

## **Abstract**

Recent literature has stressed the importance of leaders, in particular female leaders, to economic outcomes. The gender of the leader can be thought of as a signal of the leader's preferences. Therefore, if women share similar policy preferences, as a group they should show greater support for female leaders than for male leaders. Previous research analyzing this question has relied on self-reported surveys, raising the possibility of differential survey response bias. I exploit the unique institution of gender-segregated voting booths in Chile, which allows me to use actual voting data to test for gender bias among voters in the political arena. I find evidence of a small but significant negative gender bias: women overall are less likely than men to vote for female candidates. This decomposes into a positive gender bias among center-left voters and a negative gender bias among center-right voters. My results are robust to controls for endogenous selection of candidates by parties, and are not explained away by municipality characteristics or candidates' incumbency and experience. Roll-call voting data from the Chamber of Deputies show that elected female politicians in the center-right coalition deviate from the party line by taking a stronger pro-women stance on social issues such as health, family, education and justice. Moreover, women voters penalize center-right female legislators who deviate from the party line, but reward those who deviate on social issues. I provide evidence on the possible channels of these effects—lower campaign expenditures and a mismatch of candidates and voter characteristics. Alternative explanations such as gender identity, female candidates running "as men" or strategic sorting of candidates have less support in the data.