Women Want an Answer!

Field Experiments on Elected Officials and Gender Bias

Gabriele Magni

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations
Loyola Marymount University

Gabriele.Magni@lmu.edu

Twitter: @gabmagni

Zoila Ponce de Leon

Assistant Professor, Politics Department

Washington and Lee University

zponcedeleon@wlu.edu

**Online Appendix**

**Table A1: Experimental Balance**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Female Alias | Male Alias |
| MPs Gender: Female (Share) | 0.29 | 0.30 |
| MPs Age (Years) | 53.2 | 53.4 |
| MPs Party Ideology (0-10) | 5.5 | 5.4 |
| MPs Government Coalition (Share) | 0.57 | 0.55 |
| Electoral System: Proportional (Share) | 0.66 | 0.66 |
| Total Female MPs (Share) | 0.29 | 0.29 |

* MPs Gender: 0 = Male; 1 = Female
* MPs Party Ideology: 0 = Left; 10 = Right
* MPs Government Coalition: 0 = Opposition; 1 = Government Coalition
* Electoral System: 0 = Majoritarian; 1 = Proportional Representation

*Note: Proportional Electoral System and Total Share of Female MPs are measured at the country level*

**Table A2: List of Names Used for the Aliases Sending the Messages**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Feminine First Name** | **Masculine First Name** |
| ***Europe*** |  |  |
| **France** | Camille  | Jean-Pierre |
| **Germany** | Julia  | Lukas |
| **Ireland** | Sarah  | Patrick |
| **Italy** | Eleonora  | Stefano |
| **Netherlands** | Karin | Jan |
| ***Latin America*** |  |  |
| **Argentina** | María Rosa | José Carlos |
| **Brazil** | Maria Clara | Pedro Henrique |
| **Chile** | María Rosa | José Carlos |
| **Colombia** | María Rosa | José Carlos |
| **Mexico** | María Rosa | José Carlos |
| **Uruguay** | Luciana | Daniel |

We selected the first names based on lists of common first names for each country.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Messages Sent in the Audit Experiment**

***Messages in European countries***

France (French)

*Cher M. / Chère Mme [MP’s last name],
Mon nom est FirstName LastName. Je viens de perdre mon emploi et je ne sais pas quoi faire. Pourriez-vous m'indiquer la procédure à suivre afin de pouvoir toucher des allocations chômage? Personne n'a été capable de me donner des indications claires à ce sujet.
Je vous remercie par avance.
Cordialement,
FirstName LastName*

Germany (German)

*Sehr geehrter Herr/Frau [MP’s last name]
Ich heiße FirstName LastName. Ich habe meinen Arbeitsplatz verloren und weiß nicht was ich nun machen soll. Können Sie mir sagen, wie ich Arbeitslosengeld beantrage? Niemand kann mir sagen, an wen ich mich wenden kann oder was ich machen soll.
Mit freundlichen Grüßen
FirstName LastName*

Ireland (English)

*Dear [MP’s last name],*

*My name is FirstName LastName. I lost my job and I don't know what to do. What should I do to get unemployment benefits? No one will tell me where to go.*

*Thank you,*

*FirstName LastName*

Italy (Italian)

*Gentile Onorevole [MP’s last name],*

*Mi chiamo FirstName LastName. Ho perso il lavoro e non so più cosa fare. Che cosa devo fare per avere il sussidio di disoccupazione? Nessuno mi dice dove andare.*

*Grazie,*

*FirstName LastName*

Netherlands (Dutch)

*Geachte heer/mevrouw [MP’s last name],*

*Mijn naam is FirstName LastName. Ik ben mijn baan kwijt en ik weet niet wat ik nu moet doen. Hoe kan ik een werkloosheidsuitkering krijgen? Niemand kan mij vertellen wat ik moet doen.*

*Bij voorbaat dank,*

*FirstName LastName*

***Messages in Latin American countries***

Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Uruguay (Spanish)

*Estimado/a Congresista [MP’s last name],*

*Mi nombre es FirstName LastName. El año pasado me diagnosticaron insuficiencia renal, y no sé qué hacer. ¿Cómo puedo acceder a algún tipo de tratamiento gratuito? Espero me pueda ayudar. Muchas gracias.*

*Cordialmente,*

*FirstName LastName*

Brazil (Portuguese)

*Caro/a Deputado/a [MP’s last name],*

*Meu nome é FirstName LastName. No ano passado, fui diagnosticado/a com insuficiência renal. Nao sei o que fazer. Como posso ter acesso a algum tipo de tratamento gratuito? Espero que o senhor possa me ajudar. Muito obrigado/a*

*Atenciosamente,*

*FirstName LastName*

**Treatment Effect (various operationalization)**

As a robustness check, we code replies in two different ways.[[2]](#footnote-2) First, following the operationalization adopted in the manuscript, we assign 1 only to “real replies” – i.e. messages that contain information that addresses the question about unemployment benefits or healthcare access – and 0 to lack of replies and messages that do not provide any information. Second, we assign 1 to every reply, regardless of the response content.

***Examples of real vs. not real reply (Ireland)***

Real reply

*Dear Patrick*

*Thank you for your recent e-mail regarding unemployment benefits.*

*In the first instance, you should attend the Intreo Centre, [exact address], [Name] who will be able to make an appointment for you to discuss your social welfare entitlements / application procedure.*

*When you visit the Intreo Centre for the first time, you should bring your PPS number and proof of your address, such as a utility bill in your name Intreo will provide a personalised service, based on your individual needs including; advice on education, training and personal development opportunities, job search assistance as well as information on and access to our range of income supports.*

*I trust this information is of assistance to you.*

*Kind Regards*

*MP’s Name*

Not real reply

*We wish to acknowledge receipt of your email.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*MP’s Name*

As an additional check, we also run the analysis excluding Ireland and Argentina, the two countries in which the experiment was conducted in 2016. This allows us to evaluate the treatment effect in the countries in which the experiment was conducted within a shorter timeframe in early 2017, and specifically after the election of Donald Trump, which may have affected politicians’ gender attitudes.

**Table A3: Response Rates (Robustness Checks)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Countries****included** | **Reply code** | **Response rate for female aliases** | **Response rate for male aliases** | **% difference in response rates and p-value** |
| **All** | “Real” replies | 26.2 | 23.2 | 3 (.03) |
| **All** | All replies | 27.7 | 24.6 | 3.1 (.03) |
| **Ireland and Argentina excluded** | “Real” replies | 24.6 | 21.2 | 3.4 (.02) |
| **Ireland and Argentina excluded** | All replies | 26.2 | 22.6 | 3.6 (.02) |

**Statistical Analysis with Covariates**

We now present regression analysis in which we evaluate the effect of the treatment with and without controls. Since MPs come from different countries, we adopt multilevel models with random intercepts in which MPs are clustered by country. In all of the models, the binary dependent variable equals 1 for MPs who replied to the message and 0 for those who did not. All of the models presented are multilevel logit models.

As a robustness check, we operationalize the dependent variable in two different ways. For the models in Table A4, we assign 1 only to “real replies” (as described above) and 0 to lack of replies and messages that do not provide any information. In Table A4, the dependent variable equals 1 for every reply, regardless of the response content.

As an additional check, we also run the analysis excluding Ireland and Argentina, the two countries in which the experiment was conducted in 2016 (see Table A5 and Table A6).

 All the tables below report three models. The first model includes only the treatment, which is equal to 1 if the email was sent by the female alias and 0 if the message was sent by the male alias. The second model also includes two individual-level controls: age and gender of members of parliament (gender equals 1 for female MPs). Controlling for these characteristics is important because, as shown in the manuscript, gender is positively correlated with the likelihood of response, especially in Europe. Furthermore, one could expect that younger MPs are more likely to reply via email.

The third model also includes two party-level and three country-level variables. We control for party ideology with the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) for European countries and the Latin America and the Caribbean Political Dataset by Huber et al. (2012) for Latin American countries. The CHES provides a general measure of party ideology that ranges from 0 (left) to 10 (right). We classify as left-leaning parties that have a value smaller than 5 and as right-wing parties with a value bigger than 5. In the Latin American dataset, the party ideology variable ranges from 1 (left) to 5 (right). We classify as left-leaning parties with a score of 1 or 2 and as right-wing parties with a score of 4 or 5. We exclude parties with a score of 3, which in the Latin American dataset corresponds to a centrist position.[[3]](#footnote-3) In both European and Latin American countries we exclude independent and unaffiliated MPs for whom a party ideology measure is not available.

We also control for whether the party to which the MP belongs is a member of the government coalition (equal to 1) or is in the opposition (equal to 0). If welfare services are associated with the government inasmuch as the government is often the main provider, MPs belonging to parties in government may have a stronger incentive to reply.

Regarding country-level variables, we control for the electoral system, the percentage of female MPs, and the number of days before the next election. The variable controlling for the electoral system is equal to 1 for systems in which voters can directly vote for a candidate (i.e. majoritarian electoral systems with single-member districts or binomial configuration and proportional representation systems with preferences) and 0 for electoral system in which voters can only choose a party list (closed-list PR systems). The rationale behind this operationalization is that MPs who are elected through direct expression of voters’ preferences rather than party leaders’ decisions have an extrinsic motivation to be more responsive to citizens’ demands.[[4]](#footnote-4)

We also control for whether parliaments with a higher percentage of female MPs and with an approaching election that may generate extrinsic motivations for MPs to reply produce a higher response rate.

Results in Table A4 reveal that the treatment has a consistently significant effect. MPs are more likely to reply to female citizens who ask for welfare support. The effect remains significant even when we control for gender and age of MPs (model 2), for the ideology and the government position of the parties to which they belong, and for the electoral system under which they were elected (model 3).

 The regression analysis also reveals other interesting findings. Female MPs are more likely to reply to requests for help from citizens, even if the effect loses significance in the third model that controls for both MPs’ gender and proportion of female MPs in parliament. Younger MPs and MPs from left parties are more responsive to requests for help with welfare access. To the contrary, being a member of the government coalition does not have a significant impact.

Finally, the electoral system coefficient goes in the expected direction, with a positive sign for electoral system with preferences in which candidates must personally win citizens’ votes, but fails to reach statistical significance at the conventional levels.

Results remain substantively unchanged in Table A5, Table A6, and Table A7.

**Table A4: MPs’ responsiveness to citizens’ demands (“real responses,” all countries)**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  | *Dependent variable:* |
|  |  |
|  | Real response  |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|  |
| *Individual level* |  |  |  |
| Treatment (Female) | 0.22\* | 0.22\* | 0.23\* |
|  | (0.09) | (0.09) | (0.09) |
| MP Gender (Female) |  | 0.22\* | 0.20 |
|  |  | (0.10) | (0.10) |
| MP Age |  | -0.01\*\* | -0.01\*\* |
|  |  | (0.004) | (0.004) |
| MP Party Ideology (Right) |  |  | -0.07\* |
|  |  |  | (0.03) |
| MP Party Gov. Coalition |  |  | -0.02 |
|  |  |  | (0.10) |
| *Country level (11 countries)* |  |  |  |
| Elec. Syst.: Preferences |  |  | 0.11 |
|  |  |  | (0.17) |
| % Female MPs |  |  | 0.01 |
|  |  |  | (0.04) |
| Days to Next Election |  |  | 0.001 |
|  |  |  | (0.001) |
| Constant | -1.38\*\* | -0.77 | -1.38 |
|  | (0.44) | (0.49) | (1.29) |
|  |
| Observations | 3,685 | 3,216 | 3,075 |
| Log Likelihood | -1,636.17 | -1,532.46 | -1,482.73 |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 3,278.34 | 3,074.91 | 2,985.47 |
| Bayesian Inf. Crit. | 3,296.98 | 3,105.29 | 3,045.78 |
|  |
| *Note:* | \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001 |

**Table A5: MPs’ responsiveness to citizens’ demands (all responses, all countries)**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  | *Dependent variable:* |
|  |  |
|  | All responses |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|  |
| *Individual level* |  |  |  |
| Treatment (Female) | 0.22\* | 0.23\*\* | 0.24\*\* |
|  | (0.09) | (0.09) | (0.09) |
| MP Gender (Female) |  | 0.22\* | 0.20 |
|  |  | (0.10) | (0.10) |
| MP Age |  | -0.01\*\* | -0.01\* |
|  |  | (0.004) | (0.004) |
| MP Party Ideology (Right) |  |  | -0.08\*\* |
|  |  |  | (0.03) |
| MP Party Gov. Coalition |  |  | 0.01 |
|  |  |  | (0.10) |
| *Country level (11 countries)* |  |  |  |
| Elec. Syst.: Preferences |  |  | 0.21 |
|  |  |  | (0.17) |
| % Female MPs |  |  | 0.01 |
|  |  |  | (0.04) |
| Days to Next Election |  |  | 0.001 |
|  |  |  | (0.001) |
| Constant | -1.31\*\* | -0.74 | -1.37 |
|  | (0.43) | (0.48) | (1.26) |
|  |
| Observations | 3,685 | 3,216 | 3,075 |
| Log Likelihood | -1,663.09 | -1,558.11 | -1,505.81 |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 3,332.17 | 3,126.23 | 3,031.62 |
| Bayesian Inf. Crit. | 3,350.81 | 3,156.61 | 3,091.94 |
|  |
| *Note:* | \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001 |

**Table A6: MPs’ responsiveness to citizens’ demands (“real responses,” excluding Ireland and Argentina)**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  | *Dependent variable:* |
|  |  |
|  | Real response |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|  |
| *Individual level* |  |  |  |
| Treatment (Female) | 0.23\* | 0.23\* | 0.24\* |
|  | (0.09) | (0.09) | (0.09) |
| MP Gender (Female) |  | 0.23\* | 0.17 |
|  |  | (0.10) | (0.11) |
| MP Age |  | -0.01\* | -0.01\* |
|  |  | (0.004) | (0.005) |
| MP Party Ideology (Right) |  |  | -0.08\*\* |
|  |  |  | (0.03) |
| MP Party Gov. Coalition |  |  | -0.06 |
|  |  |  | (0.11) |
| *Country level (9 countries)* |  |  |  |
| Elec. Syst.: Preferences |  |  | 0.06 |
|  |  |  | (0.17) |
| % Female MPs |  |  | 0.02 |
|  |  |  | (0.03) |
| Days to Next Election |  |  | -0.001 |
|  |  |  | (0.001) |
| Constant | -1.62\*\*\* | -1.02\*\* | -0.86 |
|  | (0.34) | (0.40) | (1.09) |
|  |
| Observations | 3,272 | 2,822 | 2,718 |
| Log Likelihood | -1,506.24 | -1,406.94 | -1,366.69 |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 3,018.49 | 2,823.88 | 2,753.39 |
| Bayesian Inf. Crit. | 3,036.77 | 2,853.61 | 2,812.46 |
|  |
| *Note:* | \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001 |

**Table A7: MPs’ responsiveness to citizens’ demands (all responses, excluding Ireland and Argentina)**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  | *Dependent variable:* |
|  |  |
|  | All responses |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|  |
| *Individual level* |  |  |  |
| Treatment (Female) | 0.24\*\* | 0.24\*\* | 0.24\*\* |
|  | (0.09) | (0.09) | (0.09) |
| MP Gender (Female) |  | 0.22\* | 0.17 |
|  |  | (0.10) | (0.11) |
| MP Age |  | -0.01\* | -0.01\* |
|  |  | (0.004) | (0.005) |
| MP Party Ideology (Right) |  |  | -0.08\*\* |
|  |  |  | (0.03) |
| MP Party Gov. Coalition |  |  | -0.03 |
|  |  |  | (0.11) |
| *Country level (9 countries)* |  |  |  |
| Elec. Syst.: Preferences |  |  | 0.15 |
|  |  |  | (0.17) |
| % Female MPs |  |  | 0.03 |
|  |  |  | (0.03) |
| Days to Next Election |  |  | -0.001 |
|  |  |  | (0.001) |
| Constant | -1.55\*\*\* | -0.99\* | -0.93 |
|  | (0.35) | (0.40) | (1.12) |
|  |
| Observations | 3,272 | 2,822 | 2,718 |
| Log Likelihood | -1,528.81 | -1,428.52 | -1,386.12 |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 3,063.61 | 2,867.04 | 2,792.24 |
| Bayesian Inf. Crit. | 3,081.89 | 2,896.76 | 2,851.32 |
|  |
| *Note:* | \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001 |

**Observational Results**

We further look into how demographic and political characteristics of MPs influence their response rate.

Female MPs are more likely than male MPs to reply to citizens.Overall, emails sent to female MPs received responses 28% of the time, whereas those sent to male MPs received responses 23.3% of the time.

Table A8 below reports response rate by MPs’ gender across countries. The first column shows the percentage of female MPs sitting in parliament, which varies substantially from 10.7% in Brazil to 42.6% in Mexico. Ireland exhibits the lowest value in the European sample (22.2%) while the Netherlands has the highest percentage (38%). We report the number of emails sent to female MPs and we calculate the response rate as the ratio between replies obtained and emails sent.

With the exception of Ireland that produced a very high overall response rate regardless of MPs’ gender, we see a common trend in the other European countries. Female MPs replied on average more often than male MPs. In Germany and France the difference in response rate between female and male MPs is around 5 percentage points.

With the exception of Uruguay, where male MPs replied on average more often than female MPs, Latin American countries exhibit a similar trend to that present in the European cases: female MPs reply on average more than male MPs. Whereas the difference between response rate from female MPs and response rate from male MPs in the European cases ranges from 2.7% in Italy to 6.7% in the Netherlands, in Latin America the difference ranges from 1.3% in Brazil to 12.7% in Colombia.

**Table A8: Response rate across countries by MPs’ gender**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Number of Female MPs | Number of Emails Sent to Female MPs | Response Rate from Female MPs | Number of Emails Sent to Male MPs | Response Rate from Male MPs |
| France | 149 (26.1%) | 148 | 25.7% | 413 | 20.1% |
| Germany | 242 (37.2%) | 236 | 56.4% | 394 | 51.8% |
| Ireland | 35 (22.2%) | 35 | 88.6% | 123 | 89.4% |
| Italy | 195 (31%) | 195 | 19.5% | 435 | 16.8% |
| Netherlands | 57 (38%) | 56 | 46.4% | 93 | 39.8% |
| *Total Europe* | *678* | *670* | *39.7%* | *1458* | *34.8%* |
|   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Argentina | 100 (38.9%) | 97 | 9.3% | 158 | 7% |
| Brazil | 55 (10.7%) | 53 | 7.6% | 461 | 6.3% |
| Chile | 19 (15.8%) | 19 | 26.3% | 101 | 21.8% |
| Colombia | 31 (18.7%) | 25 | 16% | 90 | 3.3% |
| Mexico | 213 (42.6%) | 201 | 6.4% | 257 | 5.1% |
| Uruguay | 20 (20.2%) | 18 | 11.1% | 77 | 28.6% |
| *Total Latin America* | *438* | *413* | *8.9%* | *1144* | *8.8%* |

We also examined whether response rates varied based on partisan ideology. To classify party ideology, we rely on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey and the Latin America and the Caribbean Political Dataset by Huber et al. (2012). We follow the operationalization described above.

In Europe, with the exception of Ireland, left-leaning parties are always more responsive to requests for help with unemployment benefits. This effect is especially strong in the Netherlands (52.7% vs. 39.5%), Italy (21.8% vs. 9.4%) and Germany (57% vs. 49.8%). Several factors may contribute to explain such finding: MPs from left parties may be more sensitive to the unemployment issue; they could have a stronger extrinsic motivation to reply, if they believe that such messages come from constituents more likely to vote for leftist forces; or they may be on average younger and more likely to be women, which could have a positive impact on the response rate.

In Latin America, results are less clear. Mexico (7.8% vs. 5.2%) and Brazil (7.1% vs. 4.7%) are similar to France, in that left-leaning parties are slightly more responsive than right-leaning parties. In contrast, Argentina (7.1% vs. 11.3%), Chile (21.3% vs. 26.5%), and Colombia (0% vs. 7.9%) show the opposite trend (see Table A9 below for response rate by MPs’ party ideology across countries).

 A factor that could explain these differences in the Latin American region is that right-leaning parties in Mexico and Brazil have not included social issues, such as access to health services, as part of their platforms, leaving such issues to left-leaning parties. On the contrary, in countries such as Argentina, Chile, and Colombia, social issues have taken an important position within party platforms regardless of party ideology.

**Table A9: Response rate across countries by MPs’ party ideology**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Number of Emails Sent to MPs ofLeft Parties | Response Rate from MPs ofLeft Parties | Number of Emails Sent to MPs ofRight Parties | Response Rate from MPs ofRight Parties |
| France | 313 | 23% | 222 | 21.6% |
| Germany | 321 | 57% | 309 | 49.8% |
| Ireland | 38 | 89.5% | 94 | 90.4% |
| Italy | 423 | 21.8% | 138 | 9.4% |
| Netherlands | 55 | 52.7% | 86 | 39.5% |
| *Total Europe* | *1150* | *35.7%* | *849* | *39.3%* |
|   |  |  |  |  |
| Argentina | 99 | 7.1% | 80 | 11.3% |
| Brazil | 210 | 7.1% | 149 | 4.7% |
| Chile | 47 | 21.3% | 49 | 26.5% |
| Colombia | 6 | 0% | 92 | 6.5% |
| Mexico | 102 | 7.8% | 350 | 5.1% |
| Uruguay | 52 | 25% | 43 | 25.6% |
| *Total Latin America* | *516* | *10.3%* | *763* | *8.4%* |

Note: The number of emails sent lo left and right parties in a country is smaller than the total number of emails sent in that country because some MPs are not affiliated with any party and some parties are not coded by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey on the political ideology dimension. For instance, in France we sent a total of 560 emails, but the number of emails to left and right parties is 535. Some MPs (e.g. Philippe Noguès or Patrice Prat) are unaffiliated and some parties do not have a political ideology score (e.g. Mouvement Indépendantiste Martiniquais, No Oe E Te Nuna'a, or Parti Socialiste Guyanais).

1. The names María Rosa and José Carlos are not as common in Brazil and Uruguay as in the other Latin American countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It is important to notice that some of the replies come directly from MPs, while others come from their staff. We do not differentiate between these types of responses for substantive and practical reasons. Substantively, we are interested in responsiveness as measured by an answer to constituents’ inquiries. As long as there is a reply, this requirement is met regardless of whether the response comes from the MP or from their staff. Practically, we are not always able to establish who sends the reply. While in some cases staff members sign their replies with their own credentials, we cannot be certain that responses coming from MPs are actually crafted by the MPs themselves. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Since the Latin American variable is measured on a five-point scale, we rescaled it to make it directly comparable to the European one. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. We also conducted a robustness check in which we assigned 1 to PR systems and 0 to majoritarian systems, and another in which we controlled for both type of electoral system (PR vs. majoritarian) and vote for specific candidates (i.e. preferences or not as described in the main body above). Results remain substantively unchanged. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)