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Gender bias in candidate turnover: a longitudinal analysis of legislative elections in Flanders/Belgium (1987-2019)

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Abstract

A higher candidate turnover among women may be one of the reasons why quota rules seldom succeed in attaining full legislative parity. This proposition is tested on the basis of a longitudinal analysis of 11.678 candidates for legislative elections during the period 1987-2019 in the Flemish region of Belgium. It is shown that male candidates have shorter careers than women, contrary to expectations. The duration of the career as a candidate depends on the electoral performance, but only for men. In the long run, the introduction of a strict quota rule prolongs the candidate careers of both men and women, but the effect for women is much stronger. This finding contradicts the allegation that quotas lead to an influx of unmotivated women candidates with a high turnover.

Key words: Candidate turnover, candidate selection, gender quotas, Belgium, list PR systems

Word count (online supplemental material excluded, title page included): 8407

1. Introduction

This article investigates the impact of gender on individual career trajectories as electoral candidate. It compares candidate turnover (career termination at the candidate level) between men and women. The basic assumption is that an unequal turnover might be one of the reasons why full equality in gender representation is often not accomplished, even after the introduction of strict quotas (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2005; Krook, 2010; Krook and Norris, 2014; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995).

The degree of political turnover can be considered a longstanding concern in representative democracies. While a number of scholars have focused on the career paths and turnover of MPs (e.g. Matland and Studlar, 2004; Marino et al., 2018; Gouglas et al., 2017) and members of the executive branch (e.g. Blondel, 1985), the issue of turnover at the electoral candidate level has largely been neglected. Only recently, some research efforts have been made to analyze the turnover of parliamentary candidates. Put et al.(2015) look at the selection of viable candidates for the elections of the Belgian lower chamber between 1999 and 2010 and they examine the effects of candidate selection on intra-party incumbency turnover. Moreover, Golden and Picci (2015) apply a regression discontinuity design to elucidate incumbency effects – both with regard to reselection as to re-election – in the List PR system of the Italian Chamber of Deputies between 1948 and 1992.

This limited attention for candidate turnover is surprising, since candidate turnover levels can be used as a measure for the degree of party change or stability (Barnea and Rahat, 2011), the permeability of political systems and parties for new and inexperienced candidates, or the level of intraparty competition between candidates (Hazan and Rahat, 2010).

All these issues also have a gender dimension. Higher turnover amongst women candidates may be one of the factors impeding equal woman representation in parliament (Luhiste, 2015).

Perhaps women who are selected by the party to comply with quota requirements are more inclined to give up after a few tries, while male candidates persist and gradually build up political capital. To the extent that quotas increase unequal candidate turnover across gender, they may unwillingly hamper equal representation, as the constantly renewed and inexperienced women will be no match for men who are seasoned electoral candidates.

Matters could even be worse if the electoral capital built up through elections is valued unequally across gender (Mazur et al., 2020: 28). On the basis of previous research (André et al, 2017) it can be expected that candidates who perform strongly in electoral terms will be re-selected time and again by the party, and hence survive longer as a candidate. But the question is whether women candidates are equally rewarded for their electoral performance as men by potentially gender-biased party selectorates.

In order to capture the dynamics of candidate turnover in general, and its relationship with gender in particular, it is crucial to conduct a longitudinal analysis. We need to have information about the long-term trajectories of candidates. As Franceschet et al. (2012) put it, the true impact of quotas on women's political representation and emancipation needs multiple election cycles to be felt. Earlier longitudinal research has identified changing patterns in candidate nominations over time (Fortin-Rittberger and Eder, 2013; Wauters et al., 2014). Our contribution adds to this developing literature by applying a longitudinal in-depth perspective on the flexible-list PR system of Belgium.

In sum, we will apply a longitudinal analysis to investigate (1) whether candidate turnover is higher for women than for men, (2) how electoral success affects the duration of a career as a candidate across gender and (3) how the introduction of quotas impacts this duration across gender. In order to answer these questions, we make use of an original and longitudinal dataset on the selectoral careers of 11,678 individual candidates in the Flemish region of Belgium, in all legislative elections from 1987 to 2019. We measure how many elections it takes before a

candidate never returns on an electoral list. We apply survival analysis to these data, with a candidates' selectoral life being defined by the election years of the first and last recorded candidacy. We test whether the introduction of obligatory gender parity on lists had a significant effect on the survival of the candidates, both in the short and the long run. We also test the impact of electoral success on candidate survival, and its interaction with gender.

The results show that men actually have a higher risk of career termination than women. Career duration depends on electoral performance, but only for men. The introduction of quotas decreases the risk of career termination for male candidates both in the short and long term. For women, the positive long term effect of quotas on the duration of the career is much stronger than for men, but in the short run quotas increase the risk at career termination.

2. Theory and hypotheses

The diffusion of electoral gender quotas has led to historical leaps in women's legislative representation in several countries worldwide (Krook, 2010; Murray, 2004; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009). At the same time, empirical research also reveals that quotas do not always constitute a sufficient condition to ensure high levels of women in parliament. A complex pattern of barriers moderates the effects of electoral gender quota systems (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2005, Matland, 2006; Meserve et al., 2018). One of the factors which may interfere with the effect of quotas is unequal candidate turnover.

In proportional representation systems, it is normal that only a small fraction of the candidates selected by the party actually obtains a seat. It can be argued that persistent candidates stand a better chance of winning this prize, than those who give it one or only a few shots (André et al., 2017). Running time and again allows a politician to gradually develop a campaign and fundraising network, and build up electoral capital. Candidates may eventually be rewarded for

their electoral success, or even for their mere loyalty to the party, with a realistic position on the list. The persistent candidate will also be able to give the selectorate a push in that direction, thanks to the profound knowledge of the intra-party selection process acquired over time (Carson and Roberts, 2005; Hobolt and Hoyland 2011; Jacobson 1989; Jacobson and Kernell 1983). If turnover is higher amongst women than amongst men, this will inevitably function as a brake on the election of women.

Why would candidate turnover be higher amongst women? It is useful to distinguish between supply-side and demand-side effects on candidate turnover. The *supply-side* refers to the group of aspirant-candidates willing to pursue political office, driven by their motivation and political capital. A higher turnover amongst women may be a supply-side problem, in the sense that women are less motivated than men to continue in the electoral race for a long span of time. This may force parties to seek new women candidates at every election. Such a supply-side explanation finds some support in studies showing that qualified women in general exhibit less political ambition than men (e.g. Allen and Cutts, 2020). Apart from the suggested differences in motivation, other explanations for a gender gap in candidate supply are provided in recent studies. Based on an experimental design, Kanthak and Woon (2015) find evidence that women are more averse to competitive electoral settings than men. In line with this finding, Preece and Stoddard (2015) use a field experiment to show that women are dissuaded from running for office when they are confronted with the competitive nature of the electoral process. In addition to competitiveness, Coffé and Bolzendahl (2017) bring evidence that women are less comfortable with interpersonal conflict, which is typically associated with political careers. A recent study by Dahl and Nyrup (2021) indicates that these gendered differences already exist at the early candidate emergence stage of political careers, where women are less confident about their qualifications and chances of being elected than men. Indeed, women tend to be less convinced about their (political) capabilities, even while having similar qualifications as men

(Lawless and Fox, 2010). Women politicians also worry more about making mistakes (Erikson and Josefsson, 2019). Finally, scholars observe a gap in interest for political careers, explained by a lack of time in addition to professional and household burdens (Davidson-Schmich, 2016), or even a gender gap in political interest more generally (e.g. Coffé, 2013; Inglehart and Norris, 2005; Paxton et al., 2007; Fernandez et al., 2021).

Recent literature also suggests that supply side explanations are the logical outcome of a gendered opportunity structure favoring men (Piscopo and Kenny 2020). Applied to candidate selection, this would imply that a gender difference in turnover is essentially a demand-side problem. The demand-side defines the candidate preferences of the party gatekeepers or selectorate (Norris, 2004). Women candidates may face more obstacles in the party when they attempt to gradually strengthen their position by running time and again (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Krook, 2010; Krook and Norris, 2014). Party selectorates, which are often “old boys’ clubs” may be less appreciative towards female candidacies (Norris, 2004) and more inclined to reward strong and persistent male politicians with reselection, while disregarding a similar trajectory amongst women (Mazur et al, 2020: 28). Cheng and Tavits (2011) show that the gender composition of selectorates even affects women’s initial motivation to run for office. Women also believe that male recruits receive more strategic and financial support from party leadership (Butler and Preece, 2016). Both supply- and demand-side explanations result in a higher risk of career termination for women:

Hypothesis 1: *Male candidates will have a longer career as a candidate than women candidates.*

Apart from a general gender bias in intra-party nomination processes, selectorates might also be less inclined to reward electorally successful women with reselection than men. This implies that the effect of electoral success in previous elections on the duration of careers should be stronger for men than for women. In flexible list PR systems, we know that parties promote

candidates who are successful at winning preference votes (André et al. 2017). There are several reasons why intra-party reward structures for electoral performance are gendered mechanisms. Whereas demonstrable vote-earning capacity gives female candidates objective ammunition in convincing selectors to receive future list positions, this incentive for self-promoting behavior implicitly favors male candidates. Rudman (1998) shows that women experience backlash in the form of social and economic penalties for self-promotion as it violates gender stereotypes. Additionally, women's fear of such a backlash decreases their self-promotion abilities (Moss-Racusin and Rudman, 2010). Our data allow for a test of the hypothesis that women are rewarded less for the same electoral performance.

Hypothesis 2: Electoral success will have a stronger positive effect on career duration for men relative to women.

As concerns the impact of quotas on candidate turnover, we distinguish between a short term and a long term effect. In the short run, gender quotas will create a demand shock by forcing selectorates to nominate more women to stand for elections, replacing male candidates (Tripp and Kang 2008; Górecki and Kukołowicz, 2014). We expect this increased demand for women candidates to prolong the careers of already experienced women candidates. For male candidates, quotas will increase the risk that their career ends in the short term.

Hypothesis 3a: In the short run, the introduction of quotas will have a negative effect on career duration for male candidates, and a positive effect for women candidates.

The effect in the long run depends on the supply of women candidates. It is sometimes alleged that quotas will lead to an influx of unmotivated women, who are merely used as 'sacrificial lambs' by the party in order to meet quota requirements (Bernstein, 1986; Thomas and Bodet, 2013; Martinez i Coma and Lago, 2021). If this is correct, such 'per functionary' candidates

quickly give up on their careers and need to be replaced by the party on a constant basis, thereby increasing women turnover.

This bleak picture is based on the assumption that highly motivated and ambitious women, willing to embark on a long trajectory to legislative office, will be in short supply. However, it might also be the case that such women politicians exist in abundance, but have not been granted sufficient opportunities as candidates by male dominated selectorates prior to the introduction of quotas (e.g. Mazur et al., 2020: 28). As quota rules create an increased demand for women candidates and incentivize parties to keep women on their candidate lists, selectorates are now obligated to give women politicians the career opportunities which they were reluctant to grant before. This demand-side argument leads to the hypothesis that quotas will decrease candidate turnover amongst women and hence prolong their candidate career.

The same will arguably be the case amongst male candidates. It can be expected that particularly the unmotivated and occasional male candidates will be deselected to create room for women. Put differently, especially strong and highly motivated male candidates will be retained on the list. If this is true, the turnover amongst the remaining male candidates will decrease and candidate careers will become longer.

Hypothesis 3b: In the long run, the introduction of quotas will have a positive effect on career duration for both male and women candidates.

3. Electoral gender quotas in Belgium

In many regards, the adoption and implementation of electoral gender quotas in Belgium can be considered a success story. A first form of quotas was introduced in 1994, when a male-dominated federal parliament approved a law on the more equal distribution of list slots between men and women. More specifically, no more than two thirds of the candidates on a particular

list could be of the same sex. Although Belgium has a flexible-list proportional representation electoral system where the rank order of candidates strongly determines who gets elected, no requirements were added regarding the ranking of candidates. As a result, the effectiveness of these quotas during the first election year they were in place – i.e. the federal and regional elections of 1999 – was relatively limited: the share of women MPs only increased to 24.9% in the federal Lower House and 20.3% in the Flemish Parliament. At the time, quotas introduction as such was more important than the specific modalities. These numerical requirements were indeed a compromise that institutionalized the political status quo rather than ambitious equality targets (Maddens et al. 2014).

The breakthrough with respect to quotas came only in 2002, when a parity rule for lists was introduced. This meant that, from the 2003 election onwards, parties were obliged to nominate substantially more women on the list than before. Also, from then onwards the Belgian quota system included a placement mandate: each gender should be represented in the top three slots on each list. Since the 2007 federal elections, the placement mandate became stricter and has been pertaining to the top two positions. Lists that do not comply with these rules are rejected by the public authorities. This system has been adopted for Belgian elections at all levels (Meier, 2012).

The introduction of drastic quota rules in 2002 led to a substantial increase of the number of elected women MPs. For the Lower House, the percentage increased from 24,9% in 1999, to 34,7% in 2003 and 36,7% in 2007. Since the most recent elections in 2019, women make up 41.3% of the elected candidates. Thus, in spite of the strict parity rule for lists, perfect gender parity in parliament is still not reached.

Even so, from a Western European perspective, the Belgian quota system is relatively far-reaching as most neighboring and nearby countries do not apply electoral gender quotas for national elections. Instead, party voluntary quotas are in place (Dahlerup, 2006; Gender Quotas

Database, 2019). Within the group of countries that apply the flexible-list PR system, the Belgian quota system is the most far-reaching and more substantially intervenes in the intra-party candidate selection processes (Meier, 2012). Therefore Belgium can be considered a critical case, providing a benchmark for the future adoption and implementation of electoral gender quotas in similar electoral systems.

4. Data and methods

Our dataset includes all candidacies by 11,678 individual candidates from parliamentary elections in Flanders (Belgium) between 1987 and 2019.¹ We registered the sociographic and political characteristics of all electoral candidates of eleven Flemish political parties, running for 32 parliamentary elections organized during this period of time.² We follow all Flemish parties between 1987 to 2019, starting from the moment when they managed to obtain at least one seat in any of the investigated assemblies. In this way, 11 parties are included. Table A in the Online Supplemental Material gives an overview of the political parties and election years included in the analysis.

We apply a survival analysis with discrete survival time. For our longitudinal approach, the data are structured in a long format. Even though individual candidates are the unit of analysis, as they are followed over time – over which candidate-level covariates (e.g. age) can vary – several records for each candidate are created. More specifically a record is added for each

¹ Belgium has a largely split party system, with Flemish parties competing in the north of the country, and Francophone parties competing in the south. We only have data on candidates running for the Flemish parties.

² We do not include the 1989 election for the Parliament of the Brussels Capital Region, as this regional election took place before the fourth state reform (1993), which turned Belgium into a full-fledged federal state with directly elected regional assemblies. All regional elections involving Flemish parties after this state reform are included in the analysis.

change in at least one of the relevant variables (Hox et al., 2018, p. 155). The dependent variable is the number of election years until the candidate runs for the last time. We thus calculate the number of election years from the election year of the first candidacy for that candidate to the election year when the candidate runs for the last time. This period can be considered a candidate's selectoral life with the event of selectoral 'death' being career termination. Again referring to the overview of elections in Table 1, if a candidate started her selectoral career in 1995 and ended in 2003, time to event is three.

Determining a candidate's selectoral survival time based on election years instead of parliamentary elections has important implications in our research design as Belgium has organized multiple concurrent elections (see Table 1). This means that MPs for several government levels were elected on the same election day.³ Therefore, each time a candidate runs for several parliaments simultaneously and on the same day, we withheld the 'most important' of those candidacies. The hierarchical structure to compare the importance of candidacies is the following: 1) candidacies from realistic list positions are chosen over those from unrealistic positions⁴; 2) Candidacies as effective candidate are prioritized over successor

³ Before 2014 candidates were legally allowed to simultaneously run for several parliaments on the same election day. Additionally double candidacies are also possible if candidates run simultaneously as an effective and a successor candidate.

⁴ The starting point for our operationalization of realistic list positions is the number of seats for the party list in the previous election (P). Apart from the first P positions, the final list position is also considered realistic as these are traditionally assigned to prominent and senior politicians which are frequently able to reach the vote threshold by themselves. The first successor candidate is also considered realistic. Moreover, if a party list is competing in the largest districts ($M \geq 10$) or had a large party magnitude in the previous election ($P \geq 5$), one additional realistic position is added after the first P positions. If both these conditions are met, two additional realistic positions and the second successor are added.

candidacies⁵; 3) higher ranks on the list are preferred; 4) candidacies in federal elections are prioritized over regional and European elections.

It can also happen that a candidate ‘skips’ one (or more) election year(s) without electoral career termination. Such an absence from candidate lists in a given election year should not automatically be considered as career termination. To handle uncertainty concerning career termination we apply right censoring when the last recorded election year is after 2007. This cut-off point is motivated by the observation that if one is to plot the number of returning candidates after one, two, ..., (maximal) nine election years without candidacy, a clear nod can be noticed at four ‘in-between’ election years. In fact, only 0.67% of the candidates who have not run for four consecutive election years return on future candidate lists and therefore we interpret four election years without candidacy as career termination.

In order to calculate time-to-event correctly, we need a clear career starting point in addition to pinpointing the event of career termination. Therefore we exclusively focus on first time candidates. To designate first-timers during the first elections under consideration (i.e. from 1987 onwards), we also checked the party lists of the four earlier 1977, 1978, 1985 and 1981 elections.

Concerning the modelling strategy, we follow Hox et al. (2018) to estimate hazard ratios with discrete time operationalization. Applying a discretized time scale boils down to using multiple consecutive coarse time intervals, such as years. At the end of each interval (i.e. election year) it is registered whether or not the candidate has run for election. We run generalized linear regression models with logit link function and binomial error distribution to analyze discrete

⁵ Successors are candidates that need to replace elected MPs when they become minister in the government or when they give up their seat for other reasons (e.g. retirement, death, scandals). In all parliamentary elections in Belgium, separate lists of successor candidates are presented to voters.

survival times. Based on a sequential likelihood ratio test, we smoothed the discrete baseline hazard function by using a cubic polynomial of time. In this way we were able to reduce the number of parameters without deteriorating model fit. As all variables in the research design are situated at the candidate level, we opt to include party fixed effects to control for between-party variation.

To test H1 we include a dummy variable for gender (0: women; 1: male). Building on André et al. (2017), electoral strength (Hypothesis 2a) is operationalized by using the relative rank difference. This measure compares the rank of each candidate in terms of preference votes to the rank in terms of list position. For example, if a candidate on the fourth list position would be the third candidate after sorting in descending order in terms of preference votes, the rank difference score would be +1. As the number of list positions is not constant over time and over the different electoral districts, we express rank difference relative to respective list size. In the Belgian electoral context of strong cross-sectional variation in district magnitude, the presence of electoral alliances and district reforms, relative rank difference is a more suitable indicator to gauge electoral strength than the more straightforward raw numbers or proportion of preference votes. A potential disadvantage of using relative rank difference as indicator is that it amalgamates the effects of list position and vote-earning capacity. Especially in a flexible list PR setting where the rank order of candidates has a strong impact on candidate electability, these two variables may yield different effects on candidate turnover. Using proportions of preference votes has, however, considerable shortcomings as well. This variable is typically highly skewed to the right with a limited group of top candidates receiving extremely high shares, which are at the same time placed in the highest list positions. Nevertheless, we also present the results using these alternative specifications in the Online Supplemental Material.

In order to test H2, we also include an interaction of the relative rank difference variable with gender. With regard to H3a and H3b, a dummy variable indicating the introduction of 50-50

quota legislation is incorporated in the model and allowed to interact with gender. As argued above, the introduction of 50-50 quotas was the crucial measure which boosted woman representation on the lists. We also apply a more detailed scheme that distinguishes between immediate 50-50 quotas implementation (i.e. the first federal and regional election with a parity rule) and the period afterwards to account for short term and long term quota effects. The period without quota is the reference category.

We control a number of covariates associated with candidate selection dynamics. Meserve et al. (2018) show that gender bias in candidate selection for the European elections is largely a matter of incumbency bias, as there are more male than women incumbents. Also, parties prefer to reselect candidates with a local mandate (Put and Maddens, 2013), amongst whom men are also overrepresented. As we follow candidates throughout time we also account for their age. Therefore we include two dummies and one continuous variable: incumbency status (1: incumbent; 0: no incumbent), the candidate's local office status (1: local office; 0: no local office) and age (grand mean centered).

5. Analysis

To begin with, we calculate a number of descriptive statistics about candidate careers and potential gender differences. An average career as a candidate lasts 1.895 elections; while male candidates run on average 1.913 times, against 1.873 times for women. More descriptive statistics are provided in the online Supplemental Material. While these first results appear to support H1, a detailed comparison of survival functions leads to different conclusions. Figure 2 plots the Kaplan-Meier survival function across gender. This non-parametric approach that accounts for right-censoring suggests that the risk of career termination is higher for men than

for women (i.e. the curve for women does not drop as fast as the men curve), although the difference seems to fade away over time.

Figure 2: Survival plot across gender

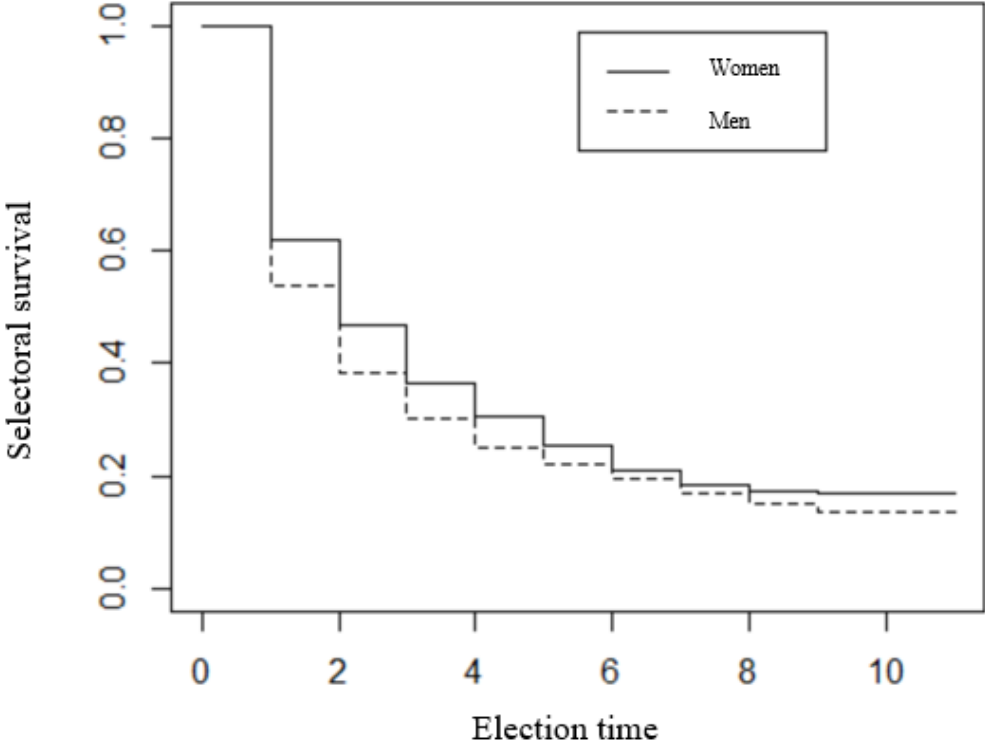


Table 2 summarizes the results of the survival analyses with dichotomous quotas operationalization (50-50 quotas or not). Three models are shown. Model 1 includes all variables without interactions, which allows to test H1 and H2a. Model 2 incorporates the interaction between gender and quotas which we use to test H2a and H3b (for H3a see below). Model 3 additionally allows electoral strength to interact with gender (to test H2).

Table 2: Hazard ratios for generalized linear model with 50-50 quotas dummy.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	HR	SE	HR	SE	HR	SE
Relative rank difference	0.761***	0.077	0.753***	(0.078)	0.989	(0.132)
Gender (male)	1.203***	0.045	1.539***	(0.063)	1.555***	(0.063)
Quotas	0.158***	0.046	0.209***	(0.068)	0.211***	(0.068)
Local mandate	0.666***	0.046	0.661***	(0.047)	0.661***	(0.047)
Incumbency	0.351***	0.119	0.350***	(0.119)	0.350***	(0.119)
Age (centered)	1.021***	0.002	1.021***	(0.002)	1.021***	(0.002)
Gender x Quotas	-	-	0.615***	(0.086)	0.605***	(0.087)
Gender x Relative rank difference	-	-	-	-	0.660*	(0.164)
Party fixed effects	Included		Included		Included	
N (candidacies)	16,996		16,996		16,996	

Notes: HR = Hazard ratio. SE = Standard error;

Significance levels: ***: $p < 0.001$; **: $p < 0.01$; *: $p < 0.05$;

Based on a sequential Chi square deviance test, the baseline hazard is smoothed via a cubic polynomial. GLMs (with binomial error distribution and logit link) with a discrete time or ‘party in time’ function yield highly similar results.

A first important finding is that, in line with the Kaplan Meier plot in figure 2, at any given point in time and controlling for all other variables, men are significantly more likely to face career termination than women. This finding is at odds with H1. Indeed, on the basis of both a demand- and supply-side logic, we suspected that men would persist longer as a candidate than women.

In order to verify whether these results depend on specific political parties in the Belgian party landscape, we run an additional model which includes party dummies and their interaction with gender (see Figure A in the Online Supplemental Material). We indeed find evidence that the result of higher risk on career termination for men is consistent across all parties.

When it comes to electoral performance, Model 1 and Model 2 corroborate that, in general, more successful candidates face lower risk at career termination. The hazard of career

termination is significantly smaller for candidates who perform better than average in terms of relative rank difference. However, introducing the interaction between relative rank difference and gender (Model 3) shows that this is only the case among male candidates. This is a key finding, as it indicates that women candidates are *not* rewarded equally in terms of selectoral career length for the same objective electoral performance. The fact that the main effect of relative rank difference is not significant in Model 3 suggests that a strong electoral performance does not have an effect on career termination for women.⁶ But this coin also has another side. The absence of an electoral effect for women also implies that these are not punished with deselection in the case of a bad performance. Put differently, electoral failure is only a significant hazard for men. Women politicians appear somehow immune to the positive and negative effects of electoral performance on their career as a candidate.

In a final step, we test the impact of quotas on career termination risk. The quotas variable included in the models reported in Table 2 measures the long term effect, as it compares the period before and after the introduction of a drastic parity rule. The significant and negative effect of this variable shows that the hazard at career termination decreases after the introduction of quotas (in line with H3b). At the same time, the significant interaction with gender in Model 2 and Model 3 indicates that this effect is stronger for women than for men. For women, the risk at selectoral career termination in the quotas era is approximately five

⁶ When using candidates' list position and proportions of preference votes instead of the relative rank difference yields similar conclusions. These results are reported in Table C in the Online Supplemental Material. The only exception is the result regarding H2. In other words, the interaction term between gender and electoral performance – this time measured using preference vote proportions within the list – is no longer statistically significant. As indicated, this might be explained by the skewed nature of this variable, with top candidates eclipsing the effect of electoral strength for lower placed candidates.

times smaller (1/0.209) than before. For men, this risk is only about 1.6 times smaller (1/0.615) with stringent quota legislation. Women candidates thus last longer after the introduction of quotas, because they are granted more opportunities to build a career. The drop out for men is also smaller, because primarily the stronger candidates are retained on the list. It now appears that, while both effects are confirmed, the effect of quotas on woman candidates is stronger.

In order to capture the short term effect of quotas, Table 3 presents models with a more fine-grained distinction between different quota regimes in Belgium: immediately after the introduction representing the short term (election years of 2003 and 2004), and the elections after that (from 2007 onwards) representing the long term. The earlier conclusions about long term effects of quotas and the effect of electoral success are again confirmed. But the short term effects of quotas are surprising. While we expected a negative effect on career termination hazard for women, and a positive effect for men under H3a, we find exactly the opposite.

The short term effect for men is negative (hazard ratio < 1). Thus, the introduction of quotas appears to provide an opportunity for male candidates, rather than a risk. This is counter intuitive, given the demand shock that quotas create. This shock involves a reduction of the number of male candidates from about two thirds to a half. But precisely this shock, and the accompanying influx of new women, might make the parties prudent and inhibit them from replacing more men than necessary. A normal turnover amongst male candidates combined with the exceptionally high turnover among women might result in an almost entirely renewed list, which would be a leap in the dark. To avoid this risk, there appears to be a tendency to hold on to as many experienced male candidates as possible. This inertia apparently outweighs the mathematical quotas shock effect.

Table 3: Hazard ratios for GLM distinguishing between short term and long term quota effects.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	HR	SE	HR	SE	HR	SE
Relative rank difference	0.619***	(0.083)	0.614***	(0.083)	0.867	(0.144)
Gender (male)	1.222***	(0.048)	1.496***	(0.063)	1.516***	(0.064)
Quotas (short term)	0.944	(0.058)	1.218*	(0.082)	1.220*	(0.082)
Quotas (long term)	0.038***	(0.074)	0.049***	(0.099)	0.049***	(0.099)
Local mandate	0.690***	(0.050)	0.685***	(0.050)	0.686***	(0.050)
Incumbency	0.281***	(0.121)	0.284***	(0.121)	0.284***	(0.121)
Age (centered)	1.027***	(0.002)	1.027***	(0.002)	1.028***	(0.002)
Gender x Quotas (short term)	-	-	0.627***	(0.111)	0.627***	(0.111)
Gender x Quotas (long term)	-	-	0.637***	(0.125)	0.621***	(0.125)
Gender x Relative rank difference	-	-	-	-	0.599**	(0.176)
Party fixed effects	Included		Included		Included	
N (candidacies)	16,996		16,996		16,996	

Notes: HR = Hazard ratio. SE = Standard error;

Significance levels: ***: $p < 0.001$; **: $p < 0.01$; *: $p < 0.05$;

Based on a sequential Chi square deviance test, the baseline hazard is smoothed via a cubic polynomial. GLMs (with binomial error distribution and logit link) with a discrete time or 'party in time' function yield highly similar results.

Contrary to expectations, the short term effect for women is positive. This means that in the short run, the introduction of quotas increases the risk at career termination for women. While we expected that the obligation to increase the number of women candidates would protect the existing women candidates from deselection and hence prolong their career, this does not appear the case. The introduction of drastic quotas is a hazard for women who already embarked on a career.

6. Conclusion

This paper started from the suspicion that the continued under-representation of women in parliament can be in part attributed to a larger candidate turnover among women. Perhaps

women are given less opportunities to continue the long road towards parliamentary office by male dominated selectorates (according to a demand-side logic). Or perhaps they are less inclined to keep on following this path (according to a supply-side logic). In order to test this proposition we performed a longitudinal analysis, investigating the trajectories of 11,678 individual candidates running in Belgian federal, regional and European elections during a period of 32 years, from 1987 to 2019. We applied a survival analysis to these data. Technically speaking, we estimated hazard ratios for the termination of the 'life' as a candidate, comparing risks for different covariate combinations.

The good news is that the initial suspicion was not confirmed. In fact, male candidates face earlier career termination and therefore have shorter careers. This finding might be related to the historic overrepresentation of men on Belgian candidate lists. Until the 1980s, elections were largely a masculine affair, which created an excess supply of motivated male aspirants while the electoral role of women gradually became more important. The result was an even fiercer competition for list positions among men, resulting in a relatively high hazard at career termination. If this interpretation of our findings is correct, and if the higher risk for men is indeed an after-effect of their dominance in the past, it should gradually disappear (as suggested by Figure 2).

We also suspected that a higher turnover among women candidates might be due to the fact that men and women are unequally rewarded for electoral success. While we found no evidence for the higher turnover over the entire period, the proposition about unequal rewards appears correct. As expected, electoral success decreases the hazard at career termination. Put differently, a lack of success poses a significant danger for candidates. But this is only the case for male candidates. If men perform strongly, they are less likely to get deselected. Women with similar results are not rewarded in the same way. In other words, the normal competitive dynamic through which candidates are allowed to keep running for election to build up electoral

capital is a masculine affair. But this works in both directions: while poor results entail a significant risk at career termination for men, women appear immune to effects of electoral performance either in the positive or the negative sense. While selectorates are less inclined to reward successful women, they also appear milder towards women who disappoint electorally. This mildness at the demand-side may explain why the unequal effect of electoral performance on career duration does not lead to a higher turnover among women.

We also theorized on the possibility that introducing quotas might increase candidate turnover among women. It is sometimes argued that quotas obligate parties to fill the list with perfunctory women, who give up after one election and need to be constantly replaced. The underlying assumption is that motivated and confident women politicians are in short supply. But this does not appear to be the case. In the long run, quotas have a strong positive effect on the career duration of women candidates. This finding suggests that the lack of women on lists in the pre-quotas era was mainly a demand-side problem. While selectorates used to be reluctant to grant women the opportunity to grow as candidates, from one election to another the quotas have forced them to overcome this reluctance.

Nevertheless, in the short run, the introduction of quotas is a hazard for experienced women candidates, and involves a significant risk that their career will end. We suspect that this somewhat surprising effect is due to fact that quotas trigger an intense effort in the party to recruit new women politicians and fully tap the women political potential. If successful, such an effort will create more competition between potential and current women politicians. Apparently, the already experienced candidates are often the victim of this fiercer competition. Thus, in the short run, quotas appear to have a disruptive effect on the recruitment and selection of women candidates. But in the long run, the dust settles and the women who survive the quota shock, or are recruited because of it, are more likely to survive longer as a result of quotas.

For male candidates, quotas have a negative effect on career termination, both in the short and long term. The latter finding was expected, as the male candidates retained on the list will arguably be the strongest candidates, who will therefore have a longer candidate career. The negative short term effect, on the contrary, is counter intuitive. Quotas involve a sudden and automatic drop of demand for men, from about two thirds of the list positions, to half of them. Yet what we find is that males stand a higher chance of prolonging their career immediately after the introduction of quotas. A logical explanation is that the forced renewal of the lists, due to the influx of new women, puts a brake on normal candidate turnover for men. Presenting an almost entirely refreshed list to voters would pose a large risk for the party, and therefore selectorates do not deselect more men than strictly necessary.

These findings attest to the usefulness of gender quotas, also in the long run. But even so, as is well known, quota rules generally fall short of creating full legislative parity. Can this be attributed to unequal candidate turnover across gender, as we initially suspected? On the basis of our longitudinal analysis of Flemish candidate trajectories the answer to this question is no. However, a short term deterioration of candidate turnover among women should not be considered a valid argument to retreat quota legislation.

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