

Abstract for the general public

Exploring the universe of gender gaps in political participation, the project aims to uncover the intricate relationship between national progress towards gender equality, individual gender-role attitudes, and their combined impact on the gender gaps in political participation. By conducting extensive cross-national analyses and delving into political contexts, this research endeavor strives to not only shed light on the root causes of gender gaps in political engagement but also to propose actionable strategies for fostering inclusivity and empowering individuals to actively engage in politics.

The gender gaps in political participation highlight the contrasting rates and ways through which men and women participate in political activities. Studies have shown that women will likely engage in non-institutional and individual forms of political participation, while men, in contrast, engage in collective and institutional ones. For instance, women will likely sign petitions rather than vote or join strikes, while for men, the opposite is true. Disparities in the amount of available economic resources, differences in attitudes toward gender roles, and variations in gender equality at the national level are the three main reasons for gender gaps.

Although this topic frequently captures the attention of researchers, the current body of literature exhibits some serious flaws that require addressing. Firstly, limited investigation exists into gender gaps in different forms of political participation, such as voting, signing petitions, and participating in strikes. Moreover, insufficient exploration has occurred regarding how national-level gender equality and individual gender-role attitudes influence these gaps. The complex relationship between gender-role attitudes and gender equality has not been thoroughly examined either. Additionally, the prevailing approach to gender-role attitudes remains unidimensional. Lastly, a more comprehensive index is necessary to encompass the dimensions of gender equality relevant to Europe.

As we delve into this project, three key research questions guide us: How do gender-role attitudes and gender equality impact the gender gaps in various forms of political participation? Do they interact? If they interact, in what ways? Based on these research questions, we can develop three sets of working hypotheses that aim to explore the impact of gender equality, gender-role attitudes, and their interplay on the gender gaps observed in different forms of political participation.

The study combines cross-sectional data from the European Values Study, the European Social Survey, and administrative sources, spanning multiple years from 1999 to 2021, painting a comprehensive picture of gendered political engagement. In total, my research covers 35 countries, primarily the European Union and the European Economic Area, with a micro-level sample of around 200,000 respondents. Employing advanced statistical techniques this study meticulously dissects the data.

Going beyond merely documenting the “state of art,” the project aims to fill gaps in the existing literature by providing new theories, analytical tools, and empirical resources in political science and sociology. In terms of theory, this research aims to achieve several goals. Firstly, it seeks to provide a clearer understanding of gender-role attitudes and gender equality. Secondly, it aims to develop theoretical frameworks that explore how various clusters of gender-role attitudes are connected to gender gaps in different forms of political participation. Lastly, it aims to establish theories that explain the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between gender-role attitudes and gender equality at the country level. While previous studies have tackled these issues, there are still a few theoretical unresolved discrepancies. In terms of methodology, this project aims to make several improvements. Firstly, it will enhance the way gender-role attitudes are measured by considering their multidimensional nature. Secondly, it will develop measures of gender equality at the country level, considering the distinction between status (politico-cultural) and class (socio-economic) inequalities as well as the difference between doctrinal and non-doctrinal policies. Thirdly, it will enhance cross-national quantitative research by combining qualitative administrative data with quantitative data, thus improving method triangulation. Lastly, it will advance the methodology of studying reciprocal and dynamic relationships using cross-sectional data.

The results will have a clear impact on the research field, scientific discipline, and society due to their theoretical contributions, methodological innovations, interdisciplinary connections, and practical significance. Through international workshops and engaging audio-visual content, the ripple effect of this research will not be confined to academic circles; it will echo in society. In a world where understanding and navigating gender gaps is still relevant, this project stands at the forefront, unraveling the mysteries of gender gaps in political participation.