

A blocked pipeline: Recruitment, nomination, and election of women candidates in Canadian
federal elections, 2004–2019

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Abstract

This dissertation addresses the question of women's descriptive underrepresentation in Canadian politics at the federal level. Previous studies of women's underrepresentation in Canada and elsewhere have largely focused on analysing the results of elections, and studies that do account for earlier factors such as recruitment and candidate selection are limited in their scopes.

In this dissertation I analyse women's representation in a holistic manner, accounting for factors from the pre-nomination stage up through election. Conceptually, I approach the path to political office as a three-stage "representation pipeline," comprising candidate emergence, candidate selection, and election. I base my analysis on Elections Canada's records of nomination contests held by federal political parties for the 2004 through 2019 general elections, paired with relevant district-level demographic factors from the Canadian census. I complement this analysis with an original survey of nomination contestants in the 2019 election.

I find that women's underrepresentation in Canada is determined chiefly by issues in candidate emergence, rather than by issues in candidate selection or electoral discrimination. Instead, nominations in Canada are in the strong majority of cases acclamations, making candidate emergence and election the only meaningful barriers to women's representation in most cases. Furthermore, women face a small but significant degree of electoral discrimination, with women having slightly lower odds than men of winning election even when controlling for their party's past performance in the district. Finally, I find that urban districts are more conducive to women's representation at all three stages of the representation pipeline.

Key words: Women's representation, Canada, candidate selection, nomination contests

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List of Acronyms

BQ	Bloc Québécois
CPC	Conservative Party of Canada
EDA	Electoral District Association
GPC	Green Party of Canada
LPC	Liberal Party of Canada
MP	Member of Parliament
NDP	New Democratic Party (of Canada)
SMP	Single Member Plurality
STV	Single Transferable Vote

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I. Introduction

Women's underrepresentation in Canadian politics is an evident and uncontroversial fact. As of 2022 women occupy just over 30% of seats in the House of Commons, a number that represents a historic high for the 101 years in which women have held seats in the House but also constitutes a middling performance on the world stage. This figure is slightly above the worldwide average of 26%, making Canada currently 60th in the world for women's representation in national legislatures (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2022). That this level of representation falls well below women's share of the overall population is widely understood to be problematic, both for how it impacts the quality of representation women receive in Parliament and for the fundamental unfairness it represents.

While the existence of a problem may be evident, its causes, and therefore its solutions, are less so. Certainly, the issue of women's representation has been the focus of a great deal of scholarly attention over the past decade, but much of this research has been conducted in a rather piecemeal fashion. Existing analyses of women's representation in Canada and in other democratic countries are largely focused on the results of elections, even if many of these studies themselves presume causal mechanisms relating to candidate selection. Studies of political candidacies are rarer, and even fewer are the analyses that examine rates of participation in candidate selection processes rather than just their outcomes (see, for example: Cross and Young 2013). Finally, while prior research has examined all of these stages discretely, the independent nature of these studies makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the primary causes of women's underrepresentation and how these various factors interact. In sum, the existing literature on women's descriptive representation in Canada and comparatively has an abundance of detail on the outcomes of elections, but it includes far fewer empirical studies that examine

candidate selection directly. As a result, while many studies posit causal mechanisms limiting women's representation at the selection stage or even earlier, much of this remains unconfirmed.

In this dissertation I propose to contribute to this literature by providing a holistic analysis of women's participation and success in Canadian federal politics at all stages. Theoretically, I approach the path to becoming a representative as a pipeline with three distinct stages — candidate emergence, candidate selection, and election (see Figure 1 in Chapter IV). I base my study on a quantitative analysis of data tracking women's participation and performance at each of these three stages for each general election from 2004 through 2019. Examining the representation process at all stages will provide an analysis that better examines where in pipeline women aspiring to politics are being excluded, thus allowing for better understanding of the causal mechanisms at play.

My goals in this analysis are twofold. Firstly, and most simply, I aim in this dissertation to determine the relative importance of each stage of the pipeline to women's descriptive representation — are women not being elected to Parliament because voters aren't electing them, because political parties aren't selecting them as candidates, or because they aren't even being recruited in the nomination process to be considered as potential candidates? Or perhaps women are facing barriers at each stage of the process, which in their totality result in this underrepresentation? Answering this question will provide clear direction on where to target future research and public policy efforts surrounding women's underrepresentation, both in Canada and comparatively.

My second goal is to analyse under what district-level conditions women see the most success, and how these factors differ across the three stages of the pipeline. While prior research has identified many factors that contribute to women's underrepresentation — such as district

competitiveness, political ideology, and district education levels — precisely *when* these factors have an effect is less clear. For example, are women more likely to be candidates in hard-to-win districts because parties are more likely to select them there, or because they're more likely to be nomination contestants in these districts? With this analysis, then, I aim to shed light on the precise causal mechanisms of several known barriers to women's representation and thereby provide useful insight into the workings of the political candidacy process.

In choosing Canada as a case for this dissertation I make two contributions to political science scholarship. Firstly, I provide the comparative literature on women's descriptive representation with an examination of the Canadian case from which lessons can be taken to understand women's political candidacy more broadly. Secondly, this dissertation expands the literature on Canadian politics by providing a holistic overview of an under-studied topic, namely candidate emergence and selection.

For the comparative study of women's descriptive representation in politics, Canada presents a compelling case in a multitude of ways. Compared to its peer countries, Canada has had a very middling performance in advancing women's representation. While the share of seats in the House of Commons occupied by women has been increasing since the first woman MP was elected in 1921, women hold only 30.5% of seats in the House of Commons and have similarly low rates of representation in provincial legislatures and municipal councils.¹ This low rate of representation makes Canada a critical case for women's descriptive representation. On most general metrics of gender equality, Canada ranks among the most equitable countries in the

¹ Women occupy forty-four of the eighty-eight currently filled seats in the Canadian Senate, although this body is appointed.

world. For example, Canada is ranked the 19th most gender egalitarian country in the world according to the United Nations' Gender Inequality Index (2019) and the 24th most equal by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (2021). Conversely, as mentioned above, the Inter-Parliamentary Union ranks Canada 60th in the world for the percentage of women in the lower or single house of parliament (2022). Why does a country that is generally friendly to women (relative to other countries in the world) perform so poorly in political representation? This disconnect presents an excellent case for studying how institutional factors can inhibit women's access to political office.

Canada's electoral system makes all stages of the representation pipeline crucial for descriptive representation and forces voters and selectors to make clear choices between having a woman as a representative or candidate, or not. By having uniquely single-member districts, parties are not able to engage in the "slate-balancing" common in multi-member districts and list systems, wherein parties attempt to balance their candidates on gender or other grounds for self-identification. Likewise, the decentralised manner in which parties conduct nomination contests makes it difficult for them to engage in this balancing at a party level, as the nominations are conducted independently in each district without necessarily having any knowledge of which candidates other districts have selected. This environment makes all stages of the representation pipeline essential to determining the gender balance of representatives and provides a large number of individual cases within a single election.

The laissez-faire approach to candidate nomination in Canada likewise makes Canada an interesting case for comparison. In addition to the factors mentioned in the above paragraph, the laissez-faire approach to nomination in Canada has created a disparity in Canadian parties with regards to quota policies. While the Liberal and New Democratic Parties have adopted policies

to encourage the recruitment of equity-seeking candidates, the Conservative Party has not. This variation in practices provides an excellent environment for evaluating the effectiveness of these measures in promoting women's representation.

For reasons similar to those that make Canada a compelling case from a comparative perspective, the study of women's descriptive representation is also important to the field of Canadian politics. Given the immense importance of descriptive representation to the functioning of a healthy democracy (see Chapter II) and Canada's poor performance in this field relative to other countries, women's descriptive underrepresentation is an important political issue in Canada. Despite the importance of the issue, the study of women's descriptive representation in Canada has been conducted mostly in a piecemeal fashion and has often focused on refuting the idea of electoral discrimination. As such, while the literature can point to several factors that influence women's representation, these analyses are very limited in their scopes and are often disproportionately focused on the final stage of the pipeline: elections.

Canada's electoral system and practices in candidate nomination are both under-studied and of paramount importance. Unlike in countries such as the United States, which hold primary elections open to the majority of the voting public and which consequently receive much media and scholarly attention, candidate nomination in Canada is a very quiet affair. Very few Canadians participate in party nomination contests, and this low participation is reflected by the very small amount of academic literature which addresses candidate nomination in Canada. Therefore, with this dissertation I aim to contribute to the study of Canadian politics in two principal ways: firstly, by expanding the very small literature on candidate emergence and recruitment in Canadian politics; and secondly, by providing a uniquely holistic analysis that considers all stages of the representation pipeline in concert.

To achieve these goals, the rest of this dissertation is organised into eight chapters. The first four chapters serve to situate the present study in the literature and explain its overall theoretical framework and hypotheses. The next four chapters are each dedicated to an analysis of a specific stage of the pipeline; these empirical chapters are followed by a conclusion that compiles the overall results of this dissertation across all three stages. Because each empirical chapter uses different data sources, I present no overall methodology chapter in this dissertation. Rather, I structure each of the four empirical chapters in a manner similar to a short article, presenting the specific methodology and hypothesis for each chapter alongside the results. In more detail, the remaining chapters of this dissertation proceed as follows:

In Chapter II, I address the fundamental justification for writing this dissertation — why is it important to study women’s descriptive representation in elected bodies? I provide an overview of what descriptive representation is and why it matters in legislatures, focusing on the commonly found link between descriptive representation and substantive representation. I explain the difficulties of applying this link in the Canadian context and inspect other justifications for the importance of descriptive representation, focusing on its importance for symbolic representation. I conclude that descriptive representation is important for multiple reasons, arguing that a legislature that underrepresents women will suffer a loss of legitimacy and possibly provide less substantive representation to women.

In the third chapter, I move beyond justifying the importance of descriptive representation to present an overview of what is currently known about the causes of women’s underrepresentation in legislatures in Canada and around the world. Overall, I present that existing studies of women’s representation are heavily focused on studying the outcomes of

elections, although increasingly these studies indicate that the main barriers to women lie well before the election stage. Yet, these studies do so without testing this proposition. While a growing number of investigations into the role of candidate selection and political recruitment exist, these are largely done in a piecemeal fashion, making it difficult to pinpoint where exactly women are being left out of the process. From here I identify the shortcoming in the existing literature that I seek to rectify with this dissertation: the need for a wholistic analysis of women's participation in Canadian politics that accounts for the entirety of the representation pipeline.

In the first empirical chapter, Chapter V, I present the results of an original survey of nomination contestants for the 2019 general election. This chapter serves to establish a baseline for the empirical chapters to follow by examining personal characteristics of nomination contestants that I can not obtain from official data, such as their demographic details, their levels of education, their past experience in holding office, and their family situations. With this analysis I investigate the commonly raised concern that women running for office are on average more qualified than the men they compete against. This baseline is crucial to establish because it will inform the interpretation of all subsequent results — if women are systematically more qualified for office than men, then a finding that they win nomination or election at equal rates would still imply a bias against women. Conversely, if men and women have similar qualifications on average, then equal rates of success in nomination and election would imply that the system is working fairly.

After establishing this baseline, the following three chapters proceed with an analysis of women's rates of participation (and success) at each of the three stages of the representation pipeline presented in Chapter IV. In the first of these chapters, Chapter VI, I examine the emergence stage of the pipeline using a dataset of nomination contests derived from Elections

Canada's records. Specifically, this dataset details the genders of all participants in major-party nomination contests for general elections from 2004 through 2019. I use this data to test both the frequency with which women participate in nomination contests overall and to examine the extent to which this rate varies across time, between political parties, and between districts with different characteristics.

In Chapter VII, I shift the dependent variable in my analysis to focus on women contestants' rates of actually being selected as candidates, controlling for their rates of participation in nomination contests. I do this using both the above-mentioned Elections Canada database as well as the Library of Parliament's dataset of federal election candidates. I find that women and men are selected as candidates at statistically identical rates, although this finding is undercut by the fact that the majority of nomination contests are in fact won by acclamation due to having only a single contestant.

In the final empirical chapter, Chapter 0, I complete this analysis by examining women's rates of success at the election stage. I do this using the same Library of Parliament dataset from the previous chapter, analysing both individual candidates' odds of winning and the probability of a district electing a woman. I find that, even when controlling for a party's past performance in a district, women do have a slightly (but statistically significantly) lower probability of winning election than do similarly situated men.

Finally, in Chapter IX, I revisit the results of the four preceding chapters to examine the overall state of the representation pipeline. Examining the results of these empirical chapters together allows me to present an answer to my overall research question, as well as to compare the trends that have emerged across the three stages of the pipeline. From this basis I summarise

the contribution to the literature and present avenues for future research and changes in public policy.

II. The Importance of Descriptive Representation

This thesis examines women's representation in Canadian politics in a manner that focuses on the number of women elected to the House of Commons and their proportion relative to men. In so doing, it implies that the number of women in Parliament matters, and moreover that it matters in a way that affects the quality of representation. Of course, the idea that women should account for roughly the same number of parliamentarians as men is by no means a radical proposition in the 21st century, but something approaching a political consensus, at least as an abstract ideal; parties on both the left and right emphasise the importance of increasing the number of women in politics, even if they disagree about what methods are appropriate to turn this principle into a reality.

While the idea that parliamentary seats should be distributed equitably by gender may seem self-evident and uncontroversial, the arguments underpinning the importance of descriptive representation are far more multifaceted. Assuming that all women citizens are equally able to choose their representatives as are citizens of other genders, what does the gender of the representatives they collectively elect matter? To answer this question, and to justify the focus of this thesis, in this chapter I attempt to answer why the descriptive representation of women is important.

Descriptive representation is important to the functioning of democracy in a number of ways. Firstly, it reflects fairness in the electoral system. Assuming similar levels of political interest, a democratic system wherein all citizens are eligible to vote and run for elected office should produce a legislature whose demographics reasonably reflect that of the population (see: Phillips 1998). Beyond these reasons of fundamental fairness, many argue that ensuring some

degree of equality of outcome, rather than simply equality of opportunity, is important to making representative democracy function properly (Mansbridge 1999; Campbell, Childs, and Lovenduski 2010; Hayes and Hibbing 2017), to the extent that some authors “take the value of having descriptive representatives in public positions as a given” (Dovi 2002, 729). Primarily, these arguments are based upon the link between the descriptive representation of a group in the legislature with the substantive representation of that group’s interests, and also with the symbolic importance of showing women as having an equal role in society to men. The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows: first, I present an overview of what representation itself is and how it relates to the concept of descriptive representation. Next, I discuss the concept of substantive representation and explain its link with descriptive representation. I then discuss the contentions around this link, followed by presenting arguments in favour of descriptive representation that do not rely on a substantive effect. Finally, the chapter concludes by articulating the understanding of descriptive representation that underpins this thesis.

What is (descriptive) representation?

Representation as a concept is at the core of modern electoral democracies. While the function of elections is clearly to elect legislators and other public officials to represent citizens in the decision-making process, what exactly it means for a legislator to represent their constituents is a rather complex and contested topic. Fundamentally, a representative’s role is to somehow serve as a link between the government and the group of citizens they represent — typically those residing in a particular geographic area. How exactly they can form this link is theoretically complicated, and as such the reasons why (or even if) the gender balance of a legislature matters for representation can be conceived of in many ways and can rely upon many different

conceptualisations of representation. Does the gender balance of a legislature matter for representation, and if so, how? In the following paragraphs, I will provide a brief overview of three major typologies of representation and explain how these relate to the concept of descriptive representation.

As early as 1774, Edmund Burke famously differentiated between two different visions of how a Member of Parliament could represent their constituents, known as the *delegate* and *trustee* models of representation (E. Burke 1987). In the former model, a representative's role is essentially to serve as a human conduit for the general will of their constituents. They would be expected to vote in line with the wishes of the majority in their district on any given matter and to regularly consult constituents so as to be able to accurately know what the majority opinion is. Conversely, in the trustee model the representative is entrusted with the duty of making decisions on behalf of their constituents, under the presumption that they will have more accurate and current information to inform their choices and will have been selected for their sound judgement. The role of citizens in the trustee model is to choose a trustee of sound reason and judgement, who will then take on the role of deciding what course of action is best for the district.

In a typology of representation similar to Burke's, Mansbridge (2003) divides conceptualisations of the relationship between a legislator and the electors in their district into three forms of representation: promissory, anticipatory, and gyroscopic. The latter of these three forms is essentially equivalent to Burke's trustee and presents a conception that "stresses the representative's own principles and beliefs [and] sees the voter as having power not over the representative but over the system (by inserting the representative in that system)" (Mansbridge 2003, 522). The former two forms, anticipatory and promissory, are essentially derivatives of

Burke's delegate model, and vary principally in how representatives communicate with and are held accountable by voters. Under a promissory model, representatives make promises during an election campaign, and voters chose representatives based upon their agreement with a proposed platform, combined with how well an incumbent has kept past promises. In an anticipatory model, this paradigm is flipped. The representative spends their time in office anticipating how their actions will be viewed by voters at the next election, and voters likewise are assumed to vote for or against an incumbent based upon their retrospective judgement of their performance to date.

Even in Burke's very limited classifications, one can see how a representative's gender (or other important characteristics and identities) could matter differently or not at all. Under the delegate model, at least in its purest form, a representative's gender should not matter at all, as the representative will be reliably voting in line with the will of their constituents. For a trustee representative, however, their own life experiences and personal interests will inevitably play a role in shaping their judgement. As such, having a representative whose identities and experiences reflect one's own is clearly beneficial in improving the quality of representation; the more alike a constituent and representative are, the more their interests, values, and judgements should overlap, therefore the more the (trustee) representative's decisions will reflect the preferences of the constituent. Similarly, in Mansbridge's typology it is evident that a gyroscopic view of representation places much more importance on the identity and background of a representative than would either the promissory or anticipatory models, as a gyroscopic view of representation depends on a representative's ability to make judgements independent of their constituents.

Under both typologies, however, the connection between a representative's identity and the quality of representation they provide is still indirect and incomplete, even for a gyroscopic or trustee representative. While both models make it clear that a representative's judgment is in some sense important, how exactly this links women's representation being important remains unclear. In another widely-cited typology of representation, Hanna Pitkin (1967) approaches the question from a linguistic lens, categorising the many common meanings of the word "representation." From this typology, Pitkin makes it clear that representation as a concept goes much deeper than the formalistic "authorization view." While it is correct that representatives are people authorized to make decisions on behalf of others, representation as it is commonly understood entails more than a simple authorisation to decide. In Pitkin's view, a representative is someone tasked with both "acting for" and "standing for" the people they represent. In "standing for" rather than "acting for" constituents, the identity of a representative becomes inherently relevant, particularly as it relates to the concept of descriptive representation.

Simply put, descriptive representation is an understanding of representation that focuses on the *who* rather than the *how*; in other words, the notion that a representative should be 'in some sense typical of the larger class of persons whom they represent,' (Mansbridge 1999: 629) usually by sharing a gender, religious, or ethnic identity. Under Pitkin's (1967) conceptualisation, descriptive representation is predicated on representatives "standing for" their constituents, and proponents of it assert that a legislature ought to be a reflection of the society it represents, or in other terms a "mirror" of society.

While descriptive representation may reflect a very common understating of representation, it is also an incomplete one. Pitkin (1967) herself acknowledged that descriptive representation is without doubt *an* aspect of representation, but also highlighted that it does not

have a direct link with the act of representing. In other words, representation as “standing for” is not directly linked with representation as “acting for.” In the following section, I discuss the concept of substantive representation and provide an overview of the conceptual link between these two visions of representation.

Descriptive and substantive representation

Substantive representation is, at its core, representing people’s *interests* — in Pitkin’s typology (1967), substantive representation is about the action of representation and focused largely on voting for and against legislation. Pitkin herself favoured this view of representation, arguing it to be the most important component of a representative’s work. Despite Pitkin’s own skepticism, many scholars have argued that there exists a clear connection between “standing for” and “acting for,” and that this connection is rooted in the concept of substantive representation (e.g. Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995). Given that substantive representation is the representation of interests, women as a group can be descriptively represented by having representatives who are women and can be substantively represented by having their representatives act in ways that advance their collective interests.

While these two concepts are on their face distinct, a growing body of literature has argued that they are in fact inextricably linked². Broadly speaking, many scholars argue that even if not strictly *necessary* for achieving substantive representation, a descriptive representative who shares an identity with their constituents will be better able to understand their interests, and therefore more able to advance them substantively (Celis 2006; Celis and Childs 2008; Celis et al. 2008). Particularly when it comes to the interests of marginalised groups, descriptive

² For an overview of this literature, see the latter half of Wängnerud’s (2009) review article.

representatives will be more able to convincingly and cogently participate in deliberations and also more able to engage in open communication with their constituents (Mansbridge 1999).

In this way, the distinct concepts of substantive and descriptive representation have a clear theoretical link under more than one conception of representation. Under a gyroscopic or trustee model, a descriptive representative will be more able to represent their constituents because they will better understand their interests, and indeed share them; a woman legislator will understand the interests of her woman constituents in a way a man could not and be more motivated to represent those interests when voting in the legislature as she herself shares them. Under a delegate, anticipatory, or promissory conceptualisation, sharing an identity with their constituents will improve a representative's communications, and make the representative more convincing when participating in deliberations with their fellow legislators.

In addition to this theoretical overlap between descriptive and substantive representation, a large number of studies have empirically investigated the connection and found evidence of a positive relationship. For example, Cowell-Meyers and Langbein (2009) find that a greater share of seats in US state legislatures occupied by women increases the probability of the state adopting pro-women policies. In the Canadian context, Tremblay (1998) finds women MPs are more likely to speak in favour of women's interests, although she notes that an MP's gender is likely of secondary importance to holding feminist beliefs (see also: Tremblay and Pelletier 2000).

In reviewing this literature linking the descriptive and substantive representation of women, however, it is important to note the divide in the literature regarding how to define and operationalise the concept of substantive representation. While scholars studying the substantive–descriptive link all focus on behaviours that can reasonably be called “acting for”

women in Pitkin's typology, the exact acts examined vary considerably. As Celis (2009) highlights, a broad view of substantive representation includes a wide array of acts in favor of women's interests at all stages of the legislative process,. Consequently, the operationalizations employed to link descriptive and substantive representation can vary between a fairly narrow definition such as sponsoring or voting for legislation (Vega and Firestone 1995; P. E. Jones 2014) to a much broader definition focusing on advocating for women's issues in parliamentary debates (Tremblay 1998; Childs and Withey 2004; Xydias 2007), even expanding to extra-parliamentary representation such as intervening in government departments on behalf of constituents (Lowande, Ritchie, and Lauterbach 2019). This variation in operationalizations creates some difficulty in reviewing the literature on the descriptive–substantive link, as not all analyses are in effect studying the same thing. Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) clarify this divide by separating “substantive representation as process” (attempts to change the legislative agenda) from “substantive representation as outcome” (the actual adoption of laws for women's rights). Existing literature, however, has found positive links with descriptive representation for both forms of substantive representation, indicating that descriptive representation can provide a substantive improvement in outcomes in a wide variety of contexts.

Descriptive representation and uninominal districts

Accepting this link between descriptive and substantive representation, one may logically conclude (as Mansbridge [1999] does) that it is desirable for women to be represented by women. In countries such as Canada which use single-member geographic districts to elect their representatives, however, having women represent women in the legislature is functionally impossible to implement universally; as districts are not sex-segregated, some women citizens

will inevitably have a representative who does not share their gender, provided of course that women's representation does not rise so high as to reach one hundred per cent of the members of the legislature.

Conceptually, then, there is a disconnect between the idea of mirror representation and the realities of single-member districts; if districts are geographic with a single representative, then it is impossible for all citizens to have a representative who shares their own identity without having an entirely homogenous population or having the population segregated between districts. While a legislature as a whole can provide descriptive or mirror representation to its citizens by reflecting their demographic composition, many citizens will still not have a representative for their district that shares their gender.

The conceptual link between descriptive representatives and their "constituents" in other districts is made via surrogate representation. As explained by Mansbridge, surrogate representation is "representation by a representative with whom one has no electoral relationship—that is, a representative in another district" (Mansbridge 2003: 522). While surrogate representatives "do not have to be descriptive representatives" (Tremblay 2006, 507), the two concepts are very frequently linked, and descriptive representatives may be more easily able to form a link with their surrogate constituents (2003, 523).

While surrogate representation does provide an explanation for how a legislature may achieve mirror representation while maintaining single-member districts, it is not an entirely uncomplicated affair. Surrogate representation introduces complications into the concept of representation by altering the traditional processes of accountability. In representing a geographic district, a representative has a clear electoral link with their constituents, and thus a clear mechanism for accountability; they will win their seat by making promises that voters find

appealing (promissory representation) and will be re-elected or removed based upon how well they perform while in office (anticipatory representation). If, however, a women member of a legislature is to be presumed to represent women who live outside of the district she formally represents, there is no direct way for those women outside of her district to hold her accountable for her decisions.

As such, a surrogate representative necessarily relies upon less traditional means for connecting with surrogate constituents. For this reason, it is not sufficient to simply have a woman elected in District B in order to achieve surrogate representation for the women constituents of District A; rather, a true surrogate representation would require that those women elected “commit themselves to representing women” (Tremblay 2006, 507). In this sense, a woman legislator becomes a “gyroscopic surrogate,” working to represent women’s interests not for fear of losing their reflection, but for internal motivations unrelated to electoral politics (see: Wigginton 2021). While others have argued that this role might be played “unconsciously ...[or] simply by chance” (Mansbridge 2011, 628), this nevertheless requires representatives to act in a way that advances women’s interests, something that simply electing a woman does not inherently ensure.

In sum, descriptive representation is a laudable goal because of its link to substantive representation, and surrogate representation explains how it may be possible to achieve a link between representatives and those outside their district. A question that remains, however, is how many surrogate representatives are needed to substantively represent women; could a single woman legislator serve as a surrogate representative for all women? As Mansbridge (1999) argues, while a single representative may theoretically be able to influence deliberations sufficiently, in practice a plurality of voices is needed to achieve representation across

committees and subject areas and particularly to fully represent the diverse interests of a heterogeneous group.

Following this logic, proportionality (often called parity when assuming binary gender) is a common goal for the number of descriptive representatives needed to achieve optimal representation. Nevertheless, some scholars have argued that at minimum a “critical mass” of descriptive legislators is needed, often proposing a proportion of around 30% of the legislature being women as the threshold at which substantive representation of women begins to materialise (Dahlerup 1988; Wängnerud 2009). Such a proportion is often held to “support but in no way guarantee the substantive representation of women” (Tremblay 2006, 509).

The effectiveness of critical mass, however, has been increasingly questioned in the literature. While still asserting that a few “token” representatives are insufficient, Childs and Krook (2006) argue that the existence of critical mass is “theoretically dubious.” Empirically, Studlar and McAllister (2002) find little evidence to support the hypothesis that achieving a critical mass of women legislators accelerates growth in women’s representation.

What does it mean to substantively represent women?

In addition to difficulties articulated by Pitkin and others in linking descriptive and substantive representation, there exists also a fundamental issue in evaluating substantive representation at a population scale. Indeed, the very notion that women as a group can be substantively represented in a legislature implies that women as a group have shared interests. For many scholars, the sometimes-implicit assumption is that a substantive representation of women’s interests means in

effect feminist representation. A substantive representative for women, then, would be one who supports policies such as abortion access, increased maternity leave, and universal childcare.

In this context, the overlap between descriptive and substantive representation is far from complete. In particular, the idea that having more legislators who are women will increase the substantive representation of women is predicated on the idea that women legislators will necessarily advance more legislation that favours women. As Tremblay and Pelletier argue (2000), advancing women's substantive representation is not as simple as electing more women, but rather must consist of electing more people who will advocate for women's interests — in other words, electing more feminists. While they find women to be more likely advocates for women's issues than men, they overall find feminist beliefs to be a more important predictor of a legislator's support for substantively representing women than gender or political party.

This assumption of a leftist and feminist substantive interest can also come into conflict with the political beliefs of women voters themselves. As Celis and Childs (2012) argue, taking for granted that representing women's interests means implementing a left-leaning feminist agenda can conflict with the political views of women themselves. While women voters do on average vote more often for left-leaning parties, women voters are of course not a monolith, and many do vote for conservative parties which may even openly advocate un- or even anti-feminist policies. Indeed, the trend of women voting more often for left-leaning parties is a realignment of a previous trend of women being on average more conservative (Inglehart and Norris 2000), and this shift remains a generational divide between older and younger women (Norris 1996). In Canada specifically, the trend of realignment observed elsewhere in the world generally held true, with women being modestly more likely to support left-leaning parties, although not within Québec specifically (Erickson and O'Neill 2002).

As such, while women as a group may more often support left-leaning parties, this tendency has not always existed, and the ideological gap between men and women is generally fairly small. For Celis and Childs (2012), then, this conflicts with many mainstream studies and conceptualisations of women's substantive representation; if some women are voting for right-leaning parties, can a left-leaning feminist legislator truly be substantively representing their interests? The authors argue therefore that conceptions of "acting for women" must be broadened to reflect the ideological diversity of women and even the heterogeneity of feminist thought. The idea of "women's interests" can thus become very context-dependent, varying across countries and across ideologies (see: Celis et al. 2014).

Moreover, the very idea that women inherently have shared interests by virtue of their gender is not without question. Firstly, linking descriptive and substantive representation in this way is often criticized for venturing into gender essentialism — that is to say, overstating differences between genders to an extent that creates division and hinders rather than helps women by increasing the extent to which gender is seen as limiting (see: Mansbridge 2005, 623). Similar to ignoring ideological diversity between women, a gender essentialist critique would argue that gender is being over-emphasised to the exclusion of other interests and identities. In a related way, a straightforward link between substantive and descriptive representation can also be criticized on intersectional grounds, as a strict preference for gender representation may ignore the realities of women who hold other identities, such as being an ethnic minority or LGBTQ, for which they may also wish to be substantively represented (see: Celis and Erzeel 2013; Montoya et al. 2021).

For some theorists, the answer to these difficulties in defining women's interests without essentializing gender lies in instead focusing on structural social relationships. Rather than rely

upon shared political interests rooted in biology, Williams (1998) argues that it is the experience of marginalization itself which unites women and other minority groups as a class. In this perspective, women making better representatives for women is not rooted in having shared interests or policy preferences, but rather in sharing similar ‘perspectives’ on the world, to use the language of Young (2001). Having a legislator who shares their gender, and therefore lives under similar structural conditions of marginalisation, will make a woman or a member of a minority more comfortable with contacting their representative and increase their levels of trust (Williams 1998).

Finally, it bears noting that scholars who defend descriptive representation’s necessity on the basis of substantive representation are largely writing from an American perspective. Despite the numerous limitations and objections mentioned above, the context of the US political system does provide ample reason to assume that it matters who one’s representative is. Despite generally belonging to political parties, legislators in the United States tend to have a wide degree of latitude in deciding how to vote on bills and frequently break ranks with the rest of their caucus. In particular, authors such as Pitkin wrote at a time when partisanship in the US Congress had been in a long-standing decline (Brady, Cooper, and Hurley 1979). While partisanship has since been slowly rising among American legislators, cross-party cooperation remains common (Andris et al. 2015), and party discipline remains far weaker than what is normal in parliamentary systems. While it can still be questioned if a woman will *necessarily* be more likely to vote for legislation that favours women as a class, the core concept that the individual legislator matters for effective representation is still very sound in this context, and has been empirically demonstrated in several analyses (see, for example: Swers 2005).

In the Canadian context, however, this proposition is far less clear. Politics in the Canadian House of Commons is characterised by strict party discipline, with breaking from the party line being an incredibly rare anomaly in major party caucuses. Beyond the direct question of voting on bills in the House of Commons, this expectation of party discipline can extend to a requirement to support the party's positions publicly at all times, an expectation that can start as early as the vetting process to "greenlight" potential nomination contestants (Marland 2020). Overall, Canadian political parties tend to exert very tight control over legislators, to the extent that backbench Members of Parliament have often been likened to "trained seals" (Garner and Letki 2005) who do little more than vote on command.

The expectation of Canadian MPs to vote in line with their party greatly undercuts the importance of individual representatives, both in terms of their identities and in terms of their views. If a representative will ultimately give in to the will of their party on all votes of consequence, how can their identity matter for substantive representation? Obviously, MPs have the legal power to choose how to vote on any given issue, and breaks from the party line do happen, sometimes resulting in floor-crossing or being expelled from caucus. Likewise, MPs do play a role in setting the party line themselves through caucus meetings, although these processes are incredibly secretive (Marland 2020) and thus not fully understood by scholars. Overall, though, the vision of substantive representation put forward by most (largely US-based) scholars assumes a great deal of latitude for representatives and does not very closely reflect the realities of Canadian politics. While a propensity for women MPs in Canada to substantively represent women more often has been demonstrated at least in terms of speaking on such issues in the House of Commons (Tremblay 1998), a broader nexus between descriptive and substantive representation should be given increased scrutiny in the Canadian context.

In sum, the argument that increasing the number of women in a legislature inherently improves substantive representation for women, although it is very widely made, is not without controversy. Due to the nature of geographic districts, a woman descriptive representative does not have a direct link of electoral accountability with her surrogate constituents, and therefore must have internal motivations to dedicate herself to the cause of representing women. For this reason, many scholars question the notion that electing just any woman will serve to further women's representation, and instead argue that specifically electing *feminists*, or women dedicated to representing women, is needed. Furthermore, the notion that women as a group can be substantively represented is not without question; women have a very diverse set of political opinions and interests, even as it relates to so-called "women's issues." As such, the idea that all women share common interests that can be substantively represented has clear limitations, particularly relating to representing the interests of conservative women. Finally, the reality of tight party discipline in the Canadian parliamentary system further calls into question the link between descriptive and substantive representation, as the majority of representation theorists assume conditions more akin to the US Congress, wherein individual legislators have considerably more latitude than they do in Canada. None of this, however, is to say that the link between substantive and descriptive representation does not exist — many studies have found women's substantive representation to improve with more women in Parliament, even in the Canadian context (for example: Tremblay 1998). Given these empirical and theoretical limitations, however, it is best to think of the link between the concepts as being "complicated rather than straightforward" (Childs 2006).

Other justifications for descriptive representation

Beyond its link with substantive representation, however, descriptive representation is often valued as a good in and of itself — descriptive representation is important because it is fair, and because it itself is an essential component of effective representation. In this context, the importance of a legislature which reflects the population is not contingent on downstream effects such as substantive changes in legislation. While this framework allows for the possibility that descriptive representatives are a functional improvement, it would also argue that the mere presence of a descriptively representative legislature is itself a worthy goal, even if their presence does not change the outcome of votes in any way at all.

The first, and perhaps most fundamental, way in which descriptive representation can be valued on its own rests on an argument of basic fairness. Simply put, the fact that men hold roughly 70% of seats in the Canadian House of Commons while making up only 50% of the population is a reflection of a fundamental unfairness in society — if women and men are citizens of equal worth, they should be winning seats in parliament at equal rates. This articulation is what Dovi (2007) and Phillips (1998) both refer to as the “justice argument” for representation. While Phillips acknowledges the limitations of this argument in that it fails to articulate any specific harm in women being underrepresented, and in that it does not directly relate to the actual act of representation, the argument is almost unassailable in its simplicity and notably would require an opponent to justify the current state of affairs: “by what «natural» superiority of talent or experience men could claim a right to dominate assemblies?” (Phillips 1998, 70).

While a simple argument from fairness might not articulate a specific harm done by underrepresentation, this does not mean that descriptive representation is entirely divorced from the effectiveness of a representative. As Mansbridge (1999) argues, the benefits of descriptive

representation are not limited to its ability to create substantive representation, but extend also to the creation of symbolic representation. Particularly, Mansbridge emphasises the importance of the symbolic meaning of having equitable descriptive representation, as “low percentages of Black and women representatives, for example, create the meaning that Blacks and women cannot rule, or are not suitable for rule” (Mansbridge 1999, 650). Notable in Mansbridge’s example is that this defense of descriptive representation is rooted not in any effect of descriptive representation but in the harmful effects of its absence. As such, Mansbridge’s argument shows that descriptive representation can be an end in itself, not simply a means to produce some other positive effect. Moreover, while symbolic representation is deeply entangled with descriptive representation, its effects are distinct and depend on a society’s cultural context (Lombardo and Meier 2019).

As such, while unfairness itself might not be a direct societal harm, the symbolic meaning created by allowing it to continue is. Accepting the unfair situation of women being underrepresented creates the symbolic meaning that women are in some way less suited to the role of legislator. It is important to note, however, that the benefits of symbolic representation happen at a macro level and that women do not necessarily benefit in this way by having a woman representing their own district (Lawless 2004). Nevertheless, having a large number of women legislators can have a substantive influence on cultural gender equality, even absent any changes in legislation (Burnet 2011).

Both fairness and symbolic representation also play a role in increasing the legitimacy of political institutions in the eyes of the government. Mansbridge (1999) explicitly argues that these gains in symbolism translate into greater overall legitimacy for governments; even absent any change in decision-making based on the presence of descriptive representatives, having a

demographic composition that reflects that of the population increases the extent to which decisions will be embraced as legitimate by the population at large. By seeing people like themselves and their neighbours in government, citizens can more easily see that legislation comes from people who truly do represent the entire population and thus can more easily accept it and other government actions as being legitimate in a democratic context.

On an empirical level, the importance of descriptive representation for legitimacy has been studied in relation to gender, racial, and ethnic representation, both in the context of legislatures (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005) and other government institutions such as the courts (Scherer and Curry 2010). Overall, studies find that descriptive representation increases perceptions of legitimacy among the population and in particular finds that the importance of being governed by people sharing their own identity is especially important for members of traditionally marginalised groups (Arnesen and Peters 2018).

Notably, arguments for descriptive representation based in fairness and legitimacy also extend the benefits of a gender-balanced legislature beyond women. While improving the substantive representation of women may be seen as a “women’s issue”, the benefits of a government being seen as legitimate and fair are wide-reaching and extend to all government decisions. In sum, even discounting the link with substantive representation, descriptive representation produces benefits in terms of fairness, symbolic representation, and increased government legitimacy, effects which not only benefit women but improve the functioning of government overall.

Conclusion — Why study descriptive representation?

The core function of any modern democracy is representing citizens in decision-making processes. While what a representative does in office and how they do so are obviously important, who they are is also inextricably linked to their role. While the link is complex and confounded by other factors, descriptively representing women can lead to an increase in the substantive representation of women's interests. Although this link does require women representatives to take the additional step of dedicating themselves to the role of representing women (something that is not guaranteed to happen in all cases), empirical work does show that women's interests are better served overall by having a larger number of women representatives in legislatures.

Beyond these benefits in terms of advancing legislation, descriptive representation is important simply as a reflection of a fair and equitable electoral process. From a perspective of basic justice, men holding the vast majority of parliamentary seats is fundamentally unfair and contrary to the principle of gender equality. This unjust situation has deeper effects in terms of symbolic representation, as allowing women to be only a small minority of elected representatives creates the meaning that women do not "belong" in Parliament and creates a broader negative image of the women's role in society. Finally, these issues of fairness and symbolism also influence perceptions of government legitimacy, with governments that better reflect the population they govern in demographic terms (including gender) being perceived as more legitimate in their decisions, due largely to being perceived as being made up of more fairly chosen representatives.

III. Prior Literature

Introduction

Women are substantially underrepresented in Canadian federal politics, making up only 30% of the House of Commons' current membership. This leaves Canada ranked in the middle of world countries for rates of women's representation, and well below most other established democracies, although very few countries have parliaments that approach gender parity (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2022). While it is readily apparent that Canadian federal elections, like most national elections around the globe, result in more men being elected than women, the reasons behind this are less clear. There are several steps between being a citizen and becoming an elected Member of Parliament, though exactly how each influences parliament's gender parity is not entirely clear.

At the macro level, several societal factors surrounding culture and development have been found to have an important influence on the rate at which women are represented. More developed countries show higher rates of women's representation, with less developed countries also generally not conforming to theories of representation developed for rich nations (Viterna, Fallon, and Beckfield 2008). Similarly, countries longer established as democracies are also associated with higher levels of women's representation (Tremblay 2007). The overall political culture of a country also plays an important role in determining women's representation, with countries with longer histories of women in elected office and with more generally gender-egalitarian cultures having higher rates of women elected to legislatures (Hill 1981), and specifically countries with higher rates of women in the workforce see more women elected

(Stockemer and Byrne 2012). These societal factors permeate the entirety of the representation pipeline and influence women's representation on a fundamental level.

In the following chapter I first provide an overview of the process through which a citizen becomes an elected official and explain the particulars of how these processes work in the Canadian case. Next, I present the state of the literature on the factors determining women's descriptive representation, dividing the relevant factors based upon the three stages of the "representation pipeline." Finally, I present a brief conclusion summarising these factors.

Elections and electoral rules

Elections are the foundations of modern democracies and constitute the most visible stage in the "representation pipeline." For the general public, elections are usually the only stage in which they themselves participate in process, unless they are among the vanishingly small number of Canadians sufficiently engaged in party politics to participate in candidate selection. For researchers as well, elections are the most visible portion of the pipeline due to simple data availability. Even in countries with more open nomination processes than Canada, data on elections is far easier to access and more commonly complete. Moreover, the variation of candidate selection processes across countries makes comparisons at earlier stages more difficult, creating further incentive for scholars to concentrate their studies on the election stage.

While these realities have created a wealth of studies using data from elections, the majority of research in fact posits causal mechanisms at an earlier stage in the pipeline. Factors at the election stage come primarily in two forms: how the country's legal-institutional framework shapes the electoral process, and how voters respond to women candidates. In the

remainder of this section, I detail the state of the literature on how electoral systems, legislated quotas, and electoral discrimination shape women's descriptive representation.

Electoral systems

Even without having any features that expressly address gender, electoral systems can have a sizeable, if indirect, impact on rates of women's descriptive representation. By shaping the "rules of the game," electoral systems can influence the behaviour of parties, candidates, and voters in ways that can favour or inhibit the election of women, as well as of minority groups. Existing literature on this topic has largely focused on the differences in women's representation under proportional representation and under plurality or majoritarian systems.

Overall, a large number of studies have found that systems of proportional representation favour the election of women and conversely that plurality and majoritarian systems favour men (McAllister and Studlar 2002; Grofman 2016; Thames 2017). While the trend of proportional representation electing more women is clear, determining the exact extent to which this is caused by the voting system itself is difficult due to the difficulty in separating a country's electoral system from other aspects of its political culture, as well as the non-linear way in which women's representation generally increases (Salmond 2006).

Part of the link between proportionality and women's representation is related to district magnitude — that is, the number of representatives allocated to each district (Rule 1987). In short, having multiple members per district can create several advantages for diversity in representation, particularly as it comes to "slate balancing"; needing to nominate multiple candidates in the same district increases both the pressure upon parties to account for diversity and their ability to do so. While a sole candidate in a single member district will naturally be only of one gender, having multiple candidates opens up the possibility of balancing between candidates' genders and makes

it more apparent to voters when a party fails to do so. As such, parties operating in multimember or list-PR systems face especially high pressures to match the gender parity of their opponents, enabling a “contagion” effect in women’s political candidacy (Matland and Studlar 1996). Having multiple candidates in each district also helps to minimise the coordination problem common in single member systems: by balancing at the local level parties can achieve balanced candidate slates without needing any central coordination. These balancing effects also apply on a local scale, with Irish STV districts with greater numbers of seats seeing more women become candidates and representatives (Engstrom 1987). For these reasons, even in plurality electoral systems, multimember districts show some evidence of being more likely to elect women and to have women as candidates than do single member districts (Welch and Studlar 1990; Rule 1994). In addition to increasing the number of women present, greater district magnitude may also influence the behaviour of women representatives, with those women elected in multimember districts being more likely to behave as substantive representatives for women than their counterparts in single- or dual-member districts (Kweon and Ryan 2021; Crisp and Cunha Silva 2022).

The positive influence of proportional representation on women’s descriptive representation is, however, not without limit. In a test of the limits of this relationship, McAllister and Studlar (2002) find that developing countries do not share the pattern observed in developed countries, with proportional systems in the former electing no more women than do majoritarian or plurality systems. Even within developed countries some more recent literature has questioned if the link is indeed causal (e.g. Tremblay 2007), particularly given the underwhelming results in countries which have switched to PR from majoritarian systems (Curtin 2003). In all contexts, the positive effects of proportional representation rely upon political actors adjusting their behaviour, in particular upon political parties nominating more women candidates; in cases where political

parties fail to do this across the board, the contagion effects seen elsewhere will not be produced and women will remain underrepresented (see: Lane 1995). In particular, proportional systems that remain candidate- rather than party-centred are unlikely to elect any more women than a plurality system (Dhima et al. 2021).

This evidence of a link between proportional systems and gender parity have led some activists in Canada to propose electoral reform as a possible solution to improve women's representation. Despite this, changes in the Canadian electoral system have, to date, been changes away from systems more favourable to women. For elections to provincial legislatures and to city councils, Alberta and Manitoba made some use of the single transferable vote, but both returned to plurality elections by the mid-1950s (Pilon 2006). Furthermore, while still using plurality elections, many parts of Canada have previously employed dual- or multi-member districts, often for the purpose of balancing between the representation of Protestants and Catholics. At the federal level, the last of these dual-member districts were eliminated with the 1968 election, and at the provincial level they were eliminated in 1996 when Prince Edward Island retired its entirely dual-member system (Massicotte 2005, 102–3). In the 21st century, therefore, elections for both federal and provincial governments in Canada are approaching the worst possible system for encouraging gender parity: plurality elections conducted in single-member districts with a decentralised party nomination system.

Despite this trajectory of changes pointing away from proportionality, the possibility of adopting (or returning to) a proportional system, generally either mixed-member or single transferable vote, remains a perennial debate at both the federal and provincial levels. Ontario and British Columbia have both held referenda on electoral reform that failed to meet the required thresholds for implementation. Prince Edward Island has held a non-binding plebiscite, which the

government chose to ignore on the basis of low turnout. The federal Liberals and the Coalition Avenir Québec were elected in 2015 and 2018, respectively, on promises to reform the electoral system, although to date neither has. Most substantively for gender equality, at the time it was partitioned from the Northwest Territories in 1999, Nunavut considered adopting a dual-member model with each district having one seat reserved for a man and the other for a woman, although this was ultimately rejected in favour of single member districts. With the exception of this last case, however, improving women's representation has been at most a peripheral consideration in designing electoral systems, and as such it is unlikely that a change in electoral systems alone would create gender parity in the House of Commons (Tremblay 2010). Evidence from polities with similar political systems that adopted mixed-member proportional systems is also heavily mixed as to the extent to which women's representation increased following the change, casting further doubt on the viability of reaching parity this way (Henderson 2006).

Reserved Seats

In addition to proportional representation's indirect effects, proportional systems can also favour the election of women by being more amenable to the introduction of gender quotas. In many contexts quotas are part of the candidate selection process and are often voluntarily implemented by parties with no state mandate (for a discussion of these, see Candidate quotas below). Quotas can, however, also be implemented at the election stage in all electoral systems, in the form of reserved seats for women. Reserved seats in some form are currently used in over 30 countries at either the national or sub-national level (International IDEA 2019), most of which are in either Asia or Africa (Krook and O'Brien 2010). This makes reserved seats relatively rare on the world stage, but still arguably an important tool to fast-track women's representation. Systems using reserved seats vary in their means of selecting women for office, with some holding

national elections for reserved seats alongside those for general constituencies, others appointing candidates to reserved seats, and others reserving standard geographic constituencies for women, usually on a rotating basis.

While they are the most direct way of assuring women's representation, reserved seats remain fairly controversial, particularly when compared to candidate quotas. Firstly, reserved seats are often questioned on the basis of being undemocratic or unrepresentative, particularly in cases where the women holding these seats are not directly elected. For example, women appointed to Bangladesh's reserved seats are often closely connected to male relatives in politics, creating the perception they are effectively proxies and reducing their authority and legitimacy (Nazneen and Tasneem 2010). In addition to questioning the democratic nature of the concept, reserved seats can also be used by non-democratic regimes to instill an air of legitimacy. Still, even in cases where legislatures have little power, reserved seats do encourage women's participation in political life, providing benefits in symbolic representation as well as creating a pool of qualified women for future (more substantive) political roles (Nanivadekar 2006, 119).

Beyond criticisms of their democratic nature, some scholars and activists express worries that reserved seats could impose an upper limit on women's representation. Naturally, reserved seats are effective in that they provide a guaranteed number of women in a legislature, but their broader effects on women's political participation are less clear. While getting women into legislatures via reserved seats can increase the social acceptability of women in political office, it can conversely decrease the pressure on political parties to nominate women in general constituencies. For example, the introduction of reserved seats in Morocco in the early 2000s was actually followed by a decrease in the number of women elected in general seats (Sater 2012). In Uganda as well, general constituency seats are often viewed by political actors as belonging to

men, and women very rarely transition from reserved seats into general ones (Wang and Yoon 2018). In these situations, reserved seats can provide both a positive, by creating a hard legal minimum for women's representation; but also a negative, by imposing a soft cultural maximum on the number of women to be elected. In addition to this possible "ceiling" effect, relying upon reserved seats makes women's representation vulnerable to the whims of the government of the day, which may decide to pass legislation to reduce their number or eliminate them entirely, particularly in cases where these seats are not constitutionally entrenched. For example, the number of women in Bangladesh's parliament was reduced by 80% when the constitutional provision establishing reserved seats for women was removed (Nanivadekar 2006).

Electoral discrimination

Although empirical evidence is highly limited, one of the most obvious barriers to women's access to political office at the election stage is the possibility of gender discrimination by the electorate. A major source of concern for the possibility of electoral discrimination against women running for office is gendered stereotypes relating to women in leadership roles, and in particular the prevalence of such stereotypes in media coverage of elections. In a variety of electoral contexts, studies have found that that Canadian media portray women politicians differently than their male counterparts, notably treating them as a novelty when in leadership (Trimble 2007; Everitt and Camp 2009). While the pure amount of coverage of women politicians has improved to be in line with their level of representation among elected representatives and candidates, the *nature* of that coverage remains clearly gendered, with coverage of women politicians focusing more on their appearances and personal lives (Goodyear-Grant 2013).

While the presence of such gendered media lenses and societal stereotypes is well-established in the literature, their effect on women's actual electoral success is not. Indeed, most studies of gendered coverage make no attempt to establish a causal link with election results, instead focusing on analysing differences in media coverage. Of those that do, many are experimental studies of hypothetical electoral candidates which may not translate entirely to real-world elections (e.g. Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Gordon, Shafie, and Crigler 2003). These experimental studies have also found a partisan difference in gender biases, with Democrat voters in the USA expressing a pro-woman bias, and Republicans a neutral or pro-man preference in candidates (Saltzer and McGrath 2022).

Despite the large amount of experimental evidence, stereotypes and vote choice are not necessarily closely linked in the real world, and stereotypical views have not been found to impact voters' evaluations of candidates (Dolan 2014b). When examined in the real-world context of the 2010 US elections, Dolan (2014a) finds the effects of gender stereotypes on vote choice to generally be weak and inconsistent between levels of government. Overall, as Dolan concludes, the "stereotypes people hold do not appear to have a direct impact on their vote choice decisions"(2014a, 141).

In addition to studies generally failing to make a clear link between stereotypes and electoral discrimination, studies of women's electoral performance more broadly have often found women candidates to perform as well as their male counterparts or to receive only slightly lower vote shares (King and Leigh 2010) , although this does vary between countries (e.g. Bonomi, Brosio, and Tommaso 2013 find a more significant gender gap in the Italian context). Studies of Canadian elections specifically have generally concluded that a candidate's gender does not in itself have a significant effect on their electoral success. In an analysis of all

Canadian elections since women gained suffrage rights (and thereby the right to stand as candidates in elections), Sevi, Arel-Bundock, and Blais (2019) find that women do not suffer a substantial electoral penalty. Specifically, they find a small (2.5 percentage point) gap to have existed in the 1920s (when the first women ran as candidates for the federal parliament), but that the penalty in modern elections is not statistically significant (Sevi, Arel-Bundock, and Blais 2019, 206). These findings confirm those of previous studies which found that, once accounting for other factors such as incumbency and a candidate's party, women candidates in Canada face no electoral penalty (Hunter and Denton 1984), or even possibly benefit from a small advantage compared to men (Black and Erickson 2003). This positive discrimination found at the federal level is also found in municipal elections in Canada, with women candidates in these elections getting on average a vote share that is larger by 3.2 percentage points than that of men candidates (Lucas et al. 2021).

Although these studies demonstrate that men and women who run for office get elected at the similar rates under similar conditions, this does not necessarily mean that voters do not discriminate against women. The inference that voters do not discriminate between candidates based upon gender rests upon the assumption that men and women candidates are otherwise equal; several scholars, however, question this assumption. Instead, the similar results between men and women may be a product of the women who run for office simply being more qualified than their male counterparts. Fulton (2012), for example, finds evidence that women challengers are generally more qualified than the men they run against and that this fact masks evidence of voter bias. Having made similar findings, Pearson and McGhee (2013) attribute this to women waiting until they have comparatively more experience before running for congress.

It is important to note that the possibility that voters hold women to a higher standard does not contradict the findings that in recent elections women have received similar numbers of votes as men. Rather, it puts into question the robustness of the electorate's gender egalitarianism; if parties were to nominate equal numbers of men and women candidates of equal qualification, it is possible that voters would then begin to display a preference to men candidates. Further, if women candidates are indeed more qualified than are men, then men and women's equal success rates could itself reflect bias against women, as they should therefore be winning *more* often than men if they are indeed more qualified for office.

Evidence that women need to be more qualified than men to be elected is, however, mixed. In studying the 1993 Canadian election, Black and Erickson (2003) find no evidence that voters hold women candidates to a higher standard. While Black and Erickson report accounting for a wide array of factors related to candidate experience and education, exhaustive studies of this hypothesis are inherently difficult due to the nebulous nature of 'candidate qualification' as a concept. For example, while Black and Erickson (2003) control for incumbency, years in office, education, and experience in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), voters may also be weighing other factors as 'qualifications' for office, such as oratory skills, work experience in other domains, or connection to the district.

Beyond the inherent difficulties of measuring candidate qualification, the particularities of the Canadian electoral context make candidate characteristics in general unlikely to matter to the extent they may in other countries. A major difficulty in applying many United States-based studies to Canada lies in the differing degrees of personalisation in the two countries' politics. Owing to Canada's much stricter party discipline (Marland 2020), Canadian voters overwhelmingly form their vote choice on the basis of their preferred party, and not on the basis of

the actual local candidates. Using data on voters in the 2015 federal election from British Columbia, Ontario, and Québec, Blais and Daoust (2017) find that only 50% of voters have any opinion on local candidates at all, and only 9% of voters report a preferred candidate that isn't from their preferred party. Even among these 9%, 60% report voting for their preferred party, and only 40% switch to vote for their preferred candidate, meaning that only 3.6% of voters overall had a candidate preference that outweighed their party preference. Given this relative lack of attention on individual candidates, then, the average Canadian elector may be less likely than their American counterpart to hold women candidates to a higher standard simply because they put little weight on the qualification or qualities of candidates of any gender.

This tendency among Canadian voters to vote primarily for a political party makes the findings of little to no electoral discrimination against women in Canadian elections rather unsurprising — the fact that voters generally do not place much emphasis on individual candidates in forming their vote choice serves to mitigate any prejudices they have against women in politics and reduce the odds that this prejudice would ultimately flip their vote choice. While the literature on electoral discrimination has not directly attributed this non-effect in the Canadian context to the power of party affiliation, studies of other electoral phenomena have explained Canada's non-conformity to trends as being a product of political parties. For example, Wigginton and Stockemer (2021) attribute the null effect of candidate attractiveness on electoral success in Québec elections to the province's strong party system.

Similarly, the tendency observed in the United States to hold women to a higher standard may not apply simply because many Canadian voters are not evaluating candidates at all, but rather evaluating their party's platform and leader. While there is no reason to assume that Canadian voters will necessarily not share American voters' biases in evaluating women versus

men candidates, the focus on party affiliation reduces the likelihood that these evaluations will be of any material consequence.

Candidate selection

The ability of the election stage to influence women's representation is, however, entirely dependent on having a sufficiently large pool of women candidates. This makes the candidate selection processes very important in shaping women's representation. While these processes have been called the "secret garden of politics" and as such have been the subject of less direct study than have elections (Gallagher and Marsh 1988), they set the stage for elections and can shape women's electoral fortunes in two primary ways. Firstly, assuming that independent candidacies are not practically viable, the number of women nominated as candidates by major parties puts an effective limit on the number of women who can be elected. Secondly, *where* women are nominated as candidates is of preeminent importance: even if a party were to nominate a slate of candidates that is majority women, and assuming the electorate does not discriminate based on candidate gender, women can still be disadvantaged if they are nominated mostly in districts where their party is weak or in low positions on a party list.

In the remainder of this section, I first outline how candidate selection methods can determine the number of women selected by a party, followed by examining the role of candidate quotas. I then explain the importance of where women are nominated and the factors that determine if women are placed in winnable races. Finally, I provide an overview of the role that social networks play in inhibiting the selection of women as candidates and explain how political corruption can exacerbate this.

Selection methods

Much as electoral system types can shape the electoral process in ways that affect women's representation, candidate nomination processes can also have substantive effects on the demographic makeup of a party's slate of candidates. Broadly, the important differences between selection methods can be categorised into two dimensions: the openness of the electorate and the centralisation of the selection process. Openness can vary from allowing all citizens to vote on candidates versus having a party leader handpick them, and centralisation between a single national process and separate processes for each individual district (see: Rahat and Hazan 2001).

While many may argue that primary elections allowing broad participation in the nomination process, such as used in the United States, are democratically desirable, prior research generally suggests that they are less likely to nominate women. Examinations of primary elections in contexts as diverse as Iceland (Indriðason and Kristinsson 2015) and Latin America (Hinojosa 2012) find primary elections place fewer women candidates into winnable seats than do less open processes, and similar studies find that more open processes are less likely to appoint women as party leaders (Astudillo and Paneque 2021). Even in cases that restrict participation to party members, there is evidence that systems that require the rank-and-file members to share power with party elites may select more women candidates than a more open process (Gauja and Cross 2015).

The dearth of women selected through primaries is not necessarily evidence that selectors in more open processes discriminate against women. Indeed, evidence from the United States suggests that women win primaries as often as men, but compete at far lower rates (Burrell 1992). The barrier presented by primaries, then, may instead be one of resources; competing in a primary election requires significant resources to mount a campaign, which may pose a particular

barrier to women, as well as to new entrants to politics generally (Kitchens and Swers 2016). Open nomination processes can also conflict with the use of quotas, as the principle of allowing members to freely choose their candidates conflicts with limiting the pool of contenders, thus making quotas more difficult to implement (see: Baldez 2007).

Despite these issues, it is unlikely that parties that currently use open processes will shift to more closed ones in order to elect more women. Current trends, in fact, suggest a move toward more open selection processes, especially within Canada (L. Young and Cross 2002), seemingly due to a widespread belief that they are more democratic (see: Rahat, Hazan, and Katz 2008). More open processes also provide parties with a valuable means to better “take the pulse” of the electorate and to select candidates that fit voter preferences more effectively than party elites could select on their own (Gulzar, Hai, and Paudel 2021; Casey, Kamara, and Meriggi 2021). Encouragingly, however, experiments suggest that fairly simple educational efforts can greatly improve the rate at which primaries select women (Karpowitz, Monson, and Preece 2017).

Much as more open primary processes can inhibit women’s political candidacy, research also suggests that decentralised processes, such as those used by Canadian parties, tend to exclude women. Very similar to the effects of multimember districts in proportional systems, decentralised processes inhibit “slate-balancing” and produce a coordination problem; if every district is on their own selecting a single candidate, it becomes impossible for selectors to know what ultimate demographic mix of candidates they will be producing and to factor that into their decision (Rahat 2007). Even in cases where multiple candidates are to be nominated, local selection bodies can be more chauvinistic in their choices than a centralised one, though this is of course not universal across parties (Vandeleene 2014).

Candidate quotas

Analyses of women's rates of political candidacy very often focus on the importance of quotas. While reserved seats provide a direct guarantee that a certain number of women will be elected to parliament, most quota systems work more indirectly by specifying percentages of candidates to be nominated. As each jurisdiction's implementation of quotas is different and locally idiosyncratic, candidate quotas are difficult to categorise and study (see: Krook 2014), though authors usually distinguish between quotas mandated by legislation (legislated quotas) and those voluntarily implemented by political parties (party quotas). Quotas of either type tend to require a larger proportion of women candidates than do reserved seats, often in the range of 25–50% (Krook and O'Brien 2010).

Candidate quotas are among the most commonly studied factors influencing women's representation, and their effect is the subject of clear consensus: quotas substantially increase the number of women in elected office (Burnet 2011; Sacchet 2008; Krook 2009; 2006). This link between candidate quotas and increased descriptive representation of women in legislatures is robust across geographic and cultural contexts as diverse as Africa (e.g. Stockemer 2011), Latin America (e.g. Sacchet 2008; M. P. Jones 2009), and Europe (e.g. Stockemer and Sundström 2018). Between legislated and voluntary quotas, however, legislated quotas have been found to be far more effective in increasing women's representation (Rosen 2017). The reasons for this difference are fairly apparent; in jurisdictions where quotas are only voluntarily implemented, not all parties will necessarily adopt quotas, and some parties may adopt less ambitious quotas than others.

Beyond ensuring equitable numbers of candidates, quota systems can also have provisions to ensure that women candidates are given positions that are in fact winnable. Quotas of this type are most common in proportional systems that use a party list and operate by

dictating name orders on the ballot. A “double quota” of this variety ensures that women are not clustered at the bottom of the electoral list (Dahlerup 2003), often by requiring party lists to alternate between men and women candidates. While even this most strict design does not entirely ensure equal representation for women (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005), ensuring that women candidates are placed in a winnable position on the list is key to translating increased numbers of women candidates into more women legislators (Norris 2006).

In systems of single-member districts, quotas of this variety are much rarer, though not impossible to apply. Instead of dictating list-position, parties can instead implement quotas ensuring that women receive an equitable portion of seats in which the party is most likely to win (see section below), a provision that may be complicated to implement depending on candidate selection methods (see section above). Without such provisions, however, parties may react to quotas by concentrating their women candidates in districts they are unlikely to win, thus greatly reducing the quotas’ effectiveness (see: Lippmann 2021).

In the Canadian context, however, no federal party has implemented strict candidate quotas. Given Canada’s system of plurality elections conducted in single-member districts, attempting to legislate gender parity in either candidates or in representatives would be significantly more complicated than it is in countries that use list systems. Within parties as well, implementing a quota system would require major restructuring to reduce local autonomy in candidate selection — as each local Electoral District Association is generally free to select a candidate of their own choosing, current initiatives within parties are focused on candidate recruitment and do not ensure a particular mix of candidates. Voluntary party quotas are, however, in limited use at the provincial level in Canada. In 2021 the Liberal Party of Ontario announced a list of 20 of the province’s 124 electoral districts where they would only allow

women to be nominated as their party's candidate (Delitala 2021). The British Columbia New Democratic Party has a longer-standing policy of reserving the seats of retiring women incumbents for a woman candidate, and the seats of retiring men incumbents for a candidate from any equity seeking group (CityNews 2011). Systems such as these are examples of ways in which federal parties could implement stricter quotas without entirely changing their candidate selection processes.

Nomination in winnable districts

Especially in systems of single-member geographic districts, such as that in Canada, the absolute number of women nominated by a party is only part of the equation, with *where* these women are nominated also being an important factor. Much as effective candidate quotas must consider both how many women are selected as candidates and where they are placed, analyses of women's political candidacy must account for both of these factors; if women are only nominated into positions their party is highly unlikely to win, even a slate of mostly women candidates can result in a legislature of predominately men.

In the United States, there exists a considerable literature on the notion of women-friendly districts — in essence, that certain demographic conditions are more likely to produce women candidates, and elect women as representatives, than are others. In their book, Palmer and Simon (2010) developed an index of women-friendliness that posits that women are more likely to win (and to become candidates) in more urban, educated, wealthy, and ethnically diverse districts. This index has been retested in multiple contexts (e.g. Pyeatt and Yanus 2016; Ondercin and Welch 2009) within the United States and has been found to be a generally robust indication of women's chance of gaining political office.

In Canada, similar district-level studies on women's access to office have also focused on a riding's competitiveness as an important determinant of the gender of its representative. In their 2013 article, Thomas and Bodet find that women are more likely than men to be candidates in ridings where their party has little chance of winning and less likely to be nominated in those ridings that would be considered 'strongholds' for their party — in other terms, that they are more likely to serve as 'sacrificial lambs' for their party.

Thomas and Bodet's finding confirmed a long-held belief in Canadian politics for which previous studies failed to find any substantive evidence. Several studies at the federal level (Studlar and Matland 1994; Matland and Studlar 1996; Cheng and Tavits 2011; Carbert 2013), as well as some examining the elections for Québec's National Assembly (Tremblay 2008; Pelletier and Tremblay 1992), had previously rejected the hypothesis that women were more likely to run in hopeless elections, although one study (Pelletier and Tremblay 1992) found men to be in some cases more likely to run in easy-to-win districts. Two of these previous studies (Erickson 1991; L. Young 2006) did, however, find limited support for the idea that women were more likely to be nominated in particularly difficult districts. One study of US primary elections (Lawless and Pearson 2008) also found evidence that women were more likely to face difficult competition than were men.

Thomas and Bodet (2013) attribute much of this disagreement in previous literature to differences in the measurement of competitiveness. In studies of plurality electoral systems, particularly in studies of turnout, the "competitiveness" of an election is often operationalised as the difference in the vote share (usually measured in percentage points) between the winning candidate and the runner-up (for example: Matsusaka and Palda 1993; Stockemer and Wigginton 2018). While this "two party margin" is the most common measure of an election's closeness,

the Canadian context can present a more complex than average scenario for operationalising competitiveness, due largely to the large number of competitive political parties in many districts and the frequency with which Canadian electoral districts experience large swings in voter preferences between elections. This is especially true in comparison with some other SMP countries, such as the United States. To remedy this, the authors employ a “dynamic” measure of competitiveness, which differentiates districts between “strongholds” and “battlegrounds” (see: Bodet 2013). By coupling this measure with a more traditional margin between the candidate and the election winner, the authors argue they provide a more complete understanding of competitiveness than did previous studies, thus explaining why they found a substantive effect where others found little or none.

Homosocial networks, corruption, and nominations

Very often, the influence of candidate selection processes on women’s access to political office is linked with corruption. Broadly, gender and corruption have long been linked in social science literature, with women being found in many studies to be associated with lower levels of corruption. The gender-corruption link is quite robust, and has been confirmed in large-N comparative studies (Watson and Moreland 2014), in specific regions such as Africa (Stockemer 2011), and even in municipal governments (Sundström and Wängnerud 2016). Some earlier studies posited this relationship to be directly causal and assumed that women could reduce corruption by their very presence in parliament, due to women themselves being less prone to personal corruption than men (see, for example: Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti 2001; Swamy et al. 2001). The majority of studies, however, have argued that this causal link is inverted: the presence of women does not decrease a government’s corruption, the presence of corruption decreases women’s access to political office. As argued by Sung (2003), previous studies were

not well-grounded in theory and failed to adequately account for the effects of liberal democracy. Rather, the consensus in more recent literature is that corrupt and clientelistic networks inhibit women's access to office at the point of candidate selection.

The reasons to exclude women from corrupt networks are numerous and include both intentional and incidental reasons for preferring male candidates. In an incidental example, corrupt political systems often value a potential candidate for the resources that they can contribute to the corrupt network. These might be monetary or physical resources that can aid in the party's campaign, or local power or influence that may allow the party to win elections or gain money through corruption. While these tendencies do not inherently exclude women, particularly in the developing countries in which they are common, these practices exclude women *de facto*, as women are significantly less likely to have these sorts of resources to contribute (see: Bjarnegård 2018).

More directly, the male-dominated networks in corrupt parties may actively seek to exclude women for fear that they will not willingly participate in the corruption, either because they believe women to be inherently more virtuous, or simply because they view women as outsiders who can not be trusted to maintain secrecy. Moreover, as Bjarnegård (2013) notes, corrupt networks often see women as a source of unpredictability, particularly for the additional media scrutiny that women candidates can attract. From a more heteronormative perspective, women entering into a clientelistic network creates the risk of romantic or sexual relationships forming between members, creating the opportunity for group dynamics to become far less stable and predictable, thus increasing the chances of the corruption being exposed (Bjarnegård 2013, 166).

While candidate-selection processes inhibiting women's access to office are demonstrated to be closely linked to corruption, the casual mechanisms theorised to be at play do not themselves require corruption to exist. While corruption certainly plays an exacerbating role, in-group bias and candidate selection being controlled by closed, homosocial networks has been observed to negatively impact women even in established democracies where corruption is assumed to be minimal. In a Canadian example, Cheng and Tavits (2011) find the gender of an Electoral District Association's president to correlate with the gender of the selected candidate. Specifically, their analysis of candidates in the 2004 and 2006 federal elections finds that, other factors being equal, the probability of an EDA with a man as president nominating a woman as candidate was 23%, compared to 29% for associations with a woman president (Cheng and Tavits 2011, 465–66).

Overall, the nomination process seems to influence gender parity in Canada in two main ways. First, the influence of social networks can determine where women are more likely to become candidates, with electoral districts with women in leadership more likely to nominate women as candidates. Secondly, though by less clear mechanisms, women are more likely to be nominated in districts that their party has very little chance of actually winning.

Candidate emergence

Candidate emergence, or becoming a political aspirant, is the theoretically largest limit on the pool of political candidates, as the vast majority of people never take any steps towards becoming an elected politician. Having a large pool of diverse aspirants is essential to enabling political parties to select and elect a slate of candidates that reflects the population, and having few identified women aspirants ensures that few women will be elected. By the same token, though, research on the recruitment phase is necessarily limited for largely methodological

reasons; as generally all qualified electors are eligible to hold political office, observing this stage of political candidacy is typically only possible in the case of those individuals who make some concrete step toward standing for election. In the remainder of this section, I first provide an overview of how competition aversion and the costs of holding office may dissuade women from running for office and then overview how recruitment efforts by political parties can help to overcome these barriers.

Competition aversion, personality, and self-selection

Candidate self-selection may also play a role in explaining the phenomenon of women being more commonly selected as candidates in hard-to-win districts. While the end effect of nominations in Canada is clearly that women more often play the role of sacrificial lamb (Thomas and Bodet 2013), the decentralised nature of nominations would make it very difficult for parties to coordinate in which districts women become candidates. Rather, these differences may be (at least in part) explained by where women chose to run for nomination and under what circumstances parties make the most effort to recruit them.

Psychological research has found women to be, on average, more adverse to competition than are men, with both laboratory and field studies finding men's general overconfidence in the face of competition to be an important cause of this difference (see: Niederle and Vesterlund 2011). In a laboratory experiment examining the influence of this competition aversion on political ambition, Preece and Stoddard (2015) found that women who were primed as to the competitive nature of politics expressed less interest in seeking office, whereas men appeared undeterred. Other research has shown more commonly masculine personality traits such as narcissism to matter greatly in determining an individual's level of political ambition (J. Blais, Pruyssers, and Chen 2019); as many of these personality traits are more common in men than they

are in women, personality differences may help to explain why women run less often and under different circumstances.

Active recruitment by parties, however, may be able to explain, or counteract, much of this “ambition gap.” As Fox and Lawless (2004) find, women are less likely to receive encouragement to run for office than are men, although they are just as likely to be influenced by it. Given other findings that men are more likely to be encouraged to run than are women (Cross and Young 2013; Norris and Lovenduski 1993), more active political recruitment of women may be one possible way of diminishing the effects of these personality differences.

More broadly, Oliver and Conroy (2020) argue that political systems are structured in ways that systematically favour masculine personality traits. According to their research, more masculine people (of any sex) are more likely to see themselves as being suited for office, are more likely to be encouraged to run, are less likely to need to be encouraged to run, and are even slightly more likely to hold the traits and qualifications generally seen as making one qualified for office. As such, men (and more masculine people more broadly) have a structural advantage in seeking political office.

Personal costs of holding office

A final consideration that can hinder the emergence of women as political aspirants is the personal cost faced by people who hold political office. While all politicians can find the experience of running for and holding elected office personally taxing, a variety of sociological factors can make women face greater costs and provide a particular disincentive for them to consider a political career. Many of the personal costs related to political office are concentrated around family life. Being a Member of Parliament can involve long hours and frequent travel, greatly reducing the amount of time available to spend with one’s family; particularly given the

greater caregiving obligations typically faced by women, these cost increases are theorised to affect them more greatly than men and thus to have a greater impact on their decision to run for office (see: Fox and Lawless 2004). In the Canadian context specifically, Wagner (2022) notes that some women aspirants cite the distance between their community and Ottawa as a reason for eschewing federal politics in favour of involvement at the municipal or provincial level, even though otherwise women and men cited very similar motivations for seeking elected office.

Research into the phenomenon of “women-friendly districts” (see above) has often focused on how these caregiving-related costs vary with geography. Some studies (e.g. Hogan 2001; Nechemias 1985; Silbermann 2015) find women to be less likely to hold office in both those districts which are more rural, and those which are farther away from the capital. In both cases, authors assume these variables to be proxies for work-life balance and the personal cost of being a representative. A district being farther away indicates greater time needed to travel to the district and decreases the likelihood that a representative will be able to live in their own home. While similar arguments do apply to more rural areas (as representing a larger geographic area can entail more time traveling within the district), the authors also assume it to represent the “cosmopolitan” nature of urban areas; urban areas have “the opportunity to cultivate skills, social networks, and resources for a successful candidacy” (Mitchell and Monroe 2014, 39).

Recruitment efforts

Beyond the personal reasons for which a person may decide (not to) run for office, a decisive factor for many people is simply whether they were ever asked to consider it. Research strongly suggests that active recruitment is very important to the decision to run for office, especially for women. While it is theoretically possible for candidates to decide entirely of their own volition to present themselves at a nomination contest and subsequently win the nomination, the existing

literature finds this is not a particularly common occurrence. In reality, “those who received widespread encouragement from close friends, party members, party agents... would be more likely to consider a parliamentary career, and better placed to get a good seat” (Norris and Lovenduski 1993, 400–402). In their survey of Liberal and NDP candidates in the 2008 Canadian federal election, Cross and Young (2013) find that only 25% of candidates were not actively recruited by either the national party or the local EDA to run for the nomination; broken down by gender, this figure comprises only 18% of women, compared to 30% of men. Their data further reveal these relatively rare “self-selected candidates” to be otherwise different from those recruited into the role: they were largely political careerists, and less likely to have received encouragement from their family and friends or to have had much involvement in civil society organisation, despite their lengthy service to their party.

Cross and Young’s findings may also reflect the broader trend noted in the comparative literature regarding the average qualifications of men and women who seek and win political candidacy and office: on average, women candidates are more qualified than their male counterparts (see, for example: Fulton 2012). These findings show that women either set a higher personal bar for themselves or have a higher one set for them. In addition, the findings cast doubt upon the completeness of studies finding women not to face electoral discrimination.

Furthermore, as studying recruitment separately from nomination is methodologically difficult, some of the nomination effects observed in Canada may actually be more due to political recruitment effects than due to candidate selection itself. While Cheng and Tavits refer to an Electoral District Association’s president as being the “local party gatekeeper,” they do not contend that EDA presidents are necessarily blocking candidates. While the party leader can circumvent the contest portion of a nomination entirely and “parachute” in their own preferred

candidate (see, for example: Koop and Bittner 2011; Cross 2006), EDA presidents have very little power in the nomination process. Rather, as the authors explain, the influence of these “gatekeepers” lies not in somehow controlling candidate selection, but in influencing candidate recruitment. This influence on recruitment can be active, such as a woman EDA president reaching out to others in her (presumably woman-dominated) social networks who may make suitable candidates (Medeiros, Forest, and Erl 2019). The boost in the recruitment of women can also happen passively, as the mere fact that a woman is in charge of the association may signal to potential candidates that women are welcome in leadership roles in the party, thus increasing the potential that women will become contestants and eventually candidates.

In a similar study involving the relationship between having a racialized person as EDA president and attracting racialized candidates, Tolley (2019) finds the effect to influence candidate recruitment only. Specifically, her study finds that having a racialized person as EDA president has a positive effect on the number of racialized nomination contestants, it has no significant impact on the probability of a racialized person ultimately being selected as candidate. Largely, this is a natural consequence of candidate recruitment being far easier to influence than candidate selection: “Local party presidents are able to exert some influence on the process, but at the end of the day, they have a single vote, just like every other member” (Tolley 2019, 76).

The flipside of recruitment by party and EDA officials, however, is gatekeeping. Much as local EDAs can encourage individuals to run for nomination through personal relationships, they can use both their personal social connections and institutional power to dissuade or exclude aspirants whom they do not wish to become the candidate. As Albaugh (2022) highlights in the New Brunswick provincial case, local party officials frequently attempt to have their preferred

candidate acclaimed using tactics such as explicitly discouraging other aspirants from contesting the election or manipulating the timing and advertisement of nomination meetings to prevent others from having the opportunity to participate³. Beyond this localised and informal gatekeeping, the central party also has the ability to gatekeeping using the ‘greenlighting’ procedure, the process through which parties screen potential nomination contestants for their suitability. Ashe’s (2020) analysis of the NDP’s candidate selection process in the 2015 election reveals that 52 out of 555 applicants were denied at this stage, highlighting that the central party has considerable power to affect the pool of nomination contestants.

Conclusion

The empirical literature on women’s descriptive representation has reached several points of consensus. If the pathway to becoming an elected representative in Canada can indeed be likened to a pipeline, existing research then implies that there is a major blockage at the pipeline’s very entrance. Several studies have found that voters do not directly discriminate against women by giving them fewer votes, and that while the media may frame women candidates in problematically gendered ways, this does not necessarily have an impact on the electorate’s voting decisions. By the election stage, however, the cards are already stacked against gender parity; women candidates in Canadian elections are significantly outnumbered by men and are more often candidates in districts that they have no realistic chance of winning. Although some research suggests that even this lack of electoral discrimination is simply a by-product of women

³ Such practices are not *necessarily* used to prevent women from contesting nomination and instead are used against any possible challenger to a preferred candidate. As Albaugh (2022) notes though, both Canadian and comparative research suggests that local party officials are less likely to prefer women or minorities as candidates.

candidates being more qualified than are their male counterparts, the evidence for this is mixed, and in particular evidence from the Canadian context suggests this might not be the case.

While many studies have pointed to a low number of woman candidates as the major limitation in women's representation, the role that nominations themselves play in this is unclear. Although the imbalances may emerge at this stage, the causal mechanisms most often raised to explain them often relate more to political recruitment and candidate ambition than they do to the nomination process itself. While it is very likely that significant barriers do exist at the stages of nomination and election, the largest obstacles seem to exist at the earliest stages of candidacy. For a myriad of reasons women are less likely than men to feel personally qualified to, or even personally desire to, run for office than are men. Compounding this difference, political parties seem to be less likely to actively attempt to recruit women than they are to recruit men.

The gaps this leaves the literature are twofold. First, the relative importance of the recruitment and nomination stages is not in fact clear. While much of the research points to recruitment being more important, few studies have clearly distinguished between the two phases, and it is not clear how much discrimination women face at the nomination phase. Secondly, although candidate recruitment/candidate emergence and candidate nomination phases appear to play a very crucial role in shaping parliament's gender balance, it is not entirely clear exactly what factors have the greatest effect here.

This difficulty in understanding the relative importance of each phase is compounded by the fact that the literature on women's descriptive representation has a clear imbalance in terms of the stages studied. Largely for reasons of data availability and comparability, the election stage has been the focus of the lion's share of prior research, with fewer studies examining candidates and even fewer examining contenders for selection. Indeed, even in studies that

assume the existence of causal mechanisms at earlier stages, most rely upon data from the election or candidacy stage rather than data from nomination contests themselves. While this tendency is understandable given the difficulty of obtaining data from this earliest stage of candidate selection, it creates great difficulty in fully understanding the results obtained by such studies in terms of the causal mechanisms underlying the relationships they observe — are these effects in fact happening at the stage of candidate selection, or are they products of candidate emergence? Without examining each stage separately, it is not possible to definitively tell.

The second shortcoming in the literature is that the study of the determinants of descriptive representation is largely done in a piecemeal fashion. While a wealth of studies exist studying factors that affect women's political experiences, these studies are largely focused on single factors and single events. Studying women's representation in this way has created a great deal of valuable knowledge, however that knowledge is difficult to contextualise, and it is difficult to apprehend the relative importance of factors that have been studied independently.

IV. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

Introduction and overview

In this chapter I provide an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation, explaining the conceptual framework and providing the general research questions. Given the structure of this thesis, where I have divided the analysis into four chapters based on phases of the candidacy pipeline, I will not in this chapter present methodology, nor present specific hypotheses. As each chapter uses different sources of data and addresses slightly different hypotheses, I present an individual methodology and hypotheses section for each empirical chapter.

The candidacy pipeline

In attempting to explain women's political underrepresentation, the natural tendency of many scholars and political commentators alike has been to turn to elections for potential explanations. While elections may directly determine the composition of a legislature, they represent only a single step in becoming an elected representative. and access to office is controlled at three key points: election, candidate selection, and candidate recruitment.

In practical terms, the pathway to becoming an elected Member of Parliament is mitigated by two major institutions: political parties and the electoral system. Legally, the only required step is winning an election, something that can be done as an independent without any major party support. In practice, however, being elected as without the nomination of a major party is exceedingly rare in Canada, and in modern elections it is only a potentially viable option for those who have already been elected under a major party's banner or otherwise have a high public profile and political capital. For example, no independent candidates were elected in the

2021 election⁴, and the only candidate elected in the 2019 federal election with no affiliation to a political party was Jody Wilson-Raybould, the former Liberal Minister of Justice who was expelled from caucus as a result of the SNC-Lavalin affair; even being the incumbent and having a large public profile, Wilson-Raybould won her re-election only narrowly.

Given this exceeding rarity of being elected as a first-time independent candidate, obtaining the backing of one of Canada's major federal parties is a de facto requirement for becoming an elected representative. For these reasons, in my model I follow a similar division to Krook and Norris' (2014) model of gender equity promotion strategies and divide the pathway from citizen to representative into three distinct phases: Recruitment, Selection, and Election (see Figure 1). ç

Using the terminology of Cross and Young (2013) and a progression similar to Norris and Lovenduski's (1995) recruitment ladder, I divide the path to becoming an electoral candidate into two separate phases: Candidate Recruitment and Candidate Selection. Candidate Recruitment refers to the very earliest stages of becoming an elected representative, where an individual goes from being a citizen to an aspiring office holder. For some (although relatively few), this will be an entirely self-contained phase wherein they decide to stand for election entirely of their own accord. For the majority of (would-be) candidates, however, this phase entails significant amounts of outside encouragement, with friends, family, and local and

⁴ Kevin Vuong was listed on the ballot as the Liberal candidate in Spadina–Fort York, but was dropped by the party two days before the election over several legal issues that came to light. As many people had already voted in advance and this was past the deadline to approve candidates, Vuong was elected as a Liberal but made to sit as an independent.

national party officials encouraging and supporting them to consider running for office, and therefore the nomination of a major party.

The following step, Candidate Selection, entails the processes by which major parties select a contender from among the pool of identified aspiring candidates who have emerged from the Candidate Recruitment process. In Canadian federal politics, this stage takes the form of nomination contests, with local Electoral District Associations meeting to vote upon which of the aspirants will be granted the party's nomination.



Figure 1: The three-stage representation pipeline

This “representation pipeline,” which I have modeled in Figure 1, is an ideal-type and will not necessarily apply to all cases. As previously mentioned, it is theoretically possible, though impractical, to forgo the first two stages entirely by running as an independent. Similarly, emergence and selection can be merged by party leaders overriding an Electoral District Association to nominate a preferred (usually star) candidate (see: Koop and Bittner 2011), although this practice is becoming rare. For the vast majority of would-be Members of Parliament, however, these three stages of political candidacy are necessary steps to becoming an elected representative. Given the focus of this dissertation, my model is also limited to the essential stages of candidacy and does not include other possible stages, such as elevation to cabinet or party leadership.⁵ Likewise, it does not include the preceding stage of Aspirant

⁵ For a more complete model of the representation pipeline (or “ladder”) including steps beyond “representative,” see: (Lovenduski 2016)

Emergence, as the data I use in this dissertation do not allow me to investigate this step in between being an average citizen and becoming a citizen who aspires to hold office.

Following this pipeline model of representation, the empirical portion of this thesis is divided into four chapters, each covering one of the one of the three phases: candidate emergence, candidate selection, and election. The first step, candidate emergence, is covered by two chapters: one dealing with individual-level data from a survey of nomination contestants in the lead-up to the 2019 election and a second using aggregate data from the 2004–2019 period. The remaining two chapters also rely on official Elections Canada data for the same time period.

The reasons for structuring my analysis following this pipeline model are twofold. First, analysing each step of the pipeline successively allows me to clearly establish the degree to which each phase contributes to the gender imbalance among Canadian legislators. By comparing the three stages in succession, my analysis will determine both the extent to which the imbalance results from women not being recruited into consideration at all and the extent to which this imbalance is exacerbated (or ameliorated) in the subsequent stages. Secondly, evaluating the phases in concert allows me to explore how factors known to inhibit women's election to office influence different stages of the representation pipeline. As outlined in Chapter III, many previous studies of women's descriptive representation employ election-stage data for their empirical analyses (largely due to better availability of data), even in cases where the mechanisms posited to inhibit women's access to office would exist at an earlier stage in the process. By analysing all three stages of the representation pipeline in succession, I can better illustrate the relative importance of each stage and better highlight the differences and similarities of the factors that influence women candidates' success at each step in the process.

Candidate nomination in Canada

In the Canadian context, the earliest observable stage of political candidacy is the nomination contest. In many ways, nomination contests are comparable to the caucuses used in place of primary elections in some US states; members gather at a set location in each electoral district, with debate and voting held on the spot. Unlike caucuses, however, nomination contests are restricted to the very few Canadians who are dues-paying members of political parties, and they receive little media coverage, leaving most unaware of the contests until after the deadline to register (Cross 2004, 57–59). As such, very few Canadians actually participate in these contests, with a mean participation of 413 members and a median of just 201 (Cross 2002, 378). As a result, while some voters are long-time party members carefully weighing their options, many are the friends and associates of a candidate, who often join and are even bussed in for the sole purpose of voting (Cross 2004, 62).

For these reasons, studying the outcomes of nominations can be difficult. While it is clear which candidates win nominations, the informal, local nature of the contests and their very low rates of participation make it difficult to infer *why* a particular contestant is or is not successful in seeking their party's nomination. Given the relatively low number of voters, a well-organised outsider may be able to win a nomination simply by mobilising a fairly small number of supporters to join the party and attend the meeting. Given the local nature of these meetings, however, data on who votes in these meetings and upon what they base their choices are non-existent.

As a result of this general secrecy, the relatively few studies of nomination contests that exist tend to focus on their implications for candidate recruitment, rather than for candidate selection. While nomination procedures are generally quite similar between parties, they are not

closely regulated by Elections Canada, and as a result do vary slightly between parties. For gender representation, these variations have important implications. While no party in Canada has gone so far as to directly implement quotas for women or other equity-seeking groups, the New Democratic Party, and more recently the Liberal Party, require their EDAs to demonstrate that they have made an attempt to recruit women and other under-represented groups (such as racialized and LGBTQ people) before they will allow a contest to begin. While it has not delivered gender parity, this policy of requiring an active search does appear to have delivered some results, with these parties having noticeably higher numbers of women participating in contests and more women candidates (see: Cross 2016; 2006).

Research questions

Following this three-stage pipeline structure, I seek in this dissertation to answer two general research questions that span the entirety of the representation pipeline. To build the answers to these broad questions, I rely upon answering several narrow and specific questions, limited to each phase of the representation pipeline and presented in the empirical chapters to follow. The general questions I seek to answer in this dissertation are:

RQ₁: At what stage in the representation pipeline do women become descriptively underrepresented?

RQ₂: Are the conditions that favour women's representation the same across all stages of the pipeline, or do different factors determine the gender balance of each stage?

Together, these questions fit with this dissertation's overall goal of better understanding how women's descriptive representation is shaped by the multistage process of political

candidacy. In answering the first research question, this dissertation can help guide public policy by showing at which stage(s) in the representation pipeline interventions to increase women's participation would be most effective. While the existing literature assumes that much of the gender imbalance is a product of the candidate emergence stage, most studies addressing it are using election-level data and inferring a cause "upstream" in the pipeline. This dissertation can provide confirmation about the origins of these effects and also quantify each stage's importance to the overall gender imbalance in representation, thus allowing parties and governments to craft policies that precisely target the biggest barriers to women's equal representation.

Answering RQ₁ can also contribute to the academic study of women's underrepresentation, in both a comparative and Canadian context. As stated above, the assumption that women's underrepresentation is chiefly determined by candidate emergence has been confirmed by little empirical research, particularly little research that comparatively examines the entirety of the representation pipeline. Moreover, the answer to the question is far from being obvious, especially when it comes to comparing the relative importance of the stages of the pipeline. For example, in the Danish context Kjaer and Kosiara-Pedersen (2019) find that women's representation follows an "hourglass" pattern across the stages of the pipeline, with women faring far better at the election stage than either the nomination or emergence stages.

Through the second question, this dissertation can address the incongruity in much of the existing literature discussed in Chapter III by clearly identifying at which stage in the process particular factors influence women's political representation, thereby contributing to the literature a better understanding of the causal mechanisms at play. Simultaneously, answers to this second question will be of use to public policy, as they will allow policy makers to better craft solutions to address women's underrepresentation at a particular stage in the representation

pipeline. This dissertation contributes a holistic account of the factors that influence women's representation, providing clearer indications of at which stages these factors exert their influence, and the extent to which each stage of the pipeline is responsible for shaping overall representation.

General hypotheses

As I outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the structure of this thesis requires setting expectations at multiple levels of analysis. My aim in this thesis is to evaluate women's participation across all stages of the representation pipeline, and for this reason I propose separate hypotheses for each stage of the pipeline. As each stage of the pipeline is independent, and as the same factor can have different effects at each stage, separating the hypotheses in this way provides greater clarity. To better streamline this dissertation, I present these specific hypotheses in the individual empirical chapters to which they pertain. Instead, I present below a general overview of my empirical expectations for the entirety of the analysis, including for hypotheses which will be similar across stages of analysis.

In total, I present four general hypotheses. My first hypothesis responds to my first research question, and therefore targets a specific stage of the pipeline, namely emergence. The following three hypotheses respond to my second research question. These hypotheses are intended to apply across the entirety of the representation pipeline in varying degrees, as explained below.

Hypothesis #1: The candidate emergence stage will be the crucial stage in explaining women's political underrepresentation in Canada

In answering my first overall research question, I expect to find that the emergence stage plays the most crucial role in shaping women's representation. The emergence stage represents the entry to the representation pipeline, and thus it has the clear potential to influence the results further "downstream." This first stage effectively has a gatekeeping effect on the following stages: a nomination contest composed of only men will necessarily result in a man being candidate, and an election with only men as candidates will necessarily see a man elected (see, for example: Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Even assuming that nomination contests of only men are outliers, the results of the emergence stage are still of paramount importance to the overall process. If fewer women than men emerge as nomination contestants on average, then even a perfectly fair selection and election process will result in women being underrepresented. If parties frequently have no women participating in nomination contests, then even a substantial degree of positive discrimination in favour of women can not compensate, and the result will be a candidate pool which is mostly men.

The emergence stage is also one where both the "supply" and "demand" components of candidate recruitment are incredibly important, to a greater extent than in other stages. On the "demand" side, or on the side of political parties, recruitment plays a key role in shaping the representation pipeline. Even without having any formal ability to approve or refuse potential contestants, local Electoral District Association executives can have a significant influence on the candidate pool in a contest, and their encouragement (or discouragement) can be key to recruiting aspirants into the contest (see, for example: Cheng and Tavits 2011; Tolley 2019; Albaugh 2022).

On the “supply” or candidate side as well, the emergence stage is where many aspirants will opt out of the process and decide to not pursue a career in politics. Many barriers to women’s equal representation identified in the literature stem not from electors and selectors discriminating against women in politics, but from broader societal forces making it more difficult for women to participate on a personal level. The pressures of caring for children, for example, tend to be felt more strongly by women than by men, and the resultant time pressures have often been cited as a barrier to women participating in electoral politics (see, for example: Nechemias 1985). The combined effects of who parties chose to recruit and who is most willing to come forward give the emergence stage the potential to greatly influence subsequent stages, and thus have the greatest influence on the overall gender balance of representatives.

Hypothesis #2: The Conservative party is least conducive to electing women to office

Throughout the world there is an observed tendency for more left-leaning political parties to perform better on women’s descriptive representation (see, for instance: Matland 1998). This tendency can come from both the supply and demand sides of the equation: more right-leaning or traditional parties are less likely to believe in using positive discrimination measures to encourage more women into politics, and in the 21st century women are on average less likely than men to hold politically conservative views, and thus they are less likely to chose a conservative party when entering politics.

In the Canadian context specifically, the Conservative Party also is set apart from its Liberal and New Democratic counterparts by its lack of diversity requirements for nomination contests, reflecting a general trend of the Conservative Party to approach gender equality strictly

from an “equality of opportunity” lens (see: Thomas 2017). Both the NDP and Liberals require electoral district associations to have at least one candidate from an equity seeking group (including women and racialized and LGBTQ people) in order to begin a nomination contest. While both parties do allow nomination contests to proceed without an equity seeking candidate if the Electoral District Association demonstrates that they made a good faith effort to recruit such persons, the Conservative Party’s Electoral District Associations nonetheless face lower pressure from their party’s rules to actively recruit women into nomination contests. Beyond this different approach to diversity requirements, the Conservative Party also sets itself apart by having a lower rate of women membership than any of the other major federal parties (Cross and Young 2004), lowering its pool of likely political aspirants.

This expectation should manifest itself most clearly at the emergence stage. A lack of incentive to ensure women’s presence in nomination contests will reduce efforts by riding associations to recruit women as contestants. Likewise, if the party’s ideological leanings simply appeal to fewer women than do those of the other major parties, then this disparity should manifest at the earliest stages, as women who aspire to political office will less often chose to join the Conservative Party.

At the selection and election stages the biases of the emergence stage will be built in; assuming that my expectation is confirmed in empirical reality, the lower number of women nomination contestants will in turn result in a lower rate of women as candidates and as elected MPs. In addition to simply failing to correct for a low number of women nomination contestants, the selection and election stages may also introduce further biases. At the selection stage, the Conservative Party’s lack of emphasis on candidate diversity may result in women being nominated at lower rates than in the other major parties, even relative to the number of women

contestants. In all cases, however, a lower rate of women's participation in nomination contests combined with no positive discrimination measures to compensate will result in the Conservative Party electing fewer women to the House of Commons than either of their major-party competitors.

Hypothesis #3: More urban districts are more conducive to women's representation

Across all three stages of the representation pipeline, I expect to find that districts located in major metropolitan centres are more conducive to recruiting, selecting, and electing women. Urban districts on average have an array of demographic and geographic features that should make them more conducive to women's political success at all three stages of the representation pipeline. On a demographic level, urban areas tend to have younger, more educated, and more socially liberal populations, all of which tend to indicate a more favourable view of women in politics. This grouping of demographic traits should be more conducive to women's political participation at all stages; in a more gender-egalitarian area women will be more likely to see themselves as possible politicians, parties will be more likely to recruit women and select them in nomination contests, and electors will be more willing to ultimately vote for a woman in the general election.

On a geographic level, urban electoral districts also present a smaller area for which to be responsible, which can in turn be more conducive to work-life balance for a representative or candidate by requiring less travel time between events within the district. Similarly, the greater transportation infrastructure in urban areas should be more conducive to commuting between Ottawa and one's electoral district; even for districts that are very far from Ottawa, the closer

access to airports and train stations, and the greater frequency of planes and trains, will make the average travel time shorter than for an equidistant rural district.

Hypothesis #4: ‘safe’ districts have a generally detrimental effect on women’s representation

At both the emergence and selection stages, I expect to find that safe seats are more likely to be accorded to men, and harder-to-win seats more likely to be accorded to women candidates. Numerous previous studies have examined a possible tendency in Canadian politics for women to be disproportionately likely to become candidates in districts in which their party has no reasonable prospect to win the election. While Thomas and Bodet (2013) most clearly established the fact of women’s tendency to be used as “sacrificial lambs” by Canadian political parties, the reasons behind this are less clear. This tendency could be produced at either or both the emergence and selection stages. Parties may be more willing to nominate women as candidates in these districts for a myriad of reasons, such as focusing more on “slate-balancing” in districts they are unlikely to win or thinking that more diverse candidates will help them broaden their appeal in a difficult district (see: Ryan, Haslam, and Kulich 2010). Similarly, this tendency might already be set in stone at the selection stage, as the candidate pool in nomination contests might be solely comprised of women. Such a gender skew could come from women themselves being more likely to present themselves as candidates in these districts — or conversely from men being less willing to come forward when they know a district to be unwinnable — or from the parties themselves being more likely to actively recruit women into these roles. Recruitment could play a particularly important role in less winnable districts, as

potential candidates will have less motivation to come forward on their own, and as a result nominations are likely to be uncontested.

At the election stage, these effects culminate in two ways to inhibit women's access to office. The safest districts, those in which a party is nearly assured a victory, will usually not have nomination contests at all, as the party will usually guarantee the nomination to the incumbent — as incumbents in Canada (and most countries) are predominantly men, these usually relatively safe seats heavily disfavour increasing women's descriptive representation (see: Murray 2008). Those districts in which women do manage to become candidates will disproportionately be ones that they are unlikely to be able to win, thereby causing few women to be elected and failing to create more women incumbents for the next election.

Conclusion and summary

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to examine how and at what point(s) gender imbalances in representation emerge in Canadian federal politics. To this end, I conceptualise the pathway to becoming a representative as a three-stage process, where aspirants must first *emerge* as a political contender, then be *selected* as a candidate for a major party, and finally be *elected* as a representative by the voting public. Each of these three stages presents a chokepoint where potential representatives are eliminated from consideration; an aspiring representative may fail to ever emerge as a potential candidate because they are not recruited into the nomination contest or because they decide on their own to not participate. Similarly, many potential representatives

will necessarily be removed at the selection and election stages, as only one candidate is chosen by each major party and only one Member of Parliament is elected in each district.

While all three stages present an occasion that ultimately shapes the gender balance of legislatures, they do so in distinct ways and are controlled by different actors and forces. While the stages of election and selection are both about voting for a single candidate, the electorate and selectorate are distinct groups with differing preferences and motivations. At the emergence stage, the aspirant's own motivations and personal circumstances may deter them from entering, even if they might face a clear path to winning selection and election. To best address these differences, the empirical analysis of this dissertation is divided into separate chapters for each phase of the pipeline, each having its own hypotheses and sources of data.

V. Nomination Contestant Survey Results

Introduction and summary

In this first empirical chapter of this dissertation, I present the results of an original survey of individuals contesting the nomination of major parties in the lead-up to the 2019 General Election. The descriptive and multivariate analysis of the survey data reveals that the men and women who seek to become major party candidates — and by extension elected Members of Parliament — are largely quite similar in terms of their qualifications and backgrounds.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows: first, I present the aims of this chapter along with the hypotheses to be tested. Next, I explain the survey instrument and its distribution, followed by an overview of the variables and regression model. I then present descriptive and multivariate results, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

Aims and hypotheses

I have two main goals in this first empirical chapter. The first is to provide preliminary analysis to investigate several supply-side hypotheses of women's descriptive underrepresentation. While the analyses I present in the following empirical chapters benefit from a larger time scale and include the entire population of nomination contestants, they nonetheless do not include detailed demographic information on the individual level.

The second, principal goal I have in this chapter is to set the groundwork for the empirical analyses of aggregate data to follow. As a preliminary research question, I seek to establish if men and women who participate in major party nomination contests differ in terms of their experience, qualifications, or demographics. In investigating women's success in winning nomination and election, my hypotheses and analyses in following chapters will necessarily

depend upon an implicit assumption that the men and women in question are not systematically different. For example, were women seeking nomination on average less educated or politically experienced than the men opposing them, then their winning nominations at lower rates could reflect a failure to recruit qualified women contestants rather than discrimination in the nomination process. Conversely, if the pool of women candidates is on average more qualified than men candidates, then even winning nominations at identical rates would raise questions of bias against women. For these reasons, establishing the similarity of the men and women competing for nomination is a crucial first step of analysis.

To answer this question, I will be investigating the following five hypotheses derived from the existing literature. Given that this chapter does not address my primary research questions, however, this chapter differs from those to follow in that its hypotheses do not closely reflect the overall hypotheses provided in Chapter IV. Instead, I present below a series of hypotheses designed to test differences on the “supply-side” of the equation, addressing possible differences between men and women nomination contestants that could have bearing on the interpretation of my findings in the following empirical chapters.

My first hypothesis for this chapter addresses the question of candidates’ qualifications for office, particularly as they may be viewed by candidates themselves. In terms of gendered barriers to entry, many supply-side factors are those that inhibit or discourage women from seeking office in the first place. Particularly when examining the candidate emergence phase, then, a potential candidate’s qualifications and experience matter far less than their own *perceptions* of their suitability as a candidate and office holder. While a truly unsuitable candidate who is convinced of their own greatness will likely be filtered out at the selection and election stages, an excellent candidate who doubts their own abilities may self-select out of the

process, thus never reaching the recruitment stage. In terms of gender, previous research shows that women are more often members of this latter group than are men — they are more likely than men to underestimate their qualifications and thus self-exclude from politics (see: Fulton 2012; Cross and Young 2013). I expect to find this previous research reflected in the Canadian context, leading to my first hypothesis:

H₁: Women nomination contestants will be more qualified than their male counterparts

If women do indeed doubt their qualification for office more than men, or at least if such self-doubts present a substantial barrier to women's descriptive representation, then women who aspire to political office will on average hold themselves to a higher bar than will men. As a result, women contesting major party nominations will on average have more education and more prior electoral experience than will men in the same position. Qualification is, however, an inherently subjective quality, and opinions can vary substantially on both what qualities one ought to assess to determine if a potential candidate is qualified and in terms of how to assess these qualities. In evaluating this hypothesis, I limit my analysis to political experience and formal education as these criteria are among the most widely used in the literature on political candidacy, and they lend themselves to measures that are easily comparable between candidates.

In a related hypothesis, I also expect that women who compete for nominations will on average be older than the men against whom they compete. The reasons for this are twofold: first, as an extension of the above hypothesis, women may feel more need to seek education and experience before running for federal office. These additional years taken to obtain degrees, to be involved with political parties, and to run for other offices will as a natural consequence result in women delaying their attempted entry into federal politics to later in life.

H₂: Women nomination contestants will be on average older than men

Additionally, the realities of child-rearing place particular pressures upon women that may cause them to delay entry into politics; as women who have children face on average higher time demands, both from the act of childbirth itself and from more often taking on a greater burden of childcare, mothers of young children will less likely be willing to enter politics than fathers of similarly aged children. As such, women may for this reason choose to delay an attempt to enter politics to later in their lives, when their children are older.

Beyond personal traits and experiences, supply-side factors also include the resources that a (potential) candidate has at their disposal to ensure their success in seeking nomination and office. In terms of the personal resources necessary for a candidate to launch a successful campaign, one of the most important is time; seeking election is in itself a major undertaking, and if elected Members of Parliament face very heavy workloads, much of it far from home. While circumstances naturally vary greatly between individuals and between households, women very often find that they face greater pressures on their time from domestic and care-giving responsibilities, most notably from child-rearing. From this I derive two hypotheses:

H₃: Women nomination contestants will have fewer children than their men counterparts

H₄: Women nomination contestants will have older children than their men counterparts

As mentioned above, in studies of women's aversion to entering politics, the time constraints of caregiving obligations related to raising children are known to play a major role, with women being more impacted than men (see, for example: Fox and Lawless 2004; Lawless and Fox 2005). One possible way for this tendency to manifest itself is for women entering politics to simply be less likely to have children than, or to have as many children as, men in

politics. Children present as a significant resource barrier in terms of time—to all candidates, but especially to women — and this barrier grows in both intensity and duration with each additional child. Even if women who aspire to political office are not consciously forgoing having children in order to have a political career, these increased barriers may cause women with children to opt out of entering politics at a greater rate than do men with children. If this hypothesis is correct, the result will be a lower average number of children among women contestants than among men.

Equally, the time pressures caused by raising young children could cause women to delay their entry into politics. Rather than forgo a political career entirely, women with children may wait for their children to become older before entering politics than would men in the same position. For example, women may wait for their children to reach the age of secondary school before seeking office, whereas men may be more likely to enter politics while their children are still preschool-aged.

In a complement to supply-side factors, which focus on the (potential) candidates themselves, a demand-side analysis focuses on the institutions involved and how they recruit and select their candidates and elect Members of Parliament. As such, the most important aspects of the demand side are how selection and election processes respond to supply-side characteristics — how candidate traits and characteristics are privileged by the selectors and electors, explicitly or implicitly.

At the recruitment stage, the demand-side determinants centre around how the party interacts with and attempts to find potential candidates. Other than a typical vetting process conducted by the national party to ensure general suitability for office (and to avoid embarrassing incidents), the recruitment phase does not involve any hard barriers for interested

candidates, and there is theoretically no upper limit on the number of contestants that could exist. As such, the demand side's principal role here is not to select preferred candidates, but to encourage more to come forward. Here, I advance the following hypothesis:

H₅: Women contestants will more often have been pushed by others to run

The existing literature on women's descriptive representation has established that active recruitment is more important to women than it is to men. Men are more likely than women to put their own name forward for consideration without external prompting than are women, and women are conversely more likely to run for office because they were asked to do so by others. While in many cases this encouragement comes in the form of recruitment by the party — for example, members of a riding association executive committee approaching potential candidates to encourage them to run — in other cases it comes from those in the aspirant's own social circle, such as their friends and family.

Methodology

Data

The data used for the analyses in this chapter come from an original survey of nomination contestants for major political parties in the lead-up to the 2019 General Election. I conducted this survey independently, without the cooperation of the parties.⁶ The population of nomination contestants I targeted is therefore limited to those who competed in contests that were reported in

⁶ I contacted all major party presidents to request assistance in distributing the survey to contestants, but I received either no response or a refusal in all cases.

Elections Canada's Nomination Contests Database as of the beginning of October 2019. This does, however, mean that the data in my analyses are incomplete, as only 66% of party-election-riding groupings has a reported nomination contest. A lack of a reported contest will in many cases reflect instances where no nomination contest was held, such as when a party leader appoints a candidate unilaterally or when an incumbent candidate is protected and nominated by the party automatically. Still, this means that my analysis in this chapter, and in those to follow, is limited to the instances in which the party reported a contest to Elections Canada. In the case of the 2019 Election, the Bloc Québécois had not reported any nomination contests by the time of survey distribution. For this reason, I address only the Liberal, Conservative, and New Democratic Parties in this chapter.

Elections Canada does not publish complete contact information for nomination contestants, providing only their full name, city of residence, and postal code. As such, I compiled a contact list for nomination contestants based on their personal websites and social media profiles. I performed web searches on each listed nomination contestant and searched social media websites such as LinkedIn and Twitter in order to locate a contact email address for each contestant. In cases where contestants had disabled their website or profile following an unsuccessful nomination bid, I used the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine to retrieve an archived version of the webpage in question. In total, through these means I was able to retrieve working email addresses for 731 nomination contestants, or 91% of the registered contestants for the three major parties in the lead-up to the 2019 election.

Some caution should be taken in interpreting the results of the survey due to non-randomness among the contestants for whom I was unable to find contact information. By their very nature, nomination contestants who are easy to identify are different from those with

smaller internet footprints. The more visible contestants are more likely to have been successful in politics (either by winning the nomination or by having previous experience) and therefore have a publicly available email address. While I obtained contact information for many contestants from a website created for their nomination bid, such websites are more likely to be created by contestants in contested nominations (who need to more actively campaign) or by contestants who take the contest particularly seriously despite a lack of competition. In all of these cases, there are reasons to assume that some important demographic or experience differences may exist between the identifiable and unidentifiable contestants.

I began distribution of the surveys on October 11th 2019, with follow-up sent on the 1st and 14th of November. Respondents were invited to participate in the survey via a personalised invitation letter explaining the purpose of the study and including a personalised link to participate in the study. For contestants from districts in Québec, or whom I otherwise knew to be French speakers, the invitation letter was written in French with a link to the English translation, with the reverse being true for all other recruited participants.

Of the 731 nomination contestants for whom I obtained contact information, 164 completed the survey, representing a response rate of 22%. These responses were fairly evenly distributed among the population of nomination contestants, with a slightly greater response rate among Conservative and Liberal nomination contestants than among those of the NDP. Specifically, LPC and CPC contestants had response rates of 25.8% and 25.2%, respectively, compared to 22.7% for the NDP contestants. The gender balance of respondents was also almost evenly split between men and women, despite the latter group's underrepresentation among nomination contestants.

Variables and Model

The dependent variable in my analyses is gender, operationalised via a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent identified as a woman and 0 if otherwise.⁷ I include in the model a further nine independent variables related to my hypotheses and two control. The first control variable is a 3-category categorical variable for the political party whose nomination the respondent was seeking, with the possible options of Liberal, Conservative, and New Democratic. Additionally, I include as a control a measure of the party's competitiveness in the district, expressed as the number of percentage points by which the party's candidate ultimately won or lost the district in the general election. For example, in a district where the Conservative Party won the district with 40% of votes and the Liberal and New Democratic Parties received 30% and 25% of votes, respectively, a contestant for the Conservatives would be coded 10 (as their party was 10 percentage points above the runner up) and the LPC and NDP candidates would be coded -10 and -15, respectively.

I further include three demographic variables for contestants: their age, measured in years; their ethnicity, measured as a dichotomous variable coded 1 for those who identified as white (either as a single response or one of multiple) and 0 otherwise; and their highest level of education completed, measured on a twelve-point ordinal scale ranging from no formal education to doctorate or professional degree. Additionally, I include two variables relating to the contestant's children. The first is a count variable for the number of children (including stepchildren) in the contestant's household. Those who indicated more than 0 children were

⁷ Only one respondent to the survey listed their gender as something other than 'man' or 'woman,' self-identifying as a 'non-binary woman'. Their responses are included in the woman category.

further asked the age group of the oldest child, measured as a 4-category ordinal variable with the groups of under 5, 5–10, 10–15, 15–20, and over 20.

Descriptive statistics

Overall, a descriptive analysis of the survey results reveals a *lack* of difference between the men and women vying for major party nomination. In most respects there are no or very minor differences between genders in the sample; in terms of their education, prior electoral experience, prior experience with the party, and household income, women and men nomination contestants are essentially identical. Among both groups, nomination contestants are on average very highly educated, with only 27% of contestants having less than a bachelor's degree and 22% having a doctorate or professional degree (PhD, MD, JD, LLB, etc.). In terms of income, nomination contests are on average affluent, with both men and women having median household incomes over \$100,000, this putting them very far above the Canadian median of \$62,900 (Statistics Canada 2021).

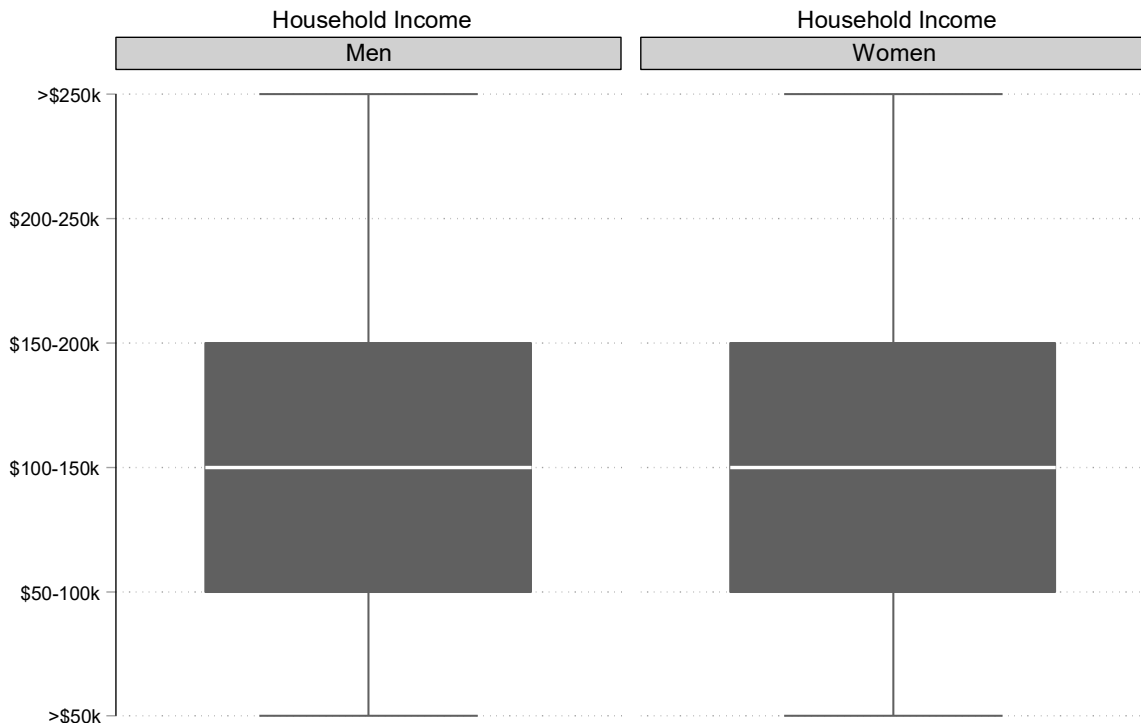


Figure 2: Household income of nomination contestants

Men and women in the sample are also very comparable in terms of prior electoral experience. The majority of nomination contestants have no previous experience holding or contesting elected office; overall, 62% of respondents report that they have never previously been a candidate for election at any level of government, and 79% report never having held elected office. Slightly more women in the sample reported having previously ran for office, with both men and women being most likely to have previously run for a municipal council. Overall, men and women report very similar prior political experience prior to seeking nomination, both in terms of years of experience and where that experience was obtained. This provides an early indication against hypothesis number three – women who participate in federal nomination contests do not appear more likely than men to acquire additional experience before attempting

to become a federal candidate. Rather, women enter the representation pipeline with roughly equivalent levels of experience to their men counterparts.

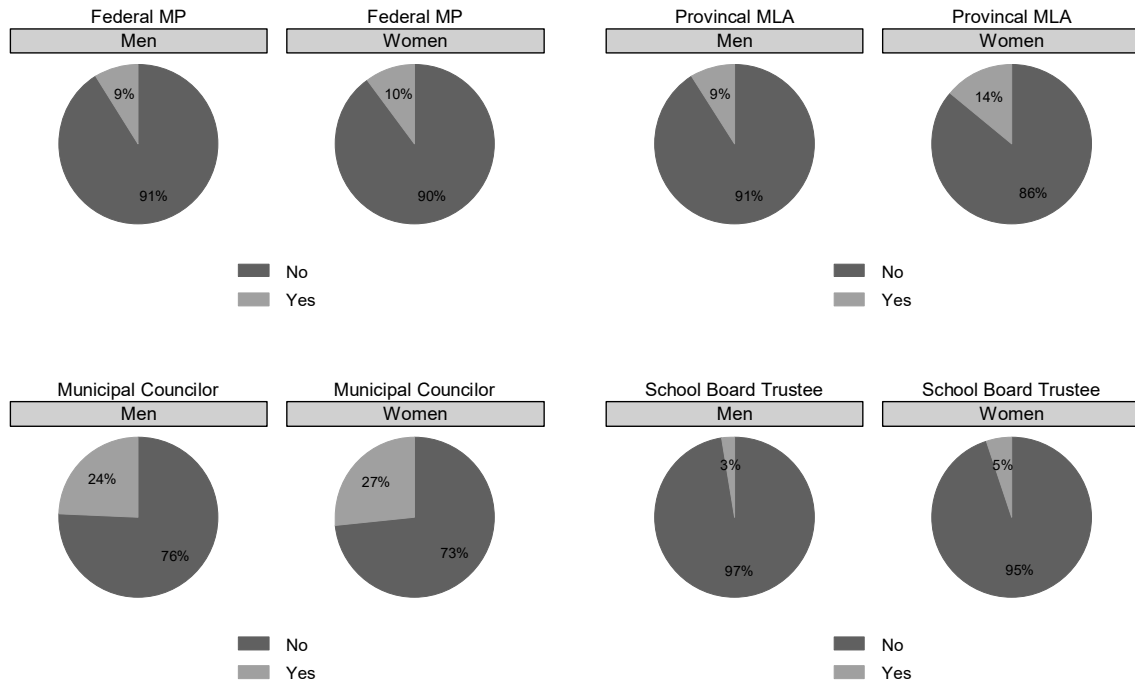


Figure 3: Prior electoral candidacies of nomination contestants

Regarding experience within their own political party, men and women again report very similar backgrounds. In terms of years of party membership, the two gender groups report almost identical experiences, with both having been party members for a mean of 8.6 years before seeking nomination. In terms of active involvement with the party, both genders again report identical levels of involvement, with a mean of four hours per month spent volunteering for the party reported by both groups.

More notable demographic differences exist, however, in relation to having children. Men and women nomination contestants are equally likely to have children, with 48% of

respondents overall reporting that they have no children (including stepchildren) in their household. They also have very similar distributions in the number of children in their households, with both groups having a median of one child, with women respondents being slightly more likely to report having more than three children (see Figure 4). Differences appear, however, in the age of contestants' children; only 16% of women with children report that the youngest is in the 0–5 age category, compared to 23% of men with children. Moreover, half of women report that their youngest child is over 15 years old, compared to only 23% of men. This provides an early indication in support of hypothesis number four: women who responded to the survey are less likely to have young children requiring around-the-clock care, indicating that the burdens of childcare are more likely to deter women from entering politics, if only until their children reach adolescence or adulthood.

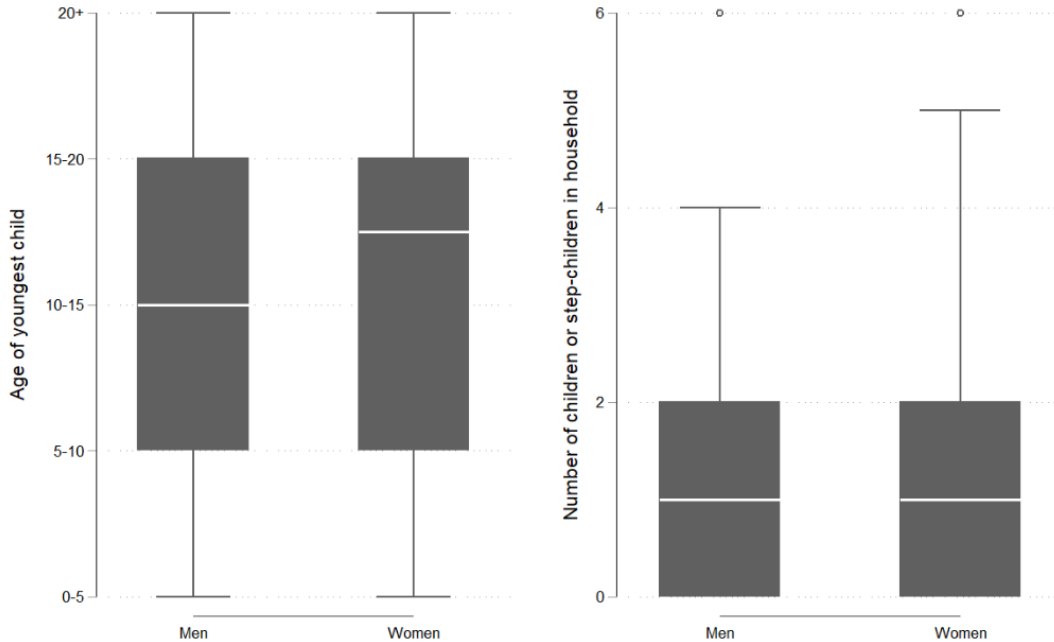


Figure 4: age and number of children of nomination contestants

Men and women in the sample also showed some degree of difference in their motivations for running for office. When asked to place their motivation on a 100-point scale, where a response of 1 means the respondent was entirely self motivated and 100 means that they ran only because others pushed them to do so, the mean response among men was 36, compared to 44 for women. As can be see in Figure 5, only one quarter of men respondents indicated they ran primarily because of others' encouragement, compared to 39% of women.

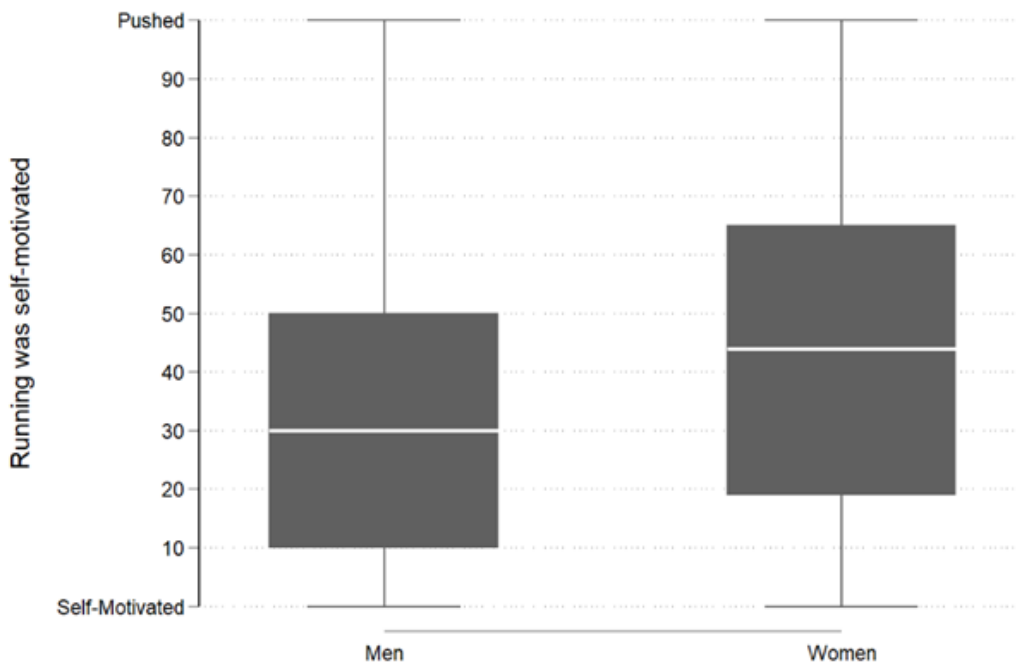


Figure 5: Nomination contestants' motivations for running

Finally, the men and women who responded to the survey show some minor differences in their understandings of the competitiveness of both their nomination and their district. As demonstrated in Figure 6 below, women responding to the survey show a slightly higher level of confidence in their own probability of being selected as candidate in their district at the time of entering the nomination contest. Conversely, women also more often indicated that they felt at

the time of entering the nomination contest that their party had only a low chance of actually winning the election in their district. Taken together, these two trends hint at a possibility that women, or at least women in the sample, more often enter contests in hopeless districts, therefore feeling little hope that their party will ultimately win but also having little doubt they will be selected as candidate. This is likely because they do not expect to face much (or any) competition in a district they know they will lose.

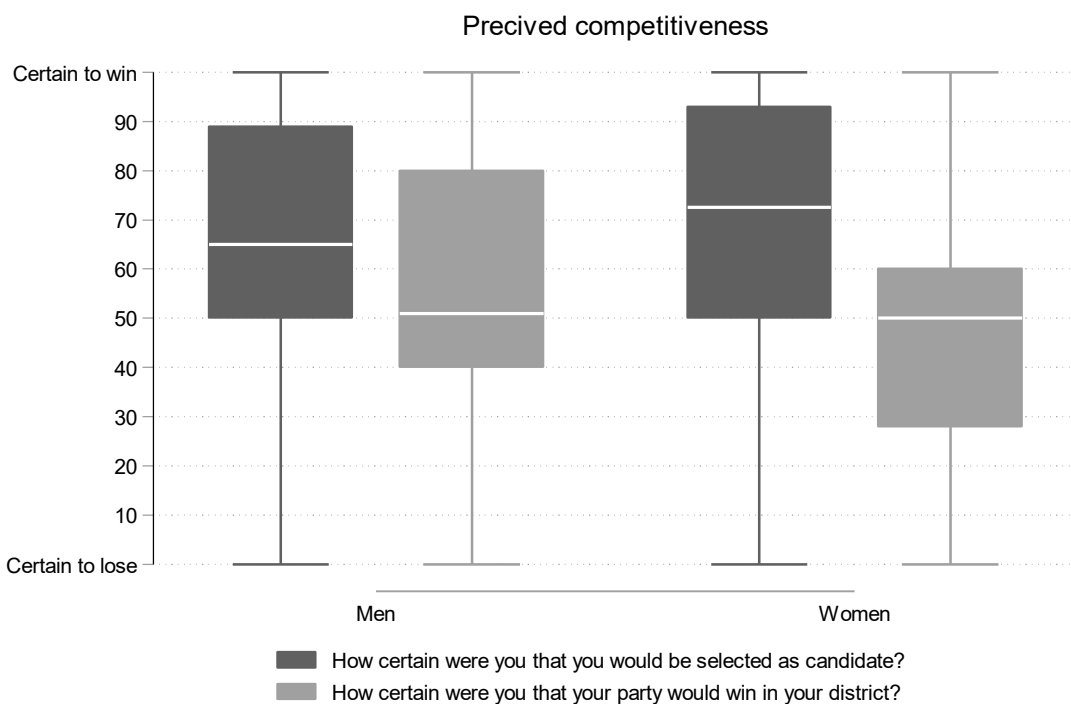


Figure 6: Respondents' perceptions of nomination and district competitiveness by gender

Multivariate analysis

The results of the logistic regression model largely confirm what can be seen from the descriptive analysis. As evidenced by the statistical non-significance of the predictor variables, women and men in the sample do not significantly differ on any aspect included in the model,

with two exceptions. The first exception, political party, is included only as a control variable, and isn't intended to be a means of testing a hypothesis. While there are theoretical reasons to expect some parties to attract more women contestants than others (see Chapter VI), this individual-level analysis is not suited to test these expectations, particularly given the disparities in response rates between political parties. As such, this statistically significant result does not provide any clear insight into the differing ability of political parties to recruit women nomination contestants or to elect women to office.

The only other variable to show some degree of statistical significance in the model is candidate age, although this only at the 90% level. This provides some limited support for my second hypothesis, indicating that women may delay their entry into federal politics later than do men. In substantive terms however, as discussed above, this delay is only very minor in size; the average age of women in the sample is only slightly higher, with men having a mean age of 46 compared to a mean age of 48 for women. As such, while the regression model does indicate that women in the sample are on average older than men to a borderline-statistically significant degree, the substantive size of this effect is relatively small.

Table 1: Logistic regression of nomination contestants' gender

	Logit model woman
Party (ref. CPC)	
LPC	1.319** (0.478)

NDP	1.559** (0.556)
Victory margin	-0.000238 (0.00779)
Education	0.131 (0.180)
white	0.0688 (0.474)
age in years	0.0272+ (0.0157)
average monthly time spent on party activities, in hours	-0.0161 (0.0132)
Years as member of current party prior to seeking nomination	-0.0113 (0.0210)
Running for office was self-motivated	0.00703 (0.00660)
total number of elections contested	0.152 (0.200)
total number of years in elected office	-0.0562 (0.0925)

Number of children or step-children in household	0.0107 (0.133)
Constant	-2.547** (0.973)
Observations	142
<i>Pseudo R</i> ²	0.112

Discussion and conclusion

The results I present in this chapter are necessarily exploratory in nature and should be treated with caution. While the survey's 25% response rate would normally be considered quite high, given the very small population being analysed here — contestants for major party nominations in the lead-up to the 2019 Canadian General Elections — the resultant sample size is still rather low and does not easily allow for firm conclusions. Moreover, the response rate was not even across the population, with a roughly equal number of men and women responding, despite men being very clearly overrepresented among nomination contestants (see next chapter).

Nevertheless, the results of this survey reveal information that cannot be obtained from any other source and which can be useful to guiding my analysis of aggregate data in the chapters to follow. Overall, the responses to the survey reveal that the men and women considered for nomination by major federal are very similar, with few differences between the two groups. They have nearly identical levels of prior political experience and education, as well as similar levels of experience within their own parties. This is important to subsequent analyses as it confirms the validity of a portion of the framework I presented in the prior chapter: women

and men should be expected to win nomination and election at very similar rates in the absence of some form of discrimination. When observing a difference in electoral success (or in nomination success) between gender groups, the alternative explanation to discrimination is naturally that there is some systematic difference in qualification that explains the differential outcome — that the women candidates simply do not have the same level of experience as do men candidates, and that this therefore explains why they are less often successful. The survey results, however, fairly convincingly suggest this not to be the case.

As a corollary, however, these similarities in background between men and women would also tend to disprove the hypothesis that women need to attain a higher bar in order to be seen as qualified for political office. In many contexts, research has suggested that women performing as well as men in elections is still an example of electoral discrimination, because women candidates are on average more qualified than the men they run against (see, for example: Fulton 2012). Based on the metrics I observed in this survey, however, this is not the case in Canada; women and men have very comparable levels of education and experience when entering the process to run for office.

VI. Candidate Emergence

Introduction and overview

In the preceding chapter, I examined the individual-level characteristics and motivations of nomination contestants in the 2019 General Elections. In this chapter, I flip the analysis to the demand side of the equation — what are the characteristics of a nomination race that musters more women contestants? Which parties perform better at balanced gender representation at this earliest stage, and is this representation equal across the country? The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows: first, I present an overview of my theoretical expectations and hypothesis for the emergence stage of the pipeline. Next, I explain the data sources used in my analysis and the methods of analysis. Finally, I present the descriptive and multivariate results, followed by a conclusion.

Theory and hypotheses

In this chapter I continue the analysis of the emergence stage begun in Chapter V using aggregate-level data instead of individual-level survey data. Given this change in data, my conceptual framework also largely shifts from focusing on the supply side of the equation to the demand side of the equation. As such, in this chapter I ask not which women emerge as nomination contestants, but instead ask where and under what conditions they do so. I present below three specific hypotheses for this stage of my analysis, which closely reflect hypotheses two through four presented in Chapter IV.

I expect overall to find that demand-side influence on women's representation can manifest itself in two principal ways: through the influence of the political parties conducting the nomination contests and through the influence of the communities that a successful contestant

will vie to represent. At the party level, my expectations result in a single hypothesis that will be familiar from the previous two chapters:

H₁: The Conservative party will have fewer women competing for nomination

The reasons I expect the Conservatives to do more poorly in compiling gender-balanced nomination contests are twofold. Firstly, as mentioned in previous chapters, the Conservative Party does not share the equity promotion rules for nomination contests used by other major parties. While New Democratic and Liberal EDAs must prove they made at least a “good faith effort” to recruit candidates from equity-seeking groups (including women) in order for a nomination contest to go forward, Conservative EDAs face no such restrictions as to the identities of their contestants. This places a clearly lower incentive for Conservative EDA executives to target women specifically for active recruitment and as such should result in a lower number of women emerging as contestants for the Conservative Party.

Secondly, the Conservative party may also be less able to attract women due to differences in policy preferences. At least in the 21st century, women in Canada and in much of the Western world have on average more left-leaning policy preferences than do men. This also results in women voting for, and identifying as partisans of, the Conservative Party at lower rates than do men. This gender imbalance in partisanship between the parties, small though it may be, means that even if nomination contests are perfectly representative of a party’s voter base, the Conservatives will still have at least a modest gender gap in favour of men.

In addition to the culture and rules of political parties shaping the gender balance of nomination contests, I similarly expect the culture and geography of electoral districts to shape

their contests' gender balance. While much of a district's impact on its politics will be a function of the culture of the people who live there, the physical geography of the district can also be a limiting factor that might result in fewer women emerging as nomination contestants than would otherwise:

H₂: More rural districts and those situated further from the capital will have fewer women nomination contestants

Simply put, representing a more rural and more remote district represents a larger time commitment than does representing a central and urban district. In studies of women's aversion to entering politics, the time constraints of caregiving obligations related to raising children are known to play a major role, with women being more impacted than men (see, for example: Fox and Lawless 2004; Lawless and Fox 2005). Considering these caregiving obligations, representing more rural districts located further from the capital exacerbates the disincentive to seek office. Given the need to travel longer distances to travel between Ottawa and the riding, and the greater difficulty of traveling around the district (in the case of rural areas), representing these districts will present a greater time commitment, which will likely deter women from seeking nomination in these districts (see: Nechemias 1985; Silbermann 2015). While both men and women aspirants will be aware of the fact that representing a district in rural British Columbia, for example, would require spending large amounts of time far away from home, this is likely to present a stronger disincentive on average to women, particularly women with children, due to the increased social pressures and expectations surrounding motherhood.

In addition to the physical geographic limitations of rural districts, rurality may also present a barrier to women's representation in the extent to which it represents a proxy for an area's demographic makeup. More urban areas on average tend to have more educated, diverse,

and culturally liberal populations, which may be more open to having women in leadership roles. A bias such as this could affect both the supply and demand sides of the candidate emergence phase — women from areas with less egalitarian cultures may be less likely to see themselves as suited for political office, and party executives from such areas may likewise be less likely to target women in their recruitment efforts, either because they themselves less likely see women as suitable candidates or because they fear that a woman candidate wouldn't be as likely to win an election in their district.

A final, more indirect demand-side factor that could inhibit women's descriptive representation at the recruitment stage is district competitiveness. Several studies in the Canadian context, most notably Thomas and Bodet (2013), have observed a tendency in Canadian politics for women to be more likely to be candidates in districts that their party is unlikely to win. While this imbalance could be due to influences at the selection stage (see Chapter VII), it could equally be a product of candidate recruitment practices: women may be more likely to emerge as political aspirants in districts their party is unlikely to win.

H₃: Women are more likely to be contestants in districts in which their party is unlikely to win the election

The nature of Canada's nomination process makes the tendency for women to ultimately become "sacrificial lambs" running in districts that their party has little to no chance of winning somewhat perplexing. With a centralised nomination process it would be very possible that parties would deliberately assign women to their most difficult-to-win districts. Following the nomination practices of major parties in Canada, however, the vast majority of nominations are independent choices by local electoral district associations, with no input from the central party nor necessarily any knowledge about the candidates selected in other districts.

Given this independence, any gender imbalance in difficult-to-win districts must be the product of either the emergence or selection stages of the pipeline.

While this tendency may indeed be the result of patterns in candidate selection (see Chapter VII), the gender balance may be “baked in” come the selection stage, particularly in unwinnable districts. Nomination contests in hopeless districts will likely be very different from those in safe or competitive districts, as there is little reasonable prospect that the winner of the contest will go on to be elected to Parliament. For this reason, I expect a much higher rate of acclimations in hopeless districts, as aspirants will likely be less willing to participate in a contest, especially if they know that another person is already interested.

In addition to attracting fewer nomination contestants, nominations in hopeless districts will also attract qualitatively different aspirants than would a nomination in a competitive district. Assuming that aspirants are reasonably aware of their party’s prospects in the upcoming election, those who agree to seek nomination in a hopeless district will have motivations other than hoping to become a Member of Parliament in the short term. Instead, they might be motivated by providing a service to the party by “taking one for the team” and attempting to build the party’s base in the district. Similarly, they may see their participation as an opportunity to gain experience and political capital for a future run in a district in which their party is more competitive.

These differences in motivation could cause a difference in gender balance between competitive and uncompetitive districts. Patterns in political recruitment could also produce a greater number of women aspirants in long-shot districts, even with recruitment happening well before the selection stage. Both the New Democratic and Liberal Parties have adopted nomination rules to promote diversity in their candidate pools that require that at least one person

from an equity-seeking group (including women) be present in the pool of nomination contestants before a vote can be held. While parties allow for exceptions to this rule, they are only to be granted in cases where the electoral district association can demonstrate a good faith attempt to recruit such candidates. Given these policies, EDAs that are having difficulty finding potential candidates will have a clear incentive to target their recruitment efforts towards women, as they will be required to prove they made an effort to recruit an equity-seeking candidate, and women are the demographically largest equity seeking-group. Assuming that fewer people agree to be candidates in hopeless districts, and that consequently the majority of candidates in these districts are acclaimed, an incentive to recruit at least one woman as a nomination contestant becomes functionally equivalent to an incentive to install a woman as an electoral candidate.

Methods and data

The primary source of data used in this chapter is Elections Canada’s Nomination Contest Database, which reports details on all nomination contests held by registered federal parties⁸. The database provides only very limited information on contestants, including their name, city of residence, and the name of their financial agent. Given the lack of any demographic data, I manually coded contestants’ gender based on their given name. In cases of androgynous or unfamiliar names, I located media reports about the contestant and relied on the pronouns used in the article to determine the contestant’s gender. To verify accuracy, I conducted a further such

⁸ For a discussion of this dataset’s limitations, see the “Data” section of Chapter V.

check of news sites on a random sample of 100 contestants whose gender I had coded previously based on given names and found no errors.

Temporally, I limit my analysis to the period of 2004–2019, as these were the contests available in the database at the time of data collection. I include only those contests conducted in the lead-up to a General Election and exclude all contests to select a candidate for a by-election. Specifically, my analysis includes contests for the 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2019 General Elections. I also expand my scope from the previous chapter to include all parties that elected a candidate to Parliament during this timeframe, which is to say I include the Conservative, Liberal, New Democratic, and Green Parties, as well as the Bloc Québécois.

I employ these data to test my hypotheses using a hierarchical Poisson regression model. I assume a Poisson distribution as the dependent variable is a non-normal count variable (see Figure 7), with roughly equal variance and mean.⁹ As my model includes predictors at both the level of the nomination contest (level 1) and the electoral district (level 2), this model is multilevel in form, with random-effects intercept for the electoral district.

To measure a district's remoteness, I include the electoral district's driving distance to Ottawa, sourced using Google Maps. For those districts that include multiple municipalities, the data for the largest population centre are included (e.g. data for Central Nova use the driving distance to Ottawa from the town of New Glasgow). For urban areas, the same distance is used for all districts in the same municipality (e.g. all Montréal districts use the same distance). To account for the expected non-linearity of this relationship, I use the log of this distance in the

⁹ A negative binomial regression model returns similar results.

model. This is an appropriate transformation as the potential cost of working in Ottawa as perceived by aspirants to nomination is unlikely to increase constantly with distance. Rather, as the distance becomes larger, the marginal increase of each unit of distance should decrease, especially once distances are large enough that daily commuting is no longer feasible.

Additionally, I include as a control a measure of the party's competitiveness in the district. I employ two different measures of competitiveness in my analyses, both in this chapter and in subsequent ones. In my regression analyses, I employ a traditional static victory margin measurement, expressed as the number of percentage points by which the party's candidate ultimately won or lost the district in the general election. For example, in a district where the Conservative Party won the district with 40% of votes and in which the Liberal and New Democratic Parties received 30% and 25% of votes, respectively, a contestant for the Conservatives would be coded 10 (as their party was 10 percentage points above the runner up) and the LPC and NDP candidates would be coded -10 and -15, respectively.

In my descriptive analyses I employ a dynamic measurement which accounts for the party's decision in both the current election year and in one election prior. Specifically, I match the measurement used by Thomas and Bodet (2013), dividing districts into 'Own-Party Strongholds' (districts which are safe for the party in question), 'Other-Party Strongholds' (districts which are safe for another party) and 'Battlegrounds' (districts in which multiple parties are competitive).¹⁰ Using this measurement allows a more direct comparison with the work of Thomas and Bodet (2013), which is the most authoritative work on the role of district competitiveness in limiting women's descriptive representation. Particularly in the context of a

¹⁰ For a more complete description of this measurement, see Bodet (Bodet 2013)

multivariate analysis, however, this trichotomous variable is limited in that it does not capture the degree to which a district is safe or competitive, nor does it clearly distinguish which parties are most competitive in a Battleground.¹¹

All other variables I include in the model are district-level demographic variables from the Canadian Census. For each variable, I use the data from the closest available census year to the election. Specifically, I include the district's population, median age, median household income (in dollars), education (in the form of the percentage of the population that holds a bachelor's degree or higher), percentage of the population born outside of Canada, and population density (in people per square kilometre).

Finally, in the regression model I also control for the electoral district in the form of a multi-level model, with a random-effects intercept for the electoral district. This intercept serves to control for unobserved variation and autocorrelation at the district level. In controlling for the electoral district, however, I also need to account for changes in the districts due to the regular decennial redistricting that occurred between the 2011 and 2015 elections. This redistricting added 30 new districts and also substantially changed the borders of many existing districts. To account for this, I borrow data from Stockemer and Wigginton (2018), which match the 338 ridings of the 2015 representation order with their 308 predecessors from the 2004 representation order. This dataset considers a district to be the same if it lost no more than 40% of its area in the redistricting process and also gained no more than 40% new territory. In total, 93% of the

¹¹ A regression analysis using this categorical variable returns similar results

districts of the 2004 representation order are continued in the 2015 order, with all other districts being considered distinct entities.

Descriptive statistics

When examining the descriptive statistics, one of the most striking findings is not actually related to contestants' gender at all, but rather to the overall number of participants. Simply put, the *majority* of nomination contests in the dataset have only a single registered contestant, meaning that the contest was in fact an acclamation. Slightly over 71% of the contests in the dataset had only one contestant, meaning that there was no meaningful selection stage in the pipeline for these political aspirants. Even among non-acclaimed contests, the average number of contestants is quite low, with only 38.5% of contested nominations having more than two competitors.

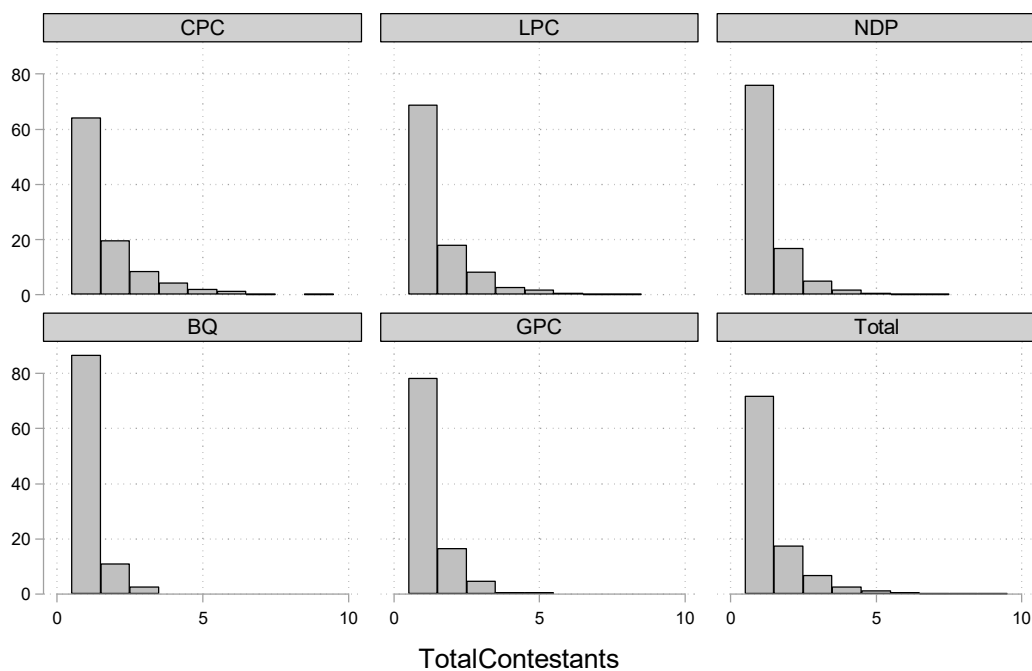


Figure 7: Total number of nomination contestants by party

This fact alone provides an early indication of the paramount importance of the emergence stage in shaping the outcome of the representation pipeline. Acclamations eliminate the selection stage entirely, allowing whichever aspirant has come forward to proceed unimpeded to the election stage. In these cases, then, deficits in recruiting women cannot be solved at the selection stage, and indeed from a party’s perspective cannot be solved at all (other than by losing the election).

Looking more closely, however, reveals that the emergence stage is more determinative that might first appear. While a majority of nominations go uncontested, the rates of acclamations vary considerably based upon the party’s competitiveness in the district. Conforming to my expectations, acclamations are most common in districts in which the party has no reasonable prospect of winning the election. Specifically, contests for districts that were lost by 10

percentage points or more in the following election were acclaimed at a rate of 80.5%, compared to 71.4% of districts that were lost by less than 5 percentage points of the vote, and 68.5% of districts that were won. As such, while acclamations account for a very large number of contests, competitive contests are most likely in districts with a reasonable prospect of sending their candidate to Parliament.

While the bivariate relationship between a party's chance of winning a district and the probability of acclamation is clear, the relationship between winnability and the number of women contesting the nomination is less strong. As can be seen in Figure 8 below, the likelihood of having at least one woman participant in a contest does not vary greatly between different competitiveness categories, with the variation between the highest and lowest groups being only five percentage points. As such, while women are more often present in nomination contests in a district which is another party's stronghold, the difference between such districts and their own party's strongholds is only modest in size.

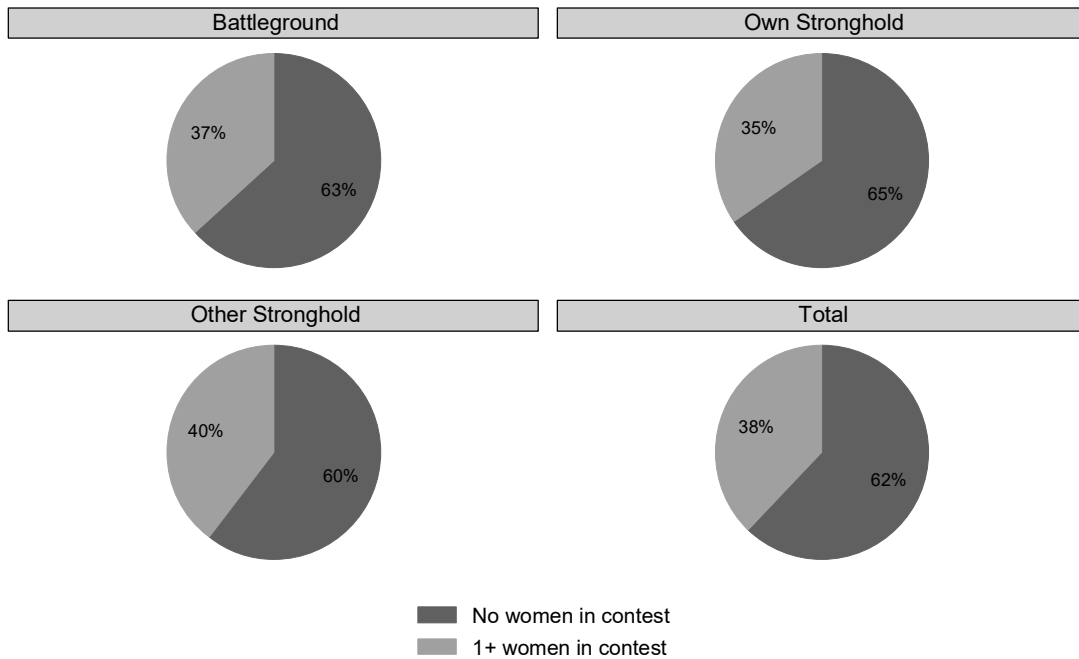


Figure 8: Presence of women nomination contestants by party-level district competitiveness

The descriptive statistics also show a clear time trend in nomination contests. Simply put, women’s representation at the emergence stage has been increasing over time, with the number of contests with no women contestants markedly declining from almost 70% in 2004 to approximately 50% in 2019. As can be seen in Figure 9 below, the average number of women nomination contestants has gradually increased throughout the period of the sample, providing an encouraging indication that the rate of women’s representation in Canadian politics is on a general upward trend.

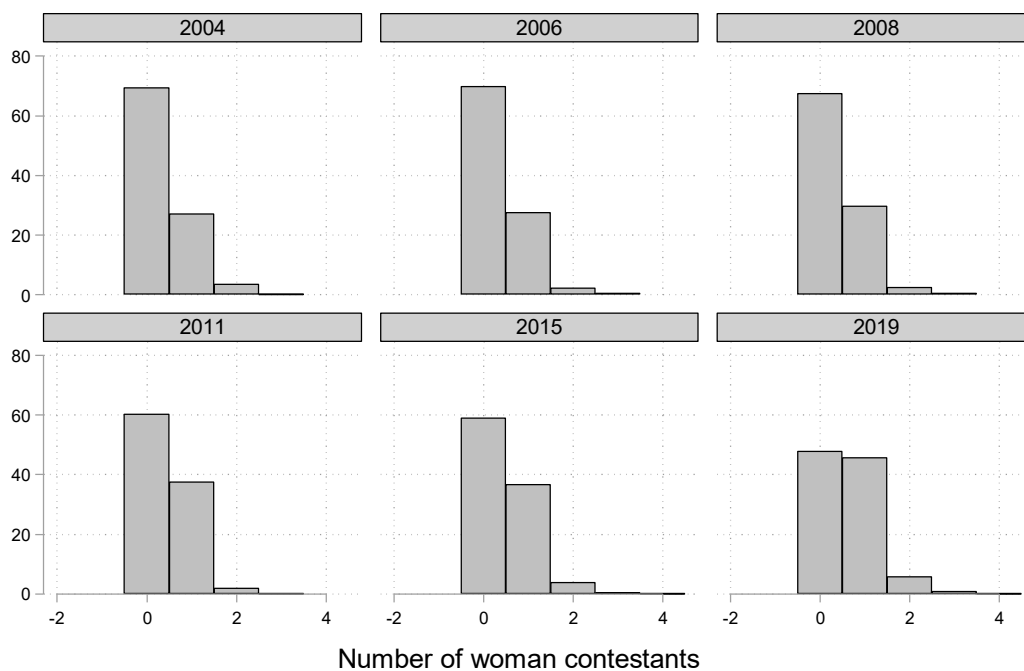


Figure 9: Number of women nomination contestants by general election

The final major difference evident from a descriptive analysis of the data is between political parties. As expected, the NDP and LPC attract markedly more women contestants than does the CPC. Over 72% of the Conservative Party’s nomination contests had no women participants, compared to only 59% of Liberal contests and 52% of New Democratic contests. This provides some early support to my first hypothesis and indicates that the Conservative Party has a lower rate of women’s representation that begins in the very earliest stages of the representation pipeline.

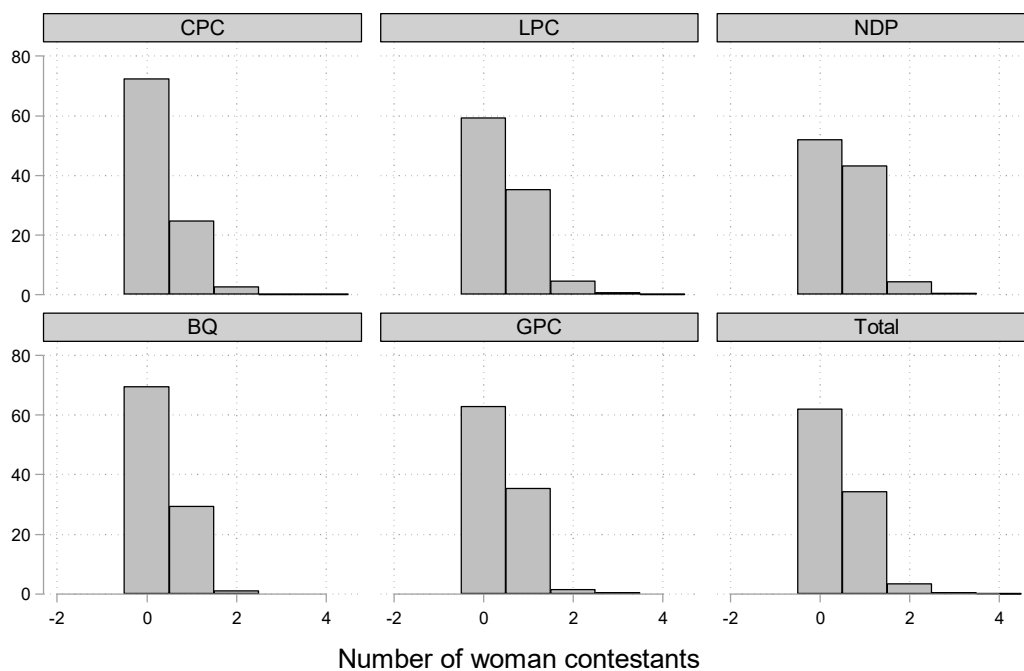


Figure 10: Number of women contestants in nomination contests by party

Multivariate analysis

The regression model (see Table 2 below) reveals largely similar results to those seen in the descriptive statistics. Compared to the reference category of the Conservative Party, all other parties show an increased likelihood of having women participants in their nomination contests. Compared to either the NDP or the Liberal Party, the model predicts that a Conservative nomination contest will have on average half as many women participants. This provides clear confirmation of hypothesis one, showing the Conservatives to have a significant deficit of women at the emergence stage.

Table 2: Poisson regression of number of women participants in nomination contest

	Poisson Model #Women Contestants
# Total Contestants	0.374***

	(0.0172)
Party (ref CPC)	
LPC	0.497*** (0.0658)
NDP	0.690*** (0.0676)
BQ	0.451*** (0.124)
GPC	0.343*** (0.0933)
Year (ref 2004)	
2006	0.0534 (0.0927)
2008	0.257** (0.0877)
2011	0.211* (0.0928)
2015	0.339*** (0.0784)
2019	0.545*** (0.0842)
Victory Margin (party)	-0.000609 (0.00112)
Population	0.00000291+ (0.00000148)
Median age	0.00000354 (0.00000379)
Median income	0.00000463 (0.00000580)
% With degree	0.00836*

	(0.00399)
% Immigrants	-0.00213 (0.00208)
Population Density	0.0000103 (0.0000162)
Distance from Ottawa (log KM)	0.0111 (0.0188)
Constant	-2.770*** (0.240)
<hr/>	
District intercept	1.41e-33 (6.24e-18)
<hr/>	
Observations	4663
Groups	434
Log likelihood	-3535.3119

Standard errors in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Substantively, the differences between political parties are quite large (see Figure 11). The New Democratic Party has by far the largest expected number of women contestants, at 0.56. They are closely followed by the Liberal Party, with a predicted value of 0.46. The lowest value by far among the major parties is that of the Conservatives at 0.28 — half as many as the NDP. Overall, this provides clear confirmation for the first hypothesis of this chapter and early support for my second general hypothesis: the CPC performs less well in attracting women to nomination contests than do either of their two major pan-Canadian rivals and also performs less well than either the Green Party or the Bloc Québécois.

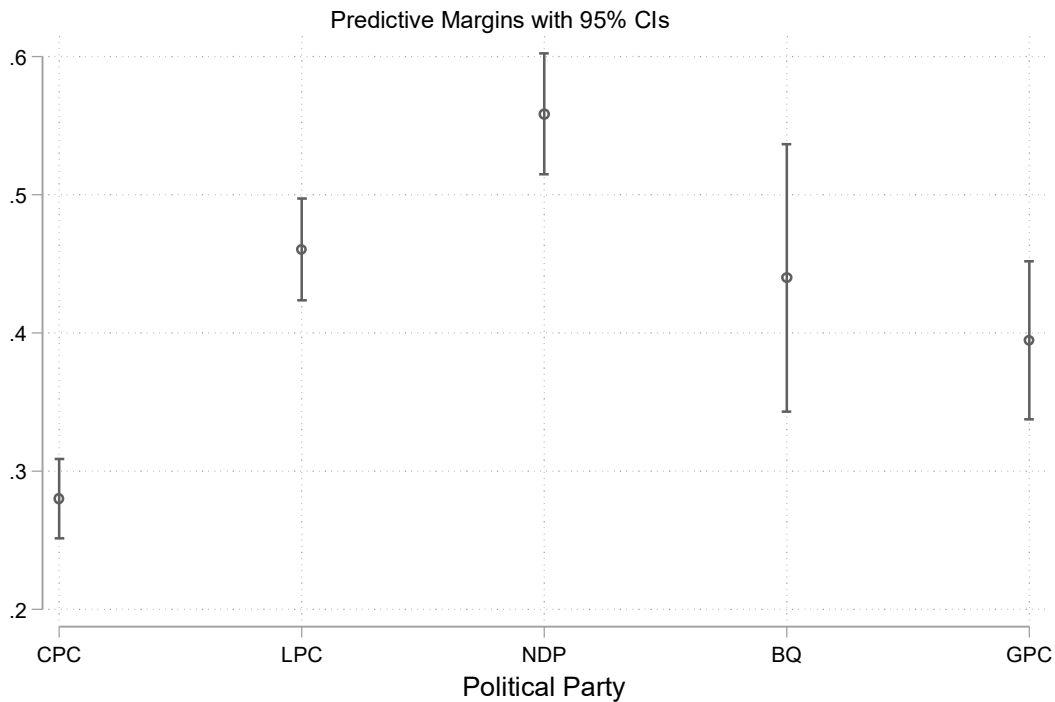


Figure 11: Predicted number of women nomination contestants by political party

Similarly, the model also confirms the apparent time trend found in the descriptive statistics. According to the model, the trend from Figure 9 of women’s participation in nomination contests growing over time is robust to controlling for party and for district factors. This is an encouraging result for women’s descriptive representation and reflects that, at least at the emergence stage, efforts to improve gender parity in Canadian politics have been making some modest progress.

In terms of geographic factors, the model shows little significant effect from any of the riding-level features. Contrary to what many studies, particularly in the American literature, would suggest, my results show little indication that some districts are themselves more “woman-friendly” than others. While studies in the United States have found that the physical

geography of a region can play a limiting factor in the likelihood of a woman becoming an elected representative, neither distance from Ottawa nor population density has any influence on the number of women participating in a nomination contest. At least at the emergence stage, then, there is no support for my hypothesis.

The only district-level factor that shows a significant effect at the conventional threshold (95%) is the education level of the population. In concordance with my third overall hypothesis, districts with more educated populations see a larger number of women compete in nomination. Substantively, however, this effect is quite modest. As can be seen in the marginal effects plot below (see Figure 12), the predicted number of women nomination contestants increases from 0.38 in the least educated district (where 4.4% of the population has a degree) to 0.56 in the most educated district (49.8% holding a degree). Within the interquartile range of district education levels (the 25th percentile having 8.9% of residents holding a degree and the 75th having 21.1%) this difference is even less appreciable, with the predicted number of women contestants rising by only 0.04, from 0.40 to 0.44. Overall, then, while the education level of a district is a significant predictor of the number of women who participate in its nomination contests, in practical terms this effect is quite small, and districts with less educated populations are at only a slightly lower likelihood of having women compete for nomination.

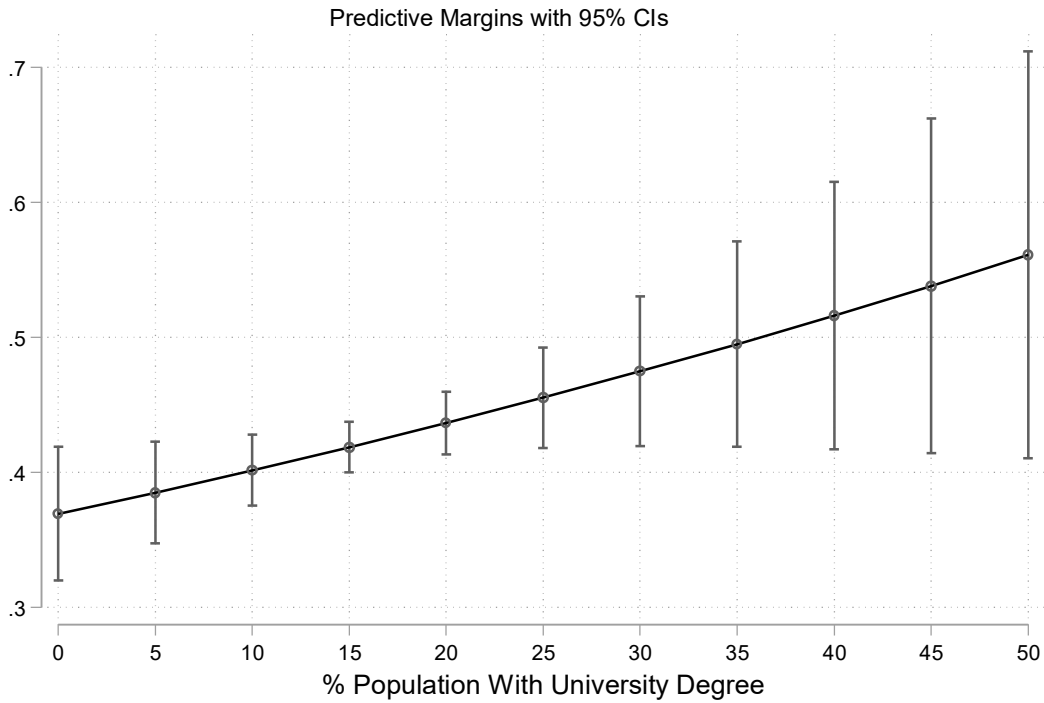


Figure 12: Number of women nomination contestants by district education level

Approaching the conventional threshold, at the 90% level of significance, a district's population size also has an effect on the number of women competing in nomination contests. These pieces of data together provide some very modest support for the expectation that more urban districts are more friendly to women at the emergence stage, however the substantive size of both effects is very small to the point of being mostly inconsequential. Overall, the model predicts that district-level factors are of little practical importance in predicting the number of women participating in nomination contests.

Finally, contrary to my above hypothesis, a party's victory margin in the election has no statistically or substantively significant relationship with the number of women competing in a nomination contest. While this very clearly provides no evidence to support my hypothesis, the

reason behind it is less clear. It could reflect a lack of support overall for the notion that women are less often candidates in winnable districts, or simply that women's underrepresentation in winnable districts occurs at the selection stage. I will explore this possibility further in the following chapter.

Discussion and conclusion

Overall, my analysis in this chapter has provided a clear indication that the emergence stage likely plays a large factor in determining women's representation. Even at this very earliest step in the representation pipeline, women are noticeably underrepresented, with over 60% of all reported nomination contests having no women contestants whatsoever. This finding is particularly indicative of the emergence stage's importance, as it leaves no opportunity for equity-minded selectors to correct the gender imbalance at later stages; with no women competing for a nomination, a woman candidate is not possible.

The importance of the emergence stage relative to the selection stage is also made evident by the high rate of acclamations. With over 70% of contests being acclaimed, for most political aspirants agreeing to seek nomination is tantamount to being selected as candidate. In this framework, equity in recruitment is a key measure in promoting women's representation, as a recruited contestant will most likely become the party's candidate. It is important to note again, however, that it is not possible to say from the data available *why* these races are acclaimed. As Albaugh (2022) outlines in the case of New Brunswick provincial elections, one way that both local and central party elites can influence nomination outcomes is to engage in gatekeeping practices designed to discourage aspirants from competing against a preferred candidate.

Albaugh argues that, through means such as discouraging potential contenders from running and manipulating convention timings, party elites can install their preferred candidate by preventing

a meaningful nomination contest from actually taking place. In such cases, however, there will be no features in the nomination contest data available to me that would distinguish an acclaimed nomination that was the result of gatekeeping from one that resulted from a genuine lack of interested aspirants.

The data also hint that mandating equitable recruitment does deliver results. The Liberal and New Democratic Parties, who mandate that Electoral District Associations work to recruit equity-seeking candidates, have markedly higher rates of women participating in their nomination contests than does the Conservative Party. Temporally, as these efforts have been increasing, women's participation in nomination contests has also been increasing.

At the district level, however, the results mostly indicate that a riding's characteristics play little role in attracting or dissuading women from seeking nomination. Despite prior literature, I find no statistically significant evidence that women are less likely to compete for nominations in winnable districts. In terms of ruralness and remoteness as well, I find no indication that denser areas closer to Ottawa have any higher rates of women's representation, at least at this stage of the pipeline. The only clear indication of a significant district-level effect is that more educated districts have more women vying for nomination, although substantively this effect pales in comparison to the differences between parties.

VII. Candidate Selection

Introduction and overview

In the previous two chapters covering candidate emergence I established that a major gender imbalance already presents at this earliest stage in the representation pipeline. While men and women competing in nomination contests have similar demographic profiles and levels of experience, men make up the large majority of nomination contestants for major parties. Moreover, the results of Chapter VI hint that in many cases the selection stage is *unable* to boost women's representation as 70% of contests are acclaimed, and over 60% of contests have no woman contestant to be selected.

Nevertheless, the existing comparative literature on women's representation places a great deal of importance on candidate selection as an obstacle (or indeed, particularly in jurisdictions with quotas, a asset) to women's access to political office. The means of candidate selection (between centralised and decentralised processes) have been found to have an effect on women's access to office (e.g. Gauja and Cross 2015), with primaries in particular often being found to be detrimental to nominating women (e.g. Astudillo and Paneque 2021). In cases of political corruption, male-dominated networks controlling candidate selection is often identified as the source of the relationship between high political corruption and low descriptive representation of women (e.g. Sundström and Wängnerud 2016).

In this chapter, then, I will investigate this possible incongruity between expectations from the literature and my results indicating candidate emergence to have already greatly limited women's representation in Canada. Does candidate selection still matter for women's representation in Canada? While the results of Chapter VI reveal that the potential impact of

candidate selection is limited, selectors could still influence descriptive representation though either further restricting women by favouring men, or mitigate women's underrepresentation through positive discrimination.

Theory and hypotheses

My overall expectation for this chapter is to find that the selection stage plays only a minor role in shaping women's descriptive representation in Canadian federal politics. As my analysis in Chapter VI reveals, by the candidate emergence stage women's representation is already quite limited numerically; women make up less than a third of nomination contestants, and the strong majority of nomination contests are acclamations. In this context, selection-stage effects will inherently be limited. Many contests will have no women to be chosen, making selectors' biases for or against women moot, and others will have but a single contestant, making any meaningful selection process impossible. Nonetheless, I expect to find that in those districts which do have competitive nomination contests, candidate selection does play a role in determining how many women get elected to Parliament, as well as which districts they get elected to represent.

In the previous chapter, I investigated the possibility that women are more likely to emerge as nomination contestants in districts which their party is unlikely to win. Previous research has established that women disproportionately serve as "sacrificial lambs" (Thomas and Bodet 2013), representing their party in a district they have no reasonable prospect of winning, but the casual mechanism behind this is not clearly identified in the literature. One possibility, as explained in Chapter VI, is that this tendency results from trends in political recruitment, with women more often being recruited by parties in unwinnable districts, partially to allow for an acclaimed nomination contest that does not violate equity quotas. It is also possible, however, that this trend is in fact a product of biases in candidate selection:

H₁: Women will more often be selected as candidates in districts in which their party is unlikely to win

Surely, uncompetitive or hopeless districts can expect to have more influential candidate emergence stages — the lack of a reasonable prospect of being elected gives aspirants a much lower incentive to participate in the nomination contest, consequently lowering the number of participants and increasing the number of acclaimed contests. Such acclaimed contests will naturally have no room for selection-stage effects, but in those hard-to-win districts that do have a contested nomination selectors may still select women more often than their counterparts in safer districts.

As party members from the district in question, selectors will have a reasonable understanding of their party's prospects in the upcoming election and may make decisions based on these prospects. In districts where the party is unlikely to win, selectors may be more motivated to select more diverse candidates, including women, in an attempt to broaden their party's appeal and to reach out to voters outside of their usual ideological base. In other words, women may be subjected to a district-level glass cliff phenomenon, wherein women are more often appointed to leadership positions, be they in politics, business, or elsewhere, at times when the organisation is in a difficult or precarious situation (see, for example: Morgenroth et al. 2020). While not a common feature in the Canadian literature on women's representation, the glass cliff has been examined experimentally in the UK context (Ryan, Haslam, and Kulich 2010) and presents a possible explanation for women's disproportionate tendency to become candidates in unwinnable seats. For these reasons, I expect to find that women are less successful in CPC nomination contests than in those of the other major parties:

H₂: Women less often be selected as candidates by the Conservative Party than by the Liberal or New Democratic Parties

While the decision to promote gender equity in recruiting nomination contestants does not affect the selection of candidates directly, it does provide a clear indication of a party's overall priorities and values. Active members of parties with equity-promotion policies will be more likely to embrace these policies on a personal level and may even be drawn to the party in part because of their support for gender equality. As a result, members voting in nomination contests might be more likely to base their voting decisions at least in part on candidates' genders, and consequently vote more often for candidates from underrepresented groups, including women.

Finally, I also expect district characteristics to play a role in shaping how selectors make decisions about candidates. While the physical distance from Ottawa is unlikely to matter at the selection stage, as aspirants deterred by the work-life balance issues caused by commuting will largely have self-selected out during the emergence stage, the overall culture of a riding may still shape the selection process:

H₃: More urban districts will select women as candidates more often than more rural districts

Just as women living in more urban areas may feel more at ease seeking political office, and party executives in these areas may see women as more viable candidates to recruit, selectors in more urban areas may have a greater propensity to vote for women contestants (or at least have less bias against them). These more diverse and educated areas have more socially liberal cultures that are less bound by traditional gender norms. Selectors from these areas will therefore

be more accustomed to diversity in their everyday lives and to women in leadership roles, and therefore they may be more willing to select a woman as their party's candidate than their more rural counterparts. They will also probably see women as more electable in their districts, as they will be less likely to presume electors to be biased against electing a woman as their Member of Parliament.

Methods and data

In this chapter, I am extending my analysis from the preceding chapter to the selection stage. As such, the variables I employ are the same and the data from the same sources. The exception to this is my main dependent variable, which is the gender of the candidate selected, coded 1 for a woman and 0 otherwise. In my regression models, I include as a control variable the number of women competing in the contest in order to account for the gender balance of the choices available to selectors. I also include the same control variables employed in the previous chapter: total number of contestants, political party, election year, and party-level victory margin; and at the district level, I include control variables for population, median age, median income, percentage of the population with a university degree, percentage of the population born outside of Canada, population density, and geographic distance from Ottawa. To reflect the slightly messy and irregular nature of candidate nominations in Canada, I present three different analyses with three slightly different dependent variables: the gender of the winner of a nomination contest, the gender of the winner of nomination contest excluding acclaimed contests, and the gender of the candidate who appeared on the ballot in the election.

As discussed in the previous chapter, most nomination contests in Canada fail to attract many candidates, and as such over 70% of contests have only a single contestant. I therefore run additional analyses separating these acclaimed contests due to the necessarily different dynamics at play — notably, the lack of a distinction between the emergence stage and the selection stage.

The final variation, looking at candidates on the ballot, is necessary to reflect that not all candidates actually face a nomination contest, and not all contest winners ultimately remain as candidates come the election. While all parties provide some form of protection to incumbent MPs, in some instances this results in no nomination contest being reported to Elections Canada, whereas in others it results in a pro forma nomination contest with a single contestant. Likewise, party leaders occasionally decide to place a star candidate in a particular district without requiring the candidate to go through the usual local selection procedures. Even in cases where a contest occurs, a candidate will occasionally be replaced by the party leader for reasons either of scandal or of a candidate dropping out. For example, after the Conservative candidate for the 2019 election in Central Nova withdrew for personal reasons, the party leadership opted not to run a new nomination contest and instead replaced him with country musician George Canyon, who had not been a contestant in the original nomination contest.¹² In cases such as these, my first two models will examine the candidate chosen by the local party membership, whereas the third will look at which candidate ultimately ended up listed on the ballot.

In this final analysis, based on the candidates who actually ran in the election, I draw my dependent variable from the Library of Parliament's dataset of Elections and Candidates (Library

¹² This decision was highly controversial as it was made without consulting the electoral district association (D. Burke 2019).

of Parliament 2022). This dataset includes the candidate's gender, and as such I am not inferring gender based on given names and news coverage as in other analyses based on Elections Canada's Nomination Contest Database.

In total, then, I present three regression models, one for each variation on the dataset (all nomination contests, all non-acclaimed contests, and final candidates). The first two models are logistic models, to reflect the binary nature of the dependent variable (woman/not a woman¹³), whereas the third is a Poisson model as in the previous chapter. As in Chapter VI, all three models are hierarchical models with a random intercept at the district level.

Descriptive statistics

Looking at descriptively at the data from the selection stage, there is already an indication that the selection stage has relatively little effect on the representation pipeline overall. As can be seen in Figure 13 below, 30% of overall nomination contest winners are women, a figure that is remarkably close to the 29% of nomination contestants who are women. Already, this indicates that the level of representation of women in nomination contests translates very directly to their level of representation amongst electoral candidates.

Looking at these results within the largest parties, there is a comparable level of similarity between rates of women's participation in nomination contests and rates of women's selection as candidates. Women made up 19% of Conservative nomination contestants in the dataset, 31% of Liberal contestants, and 40% of New Democratic contestants; as can be seen in Figure 13,

¹³ While the vast majority of candidates in the second category are men, it also includes four candidates who are listed as having an "other gender identity" in the Library of Parliament dataset.

these proportions are exactly the same (when rounded) as the share of nomination contests won by women. The descriptive statistics therefore give a good indication that women are as likely as men to win nominations contests across all major political parties.

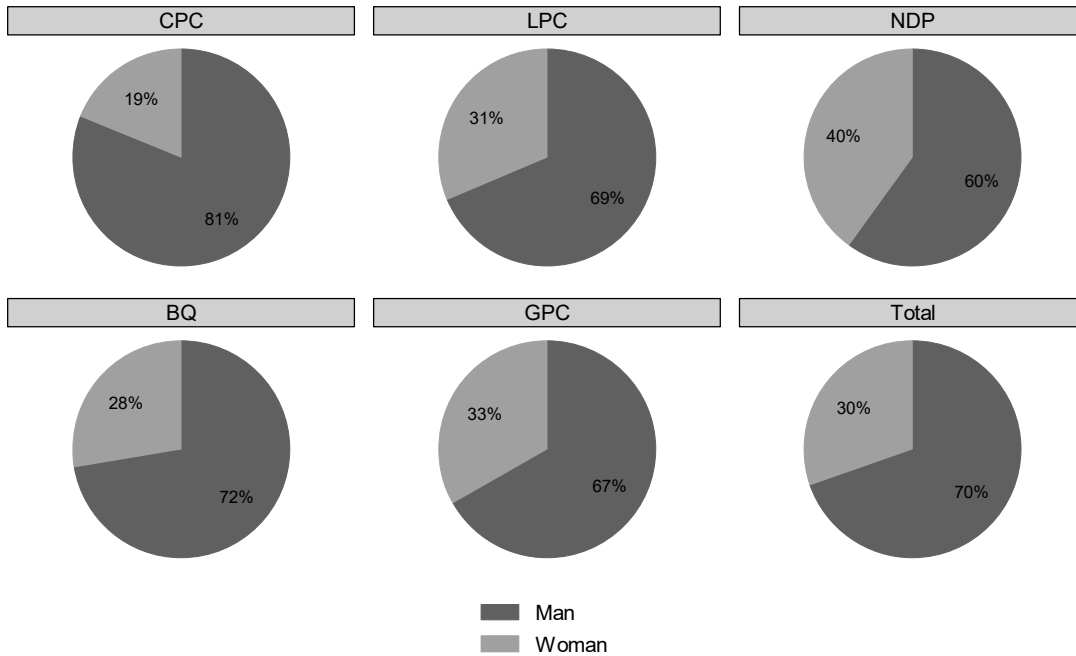


Figure 13: Gender of nomination contest winners

In terms of district competitiveness, the descriptive data indicate a similar trend to that present at the emergence stage. As can be seen in Figure 14, women are most likely to be selected as candidates in districts which their party is unlikely to win (other party strongholds) and least likely to be selected in districts which are safe for their party (own party strongholds). Overall, then, the data do suggest that women are more likely to become candidates in harder-to-win districts, and end up serving as “sacrificial lambs.”

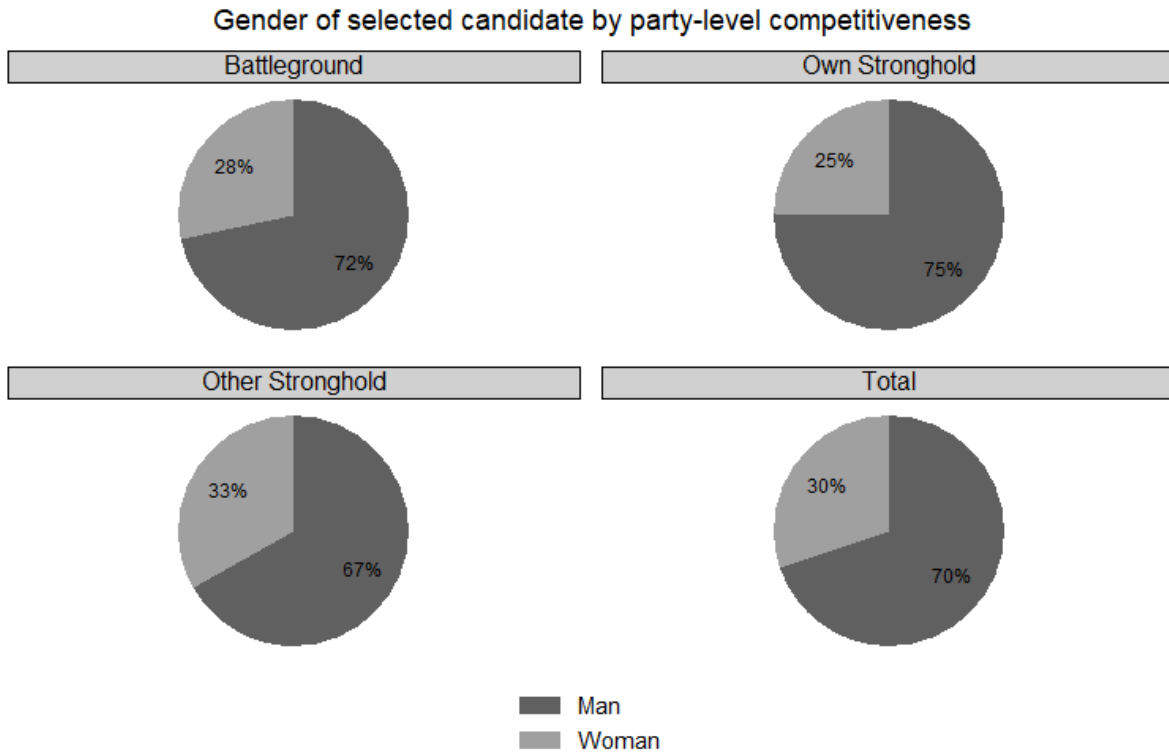


Figure 14: Gender of selected candidate by party-level competitiveness

Finally, the descriptive statistics also indicate a time-trend similar to that seen in Chapter VI. The share of nomination contest winners who are women has been generally increasing from election to election, with a particularly notable jump from 2015 to 2019. In this period women’s share of selected candidates increased by 10 percentage points to 42%, representing a 20-point increase since 2004. In addition to showing a great deal of increase over a 15-year time frame, the descriptive statistics also suggest that the share of contest winners who are women again closely tracks with the share of contestants who are women. While 2004 and 2006 show women being selected at a slightly lower rate than they participated (being 21% and 23% of contestants, respectively), this shifts to parity in 2008 and 2015 a slightly higher rate in 2019, where women accounted for 38% of contestants. This hints at a possible dual time trend — a large increase in

the number of women participating (and therefore winning) nomination contests, but also possibly a much more modest increase in selectors' preference for women.

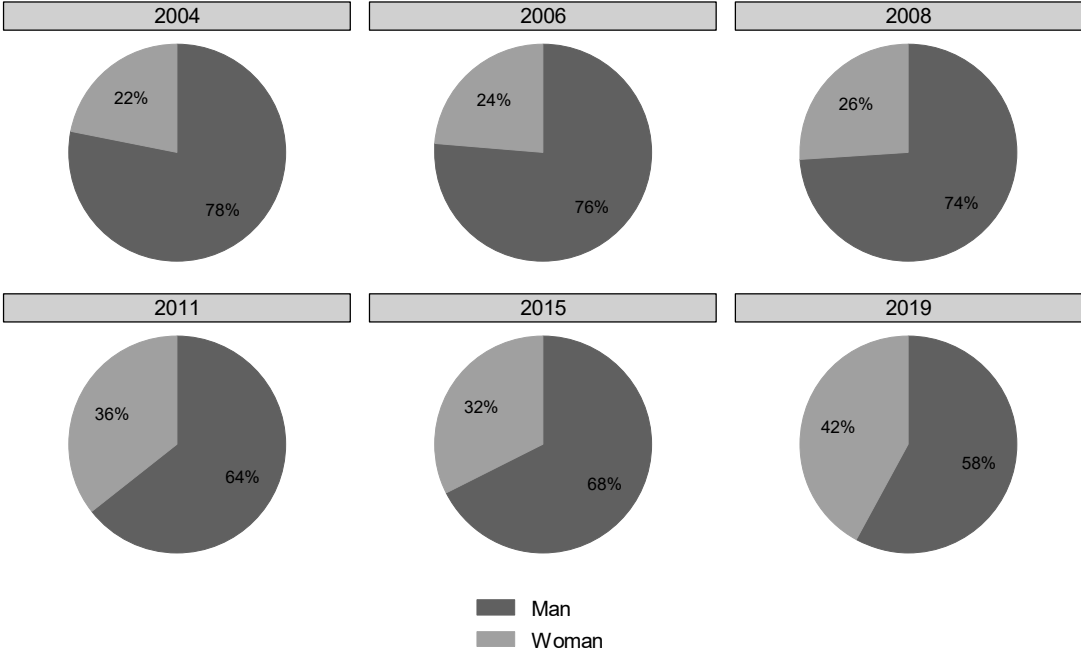


Figure 15: Gender of nomination contest winner by year

Multivariate analysis

Overall, the results of all three models indicate that there is relatively little variability between nomination contests, as implied by the descriptive statistics. Rather, the results largely imply that the imbalances present at the emergence stage are in most cases neither decreased nor exacerbated by the selection stage. Looking at time trends, for example, Models 1 and 2 find no significant time effects, whereas Model 3 shows significant effects of increasing magnitude for the election-year variables. Substantively, Model 3 predicts an increase in women's representation from an average of 1.3 women candidates per district in 2004 to an average of 2 women candidates per district in 2019. Given the lack of significant effect in Models 1 and 2, which control for the number of women nomination contestants, this increase is seemingly the product of an increasing number of women competing for nomination, and not that of selectors increasing the rate at which they select women as candidates.

Table 3: Regression models of selected candidates

	Model 1 (Logit) Woman Selected All contests	Model 2 (Logit) Woman Selected Contested contests	Model 3 (Poisson) #Women Candidates Official Candidates
# Women Contestants	7.247*** (0.255)	3.212*** (0.229)	
# Total Contestants	-2.531*** (0.126)	-1.112*** (0.123)	0.112*** (0.0174)
Party (ref CPC)			
LPC	-0.0138 (0.212)	0.00872 (0.235)	
NDP	-0.0475 (0.214)	0.0592 (0.248)	
BQ	-0.212	-0.950	

	(0.406)	(0.717)	
GPC	0.421 (0.294)	0.691 ⁺ (0.362)	
Year (ref 2004)			
2006	-0.0112 (0.288)	-0.0452 (0.327)	0.00278 (0.0729)
2008	-0.0615 (0.277)	-0.192 (0.317)	0.162* (0.0707)
2011	0.347 (0.309)	0.300 (0.403)	0.188** (0.0721)
2015	-0.130 (0.253)	-0.125 (0.282)	0.252*** (0.0702)
2019	0.139 (0.279)	0.0599 (0.309)	0.451*** (0.0683)
Victory Margin (party)	0.00517 (0.00380)	0.0107* (0.00514)	0.000823 (0.00119)
Population	-0.00000170 (0.00000510)	-0.000000647 (0.00000617)	0.00000179 (0.00000135)
Median age	0.00000440 (0.0000205)	0.0000439 (0.000456)	0.00000267 (0.00000352)
Median income	0.00000892 (0.0000202)	-0.00000441 (0.0000249)	-0.00000243 (0.00000490)
% With degree	-0.0201 (0.0134)	-0.0125 (0.0163)	0.000795 (0.00328)
% Immigrants	0.0176* (0.00707)	0.0209* (0.00832)	0.000461 (0.00169)
Population Density	0.00000582 (0.0000555)	-0.0000170 (0.0000677)	0.0000266* (0.0000135)
Distance from Ottawa (log KM)	0.00719 (0.0654)	0.0115 (0.0783)	-0.00809 (0.0162)

Constant	-1.905* (0.823)	-1.258 (1.034)	-0.523* (0.211)
District intercept	0.0724 (0.139)	0.341 (0.245)	0.00549 (0.00975)
Observations	4663	1308	1871
Groups	434	401	434
Log likelihood	-682.07406	-464.1993	-2658.1699

Standard errors in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0$.

Another notable absence in Models 1 and 2 is any significant effect of political parties on selecting women as candidates. Both models find all three major parties to have identical odds of choosing a woman, with Model 1 predicting all three parties to choose a woman in 30% of cases and Model 2 in 27% of cases. In examining only contests with more than one contestant, Model 2 does show some indication that the Bloc Québécois selects women less often than other parties and the Green Party more often, but neither of these effects is statistically significant at the conventional levels.

Overall, I find no evidence that there are differences between parties at the selection stage. While some parties may be more likely than others to successfully recruit women into nomination contests, these same tendencies do not apply at the selection stage. Controlling for the number of women in the pool of candidates, the major parties are equally as likely as each other to select a woman as their candidate.

This model produced a very counterintuitive finding related to the role of district winnability. Contrary to expectations from the literature, Model 2 shows a statistically significant and *positive* effect of a party's victory margin in a given district on the probability that a woman is selected as candidate there. That is to say, the model indicates that women are in fact *more* likely to be selected in winnable ridings than in hopeless ones. As can be seen in the below

graphic (Figure 16), however, the strength of this effect is fairly modest. Across the entire range displayed in the plot, from a loss of 50 percentage points (or in lowest 2% of all outcomes) to a win by 50 percentage point (the top 2% of all outcomes), the chance of a woman being selected only increases from 21% to 32%. Within a more usual range of district winnabilities, a loss by 10 points (25th percentile) to a win by 20 points (75th percentile), the model predicts only a change from 26% to 29% in the odds of selecting a woman as candidate.

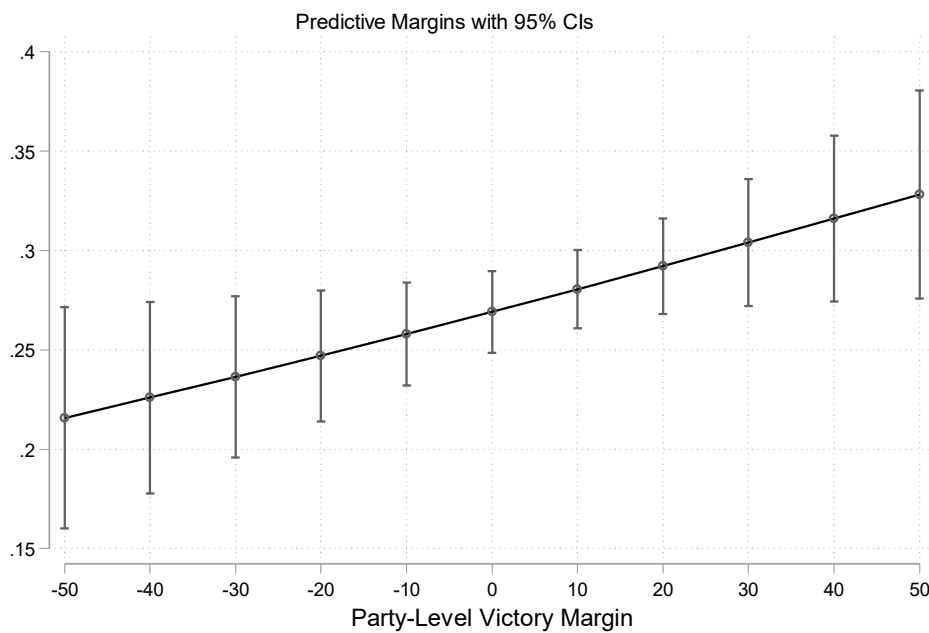


Figure 16: Odds of selecting a woman as candidate by district competitiveness (Model 2)

In discussing this counterintuitive finding, it is important to recall the restrictions of Model 2. Firstly, in this chapter I am analysing only the effects that happen at the selection stage, not the overall results of the representation pipeline; the dearth of women participating discussed in Chapter VI is already “baked in” to the results and controlled for. As such, finding that women are less often *selected* as candidates in hopeless districts does not mean that they are less likely *to be* candidates in hopeless districts. Indeed, Model 3, which analyses the number of women

candidates at the district level, shows no relationship between the victory margin of the winning party and the number of women running, and the descriptive statistics discussed above suggest that women are overall more often candidates in losing districts than winning ones. Finally, Model 2 is using a restricted dataset of only nomination contests that were not acclaimed. This dataset unsurprisingly contains far fewer hopeless districts than the unrestricted dataset, and those unlikely-to-be-won districts that nonetheless manage to garner the interest of more than one contestant are likely unrepresentative. The finding therefore only shows that, among *competitive* nomination contests, women are modestly more likely to be selected as candidates in winnable districts than in unwinnable ones.

Nevertheless, this finding is in some ways counterintuitive; in competitive nominations, women are more likely to be selected in districts where their party has a better chance of winning the election. This finding is particularly surprising as it cannot be convincingly explained as a simple matter of selectors positively discriminating in favour of women; each candidate selection is a single and independent choice, therefore selectors are not *placing* women candidates in better districts. Rather, selectors in winnable districts more often chose a woman from their pool of contestants than do selectors in hard-to-win districts. One possible explanation is that selectors in hard-to-win districts are more concerned about the possibility of voters discriminating against a woman candidate and want to retain every possible advantage given their longshot situation.

Across all three models I also find some indication that more urban districts have a greater propensity to select women as candidates, even when controlling for the number of women in the contest. Models 1 and 2 both show a significant effect for percentage of the district's population that was born outside of Canada, indicating that these more diverse districts also have a greater propensity to select women. As can be seen in the below plot (Figure 17,

which shows the predictive margins of Model 2), this effect is rather large in its substantive size; a district with absolutely no immigrant population is predicted to select a woman in 23% of contests, compared to the most diverse districts (67% immigrants) selecting a woman in 39% of cases.

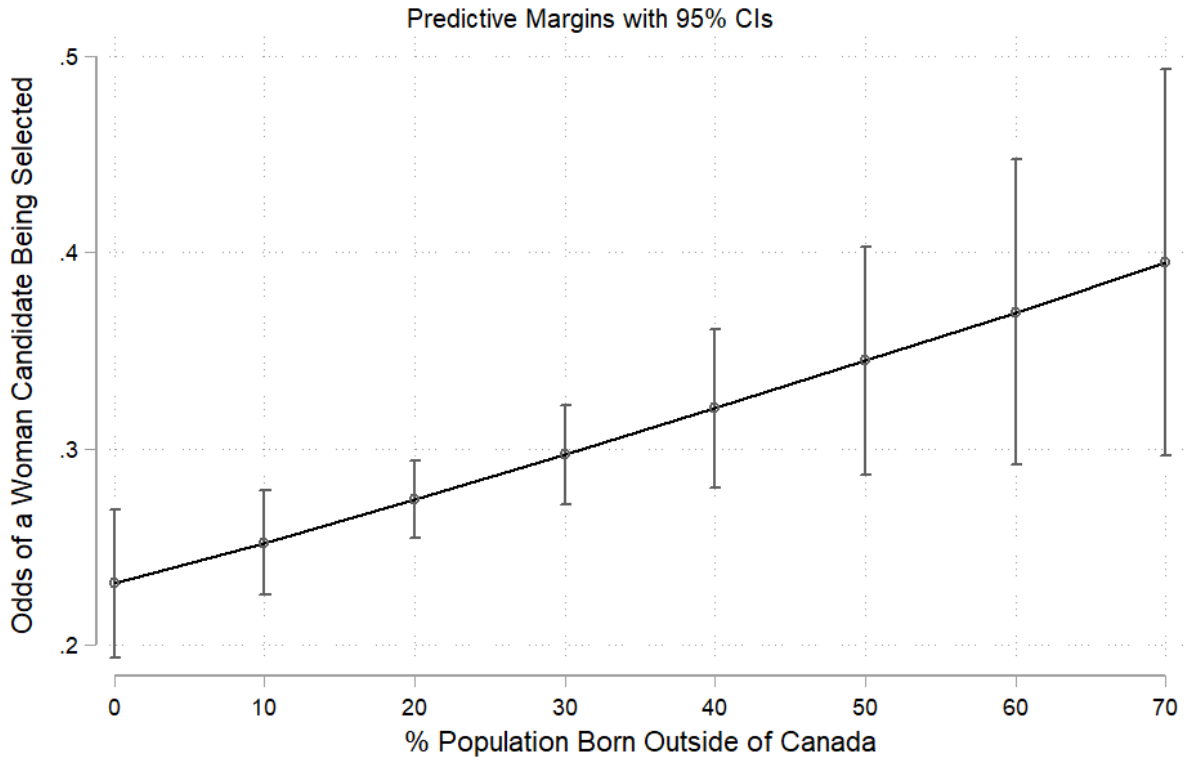


Figure 17: Odds of selecting a woman as candidate by district diversity (Model 2)

In Model 3, which predicts the number of women candidates in a district using parties' final official candidates, we also see indications that more urban districts will have more women candidates. The model shows a significant and positive effect from population density on the number of women candidates. As can be seen in the plot below, however, this effect is fairly modest in size. Between the most rural districts, with densities under one person per square

kilometre, and the most urban, with densities over eight thousand people per square kilometre, the model predicts an increase of only 0.3 women candidates.

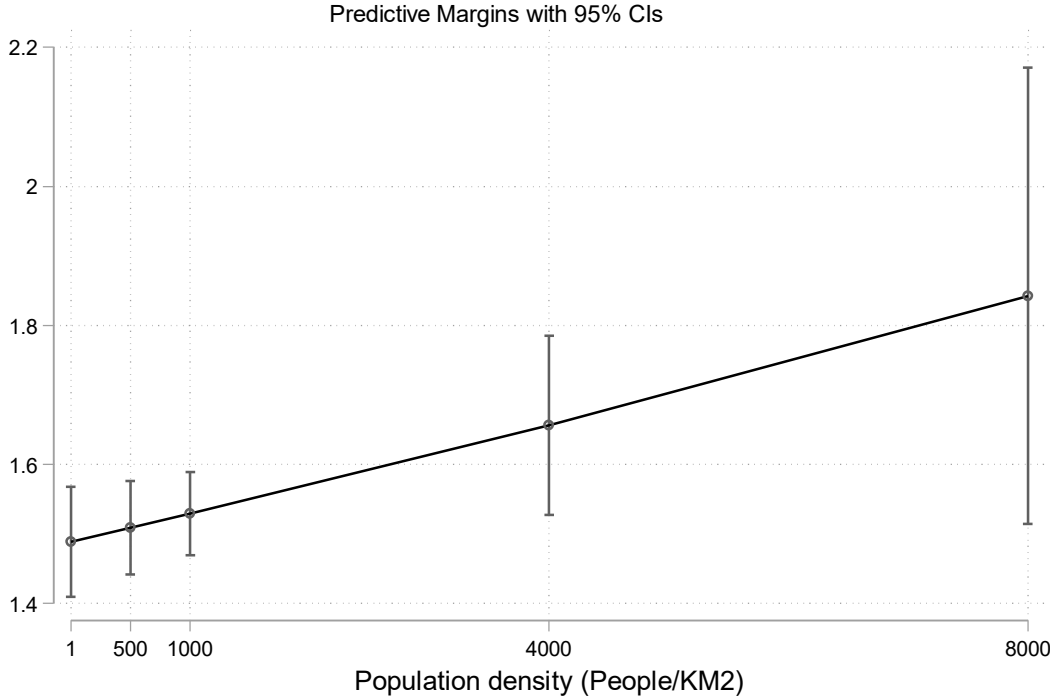


Figure 18: Number of women candidates by district urbanity

Discussion and conclusion

Overall, my analysis in this chapter has revealed the candidate selection process to have a very limited impact, if any, on women’s representation in Canada. Instead, the gender balance of the selection stage reflects that of the emergence stage very directly, with a gender balance of 29% of women being nomination contestants resulting in a balance of 30% of selected candidates being women. Even within parties and within individual years this general trend continues; women are selected as candidates at a rate proportionate to the number of women who emerge as nomination contestants. From this alone I can draw a partial answer to my overall research

question of which stage (or stages) in the representation pipeline drive(s) women's descriptive representation in Canada: the candidate selection process is not playing a significant role.

Despite this general trend, my analysis does reveal some patterns in selecting women as candidates. Even when controlling for the number of women nomination contestants and excluding acclaimed races, women are more likely to be nominated in more urban and diverse districts, showing some support in the Canadian case for the US findings that women are less often candidates in remote areas (Nechemias 1985; Silbermann 2015). In a greater contrast to the existing literature, women are also more likely to be selected (excluding acclimations) in easier to win districts, providing an indication that any "sacrificial lamb" phenomenon is likely a product of candidate emergence and recruitment patterns and not an artifact of candidate selection.

Overall, however, selection plays only a very limited role in women's representation, at least in the current political landscape. Once the number of women nomination contestants is controlled for, I find no trends over time in how often women are selected, or even differences between major parties. Certainly, this tendency could change in a future where more women compete in nomination contests and selectors consequently have more opportunities to shape women's descriptive representation. For the 2004–2019 time period, however, women's underrepresentation among major party candidates in federal elections is almost entirely explained by their underrepresentation at the candidate emergence stage.

VIII. Election

Introduction and overview

In the previous chapters of this dissertation, my analysis has focused primarily on determining the extent to which women and men enter federal politics on an even playing field. In Chapter V, I establish that women and men who participate in major party nomination contests are similar in their qualifications and prior experiences. In Chapter VI, I find that women enter nomination contests at far lower rates than men, and that these “contests” are in most cases acclamations. Still, the analysis of Chapter VII reveals that, when nominations are indeed contested, women and men win at similar rates, controlling for the smaller number of women entering these contests.

As such, up until this point the results of this thesis seem to indicate that women’s underrepresentation is largely — or perhaps entirely — a problem of candidate emergence. If more women can be encouraged to participate in nomination contests, then parties will nominate a correspondingly larger portion of women candidates, thus giving women the equal playing field needed to achieve equitable representation. In assessing the determinants of women’s descriptive underrepresentation, however, it is important to further analyse if a level playing field is indeed sufficient for women to be elected in equal numbers. Once at the election stage, are women in fact as likely as men to win? Or do elections present another barrier to women’s equal representation?

The existing literature in the Canadian context has largely concluded that, once at the stage of election, women have equal or perhaps even better odds of winning than do men. In this

chapter I will test this general conclusion, as well as investigate how the election stage influences women's representation more broadly.

Theory and hypotheses

The primary hypothesis investigated in this chapter is based on a simple yet fundamental question: do women win elections less often than similarly placed men? Intuitively, the expectation that women will receive fewer votes in an election than would a man under the same circumstances makes sense. It is well established in research that voters hold many negative and stereotypical views of women politicians and that they judge women more harshly than men in a variety of political contexts (see above). From a more intuitive approach, it is also well established that women face many different forms of discrimination in Canada, earning lower salaries on average, being judged more harshly in various social contexts, and generally holding fewer leadership positions in multiple domains; from this baseline of subtle (and not-so-subtle) misogyny, it would be logical to expect women candidates in elections to face harsher judgement and subsequently to be less likely to win election than men.

Existing empirical evidence, however, runs contrary to this expectation. Particularly in Canada, existing studies find that women running for office do not face any statistically significant degree of discrimination from electors. In particular, Sevi et al (2019) find that while women running in the first elections in which women were eligible did face some degree of vote penalty for their gender, the twenty-first century vote gap between men and women is neither statistically nor substantively significant. Based on this prior research, I expect to find that elections do not pose a significant barrier to women's representation, and therefore that women and men win elections at equal rates:

H₁: Women will be no less likely to win election than are men

In addition to this existing empirical evidence indicating that women and men receive comparable levels of votes, there are theoretical reasons to doubt that women will face a substantive electoral penalty, particularly in the Canadian context. While voters *hold* gendered and stereotypical views of political candidates, *how* these views actually influence their voting behaviour is far less clear (see Chapter III). The existing literature generally fails to demonstrate a conclusive link between these stereotypes and an aversion to voting for women, to the extent that Dolan (2014a, 141) concludes that the “stereotypes people hold do not appear to have a direct impact on their vote choice decisions.”

In the Canadian context in particular, there is reason to expect that the strength of the party system may be sufficient to mitigate anti-women biases in the electorate. Canadian elections are very much centred on political parties and their leaders, with candidates playing a rather minor role, particularly in contrast to US elections. Consequently, most Canadian voters base their vote choice on their preference of political party, giving little weight to the individual candidate in their district. Using data from electors in Québec, Ontario, and British Columbia during the 2015 federal election, Blais and Daoust (2017) found that only 50% of voters have any local candidate preferences at all, and that the few whose preferred candidate and party do not match most often vote for the candidate that matches their preferred party.

Given this lack of emphasis on individual candidates, I expect any gender biases in the electorate to not materially affect electoral outcomes. Simply put, if the majority of voters do not have preferences between individual candidates, and therefore do not consider individual candidates in making their vote choice, then the majority of voters will not be able to be influenced by their gender biases, at least not on the candidate level (such biases against party

leaders could still influence their votes in the rare cases where a woman is a party leader during an election¹⁴). While some minority of electors still place emphasis on the role of individual candidates, I expect that, as Blais and Daoust found, the majority of them will ultimately base their vote choice on party preference, and that the number of voters who decide based on individual candidates will be sufficiently small to make any discrimination ultimately immaterial to electoral outcomes. Indeed, a similar phenomenon exists in the case of candidate appearance's influence on vote choice in Canadian elections; while studies in more candidate-centred electoral systems find that more physically attractive candidates get more votes, a study in the context of Québec found a null effect, which the authors attribute to Québec's strong party system (Wigginton and Stockemer 2021).

While overall I expect to find that those women who make it to the election stage will have comparable odds of winning to their men counterparts, I nonetheless expect to find some variations in where women more often win election. Firstly, I expect to find that when women win elections, they do so by narrower margins than do men:

H₂: Women will more often be elected by narrow margins

Finally, as in previous chapters, I expect to find that more urban districts — that is to say, districts that are more urban, more educated, and more diverse — are more “women friendly” than more rural ones. While in part I would expect such a tendency to arise simply as a product of more women seeking and gaining nomination in such districts, my hypothesis here is made controlling for the number of women candidates in the district:

¹⁴ For the entirety of the 2004-2019 period I cover in this dissertation, the Green Party's Elizabeth May is the only woman to be leader of a party which won at least one seat in the House of Commons.

H₃: More urban districts will elect women as MPs more often than more rural districts

As in previous chapters, I expect more urban districts to foster more inclusive cultures that are more accepting of women in leadership roles. Just as such conditions may make women more likely to seek nomination and make selectors more likely to choose a woman as their candidate, electors living in more urban districts should be more likely to support women candidates.

Electors who are more educated, more accustomed to diversity, and more urban will be more likely to value diversity in representation and to be more socially liberal, and as such should be more likely to vote for women candidates than electors in more rural and less diverse districts.

Methods and data

In my multivariate analysis in this chapter, I present two hierarchical logistic regression models using data from a singular source. In the first model I analyse results on the district level, with the dependent variable being the gender of the candidate who was elected in the district, coded 1 for a woman and 0 otherwise. In the second model I move my analysis to the candidate level, with the dependent variable being if the candidate in question was elected.

As in Model 3 from Chapter VII, I draw my main independent variables from the Library of Parliament's dataset of Elections and Candidates (Library of Parliament 2022). This dataset provides the gender and political affiliations of all General Election candidates in the time period, as well as the share of votes they won. For control purposes, I also derive from this data the number of women candidates in every district and the total number of candidates. Likewise, I derive from this dataset the victory margin of the winning party and each party's victory margin at the previous election. As in previous chapters, the party-level victory margin is the number of percentage points by which the party's candidate ultimately won or lost the district in the general

election, meaning that a candidate who won and received 7 more percentage points of votes than the runner-up would be coded as 7, and a candidate who lost and received 13 percentage points fewer in vote share than the winner would be coded as -13.

Following the same form as in previous chapters, I take my other control variables from the Canadian Census, using the closest census year to each election (see Chapter VI). Across both models, then, I include variables for four district demographic factors: the percentage of the population born outside of Canada, the percentage of the population with a university education of at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent, the median age of the population, and the population density (in people per square kilometre). As in previous chapters, I include each of these variables to measure different aspects of a district's "urbanity," which might influence the extent to which it is hospitable to attracting and electing women candidates. The percentage of the population born outside of Canada serves as a measure of the district's diversity, which may provide an indication of how accepting residents are of people of non-traditional backgrounds holding positions of power. Those more used to interacting with a more diverse population may be less likely to hold biases against women being in positions of power. The percentage of the population with a university education provides a similar metric, as people with higher levels of education are less likely to hold strictly traditional views of gender roles and thus are more likely to vote for women. Similarly, the median age of the population provides an important indication as younger electors are also more likely to hold more feminist views and consequently to be more supportive of women running for office. Population density provides an indication of how urban the district is in a strictly geographic sense — people living in more urban areas tend to hold more socially liberal views, and as such should be less likely to hold biases against women candidates.

In both models I also include measures of a district's competitiveness, although the specific measure differs between models. In Model 1, which measures the likelihood of electing a woman at the district level, I employ the victory margin of the winning candidate. This indicator serves to test the hypothesis that women are less likely to win by a safe margin than are men. In Model 2, which predicts the likelihood of an individual candidate to win election, I use a party-level measure of competitiveness, specifically the party's victory margin in the *previous* election. I employ this lagged variable to provide a useful indication of how reasonable a prospect the candidate had of winning the district in question based on the party's past performance in said district. Consequently, I while I include dummy variable controls for election years in both models, the reference years in the two models are different (2004 for Model 1 and 2006 for Model 2) as the lagged competitiveness variable forces me to exclude data from the 2004 election from model 2.¹⁵

Finally in both models, I also control for voter turnout, a variable sourced from the above-mentioned Library of Parliament dataset and measured as the percentage of registered voters¹⁶ who cast a ballot. Elections with low levels of voter turnout tend to favour incumbent politicians as well as the political right. Both of these results are generally detrimental to electing greater numbers of women. The electors most likely to turn out in elections with lower levels of

¹⁵ While ideally I would include the 2004 election in Model 2 using lagged competitiveness data from the 2000 election, this is not feasible as the representation order and number of districts changed between the two elections. In addition, the Progressive Conservative Party and Canadian Alliance merged to form the modern Conservative Party of Canada, making it infeasible to obtain information on each party's past performance.

¹⁶ As voter registration is automatic in Canada and reasonably accurate, and as many districts have high numbers of non-citizens who are ineligible to vote, registered voter turnout provides a better estimate of the "true" Voting Eligible Population turnout rate than it might in many other countries (see Wigginton, Stockemer, and Schouwen 2020).

interest similarly tend to be older and more conservative, which may likewise indicate that they are less likely to support women candidates on average.

As more technical control variables, in Model 1 I control for the total number of women candidates in order to provide an indication of the baseline probability of the district electing a woman — for example, in a district with no women candidates whatsoever (a scenario present 323 times in the dataset), there is no possibility of electing a woman regardless of any other factor. In both models I also control for the overall number of candidates, which in Model 1 provides a measure of the relative number of women candidates and in Model 2 provides an indication of how many other people each candidate is competing against. Finally, in Model 2 I control for the political party with which the candidate is affiliated. As I include only candidates for parties that have won a seat in the House of Commons during the timeframe of the present study, this is a five-category variable consisting of the Conservative, Liberal, New Democratic, and Green Parties of Canada, and the Bloc Québécois.

Descriptive statistics

Looking descriptively at the election stage of the representation pipeline presents a picture of the pipeline's overall results — how well represented are women in Canadian federal politics?

Overall, the results show, as expected, that Canada is very far from reaching gender parity in the House of Commons, with the average across the sample indicating that only 24% of elected MPs are women (see Figure 19). Encouragingly, there is an apparent increase over time, albeit it a

modest one, with women’s share of electoral winners rising from 21% in the 2004 election to 29% in the 2019 election¹⁷.

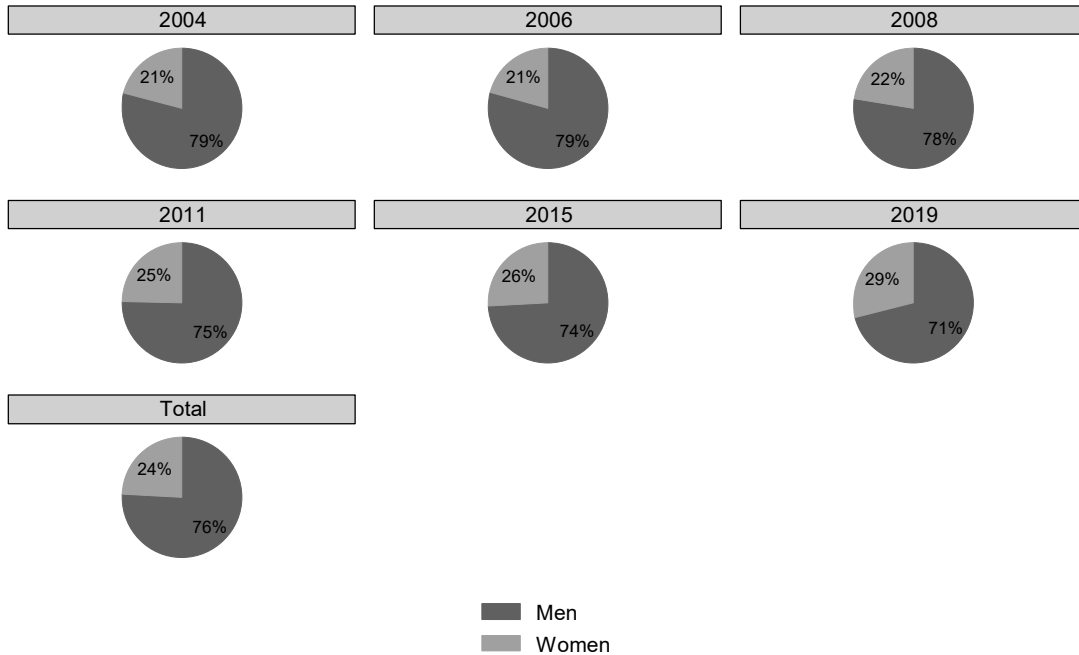


Figure 19: Gender of electoral winners by year

Between political parties, however, there is significant variation in the rates at which women are elected to the House of Commons (see Figure 20). Women account for only 15% of Conservatives elected during the time frame, making the party a notable outlier in women’s representation. While the other parties with official standing in the House of Commons have fared better in electing women, even the New Democratic Party’s record in this time frame shows only 38% of its general election winners being women. The Green Party stands alone in having a majority of its general election winners be women, however this is largely a product of

¹⁷ This figure has risen only slightly since 2019, with the current makeup of the House of Commons (in 2022) being 30.5% women.

their small size as a parliamentary party — the GPC recorded only 5 general election wins during the 2004-2019 timeframe, 3 of which were the party’s then-leader Elizabeth May.

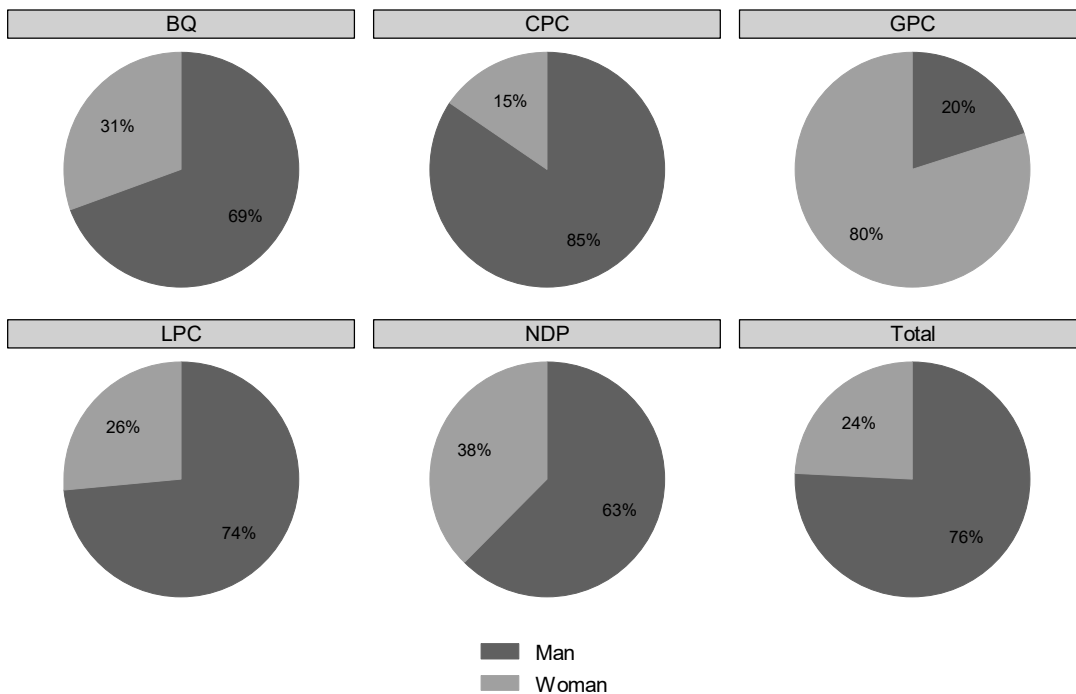


Figure 20: Gender of general election winners 2004-2019 by party

From these results we can already see an indication that while candidate nominations undoubtedly play a major role in determining Parliament’s gender balance, the election stage is nonetheless not irrelevant. In comparing the gender makeups of parties’ elected caucuses in Figure 20 to the gender balances of their candidate slates in Figure 21, a noticeable disparity presents itself for the largest parties. While women are dramatically underrepresented among Conservative candidates at 20%, this is still two percentage points greater than their rate of representation among elected Conservative MPs. The Liberals have the most sizeable gap, with a

candidate pool of 31% women producing caucuses of on average only 26% women. The Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party, however, have no gap and a 1 percentage point gap respectively.

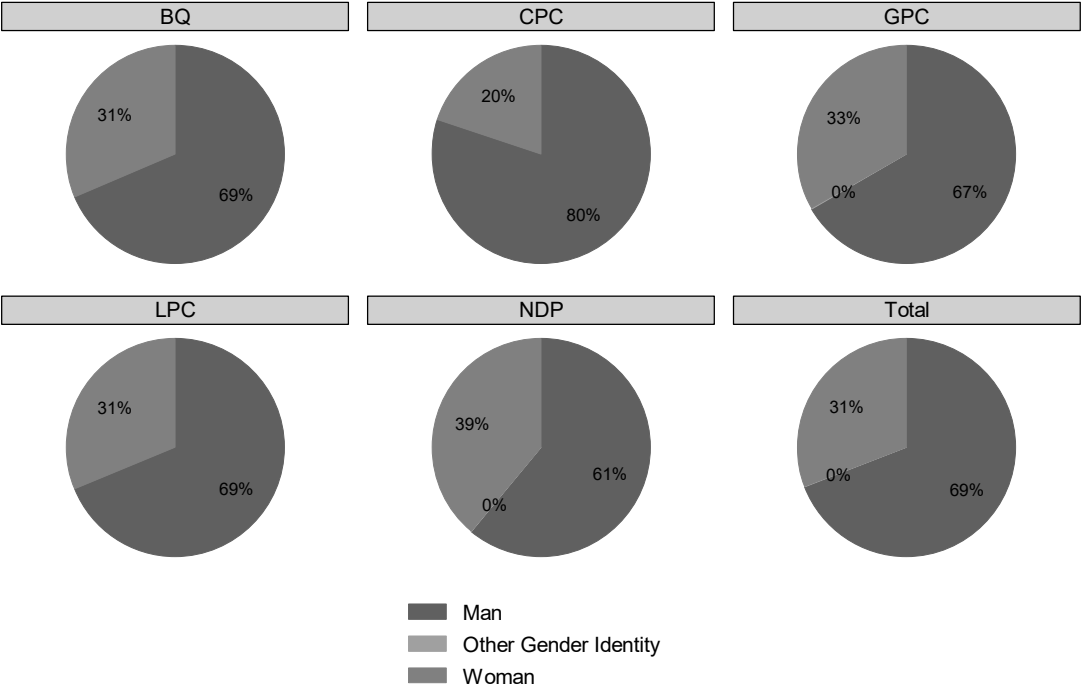


Figure 21 Gender of general election candidates 2004–2019 by party

Multivariate analysis

In Table 4 below, I present two logistic regression models from the same data set. Model 1 operates at the district level, with the dependent variable being whether or not the district in question elects a woman to Parliament. In Model 2 the analysis happens at the candidate level, with the model predicting whether or not the candidate in question wins their election.

Table 4: Multivariate regression models for the election stage

	Logit model Woman elected	Logit model Won election
Woman candidate		-0.386*** (0.0788)
# women candidates	1.079*** (0.0953)	
# total candidates	-0.138 (0.0881)	-0.0701* (0.0333)
Party (ref. BQ)		
CPC		-0.457*** (0.134)
GPC		-5.667*** (0.465)
LPC		-0.478*** (0.134)
NDP		-1.840*** (0.146)
Year (ref. 2004 in M1, 2006 in M2)		
2006	-0.0138 (0.288)	
2008	-0.170 (0.278)	0.0973 (0.111)

2011	-0.0454 (0.275)	0.102 (0.109)
2015	0.0423 (0.325)	-0.303* (0.131)
2019	-0.265 (0.342)	0.130 (0.113)
Immigrants (%)	0.000815 (0.0109)	0.0100** (0.00308)
Uni education (%)	0.0408* (0.0201)	0.00431 (0.00564)
Median age	0.00000633 (0.0000162)	0.00000176 (0.00000672)
Turnout	0.000251 (0.0253)	0.00315 (0.00734)
Population density	0.0000477 (0.0000909)	-0.0000598* (0.0000261)
Party victory margin (at last election)		0.0462*** (0.00225)
Winner victory margin	-0.0142* (0.00650)	
Constant	-3.460* (1.661)	-0.0530 (0.521)
District intercept	4.898*** (0.911)	1.48e-34 (9.83e-19)
Observations	1905	6206

In Model 1, I analyse the district level factors that predict the likelihood of electing a woman to Parliament. Of the district characteristics included in the model, the only one found to be a significant predictor of the odds of electing a woman to Parliament is education level, measured as the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher. Of the measures

of a district's urban character, education is the only one to have a statistically significant impact on the probability of a woman being elected — population density and the percentage of the district's residents born outside of Canada have no statistically significant effect.

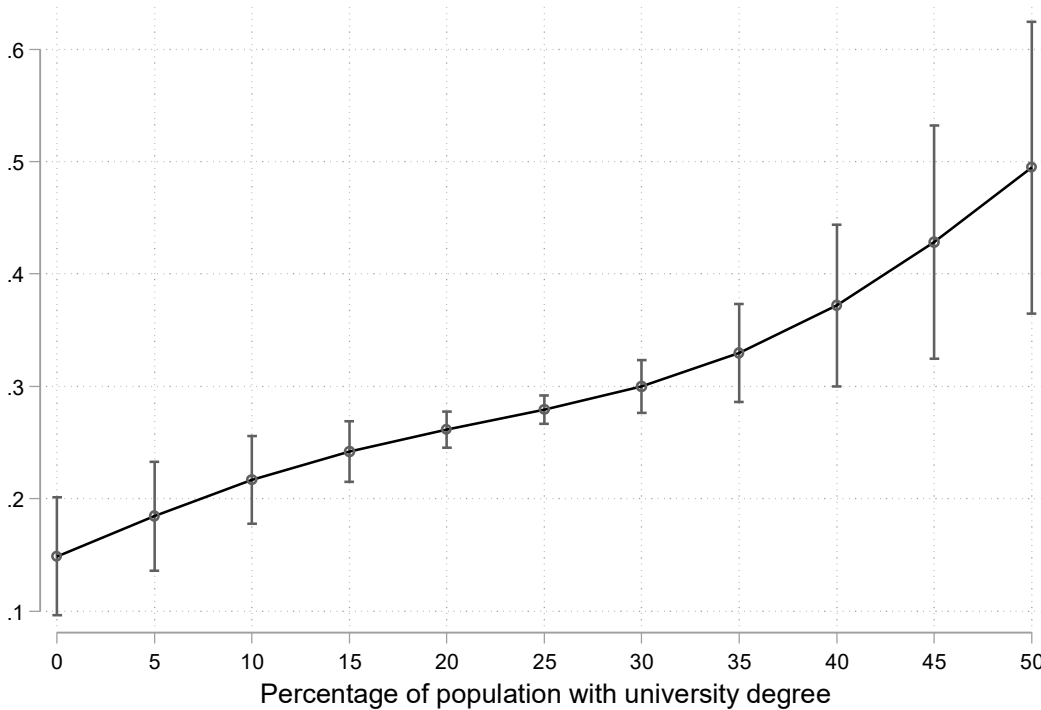


Figure 22: Probability of electing a woman by district education level (95% CIs)

Substantively, the effect of a district's level of education is quite sizeable (see Figure 22). From the least educated district in the dataset, where just under 5% of the population hold a university degree, to the most educated, where just under 50% are university educated, the model predicts an increase of over 30 percentage points in the odds of electing a woman to parliament. Specifically, the predicted probabilities of electing a woman range from 18.5% for a district where 5% of the population holds a university degree to 49.5% for a district where 50% of residents are university educated. Even ignoring the extremes in terms of average education levels, the effect is still substantively notable; between the 25th percentile in education level (8.7% university educated) and the 75th percentile (20.3%), the predicted probability of electing a

woman to the House of Commons increases from 20.9% to 26.3%. As such, even controlling for the number of women on the ballot, districts with more educated populations elect more women to parliament.

Furthermore, in Model 1 there is a statistically significant and negative relationship between the victory margin in the district and the probability of electing a woman. It is important to highlight that, unlike in Model 2, this victory margin is not a lagged variable, but rather reflects the victory margin in the observed election itself. In other words, this result implies that when women win election, they are more likely to do so by a narrow margin than are men.

Substantively, this effect is more modest in size than the effect of district education (see Figure 23). From the thinnest victory margin in the dataset of 0¹⁸ percentage points to the safest seat won by just over 75 percentage points, the probability of the elected MP being a woman decreases by only just under 10 percentage points, from 26.6% in the closest district to 16.7% in the safest district. Within the interquartile range of observed victory margins, however, this variation is even smaller. The difference in probability of electing a woman between a district with a victory margin in the 25th percentile (7.4 percentage points) and one in the 75th percentile (30 percentage points) is only around 3 percentage points, with the odds of electing a woman varying from 25.5% to 22.3% within this interquartile range.

¹⁸ The victory margin figures in the dataset are expressed in percentage points, rounded to the nearest decimal. As such, the closest race in the dataset is not in fact an exact tie but rather a win by 9 votes (a win by Québec New Democrat François Lapointe during the 2011 “Orange Wave”).

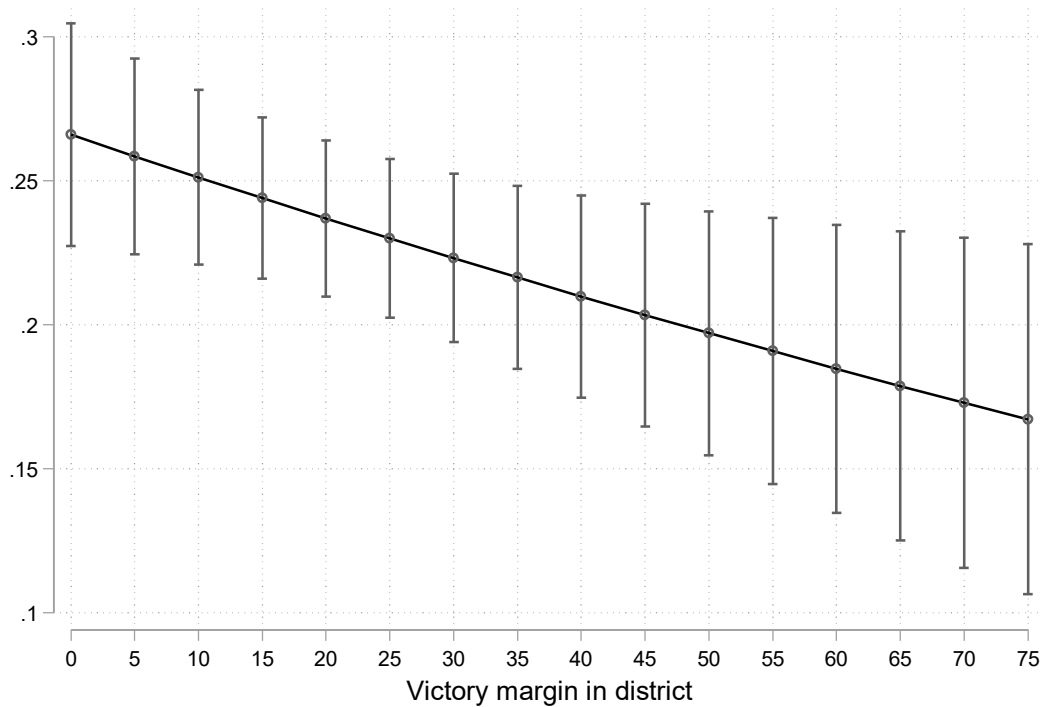


Figure 23: Predicted probability of electing a woman by district victory margin (Model 1)

As such, much of the tendency of voters to less often elect women by wide margins is the product of a relatively small number of men incumbents in very safe seats. For example, throughout the time period covered in this analysis, Conservative MP Kevin Sorenson has been winning the Alberta district of Crowfoot (renamed Battle River—Crowfoot post-2019) by incredible margins, never getting fewer than 80% of votes. Still, even within more typical victory margins, women are less likely than men to win by a comfortable margin. In part, this tendency might be driven by woman candidates simply receiving fewer votes than do men who run in similar circumstances.

In Model 2, the dependent variable shifts from the gender of the candidate elected in a district to whether each individual candidate lost or won the election. As such, while I include

the same variables as in Model 1 for control purposes, my analysis in this model is centred around a single independent variable: the candidate's gender. From this, Model 2 delivers a clear result, statistically significant at the 99.9% level of confidence — women have a lower probability of winning election than do men.

While statistically significant, the substantive size of this effect is overall fairly modest. Controlling for all other variables in the model, a man or non-binary candidate has on average a 24% chance of winning their election, compared to a woman having a 22% chance of winning election. As such, a woman candidate, according to this model, has an approximately 8% lower chance of winning election than does a man running in the same district and for the same party. Nevertheless, while modest in its substantive size, this result does imply that a greater rate of losing at the election stage is a non-trivial factor inhibiting women's representation.

To better contextualize this difference, let us consider a typical federal election under the current representation order of 338 seats. Counting only the 4 parties with official standing in the House of Commons (LPC, CPC, NDP, and BQ), and assuming that the 3 largest parties run in all 338 districts, and the Bloc in all 78 Québec districts, we can expect 1430 major-party candidates in a typical federal election. Assuming also the average in the sample of 24% women candidates, 343 of these 1430 candidates will be women. Under these circumstances, the difference between women winning at their predicted probability of 22% and men's probability of 24% is a difference between 75.5 women being elected and 82.3 women being elected. In other words, even this fairly small degree of electoral discrimination can be expected to account for about a half dozen fewer women being elected to the House of Commons than would be if men and women had equal odds of winning, even with women continuing to be underrepresented among electoral candidates.

Breaking this bias down by party, however, we see that the gender bias is not entirely even across the board (see Figure 24). New Democratic candidates see very little difference in their probability of winning election, with men having a 15% probability of winning election compared to 14% for women. For Liberal and Conservative candidates, however, this difference is more substantive, with women Liberal candidates having 31% odds of winning election compared to 35% for men, and women Conservative candidates 38% compared to 42% for men.

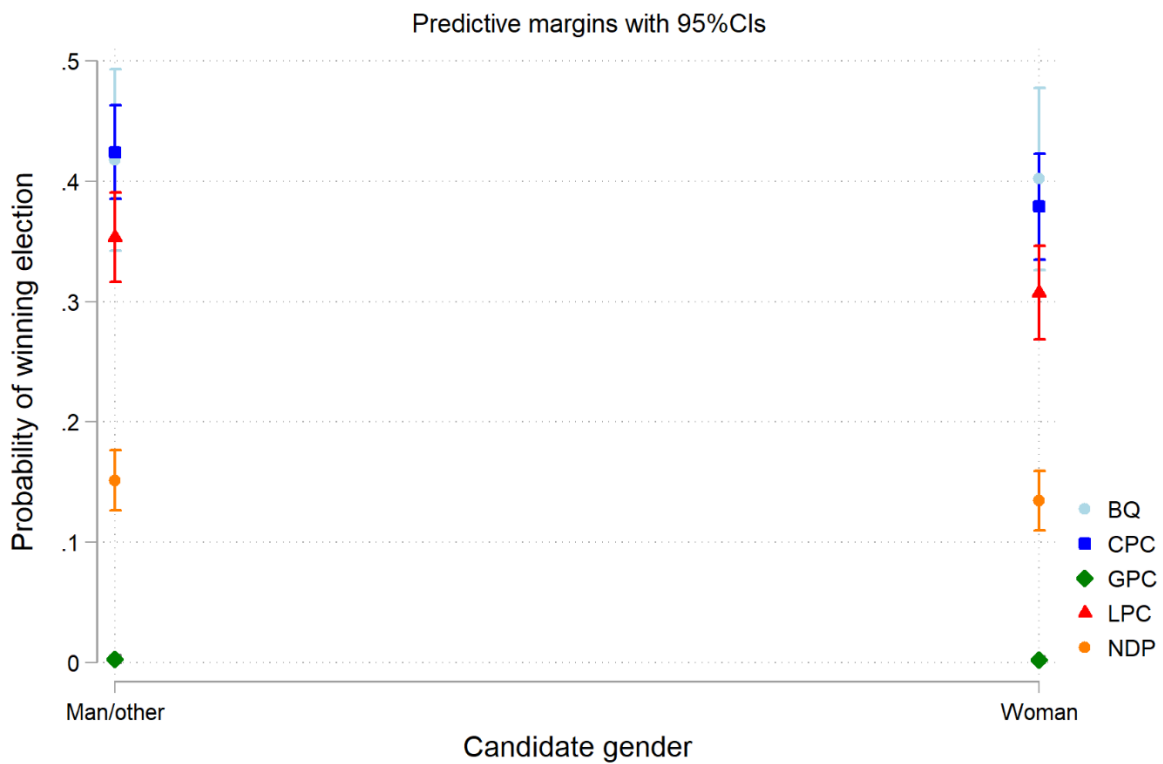


Figure 24: Probability of winning election by candidate gender and party

Discussion and conclusion

At the election stage, women are already clearly underrepresented in Canada's federal elections, accounting for only 31% of major party candidates. From this starting point, it is to be expected that elections will produce a Parliament where women are underrepresented relative to their demographic weight, unless voters favour women candidates disproportionately. The reality, however, is much the opposite — even relative to the number of women electoral candidates nominated by major parties, women are still less likely to be elected than are men in similar situations.

In a simple univariate analysis, the average candidate pool of 31% women results on average in only 29% women MPs, indicating a small but noticeable number of women being eliminated at the election stage. When controlling for district-level factors, including the party's previous performance in the district, this amounts to women having a 22% chance of winning their election compared to 24% for men, or in other words having an 8% lower chance of winning election than do men. Contrary to other research, then, I find that electoral discrimination is in fact a minor but non-negligible contributor to women's underrepresentation, further exacerbating the issue of women's underrepresentation among political candidates.

In terms of where women win election, I once again find evidence that more urban districts are more amenable to women's representation. In previous chapters, I found that such districts were more friendly to women candidates at earlier stages, being more likely to have women compete in nomination contests and be selected as candidates. Even controlling for these higher rates of women candidates, however, districts with more educated populations are still more likely to elect women to Parliament. This provides an indication that the benefits of more urban populations to women's representation happen at all stages of the representation pipeline,

with more educated populations producing more women nomination contestants and voting more often for women.

IX. Conclusion

In this dissertation I undertook to answer two broad questions surrounding women's representation in Canada. First, and foremost, this dissertation aims to determine at what stage of the representation pipeline women become underrepresented, and how important each stage is to women's descriptive representation relative to the others. In a second, consequent, research question, I seek to understand how the factors that influence women's representation vary across the three stages of the representation pipeline.

In this concluding chapter, I revisit the results of the four preceding empirical chapters in order to answer these two central research questions. While in each of these chapters I presented conclusions germane to the specific pipeline stage and research question each chapter addressed, in this final section I present transversal conclusions that address the state of the representation pipeline as a whole.

In the first section of this conclusion, I address my first overall research question and first general hypothesis — in other words, I address the question of what stage in the pipeline drives women's underrepresentation. Following this, in the second section I address my second research question and second through fourth overall hypotheses, presenting a transversal overview of how several different factors influence women's representation throughout the pipeline. Finally, I present a discussion of the implications of this dissertation's findings, both as they pertain to public policy as well as to academic research.

Revisiting the pipeline – when are women underrepresented?

In answering the first research question, it is illustrative to revisit the diagram of the representation pipeline from Chapter IV with the addition of descriptive statistics. From these figures alone, it is readily apparent that the greatest issues in the representation pipeline lie at its beginning: from a population where women make up a slight majority,¹⁹ Canada’s major federal parties produce a pool of nomination contestants in which just shy of 29% of participants are women. From this starting point women’s rate of representation tapers only slightly throughout the pipeline, resulting in an average of 24% of general election winners being women.

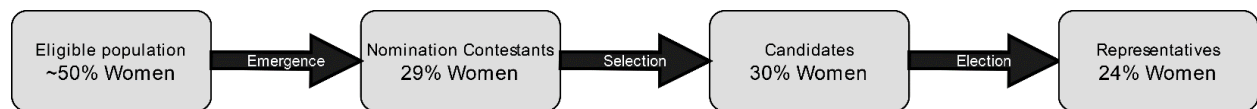


Figure 25: The representation pipeline revisited

These rough figures confirm two important premises for this conclusion. First and foremost, they illustrate that the candidate emergence stage represents an incredible barrier to women’s representation. The rate of underrepresentation at this earliest observable stage makes a gender-balanced House of Commons infeasible on its face and indicates that significant issues are present in political recruitment. Secondly, the decline over the course of the pipeline shows that the emergence stage is not the only issue for women’s representation, but rather that problems exist throughout the pipeline. In the remainder of this section, I will revisit each stage in order and summarise the main conclusions to be taken from the preceding chapters.

¹⁹ The 2021 Census of Population reports 50.7% of the Canadian population falling into the gender category “Women +,” which “includes women (and/or girls), as well as some non-binary persons.”

Emergence: the pipeline is blocked at its beginning

Even from a simple descriptive analysis of Canada's representation pipeline, the clear conclusion is that the greatest shortcomings in assuring gender equity happen in its earliest stages. Across all major parties during the 2004–2019 period covered in this dissertation, women account for only 29% of nomination contestants. From this starting point, women's underrepresentation is an inevitability — even selection processes that consider the importance of gender equity and elections biased heavily in women's favour can not realistically reverse this trend. Far too many nomination contests simply have no women available to be chosen.

From the results of Chapter V, we learn that the women and men who do emerge as nomination contestants are of very similar profiles overall. Both men and women nomination contestants have on average no prior experience holding elected office, though those men and women who do have prior experience have very similar rates of experience at the same orders of government. Likewise, the two groups have similar levels of education and involvement in their parties, giving an overall impression that women are holding themselves to a higher bar before running for office; rather, men and women who aspire to politics seem to be entering politics at similar stages.

One of the few observed differences between men and women contestants, however, may be illustrative in determining the reason for women's lower rates of participation in nomination contestants: women who responded to the survey were more likely to indicate they were motivated to run by external encouragement. As can be seen in Figure 5, while both groups' median fell closer to running due to self-motivation than running due to encouragement, women more often reported running for reasons primarily of external motivation and were less likely to report running solely for personal reasons. This provides a possible indication that a lack of

active recruitment efforts from parties and others may be in part to blame for the low rates of women emerging as nomination contestants. Given the gendered differences in reasons for running for office, absent a deliberate effort to recruit women, it is to be expected that more men will emerge as nomination contestants than will women.

Selection: candidate selection is (largely) irrelevant to women's representation

While women are elected at even lower rates than they participate in nomination contests, the reason for this does not seem to lie in the candidate selection process. In first presenting the representation pipeline model in Chapter IV, I acknowledge the caveat that it is an ideal type that will not necessarily apply in all cases. Party leaders may occasionally force the nomination of a star candidate, for example, bypassing the normal channels to place a candidate where they wish. In other, even rarer, cases, a political aspirant may eschew the usual processes and seek to be elected as an independent, but successful independent candidates are exceedingly rare in Canada.

A third possible variation in the pipeline process would come in the form of simply forgoing the selection stage through an acclamation — if only one qualified candidate enters the nomination contest, then there is no meaningful selection stage to be had and the political aspirant can proceed directly to candidature. While other variations in the representation pipeline may be relatively rare, uncontested nominations are in practice incredibly common, with over 71% of contests in the dataset having only a single contestant. This alone points to the candidate selection process itself being relatively unimportant; if candidates are simply chosen by default, then the only meaningful pre-electoral barrier to women's representation happens in terms of candidate emergence.

Moreover, even in cases where nominations are contested, the candidate selection process is often still irrelevant to women's representation. Even among non-acclaimed contests, 44% of

contests have no women competing at all, and fewer than 2% have more than one woman contestant. In their totality, this state of affairs leaves little room for candidate selection to influence women's representation. In the 71% of nominations which go uncontested, selection processes necessarily have no influence women's representation as there is effectively no selection process at all. In the 44% of contested nominations in which no women compete, the selection process is also irrelevant to women's representation as no matter who is chosen or for what reasons, the result will not lead to a woman candidate being elected. In total then, these two scenarios mean that in only 16.5% of nomination contests will selectors be making a real choice that could affect women's representation.²⁰ Within this minority of cases where selection processes have the potential to influence outcomes, their influence on women's representation is largely neutral. Women and men are selected as candidates in proportion with their rates of participation in nomination contests. Moreover, this trend of proportional selection by gender is true across all parties, regions, and years, providing a robust indication that party selectorate in Canada are willing to select women as candidates, provided of course that women are indeed recruited into the nomination contest process.

In its totality, then, the selection stage is largely a non-factor in determining the state of women's representation in Canada. Most electoral candidates are, at least officially, chosen by default, with only a single contender coming forward. This is not, however, to say that the problem therefore lies entirely upon the "supply" side of the equation, or in other words, not to say that the problem rests entirely upon women not coming forward. Political parties and their

²⁰ Selectors' choices are also immaterial to women's representation in contested nominations where all contests are women, however such cases are exceedingly rare, occurring only 72 times in the dataset and thus accounting for less than 0.016% of contests.

local Electoral District Associations can and do exert considerable influence at the emergence stage by choosing which potential candidates to actively recruit by tailoring their recruitment processes to attract diverse candidates. Concluding that the selection stage is of little consequence is not to say that political parties are not at fault for women's underrepresentation – indeed, particularly given the fact that women contents more often reported having been pushed to run (see Chapter V), it is quite likely that EDA executive's choices in who to encourage to run play a massive role in determining the gender of the selected candidate. Rather, my findings indicate that any shortcomings in parties' efforts are happening well before a formal nomination vote is ever held.

Election: Electoral discrimination is still a (small) factor

While women and men are selected in nomination contests at equal rates, the same is not true of elections. Looking at the crude numbers from the pipeline diagram above (see Figure 25 above), a candidate pool of 30% women candidates results on average in only 24% of people elected to Parliament being women. Certainly, some of this disparity is due to which parties more often nominate women (e.g., the NDP nominate many women but win few seats) and where women become candidates. But the multivariate regression results from Chapter VIII reveal that, even when controlling for a candidate's party and for that party's past performance in the same district, women have a statistically significantly lower chance of winning their election than would a man running in the same circumstance.

In this my research conflicts with some prior research. Overall, the existing literature in the Canadian context finds electoral discrimination to be either a non-factor or a trivial factor (see Chapter III above). Indeed, even in studies that find women candidates to face some degree of electoral penalty, the framing of the results generally indicates this to be of ultimately little

consequence. Sevi et. al. (2019), for example, state in the title of their article that women do not get fewer votes, although their results do find a modern (statistically insignificant) vote gap of 0.5 percentage points and a historical one up to five times that size. Hunter and Denton similarly find in several of their analyses a “trivial female disadvantage” (1984, 402) in the order of 277 fewer votes.

While my results differ in being statistically significant, substantively the difference between the results I present in Chapter 0 and the existing literature is rather minor. Overall, I find women candidates to have a 22% chance on average of winning election compared to a 24% chance for men. This gap is for sure quite substantively small, even if statistically significant. Indeed, even those prior studies that find women to be on average *more* likely to win their elections find substantively very small effects. Black and Erickson (2003), for example, find women to have an electoral edge of 1.23 percentage points when controlling for their party’s past performance in the district. While there is some disagreement in the literature, then, on both the direction and statistical significance on any electoral discrimination between genders, there is broad agreement that it is rather small substantively.

This is not to argue that the discrepancy I observed in Chapter VII ought to be simply shrugged off. As outlined above, this relatively small difference in probability of winning amounts over Canada’s 338 electoral districts to an expectation of 6 fewer women winning than men, were men and women to be candidates at equal rates. While my results here indicate that the election stage is not currently a major barrier to women’s representation, the fact that women are winning elections at lower rates than are similarly situated men is not negligible and merits further study.

What is driving underrepresentation?

The answer to my first research question, presented above, is fairly straightforward: the emergence stage is by far the biggest source of women's underrepresentation in Canada. In the remainder of this conclusion, I will review what my results in the previous chapter say about *why* women are underrepresented and how these factors evolve over the course of the pipeline. In general, this section serves to review my latter three overall hypotheses, outlined in Chapter IV, in light of my analyses in the prior chapters. In the subsections to follow I will address each of these hypotheses in turn and provide an overview of what the analyses in the four preceding chapters reveal in their totality.

One overall trend unrelated to my overall hypotheses, however, is a trend relating to time. Across all three stages of the pipeline I have observed in this dissertation a general trend towards greater levels of women's representation over time. With each successive election cycle in my sample, more women are contesting nomination, being selected as candidates, and winning election. Indeed, the one election that has happened since finishing my empirical analysis (the 2021 General Election) also saw a slight increase in the number of women elected to the House of Commons over the results of the 2019 election.

Differences between parties

The second general hypothesis I set out in Chapter IV was that the Conservative Party of Canada would perform worse than either of its two major rivals, namely the Liberal and New Democratic Parties, in terms of representing women. My expectation was based both off the Conservative Party's lower appeal among women and also the CPC's lack of equity-promotion rules for

nomination contests. The results of my analyses confirm this hypothesis, in line with findings from other Canadian context studies and from the comparative literature, all of which broadly finds that right-leaning parties elect fewer women.

While the Conservative Party stands out from the others as performing worse than the other two major pan-Canadian parties or the Bloc Québécois, *where* in the pipeline these problems emerge largely reflect the overall tendencies described above. The greatest barrier by far to women becoming elected Members of Parliament for the Conservative party lies in the low rate of women nomination contestants, with a smaller secondary barrier presented by women CPC candidates winning elections at lower rates. In this my analysis contributes a precision to the often-observed tendency of conservative parties to elect fewer women in localising its origins within the pipeline; rather than being an issue of the Conservative Party's selectorate being hesitant to nominate women as candidates, the imbalance primarily stems from the party's comparatively small number of women nomination contestants.

More specifically, at the emergence stage Conservative nominations are far more likely to be male dominated, with over 70% of CPC nomination contests having no women participating at all, compared to 59% for the LPC and 52% for the NDP. At the selection stage, only 19% of CPC nomination contest winners are women, compared to 31% for the LPC and 40% for the NDP. When controlling for other factors, including the number of women contestants, however, these differences between parties in selection are not statistically significant. Finally, at the election stage, women running for the CPC have a 4-percentagepoint reduction in their probability of winning compared to a man, a figure equivalent to that of LPC candidates, but greater than that of those running for the NDP, who see slightly over a 1-percentage-point reduction.

Confirming the hypothesis that the Conservative Party underperforms in women's representation also sheds some doubt on the durability of the time trend discussed above, at least as it pertains to the ultimate gender balance of the House of Commons. While the Conservative Party's shares of women nomination contestants, candidates, and Members of Parliament have also been increasing over the course of the 2004–2019 period covered in this dissertation, this has happened at a slower rate than its main rivals. As such, the continued growth women have seen in their share of seats in the House of Commons since 2015 may only be sustainable if either rates of women's representation in the Conservative Party increase to match those of their rival parties, or the Conservatives continue to remain a minority in the House of Commons and do not again win a majority of seats.

Urban districts

In terms of *where* women are likely to be elected, I have examined in this dissertation the effect of several variables which together represent a district's urbanity; that is to say, the extent to which it is a dense, urban community with a diverse and well-educated population. In line with my third general hypothesis (see page 71) I expected to find that such districts are more conducive to women's representation, due to being more likely to have populations that support women's involvement in politics and are comfortable with seeing diversity in leadership. Overall, I find that such districts do have an effect on women's representation, and also that this effect differs between the stages of the pipeline. In this as well I confirm the findings of prior literature while at the same time clarifying the effect's location within the representation pipeline.

Across all three stages of the pipeline, I find evidence that more urban districts are more friendly to women. At the emergence stage, more educated districts have a statistically significantly larger predicted number of women nomination contestants. Substantively, however, this effect is rather small, with districts within the interquartile range of observed education levels differing in their expected number of women contestants by less than 0.05 percentage points. At the selection stage, population diversity (measured as the percentage of the population born outside of Canada) has a significant effect on the probability that a party nominates a woman; population density has a similar effect on the predicted number of women candidates in the district. Substantively the effects at this stage are larger, with the most diverse district having a greater probability of selecting a woman than the least diverse by 16 percentage points, and the densest riding having 0.3 more women candidates than the most rural. Finally, at the election stage I again find that more educated districts are more conducive to women's representation, and much more substantively so than at the emergence stage. Specifically, the most educated district has a greater probability of electing a woman than does the least educated district by 30 percentage points.

Overall, then, more urban districts have greater probabilities of being represented by a woman, although in different ways at different stages. More educated districts voting for women more often seemingly reflects the role education plays in promoting the importance of women's representation. Similar logic applies to the smaller effect at the emergence stage, with greater education levels increasing the odds that people in the district will encourage women to run for office and increasing the odds that women will see themselves as viable candidates. The fact that education does not play a role at the selection stage, and conversely that district diversity does play a role, highlights the important fact that influences are not uniform across the pipeline.

While more diverse populations select women more often, they are no more likely to produce women nomination contestants, nor more likely to vote for women.

Notably, however, I find no evidence that the distance between a district and Ottawa has any relationship to women's likelihood of running for office. While I include this variable in models for both the selection and emergence stage, it does not prove to be statistically significant nor substantively large at either stage. This, combined with population density's lack of effect at the emergence stage, refute the geographic aspect outlined in my general hypothesis. While some studies in the United States have found evidence that more distant and rural districts may be less likely to be represented by a woman due to the additional time pressures incurred by representatives for these districts, I find no such evidence here in the Canadian case. As such, any tendency of women to more often emerge as contestants or be selected as candidates in more urban areas is likely a product of the culture and socioeconomic character of these communities and not a reflection of the difficulties of representing more rural and remote regions.

Safe vs competitive seats

The role of district competitiveness in inhibiting women's representation has been a frequent object of study in Canadian politics, and generally analysed at the stage of political candidacy (see, for example: Thomas and Bodet 2013; Pelletier and Tremblay 1992). In my fourth general hypothesis I expected to find that women are indeed more likely to be candidates in hard-to-win districts but did entertain the possibility that this effect could be caused by either or both the selection and emergence stages. I do not find clear evidence in my analysis to support this hypothesis.

Descriptively²¹, I do find evidence that women may more often be candidates in difficult-to-win districts. As can be seen in Figure 14 in Chapter VII, women are selected more often in the least winnable districts than they are in the most winnable. (see Figure 8 in Chapter VI), with a modest difference between the most and least winnable districts in terms of the gender makeup of contestants. Looking as well at the survey data from Chapter V, I find that women entering nomination contests were slightly more likely to both believe that they were very likely to be selected as candidate and also that their party was unlikely to win the election. Overall, then, the descriptive results from my analysis provide some support to my hypothesis, and overall fall in line with the findings of Thomas and Bodet (2013). Moreover, my analysis expands upon their findings by showing that this descriptive trend is present in at the emergence stage, indicating that women are not being selected from among several choices to serve as a sacrificial lamb, but rather are more often coming forward or being recruited to serve the role.

When controlling for other factors in multivariate analyses, however, I do not find any such trend. At the emergence stage, and when including acclimations at the selection stage, I find no statistically significant relationship. However, when excluding acclaimed contests at the selection stage, I find in fact the exact opposite of my expectation: women are more likely to be selected in *more winnable* districts. Specifically, I find that women are 10 percentage points more likely to be chosen in the most winnable districts than they are in the most hopeless districts. As I do in Chapter VII, it is important here to emphasise that this effect only holds on the restricted dataset that excludes acclaimed races — in other words, it only holds in cases

²¹ The descriptive trend is particularly important to this hypothesis because, as Thomas and Bodet (2013) highlight, the usually cited trend is itself a descriptive observation and not a causal theory.

where there is indeed an actual choice to be made by selectors about candidates, which is a minority of nomination contests overall.

This sheds some considerable light on the mechanism behind the “sacrificial lamb” phenomenon observed by others and hinted at in my descriptive analysis. If women are indeed more often candidates in districts that they have no reasonable prospect to win, it is not because Electoral District Associations are selecting women more often in these cases. Rather, it is because women are participating in nomination contests in these districts that they win by acclamation. Here again, I highlight that I am not answering a question of supply versus demand in finding that the issue is not at the selection stage. Indeed, any tendency of women to participate more often in contests for districts that are difficult to win could very well be driven by party recruitment patterns, with parties possibly targeting women more often to fill these roles.

Going forward – what is to be done?

In this final section of this conclusion, I will reflect on what practical lessons and next steps can be gleaned from the results of my analysis in this dissertation. Principally, this dissertation has found that the emergence stage is the primary driver of women’s underrepresentation in Canada, particularly in light of the high rate of uncontested nominations. I have further found that several factors, such as a district’s level of education or winnability, can have different effects at different stages in the pipeline, highlighting the importance of considering the integrity of the pipeline in order to fully appreciate how any particular factor might influence women’s rates of representation. In the remainder of this conclusion I will offer some suggestions on how best to

act on these two conclusions, both in crafting public policy and in conducting further academic research on the determinants of women's descriptive representation.

In terms of public policy, my results provide a clear indication of where to target interventions, and also of the potential effectiveness of “soft” quotas. The clear imbalance at the earliest stages of representation, that is to say at the emergence stage, shows that there are large potential gains to be made in increasing the rate at which women participate in nomination contests. Similarly, the “soft” quotas used by the NDP and LPC show considerable promise in light of this fact, and also in light of the two parties' performances in elections. The fact that the selection and election stages have little impact on women's representation overall indicates that programmes to get more women into the nomination stage should translate very directly into more women being elected. Moreover, the stronger performance of the NDP and LPC compared to the CPC provide another indication that even voluntarily adopted soft quotas could deliver strong results in increasing the number of women elected to the House of Commons.

In terms of academic research, my results speak to the importance of unpacking the black box of candidate selection and looking more closely at how political candidates are chosen. In particular, further research is needed to examine the relative importance of the different stages in the pipeline in contexts outside of Canada. The results I present in Chapter VII indicate that candidate selection in a formal context happens only in a minority of cases in Canada, with most contests in fact being acclamations. In these cases, then, candidates are in fact being chosen either by default or via recruitment, essentially merging the first two pipeline stages. Given this somewhat unusual state of affairs, the transferability of some of my findings to other contexts is not a given. In particular, my finding that the selection stage poses no significant barrier to women may be largely a reflection of the fact that it is only a minority of nominations in Canada

that do indeed see a meaningful nomination stage — were more nominations to see competition, it is quite possible that dynamics would shift and that gender biases at the nomination stage could emerge. Comparative research examining different candidate selection systems and political cultures is needed to confirm this relationship.

Beyond extending this research to other contexts, further research in the Canadian context is needed to better understand the factors at play at the emergence stage. While my analysis in this dissertation has demonstrated the emergence stage of the pipeline to be the point at which the majority of important influences on women's representation are most present, it does not fully explain how or why they happen. For example, while the “sacrificial lamb” effect is a product of the emergence stage (if it is a significant factor at all), it is still unclear *why* women would be more like to contest nominations in hopeless districts. Do parties more often target them for recruitment in these cases, or are they coming forward on their own? Answering questions such as these will require more in-depth research on the emergence stage, and in particular will require better understanding of the role and motivations of party activists in recruiting potential candidates. Moreover, future studies should pay particular attention to the low average participation rates in nomination contests when trying to better understand political recruitment patterns. The low rates of participation in nomination contests show both that Canadians have a fairly low rate of engagement with political parties and also that party members engaging in recruitment efforts have the potential to have a very large influence on the overall outcome of the selection process.

In both the Canadian and comparative contexts, however, closer examinations of parties' recruitment and selection processes is not a simple endeavor. To use the words of Gallagher and Marsh (1988), candidate selection is the “secret garden of politics”: political parties are generally

quite opaque about the details of their processes, and in Canada these processes are subject to very little regulation or oversight. While the Canada Elections Act does define nomination contests, the requirements for political parties are made in a context of financial reporting, with no particular requirements as to rules or contestant eligibility. In Canada and elsewhere political parties have a clear incentive to retain maximum control over their recruitment and nomination processes in order to ensure that candidates are aligned with the party's values and goals, and as such they are unlikely to increase transparency voluntarily.

In this context, researchers will be unlikely to have easy access to necessary data and may have great difficulty in obtaining the cooperation of political parties. For example, an obvious potential barrier to examine in the pre-nomination contest stage of the pipeline is the so-called “greenlighting” process, wherein parties screen potential nomination contestants for suitability. These processes exist for the purpose of allowing the party to exclude people it sees as unsuitable candidates for any reason²², largely for the purpose of avoiding embarrassment or scandal during an election campaign. While this process is an obvious area of interest for researchers, political parties are likely to be cagey about revealing detailed information about how many would-be contestants are rejected at this stage and would likely be particularly worried about sharing said applicants' demographic details for fear of hurting their public image if they are revealed to be excluding women or other underrepresented groups at this stage.

²² The Liberal Party, for example, includes in its policy on candidate selection the power for the committee to recommend the rejection of a potential contestant based on “any other political considerations which, in the sole and unfettered view of the Green Light Committee, impact upon the acceptability of a Potential Nomination Contestant to qualify as a Qualified Nomination Contestant” (Liberal Party of Canada 2022, sec. 6.8.j).

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