

Title

Do Gender Quotas Work? A Quantitative Assessment of Their Impact on Representation, Candidate Quality and Future Career

Authors

Drs. Tomas Turner-Zwinkels

Dr. Marijtje van Duijn

Prof. Dr. Andreas Flache

Prof. Dr. Melinda Mills

--

Abstract

Few human resources practices are simultaneously as popular and controversial as gender quotas. While proponents and opponents agree on the aim to increase female participation, they disagree on the effectiveness of quotas in doing so. We quantitatively investigate three key controversies in this debate: that quotas do not have a positive, direct effect on the numerical representation of women; that they reduce qualifications; and that they harm the future career chances of women. We study these dynamics in the Dutch national parliament: a stable context in which political parties have gradually introduced voluntary party quotas. Using individual level career data with the complete pre-parliamentary career pathways of all Dutch MPs (N=821) from 1965-2012 and a difference-in-differences design, we leverage the variation introduced in this context as a quasi-experimental condition and test key hypotheses that inform these controversies. Results suggest that quotas have a direct impact on the representation of women on top of general trends. We also show that the entry qualifications and future careers of 'quota-women' and 'non-quota-women' are similar. We conclude that quotas increased the representation of women in the Dutch parliament without the two main negative side-effects often used as arguments to not implement them.