The Unequal Representation of Social Groups in Democracies

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1. How well are the preferences of different social groups represented by political elites in democracies?

2. Are members of social groups better represented by in-group politicians?

Lots of prior work related to these questions.

- Preferences of less affluent, less educated, female citizens under-represented by politicians overall.
  Gilens 2012, Giger et al 2012, Lupu and Warner 2022

- More in-group politicians in office $\implies$ favorable outcomes.
  Kittilson 2008, Carnes and Lupu 2015, O'Grady 2019, Alexiadou 2022

- However, within-group heterogeneity of voters *and* legislators largely overlooked.

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- Not all women in Congress are pro-choice.

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- Views on abortion in the U.S. Congress cut across party lines.

- Develop new measure of how far social groups' opinions are represented by:

    - Politicians overall?
    - In-group politicians?

- Measure accounts for within-group heterogeneity of both voters and politicians.

    - First cross-national study of descriptive representation accounting for this.
    - Closest: Hakhverdian (2015) but only education, in the Netherlands.

- (So far) we apply this approach to study the unequal representation of citizens:

    - By electoral candidates.
    - Across three cleavages: gender, education, urban-rural location.
    - Across 18 countries, 4 continents, a decade (2007-17).

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Straightforwardly calculated using survey data on citizen and elite preferences.

Empirical strategy

We employ this measure to study how well the left-right preferences of different social groups are represented by politicians.

- Data on **citizen** left-right preferences & characteristics: **Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)**.

- Data on **candidate** left-right preferences & characteristics: **Comparative Candidates Survey (CCS)**.

    - Non-response bias: post-stratify elite sample to match partisan composition of elected legislature.

        - TBC: gender, other characteristics.

- **Coverage:**

    - 37 country-years, spanning 18 countries, 4 continents, 2007–17 (more to be added).

    - 3 cleavages: gender, education, urban-rural location.

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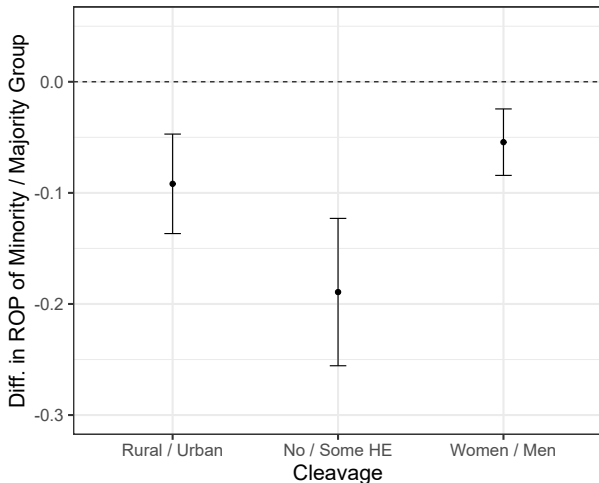
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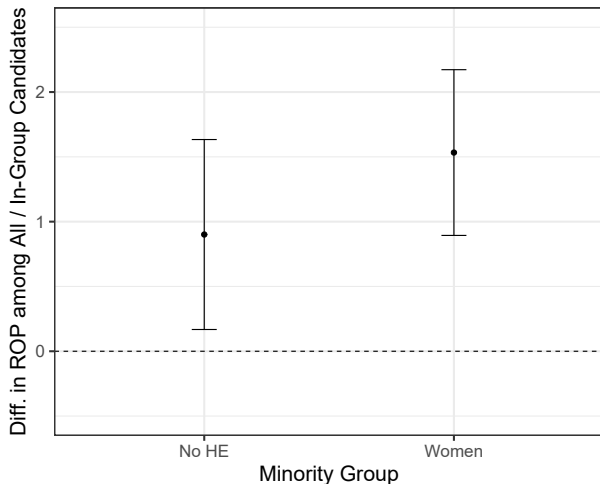
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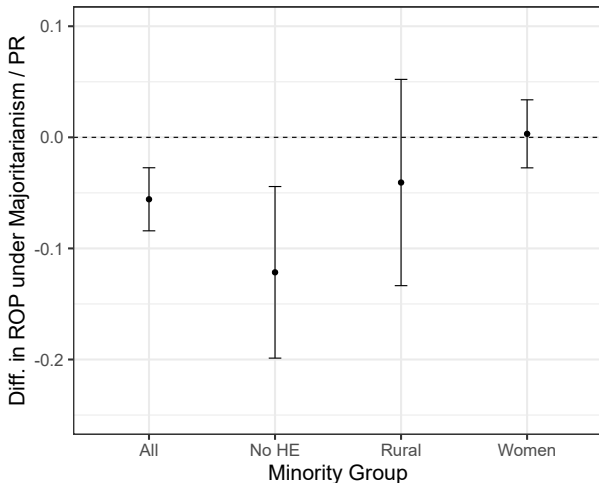# Are minorities systematically under-represented by candidates?

Note: Paired *t*-tests of H_0 : minority ROP − majority ROP = 0.

Are minorities better represented by in-group candidates?

Note: Paired t-tests of H_0 : in-group ROP − overall ROP = 0.

Note: Clustered/Welch Two-Sample t-tests of H_0 : ROP under Maj $-$ ROP under PR $= 0$.

Conclusion

- **Relative opinion presence**: a measure of how well social groups' opinions are represented by politicians.

- Allows us to study group representation by all / in-group politicians without assuming uniform preferences / interests.

- Initial findings:

    - All minorities under-represented by candidates, but esp. low education voters.

    - Minorities substantially better represented by in-group candidates.

    - Minority representation among candidates somewhat better under PR.

- TBC: more countries, cleavages; intersectional identities.

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