

Mind the (Gender) Gap: Analysing Statistical Relationships between Gender and Political Ideology

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Ruth Dassonneville for her invaluable assistance and support in navigating her dataset and adapting it to align with our research objectives.

Abstract

(100 - 250 words)

1 Introduction

There is a growing body of literature in political science that aims to examine the increasing levels of political polarization worldwide. McCoy and Somer (2019) theorize that this polarization of the electorate often builds on existing social and political cleavages and their associated political grievances and crisis of representation (McCoy and Somer 2019, 237, p. 240). In this context of polarization, the debate on the impact of gender as a social cleavage on political ideology has heated up again. Reputed news publications such as *The Economist* and *Financial Times* have recently reported of a growing ideological divide between men and women in the 18-30 age range, with men being much more likely to self-identify as conservative when compared to women. In contrast, other political scientists have dismissed the claim of growing ideological gaps, stating that the divergence in ideology might not be largely steady, or at least not as dramatic as posited.¹

In light of the contradicting viewpoints on this increasingly relevant issue, we aim to investigate this question: what is the relationship between gender and ideological self-identification? To this end, we use Ruth Dassonneville (2021)’s dataset to replicate her original investigation into the relationship between gender and ideology. We anticipate that the feminist mobilization in the late twentieth century made women’s issues more culturally salient for women and caused women to self-identify as more ideologically liberal than men on average. However, whereas Dassonneville investigated the ideological gender gap over time, our analysis will be strictly limited to examining the gendered gap of political ideology in the twenty-first century, as it so exists.

Besides the attempted replication of her analysis, this essay will also analyse the influence of regime-type on the relationship between gender and ideology to examine whether the type of regime influences the size of the gendered ideological gap. We employ regression analysis on Dassonneville’s dataset and create several linear models to map the relationship between gender and ideology, and the potential moderating effects of time, age, country, and regime-type.

In section 2, we briefly discuss the existing literature on the gender gap in political ideology. We then describe the data we are using for this replication as well as the operationalization of our key variables in section 3. In section 4, we discuss our findings after which we conclude with a summary of our findings, and discussion of the limitations of our scope of study as well as potential avenues for further research in section 5. *Insert brief sum of findings.*

2 Literature Review

The study of the relationship between gender and ideology in the late twentieth century found that while women tended to be more ideologically conservative compared to men before 1980, the post-1980 era has seen a slow and sustained reversal in the ideological gender gap. There are multiple causal explanations that have been posited for this reversal.

While structural factors such as age, greater religiosity, and low participation in the workforce explained ideological conservatism in women pre-1980s, increase in female participation in the labor force and secularity in general saw a great convergence in the gendered ideology divide in a process that Inglehart and Norris have termed as gender de-alignment (Giger 2009; Inglehart and Norris 2000; Shorrocks 2018; Vaus and McAllister 1989). Inglehart and Norris (2000) found the “modern gender gap”, where women are more ideologically liberal than men, to have occurred primarily in postindustrial societies and not in developing or postcommunist societies. The scholarship on this modern gendered ideological gap agrees that structural factors no longer account for this ideological gap. Controlling for socioeconomic disadvantage found that it could not explain the gap in ideology.

Some authors have posited that sociopolitical socialization plays a role in accounting for the ideological divide between men and women such that women are more likely to be socialized to be less individualistic

¹See “Why young men and women are drifting apart,” *The Economist* (13 March 2024); John Burn-Murdoch, “A new global gender divide is emerging,” *Financial Times* (26 January 2024); Zack Beauchamp, “Are men and women growing apart politically? Not so fast,” *Vox* (13 March 2024); for discussions on gendered ideology gap in recent news media.

and thus have gendered moral values that lead to liberal ideology (Gidengil et al. 2003). Empirically, however, a consistent gender gap on economic ‘compassion’ issues is not found to exist (Helen, Thomas, and Wilcox 1994). Furthermore, in postindustrial societies, regardless of family political ideology and political socialization, young women are consistently found to be more ideologically liberal than young men in similar contexts (Ditmars 2023).

The last, and most convincing explanation for the gendered ideology gap is the salience of sociocultural factors. Feminist mobilization in the late twentieth and twenty-first century has led to the increased salience of women’s issues. Ditmars (2023) terms this increased salience of contextually relevant issues in a certain time period as “period forces”. Many authors in the discipline believe that feminist mobilization caused a cultural trend shift and value reorientation which made women’s issues more salient in the collective female cultural consciousness and thus caused women to realign to left-leaning parties and ideological positions, which tend to represent feminist issues (Gidengil et al. 2003; Giger 2009; Inglehart and Norris 2000). Dassonneville further maps the shift of this gendered ideological gap over time in a longitudinal study and finds that the ideological shift was most dramatic between 1980 and 1995 (Dassonneville 2021, 229).

Feminist mobilization in the recent past has brought women’s issues such as gender equality, equal representation and access to reproductive rights to the forefront of women’s consciousness. We argue that this cultural salience of women’s issues in their consciousness makes them more inclined towards ‘liberal’ parties and ideologies which are more likely to represent these issues. Here, we expect gender to act as a proxy for the salience of certain specific sociocultural factors and policy issues which have greater relevance and impact for women rather than men. While the scholarship surrounding the existence and reversal of the gender gap is vast, the scholarship has yet to examine how long the gendered ideological gaps caused by such culturally salient issues persist.

Considering the increasing levels of political polarization worldwide, figuring out the impact of gender and gender-related sociocultural factors on ideological polarization is an issue that requires more attention than it is being afforded at present. This is further compounded by the ongoing autocratization wave has slowly been eroding liberal democracy in postindustrial societies. As sociopolitical factors are an intrinsic part of the cultural context of a country, the regime-type of a country must play a significant role in the gendered ideology gap. We identify the lack of investigation into this relationship as a gap in the literature that we hope to mitigate in some way in this essay.

Aiming to replicate Dassonneville’s work with a limited the longitudinal element, our hypotheses are as follows:

- H1:** In the twenty-first century, women are more likely to self-identify as ideologically liberal than men.
- H2:** This gender-ideology relationship is likely to strengthen over time in the period of analysis from 2004 to 2018.
- H3:** The type of regime has an impact on the gendered ideological gap.

However, the existence of the traditional gender ideology gap pre-1980 means that we must consider that age could act as a mitigating variable in the ideological gap and might need to be controlled for.

3 Research Design & Data

description of the empirical approach to test the proposed hypotheses, data description, incl. descriptive statistics and plots (700 - 1000 words)

3.1 Data

To test the effect of gender on ideology, this paper uses the replication **data** for Dassonneville (2021)’s article (Dassonneville 2020). This dataset was constructed by combining the data from the Eurobarometer surveys, the Latinobarometro, the European Social Survey, the World Values Study, the Comparative Study

of Electoral Systems and national election studies. Our sample consists of 36 OECD countries rated at least partially free by Freedom House and our temporal scope extends from 2004 (first data on Latvia) to 2018. The data is organised in a country-year format, which allows us to conduct a cross-sectional, longitudinal, and comparative analysis of the impact of gender on ideology over time and across countries.

3.2 Variables

Outcome Variable

As the outcome variable, this research uses the `ideology_st` variable included in the data set. All surveys included in this data set include a question on respondents' ideological self-placement on a left-right scale². However, the surveys partially measure ideology in different ways, with differing numbers of answer categories and differences in the provision of a middle option. Thus, Dassonneville (2021) harmonised all scales to a 1-10 scale with 1 representing the most left and 10 representing the most right (Dassonneville 2021). As ideology is the variable of interest, we remove all observations with missing ideology values from the data set.

Predictor Variables

Female is the main predictor variable. It is measured on a binary scale, with 0 representing male, and 1 representing female. As gender acts as the proxy for sociocultural factors and is the main predictor variable of interest, we remove all observations with missing gender values from the data set.³

We use the variable **Year** to examine whether there is a time-trend in the effect of gender on ideology. As we are interested in the years 2004 until 2018, we remove all prior data from the data set.

As the effect of gender on ideology may change with age, the variable **Age** represents respondents' age at the time of the survey and ranges from 16 to 100. It is measured by subtracting respondents' year of birth from the year in which the survey was taken. Depending on the exact date of a birthday or the survey implementation in a given year, the measured age may be one year above or below respondents' actual age. However, as this is only a marginal deviation, we do not assume this to introduce a substantive bias.

Country refers to the country in which the survey was implemented. The data set includes observations from 36 countries. As we are interested in analysing OECD countries, we include data on the United Kingdom but exclude data on Great Britain and Northern Ireland from our analysis. Moreover, while some surveys on Germany measured attitudes in East and West Germany separately, we do not have sufficient temporal coverage to maintain this distinction in our analysis and, hence, analyse Germany as a unitary case. On average, there are 4.0046194×10^4 observations per country and 2669.7462963 observations per country-year. Table X lists the countries included in the data set, as well as the years for which data is available for each country.

²Across surveys, the wording for this item is very similar. The item is usually phrased along the following line: "In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". How would you place your views on this scale?" (European-Social-Survey 2020; GESIS-Leibniz-Institut-für-Sozialwissenschaften n.d.; World-Values-Survey 2021)

³In the surveys used for this data set, sex was often directly coded by interviewers, rather than inquired from respondents themselves: "In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". How would you place your views on this scale?" (European-Social-Survey 2004; World-Values-Survey 2021)

	Years
Australia	2004 2007 2010 2013 2016
Austria	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Belgium	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Czech Republic	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Denmark	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Estonia	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Finland	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
France	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Germany	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
United Kingdom	2004 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Greece	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Hungary	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018
Iceland	2005 2007 2009 2010 2011 2013 2014
Ireland	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Italy	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018
Latvia	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Lithuania	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Luxembourg	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
The Netherlands	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Norway	2004 2005 2006 2008 2009 2010 2012 2013 2014 2016
Poland	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Portugal	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Slovakia	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Slovenia	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Spain	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Sweden	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017
Switzerland	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2010 2011 2012 2014 2016
Turkey	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2014 2015 2016 2017
Israel	2006 2008 2010 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016
Chile	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2015 2017
Mexico	2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2015
New Zealand	2004 2005 2008 2011 2014
Japan	2005 2007 2010 2013
United States	2004 2006 2008 2011 2012 2016
South Korea	2004 2008 2010 2012 2016
Canada	2004 2008 2011 2015

The cultural and political setting matters for our hypothesised relationship between gender and ideology. As this setting may differ across regime types, we introduce a new **regime** variable. We code this variable using V-dem’s Regimes-of-the-World index (Coppedge et al. 2023). This index codes countries as liberal democracies (4), electoral democracies (3), electoral autocracies (2), or closed autocracies (1). The regime variable in our data is created by manually coding each country-year as one of these regime types. Our data only includes regime levels 2 to 4 (there are no closed autocracies).

Control Variables

As gender is randomly biologically assigned, there are very few potential confounding variables that may influence both gender and ideological self-identification. One of the few potential confounders is the country-specific cultural and ideological context. In certain countries, it may be common practice to abort based on fetuses sex. Parents not following this practice may both be more likely to give birth to e.g., female children and, at the same time, have e.g., more left attitudes which they transfer to their children. However, the authors are not aware of such practices in any of the countries included in the sample of 36 OECD countries. Hence, we do not include further control variables.

Table 2: Variables - Descriptive Statistics

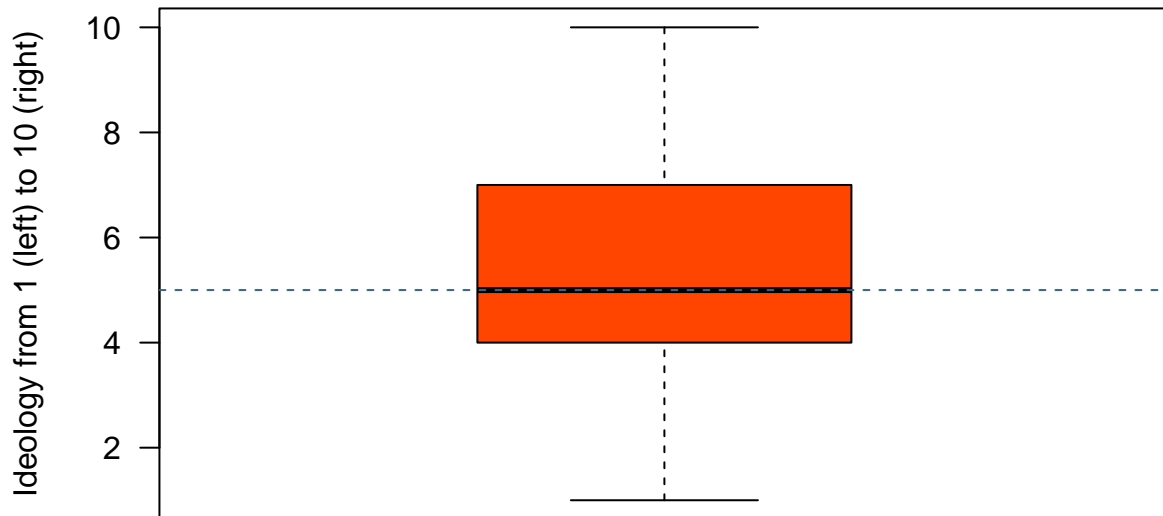
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	SD	NA's
Ideology	1	10	5.43	5	2.15	0
Female	0	1	0.53	1	0.50	0
Year	2004	2018	2010.22	2010	3.99	0
Age	16	100	48.96	49	17.83	0
Regime	1	3	2.93	3	0.27	0

Name	Description
<code>ideology_st</code>	Respondent's ideological self-placement standardised on a scale from from 1 (left) to 10 (right)
<code>female</code>	Binary variable: 0 (male) or 1 (female)
<code>year</code>	Year in which the survey was implemented, from 2004 to 2018
<code>age</code>	Respondent's age at the time of the survey
<code>country</code>	Name of the OECD country of the respondent
<code>regime</code>	Regime type of the country of the respondent: 3 = liberal democracy, 2 = electoral democracy, 1 = electoral autocracy)

3.3 Data Visualization

Before running the regression analyses, we have plotted ideology self-identification by gender, time, and country for the dataset in order to visually map the relationship between gender and ideology. Data visualizations in Figures 1 - 6 all seem to support our hypotheses **H1** and **H2**, which state that women tend to identify as more ideologically liberal than men, and that this gendered ideological gap increases over time.

Figure 1. Distribution of Ideology



It is clear from Figure 1 that, on average, people rarely tend towards ideological extremes. The bulk of the data being between 4 and 7 on the ideological scale shows that any ideological gap between genders cannot be hugely polarized. However, to show that gender does have some effect on ideological self-identification, Figure 2 maps the distribution of ideology by gender for the year 2018. Here, we see that women occupy a larger range of ideological identification than men, occupying the space between approximately 3.5 - 8.5 where men's ideological self identification is clustered between approximately 4.5 - 7. This greater ideological range could be a moderating effect of age: as previously mentioned in the literature review, the traditional gendered ideological gap shows that women tended to vote more conservatively on average pre-1980s, which could still persist among female population above a certain age.

Figure 2. Distribution of Ideology in 2018 by gender

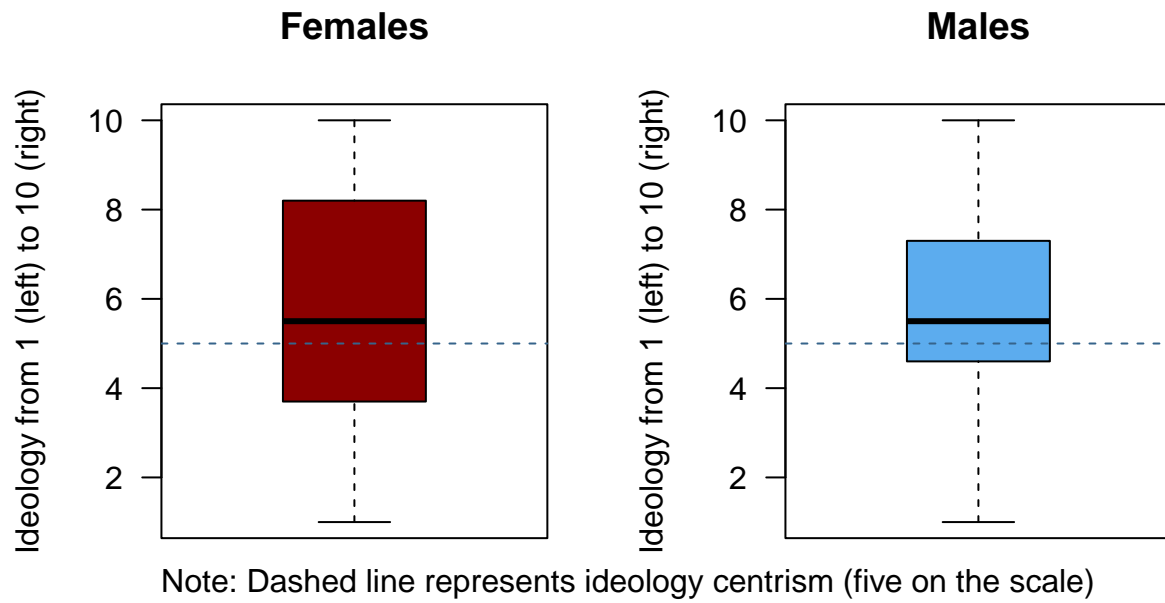


Figure 3. Development of average female and male ideological self-placement over time

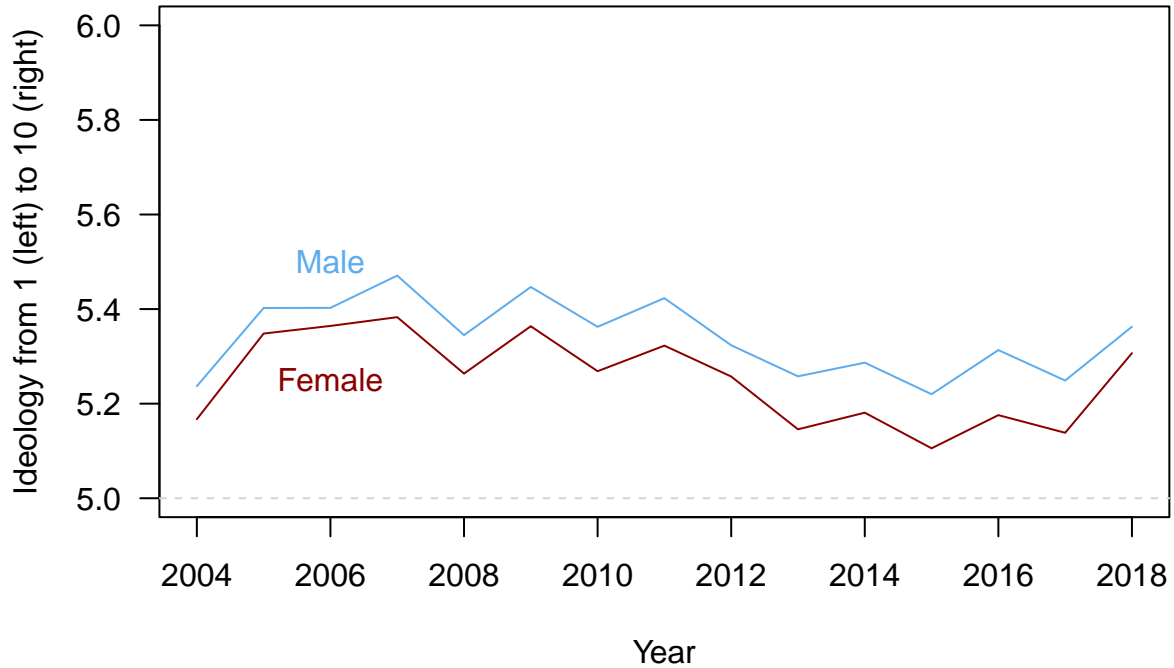
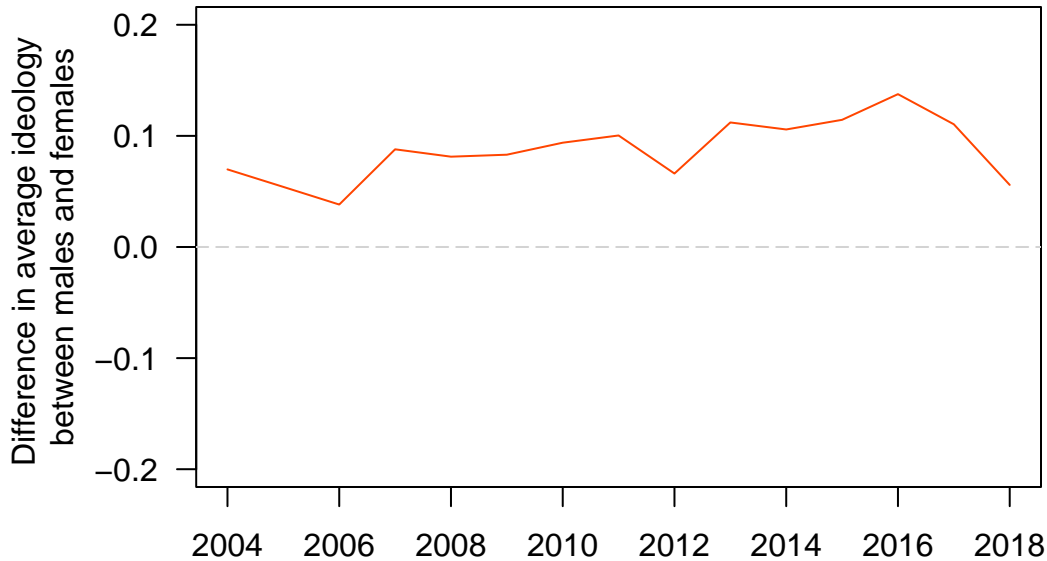


Figure 3 explicitly shows that there is a distinct difference between how men and women self-identify ideologically which remains steady over time. In fact, we can see that the average ideological gap between men and women widened between 2004 and 2017, showing that there is a time trend effect to the gendered ideology gap. Due to the lack of data for the year 2018 (the dataset only contains data from two countries - Italy and Hungary - for 2018), we assume that the narrowing of the gap is not significantly representative of the average relationship between gender and ideology in postindustrial societies for that year.

Figure 4. Development of difference in average female and male ideological self-placement over time



Note: Values over 0.0 mean that males are more right-wing.

Providing support for **H1**, Figure 4 shows more clearly that over the period of 2004-2018, women have self-identified as more ideologically liberal than men on average. Furthermore, the average gap between men and women's ideological positioning also seems to have widened between 2004 and 2017. This means that, not only do women tend to be more ideologically liberal than men on average, they also tend to be more ideologically liberal by a *greater degree* over time.

As our predictor variable **gender** is acting as a proxy for sociocultural factors, the observable time trend has fascinating implications for the cultural salience of issues affecting women. The increasing ideological gap seems to indicate that the cultural salience of these issues are not only sustained over time, but that their importance is actually increasing over time in the twenty-first century. However, Figures 3 and 4 show the average time trend for 36 OECD countries. This time trend may not present equally for every country, which is why, in Figures 5 and 6, we break down the relationship between gender and ideology over time by country.

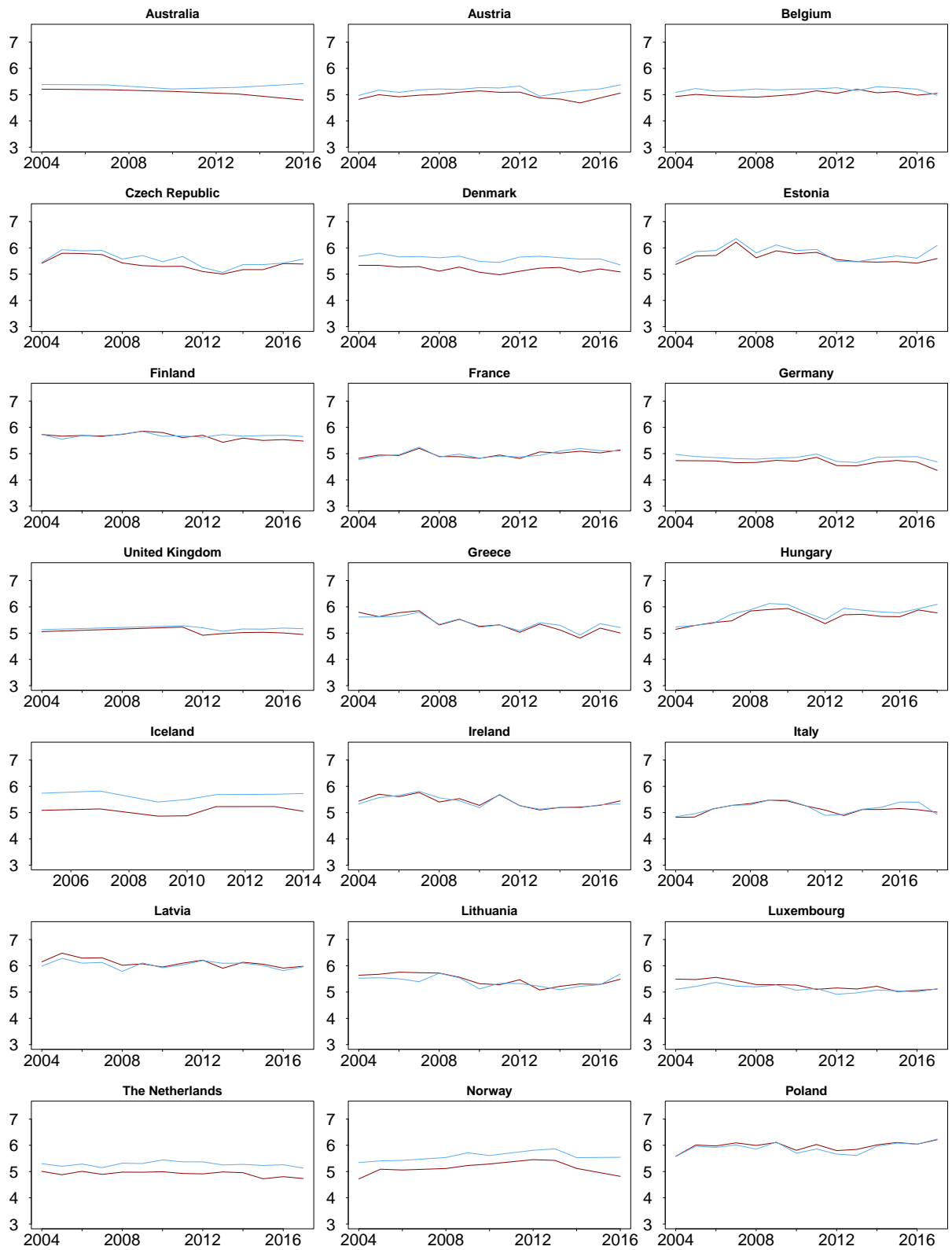
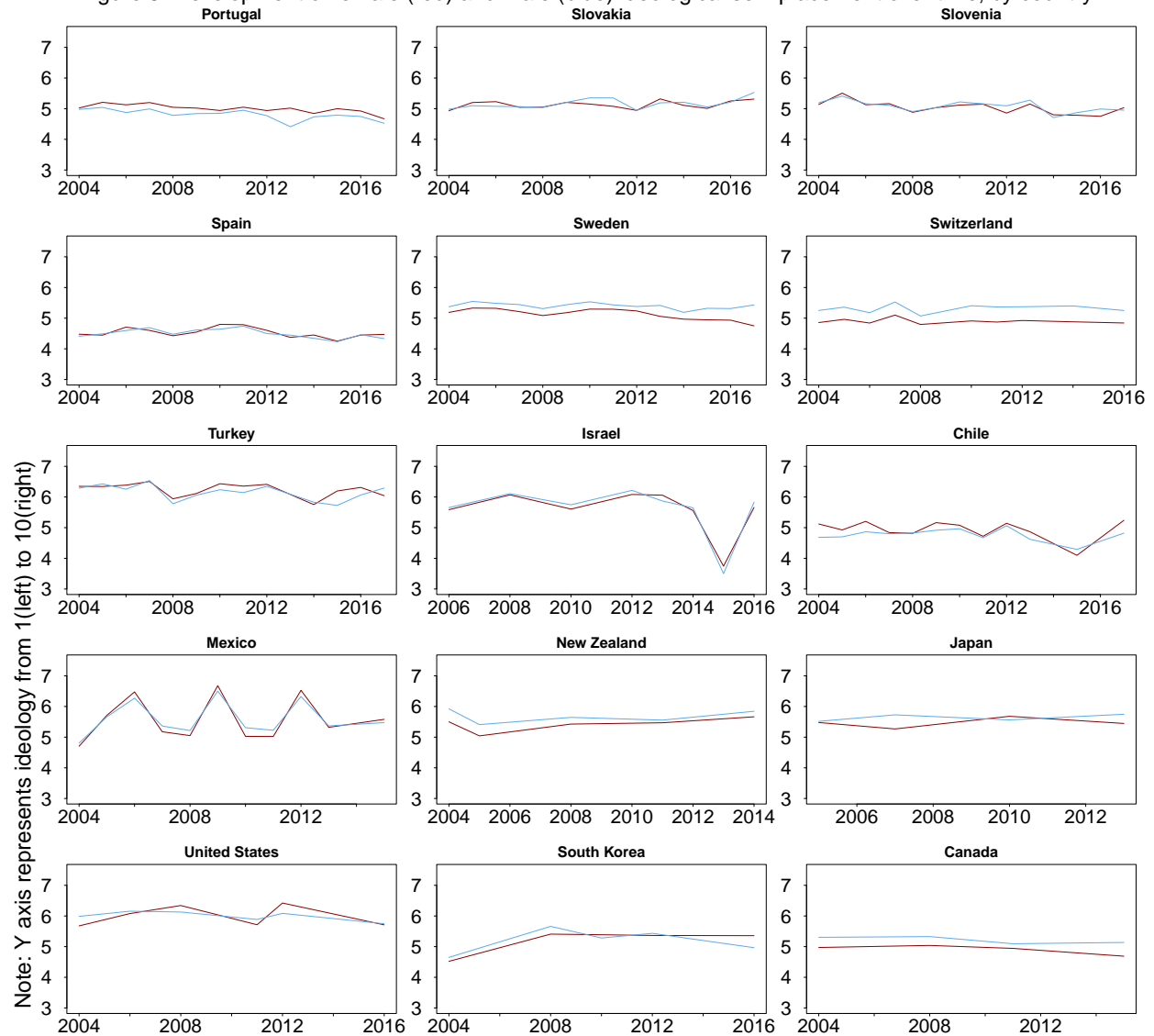


Figure 5. Development of female (red) and male (blue) ideological self-placement over time, by country



In breaking down the visualization by country, our findings reflect Dassonneville's in that there is a lot of

variation in the ideological gap over time as compared to Figure 3 (Dassonneville 2021, 232). Where some countries like Australia, Austria, Norway and Canada have seen an increasing ideology gap between men and women, the gap in other countries like Iceland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland has remained remarkably steady. Countries including Belgium, Turkey, Slovenia, and South Korea actually saw a narrowing down and reversal of the ideological gap, such that over time women seem to be self-identifying as more conservative than men. The country-wise breakdown of data also makes it clear that while some countries have a significant ideological gap between the genders, in other countries, the ideological gap over time ranges between very small to almost nonexistent. This includes examples like France, Ireland, Poland, and Latvia.

Figure 5, therefore, clearly shows that evidence of the existence of a gendered ideological gap varies across countries. As our **gender** variable is a proxy, this indicates to us that the cultural salience of women's issues varies across countries with different sociocultural and politico-legal contexts.

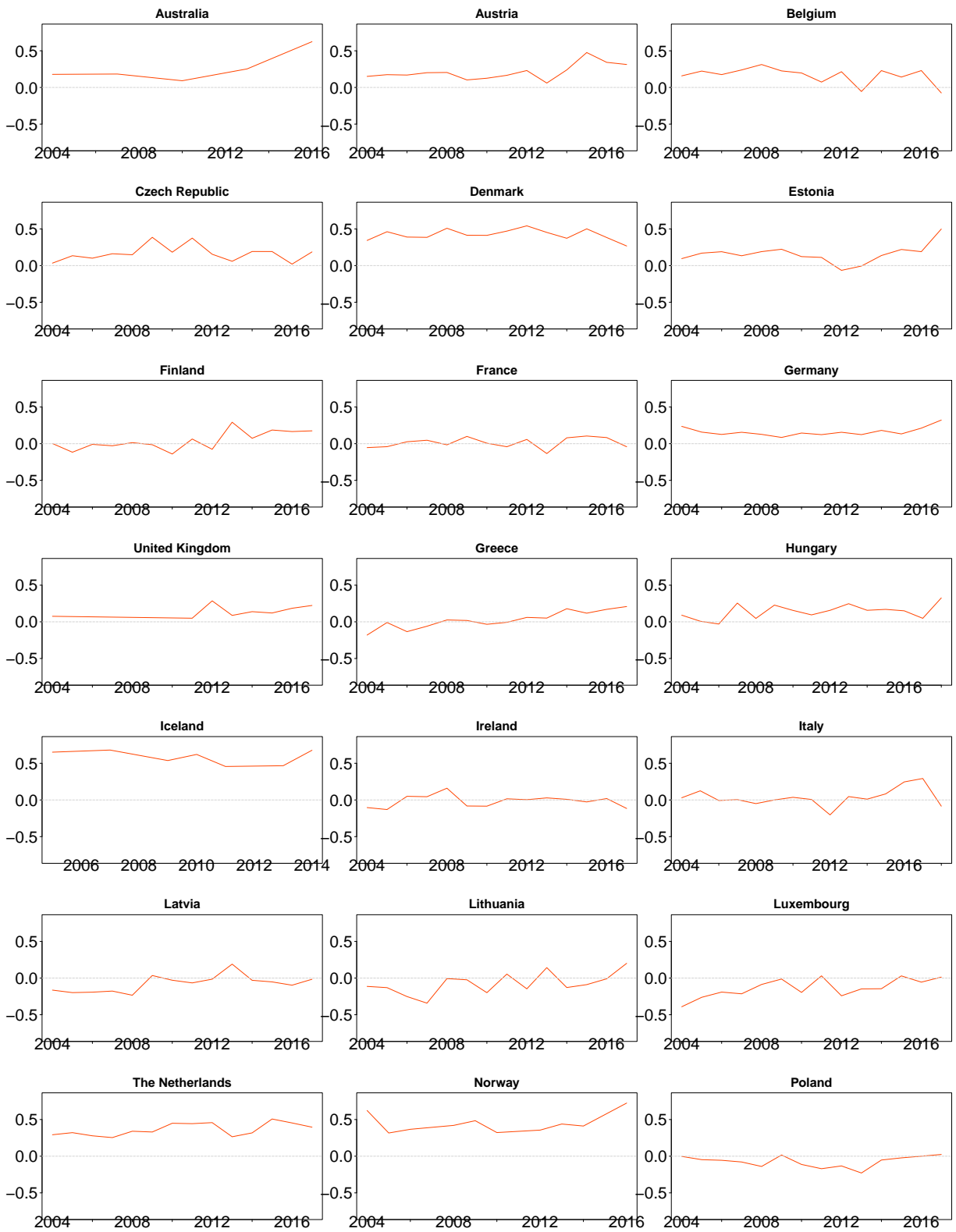
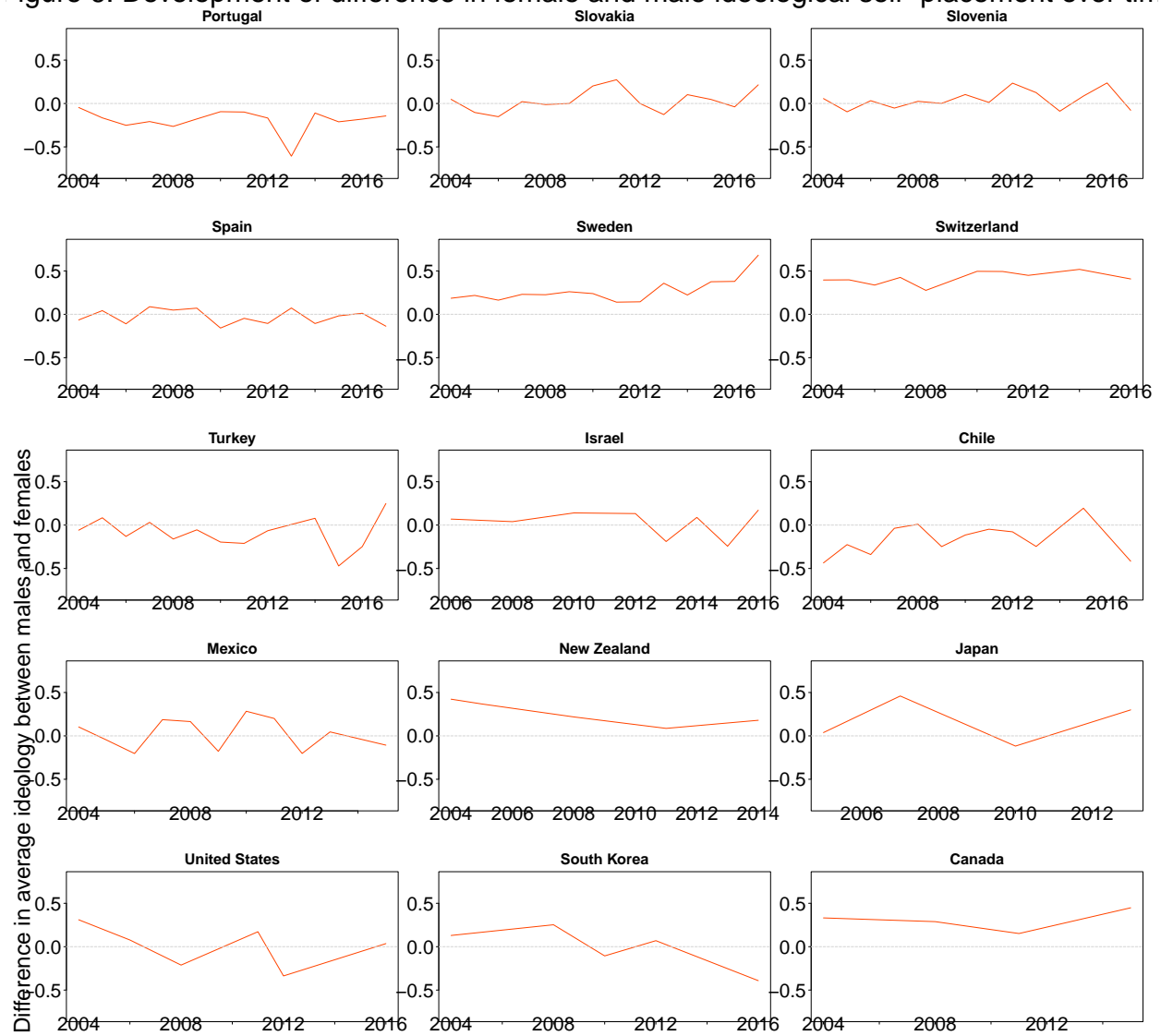


Figure 6. Development of difference in female and male ideological self-placement over time



Building on the country-wise variation as seen in Figure 5, Figure 6 breaks down the difference in degree

of ideological self-identification by gender over time. Although Dassonneville asserts that the ideological gender gap has been largely stable over time since the 1990s (Dassonneville 2021, 234), Figure 6 shows that most countries have seen fluctuation in the ideological gap between genders, even if the difference is not so dramatic as it was in the 80s and early 90s.

3.4 Data analysis method

To evaluate the relationship between gender and ideology, and the extent to which this effect is moderated by variables like year, age, country, and regime, we employ regression analysis and create several linear models.

First, we run a simple linear regression, analysing the relationship between gender and ideology. We subsequently include interaction terms to examine heterogeneous treatment effect of gender based on year, age, country, and regime type respectively.

4 Data analysis and Discussion

(1000 - 1500 words)

Discuss that we cannot say anything on causality (because we cannot manipulate gender, no experiment, ...)

5 Conclusion

(500 - 700 words) • a short summary of your paper,

• discusses the limitations of your approach (either in the theory you propose or in the empirical analyses). These limitations can be presented in positive terms as they open new avenues for future research.

- gender proxies the salience of sociocultural issues: does this salience only affect women or also men in the ideological gender gap (do they become more/less liberal in solidarity/backlash? is there a way to map this? is it relevant? not so if we're only measuring the gap, but potentially relevant if we're generally interested in gender-ideology relationship)
- Further potential confounders we did not account for? Economic situation (economic crises, etc. - but is this really relevant?)? Anything else? - I would say economic crises (as they affect everyone) would shift the placement at large but would not necessarily affect the gap. Previous gender gap literature found that women identify as more liberal even when controlling for economic disadvantage, so I would assume it's not really relevant.
- potential dataset limitation: The data we have is compiled from different data-sets - (partially) different question-wording/scales/question administration techniques, etc. -> may possibly lead to systematically different answers to different surveys - BUT not a huge problem because question wording is very similar + surveys are well established/tested
- Problem with left-right self-placements as proxy for 'ideology': (Anna has sources on this, if we want to include further references - but probably not necessary) PROBLEM: 'left-right' might not be understood similarly by different people/in different contexts; ideology may actually be multi-dimensional and not well captured with left-right scale; Social desirability bias in self-identification; etc. BUT Not a massive problem: left-right is still most dominantly used in literature; understood by most respondents SOLUTION/further research: use different measures of ideology (different scales, infer left-right position from questions on policy-areas, etc.)
- State how your analysis could be improved (e.g. better data that would be useful to collect).

Table 3: Regression table

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Ideological self-placement from left (1) to right (10)			ideology_st
	<i>OLS</i>			<i>OLS</i>
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	5.477*** (0.003)	27.760*** (1.314)	5.467*** (0.008)	5.826*** (0.070)
Female	-0.091*** (0.004)	11.559*** (1.809)	-0.306*** (0.010)	
Year		-0.011*** (0.001)		
Female x Year		-0.006*** (0.001)		
Age			0.0002 (0.0001)	
Female x Age			0.004*** (0.0002)	
Year				-0.050 (0.098)
Observations	1,441,663	1,441,663	1,441,663	2,748
R ²	0.0004	0.001	0.001	0.0001
Adjusted R ²	0.0004	0.001	0.001	-0.0003

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

- dassonneville notes a flattening of the ideology gap (holds mostly steady post-1990). Potential dataset limitation here that it caps out at 2018 and doesn't capture the major cultural trend/mobilization of the metoo movement which became salient post-2017 and probably has driven the ideology gap wider
 - potential dataset limitation: the data we have is only for OECD countries where the sociocultural gendered divide might not be as stark as in some other densely-populated developing (industrial?) societies like China, India, Brazil, etc. The findings would be more robust if data from these places could also be incorporated
 - regime-type: most of the observations in our dataset are liberal democracies. Non-findings for gender-ideology relationship by regime type might be due to limited number of observations.
- Basically, state what your paper could not do and propose how future research could go about it. If for example you know that there are important confounding factors which you could not include, mention these and emphasize the importance of including them.
- makes concrete suggestions for future research.

6 Proposal

Please write your final project using this template.

The below text explains in detail how to cite and get a nicely formatted reference list. You can delete this text and use the rmd file as your template.

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 - you can cite works within the Rmarkdown file, by writing `[@powner2015]` in the text and you will get the following citation in brackets (Powner 2015).
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 - To add references of the works you want to cite, you need to insert the citation information in the references.bib file. You can find the citation information on almost anything on google scholar: - 1) go to google scholar and search for topic of your interest, - 2) choose a work on Google Scholar, then click on cite, then choose Bibtex format, copy-paste this in the references.bib file, save the .bib file. That is all.
- In this class we are going to use the APSA reference and citation style.
 - The hard way to follow this style is to read the style manual and manually correct the style in your reference list and citations. By style is meant, for example, whether one should write the full names of the authors, or abbreviate the first name, whether one should write the title of the work in italics or not, whether one should place the publication year right after the author's name or towards the end, etc..
 - All these rules are specified in the APSA style manual, which I uploaded on Moodle.

- The good news is, in this class you do not need to do anything manually, as Rmarkdown will do it for you! (From personal experience I can tell, this is pretty awesome, it will save you tons of time.)
- You just need to specify the citation and language style in the YAML preamble and supply the style file in the folder where your Rmd file is. **This is already done in this template.** Check the YAML preamble in this template, line 9 says `csl: american-political-science-association.csl`, this is you telling Rmarkdown to use the style saved in this .csl file.
- You do not need to do anything more, just cite the works in your text. Rmarkdown will create proper citations and format the reference list in the correct way as specified by the APSA style. It will include the reference list right at the bottom of your document.

Let us cite another work by Tsebelis here: Tsebelis (1999) or (Tsebelis 1999, 100).

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