

# Why So Few Women in Politics? Evidence from India\*

Mudit Kapoor and Shamika Ravi

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## Abstract

In this paper we analyze women as political candidates in a representative democracy. Using 50 years of assembly elections data at the constituency level from the Indian states, we show that women are more likely to contest elections in those constituencies where gender ratio of the electors is less in favor of women. For example, women are more likely to contest elections in backward states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where the gender ratio of electors is in favor of men than in socially developed states like Kerala where the gender ratio of electors is more in favor of women. We present a “citizen candidates” model of representative democracy and show that our empirical results are consistent with the theoretical predictions of this model. Our results challenge existing policy of random reservation of seats for women.

JEL Classification: P16, J10, J11

Keywords: gender, median voter, political economy

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# 1 Introduction

The International Political Science Association reports that women representatives account for 20.3 percent of all parliamentarians in the world, as of January 2013 (figure 1). This highlights the severity of worldwide under-representation of women in political positions. According to Norris and Inglehart (2000), the gap between men and women has narrowed least in political representation when compared to education, legal rights and economic opportunities. However, despite the magnitude of this problem, there is little understanding regarding factors that might be causing this. Why are there so few female representatives in political positions, relative to their share in the population and electoral rolls? In this paper, we present an answer to this fundamental question.

Through a political context, our study aims to contribute to the broader literature and understanding of gender inequality. Amartya Sen's observations (1990, 1992) on "missing women" highlighted that the ratio of women to men is suspiciously low in countries such as India and China. The understanding of this phenomenon was further extended by Anderson and Ray (2010) who provide a decomposition of the missing women by age and cause of death and suggest that excess female mortality is a universal phenomenon which extends to adult population as well and should not be attributed merely to parental preferences. In democratic countries such as India, this worsening sex ratio of women to men in the population, directly worsens the electorate sex ratio. If policy preferences of men and women differ, then we show through a "citizen candidate" model that worsening electorate sex ratio will lead to more female candidates contesting elections for political representation. The model, however, also predicts that the worsening sex ratio of electorates will lower the probability of winning for female candidates. The empirical results from the Indian data are consistent with both these predictions of the model.

We use a simple "citizen candidates" model of representative democracy to show women's decision to contest elections. If the cost of contesting an election is higher for female candidates relative to men, then the model predicts that women are more likely to contest elections in those constituencies where there are more women missing

in the electorate. That is, women candidates contest in places where the gender ratio in the population is worse. The intuition for this result is that in places where the gender ratio is in favor of women, they do not have to incur the high cost of contesting an election to achieve their preferred policy outcomes. They achieve this through the simple act of voting. The model also predicts that in constituencies, where the gender ratio is unfavorable to women, female candidates incur the costly strategy of contesting elections, not always with the objective of winning but to prevent those candidates whose policy preferences are farthest from their interest. Together the two imply that there will be fewer female representatives in the parliament from both types of constituencies. In constituencies where women are well represented, they do not contest elections, while in constituencies where the gender ratio is worse, female candidates contest elections, but are less likely to win. Our work, therefore, has important implications for reservation policy for women in parliament.

We test the predictions of the model using data from assembly elections in India, over 50 years. We show that women are significantly more likely to contest elections in those constituencies where gender ratio of the electors is less in favor of women. For example, women are more likely to contest elections in backward states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where the gender ratio of electors is in favor of men than in socially developed states like Kerala where the gender ratio of electors is more in favor of women. The results also reveal that though more women candidates contest in constituencies with unfavorable gender ratios, they are less likely to win in these constituencies. In the light of our findings, we would argue that blanket quotas for women might not be the best policy prescription to enhance political participation by women.

Over the last 20 years, 17 countries have legislated reservations in seats for women candidates and 44 countries have legislated quotas for women in political parties candidate lists (see figures 2 and 3). There is growing evidence in the literature to show that reservation policies have improved women's representation (Jones, 1998 and Norris, 2001). There is also evidence to show that women's reservation has an impact on policy decisions. While Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) exploit a randomized controlled setting in India to show that reservation of village council seats for women

affects the type of public goods provided, Besley and Case (2000) control for state and year fixed effects and show that compensation for workers and child support policies are more likely to be introduced in places where there are more women in parliament. Dollar Fisman and Gatti (2001) do a cross sectional comparison and find a negative correlation between representation of women in parliament and corruption. However, despite growing evidence of causal effect of women’s representation on policy decisions, we have little understanding of why so few women participate in active politics as representatives. This paper is an attempt to fill that gap.

The rationale for reservation in favor of women is that women have higher costs of running for office than men. As a result, several countries have legislated randomly reserved seats for women. In India, one third of village council positions have been randomly reserved for women. Our results challenge such reservation policy, and instead, suggest that if the objective of reservation is to promote compensatory justice and safeguard the interests of women, then it should be aimed towards those constituencies where women are electorally a minority. Our results reveal that women are more likely to contest elections in places where the gender ratios of the electorate is stacked against them. For reservation policies to have a bite and affect the political representation of women, they must be implemented in constituencies where women are electoral minorities.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: section 2 describes the citizen candidate model of Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) which is build on the framework of Osborne and Slivinski (1996) and Besley and Coate (1997). In subsection 2.1, we extend the model to incorporate three of more political candidates. Section 3 describes the empirical strategy that we use to test the predictions of the model. Section 4 has the details of the Election Commission of India data that we use for the analysis. Section 5 has the results and discussion and section 6 concludes.

## 2 Theory: The Citizen Candidate Model

For our analysis, we use the theoretical model developed by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) which builds on the framework developed in Osborne and Slivinski

(1996) and Besley and Coate (1997). In all these models, the political candidates are “citizen candidates” and the political process is modeled as a three stage game. In stage one each citizen decides whether or not to become a political candidate. In the second stage, the citizens vote for the political candidates and in the third and final stage, the candidates with the maximum number of votes chooses the policy. This structure implies that the candidate who wins will implement their preferred policies and cannot credibly commit to do otherwise. While voting, citizens take this into account and vote for the candidates on the basis of their policy preferences and abilities. Citizens then decide whether or not to run for office depending on who else will enter the electoral race. The candidates, therefore, face a trade off between the probability of winning the election and the fixed cost of contesting the election.

The model developed by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (henceforth CD) has two distinguishing features. Firstly, the cost of contesting an election is higher for a women than for men. Secondly, the the final policy outcome that is implemented by the winning candidate is the mixture of a preferred policy and a policy option preferred by a local elite (which is different from what the winning candidate would prefer). This could either reflect the “capture” of decentralized government by local elite (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2000; Besley and Coate, 2001) or that the elected representative is under the control of the elected state government and assembly. This framework developed by CD captures to a very large extent the reality of the electoral process in India. Every citizen is eligible to vote and to contest election by standing as a political candidate. The political candidate who garners the maximum number of votes wins the election and is in a position to implement policies, but is also subjected to control by elected state government and assembly.

The key features of the CD model are as follows. The citizens of a constituency will implement a policy which is chosen in the interval between  $[0, 1]$ . Each citizen has a preferred policy option,  $\omega_i$ , and women and men have different policy preferences. This aspect of the model is reflected in their detailed empirical work. More specifically, it is assumed that women’s preferences are distributed over  $[0, W]$  and the men’s preference is distributed over the interval  $[M, 1]$ . The cost of contesting the election for the women is  $\delta_w$ , and the cost of contesting the election for the men

is  $\delta_m$ , where  $\delta_w > \delta_m$ .

The utility to citizen  $i$  with a preferred policy option  $\omega_i$ , if the outcome  $x_j$  is implemented is  $-|x_j - \omega_i|$  if citizen  $i$  is not a candidate, and  $-|x_j - \omega_i| - \delta_i$  if citizen  $i$  is a candidate. The policy which is implemented by the winning candidate  $x_j = \alpha\omega_j + (1 - \alpha)\mu'$ , where  $\mu'$  is the policy option preferred by the local elite, and  $\alpha$  is the weight given to the candidate's own preference. This implies that if no one runs for the election then citizen  $i$ 's utility is given by  $-|\mu' - \omega_i|$ . It is also assumed in the model  $\mu' > m$ , where  $m$  is the preference of the median voter. Citizens are fully aware of the lobbying process and take it into account for the voting decision.

In this paper, we will focus exclusively on the decision of female candidates to contest elections. Moreover, we will only analyze circumstances in which the woman candidate faces an opposition, if she chooses to contest elections. The reason for limiting our analysis to this scenario is because in our data on elections at the constituency level, we have not come across a single constituency where a woman ran an election unopposed.

Besley and Coate (1997) have shown that if two candidates contest an election then each one of them should have an equal chance of winning, therefore, the policy outcome they would implement needs to be symmetrical around the median voter preference. In the CD framework this implies that a woman who is the furthest away from the median voter has the policy preference 0 and would implement policy outcome  $(1 - \alpha)\mu'$  if she is elected. For another candidate to contest election against such a candidate implies that she would have to implement a policy outcome  $2m - (1 - \alpha)\mu'$ , which is symmetric around the median voter, to have an equal probability of winning. This implies that for the woman with preference 0 (who is furthest from the median voter) to contest election, it must be the case that she gets a higher utility from contesting the election than accepting the policy implemented by the opposing candidate. More specifically, this implies that

$$\text{Expected utility from contesting} = \frac{1}{2}(-|(1 - \alpha)\mu'|) + \frac{1}{2}(-|2m - (1 - \alpha)\mu'|) - \delta_w$$

$$Utility\ from\ not\ contesting = -|2m - (1 - \alpha)\mu'|.$$

Hence, she will contest if and only if

$$\frac{1}{2}(-|(1 - \alpha)\mu'|) + \frac{1}{2}(-|2m - (1 - \alpha)\mu'|) - \delta_w > -|2m - (1 - \alpha)\mu'|,$$

or

$$m - (1 - \alpha)\mu' > \delta_w.$$

This implies that if the cost of contesting an election for a women candidate with an extreme policy preference 0 relative to the median voter preference is high, such that she will not contest the election, then no other women would contest the election. In other words if

$$\delta_w > m - (1 - \alpha)\mu', \tag{1}$$

then there is no equilibrium where a women will contest the election.

Equation 1 captures the key factors that influence the women's decision to contest elections. In addition to the cost of contesting the election it depends on the median voter preference  $m$ , the lobbying effort of the political elite  $(1 - \alpha)$ , and the policy option preferred by the local elite  $\mu'$ . In particular the key implications of the model are (i) if the median voter preference is more in favor of the women then it is less likely that women will contest elections, *ceteris paribus*. For example, consider two constituencies (say A and B) which are identical in all respects except that the median voter preference in A is more in favor of the women than in B, in other words  $m_A < m_B$ , then for given values of  $\delta_w$ ,  $(1 - \alpha)$  and  $\mu'$  it is possible that

$$m_B - (1 - \alpha)\mu' > \delta_w > m_A - (1 - \alpha)\mu'.$$

This implies that in constituency B, women will contest the election while in constituency A she will not contest the election. This forms the fundamental basis of our empirical work. (ii) For a given cost of contesting election for women and the

median voter preferences, the higher the lobbying effort of the political elite  $(1 - \alpha)$ , and/or the policy option preferred by the local elite  $\mu'$ , then its less likely for the women to contest the election.

## 2.1 Model with Three or More Political Candidates

### Theoretical Example: Public Provision of Goods

In this section we adopt a simple example from Besley and Coate (1997) where the electorate votes on a provision of a public good such as law (L), healthcare (H) and roads (R). Suppose there are five groups of policy preferences that are indexed by  $\tau \in \{a, b, c, d, w\}$ . Type  $a$  citizens have a preference ordering  $V^a(R) > V^a(L) > V^a(H)$ . Type  $b$  citizens have a preference ordering  $V^b(R) > V^b(H) > V^b(L)$ . Type  $c$  citizens have a preference ordering  $V^c(H) > V^c(R) > V^c(L)$ . Type  $d$  citizens have a preference ordering  $V^d(L) > V^d(H) > V^d(R)$ . Type  $w$  citizens have a preference ordering  $V^w(H) > V^w(L) > V^w(R)$ . Next assume that Type  $w$  citizens are women while the rest of the citizens are all male. This implies that women prefer healthcare to law to roads. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the cost of contesting the election for the women,  $\delta_w$ , is greater than the cost of contesting the election for the men,  $\delta_m (= 0, \text{for simplicity})$ . However, the preferences of women are such that  $V^w(L) > V^w(H) - \delta_w$  and  $V^w(L) - \delta_w > V^w(R)$ . This implies that if the women has a choice between contesting the election and implementing her preferred policy or choosing a candidate who will implement her second preferred option then she will choose not to contest the election but vote for the candidate. But if the choose is between contesting or choosing a candidate that will implement her third choice then she will always choose to contest.

Let  $T^\tau$  be the number of citizens of type  $\tau$ . Next assume that (i)  $T^a + T^b + T^c > T^d + T^w$ , which implies that majority of the electorate prefers roads to law; (ii)  $T^b + T^c + T^w > T^a + T^d$ , which implies that majority prefers health to law; and (iii)  $T^d > \max\{T^a + T^b, T^c + T^w\} + 1$ , which implies that in a three way race law will receive the plurality. Under these assumptions there will be three candidates in equilibrium, candidates from the group  $\{a, d, w\}$  will contest the elections. The



equilibrium condition implies that if a losing candidate is contesting then he must affect the outcome. Note that in this equilibrium  $a$  and  $w$  will certainly lose the election yet they contest to prevent others from winning the election. For example, suppose  $a$  does not contest the election then citizens of type  $b, c, w$  will vote for the  $w$  candidate and by part (ii) the  $w$  (women) candidate will win and implement healthcare which is the least desirable outcome for  $a$ . Hence  $a$  contests to prevent  $w$  from winning. Similarly,  $w$  (women) contests the elections to prevent  $a$  from winning, because if  $w$  does not contest then  $a$  will get votes from type  $a, b, c$  and by part (i) will win the election, and the subsequent policy, roads, that would be implemented by  $a$  is the least preferred outcome by the women. This implies that a woman will contest election not necessarily to win but to prevent another candidate (who will implement the least preferred policy) from winning.<sup>1</sup> Hence, in equilibrium, candidates from the group  $\{a, d, w\}$  will contest the elections and the candidate from group  $d$  will win the elections. In this example the spoiler candidate stays in the race to prevent the other candidate from winning.

Next suppose that the women have an absolute majority in the electorate, that is  $T^w > T^a + T^b + T^c + T^d$ . Under this assumption there will be only one candidate contesting the election and that would be candidate from type  $c$ . No other type will have an incentive to contest the election because they will not be able to affect the outcome. What is important to note is that even  $w$  will not contest election because her preferred policy regarding healthcare would be implemented by candidate  $c$  so she does not have to incur the cost of contesting the election while also getting the preferred policy outcome. What is interesting to note from this example is that with similar type of preferences the choice for the women to contest or not contest the election depends on her electoral representation. *From this example it is clear that if there are more women in the electorate relative to men then she is less likely to contest the election.* This intuition along with equation (1) forms the basis of our empirical strategy.

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<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that as in Besley and Coate (1997) we assume *sincere partition*, which intuitively implies that electorate is divided among the candidates such that every citizen is associated with her/his preferred candidate.

### 3 Empirical Strategy

Equation 1 forms the basis of our empirical strategy. We study the effect of the median voter preference on the probability of a women contesting the election at the constituency level using the PROBIT estimation. Since we do not directly observe the median voter preference we use the gender ratio of electors at the constituency level as a proxy for the median voter preference. The gender ratio of the electors is the total number of female electors divided by the total number of male electors. Higher gender ratio of electors implies a median voter preference more towards the women. We use state fixed effects to control for other factors like the the lobbying effort of the political elite  $(1 - \alpha)$ , and the policy option preferred by the local elite  $\mu'$ . We also allow the state fixed fixed effects to interact with time dummies to capture any time varying changes in the lobbying effort of the political elite and also their policy preference.

In particular we run the following regression

$$\begin{aligned} Pr(y_{it} = 1) = & \Phi(const + \beta Gender\ ratio\ of\ electors_{it} + \\ & state\ FE + time\ dummies_t + \\ & state\ FE \times time\ dummies_t + error_{it}), \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

where  $y_{it} = 1$  is equal to 1 if the women contest elections in constituency  $i$  in year  $t$ , and 0 otherwise. *state FE* is the state fixed effects which captures state level factors such as the extent of discrimination towards the women, lobbying efforts and the “capture” by the political elite, *time dummies<sub>t</sub>* is a dummy which controls for time effects. Typically, assembly elections are held every five years so there are two elections in a decade. Since we use the constituency level data from 1969 to 2012, we use a decade dummies which takes a value equal to 1 for the decade in which the election was held and 0 otherwise. We use 1970 to 1979 as a decade for the 70s, similarly from 1980 to 1989 is the decade for the 80s, 1990 to 1999 is the decade for the 90s, 2000 to 2009 is the decade for the 2000s and 2010 to 2012 is the decade of the 2010s. For example, consider the elections held in constituency  $i$  in 1972 then

$time\ dummies_t$  would be  $time\ dummies_{1970}$ , which is equal to 1 and 0 for all other decades. Similarly if the election was held in 1982 then  $time\ dummies_t$  would be  $time\ dummies_{1980}$  which is equal to 1 while all other time dummies are 0. We also use an interaction term  $state\ FE \times time\ dummies_t$ , which captures all the time varying state level factors that could vary over time. For example, this could capture time varying changes in attitudes towards women, or the changes in the lobbying efforts of the political elite or the “capture” by the political elite.

## 4 Data

The data that we use for our analysis is from the Election Commission of India (ECI). The ECI was vested by the constitution of India to oversee, direct and control the entire process of the conduct of free and fair elections to the Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies of states and union territories. The ECI collects and documents election data for each and every parliamentary and the state assembly constituency. For each constituency it reports data on the total number of electors and voters which are segregated by gender, the name and gender of each candidate contesting the election, party affiliation of each contestant and if the candidate is not affiliated to any party then the candidate is categorized as an independent, and the total number votes secured by each candidate in the election. This data is available for every general election held in the parliamentary and the state assembly constituency from 1951 till 2012.

For our analysis we use data at the constituency level for the state assembly elections held for 16 large states from 1962 till 2012. These 16 large states represent more than 93 percent of the total electors in India. Next we describe the construction of the variables of interest using the data at the constituency level.

$$sex\ ratio\ of\ voters_{st} = \left( \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N_s} female\ voters_{it}}{\sum_{i=1}^{N_s} male\ voters_{it}} \right) \times 1000, \quad (3)$$

$$sex\ ratio\ of\ electors_{st} = \left( \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N_s} female\ electors_{it}}{\sum_{i=1}^{N_s} male\ electors_{it}} \right) \times 1000, \quad (4)$$

where  $s$  is the state,  $t$  is the year in which the election is held for the state assembly,  $i$  is the assembly constituency in state  $s$ , and  $N_s$  is the total number of assembly constituencies in state  $s$ .

We describe the trends in sex ratio of electors and voters in our data from 1970s through 2010s. In Table 1a, we show the number of female electors per 1000 male electors over time. As would be expected, there are no statistically significant changes in electorate sex ratio over time. However, when we study each state separately, we note that Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have witnessed worsening sex ratio of electorates since 1970. The sex ratio of electorate reflects the general sex ratio in the population and these are the traditionally backward states in India.

*Insert Tables 1a*

Table 1b shows the sex ratio of India voters over time. It has the number of female voters per 1000 male voters in the big states, over time. We discover a significant and persistent reduction in gender inequality when we analyze voter turnout in all state elections in India, over past 50 years. We study this trend and its implications in Kapoor and Ravi (2013). In order to understand whether this positive development has an impact on election outcomes, we study the Bihar state re-elections of 2005, which were held within a short span. Our results strongly suggest that an increase in the female voters turnout negatively effected the probability of re-election for a political party in a given constituency. And in contrast, the results also show that male voters increased the probability of re-election of political parties, in a given constituency. The two results together show that men and women voted differently. While women voted for change, the men voted for status quo. These results highlight the significant role of rising women voters in modern representative democracy.

*Insert Tables 1b*

Next, we show the data of the size of constituencies measured in number of electors and voters, over time. Table 2a and 2b show the trend in number of total electors and total voters per constituency in a state. As expected, the size of constituencies have increased significantly over time reflecting the increase in population in India over last 50 years.

*Insert Tables 2a and 2b*

Table 3, we have the average number of constituencies per state, over time. There have been some changes in the number of assembly constituencies in each state, over time, largely due to formation of newer states. Table 4a and 4b reveal the staggering difference in the average number of female and male candidates per election per constituency for every decade. While the average number of female candidates per constituency per election has been going up over time, the difference across states is persistent. Backward states like Bihar and UP have more than twice the number of female candidates per constituency compared to developed states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu. These differences across states have remained persistent over last 50 years.

*Insert Tables 3, 4a and 4b*

## 5 Results

Following the empirical specification outlined in section 3, our main results are presented in Table 5, columns 1 to 4. This is a PROBIT analysis which explains the probability of female candidates contesting an assembly election in India. The unit of observation is a constituency in all state assembly elections, over 5 decades. The de-

pendent variable takes value 1 if the constituency has at least one female contestant in the election and 0 otherwise.

We start with a very simple specification where (column 1) we only use the gender ratio of electors at the constituency level as an explanatory variable. Consistent with theory, we find that higher the gender ratio of the electors (that is, median voter preference is in favor of the women) then it is less likely that a woman candidate will contest the election. The coefficient is negative and highly significant at the conventional levels of significance at 1% level.

*Insert Table 5*

In column 2, we introduce the state fixed effects. Our results do not change - we find that with higher gender ratio of electors, it is less likely that a woman candidate will contest the election in that constituency. Our findings are not affected when we introduce time dummies with and without the interaction effect. The results without the interaction term are presented in column 3 and with the interaction term are in column 4. The coefficients remain economically and statistically significant. It is important to note that changes in opportunity cost of contesting an election for women, as measured by female wages and labor force participation are controlled through the interaction of state and time dummies. These do not change our basic finding in any way.

Next, we run an OLS regression to study the determinants of actual number of female candidates who contest an election. The results are reported in Table 6. The dependent variable is logarithm of number of female candidates per constituency. There are several constituencies across various elections where no women candidates contested. To take care of this, we transform the dependent variable appropriately. We follow the same specifications as outlined in our empirical strategy and as used in the previous PROBIT analysis. In column 1, we only use the gender ratio of electors at the constituency level as an explanatory variable. Once again, consistent with theory, we find that higher the gender ratio of the electors (that is, median voter preference is in favor of the women) then it is less likely that a woman candidate

will contest the election. The coefficient is negative and highly significant at the conventional levels of significance at 1% level.

*Insert Table 6*

As before, in column 2, we introduce the state fixed effects which not change our results. We find that with higher gender ratio of electors, it is less likely that a woman candidate will contest the election in that constituency. Our findings are not affected when we introduce time dummies with and without the interaction effect. The results without the interaction term are presented in column 3 and with the interaction term are in column 4. The coefficients remain economically and statistically significant.

Finally, we study the probability of winning an election for a female candidate. Table 7 reports the results of the PROBIT analysis where the dependent variable takes value 1 when a female candidate is declared winner in a constituency for an assembly election, and 0 otherwise. This analysis is conditional on women candidates contesting from a particular constituency. That is why the number of observations are fewer because there are several constituencies in different elections where no female candidates contested.

*Insert Table 7*

The results reveal a striking finding. Women are significantly less likely to win elections from constituencies where the sex ratio of electors are unfavorable. That is, when there are fewer female electors compared to male electors, women candidates are less likely to win. Together with the previous results, this implies that though more female candidates contest elections from backward constituencies, fewer are likely to actually win and politically represent women electors.

## 6 Conclusion

The gender gap between men and women in political representation is significant and persistent over time. This is particularly puzzling given that the gender gap has been narrowing in other areas such as education, labor force participation and legal rights. In this paper, we address this problem and provide an explanation for why are there so few female representatives in political positions, relative to their share in the population and electoral rolls.

We use a simple “citizen candidates” model of representative democracy to show women’s decision to contest elections. The model predicts that when the cost of contesting elections is relatively higher for women, they will not contest in places where they are well represented, while in constituencies where the gender ratio is worse, female candidates contest elections, but are less likely to win. The two predictions together imply that there will be lower female representation in parliament. Our work, therefore, has important implications for reservation policy for women in politics.

We test the predictions of the model using data from assembly elections in India, over five decades. We show that women are significantly more likely to contest elections in those constituencies where gender ratio of the electors is less in favor of women. For example, women are more likely to contest elections in backward states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where the gender ratio of electors is in favor of men than in socially developed states like Kerala where the gender ratio of electors is more in favor of women. The results also reveal that though more women candidates contest in constituencies with unfavorable gender ratios, they are less likely to win in these constituencies. In the light of our findings, we would argue that blanket quotas for women might not be the best policy prescription to enhance political participation by women.

Through the context of politics, our study contributes to the broader literature on gender and inequality. Previous works on “missing women” highlighted the low sex ratio of women to men in poor countries and established that excess female mortality is a universal phenomenon which extends to adult population as well. In democratic



countries such as India, this worsening sex ratio in the population directly affects political outcomes through worsening electorate sex ratio. If policy preferences of men and women are different, then we show that the worsening electorate sex ratio will lead to more female candidates contesting elections for political representation. We also show that the worsening sex ratio of electorates will lower the probability of winning for female candidates. The empirical results from the Indian elections data are consistent with both these predictions of the model.

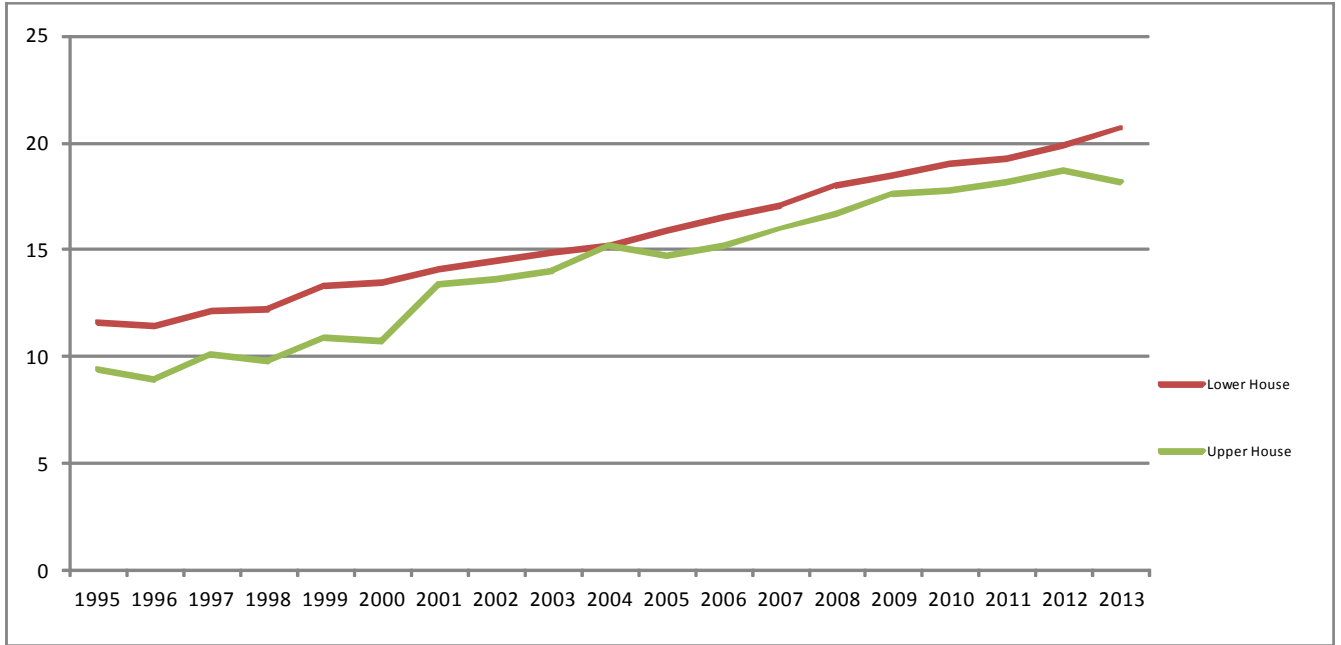
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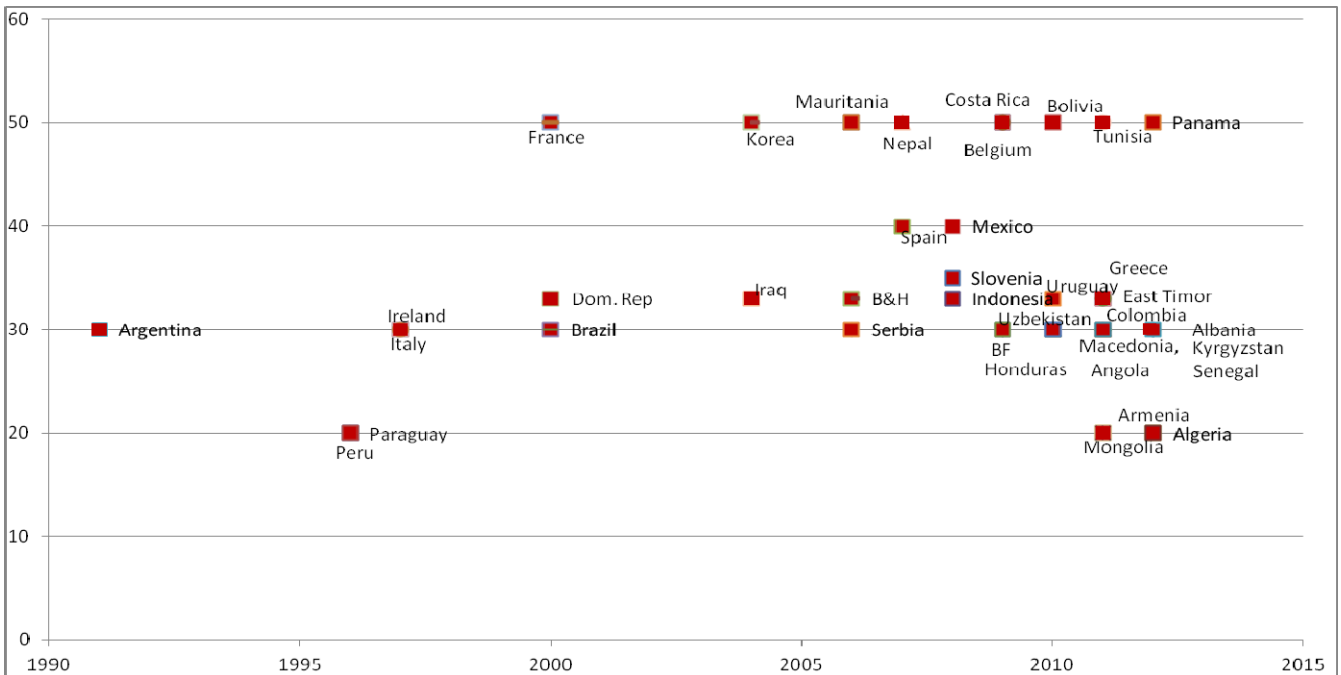
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**Figure 1: Percentage of female representatives in parliaments across the world**



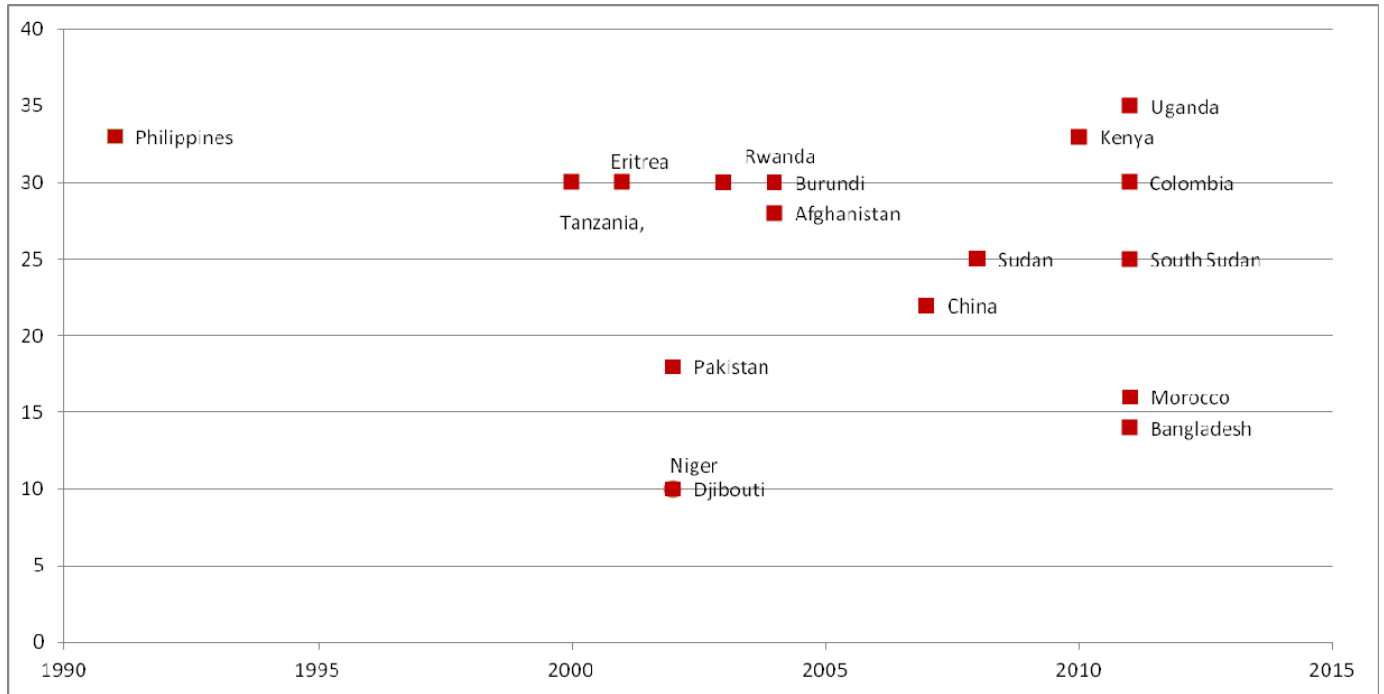
Note: data source is the Quota Project, [International IDEA](#), [Stockholm University](#) and [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#)

**Figure 2: Legislated quota (percentage) for women candidates in a political party**



Note: data source is the Quota Project, [International IDEA](#), [Stockholm University](#) and [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#)

**Figure 3: Percentage seats reserved for women candidates in parliament**



Note: data source is the Quota Project, [International IDEA](#), [Stockholm University](#) and [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#)

**Table1a: Number of female electors per 1000 male electors**

	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	1012	1011	1007	1025
<b>Assam</b>	857	871	884	931
<b>Bihar</b>	568	622	709	738
<b>Gujarat</b>	977	980	953	955
<b>Haryana</b>	889	877	855	838
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	955	1024	993	973
<b>Karnataka</b>	965	966	972	973
<b>Kerala</b>	1018	1028	1044	1081
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>	996	985	944	909
<b>Maharashtra</b>	985	976	945	925
<b>Orissa</b>	933	920	895	944
<b>Punjab</b>	856	841	898	916
<b>Rajasthan</b>	940	929	899	912
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	991	980	983	1009
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	854	834	824	834
<b>West Bengal</b>	817	886	892	916

**Table 1b: Number of female voters per 1000 male voters**

	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	906	918	930	978
<b>Assam</b>	720	766	859	887
<b>Bihar</b>	568	622	709	738
<b>Gujarat</b>	822	793	827	859
<b>Haryana</b>	808	808	801	810
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	824	980	964	1063
<b>Karnataka</b>	845	859	891	918
<b>Kerala</b>	1008	1022	1031	1049
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>	667	666	727	805
<b>Maharashtra</b>	871	829	871	857
<b>Orissa</b>	611	653	800	867
<b>Punjab</b>	814	816	875	906
<b>Rajasthan</b>	745	733	764	865
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	917	928	923	949
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	670	665	683	724
<b>West Bengal</b>	707	833	868	871

**Table2a: Average size of constituency in number of electors**

	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	91340	123450	160499	185440
<b>Assam</b>	59711	74317	96754	126481
<b>Bihar</b>	106139	129273	170312	202672
<b>Gujarat</b>	75899	98599	147916	191844
<b>Haryana</b>	64502	88072	116040	137060
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	27962	33592	46454	67712
<b>Karnataka</b>	74995	105296	145356	176229
<b>Kerala</b>	79132	100806	144025	153457
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>	71159	85166	127789	161312
<b>Maharashtra</b>	101978	124235	185859	246414
<b>Orissa</b>	81484	99477	142249	174683
<b>Punjab</b>	72466	87975	129950	139879
<b>Rajasthan</b>	76586	99203	141702	175505
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	109377	135955	177858	201031
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	120246	159737	214276	264647
<b>West Bengal</b>	82743	110956	148025	164786

**Table 2b: Average size of constituency in number of voters**

	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	62751	84842	112412	131979
<b>Assam</b>	38580	44212	74628	95387
<b>Bihar</b>	70149	89200	123115	138654
<b>Gujarat</b>	44898	47931	86929	116261
<b>Haryana</b>	43363	62200	79326	97521
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	15233	23750	32385	48173
<b>Karnataka</b>	50379	70822	98983	114277
<b>Kerala</b>	61220	76370	104074	110619
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>	38379	42130	74720	110088
<b>Maharashtra</b>	66032	70059	120832	150958
<b>Orissa</b>	37151	49543	93326	111089
<b>Punjab</b>	48645	58063	89435	98514
<b>Rajasthan</b>	43000	52706	85720	117063
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	72451	94633	116178	130200
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	61794	76178	115827	131322
<b>West Bengal</b>	49216	84569	118440	129244

**Table 3: Average number of constituencies**

	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	294	291	294	294	294
<b>Assam</b>	116	126	126	126	126
<b>Bihar</b>	318	321	324	324	270
<b>Gujarat</b>	161	175	182	182	182
<b>Haryana</b>	81	85	90	90	90
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	60	68	68	68	68
<b>Karnataka</b>	216	220	224	224	224
<b>Kerala</b>	133	137	140	140	140
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>	296	308	320	320	230
<b>Maharashtra</b>	267	279	288	288	288
<b>Orissa</b>	140	145	147	147	147
<b>Punjab</b>	121	111	117	117	117
<b>Rajasthan</b>	180	192	200	200	200
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	234	234	234	234	234
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	428	425	425	425	403
<b>West Bengal</b>	271	285	294	294	294

**Table 4: Number of candidates per election**

	1960		1970		1980		1990		2000		2010	
	Female candidate	Male Candidate	Female candidate	Male Candidate	Female candidate	Male Candidate	Female candidate	Male Candidate	Female candidate	Male Candidate	Female candidate	Male Candidate
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	23	1005	27	1249	67	1731	142	2519	231	3493		
<b>Assam</b>	5	446	11	697	16	784	45	1336	63	894	85	896
<b>Bihar</b>	40	1863	49	2440	90	3530	207	7313	114	2976	307	3216
<b>Gujarat</b>	17	550	8	828	33	1022	74	2144	63	1069	97	1569
<b>Haryana</b>	10	425	16	512	31	1178	67	2180	59	997		
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	2	267	8	306	10	358	17	415	25	311	34	425
<b>Karnataka</b>	20	684	15	978	73	1661	90	1829	105	1874		
<b>Kerala</b>	9	482	6	532	21	830	41	965	70	861	83	888
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>	17	1536	24	1682	63	2163	162	3323	213	2460		
<b>Maharashtra</b>	28	1174	26	1482	65	1814	159	3338	184	4274		
<b>Orissa</b>	11	558	11	710	21	748	59	1105	81	1172		
<b>Punjab</b>	10	600	15	560	26	764	52	641	64	920	93	985
<b>Rajasthan</b>	13	879	19	994	38	1418	82	2238	136	1731		
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>		767	12	1057	43	1815	123	3618	134	2089	144	2604
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	64	3160	78	3448	151	5427	223	7108	357	5449	599	6432
<b>West Bengal</b>	19	994	9	1261	29	1322	94	1874	127	1539	174	1618



**Table 5: Average female candidate per constituency**

States	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
<b>BIMARU</b>						
Bihar	0.126	0.150	0.276	0.637	0.403	1.263
Madhya Pradesh	0.057	0.075	0.195	0.507	0.924	
Rajasthan	0.070	0.094	0.188	0.411	0.680	
Uttar Pradesh	0.150	0.183	0.357	0.529	0.885	1.486
<b>Southern States</b>						
Tamil Nadu	0.047	0.051	0.185	0.578	0.573	0.615
Karnataka	0.042	0.067	0.327	0.400	0.467	
Kerala	0.064	0.039	0.152	0.289	0.500	0.593
Andhra Pradesh	0.077	0.092	0.229	0.483	0.784	
<b>Other Major states</b>						
Punjab	0.082	0.135	0.222	0.444	0.545	0.795
Maharashtra	0.103	0.089	0.226	0.552	0.639	
Gujarat	0.103	0.042	0.182	0.404	0.343	0.533
West Bengal	0.069	0.031	0.099	0.320	0.430	0.592
Orissa	0.079	0.073	0.139	0.398	0.551	
Haryana	0.148	0.185	0.344	0.744	0.659	
Himachal Pradesh	0.033	0.118	0.140	0.245	0.368	0.500
Assam	0.043	0.087	0.129	0.364	0.496	0.675

**Table 6: Ratio of female to male candidate**

	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	0.032	0.028	0.047	0.067	0.074	
<b>Assam</b>	0.015	0.018	0.024	0.037	0.084	0.114
<b>Bihar</b>	0.027	0.022	0.028	0.030	0.045	0.107
<b>Gujarat</b>	0.045	0.012	0.039	0.038	0.070	0.072
<b>Haryana</b>	0.027	0.038	0.028	0.033	0.066	
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	0.009	0.037	0.036	0.049	0.112	0.093
<b>Karnataka</b>	0.032	0.020	0.052	0.058	0.064	
<b>Kerala</b>	0.026	0.014	0.031	0.052	0.102	0.113
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>	0.014	0.018	0.034	0.056	0.099	
<b>Maharashtra</b>	0.031	0.022	0.042	0.052	0.048	
<b>Orissa</b>	0.025	0.021	0.035	0.063	0.080	
<b>Punjab</b>	0.021	0.035	0.043	0.098	0.080	0.107
<b>Rajasthan</b>	0.018	0.023	0.031	0.040	0.090	
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	0.024	0.014	0.029	0.037	0.077	0.063
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	0.024	0.026	0.031	0.035	0.072	0.102
<b>West Bengal</b>	0.027	0.009	0.029	0.063	0.105	0.144

**Table 7: Probability of Female Candidates Contesting an Election**

DEPENDANT VARIABLE	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female Candidate dummy				
Gender ratio of electors	-0.649*** [-9.025]	-0.493*** [-5.241]	-0.665*** [-7.034]	-0.757*** [-7.659]
Total Voters	0.000*** [38.572]	0.000*** [38.347]	0.000*** [6.752]	0.000*** [5.644]
Time dummy 1970s			-0.221*** [-3.963]	-0.050 [-0.265]
Time dummy 1980s			0.244*** [4.488]	0.583*** [3.379]
Time Dummy 1990s			0.648*** [11.449]	1.264*** [7.245]
Time Dummy 2000s			0.835*** [14.130]	1.358*** [7.834]
Time dummy 2010s			1.150*** [16.389]	1.445*** [10.285]
Constant	-0.811*** [-11.684]	-0.753*** [-6.556]	-0.718*** [-5.647]	-0.944*** [-5.121]
State fixed effect	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State *time fixed effects	No	No	No	Yes
Pseudo R2	0.0546	0.0782	0.1069	0.1148
Akaike's criterion	38577.13	38025.86	34627.16	34414.17
Schwartz's criterion	38594.34	38193.95	34837.28	35069.74
Observations	33,012	33,012	33,012	33,012

Note: dependent variable takes value 1 if the constituency has at least one female contestant in an election; 0 otherwise. Robust z-statistics in brackets; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 8: Determinant of female candidate contesting an election**

DEPENDANT VARIABLE log (1+ number of female candidates per constituency)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Gender ratio of electors	-0.238*** [-3.597]	-0.269*** [-3.155]	-0.293*** [-3.584]	-0.278*** [-3.405]
Total Voters	0.000*** [10.178]	0.000*** [9.994]	0.000** [2.229]	0.000** [2.479]
Time dummy 1970s			-0.031* [-1.851]	-0.014 [-1.585]
Time dummy 1980s			0.059*** [2.679]	0.098*** [6.737]
Time Dummy 1990s			0.226*** [5.595]	0.777*** [40.136]
Time Dummy 2000s			0.227*** [6.549]	0.270*** [11.298]
Time dummy 2010s			0.323*** [3.777]	0.281*** [9.628]
Constant				
State fixed effect	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State *time fixed effects	No	No	No	Yes
Pseudo R2	0.0436	0.0653	0.0893	0.1248
Observations	307351	307351	307351	307351

Note: OLS regression with number of female candidates per constituency as the dependent variable; Robust z-statistics in brackets;

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 9: Probability of winning an election for a female candidate**

DEPENDANT VARIABLE	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female candidate winning conditional on contesting				
Gender ratio of electors	0.694*** [4.256]	0.784*** [3.834]	0.771*** [3.768]	0.741*** [3.531]
Total Voters	-0.000*** [-8.394]	-0.000*** [-8.14]	-0.000*** [-4.986]	-0.000*** [-4.509]
Time dummy 1970s			-0.016 [-0.120]	-0.635 [-1.240]
Tme dummy 1980s			0.123 [0.964]	-0.058 [-0.153]
Time Dummy 1990s			-0.221* [-1.676]	0.116 [0.311]
Time Dummy 2000s			0.001 [0.007]	0.211 [0.567]
Time dummy 2010s			0.058 [0.386]	-0.051 [-0.155]
Constant	-1.157*** [-7.103]	-1.222*** [-4.91]	-1.178*** [-4.219]	-1.170*** [-2.840]
State fixed effect	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
State *time fixed effects	No	No	No	Yes
Pseudo R2	0.0129	0.0276	0.0349	0.0509
Akaike's criterion				
Schwartz's criterion				
Observations	8,990	8,990	8,990	8,990

Note: OLS Robust z-statistics in brackets;  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Figure 4 a) Number of female candidates per constituency: Backward (BiMaRU) states

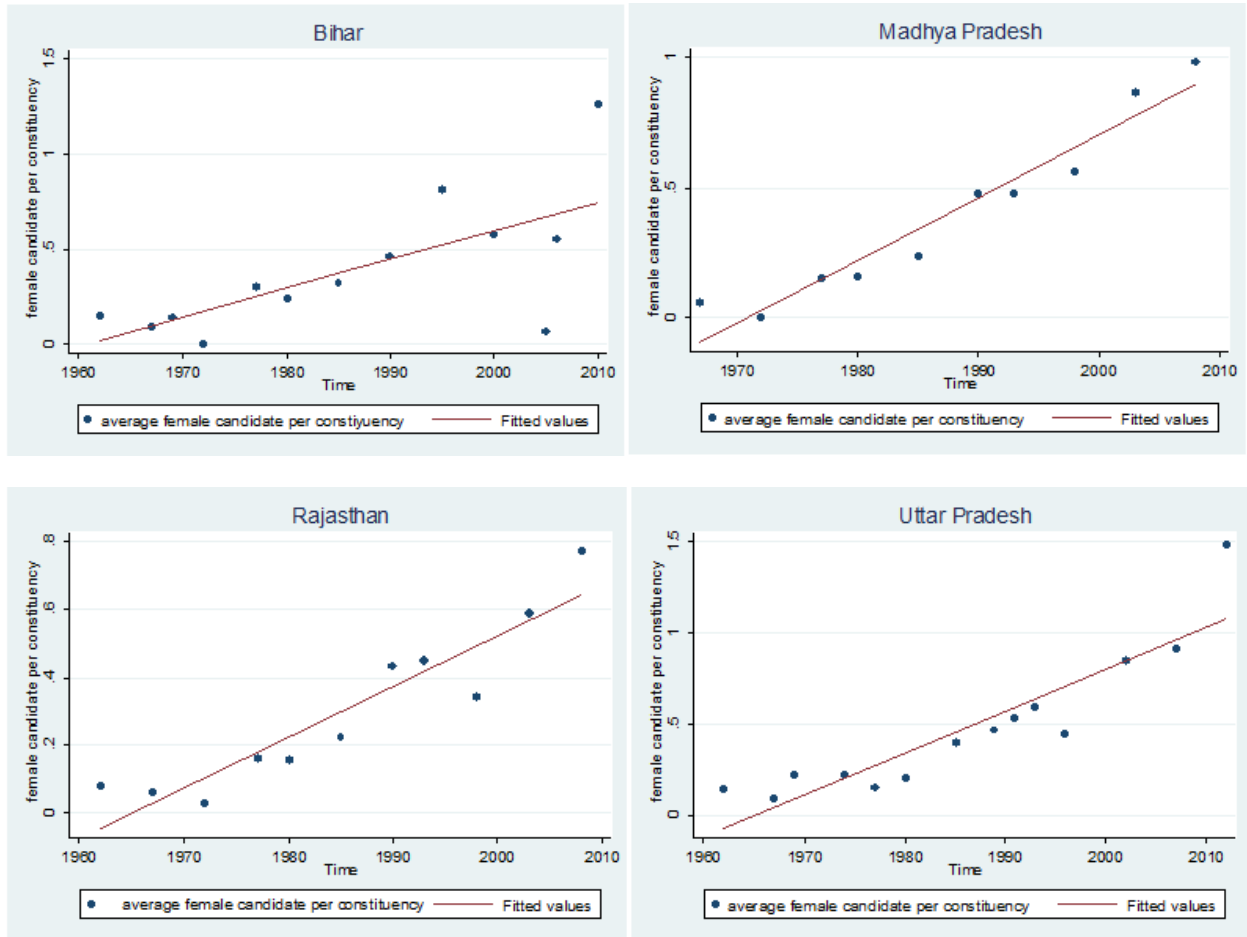


Figure 4b) Number of female candidates per constituency: Southern States

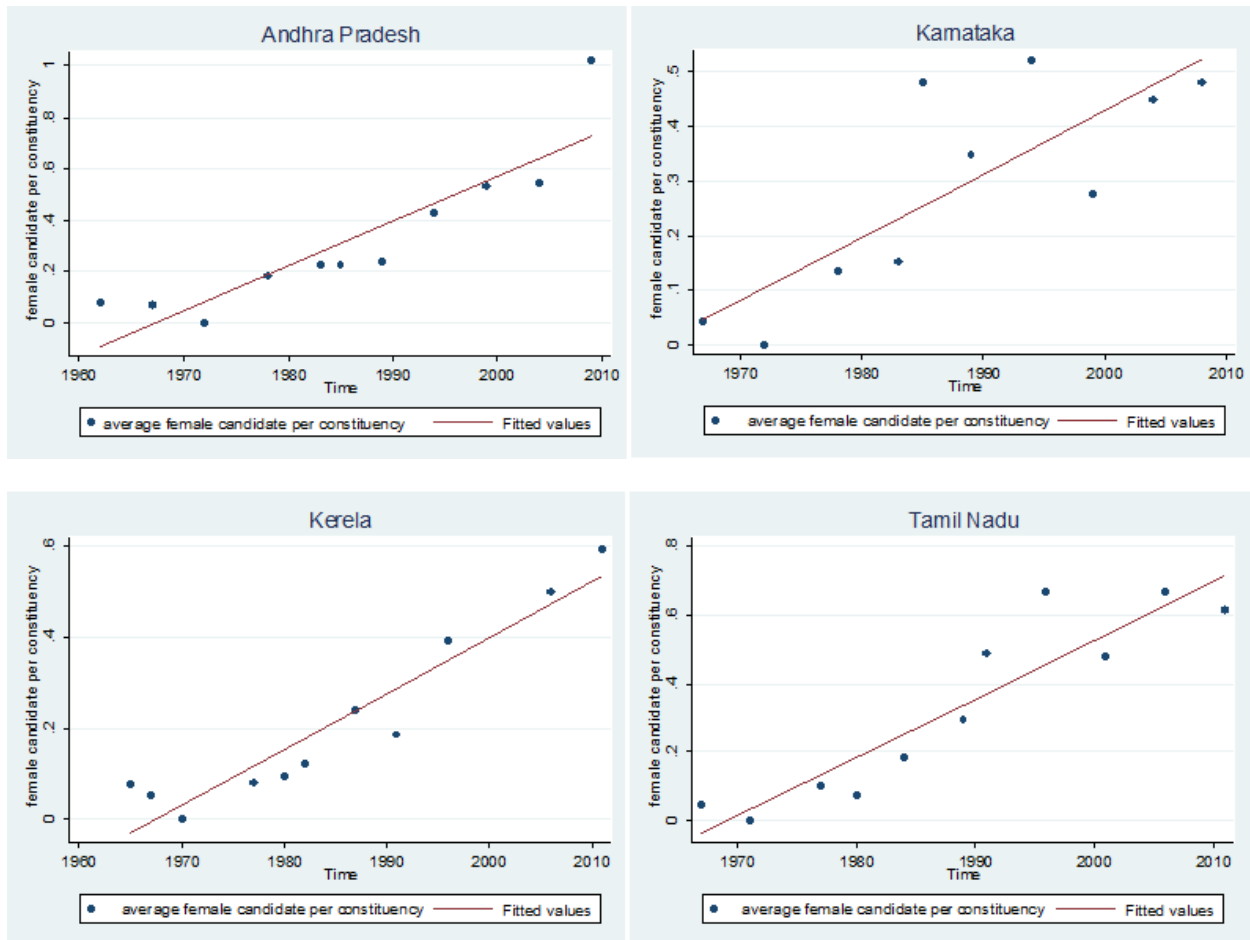


Figure 4c) Number of female candidates per constituency– Other large States

