

Women Also Know Stuff

Challenging the Gender Gap in Political Sophistication*

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Abstract

This paper proposes a simple but powerful framework to measure political sophistication based on open-ended survey responses. *Discursive sophistication* uses automated text analysis methods to capture the complexity of individual attitude expression. I validate the approach by comparing it to conventional political knowledge metrics using different batteries of open-ended items across five surveys spanning four languages (total $N \simeq 35,000$). The new measure casts doubt on the oft-cited gender gap in political knowledge: Women might know fewer facts about institutions and elites, but they do not differ substantively in the sophistication of their expressed political attitudes.

Keywords: political sophistication, gender gap, open-ended responses, text analysis

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