

Can a Woman Win?

A deep dive into the media influence, gender stereotyping, and party affiliation that has prevented America from electing a female president.

Research Question and Thesis

Does the increasing number of female legislators across state and federal lines increase the likelihood of a female's ability to win the presidency?

This paper seeks to examine these questions as well as to identify ways in which media representation, gender stereotypes, and political party affiliation make it more difficult, and potentially impossible, for a female candidate to win the presidential election regardless of her electoral history, campaign plan, or support system.

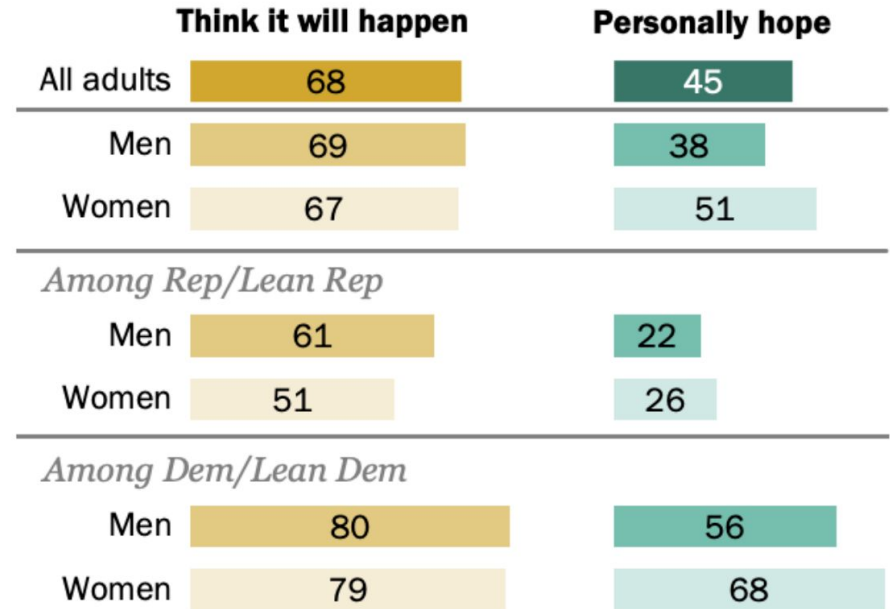
Why is this important?

- People want a female president
- There are qualified women who would make good presidents

Thomas, Deja. "In 2018, Two-Thirds of Democratic Women Hoped to See a Woman President in Their Lifetime." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, July 26, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/26/in-2018-two-thirds-of-democratic-women-hoped-to-see-a-woman-president-in-their-lifetime/>.

In 2018, most Democratic women said they personally hoped to see a woman elected president in their lifetime

% saying they think/personally hope the United States will elect a female president in their lifetime



Look at the literature

The literature appears to have three categories when talking about women running for president.

1. Media bias and lack of media attention
2. Gender stereotyping and double standards
3. Party affiliation

Methodology

- Examine studies of differences in media coverage between male and female candidates
- Examine studies of bias towards female candidates based on gender stereotypes and double standards
- Examine treatment of women in both parties as they run for office

Result: Less media attention towards issues or policy platforms of female candidates than male counterparts.

Kahn, Kim Fridkin. "The Distorted Mirror: Press Coverage of Women Candidates for Statewide Office." *The Journal of Politics* 56, no. 1 (1994): 154–73.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2132350>.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PARAGRAPHS PUBLISHED ABOUT ISSUES EACH WEEK

	Senate Races		Gubernatorial Races	
	Mean (S.D.) ^a	N ^b	Mean (S.D.)	N
<i>All Candidates</i>				
Male Candidates	26.8 (15.1)	40	39.9 (20.0)	32
Female Candidates	21.9 (12.7)	12	34.1 (15.1)	10
<i>Incumbents</i>				
Male Candidates	26.7 (13.4)	15	47.0 (21.9)	10
Female Candidates	23.7 (24.2)	2	42.7 (8.6)	2
<i>Challengers</i>				
Male Candidates	23.6 (14.5)	11	43.7 (18.0)* ^c	9
Female Candidates	16.7 (8.1)	6	14.7 (4.4)	3
<i>Open-Race Candidates</i>				
Male Candidates	29.3 (17.7)	14	31.9 (18.3)	13
Female Candidates	28.8 (12.9)	4	42.1 (9.4)	5

^aEntries are the mean number of paragraphs published about issues each week with the standard deviation in parentheses.

^bEntries are the number of candidates included for each candidate type.

^cThe *p*-value is based on the *t*-statistic: *indicates *p* < .01.

Gender Stereotyping/Double Standards

RESULTS:

- When male and female candidates displayed the same characteristics, women were punished while men were celebrated.

“The Price of Power: Power Seeking and Backlash Against Female Politicians.” The Price of Power: Power Seeking and Backlash Against Female Politicians | Gender Action Portal. Harvard . Accessed May 10, 2020.

<https://gap.hks.harvard.edu/price-power-power-seeking-and-backlash-against-female-politicians>.

- All things being equal, study participants were likely to perceive female politicians as being just about equally power-seeking as male politicians.
- When participants saw male politicians as power-seeking, they also saw them as having greater agency (i.e., being more assertive, stronger, and tougher) and greater competence, while this was not true for their perceptions of power-seeking female politicians.
- When participants saw female politicians as power-seeking, they also saw them as having less communality (i.e., being unsupportive and uncaring), while this was not true for their perceptions of power-seeking male politicians.
- When female politicians were described as power-seeking, participants experienced feelings of moral outrage (i.e., contempt, anger, and/or disgust) towards them.
- Participant gender had no impact on any of the study outcomes – that is, women were just as likely as men to have negative reactions to power-seeking female politicians.

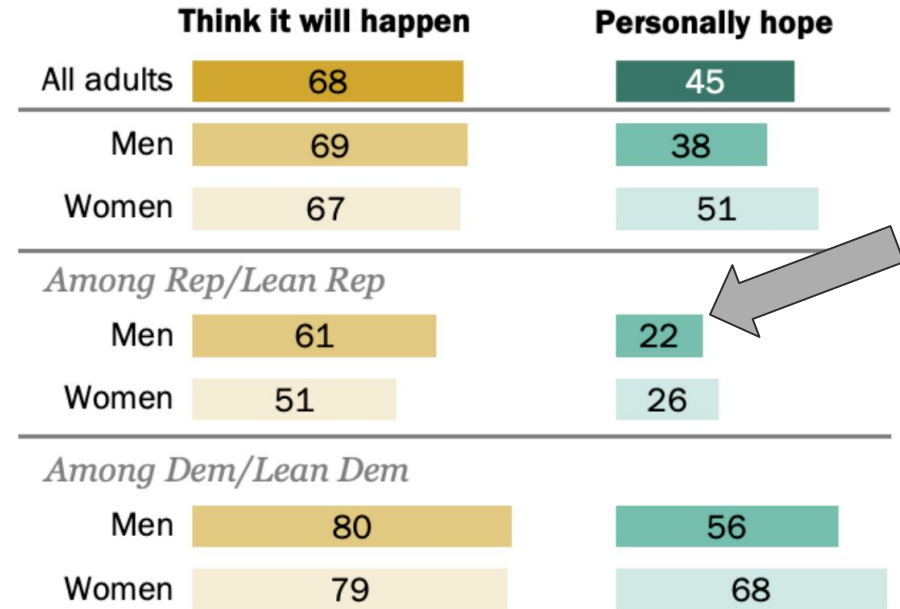
In short, both a power-seeking image and expressed power-seeking intent can bias voters against female politicians.

Party Affiliation RESULTS:

- It is clear that both republican men and women do not wish to see a female president in their lifetimes, therefore making their field even more challenging for a female candidate.

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Conclusions

- People want a female president, but are influenced heavily by the media, gender stereotyping, and party affiliation.
- The media reporting on whether or not a woman can win is harmful because it furthers the assumption that she cannot.
- A woman can win only if Americans chose to vote for her.

Thank you

