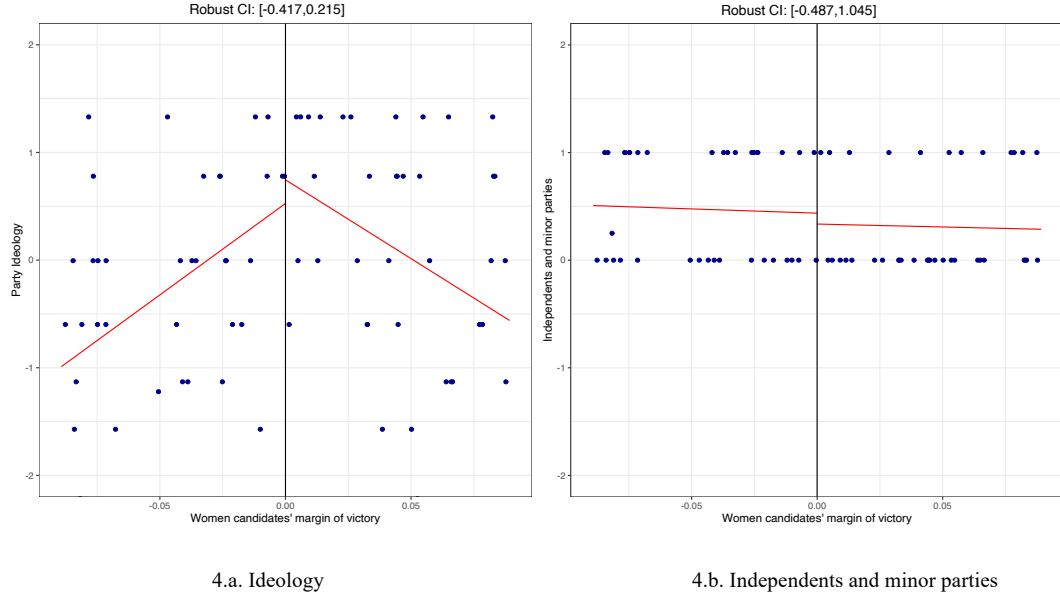
In appendix D, we report all of the results in table format. In appendix E, we show that a series of pretreatment covariates and placebo outcomes do not change around the cutoff, which provides a validity check for the regression discontinuity design (Skovron & Titiunik, 2015). In appendix F, we use multiple other bandwidths to show that the effects of electing a woman mayor (at the cutoff) on local bureaucracies are consistent across different samples and not just when using the MSE-optimal bandwidths. In appendix G, we estimate the effect of electing a woman mayor on bureaucracies, disaggregating by the types of municipal employee contracts. Under Chilean law, there are two types of municipal contracts, namely: long-term (*planta*) and short-term (*contrata*). The results hold for both types of contracts, showing that women mayors reduce the

number of both long-term and short-term employees and increase the share of women in both types of contracts.

## **Alternative Explanations and Robustness Check**

To analyze potential alternative explanations for our findings, we study whether women mayors are more likely to have certain ideological positions or to belong to independent or very small parties, which might drive their decisions regarding the size and composition of the bureaucracy. For example, if women mayors are more likely to be right-wing, they might reduce the size of the state because of their ideological beliefs. Also, if women mayors are independent or come from minor parties and thus do not have a large partisan network to rely on, they might have smaller bureaucracies because of a lack of capacity to fill positions.

In figure 4 we rule out these alternative explanations. We draw on the same regression discontinuity design used in the previous models,<sup>xi</sup> but now test the effect of electing women mayors (at the cutoff) on two other outcomes: party ideology and no party affiliation or affiliation with minor parties.<sup>xiii</sup> We standardized these outcomes to be able to make comparisons between variables with different scales.



**Figure 4:** Alternative explanations

Figure 4 reports no evidence that women mayors who narrowly won the election are more likely to be members of parties with certain ideological preferences or to belong to no party or minor parties that could make it harder for them to find people to join their government. The results with 95% robust confidence intervals range from -0.417 to 0.215 for ideology, and from -0.487 to 1.045 for independent and minor parties (results in standard deviation units). In addition to considering alternative explanations, we conduct a robustness check using a local randomization approach for our RDD. This is an alternative to the continuity-based framework used for the RDD in the previous section. The intuition behind this alternative method is that close to the cutoff we can interpret the treatment to be as good as randomly assigned (i.e., units will have the same chance of being just above or just below the cutoff). As a result, an RDD might look like an experiment that was conducted around the cutoff. This design does not rely on continuity and extrapolation assumptions like the RDD framework used in the previous section, but rather on the existence of local randomization near the cutoff (Cattaneo, Idrobo, & Titiunik, 2018).

The local randomization approach for an RDD requires us to find a window or neighborhood around the cutoff where the treatment appears to be randomly assigned. We use the *rdlocrand* package in R (Cattaneo, Titiunik, & Vazquez-Bare, 2020) to find the window where covariates are balanced between the treated and control groups, and use randomization inference to learn about the effects of electing women on a local bureaucracy.

We use eight electoral, socioeconomic, and geographic covariates that could play a role explaining political outcomes (details in appendix E). The package recommends the largest window where there is covariate balance: in this case:  $[-0.012, 0.012]$ .<sup>xiii</sup> Table 2 summarizes the difference-in-means and the p-values<sup>xiv</sup> used when implementing randomization inference in this suggested window for the four outcomes analyzed in the paper.

**Table 2:** Randomization inference (window:  $[-0.012, 0.012]$ )

	Difference-in-mean	P-value
Municipal employees	-130.619	0.000
Women municipal employees	-51.357	0.004
Men municipal employees	-79.262	0.000
Share of women employees	0.084	0.008

As in the previous section, the results show that women reduce the number of municipal employees while at the same time increasing the share of women workers. In appendix H, we use three alternative windows where there is also covariate balance and find the same results across the four samples. The findings from both RDD approaches are consistent even though they rely on different identification assumptions (continuity vs. local randomization), samples (more than 200 vs. 35 units), estimations (nonparametric local polynomial regression vs. difference in means between treated and control), and inferential approaches (robust and biased-corrected vs. Fisherian randomization-based inference).



## Conclusion

Comparative evidence suggests that women in office behave differently than men. Most studies have sought to account for this variation by focusing on legislative behavior and policy outcomes. Nonetheless, the effect of having women elected officials on bureaucratic institutions has received considerably less attention. Using an RDD in close electoral races in Chile, we find that women mayors' reform bureaucracies differently than their men counterparts. Specifically, women mayors reduce the size of local bureaucracies while simultaneously increasing the proportion of women employees. This pattern of bureaucratic reform may result from women's marginalization from formal and informal institutions and the gender stereotypes associated with it.

Women mayors may reduce the size of municipal bureaucracies because they are less likely to engage in patronage than their men counterparts or because gender stereotypes associate them with a break from the status quo. Additionally, women mayors reform the bureaucracy with a gendered perspective, increasing the share of women public employees. This may happen because women mayors are likely to have more women in their networks, are more oriented to improving the position of women and their interests than men mayors, and or because they share policy preferences with other women and perceive them to be more loyal. While we cannot adjudicate between the mechanisms that explain why women mayors increase the share of women bureaucrats, we believe that these lead to different policy implications.

Regarding the first mechanism, the supply of women can increase when structural factors, such as education and culture, are addressed, as well as through the implementation of direct measures related to the demand of women, given the feedback effects between demand and supply factors (Verge, 2015). Thus, to the extent that women politicians' networks have a higher supply of women for bureaucratic posts, increasing demand for women elected officials, through quotas,

electoral reforms, or other mechanisms, is likely to increase the pool of available women for public sector jobs. This has an additional policy implication for supply-side factors, since women bureaucrats may also become interested in politics and increase the supply of women with the will and experience to run for office. Additionally, since women and men politicians have different party networks, unless party leaders take direct measures to improve gender balance in men-dominated party networks, the pool of women available for bureaucratic positions will remain low under men mayors.

The second and third mechanisms, which focus on women mayors' demand for women in the bureaucracy, underline the difference selectors can make in increasing the share of women in local governments. This is particularly important in patronage-ridden bureaucracies, in which mayors have leeway to decide who they hire or fire. While women can make a significant difference in these settings, the election of a man mayor may cause a setback to the gender balance in bureaucracies. Hence, it is particularly important to promote the institutionalization of conditions that increase the share of women bureaucrats, including quotas for women public employees and better working environments. Indeed, extant research has shown that in more gender-balanced political systems and institutions, the gender of the selector becomes less important, as both men and women recruit more women for appointed positions (Field, 2020).

Finally, this study shows that when mayors have leeway to shape bureaucracies, we observe significant effects of gender on the size and composition of bureaucratic institutions. Therefore, our findings are likely to apply beyond Chile to most cases in the developing world, where a significant share of bureaucratic posts are filled through political linkages. Accordingly, in such settings, the gender of elected officials may have important consequences not only for the composition of bureaucracies, but also for the public policies they implement. Ultimately,

incorporating the effects of women politicians on bureaucratic posts into the study of gender politics will contribute to a more complete understanding of the position women occupy in democratic institutions and processes.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> At the national level, scholars have focused on appointed positions that are above the bureaucracy, primarily cabinet ministers (e.g., Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2005; Krook & O'Brien, 2012; Reyes-Housholder, 2016).

<sup>ii</sup> See appendix D for the bandwidths and their respective number of observations for the other outcomes.

<sup>iii</sup> Interview by the authors, Mayor, March 6, 2020.

<sup>iv</sup> Interview by the authors, Mayor, January 21, 2020

<sup>v</sup> Interview by the authors, Mayor, March 6, 2020.

<sup>vi</sup> Interview by the authors, Mayor, January 31, 2020.

<sup>vii</sup> Interview by the authors, Mayor, March 6, 2020.

<sup>viii</sup> Interview by the authors, Mayor, January 31, 2020.

<sup>ix</sup> Interview by the authors, Mayor, January 31, 2020.

<sup>x</sup> Interview by the authors, Mayor, January 21, 2020.

<sup>xi</sup> Also, we use the same bandwidth when estimating the effect of electing women mayors on the number of municipal employees. This approach allows us to rule out alternative explanations since we are using the same sample.

<sup>xii</sup> For ideology, we use the dataset constructed by Wiesehomeier, Singer, and Saskia (2019) with the ideology of parties in Latin America. The (unstandardized) ideological scale goes from 1 (left) to 20 (right). For independent and minor parties, we use official electoral data to identify

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candidates without a party affiliation and parties with just one or two mayors. The (unstandardized) variable takes a value of 1 for candidates who belong to a minor party or who do not have party affiliation, and 0 otherwise.

<sup>xiii</sup> 35 observations.

<sup>xiv</sup> We report p-values generated using a Fisherian inference. There are no relevant differences when using large-sample p-values.

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