

When women campaign, do they win?

Isabelle Engeli* & Georg Lutz#

* *University of Ottawa, Isabelle.Engeli@uOttawa.ca*

FORS, University of Lausanne, georg.lutz@fors.unil.ch

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Abstract

In this paper we look at the influence of campaign activities, past political experience on the electoral success of women candidates compared to male candidates. We use data from the Swiss comparative candidate survey conducted after the 2007 national elections. Out of 3100 candidates, 1700 participated in this survey which included a large range of questions related to campaign activities, past political experience as well as policy positions. Switzerland's open list PR electoral system is very favourable to study the impact of candidate gender on electoral success. In order to get elected, candidates have to get more preference votes than the competitors from their own party.

In a first step, we show that men differ from women with respect to campaign activities and also previous political experience. Women spend less money, they focus their campaign more often to benefit the party instead of their own candidature and they less often hold positions in party or political offices at the lower level. However, women do not worse in the political competition. Once we take into account incumbent advantage – where more men are incumbent – the ratio of elected women is about the ratio of the female candidates. When we model candidate success measured as the number of preference votes for individual candidates we do not find that women receive fewer votes than men on party ballots either.

Keywords: women's representation, open ballot PR system, electoral campaign

1 Introduction

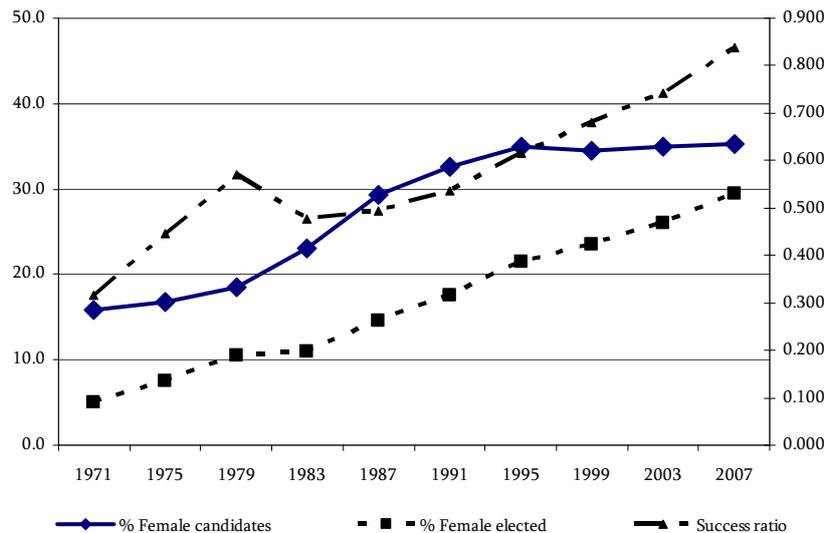
There is a well-established literature that emphasizes that electoral campaigns matter and demonstrates that campaign organization, strategies and funding as well as media attention to political candidates shape electoral outcomes (Cox and Thies 2000). As Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2009 put it, "the critical next question is how do campaign matter?". If much work has been done on incumbency advantage, the impact of campaign funding and the effect of negative campaigning on the likelihood to get elected in U.S. congressional elections, less in know about how it matters in list PR system and in particular in open-list system (Benoit and Marsh forthcoming; Shugart et al. 2005) and the interplay of gender and electoral campaigns in PR system has been so far much neglected by the literature (Engeli et al. 2008; Schmidt 2008). Recent research on elections to the US Congress shows that "when women run, women win" (Dolan 2006; King and Matland 2003; Newman 1994; Sanbonmatsu 2006; Seltzer et al. 1997; Thomas and Wilcox 1998). In other terms, when women rely on similar campaign skills and finance, they are as successful as men under the majoritarian rule. As a result, this literature argues that the ultimate barriers to equal gender representation in American political offices are the (male) incumbency advantage and the scarcity of women potential candidates for elections (Lawless and Fox 2005; Lawless and Pearson 2008; Kittilson 2006). Whether campaign impacts differently women and men candidates in PR context has largely remained an open question (McElroy and Marsh 2010).

In this paper, we investigate the impact of incumbency, campaign strategies and voters potential bias against women on the electoral success of women candidates in contrast to men candidates in an open-list PR system. Drawing on the last elections to lower chamber of the Swiss Parliament, we use original data from a candidate survey in the framework of the Comparative Candidate Survey project. Due to its open ballot PR system, Switzerland offers a valuable opportunity to study the success of female candidates in elections and voters' support for women candidacy. In order to get elected, candidates compete to a large degree with candidates from within the same party. Candidates need to attract a lot of preference votes in order to get on top of the party list and preference votes are the only mechanism to determine the rank order on the list. Switzerland introduced female suffrage as the last western democracy only in 1971 (see Figure 1). Since then, the percentage of women represented in the National council, which is the lower house elected through PR, has increased steadily. In the first elections in 1971 where women could run, only 5% of the elected candidates were women. This figure has reached almost 30% in the last election of 2007. This is not as high as the percentage of women in the parliaments of the Nordic countries, however it is by now above average of the parliaments of the OSCE countries.¹ This increase was partly due

¹ See the database of the Inter-parliamentary Union: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

to an increase in female candidates running. Only 15% of the candidates were women in the first election of 1971. In 2007 the percentage of women has been 35%. While the percentage of elected women has increased steadily, the percentage of women candidates has, on the contrary, remained stable since 1995.

Figure 1: Share of female candidates and female elected, Elections for the national Council in Switzerland



Data source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (<http://www.portal-stat.admin.ch/nrw/>)

As a result, the success ratio of women candidates, which is indicated by the right scale of the figure measured as percentage of women elected divided by the percentage of women candidates, has increased from 0.31 to 0.83.² All in all, this still constitutes a significant difference that this paper investigates. We show, that although the percentage of women elected is still lower than the percentage of women candidates in comparison to men, this differentiated performance is mainly due to the incumbency advantage – and the majority of incumbents is men – a lack of experience and lower campaign activities of women candidates.

In the following, we first review the impact of electoral campaigns on women representation in political offices and briefly describe the key features of the Swiss elections context. Turning to the results, in first step, we show that women and men candidates differ with respect to campaign activities and also previous political experience. Women

² The ratio is calculated as the percentage of women elected divided by the percentage of women that ran. So a ratio of 1 indicates, that the percentage of women elected is similar to the percentage of women running. A ratio below 1 means that women do worse at the election compared to how many woman run, a ratio above 1 means that women do better.

spend less money, they focus their campaign more often to benefit the party instead of their own candidature and they less often hold positions in party or political offices at the lower level. In a second step, we model electoral success – measured as both getting elected and the number of preference votes for candidates – and we find that women do not receive fewer votes than men on party ballots where candidates got elected.

2 Gender dynamics in electoral campaigning

There is a broad consensus in the literature to consider the feminization of political offices as four-stage model (Lovenduski and Norris 1993) that goes from the involvement of women in political parties to their ambition to run for political offices, their party nomination as candidates for elections and their actual electoral success.³ After briefly presenting the Swiss elections context, this paper mainly investigates the final stage of the process: the campaign strategies of the candidates nominated by their party and their likelihood of getting elected.

The Swiss electoral context: open-list system with strong variation in district magnitude

Among the various political factors explaining women underrepresentation in political offices, the influence of the electoral system has been the most widely discussed in the literature (Duverger 1955; Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Lovenduski 1997; Matland 1993, 1998, 2005; Matland and Taylor 1997; Matland and Studlard 1996; Norris 1985, 1997, 2004; Paxton 1997; Reynolds 1999; Rule 1987, 1994; Salmond 2006). The majoritarian system is frequently said to slow down women's access to electoral offices whereas the PR system is expected to promote it. As Norris (2004: 187) puts it, "as a simple rule, women proved almost twice as likely to be elected under proportional than under majoritarian electoral systems". The elections to the 200 seats of the lower Chamber of the Swiss Parliament, the National Council, are ruled by an open-list PR system and should thus accordingly provide a favorable context for boosting women representation in Parliament. If the political parties propose the lists, voters have the possibility to express their preferences in several ways: they can vote for a list as it is, without qualification; they can alter the list by crossing names out, by duplicating one or several names from the same list (*cumulation*) or from another list (*panachage*); or they can create their own list by selecting names from a variety of lists.

Nevertheless, the women-friendly context enabled by the open-list system may be restricted by the strong variation in magnitude across electoral districts, the 26 cantons of the Swiss State. Recent research has shown contrasted results regarding the impact of the district magnitude and the party magnitude on women elections in PR systems. The magnitude of electoral districts has been considered as moderating the impact of the

³ For a recent critical discussion of the model, see Krook (forthcoming).

electoral system. According to several studies, a high magnitude facilitate women's access to the political sphere, whereas they are marginalized in small electoral districts similarly as in majoritarian systems (Htun and Jones 2002; Norris 1997; Rule 1987, 1994). This argument is subject to much debate. Studlar and Welch (1991) found that district magnitude exerts only a marginal impact. Moreover, for Matland and Taylor (1997; see also Larserud and Taphorn 2007; Matland 1993), the magnitude of the electoral district exerts no direct impact on women elections, but does impact on the party magnitude, i.e. the number of seats won by the party in an electoral district. According to them, only parties with the probability of winning more than one seat would be likely to balance their list and to place women in top positions. On the contrary, in her investigation of elections in Latin America, Jones (2009) could not identify any effect to party magnitude. In Switzerland, 20 districts out of 26 are multi-seat districts, holding between two and 34 seats with representatives assigned on proportional basis while six small cantons hold only one single seat. Although Switzerland does not officially impose any minimum number of votes which a party must obtain to be represented, in practice the system enforces 'hidden' electoral thresholds. A party needs, for example, to receive less than 3% of the votes to obtain a seat in a large canton like Zurich with 34 seats. In a small canton as Valais (with seven seats) or Schwyz (with four seats only), a party would have to receive 10% or more of the vote for the same result.

Finally, the Swiss elections are characterized by the absence of gender quotas at the institutional level. As Jones (2009) demonstrates, in the absence of gender quotas, party commitment to the promotion of political gender equality will strongly impacts on women elections. The adoption of party quotas, or at least, the adoption of a well-balanced list in terms of gender representation favors the election of women (Kittilson 2006). To have a real chance of being elected, women must, at least, obtain a competitive position on the list, if not a secure one. Placed at the bottom of a list, women will not have more chances of winning in a PR system than in a majoritarian one (Kittilson 2006; Larserud and Taphorn 2007; Matland 2006).

Campaign effects on gender representation in political offices

A growing body of research on the US case stresses that "when women run, women win" (Dolan 2006; Lawless and Pearson 2008; Sanbonmatsu 2006). In other terms, when the candidates develop similar campaign strategies and raise similar amount of funding, they have equal chances of success, irrespective of their gender. In this case, women's political under representation is explained by the fact that women candidates are deficient in strategically key campaign characteristics. In the literature, three candidate-level factors are emphasized for explaining the barriers to women's access to national legislature: incumbency, campaign organization as well as campaign financing. As the factors have been mainly highlighted in the US congressional context, it is difficult to derive precise expectations for an open-list PR system such as the Swiss one.

Party common strategy of re-nominating incumbents disadvantages women. Drawing on the literature on incumbency advantage in elections (Ansolabehere et al. 2000; Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2006; Cox and Katz 1996; Gelman and King 1990), there is consensus in the literature to point out that the high proportion of male incumbents constitutes a significant barrier to the feminization of political offices (Newman 1994; Norris 2004; Thomas and Wilcox 1998). The high rate of male incumbent slows down the nomination of women candidates as political parties strategically tend to favor candidates who have been proved successful in the past. In addition, the incumbent advantages in terms of campaigning skills, political reputation and work for the constituency (Cox and Katz 1996; Gelman and King 1990) also decrease the chance for a women challenger to win the election (Fox and Lawless 2005). Dolan (2006) insists on the importance of the competitor's status. She demonstrates that a female challenger would be more strongly penalized than a man in a contest with a male incumbent (Dolan 2006). In contrast, an open seat offers as much opportunity to women candidates as to men. However, once they have won a seat, female incumbents have a similar probability of being re-elected as their male counterparts as far as elections to the US Congress are concerned. Nevertheless, not much is known about a potential gender effect in PR systems (Engeli et al. 2008) and, more generally, whether the incumbent advantage may be weaker in multimember district elections is still a disputed issue in the literature (Carey et al. 2000; Cox and Morgenster 1995; Hirano and Snyder 2009).

In addition, following the increasing interest in electoral campaigns, a growing body of scholars has investigated potential gender effects in campaigning for US elections. They show that when women rely on similar campaign organizational strategy and receive similar support from their political party (Burrell 1994; Biersack and Herrnson 1994; Bystrom and Kaid 2002; Dabelko and Hernson 1997), they tend to be as successful as men. Gender similarities in campaign strategies tend nevertheless to vary across level of elections and countries. In the US, a high level of campaign professionalism such as reliance on paid staff and political consultants has become nowadays the norm in congressional elections. In Switzerland, recent research has shown that campaign professionalism has not yet reached such a level and tends to greatly across political parties and even across candidates within the same party, (Engeli and Tonka 2009; Lutz 2008).

The same goes for campaign financing. A large number of studies have demonstrated the importance of campaign financing in shaping the electoral outcomes (Ansolabehere and Gerber 1994; Benoit and Marsh forthcoming; Cox and Thies 2000). A recent US study demonstrates that when women are able to invest similar level of spending in electoral campaign, they show similar likelihood of getting elected (Fox and Lawless 2005). Not much is known about gender effect in electoral campaign outside the US elections. Benoit and Marsh (forthcoming) have recently pointed out that campaign spending exert a linear impact on the probability to get elected in the Irish single transferable system. Maddens et al. (2006) found similar results in their investigation of the Belgian open list system. Both studies did not take into account any potential gender

effect. In Switzerland, there is neither legal spending ceiling nor public funding opportunity. Candidates are strongly dependant from their party budget allocated to their campaign and their individual capacity to raise their own funding. Lutz's investigation on campaign spending for the last national elections (2008) has revealed strong differences across parties and candidates. Candidates from the left side of the political spectrum tend to mainly rely on their party (scarce) financial support while candidates from the right side enjoy greater third-party contribution and self-funding capacity in addition to the financial help provided by their party. All in all, right-wing parties invest greater amount of funding in electoral campaigns and nominate less women candidates than the Social Democrats and the Greens (Lutz 2008). As a consequence, campaign spending may exert a greater differentiated impact on candidates' electoral fortune according to gender in Switzerland than in US elections to Congress where men and women candidates enjoy similar level of party funding (Burrell 1994).

Voters' bias against/in favor of women

Numerous studies on the US congressional elections have shown that voters do not longer express biased voting choice against women (Dolan 2004; King and Matland 2003; Seltzer et al. 1997; Thomas and Wilcox 1998) and may even tend to lightly favor women candidates (Cutter 2009). A similar results as been found for the Canadian national elections (Black and Erickson 2003). In Ireland, Gallagher (2003) identified a small gender bias against women candidates while McElroy and Marsh (2010) did not find any effect in their more recent study. More generally, Sanbonmatsu (2002) suggests that a good share of voters prefers one or the other gender according to still vivid gender stereotypes and would be more likely to express their political choice according to the gender of the candidate. These somewhat contrasting results incite to test once again the hypotheses of a voters' bias in an alternative electoral system. As McElroy and Marsh (2010) argue, open-list system, such as the Swiss one, provides the voters with the possibility of expressing preference votes for specific candidates without seriously damaging the electoral fortune of their favorite party. Indeed, voters can alter party lists by crossing names, duplicating one or several names from the same list or adding names from another list. As a consequence, voters may be able to express bias toward women candidates in a less restricted way than in US elections and such system may stimulate more gender-based vote choice.

3 Campaigning of men and women

Before turning into a more sophisticated analyses of electoral success, we want to explore differences between men and women in campaign involvement.

The data is mainly from a candidate survey in the framework of the Selects project and is also part of the efforts to gather comparative candidate data ⁴. We explore the electoral success of women candidates to the lower chamber of the Swiss parliament in the last national elections of 2007.⁵ Out of 3100 candidates, 1700 participated in this survey, which included a large range of questions related to campaign activities and past political experience. This data has been complemented by official data on the candidates such as whether a candidate has been incumbent or how many preference votes a candidate gained.⁶

Male and female candidates by different parties 1971 - 2007

A necessary condition for being elected is that women actually run for office. We have seen from figure 1 that there has been a steady increase in the percentage of women running for office over the years, however, there has also been stagnation since the 1990ties. This overall trend hides systematic differences between the parties. Interesting enough all the major parties started with about 15 female candidates in the first national elections when female suffrage was introduced and then developed very differently. The two main left parties in Switzerland, the social democrats (SPS) and the Greens increased the percentage of female candidates steadily with a major boost in the 1980ties, and have applied formal or informal gender quotas from the 1990ties on. As a consequence the percentage of female candidates has been around 50% for the Greens and over 45% for the SPS (see figure 2) in the last years. The centre-right parties had a much slower increase and never reached a similar level as the left parties, the people's party still had only little more than 20% female candidates in the 2007 election.

These party differences in the number of candidates then also translates into substantial differences in the number of women elected for each party⁷. In 2007 50% of the elected Green candidates were women, for the Social Democrats it was 42%. The Christian Democrats (CVP) had 39% women among the elected candidates, which means that the proportion of elected women was higher than the proportion of women candidates of the party. The lower end of the scale are the liberal party (FDP) with 20% elected women and the peoples party (SVP) with 13% elected women.

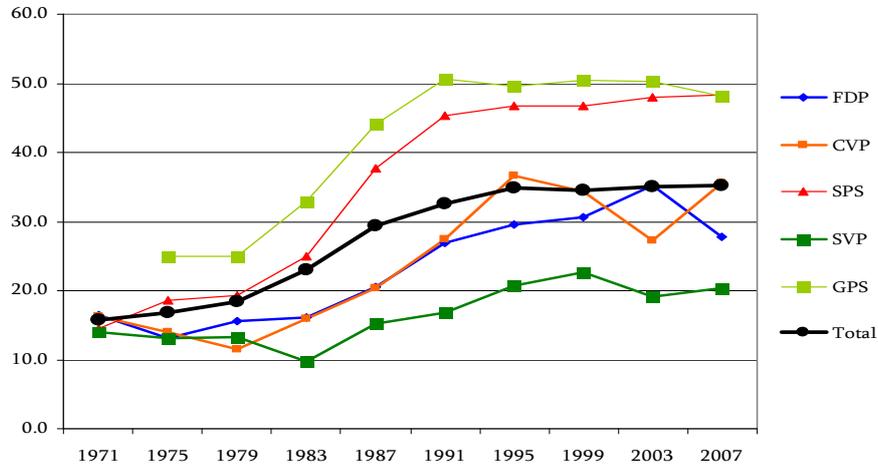
⁴ See www.selects.ch and www.comparativecandidates.org - for more information

⁵ The survey was conducted during four weeks after the elections. See Lutz (2008) for details. The survey is fairly representative. The response rate was slightly higher among women (56%) than men (53%). We also have a small party bias, where the left participated more often (67% of the social democrats SPS, 64% of the green candidates) and the centrist parties about average, (56% Christian Democrats CVP, 52% liberal party FDP, 51% peoples party SVP).

⁶ See the Federal statistical office www.bfs.admin.ch for this.

⁷ Figures also from www.bfs.admin.ch.

Figure 2: Share of female candidates for the different parties 1971-2007, elections for the national council in Switzerland

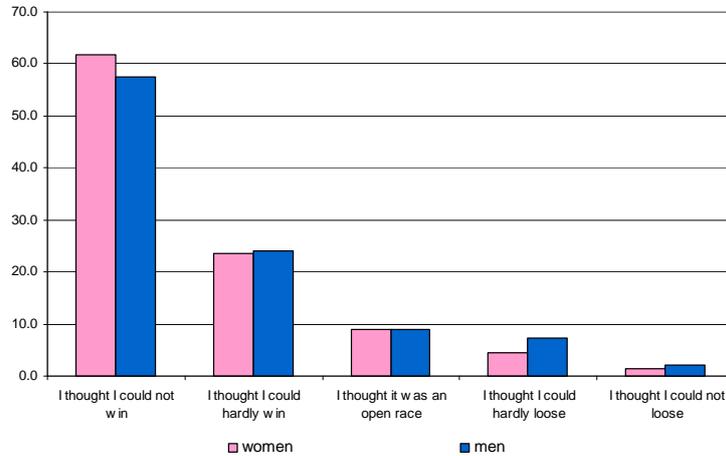


Male and female personal ambitions

Two potential indicators on how confident men and women were about their candidacy were included in the survey.

In a first question candidates were asked how they evaluated their chances of actually getting elected. They could answer that they thought they could not win or hardly win, that it was an open race, that they could hardly lose or that they could not lose. Figure 3 shows the distribution of answers between men and women. The differences are small but point in the expected direction. Women are overrepresented in the group that thinks they could not win and underrepresented in the group that thought they could hardly lose or could not lose.

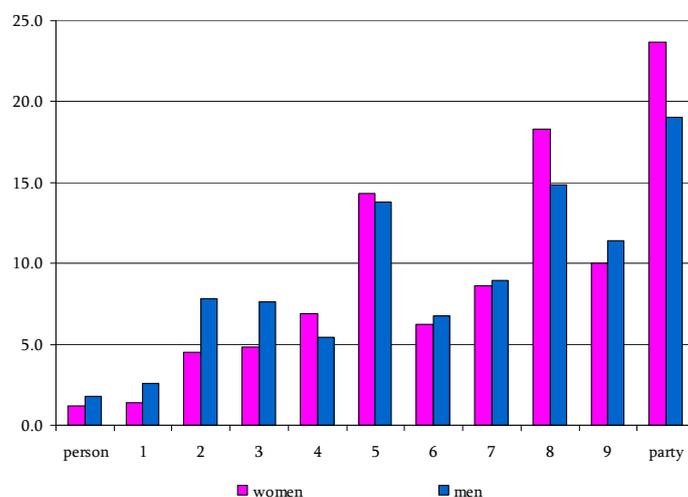
Figure 3: Self-evaluation of chances of getting elected by men and women 2007



The survey also included a question about the campaign focus of the personal campaign, where candidates could indicate on a 0-10 scale that the goal of their campaign was to create as much attention as possible for their person vs. a lot of attention for the party. We can see from this table, that women more often claim that their campaign mainly should serve the party, while more men are overrepresented on the left part of the scale which indicates that the campaign should mainly serve the candidate.

From these two figures we can see a first difference in the campaign between men and women candidates. Women less often believe in their possible success and women are more often willing to run a campaign to promote the party than their personal career. This could lead to two interpretations. First, women are more realistic about their chances of actually getting elected and therefore more realistically try to help the party. Candidates in all categories overestimate their chances of getting elected. Of those who think they have little chances, the percentage elected is 0%. Among the candidates who think the race is open, 14% got elected, and among those who thought they have good chances, 57% got elected (Lutz 2008: 38). Second, women are less ambitious and as a consequence more willing to contribute to the party fortune rather than their own success. These findings are very much in line with Lawless and Fox's studies (2005, 2009). They have shown that even in hyper-professionalized elections context such as the race for the US Congress, women candidates do express lower political ambition and expectation than men candidates.

Figure 4: Primary focus of the candidate campaign by man and women 2007



Public, party office and professional membership

In addition to this perceptions about the candidate campaign, a number of questions were included that asked about previous political experience and organizational membership. Both can play an important role for various reasons. Such positions in public or party offices make candidates known to the voters already and contribute to a strong network which can help to advance the personal career. Organizations often endorse candidates or contribute financially to the personal campaign, so this should be an advantage for a candidate too.

Table 1: Party and political offices held previously by male and female candidates 2007 (Percentage holding the respective office)

	Men	Women	Difference men women
<i>Public office</i>			
Mayor	9	3	-6
Local government	21	15	-6
Local parliament	29	28	-1
Cantonal government	1	1	0
Cantonal parliament	31	27	-4
<i>N</i>	<i>541</i>	<i>960</i>	
<i>Party office</i>			
Local level	51	44	-7
Cantonal level	48	39	-9
National level	18	15	-3
<i>N</i>	<i>541</i>	<i>960</i>	

Table 2 shows some differences between men and women, where male candidates have held both party and public offices more often than female candidates, with the exception of cantonal government positions, however these are very few positions anyway. The differences may not seem very large; however they are systematic.

The membership in various organizations reveals gender differences as well, but they are not pointing in the same direction anymore. Men are much more often members of a professional organization, or a sports club, women are much more often members of a social organization, while there are no differences regarding trade unions, cultural or religious organizations.

Table 2: Organizational membership of male and female candidates 2007 (membership in the respective organisations)

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Difference men women</i>
Trade unions	17	19	2
Professional organisations	43	31	-12
Interest groups	42	35	-7
Sports club	39	23	-16
Cultural organisations	31	32	1
Religious organisations	26	26	0
Social organisations	31	48	17
<i>N</i>	<i>1057</i>	<i>608</i>	

Campaign activities

Let's turn now in a last part to campaign activities itself. The survey included a number of different campaign instruments that are typically used, such as campaign posters, newspaper ads, flyers or a candidate website. We see that men are using the different instruments slightly more often than women, although the differences tend not to be very huge (see Lutz 2008: 43). However the usage of the different measures may not tell much about the actual importance of the different instruments.

A more direct measure of campaign activities is campaign spending by individual candidates for their own campaigns. In absence of any campaign finance regulation in Switzerland the survey data is the only source of information available on candidates' personal campaign spending. We do not have any proof of the accuracy of the self-reported figures on campaign spending, however there are no other figures available and we don't have any evidence that there is a systematic bias of some sort either.

Table 3 shows that there are very substantial differences between male and female candidates regarding campaign spending. Men tend to spend the double amount of campaign money than women and this very significant difference remains once we only take into account candidates on lists with elected candidates, which means candidates

who actually have a chance of getting elected because they run on a list where at least one seat was to distribute and if we further exclude incumbent candidates.

Table 3: Mean campaign spending by man and women 2007 in CHF

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Mean (Median) Campaign spending Total	13'308 (2'000)	6'540 (1'000)
Mean (Median) Campaign spending only candidates on lists with elected candidates	27'075 (10'000)	11'033 (4'000)
Mean (Median) Campaign spending only candidates on lists with elected non-incumbent candidates	22'580 (7'000)	9'348 (2'500)

However, we have seen above that left parties tend to have many more female candidates and left party candidate also tend to invest less money into their political campaign (Lutz 2008: 43). So the huge difference could simply come from the fact that many more female candidates are from left parties than from right parties. In order to explore gender differences we therefore ran a model that can control for party affiliation and at the same time for incumbency, since incumbent candidates are doing better in mobilising money for their campaigns. We also control for whether on a list somebody got elected because only on those list candidate competition is meaningful. The models are multi-level model where the upper level is the list of the candidate and the lower level are the individual candidates campaign expenses, which adds an additional control for possible unexplained variance between the different lists and cantons, because all candidates run on list.

The analysis in table 4 shows that a large part of the variance is related to party differences, differences between lists especially higher spending on lists with elected candidates and higher spending of incumbent candidates. However gender remains an important factor to explain campaign spending, even after controlling for key variables: male candidates spent more money on their campaign than female candidates in 2007.

Table 4: Multi-level random effects model explaining (log) campaign spending

	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Sex (male)	0.716	0.156 ***	0.635	0.153 ***
List with elected			2.327	0.258 ***
Incumbent			1.528	0.312 ***
SVP			0.952	0.389 **
FDè			1.641	0.373 ***
CVP			1.434	0.397 ***
SPS			0.338	0.381
Greens			-0.763	0.384 **
Constant	6.294	0.182	4.845	0.244 ***
sigma_u	2.110		1.465	
sigma_e	2.585		2.568	
rho	0.400		0.245	
N	1506		1506	
Groups	290		290	
R2 within	0.016		0.030	
R2 between	0.009		0.359	
R2 Total	0.012		0.270	

Level 1: candidate lists, level 2: log ratio campaign spending in CHF; *** = sig. at 0.01 level, ** = sig at 0.05 level, * = sig at 0.1 level.

4. Electoral success of men and women

We have seen above some differences in the campaign activities between male and female candidates in Switzerland. In the last section we turn now to the question if there are differences between men and women in electoral success and whether this can be explained partially by gender or by other factors. We have seen in Figure 1, that the success ratio measured as the number of elected candidates compared to the overall candidates is still pointing at that women have it more difficult to get elected. This is visible also from table 5. The total number of candidates was 35.1% in 2007, the percentage of elected women was 29.4%. However, once we control for incumbency, we can see that among the newly elected the percentage of women is already as high as the number of candidates, so there is no disadvantage of women anymore in the likelihood of getting elected.

Re-election of incumbent candidates is the rule, it is rare that a candidate on a list does not get elected because an other candidates receives more votes. In 2007 171 incumbents ran again for elections, of those only 24 (14%) did not get elected anymore, however 13 of those because the list they were running on lost one or more seats. Only 11 (6%) were direct defeats, which means that a new candidate on a list got elected instead of an incumbent candidates.

Table 5: Success rate of various groups of candidates

	women	men	Total	% women
Total candidates	1088	2001		35.2
Total elected	57	137	194	29.4
Incumbent elected	40	107	147	27.2
Newly elected	17	30	47	36.2

In a second step we analyse electoral success in a different way, in order to better capture potential voters' bias against/in favour of women candidates, we rely on the number of preference votes expressed in favour of individual candidates⁸. Electoral success is measured here using the (log of the) ratio of the votes a candidate received from changed ballots and the total of changed ballots. The rationale behind this personal votes (PV) measure is quite intuitive: a ratio of 1 (and a log ratio of 0) we would obtain if a candidate, on average, received one vote per party list ballot she is enrolled on – a neutral scenario from the personal votes perspective. If (a) voters regularly cumulated a candidate within a party ballot, or if (b) voters of other parties cast panache votes for this candidate, or if (c) voters put the candidate's name on an open list, the candidate would receive considerably more votes than the total number of ballots won by her party, and thus values on the dependent variable higher than 1 (0 for the log scale). If, on the other hand, voters regularly stroke off a candidate from a party list, the candidate would receive less votes than the total number of ballots won by her party, and thus a (log) ratio less than 1 (0). We only take into account the changed ballots. Voters in Switzerland can cast a pre-printed party ballot without changing anything. In this case, however they do not influence the number of votes for candidates in any way. On total, 50% of the voters cast a ballot without any change. On average, the Swiss candidates received 1.71 votes per changed party ballot,⁹ with a minimum of 0.18 and a maximum of 48, which corresponds to an average of 0.24 on the log scale, with minimum and maximum values of -1.69 and 3.87, respectively.¹⁰ The log is taken simply to rid the lower bound of the ratio and to correct for skew.

We apply a multi-level model in order to account for the fact the candidates run not independently but on party lists. The upper level are the different party lists, the lower level the individual candidates.

⁸ All the official data is available through the Federal Statistical Office: www.bfs.admin.ch.

⁹ As parties may pre-cumulate candidates, and voters may fill in open lists as well, the average ratio is above 1.

¹⁰ Candidates that participated in the CCS received an average of 1.65 votes per ballot, with a standard deviation of 1.51. Drop out candidates scored 1.77 on average, with a slightly higher standard deviation of 2.38. At first glance, this result does not point into the direction of strong systematic selection due to survey non-response.

Candidate gender was coded 1 for male, 0 for female candidates, so a positive sign would indicate that male candidates have an advantage over female candidates. We included age as a control variable and assume that older candidates tend to win more votes than younger candidates. The variable for campaign personalization was included and recoded so if the campaign had a strong focus on creating attention for the candidate the code was 10, a strong party focus of the campaign was recoded to 0. With this recoded variable we expect a positive impact on the number of preference votes. We also included the ambition of the candidates which we derived from the variable about the evaluation of the chances of getting elected. Candidates that thought that it was at least an open race for them were coded 1, all the others were coded 0.

Campaign spending (log) was included in the model, assuming that the higher the campaign spending, the more preference votes. We further included a number of different party and public offices (see above) and we expect a positive effect of these positions on the number of votes. Organizational membership was included in a single variable where membership in different organizations was added up, so the indicator ranges from 0-7.

In addition, we included a number of structural variables which have shown to have a significant impact in other studies too (see Lutz 2010). Incumbent candidates make likely receive more preference votes. If a candidate is pre-cumulated, which means that a candidate appears already twice on the ballot, we expect a higher number of preference votes. Some candidates for the national council ran for the Council of states (the upper house) at the same time, which is a more high profile race and as a consequence we expect a higher number of preference votes. We also expect a positive effect of the ballot position on the number of preference votes since this has shown to have a significant effect in a previous study (Lutz 2010). Last but not least, we distinguish between lists, where actually somebody got elected and lists where no candidate got elected because the situation for candidates is very different on those lists. Real candidate competition - between candidates of the same party - only takes place on lists where actually somebody gets elected, while a majority of candidates runs on lists that don't make a single seat.

The results of our analysis show that there are no significant differences between men and women regarding the number of preference votes either as there are no differences between men and women on the probability of getting elected once we control for incumbency. Gender does not explain the number of preference votes a candidate receives anymore and female candidates do not appear to be discriminated against. Even, if this may have been the case in the past, it is not anymore.

Table 6: Multi-level model explaining the number of candidate preference votes per candidate

	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	
Sex (male)	-0.008	0.029	-0.022	0.023	
Age			-0.003	0.001	**
Personalized campaign			0.010	0.004	**
Ambition (dummy)			0.213	0.035	***
Campaign spending (log)			0.010	0.004	**
Party office local level			-0.098	0.024	***
Party office cantonal level			0.067	0.024	***
Party office national level			0.039	0.033	
Local government			-0.035	0.029	
Local parliament			0.124	0.025	***
Cantonal government			-0.186	0.118	
Cantonal parliament			0.223	0.029	***
Frequency membership in different organisations (0-7)			0.023	0.008	***
Candidate Council of state			0.545	0.080	***
Incumbent			0.595	0.068	***
Pre-cumulated			0.550	0.041	***
Ballot position			0.502	0.056	***
List with elected candidates			-0.913	0.050	***
Constant	0.372	0.039	0.713	0.060	***
sigma_u	0.527		0.309		
sigma_e	0.513		0.352		
rho	0.513		0.435		
N	1665		1429		
Groups	294		288		
R2 within	0.000		0.519		
R2 between	0.004		0.530		
R2 Total	0.000		0.520		

*Level 1: candidate lists, level 2: log ratio preferences votes per changes ballot of a candidate; *** = sig. at 0.01 level, ** = sig at 0.05 level, * = sig at 0.1 level.*

Naturally, there is no gender effect either, once we include all the different control variables. Most of the control variables are significant and point into the expected direction. Age, however has a negative effect. Younger candidates, controlling for all other factors, receive slightly more preference votes than older candidates. Surprisingly holding a party office at the local level results in fewer preference votes while a similar office at the cantonal level leads to more preference votes. Parliamentary positions at both the local and cantonal level lead to a greater number of preference votes, government positions at the respective level don't have an influence. Membership in different organisations helps as well to get additional votes.

4 Conclusion

The percentage of female candidates is still below the women share of the population. In Switzerland about 35% of the candidates have been women since 1995 and there was not much of an increase in the last 12 years.

The goal of this article has been to explore if female candidates are discriminated against once they have entered the electoral arena. We did find systematic differences in campaign activities between men and women: men spend more money, they are better rooted in their party and their constituency, they are slightly more ambitious and they more often peruse personal career goals with their candidacy. However, even this does not result in an advantage of men over women anymore. Men are not more likely to get elected, once taking incumbency into account, nor are they more likely to win more candidate votes at the elections than women.

As a consequence, the problem is not anymore that women don't get elected, but that women don't run. Women do not pursue political careers at all levels in an as systematic way as men do and this makes it less likely that they enter an electoral office at the national level.

Central to women representation is the role of political parties as promoters of women's political carrier. As we have shown, right-wing parties, especially the peoples party (SVP) are more reluctant to support women careers than left-wing parties. Parties play an important role as gatekeeper to increase women's political representation. Beyond nominating women as candidates to national elections, political parties have first to increase the share of women membership and, more importantly, recruit potential candidates and launch their carrier at the city or canton level. Building up a political career takes time and the growth in women MPs also depends on the political parties' strategy to promote gender equality in the political sphere. Despite the fact that when women run they win, parties, particularly on the right side of the spectrum, have shown some long-term reluctance to adopt successful strategies to promote women political representation. This difference in party's commitment to gender equality explains a great deal of women under-representation in the Swiss parliament.

Political underrepresentation in politics may thus be more linked to the general role of women in society than to specifics about politics. Women are underrepresented in senior positions in the public and private sector in Switzerland everywhere and politics is not any different. Unless effective measures would be taken, such as the introduction of gender quotas – which seems unlikely at the moment - women representation will increase only slowly in the future and only parallel to overall changes to the role of women in the society.

5 References

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