Who supports gender quotas in Ireland? An examination of attitudes in the eligibility pool

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Abstract

Candidate gender quotas will be introduced in the Republic of Ireland for the first time at the next general election. This paper examines support for this quota amongst two sets of potential Dáil candidates; those who ran for local election in 2014 and a sample of eligible professionals. Using responses from two original datasets, the 2014 Irish Local Election Candidate Study *and the* 2013 Political Attitudes and Experiences Survey*, we identify key predictors of support for the quota. We explore whether or not there are ideological, demographic and partisan differences in support for the measure. We find the single best predictor of support for the quota is the sex of the respondent, followed by feminist ideology. There is a weak effect for leftwing ideology and partisanship. Overall the results suggest that resistance to the quota is still relatively strong.*

Introduction

The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 was passed by Oireachtas na hÉireann in July of 2012. This piece of legislation introduces a 30 percent sex quota for female party candidates at the forthcoming general election, rising to 40 percent subsequently. Any party failing to comply with the quota will be penalized by the loss of half of their State funding for the full parliamentary term. The introduction of this sex quota aims to tackle the overrepresentation of men which persists in positions of power not only in Ireland but in democracies around the world.

Currently, women make up just 16.3 percent of TDs in Dáil Éireann and 30 percent of Senators, with this latter figure largely due to the high proportion of government appointees who are women[1] (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015). Substantial empirical evidence from a variety of countries shows that men and women in the general population differ in their policy preferences across a wide range of areas (Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986; Applegate et al., 2002; Herek, 2002; Amuedo-Dorantes & Puttianun, 2010; Eichenberg, 2014). Further, female legislators have been found to behave differently from their male counterparts (e.g. Swers & Larson, 2005; Fridkin & Woodall, 2005; Kathlene, 2005; Rosenthal, 2005), adopting unique leadership styles and focusing on specific policy areas. Overall, the evidence suggests that female legislators have distinct perspectives and preferences that are not adequately addressed by male-dominated legislatures, lending legitimacy to attempts to correct this imbalance by increasing women's representation in these bodies[2].

Of the many strategies that are available to parties and policy-makers to address this issue, the adoption of a legislative quota is one of the most ambitious as well as the most controversial (Lovenduski, 1993). Forcing parties to make more space for women on the ballot paper presupposes two things: firstly, that it is political parties themselves that represent a key barrier to women's entry in politics; and, secondly, that when women end up on the ballot, the electorate will not penalize them due to their gender (i.e. voters are not biased against women). There is strong evidence that in the Irish case voter bias does not operate: analysis of election and survey data tells us that when women run for office they can expect their chances of winning to be equal to that of their male counterparts (McElroy & Marsh, 2010; 2011). Furthermore, it appears that Irish political parties are not doing everything they can to foster women's entry into politics. Despite a proportional electoral system that has been shown to facilitate their participation (Engstrom, 1987; White, 2006; McGing, 2013); an electorate that does not appear to be biased against women; and a multiplicity of parties, some of which are small and/or left-wing – features that tend to produce a greater share of female candidates (Galligan, 1993; McGing, 2013) – the number of women TDs has always been far from parity. Connolly (2013) points to a masculinist culture that may make parties inhospitable to women's progression and, indeed, candidacies. Putting in place a gender quota at the candidate stage rather than employing a strategy of reserving seats for women in the Dáil is a deliberate move that puts the onus on parties to address the imbalance. Essentially, political parties act as

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[1] Just 10 of the 43 Senators from the various panels of the Seanad and only one of those Senators directly elected by graduates of the universities are women. By contrast, women constitute eight of the remaining 11 Senators who are appointed by the government (oireachtas.ie).
[2] Concern with diversity in the composition of legislatures in particular relates to the important functions that those bodies perform as well as the fact that in many countries recruitment into parliament is what determines who is eligible to govern (Norris, 1997).

gatekeepers, determining what kind of individuals become candidates and therefore exerting a strong influence on who gains elected office (Caul, 1999; Fox & Lawless, 2010). Since the Irish electorate is not more likely to choose a male candidate over a female one, employing a gender quota at the candidate level should not harm parties' electoral fortunes[3].

Despite its apparent appropriateness in the Irish case, there has been resistance to this quota measure from sources both inside and outside the parties (Buckley, 2013). This has been particularly evident at the time of the passage of the legislation and also over the course of the candidate selection process for the forthcoming general election. Of course, such resistance is not unique to Ireland and a body of literature has developed examining the factors that predict support and indeed opposition to gender quotas. We identify one shortcoming of this literature as its tendency to focus on the attitudes of current legislators and parties only, rather than including those people who are likely to be affected by the quota in the future, that is, those people who are most likely to run for office (i.e. the eligibility pool). We argue that the examination of the attitudes of these individuals towards gender quotas is crucial, since the introduction of gender quotas changes their incentives to run.

Theory

The bulk of the current literature is aimed at explaining why individual legislators or parties favour gender quotas[4] as a strategy for increasing women's presence in politics. Overwhelmingly, authors point to gender as the key demographic predictor of support for this strategy (e.g. Htun & Power, 2006). Such a policy makes space for women in legislative bodies, allowing them greater opportunities to participate in decision-making and to advocate for measures that directly benefit them. It is for this reason that legislators who are women are thought to support quotas. Naturally, female legislators are a diverse group and their attitudes cannot be fully captured by their sex alone.

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[3] This is a point that will perhaps deserve some examination after the next election. It is fair to say that the evidence tells us that when Irish women run for office then tend to win at the same rates as their male counterparts. However, Fianna Fáil, as a large party with very low levels of female representation (not one of its current TDs is a woman) has been experiencing particular difficulties in obtaining the required amount of female candidates to run. This may lead to a necessary modification of its electoral strategy, most likely through the adding of additional female candidates to the ticket, which may harm it at the polls. This has already occurred with the addition of former Minister Mary Hanafin to the ticket in the four-seater Dún Laoghaire constituency (one seat is automatically allocated to the Ceann Comhairle), where it had been thought that running one candidate only might give the party the best chance of making an electoral gain.

[4] The literature examines quotas in their diverse forms: voluntary adoption by parties, legislative quotas at candidate-level, and reserved seats. For the purposes of this review, we focus on those studies examining support for voluntary party or legislative quotas.

However, Lovenduski and Norris (2003) find that in Westminster, controlling for background and party, women have more progressive attitudes with respect to affirmative action policies that are in women's interests, including gender quotas. This finding fits nicely with Epstein, Niem and Powell's (2005) study employing US data which finds that women legislators generally tend to hold more liberal views than male colleagues from their own party.

With respect to research that focuses on party support for gender quotas, party ideology is identified as the most important predictor of support (Davidson-Schmich, 2006). Unsurprisingly, parties on the Left tend to be more likely to favour quotas – by adopting them within the party and/or advocating for them to be introduced on a compulsory basis for all parties in the political system – than those located to the right of the political spectrum (Caul, 2001; Bruhn, 2003; Htun & Power, 2006). For those parties that have traditionally been associated with support for equality in its diverse forms the introduction of such a quota typically does not represent such a significant challenge since they, along with smaller parties, tend to have higher levels of women's representation already (see Galligan, 1993; McGing, 2013). Indeed when the gender quota was informally trialled by political parties at the Irish local elections in the summer of 2014, the Green Party and Sinn Féin actually managed to exceed the 30 percent target, while the Labour Party achieved a respectable 28 percent. For the two largest parties which also happen to be on the right of the political spectrum, women made up only 22.8 and 18.1 percent of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil's total candidates respectively. In line with the literature on the topic, Fianna Fáil has been notable both for its difficulties during the ongoing candidate selection process both in reaching the necessary target for the 2016 general election, and also for the vocal objections of many of its members to the whole idea of the gender quota[5].

Beyond pure left-right party ideology, Dubrow's (2010) research examining support by Polish political parties finds that religious ideology also matters: economically liberal and traditionalist Catholic parties do not support quotas, but those that are economically statist and anti-clerical in their ideology tend to. Furthermore, party structure with respect to this affirmative action policy has been found to matter too (Caul, 2001; Bruhn, 2003). Parties that are run along more democratic lines, make decisions in a transparent fashion, and already have women among the ranks of their higher-ups have a greater chance of adopting the measure.

While this literature represents an important scholarly contribution to understanding why it is that gender quotas end up being adopted, despite resistance from several quarters both inside and

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[5] Former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern recently described the very idea of gender quotas as "mad", arguing that "the person who works their way through the system . . . is told 'you happen to be the wrong gender, so go away'." (*Irish Times,* 2015).

outside political parties, the tendency to focus on parties' and existing legislators' support means that the attitudes of those at whom the quotas are being targeted are being overlooked. Let us take the example of the candidate gender quota. Effectively, its application – if successful – will change the composition of individuals running for office. It should do this initially by requiring that a certain proportion of candidates be women. Parties may have to search within their ranks in order to meet the quota, or they may already have female members who are eager to stand but have not yet been given the opportunity to do so. Additionally, there are two subsequent ways in which the quota might have an impact: firstly, it may encourage women to put themselves forward (rather than waiting to be approached by parties) and secondly, it may depress political ambition[6] among those men and women most likely to run (what Fox, Lawless and Feeley [2001] call the eligibility pool).

Davidson-Schmich's (2008) paper investigating the effect of voluntary party gender quotas on the level of political ambition of German party members finds evidence for this unintended latter effect. In Germany, those individuals most likely to run for office are those who are already politically active (i.e. party members). Davidson-Schmich finds that as the level of the quotas increase, the likelihood of both male and female respondents of reporting that they would be likely to accept their party's hypothetical nomination falls. Men are less likely to put themselves forward since the quota signals to them that their candidacy is not desired, while German female party members fall victim to many of the circumstances that the underrepresentation literature has already identified (e.g. lack of confidence in abilities, burdensome family circumstances etc.). Effectively, where German parties have high quotas, they meet them by recruiting unambitious women. Such reluctant candidates may fail to win seats for their party or, if elected, may fail to effectively represent the interests of women in the manner in which we would desire them to. Gender quotas then, particularly high ones, may not actually be sufficient or appropriate to achieve the aims for which they are implemented.

This paper follows from Davidson-Schmich's contribution by arguing that attitudes towards gender quotas of those individuals located in the eligibility pool are worthy of examination. These affirmative action measures should impact the incentives for members of the eligibility pool to put themselves forward as candidates for elective office. Implementing this policy changes the environment that male and female members of the eligibility pool would face were they put themselves forward as a candidate. Examining their attitudes prior to their introduction can suggest the type of impact that quotas might have on their level of political ambition after implementation.

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[6] Political ambition here should be more precisely conceived of as *nascent* political ambition, that is, the inclination of individuals to consider becoming a candidate (Fox, Lawless & Feeley, 2001; Fox & Lawless, 2005). This definition moves beyond Schlesigner's (1966) conceptualization of political ambition as being expressive only; that is, thinking of individuals as having political ambition only if they hold or stand for office.

Broadly, we suggest that those in favour of the measure might be inclined to run after the introduction of the quota, while those who oppose it might be discouraged from doing so.

Hypotheses

The overall research question that this paper seeks to answer can be formally stated as: what predicts support for the gender quota in the eligibility pool for Dáil Éireann? Our review of the literature led us to formulate three specific hypotheses relating to support for this measure:

> H1: women should have higher levels of support for the gender quota than men.

> H2: identification as a feminist should be positively related to support for the gender quota.

> H3: attitudes towards women in politics should impact support for the gender quota.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are straight-forward: since women should benefit directly from the measure due to increased opportunities for them to get their names on the ballot for their party, we expect women to have more favourable attitudes towards the gender quota. Non-party women should also support it since the quota represents a general increase in the opportunity for women to represent themselves. Similarly, independent of gender, those who identify as feminists should be more inclined to support a legislative measure that directly challenges male-domination of politics in Ireland. Hypothesis 3 merits further examination.

We also anticipate that respondents' beliefs about the cause of women's relative absence from Irish politics will impact their level of support for the gender quota. Those who believe that few women are active in political life due to structural factors (voter bias [H3b], parties' reluctance to provide women with opportunities [H3c]) should be more likely to support the quota than those who believe that women are less likely to be attracted to politics than men (H3a), a hypothesis tests the impact of respondents adherence to gender essentialist views. It should be noted that these beliefs about the causes of women's underrepresentation should impact on level of support for gender quotas regardless of whether the attributions made by the respondents are correct. It is not necessary, for example, for the electorate to be biased against female candidates for a belief in such a bias to exist. Hypothesis 3, therefore, assesses the impact of *perceptions* of the causes of women's underrepresentation on level of support only.

The subsequent section more fully describes the two data sets being used and the operationalization of the variables employed in the analysis.

Data

To examine this question in an Irish context it was necessary to construct the appropriate eligibility pool. In the relevant literature there are two possible methods for doing this: either by selecting the occupations that are highly represented among legislators and sampling individuals from those professions (after Fox, Lawless & Feeley, 2001), or by surveying those individuals who are already politically active (after Davidson-Schmich, 2008). Both approaches represent particular limitations. Firstly, though it is true that we can identify certain occupations that are over-represented in the Dáil, they are not over-represented to the extent that they are in the US (see Fox & Lawless, 2005). Secondly, Ireland's rate of political party membership is lower than the EU average (van Biezen, Mair & Poguntke, 2012), and parties do not have a monopoly on candidates' routes to power since individuals can also run as independents. In order to address these limitations, data from both sources have been employed. Individuals located in key occupations (i.e. those overrepresented in Dáil Éireann), as well as candidates at the 2014 local election were used to construct the eligibility pool[7].

The data are taken from the 2014 Local Election Candidate Study (LECS) and the 2013 Political Attitudes and Experiences (PAE) survey. The dependent variable for both sets of models is a Likert-type scale capturing the response to the following question 'how much do you support the use of gender quotas for national elections?'[8] For the LECS, this is measured on an eleven-point scale (from 0 [strongly oppose] to 10 [strongly support]); while, the PAE uses an eight-point scale.

The key independent variables are gender and identification as a feminist. The former takes value 1 if the respondent is female and 0 otherwise, while the latter takes value 1 if the respondent identifies as either a feminist or a strong feminist and 0 otherwise[9]. Since other factors were expected to matter for determining level of support for candidate gender quotas, additional

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[7] With respect to the local election candidates, it should be noted that experience at local government has long represented a path to national office in Ireland. At the 1992 general election, only 9.6 percent of TDs had never had local government experience (Gallagher, 1993), while at the 2011 general election fully 128 of non-incumbent party candidates were local councillors (Reidy, 2011).

[8] Respondents were informed that candidate gender quotas will be introduced in Ireland at the next general election. This statement was included in order to provide context for survey participants.

[9] The non-feminist group also represents two categories that have been collapsed ('not a feminist' and 'anti-feminist). Categories were collapsed in order to facilitate interpretation of the results. Employing the full scale of this variable did not alter the regression results.

variables were included in both sets of models. Since position on the political spectrum is expected to matter for the extent to which candidates are prepared to support legislative measures to address women's underrepresentation, a left-right self-placement variable was included. This was measured on an eleven-point scale from 0 (left) to 10 (right). It was anticipated that those on the left would be more likely to be in favour of the measure, while those on the right should be more likely to oppose it[10].

It was also expected that respondents' beliefs about the causes of women's underrepresentation in political life should matter for level of support for the gender quota. To reiterate, where respondents attribute their absence to structural factors that are beyond the control of women, they should be more likely to support the quota measure. Where they attribute it to women's failure to put themselves forward, they should be less likely to support it. Three variables, all measured on a five-point Likert scale, are included to capture beliefs about why underrepresentation arises. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: 1) 'not enough women come forward to be considered as candidates' 2) 'most candidate prefer male voters' and 3) 'women are not given fair opportunities by parties'. Respondents who attribute women's absence to their failure to put themselves forward should be less likely to support quotas (statement 1), while those who attribute it to voter or party bias (statements 2 and 3) should be more inclined to do so.

LECS-specific variables

For the local election candidates, additional factors were expected to matter for level of support. Level of political experience might be expected to impact candidates' evaluations of the measure. Those who have more political experience might see the quotas as a threat to the status quo and thus be less likely to support them, while those with little or no political experience might be more positive about them. Variables capturing previous candidacy (taking value 1 if the individual has previously run for elected office at any level and value 0 otherwise) and incumbency (where value 1 indicates an incumbent) were therefore included.

Also expected to matter for support of the gender quota is the type of candidate. Since the gender quota will affect those who stand as candidates for political parties only, we might expect support for them to differ along party/non-party lines. One model includes a party candidate dummy (taking

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[10] Dubrow's (2010) paper highlighted the importance of religious ideology in predicting party support for gender quotas. Early models (not presented here) included a variable capturing religiosity, measured as the frequency of attendance at religious services. Religiosity did not prove to be significant and has therefore been omitted in the final models.

value 1 if the candidate is standing for a political party, and value 0 if the candidate is an independent), while a second model includes the following party categories in the place of the dummy: Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Labour, Sinn Féin, other party[11] (including the Green Party, the United Left Alliance, and People Before Profit), and non-party. This latter model is included in the analysis since, as has been noted in the brief review above of the literature, attitudes towards quotas should differ across parties.

PAE-specific variables

Level of political engagement is expected to influence views on legislative measures in general. Respondents who follow politics more closely may have stronger views on the measure since they are more likely to be aware of what exactly the measure is and also the debate surrounding the issue. Respondents were asked 'how closely do you follow national politics?' and responses were measured on a four-point scale from 1 (not closely) to 4 (very closely).

In a similar vein, interest in holding public office in the future is expected to matter for attitudes towards the gender quota. Those who are open to holding any form of political office in the future may have systematically different attitudes towards the quota measure than those who are not. Party candidates may directly benefit from it (if they are women), or have difficulty obtaining a candidacy (if they are party men). Independent candidates might be indirectly affected by it (for female independents, the presence of more women on the campaign trail may negatively impact them since they are no longer more visible due to their low numbers, or it might impact the campaign environment in some way). A variable capturing level of interest in holding office has therefore been included. Respondents were asked 'how would you characterize your interest in holding public office in the future?' Those who had no interest were coded with a value of 0, while those who indicated that they were open to the possibility of running for office or were actively considering it were given a value of 1.

Finally, propensity to vote scores were included. As has previously been stated, for the local candidate dataset membership of particular parties should impact attitudes towards the gender quota. For the professionals dataset, propensity to vote for particular parties should matter also. Supporters of smaller and more left-wing parties (notably Labour and Sinn Féin) should feel more positively towards the quota measure, since such parties have historically had higher levels of female representation and been more likely to support measures to address gender imbalances.

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[11] Due to the low number of respondents from several of the smaller parties, these parties were grouped together for the purposes of the regression analysis.

Supporters of right-wing parties that tend to be dominated by men should be less likely to recognise that women's underrepresentation is an issue and, where they do recognise it, should be unlikely to favour affirmative action measures to address the problem. We therefore expect supporters of Fianna Fáil in particular to have lower levels of support for the measure[12]. The scores were calculated by asking respondents to indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 how probable it is that they would vote for a particular party at the next election. This value was then divided by ten in order to create propensity scores between 0 and 1.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Fig. 1. Party composition of LECS data
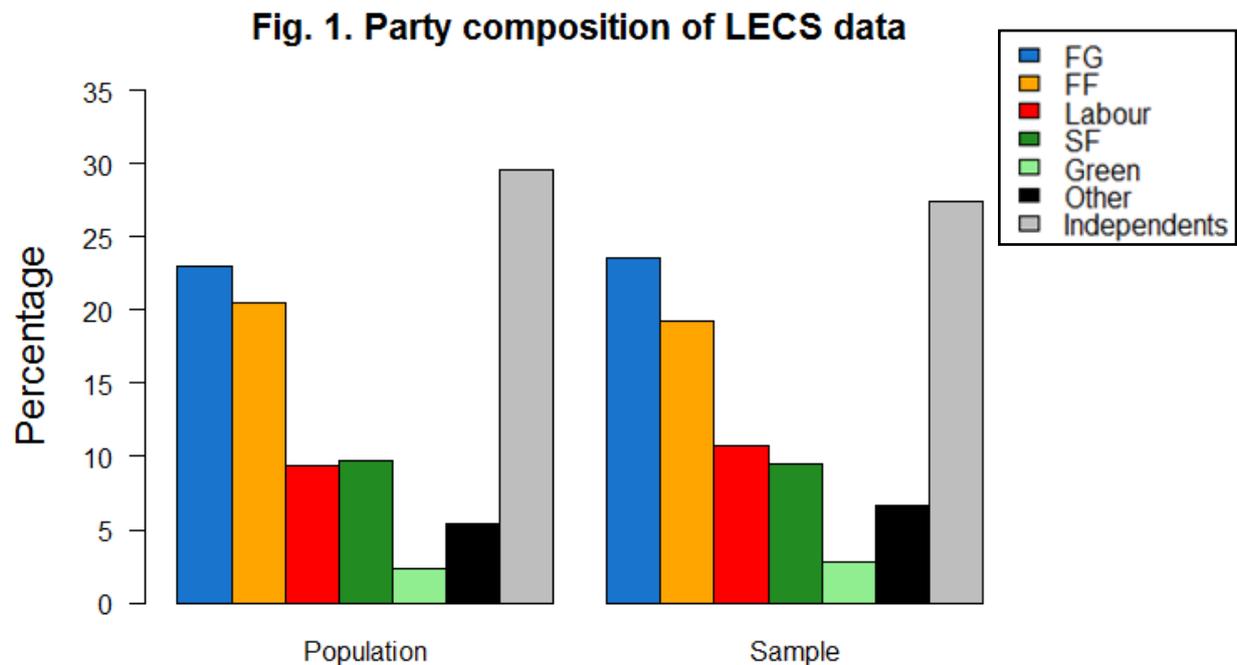
Although the entire population[13] of local election candidates received a questionnaire, only 810 usable responses were returned to the research team, giving a response rate of 40.36 percent. The

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[12] Obviously, the legislation was introduced under a Fine Gael-Labour coalition government, so we may not see a similarly impact for propensity to vote for Fine Gael, since those likely to vote Fine Gael should be broadly satisfied with the party's policy agenda.

[13] 2022 candidates were on the ballot paper at the 2014 local election. Two dropped out before the election but after each ward had completed its notice of poll and 13 of the candidates' addresses could not be retrieved. In total, 2007 questionnaires were sent out.

composition of the sample in terms of the respondents by party is very close to that of the population (see Fig. 1 above[14]). Similarly, we find that while 21.76 percent of total candidates were women, they made up 23.09 percent of respondents in our sample. We are reasonably satisfied therefore that the sample obtained closely approximates the population from which it was drawn.

With respect to the sample of professionals, 2500 questionnaires were sent to individuals in a variety of occupations in the summer of 2013[15]. 732 usable responses were returned to the research team, yielding a lower response rate of 29.28 percent. Of those who responded, 45.22 percent were women, a high figure which is unsurprising when we consider that a third of respondents were located in the education sector which tends to be dominated by women. Table 1 below provides the full breakdown of respondents by sector.

Table 1. Occupational composition of the PAE

Business	19.54%
Politics	0.82%
Education	33.61%
Law	21.86%
Health	10.52%
Other	12.16%

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the distribution of the dependent variable, that is, support for the gender quota, for the LECS and PAE samples respectively. We can see that there is substantial variation in the local election candidate sample, with the vast majority of respondents having very strong feelings about it (most respondents report strongly opposing or strongly supporting it). The professional sample also exhibits a range of attitudes towards the quota, though these are more evenly spread across the categories than in the LECS sample. This is probably an artefact of the smaller scale being used or it may be that attitudes towards the quota have crystallized at the extremities as the date for its implementation approaches. The regression analysis below seeks to explain this variation.

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[14] For the purposes of the regression analysis, the Green Party was coded into the 'other party' category, though it is represented in Fig. 1 for the purposes of comparing the LECS sample and population composition.
[15] The previous section on the data provides greater detail as to the occupational composition.

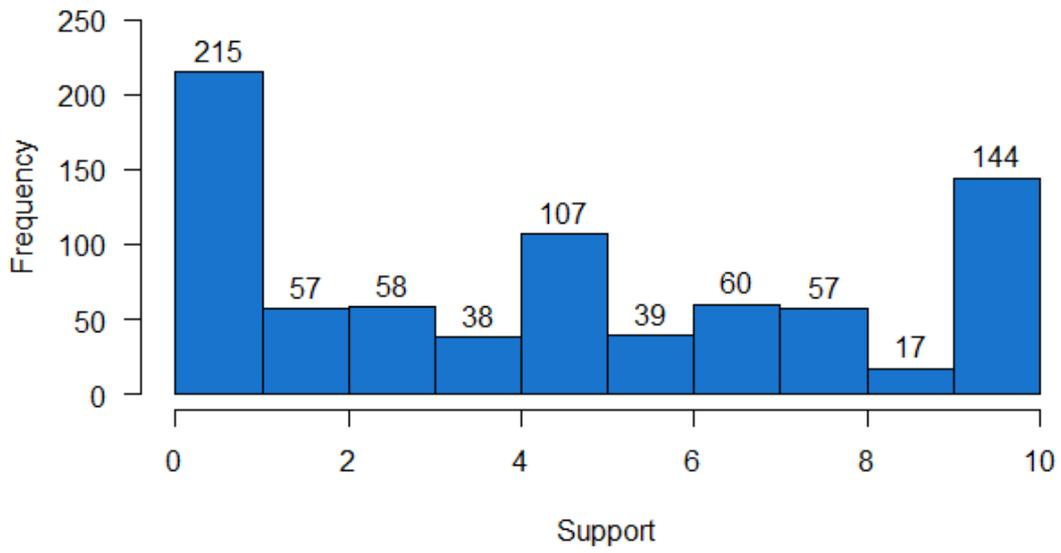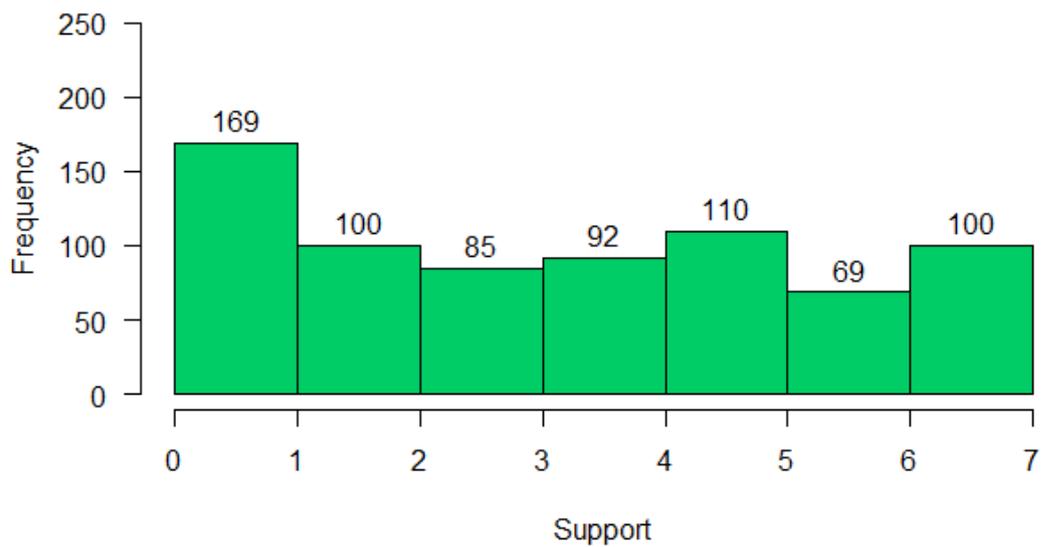# Fig. 2. Support for gender quota in LECS sample

Fig. 3. Support for gender quota in PAE sample

Regression analysis

The hypotheses stated above were tested using a series of ordered logit regression models. Table 2 provides the results from the local election candidate sample, and Table 3 presents the results from the professionals sample.

All four models lend support to Hypothesis 1: being a woman increases the probability of supporting the gender quota in both samples. Similarly, Hypothesis 2 is supported by all four of the models: identifying as a feminist increases support for the gender quota[16].

Hypothesis 3 receives only partial support. Across all four models there is clear support for Hypothesis 3c: where members of the eligibility pool attribute women's absence from politics to the lack of opportunities created for them by political parties, they are more likely to support the gender quota. With respect to our second hypothesis relating to structural barriers to women's entry into politics, Hypothesis 3b, we obtain no significant coefficients. It is worth noting, however, that the coefficients are not in the expected direction. Instead, we find that a belief that voters prefer male candidates is negatively related to support for the gender quota. Hypothesis 3a is not supported by these results. For the LECS sample, the coefficients are in the expected direction (negative) but they are not statistically significant. For the PAE sample, by contrast, the coefficients in Models 3 and 4 are statistically significant, at the 0.001 and 0.01 percent levels respectively, but in the opposite direction. Here, a belief that not enough women put themselves forward to be considered as candidates is *positively* associated with support for the gender quota. This result is somewhat puzzling since we had anticipated that blaming women for their absence from Irish politics would mean that respondents were less inclined to support measures targeted at facilitating their entry into political life. One possible explanation for this unexpected result may be that this question does not actually measure blaming women themselves for their underrepresentation as cleanly as the research team had anticipated. It is possible, for example, that individuals in the PAE sample believe not only that not enough women come forward but also that the reason that they will not come forward is due to a host of factors over which they have no control (traditional causes cited in the literature are unequal distribution of labour in the household, a lack of support network and other resources etc.). Support for a gender quota in such a circumstance is not counterintuitive. Of course, the limitation of the survey instrument is that we cannot know how respondents interpreted the question, and our attempt to make sense of this unexpected result can rely on speculation only.

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[16] Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix report the associated changes in the probabilities of a given level of support for the gender quota when the value for selected variables (those that achieve significance in the regression models) changes from the minimum to the maximum, everything else held constant.

Table 2. LECS sample - predictors of support for gender quota

	Model 1	Model 2
Female	0.85***	0.81***
	(0.19)	(0.18)
LR self-placement	-0.05	
	(0.03)	
Party candidate	0.45*	
	(0.18)	
Previous candidate	0.24	0.23
	(0.17)	(0.17)
Incumbent	-0.06	-0.13
	(0.18)	(0.18)
Feminist	1.09***	1.10***
	(0.16)	(0.16)
Women don't come forward	-0.14	-0.13
	(0.08)	(0.08)
Voters prefer men	-0.13	-0.09
	(0.08)	(0.07)
No opportunities from parties	0.49***	0.49***
	(0.07)	(0.07)
FF		-0.31
		(0.22)
Labour		0.38
		(0.25)
SF		0.46
		(0.27)
Other party		-0.04
		(0.29)
Independents		-0.40
		(0.22)
AIC	2456.74	2602.18
BIC	2540.40	2700.34
Log Likelihood	-1209.37	-1279.09
Deviance	2418.74	2558.18
Num. obs.	604	640

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$

Table 3. Professionals sample – predictors of support for gender quota

	Model 3	Model 4
Female	0.45**	0.51**
	(0.16)	(0.17)
LR self-placement	-0.16***	
	(0.04)	
Interest in office	0.04	0.14
	(0.14)	(0.15)
Feminist	0.62***	0.50**
	(0.17)	(0.17)
Women don't come forward	0.31***	0.31**
	(0.09)	(0.10)
Voters prefer men	-0.12	-0.10
	(0.07)	(0.08)
No opportunities from parties	0.91***	0.86***
	(0.08)	(0.09)
Political engagement	-0.11	-0.09
	(0.08)	(0.09)
Vote FG		-0.16
		(0.27)
Vote FF		-0.73**
		(0.24)
Vote Labour		0.76**
		(0.29)
Vote Sinn Féin		0.86*
		(0.38)
Vote Green		0.42
		(0.26)
Vote Independents		-0.21
		(0.27)
Vote ULA		0.26
		(0.41)
AIC	2448.43	2300.48
BIC	2516.10	2393.88
Log Likelihood	-1209.21	-1129.24
Deviance	2418.43	2258.48
Num. obs.	673	631

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Controls

With respect to the local election sample, incumbency and prior political experience were not significant predictors of support for the gender quota. However, being a party candidate was found to matter in Model 1. Holding everything else constant, moving from being an independent to a party candidate was found to increase the probability of supporting the gender quota by an average of 20.4 percent. For the PAE sample, neither interest in holding office nor level of political engagement was found to be significantly related to support.

Some interesting results emerge when we consider partisan effects. Left-right self-placement was found to be negatively related to support for the gender quota in both Models 1 and 3, as expected. However, only the coefficient for the PAE model was statistically significant: for this group, as individuals move from the left to the right of the political spectrum, support for the gender quota falls. We find similar results for the models containing party identification and the propensity to vote scores. Though none of the coefficients in the candidate model are significant, they are, broadly speaking, in the expected direction: Labour and Sinn Féin exhibit positive coefficients, while the Fianna Fáil coefficient is negative. For the professional sample, three of the propensity to vote scores achieved significance. Indicating that they were likely to vote for the Labour party or Sinn Féin at the next election was associated with higher levels of support for the gender quota, while reporting a higher propensity to vote for Fianna Fáil was associated with a reduction in support.

Conclusion

Overwhelmingly, we find that support for the imminent gender quota is low. The cross-tabulations of the dependent variables alone show that the vast majority of respondents either oppose the introduction of the quota or report having very low levels of support for it. The regression analysis tells us that the key predictors identified by the literature on the topic, gender and being a supporter of a party on the left of the political spectrum, are found to matter here too. Identification as a feminist and a belief that women's underrepresentation in politics arises due to a lack of opportunities created for them by political parties are also consistently found to matter. What this means is that gender quotas in Ireland appear to garner support only from the usual suspects, that is those individuals that we would expect to support this type of affirmative action policy either because they should directly benefit from it (women) or because it is consistent with their beliefs (feminists, and those who vote for parties of the Left). It is particularly noteworthy that we find that

supporters of the main opposition party, and one of the largest political parties, Fianna Fáil, tend to oppose the measure.

There does not appear to be broad consensus among the eligibility pool that men's overrepresentation in Irish political life is something that can be effectively addressed by the imposition of a legislative quota. The individuals most likely to run for a seat on the Dáil, and therefore those most likely to be affected by the quota in the future, appear to be largely unconvinced by the measure. We do not yet know whether the implementation of this policy will result in the depression of political ambition among these groups in the way that Davidson-Schmich (2008) concludes it does in her data from the German eligibility pool.

We conclude by noting that while support for the measure is currently low among these individuals, there is no reason why it should remain so after implementation. It may be that the vast majority of individuals are sceptical before the quotas are enacted but that their successful enforcement (and the attendant increase in the proportion of women elected to Dáil Éireann) at the next general election will cause a reevaluation of attitudes relating to affirmative action strategies in general and this policy in particular. Bhavnani's (2009) analysis of electoral data in India finds that the effects of reserving seats for women in local Indian legislatures persist even after the quotas are withdrawn: parties continue to put women on the ticket, and voters who were initially reluctant to cast their vote for a woman become more likely to vote for them. Effectively that paper demonstrates that the implementation of a quota for even a brief period of time can have lasting effects on the attitudes of political parties and voters. It remains to be seen whether the same will be true of the Irish case.

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Appendix

Table A1. Change in probabilities of being in each category (LECS sample – Model 1)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Female: 0→1	-0.10	-0.03	-0.04	-0.02	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.12
Feminist: 0→1	-0.15	-0.03	-0.04	-0.03	-0.01	0.01	0.02	0.05	0.05	0.01	0.13
Party candidate: 0→1	-0.07	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	-0.00	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.05
No opportunities (min. to max.)	-0.26	-0.05	-0.07	-0.04	-0.02	0.00	0.02	0.06	0.08	0.02	0.25

Table A2. Change in probabilities of being in each category (PAE sample – Models 3 & 4)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Female: 0→1	-0.41	-0.18	-0.37	-0.15	0.01	0.39	0.03	0.33
Feminist: 0→1	-0.06	-0.02	-0.05	-0.02	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.05
LR self-placement (min. to max.)	0.16	0.06	0.12	0.5	-0.02	-0.13	-0.11	-0.12
No opp. from parties (min. to max.)	-0.43	-0.11	-0.15	-0.03	0.05	0.19	0.19	0.29
Vote FF (min. to max.)	0.07	0.03	0.06	0.02	-0.02	-0.07	-0.04	-0.5
Vote Labour (min. to max.)	-0.07	-0.03	-0.06	-0.2	0.02	0.07	0.05	0.05
Vote SF (min. to max.)	-0.06	-0.03	-0.07	-0.04	-0.00	0.07	0.06	0.08