**Corruption and Women in Leadership: Evidence from Brazil**

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The idea that there are gendered differences in engagement with corruption has been documented by several studies (e.g. Swamy *et al.*, 2001; Barnes and Beaulieu, 2019). While most findings suggest that women engage less with corruption relative to their male counterparts, some studies have argued that this relationship is context-dependent (Debski *et al.* 2018; Clarke, 2022).

Corruption relies on networks of patronage and clientelism to operate. If these are majorly run by men, women may be left out of these networks, for bad or for good. Stockemer and Sundström (2019) find that corruption reduces women's participation as ministers in executive cabinets in democracies, but comparatively fewer studies consider the effect of corruption on women’s performance in the private sector. A recent exception is Statnik *et al.*, (2023), who find evidence that corruption discourages women from applying for credit.

In this paper, we test the hypothesis of whether corruption is associated with more barriers to the rise of women to positions of leadership in business, i.e. management or ownership. Our setup considers the context of Brazil, where we can match rich labor force participation data to an objective measure of corruption at the municipality level, using data from a randomized federal audit program launched in 2003.

Our main results show that municipalities with one standard deviation more corruption have a lower share of employed women in management or employer positions by 1.6 percentage points. This represents a 5 percent decrease relative to the average municipality. These findings are largely unchanged in terms of magnitude if we instead use the share of employed women who are in leadership positions.