

# Do women in power affect politics?

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# Overview



Women in Positions of  
Power



Quotas as instruments  
to increase women's  
representation



Effects: Descriptive,  
Substantive, Symbolic



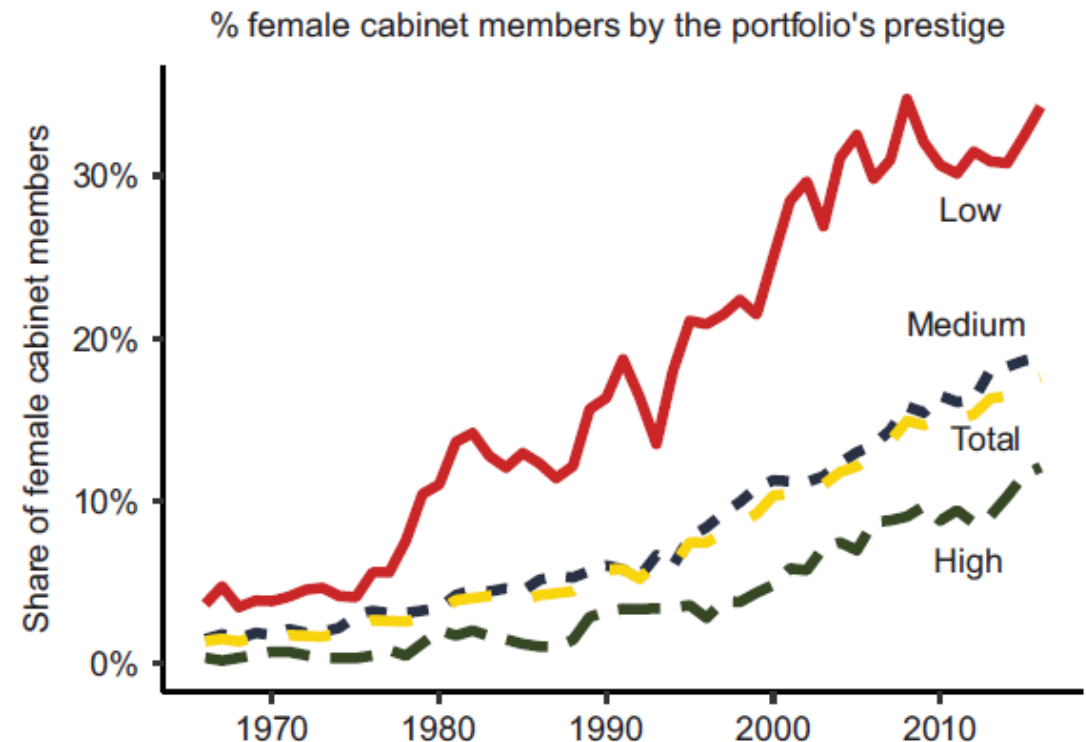
Lessons

# Typical Family Picture of Political Leaders



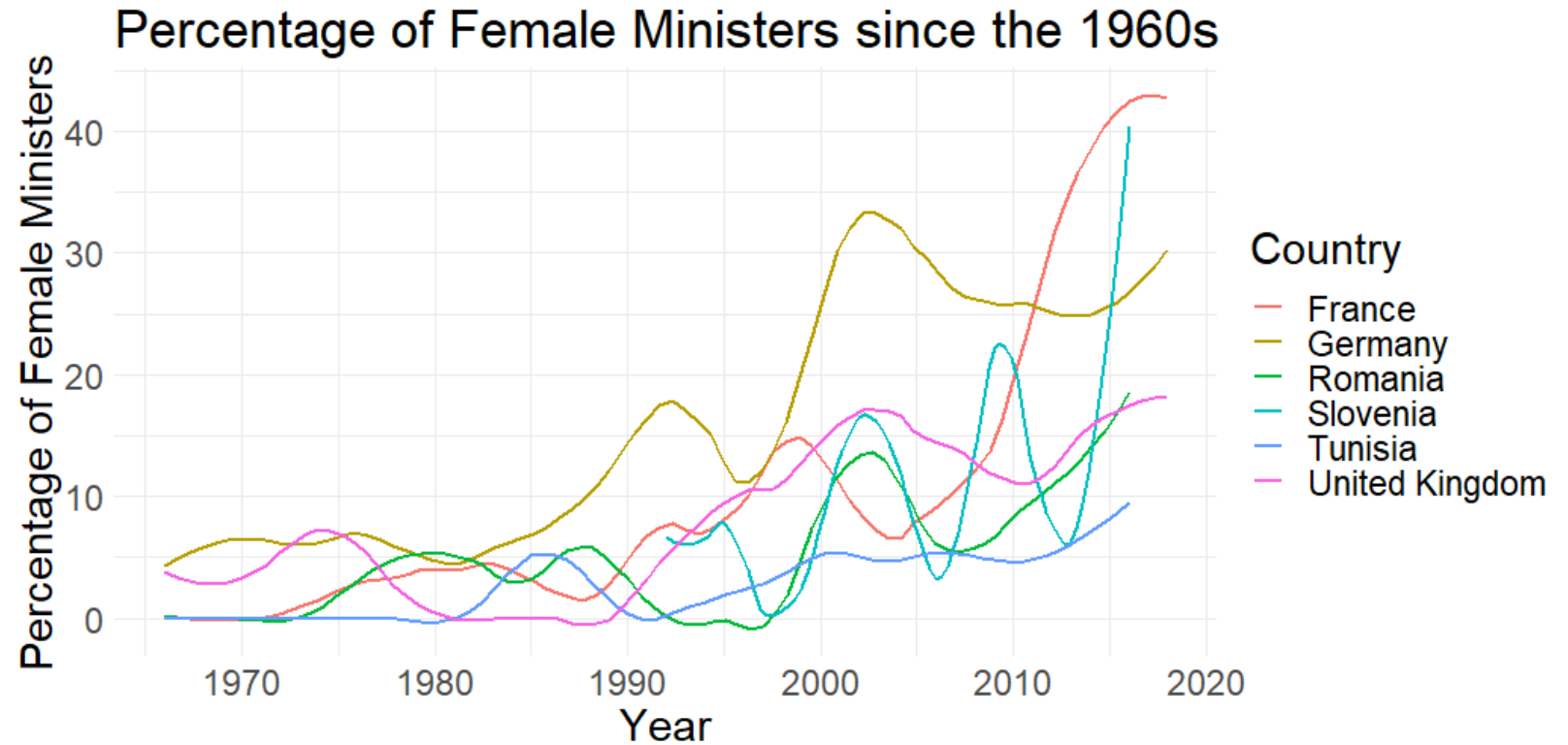
# Who governs?

- Why important? => parliamentary democracies: core decisions not taken in parliaments but in ministries (e.g. bills)
- WhoGov: dataset with annual data on cabinet members in 177 countries for the period 1966-2016
- Here: Proportion of female cabinet members since the 1960s
- Global increase of women in government positions but mainly in positions with less power/prestige (youth, tourism, etc.)
- High prestige limited to about 10%, average about 15%



## Who governs in the partner countries?

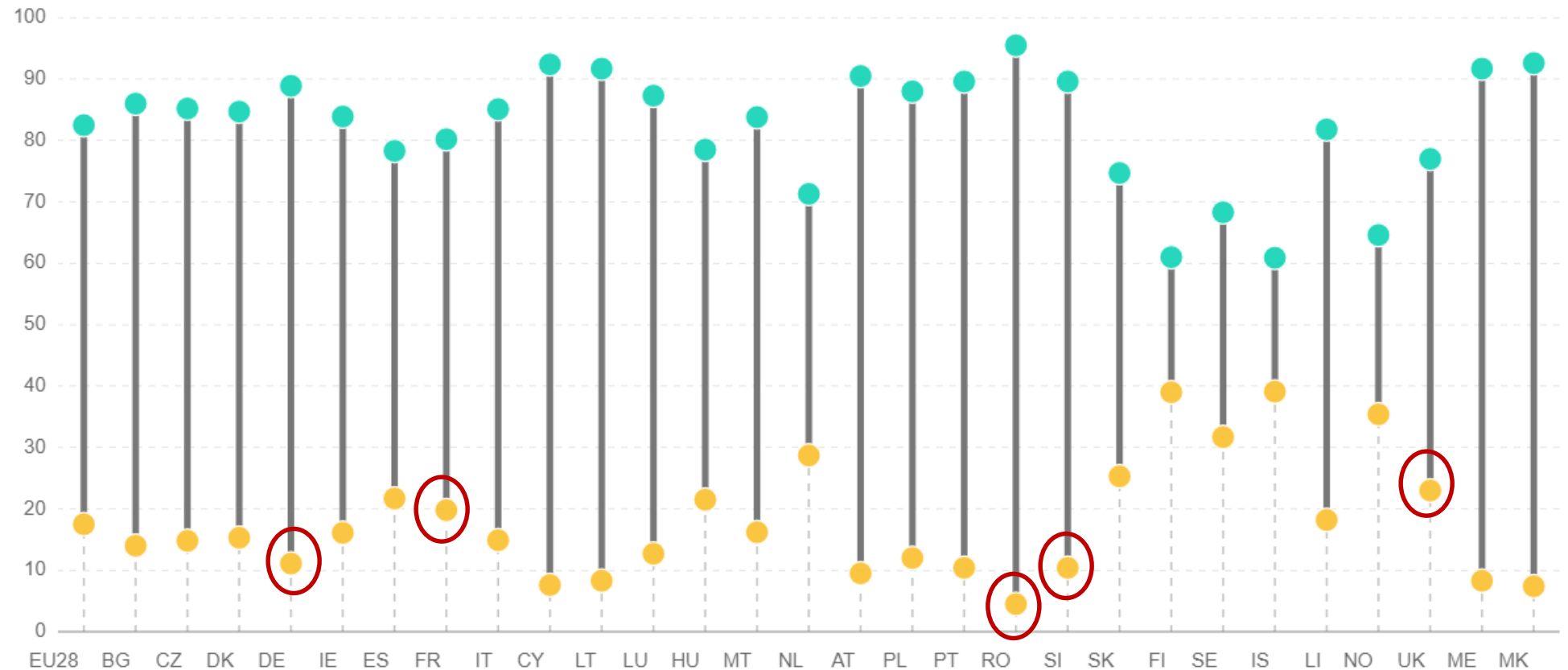
- general increase in female ministers but tends to be capped around 20% and volatile
- in five most important positions usually 0 - 1 female, not much change in the 2000/ 2010s





# Share of female mayors

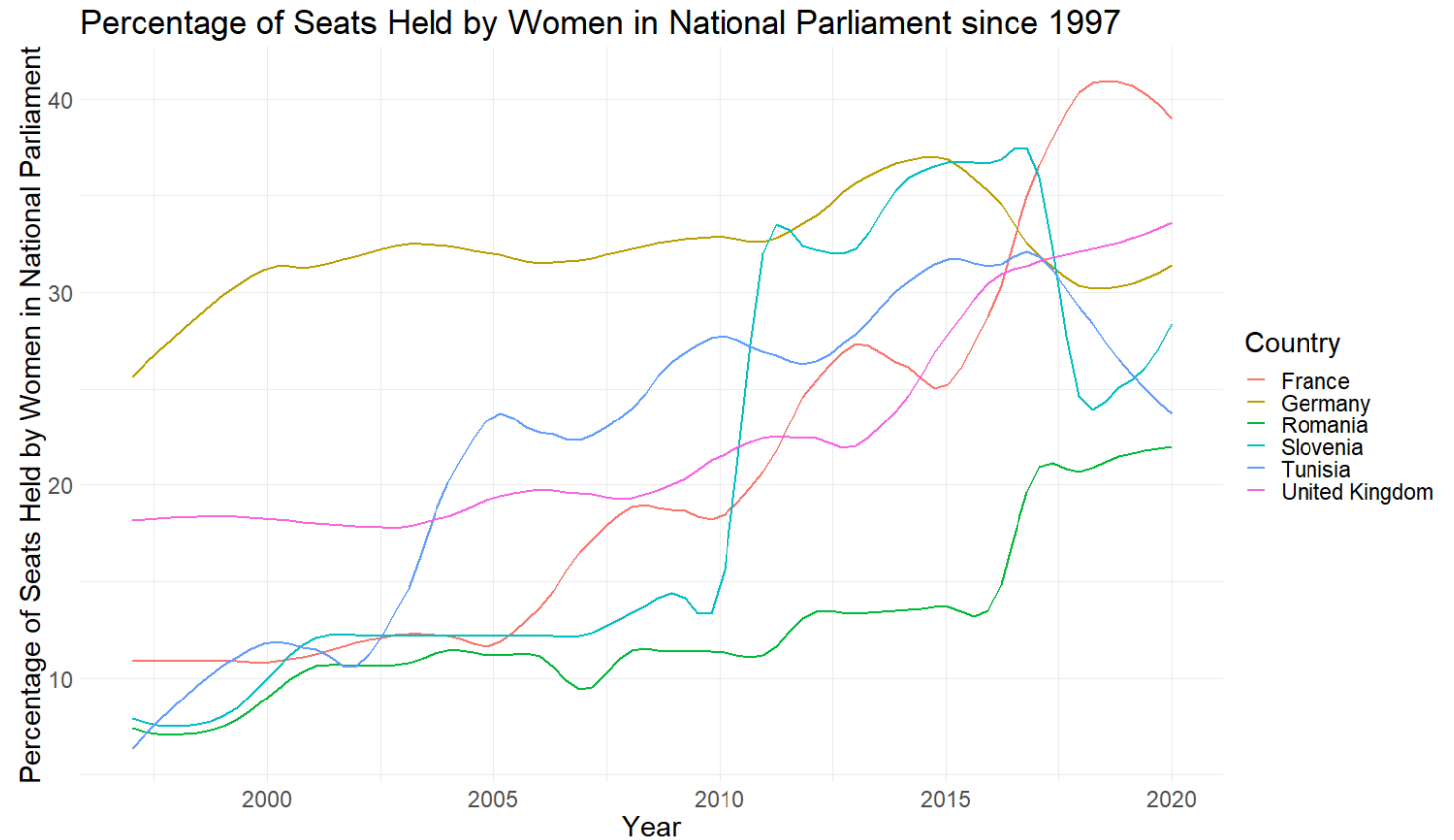
lack of power translates to local level and might even be worse there



EIGE's Gender Statistics Database - Indicator: Local/municipal councils: mayors or other leaders and members  
Source: European Institute for Gender Equality.  
LAST UPLOAD ON: 07.09.2021

# Share of Women in National Parliaments

- Trend since 2000s toward increasing representation
- Glass ceiling of 1/3?

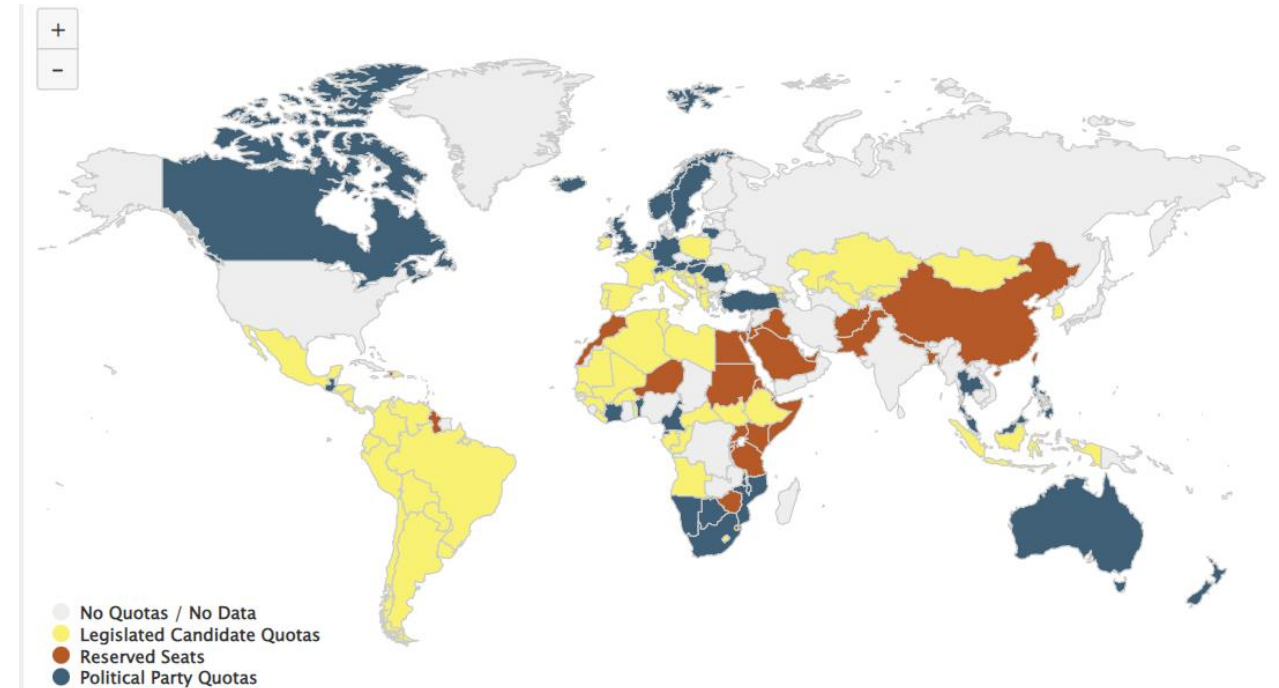


# HOW DO QUOTAS AFFECT THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN?



# Types of Quotas

- Party quotas = voluntary measures by political parties (DE, ROM, UK)
- candidate quotas = parties must field minimum percentage of female candidates (F, SI, TN)
- reserved seats = certain number of seats for women
- + special case India: 1/3 of village leaders must be female
- 121 countries have one of these forms
- consequences?



# How might quotas affect representation?

## descriptive

- Composition of parliaments
- Do parliaments and executives demographically match the electorate?

## substantive

- Representation of group interests in the political decision-making process
- Do female members of parliament represent women's interests and are they successful in doing so?

## symbolic

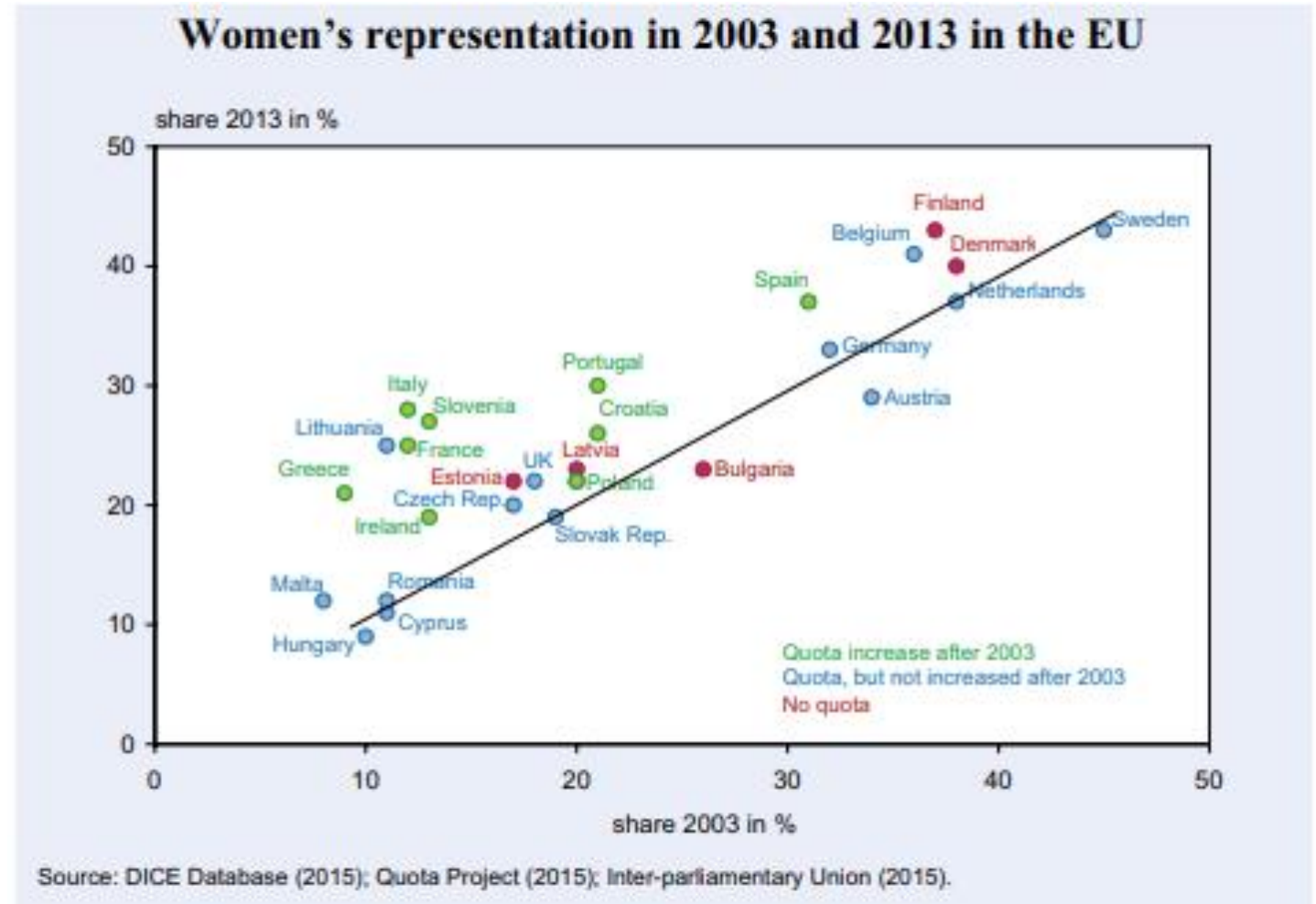
- symbolic presence of an underrepresented group
- Transformative effect on public perception of the appropriate role of this group?

# Descriptive Representation

- overall quota work for increasing descriptive representation
- large impact when quotas were introduced: first electoral cycle after introduction about doubling of seats (from 11% to 21%)
- But: wide variation
  - e.g.: Algeria, Senegal, Namibia, Afghanistan, Rwanda, and Burundi  
Introduction ↑ 20 percentage points.
  - France 2002: 10.9% -> 12.2%

## Quotas and Descriptive Representation in the EU

- share of women in national parliaments 2003 & 2013
  - no quota
  - quota, but no increase after 2003
  - quota + increase in 2003
- egalitarian political culture particularly important
- increase in representation particularly high in countries that increased their quotas after 2003
- Quotas especially important in countries without a tradition of female representation in politics



# Substantive representation

- Debate:
  - Do women have common political interests? Is there a common identity?
  - What about other group affiliations (class, ethnicity, etc.)?
- Meaningful distinction between women's interests and preferences
  - Women's interests = policies that protect women's rights as women, e.g. addressing gender-based violence, reproductive rights + importance of policy areas that disproportionately affect women, e.g. health & education
  - Women preferences: varied, including anti-feminist position
  - Objectively: Women's interests policy areas protect the interests of women as women
- Scientifically difficult to research effects on substantive representation:
  - Quotas are often part of a general move towards more progressive policies or a new party strategy to attract more female voters
  - => difficult to isolate the effect of quotas per se

## Two possible effects on substantive representation

### Processes

- female MPS have different attitudes and activities of MPs?
- emphasize different issues?

### Outcomes

- Changes in political practice (e.g., reducing gender discrimination in politics) ?
- Changes in policy (passing women-friendly laws)?

## Substantive representation: findings

### Processes

- Speeches: female MPs participate more actively than men in debates on women's rights and other gender-related issues
- Women introduce significantly more bills and motions related to the rights and welfare of women as a group than men do

### Outcomes

- More bills on issues relevant to women, such as reproductive rights and violence against women
- higher shares of female parliamentarians are associated with increased spending on health and education and less spending on defense



# India: Substantive Impact of Women Leaders of Village Council

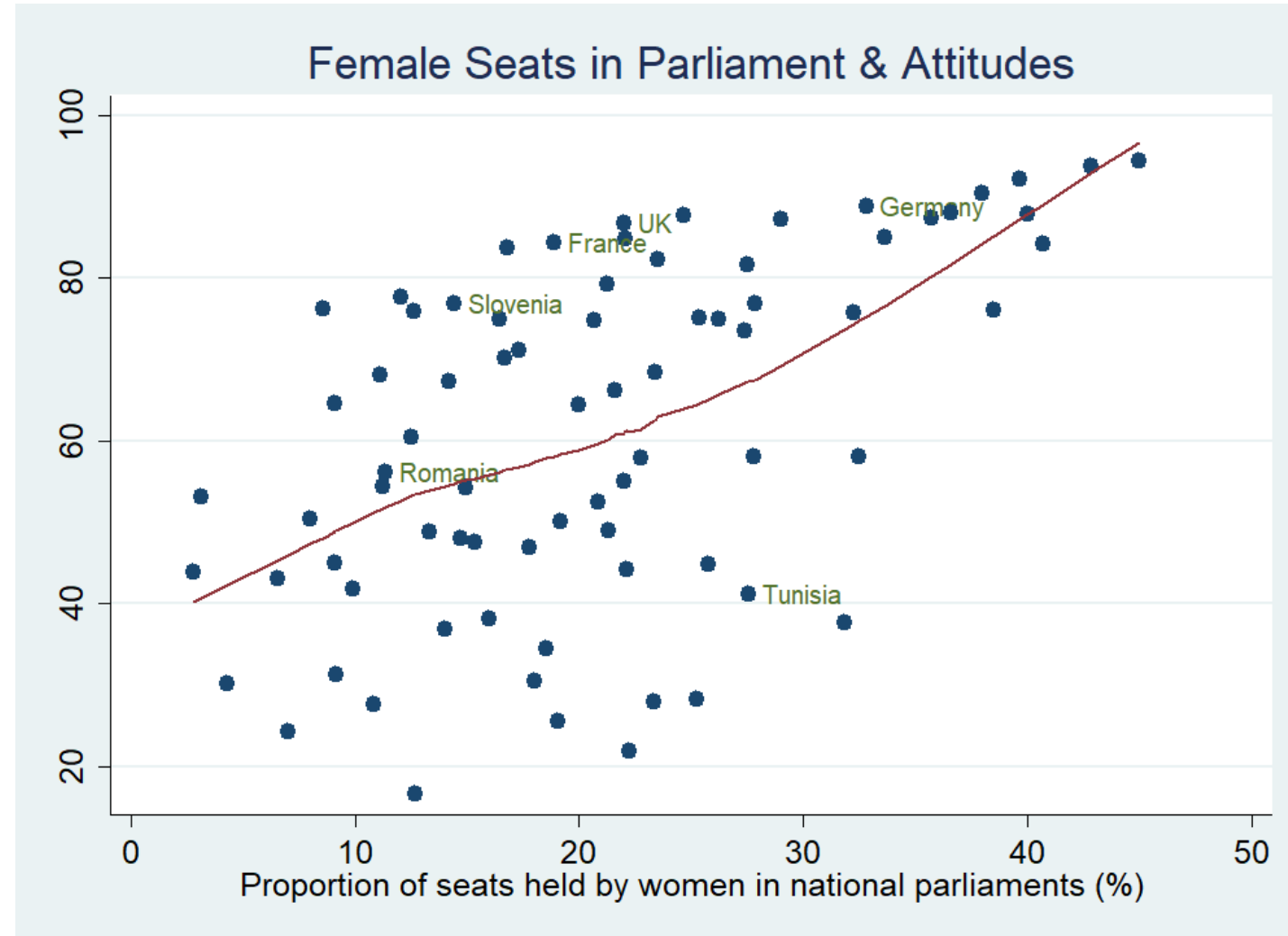
- ↑ Investment in access to drinking water => priority for women in rural India
- ↑ Consideration of female citizens in village meetings by council leaders
- ↑ Number of documented crimes against women increasing (expectations of reporting increasing)

# Symbolic representation: Strong effect on perceptions of competence

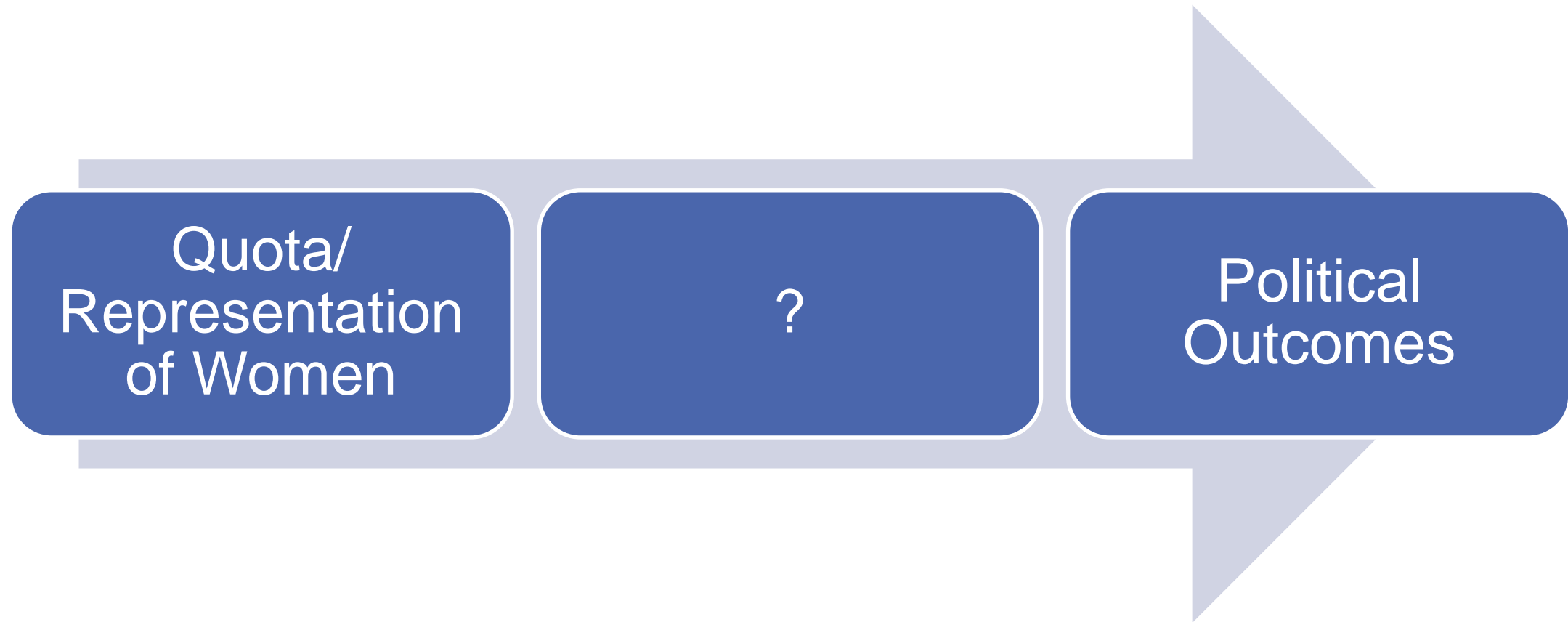
- more women in parliament => viewed as more competent => future positions
- in party leadership positions:
  - quotas increase likelihood that women attain leadership positions in parties
- in cabinet
  - ↑ women in legislature => ↑ in cabinet
  - ↑ women in legislature => ↑ high-prestige cabinet posts for women
  - India: experience of female local leaders -> more future candidates and elected women
- in parliament
  - ↑ women in legislature => ↑ women join prominent sectoral or budget-setting committees

# Symbolic Representation

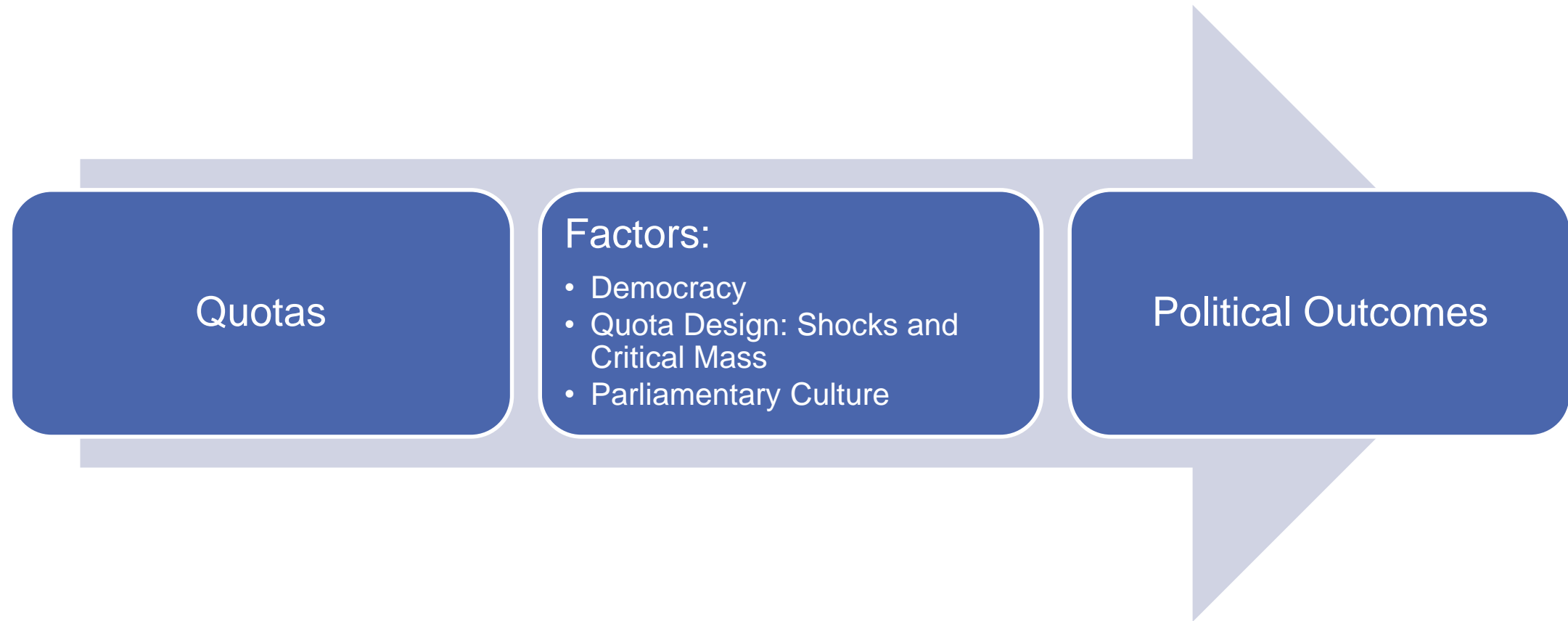
- larger share of seats held by women => citizens are more convinced by the political leadership abilities of women
- + additional research: countries with compulsory quotas => higher levels of citizen demand for more women in politics



But: Positive Effects are not Guaranteed  
Which factors influence the effect of quotas on policy?

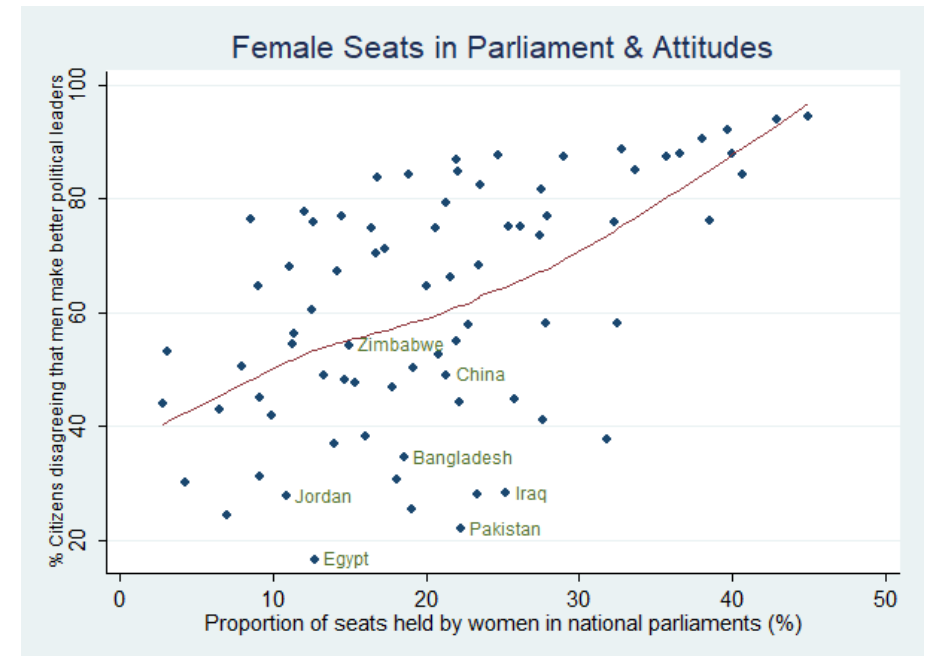


# Which factors influence the effect of quotas on political outcomes?



# Origin of Quota & Democracy

- Many autocracies have introduced quotas to improve international reputation
- often as “reserved seats” = adding new people to parliament without hard choices
- Consequences:
  - little overall influence of parliaments on policymaking
  - used more as a patronage tool
  - not taken seriously
- newly elected women have little influence Rwanda, Tanzania, Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait
- Example Morocco: elite backgrounds and political connections of quota women => affect willingness to identify with women as group



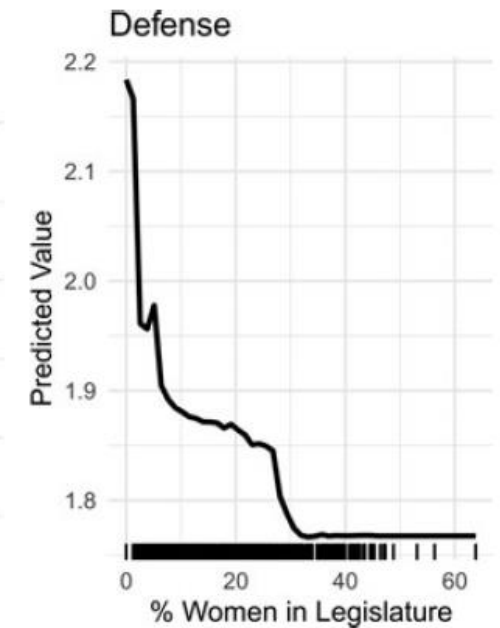
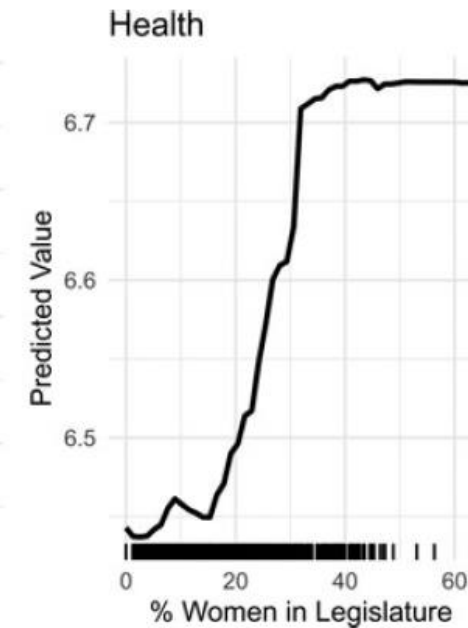
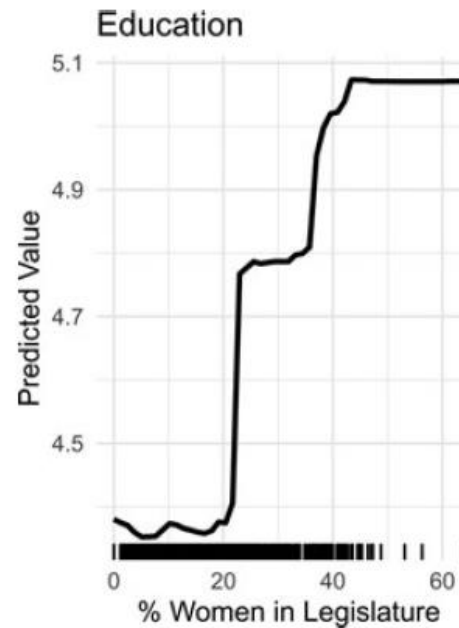
# Design of Quotas: Quota Shocks

- the greater the effect of the quota on descriptive representation, the greater the impact on policy outcomes
- place mandates (women in electable positions on party lists)
- sanctions
- high threshold (reserved seats max. 1/3 of seats)
- in executive positions



## Design of Quotas: Critical mass

- Do quotas only have an effect above a certain percentage?
- increase in spending on education, health as share of women increases
- decrease in spending on defense as share of women increases
- suggests a critical mass around 25% of women



# Parliamentary culture

- differences in parliamentary culture may play a large role in ability of women to affect policies
- parliaments are institutions dominated by men, often sexist culture (jokes, harassment)
- backlash against newcomers
- time + critical mass

# Conclusions

- quotas **work** for descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation => be bold
  - higher thresholds => 50%
  - sanctions & place mandates
  - mandatory
  - ask for quotas on different positions => party leaderships: local, provincial, national; committee leaderships, executive positions, e.g. as mayors (see India)
- effects for symbolic representation are important: don't wait for socio-political consensus about quotas => support can follow
- argue with evidence:
  - effects
  - support => support for greater role of women in politics is usually large (e.g. in Germany > 80%)
  - women that enter parliament with quotas are not less qualified than others (men and non-quota women)