

Does the entry of a woman into political office affect policy choices?

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While still far from parity, worldwide female representation in politics has substantially increased over the last two decades. We analyze whether this rise in female representation has substantive consequences for policy choices using the example of child care – a public good arguably valued by women. We hand-collect micro-data for roughly 220,000 candidates running in local council elections in 2002, 2008 and 2014 in more than 1600 municipalities in the German state of Bavaria. In this setting of open-list elections, we run RDD regressions centered around mixed-gender races for the last council seat that accrues to a party. We find that a female victory in a mixed-gender race accelerates the expansion of public child care provision. Our main strategy to explore mechanisms uses information contained in the hand-collected and carefully coded official minutes of monthly council meetings. We find that an additional woman in the council induces all female councilors to be more assertive and to speak up more often in council meetings.