

GENDER AND CANDIDATES' ELECTORAL FORTUNES IN  
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEMS:  
EVIDENCE FROM POLAND

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**Abstract**

We take advantage of a favorable mixture of institutional and cultural factors to study the impact of gender on candidates' electoral success in Poland. In principle, our results are consistent with previous findings showing that it is incumbency status, rather than candidate gender, that drives not only voter choice patterns but also candidate ranking on party lists. Nonetheless, the situation has changed somewhat after the introduction of mandatory gender quotas. Quotas have slightly improved women's parliamentary representation. They have, however, substantially worsened the relative standing of female candidates with respect to voter choice.

**Introduction**

Save for a few exceptions, women's underrepresentation in the democratically elected parliaments around the world is an undisputable fact (Karp and Banducci 2008: 108). Descriptive underrepresentation – i.e. the significantly lower proportion of women in a country's political elite relative to the analogous proportion in a country's entire population – might undermine substantive representation of women's interests (Holli and Wass 2010: 606). Numerous studies claim that proportional representation (PR) electoral systems tend to

increase the numbers of female politicians holding elected office (Duverger 1955; Lakeman 1976; Castels 1981; Norris 1985; Rule 1987). This conclusion is partly challenged by the Irish case, analyzed in the recent McElroy and Marsh's (2010) study. Ireland - with only 13-14% of female members of the lower chamber of the parliament (the *Dáil*) in recent years – is an example of a PR system where women are very strongly politically underrepresented. On the other hand, as the aforementioned study shows, Irish voters do not appear to be prejudiced against female candidates competing in parliamentary elections. In fact, conclusions of McElroy and Marsh's (2010) study echo those drawn by many others, majority of them focusing on elections to the American Congress. All these studies (Darcy and Schramm 1977; Darcy, Welch and Clark 1987; Dolan 1998; Smith and Fox 2001; Thompson and Steckenrider 1997) argue that, as long as party affiliation and incumbency status are also taken into account, female candidates do not perform worse than their male counterparts.

In this paper, we focus on the effects of candidate gender on electoral success in Poland. We thus follow in McElroy and Marsh's (2010) footsteps in studying the impact of gender on candidates' electoral success in PR systems. We nonetheless believe that, by exploiting a unique combination of institutional and cultural factors observed in Poland, we can both reinforce and go far beyond the findings of the aforementioned Irish study. On the one hand, Polish national elections, like Irish ones, are conducted under a PR rule. What is more, both countries have a dominant Catholic tradition. Finally, in Poland, as well as in Ireland, women's legislative underrepresentation is unquestionable (Siemieńska-Żochowska 2000; Moser 2001; Kunovich 2003). On the other hand, the Polish case provides us with an opportunity to study women's political representation from a broader perspective. In particular, the electoral rules, unlike in Ireland, allow parties to rank their candidates before lists with the latter's names are presented to voters. Not only the impact of gender on voter choice but also its effect on party ranking strategies can thus be studied. Also, the most recent

election to the lower chamber of the Polish parliament (the *Sejm*) – conducted on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2011 - was held under the rule of new legal arrangements according to which quotas of at least 35 per cent of candidates of each gender on every party list were enforced. The impact of quotas in this new context can be assessed here by comparing the effect of gender on candidates' electoral success before and after the quotas were introduced.

The paper proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the existing scholarly literature on the topic. Then, we provide a deeper description of all the institutional and cultural factors that make the Polish case particularly interesting in the context of this literature. We then proceed to the description of the data we use and outline the analysis that is to be conducted. The analysis consists of three parts. First, we present descriptive statistics concerning candidates running since 1991, the year marking the first free election in post-communist Poland, with an emphasis on candidate gender. We then proceed to an analysis of party ranking strategies. Finally, holding candidate ranking (and a few other control variables) constant, we examine the effect of gender on the numbers of votes cast for candidates in the three aforementioned elections. We conclude with a discussion of the results.

## **Previous research**

Existing literature on women's legislative representation offers mixed results. While it is widely acknowledged that in most contemporary democracies women are descriptively underrepresented, the causes of this state of affairs are still far from obvious. Some recent studies refer to incumbency status as the key mechanism responsible for women's political underrepresentation. They find that when party identification and incumbency are taken into account, male candidates do not outperform their female rivals at the polls (Darcy and Schramm 1977; Studlar and McAllister 1991; Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994; Thompson and Steckenrider 1997; Burrell 1998; Dolan 1998; Smith and Fox 2001; Black and Erickson

2003). This overwhelming effect of incumbency on women's electoral results, however, should come as a no surprise. High reelection rates in some Western democracies, like that of 90 per cent in the US Congress (Fox & Lawless 2004: 264), allow hardly any possibility for female members of the political elite to grow in numbers. In line with this argument, regarding reelection as the basic mechanism in operation, we should infer that women are not discriminated against by either parties or voters. Their relative underrepresentation could be perceived as a remnant of past division of gender roles and men's exclusive access to political domain, now "frozen" by the reelection processes.

However big the impeding effect of the incumbency status would be, there are some other factors thought to independently influence women's electoral prospects. Comparative research on women's performance in various electoral settings highlights the importance of institutional variables. Scholars have identified the type of electoral system as the key characteristic determining a country's proportion of female representatives. In general, party list proportional representation systems, when compared with other non-party list systems with either majoritarian or proportional principle<sup>1</sup>, are found to enhance the number of female legislators (Rule 1981, 1987; Matland and Studlar 1996; Schmidt 2008). The mechanism underlying women's relative success in countries utilizing party list PR appears to be threefold and to operate on the part of voters, parties and candidates. First, in the elections where voters are presented with lists of candidates clustered within parties the basic voter choice is between party identities, and only then among individuals. Thus, personal characteristics and demographic cues - often forming the ground for the rise of gender stereotypes and gender-based voting (McDermott 1997; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Holli and Wass 2007) - become relatively insignificant (Norris 1987; Moser 2001: 357). Second, in the

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of simplicity we propose the dichotomous division of electoral systems, distinguishing between party-list proportional representation systems and other non-party list system. The latter category includes majoritarian single member-districts, single-transferable vote and single non-transferable vote systems. Employing this approach we follow the existing literature on the topic, especially Rule (1987).

elections held under this rule parties' electoral strategies follow the logic of inclusion: the larger proportion of female nominees can balance the party ticket and make it appeal to a broader range of voters (Matland and Studlar 1996; Moser 2001). The opposite strategy is employed in elections held under majoritarian rule, especially in single-member district races where "the winner takes all". Here the chances of success, and thus party nomination itself, are highly contingent on political and social capital, that is on the assets incorporated in incumbency status. As a result, under such electoral law only very few women are nominated and actually seek political office (Moser 2001: 357). The last point concerns female candidates themselves. Some scholars argue that women are better emotionally suited to promote their own candidacies rather than to denigrate their political opponents. Thus, the "non-zero-sum" and less competitive nature of the elections held under PR rule form favorable grounds for women to launch a successful candidacy in national elections (Matland and Brown 1992: 472; Matland 1993: 738-739).

Much attention in scholarly literature on the topic is paid to the impact of another institutional factor, namely district magnitude (Rule 1987; Matland and Brown 1992; Schmidt 2008). District magnitude, the number of allocated parliamentary seats, is thought to influence women's chances of success in two distinct ways. First, the larger the district magnitude the smaller the number of votes needed to be elected. Thus, in larger districts it is more likely that women, often occupying positions receiving fewer votes (Kunovich 2003), would be elected. The second argument explores the effect of district magnitude by uncovering the mechanism of electoral turnover. It is argued that larger districts produce higher rates of electoral turnover, which in turn tends to reduce the effect of incumbency on candidate's chances of election. Thus, larger districts are claimed to enhance women's chances for electoral success as they enhance women's chances for electoral success as they promote competitors relatively

inexperienced who contest an election as non-incumbents (Rule 1987: 478 - 484; Matland 1993: 739).

With regard to the gendered consequences of institutional arrangements two concerns need to be raised. First, the influence of district magnitude on women's electoral prospects is neither automatic nor straightforward, but appears to be conditioned by party magnitude. Matland (1993), following Darcy, Welch and Clark (1987), argues that larger district magnitude leads to higher representation of women only when few relatively large parties compete for votes. This is so because party magnitude, indicated by the number of seats expected to win in a constituency, often determines nomination strategies. The smaller the number of seats expected to be won is, the less likely it becomes that women would be nominated as parties' representatives (Matland 1993: 742). The second concern is that the relation between the type of electoral system and women's performance is not universal. It seems that in the case of post-communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe female candidates' electoral performance is uncorrelated with the electoral systems being in use (Moser 2001: 353).

Along with the vast body of research explaining women's numeric underrepresentation with reference to institutional factors, a substantial part of scholarly literature has attributed this phenomenon to contextual factors and socio-cultural barriers. However, most recent studies find that political environment is not biased against women. Sanbonmatsu (2002) and Black and Erickson (2003) claim that gender stereotypes, if affecting voter choice at all, actually no longer diminish women's chances at the polls. Taking this finding as a point of departure, numerous studies ascertain that gender-based stereotypes may affect women's political recruitment prior to the election stage itself, namely at the "selection" and "eligibility" stages (Rule 1981; Fox and Lawless 2003). Fox and Lawless sought to determine factors influencing women's decisions to seek political office and their

emergence as actual candidates at the polls. The authors hypothesize that traditional gender-role socialization accounts for women's significantly lower levels of ambition to hold elective office. In this study, the substantial difference between men and women turned out to be uncorrelated with most factors of interest: political culture, family responsibilities and ideological motivations; women seemed to express significantly lower levels of political ambition when compared with men and only self-perceived qualifications explained a part of this difference (Fox and Lawless 2004 264, 271-275). Such a conclusion, however, seems to be inconsistent with previous findings on the topic, especially those drawn from the analyses based on macro-level data. At the aggregate level, countries' proportions of female representatives seem to be correlated with several contextual characteristics, such as the percentage of women in workforce, the proportion of women graduating from college, right-wing parties' dominance, and, finally, the proportion of Catholics in the population. Rule (1987: 479, 484) identified right-wing parties' dominant role in a country's politics and prevailing Catholic religious culture as factors promoting traditional non-political role of women and, consequently, diminishing their electoral representation. In so far as religious culture shapes a country's prevalent perception of gender roles, it may still affect women's political recruitment although this influence may not be apparent at the lowest, individual level. In a more recent study on Polish parliamentarians' views on gender quotas, Dubrow (2010: 566-567) found parties' ideologies concerning religion to be a fundamental variable predicting the strength of politicians' support for the introduction of gender quotas. The prevalence of the Catholic viewpoint can thus be treated as a proxy for traditionalist ideological position emphasizing women's domestic role.

### **Gender and candidates' electoral success: The Polish case**

Polish democracy seems to be a uniquely attractive case to study the effects of gender on candidates' electoral fortunes. It is so for at least five reasons. First and foremost, the

proportion of women in the lower chamber of Polish parliament – the *Sejm* – is relatively low, slightly above 20 per cent in recent years (Karp and Banducci 2008: 108; Dubrow 2010). An inquiry into reasons of the descriptive underrepresentation of women in Polish political elite is thus most legitimate.

Second, access to the Polish parliament is still relatively open to challengers: the proportion of reelected members of parliament is relatively low, accounting for 35%, 60% and 62 % respectively in 2005, 2007 and 2011 (i.e. in the three most recent elections to the *Sejm*). This suggests that the impact of incumbency status, accounting for the largest part of variation in electoral chances of candidates' in the more established democracies, may be somewhat weakened, thus uncovering the other possibly influential factors.

Third, elections to the *Sejm* are conducted under a list PR system, which for various reasons mentioned before is claimed to be advantageous for female contesters. Under this system, parties present voters with lists of candidates from among whom to choose. Only one candidate can be voted from among all running in a given constituency. Each vote counts twice. At the list level, it contributes to the number of seats a party receives in a given district. At the candidate level, it codetermines which candidates are elected. This creates a relative balance between the importance of parties and that of candidates: party labels and reputations matter but candidates compete within party lists as well (Carey & Shughart 1995: 427). The Polish version of the system allows us to discriminate parties' and voters' rankings. At the polls, voters are presented with lists of candidates ranked by parties beforehand and only then are they allowed to follow or reject parties' orders of preference. In the situation of voters being able to cast a vote for only one candidate from their favorite party, a mandatory gender choice is entailed. The Polish version of PR system adds substantially to what we can learn from the Irish case, analyzed by McElroy and Marsh (2010). The single-transferable vote (STV) system applied in Ireland does not allow parties to rank their candidates. Instead,

candidates are ranked alphabetically on a general list encompassing an entire district. In Poland, by contrast, parties rank their candidates in every district and these rankings seem to have an impact on candidates' success, with more than 50 per cent of elected candidates being ranked as first or second on a party list. The Polish case thus offers what the Irish case cannot offer, namely the potential to analyze simultaneously the impact of gender on both party ranking strategies and voter choice. We utilize this potential in the current study.

Fourth, Poland is a predominantly Catholic country, with a tradition of the Church's involvement in politics, most importantly as a major center of opposition against the former communist regime (Ramet 1990). This is strongly reflected in the effects of ideology on the probability of Polish parliamentarians supporting the introduction of gender quotas on party lists (Dubrow 2010). The predominance of Catholicism contributes greatly to the significance of Poland as a case for a study of the impact of gender on voter choice. It is so especially in the light of McElroy and Marsh's (2010) study that found little or no effect of gender on voter choice in Ireland. The prevalence of Catholicism in Poland is even greater than it is in Ireland. Lack of the effect of candidate gender on voter choice in Poland would thus greatly strengthen the evidence supporting the thesis that it is incumbency status, rather than gender, that is the most significant determinant of candidates' electoral success.

Finally, an additional element we will build on is the new legal arrangements introduced in Poland starting from the parliamentary election of the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2011. According to the new law, mandatory gender quotas on party lists were introduced. The lists have to include at least 35 per cent of candidates of each gender. This resulted in a substantial increase in the numbers of female candidates competing for seats in the *Sejm* at the 2011 election. Our expectations concerning the effect of this new electoral rule are ambiguous. On the one hand, the introduction of gender quotas might increase the proportion of women in the parliament. On the other, however, the presence of quotas might also worsen the relative

strength of female candidates in comparison to their male rivals. In other words, gender bias in both party ranking strategies and voter choice might actually increase. Parties might simply be forced to fill their lists with candidates who are there only to satisfy legal requirements and who would not have been there had the new law not been enacted. We take advantage of the unique situation and analyze candidates' electoral fortunes in three most recent elections to the *Sejm*. Two of them - conducted in 2005 and 2007 – took place under legal arrangements that did not force gender quotas on party lists. The most recent one, i.e. the October 2011 election, saw gender quotas of (at least) 35 per cent already in place. We provide a detailed comparison of the impact of gender on party ranking strategies and voter choice before and after these quotas were introduced.

### **The data and the concept of analysis**

Our analysis encompasses three most recent elections to the Polish *Sejm*. The elections were held in 2005, 2007 (an early election resulting from a premature dissolution of the *Sejm*) and 2011. The elections of 2005 and 2007 were conducted under a law that did not require parties to implement any gender quotas on the lists of candidates. In other words, in these two elections parties did not face any legal restrictions concerning the composition of their lists. Before the most recent election, held in October 2011, a law introducing gender quotas was enacted. It requires that party lists in every electoral district include at least 35 per cent of candidates of each sex. These quotas only restrict the proportions of candidates. No regulations have been implemented with respect to ranking of female candidates relative to their male counterparts.

Data on candidates running in the three aforementioned elections are available from the Polish State Electoral Commission<sup>2</sup>. Our analysis of these data comprises three parts.

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.pkw.gov.pl](http://www.pkw.gov.pl)

First, we provide a simple descriptive analysis regarding the proportions of female candidates running and winning seats in the *Sejm*. We then proceed to multivariate analyses of party ranking strategies and voter choice.

We perform analyses of party ranking strategies separately for all the three aforementioned elections. Party lists in these elections comprised from eight to forty candidates. However, realistic chances of winning a seat are limited almost exclusively to those ranked very high on party lists. In all the three years, a median legislator was ranked second on a party list. In other words, more than a half of the elected candidates were ranked first or second on their party lists. Given the above, we have decided to conduct three types of analyses concerning candidate ranking. First, we use conditional (fixed-effects) logistic regression to estimate the impact of gender on the probability of a candidate being ranked first on a party list. Then, we perform an analogous analysis concerning the probability of a candidate being ranked first *or* second on such a list. Finally, we use ranked-ordered logistic regression – i.e., the so-called “exploded logit” (Punj and Staelin 1978; Champan and Staelin 1982) – and study the effect of gender on a candidate ranking within the entire list. Rank-ordered logistic regression is best described as a series of conditional logistic regressions explaining the probability of a candidate being ranked first within a given sequence of candidates. For instance, at the second stage the candidate being ranked first on the list is removed and the candidate ranked second is considered first. At the third stage, the latter candidate is also removed and the third one is considered first. This process continues until the last sequence comprising two candidates ranked lowest on the list. The overall effect is averaged across all the sequences. The main explanatory variable in our models is candidate gender (coded as 1 for women and zero for men). We control for incumbency and ministerial status. We also interact these two variables with gender. Finally, we interact gender with

dummy variables relating to parties<sup>3</sup>. To simplify the model, we only include dummy variables denoting parties that did achieve a legal threshold of five per cent of votes (at the country level) and therefore participated in the allocation of seats in a given election. Parties that did not make it to reach the threshold thus constitute a reference category. Four parties were allocated seats in all the three elections: the Civic Platform (Polish abbreviation: PO), the Democratic Left Alliance<sup>4</sup> (SLD), Law and Justice (PiS) and the Polish Peasants' Party (PSL). After the 2005 election, two other parties – the League of Polish Families (LPR) and Self-Defense (Samoobrona) – entered the *Sejm* as well. In 2011, an emerging political party – the Palikot's Movement<sup>5</sup> - participated in seat allocation. These changes, taking place from election to election, are reflected in the selection of party dummies present in our models. In addition, for the model concerning the 2007 election we exceptionally include a dummy variable denoting a party that did not enter the *Sejm*, namely the Women's Party. The reason why we include a dummy for it, despite its lack of success in obtaining parliamentary seats, is the fact that out of 109 candidates running on behalf of that party in the 2007 election only three (2.75 per cent) were men. We could thus have introduced distortions to our analysis had we not included a dummy referring to this particular party.

Our final analysis focuses on voter choice. A response variable here is the number of votes cast for a candidate. As the latter is a count variable, we model it with negative binomial regression. Our main explanatory variable is, again, candidate gender. We control for a candidate ranking on a party list (natural logarithm of a candidate rank), incumbency,

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to emphasize here that conditional and rank-ordered logistic regression both estimate only the within-effect of the variables. In our specific case, only within-party-list effects are estimated. Hence, party dummies, which are obviously constant within party lists, can only enter the regression equations in interaction with candidate characteristics, e.g., gender.

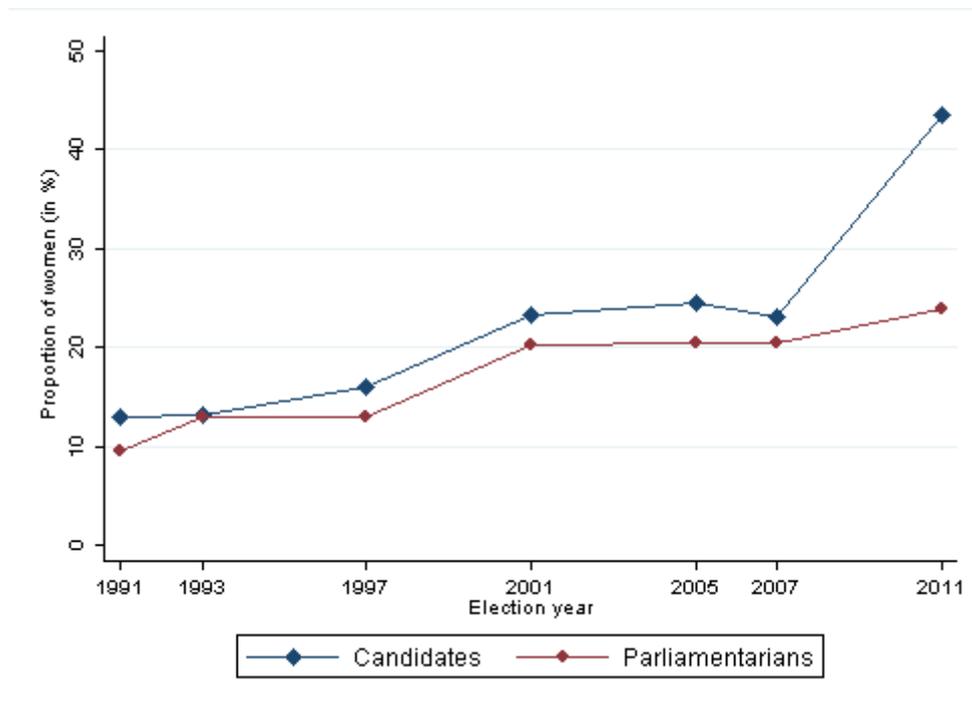
<sup>4</sup> In the 2007 election the Democratic Left Alliance competed within a broader coalition named Left and Democrats. The Alliance was nonetheless the largest partner dominating the coalition, and so we treat the Alliance and that coalition as one political entity.

<sup>5</sup> The name of the party comes from the surname of its founder and leader – Janusz Palikot – a former prominent politician and a member of the *Sejm* on behalf of the Civic Platform who has left the latter party to found his own one.

ministerial status and party on behalf of which a candidate is competing. We also examine interactions of these variables with gender. One important difference between our analysis and that by McElroy and Marsh (2010) is that we do not control for a candidate campaign spending. No data relating to individual candidate spending are available for Poland. This, however, should not be considered a major deficiency of our analysis. Unlike in Ireland, Polish electoral law does not at all provide for individual candidate campaign financing. All campaign budgets are centrally managed by parties' headquarters. The differences can thus arise between "poor" and "rich" parties rather than between "poor" and "rich" candidates. Therefore, the inclusion of party dummies in our models is certainly a conservative enough strategy to take account of issues related to campaign financing.

### **Women contesting the elections – descriptive statistics**

Obviously, the factor that contributed most to the descriptive underrepresentation of women in the *Sejm*, at least before 2011, was the small number of female candidates actually contesting the elections. Their share in the pool of candidates increased from the mere 13 per cent in 1991 to 24.5 in 2005 election. With minor exceptions, as we can see in Figure 1. below, this increasing proportion of female candidates was accompanied by the growing ratio of female legislators. Until the 2011 election, the average difference between the percentage of women running in the election and the proportion of women winning a seat was around 2.66 percentage points. This, however, changed dramatically in the latest round held in October 2011. Whereas women constituted 44.5 per cent of all candidates running for a seat, their legislative representation was significantly lower, accounting 23,9 per cent of the newly elected parliament.

**Figure 1. Proportion of female candidates and female legislators**

The basic descriptive statistics with regard to women's performance in the three most recent elections (- i. e. 2005, 2007, 2011) are presented in Table 1. Apart from the figures concerning proportions of female candidates and female legislators within specific parties, we report on two other significant indicators. In the third column we inform on the preferential positioning of female candidates on parties electoral lists. When the proportion of women running from the first *or* second position is compared with the general percentage of women contesting the elections, it is obvious that in 2005 and 2007 no clear disadvantage of women could be observed. However, it seems that in the most recent electoral races of 2011 the women were far more less likely to run from these two preferential positions than men. The last, fourth column brings us information on the potential influence of the incumbency status on the chances of running in the elections. Based on these figures we are inclined to conclude that there was no systematic bias against women in the way the electoral lists were composed. The share of female incumbents in parties electoral lists corresponds, in general, to the ratio of

women placed on the two preferential party-list positions and the overall percentage of women contesting the particular round of election. This conclusion, again, does not seem to concern the 2011 round of election, where the gender gap was clearly apparent. This general overview of women's presence in the political recruitment process provides us with only limited insight into plausible explanations of the investigated phenomenon. Thus, in the next section, we would proceed with a more detailed multivariate analysis on the topic.

**Table 1.: Women on parties' electoral lists: descriptive statistics**

Year	Proportion of women on parties' electoral lists			Proportion of women elected, by party:			Proportion of women running from the first or second position on a list, by party:			Proportion of women among incumbent candidates running for election, by party		
	2005	2007	2011	2005	2007	2011	2005	2007	2011	2005	2007	2011
Civic Platform	21,1	21,1	43,4	24,8	23,4	34,8	19,5	26,8	40,2	18,2	28,2	25,9
Democratic-Left Alliance	27,7	22	44,4	20	18,9	14,8	17,1	14,6	29,3	24	20,8	17,1
Law and Justice	21,1	19,1	39,9	18,7	20,5	17,2	20,7	24,4	19,5	13,9	18,5	20,5
League of Polish Families	19,5	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	14,7	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	11	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	18,8	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>
Palikot's Movement	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	44,5	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	12,5	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	29,3	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>c</sup>
Polish Peasant's Party	19,7	17,9	41,7	4	3,2	7,1	12,2	14,6	15,9	6,1	7,7	7,1
Self-Defence	22,8	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	26,8	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	23,8	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	30,8	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>
Women's Party	- <sup>a</sup>	97,3	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>b</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	92,9	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>	- <sup>c</sup>	- <sup>a</sup>
Other parties	27	24	45	- <sup>b</sup>	- <sup>b</sup>	- <sup>b</sup>	21,5	20	22,9	31,1	18,8	0

*Notes:*

a – party did not contest the election

b – party did not achieve the pass the legal threshold and was not allocated seats in the *Sejm*

c – no incumbents running from the party list

### **Results: Party ranking strategies**

The results of regression analyses assessing the impact of candidates' characteristics on their ranking on parties' lists are presented below in tables 2, 3 and 4. As can be seen from these tables, incumbency and ministerial status are statistically significant predictors of candidates' rankings throughout all the considered elections. Being an acting minister or a member of parliament are best predictors of candidates' chances of running from top positions on parties' electoral lists. Gender, on the contrary, does not seem to have any considerable impact here. In order to examine the effects of gender and incumbency more thoroughly we assess their impact in terms of predicted probabilities of allocation preferential positions on parties' electoral lists<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> We refrain from engaging in an analysis of the effect of ministerial status due to a small numbers of ministers. In 2005 elections there were only 15 candidates with ministerial experience in the previous cadency, in 2007 there were 24 of them, and in 2011 – 13. Ministerial status thus plays only a role of an important control variable in our models.

**Table 2. Predictors of the Probability of a Candidate Being Ranked First on a Party List: Conditional Logistic Regression Estimates**

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Woman</b>	-0.53** (0.15)	-0.52* (0.27)	-1.17** (0.22)
<b>Incumbent</b>	3.76** (0.21)	3.94** (0.21)	3.24** (0.23)
<b>Minister</b>	2.11** (0.79)	4.89** (1.24)	17.99** (0.98)
<b>Woman X Incumbent</b>	0.64 (0.42)	0.08 (0.24)	0.28 (0.48)
<b>Woman X Minister</b>	-1.40 (1.51)	33.22** (1.37)	-12.52** (1.42)
<b>Woman X Civic Platform</b>	0.56 (0.50)	-0.61 (0.55)	1.29** (0.53)
<b>Woman X Democratic Left Alliance/Left and Democrats</b>	-0.89 (0.75)	-0.23 (0.59)	-0.19 (0.58)
<b>Woman X Law and Justice</b>	-0.13 (0.66)	0.46 (0.70)	0.95* (0.54)
<b>Woman X League of Polish Families</b>	-0.83 (0.62)	-	-
<b>Woman X Palikot's Movement</b>	-	-	-0.87 (0.57)
<b>Woman X Polish Peasants' Party</b>	0.54 (0.43)	0.17 (0.76)	-0.09 (0.54)
<b>Woman X Self-Defense</b>	0.23 (0.54)	-	-
<b>Woman X Women's Party</b>	-	12.09** (0.78)	-
<b>Average p-value for Rejecting IIA Assumption</b>	0.73	0.91	0.89
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	-1,360.24	-572.91	-791.56
<b>McFadden R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.19	0.36	0.22
<b>Number of Candidates</b>	10,609	6,187	7,035
<b>Number of Party Lists</b>	591	296	338

Note: \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01 (one-tailed tests). Main entries are unstandardized regression coefficients and the numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Errors are clustered at the level of electoral district (41 clusters).

**Table 3. Predictors of the Probability of a Candidate Being Ranked First or Second on a Party List: Conditional Logistic Regression Estimates**

	2005	2007	2011
<b>Woman</b>	-0.37** (0.11)	-0.28* (0.17)	-1.05** (0.13)
<b>Incumbent</b>	3.75** (0.17)	4.02** (0.24)	3.21** (0.21)
<b>Minister</b>	2.82** (0.93)	18.26** (0.51)	4.73** (0.96)
<b>Woman X Incumbent</b>	0.87* (0.47)	0.06 (0.23)	1.34** (0.40)
<b>Woman X Minister</b>	11.03** (1.19)	-0.12 (0.90)	0.19 (1.30)
<b>Woman X Civic Platform</b>	0.22 (0.41)	0.39 (0.39)	0.89** (0.36)
<b>Woman X Democratic Left Alliance/Left and Democrats</b>	-1.09* (0.59)	-0.45 (0.48)	0.52* (0.24)
<b>Woman X Law and Justice</b>	0.54 (0.34)	0.86* (0.49)	-0.31 (0.50)
<b>Woman X League of Polish Families</b>	-0.54 (0.37)	-	-
<b>Woman X Palikot's Movement</b>	-	-	0.33 (0.21)
<b>Woman X Polish Peasants' Party</b>	0.00 (0.36)	0.15 (0.35)	-0.24 (0.35)
<b>Woman X Self-Defense</b>	0.22 (0.33)	-	-
<b>Woman X Women's Party</b>	-	-0.85 (1.39)	-
<b>Average p-value for Rejecting IIA Assumption</b>	0.72	0.91	0.77
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	-2,502.47	-1098.07	-1,435.29
<b>McFadden R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.14	0.30	0.19
<b>Number of Candidates</b>	10,609	6,187	7,035
<b>Number of Party Lists</b>	591	296	338

Note: \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01 (one-tailed tests). Main entries are unstandardized regression coefficients and the numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Errors are clustered at the level of electoral district (41 clusters).

**Table 4. Predictors of the Probability of a Candidate Ranking on a Party List: Rank-Ordered Logistic Regression Estimates**

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Woman</b>	-0.08** (0.03)	0.00 (0.06)	-0.15** (0.03)
<b>Incumbent</b>	2.59** (0.24)	2.79** (0.27)	2.23** (0.22)
<b>Minister</b>	0.97 (0.74)	4.79** (0.74)	5.08** (0.57)
<b>Woman X Incumbent</b>	0.36 (0.40)	0.13 (0.22)	0.74** (0.28)
<b>Woman X Minister</b>	0.58 (0.81)	29.45** (0.92)	-0.40 (0.77)
<b>Woman X Civic Platform</b>	0.08 (0.08)	0.11 (0.12)	0.28** (0.07)
<b>Woman X Democratic Left Alliance/Left and Democrats</b>	-0.07 (0.12)	0.16 (0.13)	0.11 (0.07)
<b>Woman X Law and Justice</b>	0.08 (0.08)	-0.13 (0.13)	-0.02 (0.09)
<b>Woman X League of Polish Families</b>	0.03 (0.10)	-	-
<b>Woman X Palikot's Movement</b>	-	-	0.04 (0.07)
<b>Woman X Polish Peasants' Party</b>	0.02 (0.09)	0.07 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.07)
<b>Woman X Self-Defense</b>	0.02 (0.09)	-	-
<b>Woman X Women's Party</b>	-	-0.84* (0.39)	-
<b>Average p-value for Rejecting IIA Assumption</b>	0.99	0.99	0.99
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	-21,505.19	-12,957.51	-14,917.21
<b>McFadden R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.02	0.04	0.03
<b>Number of Candidates</b>	10,609	6,187	7,035
<b>Number of Party Lists</b>	591	296	338

Note: \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01 (one-tailed tests). Main entries are unstandardized regression coefficients and the numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Errors are clustered at the level of electoral district (41 clusters).

In table 5 we present the effects of gender and incumbency on the predicted probability of a candidate being placed on the first position on a party list. The effects of gender have been calculated separately for each party and the effects of incumbency separately for men and women. The results of analogous analyses for candidates' chances of running from the first *or* second position are presented in table 6 while the entire list rankings are considered in table 7.

**Table 5. Predicted probabilities of a candidate's allocation the first position on a party list, by sex and incumbency for 2005, 2007 and 2011 elections**

	2005	2007	2011
<b>Sex</b>			
Civic Platform	0.5% [-1.6%; 2.5%]	-1.4% [-2.2; -0.5%]	0.3% [-1.0%; 1.7%]
Democratic Left Alliance	-1.0% [-1.8%; -0.2%]	-1.6% [-3.7%; 0.6%]	-3.2% [-5.0%; -1.3%]
Law and Justice	-0.8% [-2.9%; 1.3%]	0.0% [-1.6; 1.8%]	-0.2% [-1.8; 1.5%]
League of Polish Families	-4.0% [-6.5%; -1.5%]	-	-
Palikot's Movement	-	-	-8.1% [-10.7%; -5.6%]
Polish Peasants' Party	0.4% [-1.6%; 2.5%]	-1.2% [-6.1%; 3.8%]	-3.1% [-5.2%; -1.0%]
Self-Defense	-0.5% [-3.7%; 2.7%]	-	-
Women's Party	-	11.5% [1.6%; 21.4%]	-
Other Parties	-2.5% [-4.0%; -1.0%]	-2.2% [-4.3%; 0.0%]	-5.7% [-8.0%; -3.4%]
<b>Incumbency</b>			
Women	66.5% [47.6%; 85.5%]	29.9% [9.7%; 50.2%]	37.1% [17%; 57.2%]
Men	63.7% [55%; 72.5%]	40.6% [30.6%; 50.6%]	51.9% [40.9%; 63.0%]

*Note:* The main figures are the differences in the predicted probabilities of a candidate's allocation the first position on a party list by sex (differences between women and men for respective parties), and incumbency (differences between incumbents and non-incumbents, separately for women and men). The figures in square brackets are 95 per cent confidence intervals of the main predictions.

**Table 6. Predicted probabilities of allocation the top (first or second) positions on a party list, by sex and incumbency for 2005, 2007 and 2011 elections**

	2005	2007	2011
<b>Sex</b>			
Civic Platform	0.3% [-1.4%; 2.0%]	0.2% [-1.0%; 1.5%]	0.9% [-0.2%; 2.0%]
Democratic Left Alliance	-0.9% [-1.5%; -0.2%]	-1.6% [-3.2%; 0.1%]	0.2% [-1.5%; 2.0%]
Law and Justice	1.0% [-0.9%; 2.9%]	0.9% [-0.6%; 2.3%]	-0.8% [-1.8%; 0.1%]
League of Polish Families	-2.7% [-4.7%; -0.7%]	-	-
Palikot's Movement	-	-	-2.0% [-3.9; 0.0%]
Polish Peasants' Party	-0.1% [-1.7%; 1.4%]	-0.4% [-2.8%; 2.0%]	-1.8% [-3.8%; 0.2%]
Self-Defense	0.1% [-2.1%; 2.3%]	-	-
Women's Party	-	-10.9% [-29.0%; 7.2%]	-
Other Parties	-1.6% [-3.0%; -0.3%]	-1.2% [-2.8%; 0.4%]	-3.8% [-5.3%; -2.2%]
<b>Incumbency</b>			
Women	72.8% [56.2%; 89.5%]	39.0% [22.2%; 55.8%]	62.6% [45.7%; 79.5%]
Men	63.0% [55.4%; 70.5%]	40.9% [29.6%; 52.2%]	50.0% [39.7%; 60.4%]

*Note:* The main figures are the differences in the predicted probabilities of a candidate's allocation the first *or* second position on a party list by sex (differences between women and men for respective parties), and incumbency (differences between incumbents and non-incumbents, separately for women and men). The figures in square brackets are 95 per cent confidence intervals of the main predictions.

**Table 7 Predicted probabilities of being ranked first in a random sequence of candidates within a party list, by sex and incumbency for 2005, 2007 and 2011 elections**

	2005	2007	2011
<b>Sex</b>			
Civic Platform	0.0% [-4.4%; 4.4%]	2.7% [-1.8%; 7.0%]	3.3% [-0.4%; 7.0%]
Democratic Left Alliance	-3.7% [-8.4%; 1.0%]	3.7% [-0.4%; 7.9%]	-0.8% [-4.2%; 2.6%]
Law and Justice	0.0% [-4.2%; 4.3%]	-2.9% [-7.5%; 1.6%]	-3.9% [-7.4%; -0.3%]
League of Polish Families	1.3% [-5.7%; 3.1%]	-	-
Palikot's Movement	-	-	-2.3% [-5.8%; 1.2%]
Polish Peasants' Party	-1.6% [-6.2%; 3.0%]	1.7% [-2.7%; 6.0%]	-4.9% [-8.4%; -1.5%]
Self-Defense	-1.4% [-5.8%; 3.0%]	-	-
Women's Party	-	-18.8% [-45.5%; 7.9%]	-
Other Parties	-2.0% [-3.7%; -0.3%]	0.1% [-2.5%; 2.6%]	-3.3% [-5.5%; -1.2%]
<b>Incumbency</b>			
Women	46.4% [43.1%; 49.6%]	44.3% [40.7%; 47.9%]	47.2% [44.2%; 50.1%]
Men	43.0% [41.7%; 44.3%]	44.0% [43.1%; 45%]	40.2% [38.7%; 41.7%]

*Note:* The main figures are the differences in the predicted probabilities of a candidate's allocation the first position on a party list in a random sequence of candidates. We report on the differences by sex (between women and men for respective parties), and incumbency (differences between incumbents and non-incumbents, separately for women and men). The figures in square brackets are 95 per cent confidence intervals of the main predictions.

The results point to virtual irrelevance of gender in determining candidates' ranking on parties' lists. Holding other variables constant, the effect of gender on the probability of a candidate being ranked high on these lists is universally weak, even if sometimes statistically significant. Most importantly, the impact of gender on a candidate ranking on the lists of the two parties that have dominated all the three elections analyzed – i.e., the Civic Platform and Law and Justice – oscillates around zero if top positions on the lists are considered. On the other hand, the effects of incumbency on a candidate ranking are very strong. They do differ substantially between election years but the latter differences seem to be just an artifact of the number of incumbents who have actually decided to run for reelection. In particular, the number of incumbents contesting the 2005 election was exceptionally small, namely 304 out of 460 (compared to 394 in 2007 and 380 in 2011), which resulted in a higher relative ranking of the running incumbents. Regardless of the exact interpretation of the subtleties present in our results, they point to incumbency as the most crucial predictor of both male and female candidate ranking. The relative independent impact of gender on ranking is very miniscule. Moreover, it does not appear to be conditioned by party identities of candidates. It thus seems that parties, especially the largest ones, share a common practice regarding the composition of their lists. They tend to favor incumbents very strongly. The resulting gender bias in candidate rankings should therefore be attributed to a “freezing” effect whereby unequal rankings are a mere reflection of the existing gender imbalance among incumbent candidates. Our findings thus contradict the claim that Polish parties employ a straightforward practice of placing female candidates on “hard-to-win” positions on the lists (Kunovich 2003). Consequently, at this stage of our analysis we should refute the hypothesis that parties' ranking strategies hinder directly women's electoral performance.

## **Results: Voter choice**

Having examined the impact of gender on candidates' starting positions, we now proceed with an analysis of voter response to male-female electoral races. Negative binomial regression estimates of the equation parameters explaining the numbers of votes cast for candidates in the *Sejm* elections are presented in table 8. Then, in table 9 we present the effects of gender, incumbency and ranking on the number of votes obtained by a candidate. The effects of gender are calculated separately for different parties and the effects of the other two variables distinguish between male and female candidates. The impact of candidate gender on the number of votes varies substantially between election years, especially for the two largest parties – the Civic Platform and Law and Justice. In 2005, female candidates running on behalf of the former party obtained, on average, 892 votes more than their male counterparts, other things being equal. This difference constitutes about 27 per cent of the average number of votes cast for a candidate from that party. Supporters of Law and Justice, on the contrary, seemed to be somewhat reluctant to vote for women although the effect was less substantial. The effects for both these parties are nonetheless statistically insignificant, with corresponding 95 per cent confidence intervals encompassing zero. In 2007, the impact of candidate gender on voter choice had tended towards zero for all parliamentary parties. This tendency should perhaps be attributed to the significant increase in turnout – from 40.57 to 53.88 per cent - between 2005 and 2007. Higher turnout does certainly increase representation of the ideologically moderate part of the electorate. Interestingly, an increase in turnout might reduce not only women's disadvantage but, like in the case of the liberal Civic Platform, also relative disadvantage experienced by male candidates. On the other hand, even in the case of the Polish Peasants' Party - whose supporters come predominantly from rural areas and certainly adhere to the more traditionalist view on women's social roles – the bias against female candidates was substantially less pronounced in 2007.

This equilibrium was seriously disturbed in the most recent election, held in October 2011, presumably by the introduction of gender quotas. The slight increase in women’s descriptive representation in the parliament has come at the cost of a significant decline of the standing of female candidates relative to their male counterparts. Even though turnout reached the level of 48.92 per cent – still substantially higher than in 2005 – female candidates’ relative disadvantage was evident. The only party whose voters did not discriminate against female candidates was the socially progressive Palikot’s Movement. The most drastic bias against women running for a seat in the *Sejm* could be observed in the case of the supporters of Law and Justice. Other things being equal, men running on behalf of this party obtained 1,267 votes more than their female running mates. Even the Civic Platform female candidates - previously enjoying a relative advantage over men – now suffered a (statistically insignificant) disadvantage. It thus seems fair to claim that the new quotas have forced parties to fill their electoral lists with many female candidates who wouldn’t otherwise have been there. Perhaps these candidates had too little experience and too low political status to elicit a positive response from the electorate. Hence these considerable effects of gender on the numbers of votes cast for candidates and the effective deterioration of the relative standing of an “average” female candidate.

**Table 8. Predictors of the Numbers of Votes Cast for Candidates in 2005, 2007 and 2011 Elections: Negative Binomial Regression Estimates**

	2005	2007	2011
<b>Woman</b>	-0.09 (0.12)	0.01 (0.08)	-0.02 (0.06)
<b>Ln(Rank on Party List)</b>	-0.85** (0.03)	-0.83** (0.02)	-0.81** (0.02)
<b>Incumbent</b>	1.03** (0.15)	0.93** (0.09)	0.90** (0.08)
<b>Minister</b>	0.96* (0.49)	0.80** (0.15)	1.29** (0.23)
<b>Civic Platform</b>	2.72** (0.06)	3.10** (0.07)	2.95** (0.09)

<b>Democratic Left Alliance/Left and Democrats</b>	1.83** (0.06)	1.99** (0.06)	1.68** (0.09)
<b>Law and Justice</b>	2.93** (0.08)	2.81** (0.08)	2.92** (0.11)
<b>League of Polish Families</b>	1.71** (0.10)	-	-
<b>Palikot's Movement</b>	-	-	1.89** (0.06)
<b>Polish Peasants' Party</b>	1.81** (0.14)	1.93** (0.07)	1.95** (0.13)
<b>Self-Defense</b>	1.83** (0.06)	-	-
<b>Women's Party</b>	-	-0.51** (0.07)	-
<b>Woman X Ln(Rank on Party List)</b>	0.10* (0.05)	0.06 (0.04)	0.01 (0.02)
<b>Woman X Incumbent</b>	0.20 (0.17)	-0.16* (0.07)	-0.02 (0.11)
<b>Woman X Minister</b>	-0.58 (0.54)	0.12 (0.21)	-0.79** (0.32)
<b>Woman X Civic Platform</b>	0.21 (0.33)	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.12 (0.10)
<b>Woman X</b>			
<b>Democratic Left Alliance/Left and Democrats</b>	-0.18* (0.09)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.24** (0.08)
<b>Woman X Law and Justice</b>	-0.21** (0.07)	-0.07 (0.09)	-0.36** (0.09)
<b>Woman X League of Polish Families</b>	0.06 (0.09)	-	-
<b>Woman X Palikot's Movement</b>	-	-	0.05 (0.07)
<b>Woman X Polish Peasants' Party</b>	-0.49** (0.10)	-0.26** (0.08)	-0.40** (0.08)
<b>Woman X Self-Defense</b>	-0.06 (0.06)	-	-
<b>Woman X Women's Party</b>	-	0.74** (0.12)	-
<b>Votes Cast in Constituency</b>	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
<b>Constant</b>	6.53** (0.13)	6.88** (0.10)	6.64** (0.15)
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	-74,246.83	-46,437.48	-52,276..70
<b>McFadden R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.09	0.12	0.11
<b>N</b>	10,609	6,187	7,035

Notes: \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01 (one-tailed tests). Main entries are unstandardized regression coefficients and the numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Errors are clustered at the level of electoral district (41 clusters).

Unlike in the case of gender, the effects of incumbency and candidate ranking on the numbers of votes seem to be relatively stable over time. The bulk of the temporal dynamics observed here should perhaps be understood as an artifact of variation in turnout and in the numbers of candidates contesting a particular election. The effects are also substantially stronger than the effects of gender. It must be emphasized here that they are also independent from gender as well as from each other. At the same time, as our analysis of party ranking strategies shows (see previous section), incumbency has a universally strong impact on candidate ranking. Women's political underrepresentation thus seems to be "constructed" simultaneously at different levels of the political system. There was a basic shortage of female candidates in 2005 and 2007 but in 2011 it was not the case. The 2011 election therefore reveals much more convincingly the deeper dynamics of gender bias among the political elite. An explanation should start from gender disproportions among incumbent candidates. The "freezing" effect than starts to operate as early as parties compile their lists of candidates. Incumbent candidates, who are predominantly men, are substantially more likely to run from top positions on the lists. High ranking then brings a candidate great benefits in terms of the number of votes<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, independently from his or her ranking, incumbency still significantly increases a candidate's popularity among the electorate. This is where additional gender disproportions are generated, again in accordance with the logic of the "freezing" effect. Legal gender quotas can thus increase women's parliamentary representation only slightly. As our analysis of the 2011 election results has shown, their more noticeable consequence, at least in the short term, is greater visibility of gender bias manifesting itself in voters' straightforward reluctance to support female candidates.

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<sup>7</sup> A question obviously remains as to whether the relationship between candidate ranking and electoral success is endogenous in that it is not only ranking that affects the number of votes cast for a candidate but also the other way around, i.e., that candidates believed to have higher potential to attract votes are placed high on party lists. We however believe this potential for endogeneity is greatly mitigated by inclusion of incumbency and ministerial status variables in our models.

**Table 9. Differences in predicted number of votes received in 2005, 2007 and 2011 elections by sex, incumbency and rank on a party list**

	2005	2007	2011
<b>Sex</b>			
Civic Platform	891 (27.3%) [- 1,331; 3,114]	131 (1.8%) [-1,172; 1,434]	-550 (-8.9%) [-1,220; 120]
Democratic Left Alliance	-121 (-6.7%) [- 412; 169]	-26 (-1.1%) [- 399; 347]	-268 (-20.6%) [- 470; - 65]
Law and Justice	-468 (-13.5%) [-1,292; 357]	-144 (-2.6%) [-1,132; 843]	-1,267 (-27.0%) [- 2,025;- 510]
League of Polish Families	135 (13.1%) [-145; 415]	-	-
Palikot's Movement	-	-	26 (1.5%) [-201; 253]
Polish Peasants' Party	-399 (-41.2%) [- 703; -95]	-383 (-24.5%) [-699; -66]	-519 (-39.6%) [- 817; -220]
Self-Defense	8 (1,0%) [- 400; 417]	-	-
Women's Party	-	196 (47.2%) [92; 300]	-
Other Parties	13 (5.4%) [-29; 55]	9.7 (3.6%) [-33; 52]	- 6 (-2.4%) [-43; 31]
<b>Incumbency</b>			
Women	1,952 (208,0%) [863; 3,042]	2,120 (94,0%) [1,521; 2,720]	1,504 (110,0%) [954; 2,053]
Men	1,450 (124%) [558; 2,343]	2,684 (99,0%) [1,617; 3,752]	1,951 (76,0%) [1,031; 2,870]
<b>Rank</b>			
Women	2,583 (275,0%) [1,560; 3,607]	6,297 (280,0%) [4,705; 7,889]	3,997 (290,0%) [2,978; 5,016]
Men	3,046 (261%) [2,146; 3,946]	6,958 (256%) [5,389; 8,528]	5,105 (200%) [3,528; 6,682]

*Note:* The main figures are the predicted differences in the mean numbers of votes between: a) women and men, for respective parties; b) incumbents and non-incumbents, separately for women and men; c) candidates placed on the first and those placed on the fifth positions on electoral lists, again separately for women and men. The numbers in round brackets, expressed in percentages, are the main figures divided by the average number of votes cast for a candidate from a respective category (e.g., a particular party in the case of the effects of gender). The figures in square brackets are 95 per cent confidence intervals of the main predictions.

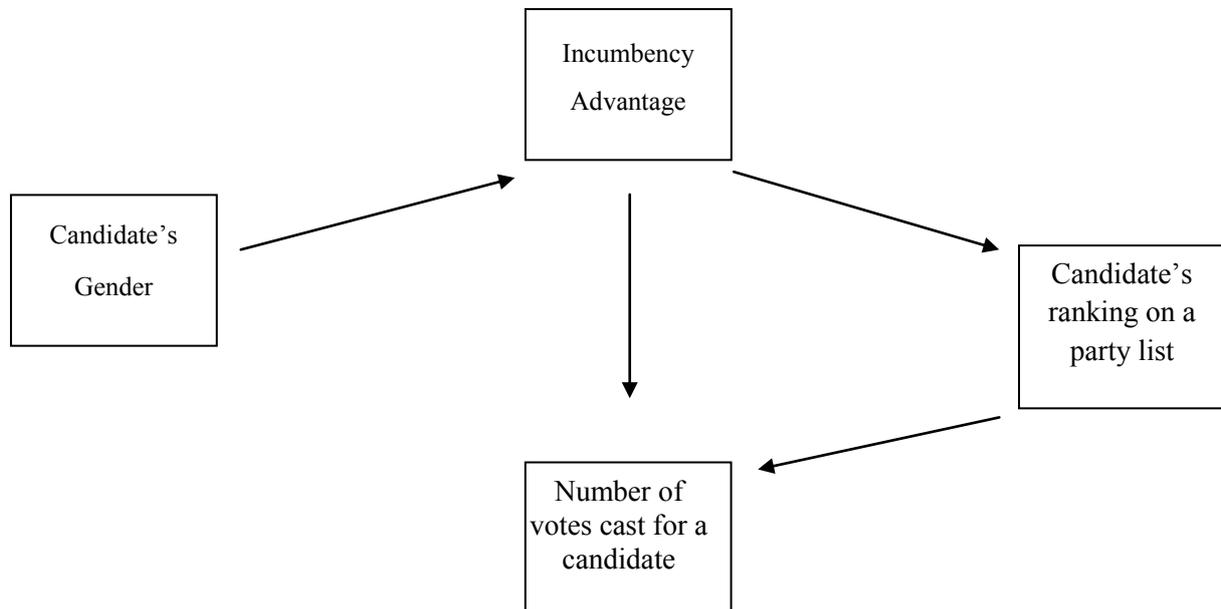
## **Discussion**

The results of our study seem to reinforce the central proposition put forward by the literature on women's political underrepresentation. Like in the US (Darcy and Schramm 1977; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1987; Dolan 1998; Smith and Fox 2001; Thompson and Steckenrider 1997) and Ireland (McElroy and Marsh 2010), the “freezing” mechanism - whereby the substantial incumbency advantages partly preserve the existing gender disproportions among parliamentarians – clearly operates also in Poland.

In the presented analyses the effect of incumbency has been studied by the way of discriminating the impact of its various components. Thus, the complex structure of the incumbency advantage has been uncovered and a more profound understanding of its influence has been gained. As figure 2 illustrates, incumbency status influences candidates' chances of electoral success in two discrete ways. First, it operates as early as parties prepare electoral lists and rank their candidates: incumbents, regardless of their gender, are way more likely to be placed on top positions on party lists than are non-incumbents. Parties' preference order is further reinforced by voters who more readily support candidates placed high on the lists. The other parallel effect of incumbency status concerns voter choice and operates independently of party list rankings: incumbent candidates are far more likely to attract public attention and this popularity affects the number of votes cast at the polls, regardless of a candidate placement on the list. Both these effects are independent from candidate gender. However, as the vast majority of incumbents are men, the end result is partial preservation of women's descriptive political underrepresentation.

Figure 2.: The structure of the incumbency advantage: the direct and indirect impact of parliamentary experience on candidate's chances of electoral success.

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Considering the model described above and the dual effect of the incumbency advantage - in terms of parties' and voters' rankings - two conclusions of general importance should be drawn. First and foremost, our analysis reinforces the findings of McElroy and Marsh's (2010) study by showing that in Poland, as in Ireland, voters are not particularly inclined to discriminate against female candidates. Such regularity observed in a predominantly Catholic country - whose citizens are often expected to adhere to the traditionalist viewpoint on women's social roles - seems singularly interesting in the context of the vast body of literature hypothesizing the opposite relation (cf. Rule 1984; 1987). Second, we find that political parties do not discriminate against women while ranking their candidates. This conclusion is of particular importance. It suggests, albeit indirectly, that there might be no gender bias in internal party functioning and that the causes of the relatively small numbers of women contesting the elections should be traced elsewhere.

These two conclusions beg some further consideration. If both parties – in terms of their rankings of candidates - and voters remain indifferent about candidate gender, then the low proportion of female legislators should be attributed to the low number of women actually contesting the elections. Obviously, this was the case in 2005 and 2007 races, when the ratio of female contesters was 24.5 and 23 per cent. Thus, as one might argue, the introduction of mandatory gender quotas, requiring effectively that parties place more women on their lists, should bring a substantial increase in the proportion of female legislators. However, the results of the most recent election of 2011, held under the rule of a new quota law, cast some doubt as to obviousness of this relationship; the considerable, by nearly a hundred per cent, increase in the proportion of women among candidates contesting the election did not bring an equivalent increase in the number of women winning seats in the *Sejm*. On the contrary, as our analysis shows, the implementation of mandatory gender quotas on parties' electoral lists has led to a situation when voters actually started to discriminate against women. This is most likely due to the fact that the fulfillment of legal requirements was the sole reason why parties included so many women on their lists. As a result, many female candidates with little political experience and low political status populated the lists causing voters' negative reaction. Despite this short-term lack of success of gender quotas in Poland, we might expect that in the long run the enhanced presence of female candidates in the political recruitment process would foster women's political interest and engagement. As some scholars argue, gender quotas foster women's "self-esteem, confidence, and motivation" in general (Nanivadekar 2006). In this respect, however, the results of the research on the long-term consequences of gender quotas in Latin America leaves little room for optimism. As Zattenberg (2009) concludes, the introduction of gender quotas in seventeen Latin American countries did not lead to substantially higher levels of women's political engagement. The next election to the *Sejm*, scheduled for 2015 (assuming no premature

dissolution of the chamber), should be an opportunity to study long-term effects of gender quotas in Poland and to draw more definite conclusions as to their impact on women's political representation in this particularly interesting context.

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