

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beating the Odds: Women's Leadership in International Organizations

Maria V. Sokolova^{1*} , Alisa DiCaprio² , Nicole Bivens Collinson³ and Zyra Quirante⁴

¹International Institute in Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland; ²R3, New York City, NY, USA; ³Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, P.A., Washington, DC, USA and ⁴University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, Baltimore, MD, USA
*Corresponding author. Email: Sokolova.mar@gmail.com

(Received 25 July 2022; revised 05 December 2022; accepted 31 January 2023)

Abstract

Despite gains at lower levels, women have made limited inroads into leadership roles in international organizations. Using a novel data set of both nominees and selected heads of 129 international organizations, we uncover several empirical patterns. Women's representation at the highest levels remains far below parity but has been improving steadily since the 1990s. One caveat is that this improvement has only occurred in a subset of institutions, which suggests a concentration of women leaders. Based on the available data, we examine whether the appointment of a woman leader impacts equality in the institution's overall staffing profile. We find that such changes occur only once there is a history of appointing women. We also look at the nominations process and find that when women are included in the nominee pool, they tend to be selected, although often they are absent. Our analysis contributes much-needed data to the broader literature on leadership in international organizations and introduces a new data set with a range of other potential applications.

Keywords: international organization; women; leadership

The question of whether international organizations have achieved gender equality remains unanswered. Although some international organizations have recently appointed woman leaders, there has been little examination of the overall history of gender trends among leaders of international organizations. This is somewhat surprising given that gender equality is a core commitment of the United Nations (UN), codified in international law and various policy statements, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet the difficulty of achieving stated goals suggests a deeper problem. In 2017, the UN secretary

general publicly noted the lack of progress and voiced the UN's commitment to increasing the number of women in top positions in the UN Secretariat by 2028.¹ Establishing gender equality among the leadership of international organizations is more than an ethical decision; it is necessary to fully represent the communities that these organizations serve.² Having women in leadership positions also encourages the next generation to consider similar career paths by reinforcing norms that women are fully acceptable and expected as leaders.

In this article, we explore the leadership appointment process in 129 international organizations, analyzing both the likelihood that the appointee will be a woman and the frequency with which women candidates appear in the pool of nominees. Our estimates show that since 1990, women leaders were chosen in only 25% of the top multilateral institutions. We find that women are underrepresented both in nominations and among selected candidates for multilateral positions. We also find that when they are selected, women tend to head the same subset of institutions. Thus, focusing on the total number of women has the effect of obscuring the fact that some international organizations appear to be "set aside" for women leaders, while others have never had a woman head.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows: The next section presents the background of the research and provides the conceptual framework. Then we describe the database and how the data were collected. Next, we provide the empirical patterns in the data that we uncovered, showing, for example, that women leaders are clustered in the same institutions. We next describe how we formulated and tested the hypotheses and discuss the obtained results. The main conclusions summarize the key takeaways and future research.

What We Know about Gender Progress in International Organizations

Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals stipulates the need to counteract women's underrepresentation in leadership in political, economic, and public life.³ Yet, the UN and other international institutions are nearly always run by men and maintain institutional staff with an unequal gender profile. This has become such a clear problem that in 2017, the UN felt it necessary to create the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. In this article, we explore whether such recognition has been translated into action.

There are a number of studies of women's representation in such roles as parliamentarians (Jankowski, Marcinkiewicz, and Gwiazda 2019; Johnson and Williams 2020), mayors (Ferreira and Gyourko 2014), business owners (Gompers and Wang 2017; Presbitero, Rabellotti, and Piras 2014), and corporate managers (Skaggs, Stainback, and Duncan 2012; Valls Martinez and Rambaud 2019), but the literature thins out considerably when looking at international organizations. This dearth of analysis is a data issue—at the highest levels, female heads are sufficiently rare that it is difficult to create anything beyond individual case studies.

A notable exception is the growing body of work on female CEOs. This literature examines how CEO gender impacts firm outcomes (Flabbi et al.

2019) and the value of career-relevant experience (Fitzsimmons, Paulsen, and Callan 2014). Some of this literature is informative for our study. For example, when and how woman leaders are appointed determines their impact. Existing work highlights that quotas help increase the number of women leaders (Beaman et al. 2009; Haack 2017) and that the appointment of women typically occurs during times of crisis (e.g., Haack 2014; Ryan, Haslam, and Postmes 2007); two examples are the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).⁴

While there is extensive literature on women's representation in politics and the corporate world (e.g., Ferreira and Gyourko 2014; Fitzsimmons, Paulsen, and Callan 2014; Flabbi et al. 2019), our article expands the analysis of female leadership roles to include heads of international organizations (IOs). We accomplish this by building a new data set specifically focused on nominees and selected heads of IOs from 1930 to 2020. To our knowledge, our data set is the first to provide data on women at this level.

We felt that it was important to expand the literature to include IOs beyond the UN in order to acknowledge that there are other organizations that also hold an important place in the global economy. This expanded set of IOs represents institutions that have international impact from the student level to the geopolitical level. In most of these institutions, membership is at the state level. Given their global membership, we might expect that such institutions would reflect the efforts toward gender equality that are well underway in many nations. In addition, these institutions, through their funding of global initiatives, can be seen as impacting the overall policy agenda through their own programming (Shepherd and Stone 2017).

Our focus on IOs draws inspiration from the literature on feminist institutionalism, which introduces a gender lens to institutional practices and outcomes (see, e.g., Kenny 2007; Mackay and Waylen 2009). Our data on nominations and selection of institutional heads lends support to the thesis that institutions are gendered in both formal and informal ways. This literature explores how gender-positive change might be encouraged in both existing and new institutions (Chappell 2011; Holmes 2020; Thomson 2018). We use our data set to show that there is a time lag in the impact of leadership change on staffing parity, which adds some nuance to questions about the timeline of gender-positive change. Finally, this literature acknowledges the methodological challenges associated with capturing gender impacts (Kenny 2014). Our data set and quantitative approach address this challenge and support the findings of the literature's case-study-based approaches.

At the theoretical level, our article contributes to the cross-disciplinary exploration of the causes for the lack of gender parity in the overall workforce. One theory is that there are not enough junior women to move up to leadership roles. Much of this literature focuses on the cultural and institutional barriers to female participation (e.g., ADB 2015; Baron 1994; Beaman et al. 2009). Another theory is that there are unequal power structures that either assign certain roles to women or omit women from certain positions (e.g., Blackmon 2021). International institutions are guilty of perpetuating this bifurcation of masculinity at the top and femininities as subordinate (Prügl 2016). By collecting data on the

candidate pool as well as those who are serving or who have served in leadership roles, we identify the nomination stage as part of the reason why gender parity is bottlenecked in the selection process for IO heads.

In addition to highlighting the importance of the recruitment pipeline, research has also explored the intergenerational nature of female leadership. This vein of work examines whether female leaders today promote the selection of future female leaders and reduce biases regarding the suitability of a woman for the job (see, e.g., Beaman et al. 2009; Cohen, Broschak, and Haveman 1998; Ferreira and Gyourko 2014; Jankowski, Marcinkiewicz, and Gwiazda 2019; Virick and Greer 2012). Our data show that institutions with women leaders are more likely than those headed by men to appoint women as second in command. Additionally, institutions that have had more than one woman at the helm exhibit markedly more parity in general staffing than those that have not had such experience.

A New Data Set on Women Leaders in Institutions

To explore the questions we had about women's leadership in institutions, we created a novel data set. The following subsections describe both the institutions we included and how the data were collected.

Institutions in the Database

To construct our database, we began by defining the universe of IOs using three parameters. First, we included all multilateral institutions, which we defined as those having three or more countries as members. This includes all the UN institutions and many regional bodies. Second, we made an effort to ensure that the included institutions operated at the highest level of sovereignty and across a variety of issues. For example, we included the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat, but not the ASEAN Free Trade Area Council, which only deals with trade. Third, we added as many large, global international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) for which we could find data. NGOs, by definition, do not have nation-states as members, yet they are involved in global governance, so we used their data to see whether their inclusion would change the outcomes for the multilateral institutions (it did not). Finally, as a caveat, we excluded any institutions that met these parameters but for which we could not find any consistent historical data about the leaders or nominees.

Among the included institutions, the agencies of the UN provided the most consistent and publicly available data. We include all agencies, departments, and commissions that serve the UN principal organs according to the publicly available UN System organizational structure, which also includes Bretton Woods Institutions.⁵ Different institutions of the UN have different sizes, mandates, and report to different UN principal organs. These differences are taken into account in our estimations. To test our results, we ran our estimations only on the UN subsample and found that it made no difference—appointments of women in the UN have the same pattern as our overall data set.

Regionally, we include both regional development banks like the Asian Development Bank and governance bodies of regional trade blocks like the African Union. We include regional groups because they cover a broad spectrum of issues, including trade policy as well as human rights, environment, climate, and gender. Secretariats of these regional blocks have therefore taken on a role of negotiation and policy forums for issues that are generally debated in the UN and its agencies.

Our inclusion of INGOs recognizes that recent years have seen the increasing influence of nonstate actors over global governance institutions that contribute to the governance functions of the UN system. To account for this trend, our data set includes INGOs with a stated interest in global governance. Availability of data for this group of institutions is limited, and we hope to expand it as more data become available.

Since our data set is limited by the availability of data, we acknowledge that there are certainly institutions that should be included but are not.⁶ We control for the lack of universality of institutions by using fixed-effects estimations that control for institution-specific, time-invariant characteristics. Table 1 describes the data set by institutional group.

We have leadership data for the full life span of 123 organizations. The remaining 6 organizations have only partial data. Regarding vice leadership, data have been collected for 94 organizations. However, these data can only be used for descriptive purposes as there are changes in structures and numbers of deputies, along with the common appointment of “special” deputies. The number of identified deputies varies from 1 to 6. For 38 of 129 organizations, we also have data on the gender of nominees for leadership positions. For 30 of the 129 IOs, we have data on staff gender composition (see Appendix 3).

Data Sources

We acquired information on candidates from public documents released by the UN and other IOs through their websites, annual reports, internal documents, and press releases. We submitted multiple requests to the UN Dag Hammarskjöld

Table 1. Data set by institutional group

Type	Count
United Nations Secretariat	76
Institutions from the wider UN System	21
INGOs	23
Regional IGOs	9
Total	129

Sources: UN institutions drawn from <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-system>; international NGO (INGO) list drawn from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_non-governmental_organization; regional intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) include development banks as recognized by the U.S. Treasury: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/international/multilateral-development-banks>; and secretariats of regional INGOs include one from each major region: ASEAN, African Union, the European Union, and the Organization of American States.

Library to obtain information and sources regarding the candidates for high-level positions and missing data on former leaders in the UN that were not readily available from public sources. Our ability to access complete data was limited by confidential or unavailable information. The data set was last updated in April 2021, with the appointment information stopping on December 31, 2020.

In most UN agencies, funds, and programs, the leader's title is associated with "secretary general" or "director general." In other institutions, the title is often "president." We differentiate the type of appointment as follows:

- "Appointed by UNSG"—when the UN secretary general has the power of appointing/approving appointment
- "Appointed by member states"—when there is a general council or similar structure of member countries approving the head of organization
- "Appointed by UNGA"—when the decision comes from the UN General Assembly or is approved by it
- "Internal executive decision"—when leaders are chosen, appointed, or hired through internal organizational procedures or open hires through a job market

Interim appointments are not included in our estimations.⁷ In the case of the president of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), we excluded observations for this position in instances of "emergency" or "special" assemblies. These assemblies tend to follow a faster pace and do not represent the conventional selection process. Appointments for less than one year were also omitted.

With respect to vice leaders, we based our research on available information about individuals holding the title of "deputy" to the leader of the organization in their title or "deputy" for a specific thematic group. We use World Bank classifications for the regions of origin of the leaders. [Appendix 3](#) contains the list of organizations for which the information regarding vice leaders was collected. Such information is fragmented and sometimes depends on the specific period or program; for example, it is not clear whether a "deputy for special programs" position remains beyond the specific program. We also did not differentiate between deputies (or "directors") for administrative issues and functional departments, as not every institution has a clear hierarchical structure at the top. Overall, the information was collected for 94 institutions, with varying information on the number of vice leaders found—from two up to seven.

Empirical Patterns in the Data

The data set we created offers quantitative insight into women's changing fortunes in the leadership of IOs. The literature has detailed the formal and informal barriers that limit their attainment (Haslam and Ryan 2008; McKinsey & Company 2019). Our data can show empirically whether this has, in fact, changed over time.

We collected information on 129 IOs with data spanning 1930–2021, which is the longest timespan the data allowed. For presentation and estimation purposes, we look at the data since 1990 because women's representation was almost nonexistent in our data between 1930 and 1990.⁸

A number of interesting patterns are revealed by our research. First, while women are better represented today than at any other time in history, they are still nowhere near parity. Second, when there are women candidates under consideration, they are likely to be selected. Perhaps most unexpected is the intergenerational nature of increased general institutional gender parity. That is, an organization's first woman head is not associated with any change in overall staffing parity, but parity in staffing patterns increases in IOs that have had more than one woman leader. We describe each of these findings in detail next.

Women Leaders Have Yet to Achieve Parity

Most IOs claim to support diversity of gender and geographic origin in both their formal and informal rules. And certainly, since the 1990s, both measures have improved as the number of women leaders has increased and the prevalence of male leaders of European origin has decreased. Our data reflect this improvement but also reveal some underlying problems with this positive result. A key issue is that there is a dearth of women being appointed at the first step of the accession process. Absent greater representation in the first tier of leadership positions, the pool from which to nominate and draw organizational leaders is restricted.

Since 1990, the overall number of women leaders has increased. Rising from 0% of leaders of multilateral organizations in 1990 to 45% by 2021, this signals significant progress toward a more equitable gender representation (see Figure 1). It should be further noted that the number of women leaders in “major” international institutions also doubled during the observed period.

There is also a geographic component to women’s appointments. While candidate pools have become relatively more diverse and, overall, the prevalence of

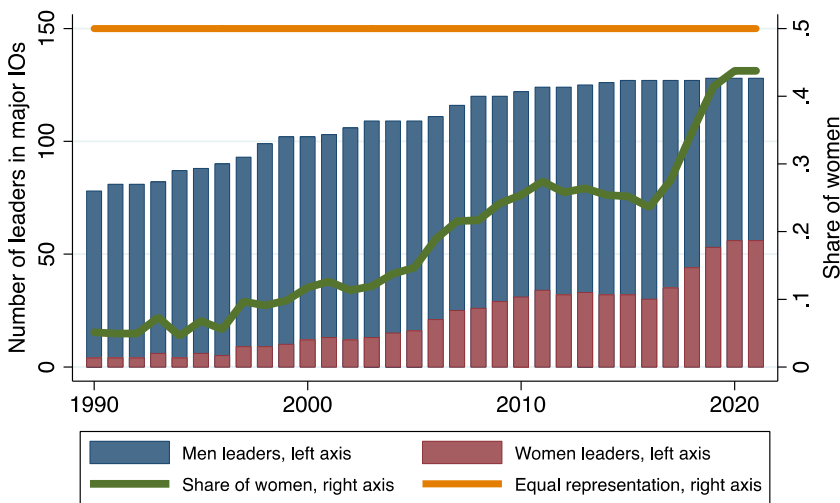


Figure 1. Distribution of leaders in major international organizations, by gender, since 1990. Source: Authors’ calculations. Left axis, number of institutions and their leaders’ gender breakdown. See Appendix 3 for the list of institutions.

Table 2. Distribution of international institutions by share of women leaders appointed, 1990–2020

Number of Women Appointed to Leadership Positions in an Institution	Number of Institutions	Total Number of Appointment Opportunities in These Institutions	Number of Women Reappointments
0	51	198	0
1	26	119	9
2	21	100	14
3	23	121	13
4	4	51	4
5	2	23	1
6	1	12	0
Total	128	624	41

Notes: *Reappointments* refers to women who were appointed to more than one term in an institution. The total number of institutions included in this table is 128 rather than 129, since data on the head of the African Development Bank are missing. Source: Authors' research.

Europe as a region of origin has declined, we find that women of European or North American origin are more likely to be appointed. Therefore, we control for the geographic origin of the leaders in our analysis.⁹ Strikingly, almost half (51) of the 129 institutions in our sample have never had a woman appointed or elected to the top leadership role. Even among institutions that have had a woman head, the historical data are surprisingly uneven (see Table 2). On average, only one in four appointments go to a woman, with the majority of these appointments occurring in the last decade. Among the institutions that have had women leaders, 61% of women's appointments are attributable to only 30 institutions (23% of the sample).

There are some notable outliers, however. The only institution that has had six women appointed to leadership positions is the UN Department of Management—a department that is largely responsible for the human resources strategy of the UN. The top institutions that have appointed women more than three times include United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The data gathered suggest that women are appointed in smaller¹⁰ or less prominent agencies.¹¹ This may indicate, as per Duerst-Lahti (1997), that offices that have had women leaders have been “regendered as female” or that these institutions become more comfortable with women leaders.

Women Leaders Contribute to a More Equal Internal Gender Composition

A common assumption about workplace gender equality is that having a woman as the head of an organization triggers higher gender parity inside the institution (Kunze and Miller 2017). Recently this assumption has been shown not to be the case at the IMF (Blackmon 2021), but there is no large-scale research on this

topic. Our data allow us to explore these connections from two different angles: do women leaders also have a woman as their second in command, and does the overall staffing gender composition change when there is a woman leader?

The second-in-command angle is interesting. We might expect that there is something of a glass ceiling, such that women are able to reach second-in-command positions even if they are not appointed as the head of an organization. Based on the information collected for 94 institutions, we find that the average share of women in “second-in-charge” positions for all IOs is a respectable 45%. However, when we only include organizations that have never had a woman leader, their share drops to 39%. This statistic, therefore, shows that institutions that have never had a woman leader do not appear to overcompensate by appointing a woman to the second-in-command position. Our data also show that institutions that have had women leaders have a more equal internal distribution of women in vice leadership positions—and it is even more prevalent if the organization has historically had women in the highest post.

The next question we examine is whether the presence of women leaders changes the internal gender composition of staff. We use publicly available information on staff composition for 30 UN organizations that are a part of our data set.¹² We find, first of all, that since 2003, the average number of women professional staff (including both employees and managers) has increased. The female proportion of staff in these organizations rose from 37% in 2003 to 45% in 2019. But does this trajectory change if a woman heads the organization? Looking at the cumulative order of the woman leader (Figure 2), we see that institutions that have never had a woman leader (first two bars) have the lowest shares of women staff (this includes professionals and managers but excludes administrative staff). Notably, the more women leaders an institution has had, the higher the share of women among the staff.

The data thus suggest that having more than one woman leader in an organization can bring greater gender parity over time. Therefore, we provide crucial context for Blackmon’s (2021) assertion that Christine Lagarde’s appointment had no effect on the staff gender composition at the IMF: as Lagarde was the first appointed woman, we would not expect any change until the institutions had subsequently appointed women leaders.

The Candidate Pool Matters as Much as the Leader

One of the reasons offered for the persistent lack of equal gender representation in top leadership is that it is difficult to find sufficient numbers of women candidates with the necessary qualifications. To explore this potential reason, we execute the following thought experiment: if the lack of women leaders comes from an absence of enough qualified women, then the presence of more qualified women candidates should have a positive effect on electing a woman to a leadership position.

We collected data on the candidate pool for the top job in 89 appointments in 38 IOs,¹³ compiling the information on the candidate short list. We find, as expected, that there is nothing close to parity in the pool of prospective nominees. Each institution short-lists an average of four candidates. Among

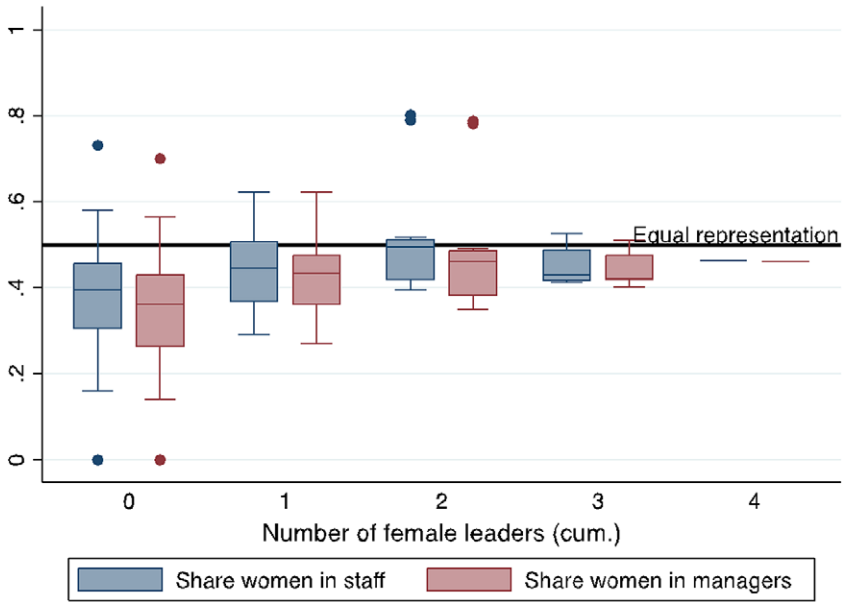


Figure 2. Staff gender composition in 30 UN agencies, by the number of women leaders appointed in the institution.

Source: Authors' calculations based on UN data. See Appendix 3 (column 5) for the list of institutions.

these candidates, 0.75 candidates—fewer than one in four—is a woman. These data suggest two hypotheses. First, if we assume that all short-listed candidates are fully qualified, then clearly qualified women exist (H_1). Second, having a higher share of women on the short list should be associated with a higher probability of electing a woman leader (H_2). We test this hypothesis on our data set in the next section.

Methodology and Estimations

Having gathered the data on key selection IOs, in this section, we provide measurable hypotheses that can be tested to show whether the selection of women leaders has a path dependency based on the institution's history. We use the collected data to explore two hypotheses in particular. First, if a woman has been appointed to the lead position in an organization, does that signal a greater propensity to appoint subsequent women to the leadership position? Second, does the proportion of women candidates impact the likelihood of a woman being chosen?

Women Are More Likely to Head Institutions That Have Already Had a Woman in Leadership (H_1)

Despite the rising share of women leaders, the previous section showed that it is often the same institutions that continually nominate women to leadership

roles. To test this relationship empirically, we hypothesize that the presence of a woman leader in the past has a significant positive effect on having a woman leader in the future:

$$P_{inst}^{fem} = \beta_1 Hist_{fem} + \beta_2 Controls_{inst} + \beta_3 Controls_{fem} + FE_{inst} + FE_{time} + \epsilon$$

In the main panel logit specification, we define $P^{fem} = 1$ as the probability of having a woman leader in the institution (*inst*), meaning that every year there is a woman leader it is equal to unity, and zero when there is a man. In the alternative specification, we look at the $P^{fem} = 1$ as the election of a woman, 0 election of a man, and missing values for the “continuous” years of the appointment.

We try both fixed- and random-effects estimations. By using fixed effects, we control for institution-variant, time-invariant characteristics, such as location of the institution, specific mandate, structure, and size. When using random effects, we assume that these unobserved characteristics (which we do not directly control in the model) are not “stable” throughout the observed period and change randomly. These types of models are used to find a common pattern in a broad set of data, such as we constructed.

Acknowledging that the length of appointment might skew the data, we include a specification for election years only and drop observations of non-election years. Here, the years of appointment are 1 for women and 0 for men, with the rest of the years of appointment recorded as “missing.” It is important to note that we do not make a distinction if another woman leader immediately followed or not after the appointment of the woman. While this is an important issue to distinguish for qualitative research, because of the rarity of these cases, it would make empirical estimation not converge.

Our second hypothesis considers the importance of women’s presence in the nominee pool. If the lack of women leaders is related to the lack of women candidates, then having more women candidates should have a positive effect on the probability of electing a woman. Table 3 presents the results of the baseline estimations of the first hypothesis. We see that the previous presence of a woman leader has a significant impact on the possibility of electing a woman, increasing the log odds of electing a woman leader. A panel linear regression produces biased results with a 0/1 outcome variable; hence, our key estimation technique of interest is the logistic regression. The observation count falls from 3,436 to almost half the sample for the fixed-effects estimations because so many institutions have never had a woman leader.

The rarity of having a woman leader until recently explains why there is no significance of the coefficient in estimations with a year fixed effect in columns (4) and (6)—women leaders are disproportionately underrepresented until late in the second decade of the 2000s. This observed delay is supported when, instead of fixed- or random-effects logistic regression, we look into population-averaged logistic regression (columns [7] and [8]). Overall, the log odds of having a woman leader in any IO since 1990 were about two times higher if there was a history of having women leaders previously.

Table 3. Estimation results (women leaders are more likely when there has been a woman leader before)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	xtreg	xtreg	xtlogit re	xtlogit re	xtlogit fe	xtlogit fe	xtlogit pa	xtlogit pa
Variables								
Previouswoman leader	0.38*** (0.02)	0.27*** (0.02)	2.12*** (0.40)	0.58 (0.45)	1.83*** (0.17)	0.16 (0.21)	1.74*** (0.13)	0.88*** (0.13)
			–	–			–	–
Constant	0.13*** (0.01)	0.07** (0.03)	2.98*** (0.30)	4.92*** (0.80)			1.77*** (0.13)	2.58*** (0.41)
Observations	3,436	3,436	3,436	3,436	1,849	1,849	3,436	3,436
R ²	0.09	0.13						
Number of institutions	123	123	123	123	66	66	123	123
Institution			RE	RE	FE	FE	PA	PA
Year				FE		FE		FE
Pseudo R ²					0.0807	0.186		

Notes: Dependent variable: having a woman leader coded 1. Standard errors in parentheses; where possible (xtreg, xtlogit with random effects). standard errors are clustered at the level of institution. *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$.

As a robustness check, we also performed estimations on the UN subsets of the data. Since there is a different level of seniority and influence of leaders in the units of the system, we also tried different subsamples. The estimations hold and some coefficients get higher significance, especially for the subsample with only “more senior” positions.¹⁴ This confirms that the concentration of women leaders is an overall pattern in IOs, not driven by any specific type of institutions.

Further, geographic origin of the leader and the type of the appointment can influence the election of women to top positions. Adding controls for origin and type of leadership position, we get a similar picture, presented in [Table 4](#).

The results of regressions with controls confirm that, indeed, there is a dependency on having a history of women leaders for another woman leader to be elected. Moreover, the election of a woman is far more likely for a woman from North America (or Latin America and Caribbean, as seen in column (5), but this result is dependent on the type of estimation), with log odds doubling for such candidates.

Interestingly, having member states decide on the election process has a negative effect on the probability of electing a woman. Other literature on this topic points to two factors that create this negative probability: first, the more political representatives are involved, the less likely they are to come to an agreement of having a woman leader as it is rather an uncommon and foreign occurrence; second, there is a projection in national capitals that they are committed to women’s representation in IOs, yet there is a dearth of women who have been elevated to senior positions within the countries, thus thinning the pool of eligible candidates. Another notable finding is that the UN secretary general’s efforts to reinforce the commitment to achieving gender parity drive the coefficient to be positive, but the effect is insignificant. It could be that this effect will become statistically significant as more time passes.

It is remarkable that based on the collected data, there are no appointment processes that have a significant and positive impact on the election of women leaders. This absence of the positive effect of type of appointment implies that institutional characteristics are less important than an individual’s commitment to leadership. A woman leader is less likely to emerge as a result of a certain institutional appointment structure but needs to be campaigned for on a case-by-case basis.

The results of the candidate pool estimations are presented in [Table 5](#). Log odds are difficult to interpret, so to see the relevance of the established effect, we looked at the marginal effects of various estimation models, presented in [Table 5](#) for estimations without year fixed effects (as the coefficient is not significant for them).

In our benchmark estimation, if an institution has never had a woman leader, the overall probability of electing a woman leader is 50%. This percentage is representative of the population breakdown globally. By contrast, for institutions that have had a woman leader before, this probability goes up to 86%, implying that women leaders are more likely to be appointed when there has been a woman leader before. Taking into account that in 47% of the studied institutions there has never been a woman leader, this suggests a concentration of women leaders in certain institutions and their absence in others.

Table 4. Results with controls

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	xtreg	xtreg	xtlogit re	xtlogit re	xtlogit fe	xtlogit fe	xtlogit pa	xtlogit pa
Variables								
Previous woman leader	0.38*** (0.06)	0.26*** (0.06)	2.22*** (0.38)	0.51 (0.45)	1.97*** (0.17)	0.11 (0.23)	1.84*** (0.32)	0.99*** (0.32)
Leader origin								
Asia	-0.00 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.00 (0.71)	-0.21 (0.84)	-0.04 (0.27)	-0.29 (0.30)	-0.01 (0.52)	-0.02 (0.49)
Europe	-0.00 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	-0.13 (0.67)	-0.23 (0.77)	-0.12 (0.25)	-0.26 (0.28)	-0.12 (0.48)	-0.01 (0.45)
Latin Am. & Caribbean	0.07 (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	0.78 (0.75)	0.20 (0.90)	0.73** (0.32)	0.04 (0.34)	0.56 (0.48)	0.43 (0.46)
North America	0.20*** (0.08)	0.24*** (0.07)	1.81** (0.77)	2.24*** (0.84)	1.98*** (0.31)	2.35*** (0.34)	1.15** (0.47)	1.24*** (0.44)
Oceania	-0.03 (0.16)	-0.02 (0.15)	0.01 (1.59)	-0.12 (1.47)	0.07 (0.44)	-0.09 (0.45)	-0.08 (1.35)	-0.10 (1.08)
Appointment type								
Internal executive			-1.61** (0.70)	-2.06** (0.84)			-0.61 (0.52)	-0.75 (0.48)

(Continued)

Table 4. *Continued*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	xtreg	xtreg	xtlogit re	xtlogit re	xtlogit fe	xtlogit fe	xtlogit pa	xtlogit pa
Member states			-4.06***	-4.55***			-1.22*	-1.22
			(1.15)	(1.32)			(0.68)	(0.75)
UNGA			-1.26	-0.59			-0.46	-0.58
			(1.30)	(1.50)			(0.81)	(0.74)
UNSG			0.03	0.26			0.37	0.28
			(0.54)	(0.69)			(0.45)	(0.40)
			-	-			-	-
Constant	0.09**	0.01	2.39***	4.29***			1.93***	2.48***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.74)	(1.08)			(0.61)	(0.63)
Observations	3,350	3,350	3,350	3,350	1,833	1,833	3,350	3,350
R ²	0.12	0.17						
Number of d_inst	121	121	121	121	66	66	121	121
Institution effects	RE	FE	RE	RE	FE	FE	PA	PA
Year effects		FE		FE		FE		FE
Pseudo R ²					0.131	0.248		

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses.
 ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1.

Table 5. Estimation results (H_2 : Having more women candidates should positively impact the election of a woman)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	xtprobit pa	xtprobit pa	xtprobit pa	xtlogit pa	xtlogit pa	xtlogit pa
Variables						
Share of women candidates	3.254*** (0.986)	3.747*** (1.329)	3.710*** (1.316)	5.738*** (1.894)	6.454*** (2.429)	6.588*** (2.417)
Previous woman leader			1.466** (0.731)			2.530* (1.324)
	-	-	-	-	-	-
Constant	1.534*** (0.325)	1.362** (0.636)	1.571** (0.680)	2.653*** (0.647)	2.518** (1.134)	3.049** (1.272)
Observations	65	47	47	65	47	47
Number of institutions	35	32	32	35	32	32
Year		FE	FE		FE	FE

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.
 *** $p < .01$;
 ** $p < .05$;
 * $p < .1$.

Table 6. Probability of having a woman leader in an institution

	No Previous Experience of Having a Woman Leader	Previous Experience with Having a Woman Leader
Logit, fe	0.5	0.86
Logit, fe w/controls	0.56	0.89
Logit, re	0.15	0.38
Logit, re w/controls	0.13	0.36
Logit, pa	0.14	0.49
Logit, pa w/controls	0.12	0.46
Probit, re	0.15	0.40
Probit, re w/controls	0.18	0.23
Probit, pa	0.15	0.49
Probit, pa w/controls	0.15	0.32

Source: Authors' calculations.

Holding all other variables constant, the probability of having a woman leader more than doubles when there has been a woman leader at some point in the history of the organization. As shown in Table 4, the marginal effect varies by the type of the model chosen (rows 1–8). Allowing for within-institution error correlation to control for institution-specific patterns, having had a woman elected increases on average the probability of having a new woman elected up to 60%.

Overall, our estimations show that having had a woman leader before doubles the odds of another woman being elected as a leader. When we look at the influence of the type of estimation, we find the result robust to probit (both for population averages and random effects models)—implying that our results are not specific to the choice of model.

Having More Women Candidates Will Result in More Frequent Election of Women Leaders (H_2)

In this modeling strategy, $Share_FemCandidates_{inst,year}$ is the share of women among the candidates' list for the top position:

$$P_{inst}^{fem} = \beta_1 Hist_{fem} + \beta_2 Share.FemCandidates_{inst,year} + FE_{inst} + \epsilon$$

We run these estimations on a different, much smaller data set than we used for H_1 , as data on nominees are very hard to acquire. We do not control for year fixed effects because for most of the institutions, we have information on only one or two elections, but we do control for institution-specific fixed effects. In the estimation with controls, we add the information on the presence of previous women leaders. The benchmark equations are probit because of the small sample size, selection from the key data set (public information about nominations can represent self-selection into the sample), and unbalanced information about institutions.

With regard to H_2 , the results in Table 5 show that, overall, there is a positive relationship between the share of women candidates and the election of a woman leader. This relationship implies that when women are included on the short lists for top positions, the likelihood that they will be elected is greater. In addition, we see a similar effect of historical dependency in these elections: a history of having a woman leader shows a positive effect on the subsequent election of a woman leader, confirming our previous empirical findings. Our estimations suggest that there is a certain path dependency in electing a woman leader. Looking at the effect of increasing the share of women candidates from none to half, the probability of a woman being chosen is 62%—higher than the 50% we found when half the candidates are women. However, when we control for the presence of a previous woman in a leadership position, the probability becomes more aligned with women candidates' representation at 51%.

From our sample of 65 election rounds,¹⁵ there were no woman candidates in 26 election rounds, suggesting a selection bias in the candidate selection. When women are seriously considered and have fair representation,¹⁶ the odds are in

their favor. And once a woman has taken a leadership position, subsequent elections give better chances to women.

Outliers: Institutions That Have Never Appointed Women Leaders

Several empirical patterns can be tested and observed when looking at the 51 IO institutions that have never appointed a woman leader. First, it is commonly believed that women tend to be appointed to smaller, less important institutions. We have data on size¹⁷ for 63 of 129 institutions in 2020 (21 non-appointers, 43 appointers). At first glance, our data do not appear to support the contention that non-appointing institutions are smaller. However, once we omit the four mega-sized outliers (World Health Organization, World Food Programme, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) from the observations (all of them have had at least one woman leader), we find that the institutions that have never had a woman leader are 48% larger than institutions that have had a woman leader. It should be noted that size of an institution as reported is not an accurate measure of the influence of that institution, since each tends to count employee types differently—some do not include consultants or staff on contracts not through headquarters, for example.

Another common suspicion is that women tend to be appointed to institutions with a “soft” portfolio. To examine this, we go back to our original data set of 129 institutions and look at the topics covered by the institutions in our data set. While acknowledging the complexity of some institutional mandates, we use the broad category of the mandate to classify organizations.¹⁸ We find that in 2020, there was generally as many institutions that had appointed a woman leader as had not. Science is a notable exception that supports the claim. However, if we look at the change over time, we see that in 2010, the 78 institutions were indeed concentrated in politics, trade, economics, and finance. [Table 7](#) breaks down institutions into nine categories of mandate. Overall, we can conclude that while historically, women have been indeed given a more “gendered” leadership portfolio, the situation is now better than before—though not yet at parity.

Conclusion

Our research supports the hypothesis that certain IOs are “set aside” for women leaders and that if an organization has previously had a woman as its leader, it is more likely to elect another one.¹⁹ A recent example is the IMF’s decision to appoint Kristalina Georgieva as managing director in 2019 following Christine Lagarde. The IMF falls into the group of 12 institutions that appointed another woman immediately following the organization’s first woman appointment. There were 25 other institutions that appointed another woman in the future, but not in succession. In this research, we do not explore the frequency of appointments of women as leaders. There is room for future research to explore questions around the length of time between woman leaders. Our data set could be extended for this purpose.

Table 7. Breakdown by topic of institution

	2010		2020	
	Have Had a Woman Leader	Have Not Had a Woman Leader	Have Had a Woman Leader	Have Not Had a Woman Leader
Administration	5	6	9	3
Food & agriculture	1	2	1	2
Humanitarian	2	5	3	5
Humanities	16	16	24	10
Legal	6	3	8	1
Logistics	1	2	3	1
Politics	8	15	15	8
Science	2	15	4	14
Trade, economics, finance	3	14	10	7
Total	44	79	77	52

Notes: There are 126 institutions in 2010 and 128 in 2020 because Usahidi still had its first leader in 2010. No data are available for earlier leaders of the United Nations International Computing Centre and no information was found in public sources on the African Investment Bank.

Our research clearly shows the shortfalls of making soft commitments or general goal statements about gender equality. Our data can be used to hold IOs to account to meet their goals and create true gender parity. We show that among 624 leadership appointments in the top 129 IOs between 1990 and 2020, women were appointed 158 times, but in only 69 institutions. While there is still persistent bias in the candidate selection, when the candidate pool consists of a higher number of women nominees, the likelihood that the leadership position will be filled by a woman is up to three times greater.

Having a history of women leaders doubles the chances for another woman leader to be elected. Yet, in 2020, 39% of IOs still had not had a woman in the top position. In 2021, the situation has improved with first-time women appointments to major organizations such as the WTO and the UN Conference on Trade and Development.²⁰ These additional appointments illustrate that appointments of women leaders are becoming more geographically diverse.

Our research shows that while many nations have undertaken gender parity commitments, few have made the same commitment to increase the participation of women in leading IOs. And those IOs that have made gender equality commitments have not followed through. To remedy the dearth of women leaders in IOs, it is imperative that both the organizations and the member states commit to nominating women to leadership posts.

We show that among institutions that have never had a woman leader, it is unlikely that the second in command will be a woman. In fact, appointing a

woman as second in command is more likely to occur in institutions that have had a woman leader. While there is no visible change after the appointment of the first woman leader, institutions that have had more than one woman at the helm are markedly closer to gender parity in general staffing than those that have not.

It is up to IOs to undertake the actions to address gender inequality. Globally, women's representation is improving, but is far from parity. Additional measures are needed to provide more chances for women to compete for leadership positions on equal terms so that the commitments of IOs become reality.

Supplementary Materials. To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <http://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X23000107>.

Acknowledgments. The authors would like to acknowledge participants in the TradeExperettes network, especially its founder, Hanna C. Norberg, for the inspiration and support for this work. This article was also influenced by insightful comments from seminar participants at the Gender Center of the Graduate Institute Geneva and the Women In Leadership in Global Governance network at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Special thanks to Professor Elisabeth Prügl, without whom the completion of this project would have not been possible.

Notes

1. The year 2017 was not the first time that the UN set targets for increasing the number of women professionals (see D'Amico 1999). For an overview of the 2017 target, see UN Women (2017).
2. In this article, the term "international organizations" refers to institutions that serve more than one country, broadening the selection beyond the UN System. The institution may serve as a development, security, cooperation, or negotiation forum, development agency, or it may act in the humanitarian or human rights sector. The empirical section provides a more detailed description of the selection of organizations.
3. Women's labor force outcomes differ from those of their male counterparts: women are more likely to work part-time or in the informal economy (ILO 2018), are likely to receive lower wages (Blau and Kahn 2017), and tend to sort into college majors that lead to lower-paying work (Chamberlain and Jayaraman 2017). The studies on women in management roles have some marginally more positive results, looking at how women get to these roles and what is different about their work compared with men.
4. These examples include the appointment of Christine Lagarde as IMF managing director after the reputational crisis of Dominique Strauss-Kahn and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as director general of the WTO following the failure of the appellate body and U.S.-China trade wars.
5. For an overview of the UN System, see https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/18-00159e_un_system_chart_17x11_4c_en_web.pdf (accessed June 24; 2020; version July 2019).
6. For example, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank recently rose to prominence in the international arena, but it remains a new institution that does not have an established history. We do not look at GATT (the predecessor of the WTO) as it was officially a trade agreement, not an institution. There may also be some field-specific institutions that are considered prominent but have been missed in the database, but we believe that these omissions will not distort the findings.
7. There are 15 international organizations that appointed interim/acting leaders, with a total of 25 interim/acting leader appointments. Among them, there were 19 appointments of men and 6 appointments of women. Only Mercy Corps appointed both genders for interim/acting vice leadership roles.
8. We do not use data for 1930–89, mainly for two reasons: the presence of women was almost nonexistent, and our estimations can be biased by the "old" institutions—making our estimations, in fact, stronger. Based on the data collected, women were elected only 7 times in 439 elections—just 1.6%.

9. Information on geographic variety is present in [Appendix 1](#).
10. Generally, it is discussed in terms of power and financial resources. These two are hard to measure and often proxied through the staffing of organizations.
11. When measured by the position in the UN System (“programme” versus “agency”) and overall popularity in media. See the section on outliers for confirmation when looking at staff size.
12. List available in [Appendix 3](#) (column 5).
13. [Appendix 3](#) provides the list of institutions and the years for which we were able to gather that information.
14. As measured by leaders of units of the UN System that are not called “department.”
15. The number decreased from 89 as we had to eliminate institutions for which information on only one election round is available.
16. Women are sometimes considered a minority, but in fact they constitute 51% of the global population.
17. As measured by the number of the professional employees.
18. Coded by the authors. Broadly, humanities: women, children, culture, climate and health; legal: human rights, criminal, drugs, courts; administrative: management, communication, administration; science: technology, measurement; politics: disarmament, UNGA, political unions, UNGA-related; humanitarian: humanitarian, disaster risk reduction.
19. International organizations that previously elected a woman leader and continued to elect women to leadership posts include the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG/SVC), the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Initiative (UNICRI), CARE International, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and the International Trade Centre (ITC).
20. Appointing Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Rebecca Greenspan, respectively.

References

- ADB (Asian Development Bank). 2015. “Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.” August. <https://www.adb.org/projects/documents/promoting-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-tcr> (accessed March 3, 2023).
- Baron, Tracy Anbinder. 1994. “Keeping Women Out of the Executive Suite: The Courts’ Failure to Apply Title VII Scrutiny to Upper-Level Jobs.” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 143 (1): 267–320.
- Beaman, Lori A., Raghendra Chattopadhyay, Ester Duflo, Rohini Pande, and Petia Topalova. 2009. “Powerful Women: Does Exposure Reduce Bias?” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124 (4): 1497–1540.
- Blackmon, Pamela. 2021. “The Lagarde Effect: Assessing Policy Change under the First Female Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund.” *Global Society* 35 (2): 171–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2020.1763925>.
- Blau, Francine D., and Lawrence M. Kahn. 2017. “The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations.” *Journal of Economic Literature* 55 (3): 789–865. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jel.20160995>.
- Chamberlain, Andrew, and Jyotsna Jayaraman. 2017. “The Pipeline Problem: How College Majors Contribute to The Pay Gap.” Glassdoor, April. <https://www.glassdoor.com/research/app/uploads/sites/2/2017/04/FULL-STUDY-PDF-Gender-Pay-Gap2FCollege-Major-1.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2023).
- Chappell, Louise. 2011. “Nested Newness and Institutional Innovation: Expanding Gender Justice in the International Criminal Court.” In *Gender, Politics and Institutions*, eds. Mona Lena Krook and Fiona Mackay. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 163–80. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230303911_10.
- Cohen, Lisa E., Joseph P. Broschak, and Heather A. Haveman. 1998. “And Then There Were More? The Effect of Organizational Sex Composition on the Hiring and Promotion of Managers.” *American Sociological Review* 63 (5): 711–27.
- D’Amico, Francine. 1999. “Women Workers in the United Nations: From Margin to Mainstream?” In *Gender Politics in Global Governance*, eds. Mary K. Meyer and Elisabeth Prügl. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 19–40.

- Duerst-Lahti, Georgia. 1997. "Reconceiving Theories of Power: Consequences of Masculinism in the Executive Branch." In *The Other Elites. Women, Politics, and Power in the Executive Branch*, eds. Mary Anne Borrelli and Janet M. Martin. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 11–32.
- Ferreira, Fernando, and Joseph Gyourko. 2014. "Does Gender Matter for Political Leadership? The Case for U.S. Mayors." *Journal of Public Economics* 112: 24–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpu.2014.01.006>.
- Fitzsimmons, Terrance W., Neil Paulsen, and Victor J. Callan. 2014. "Gender Disparity in the C-Suite: Do Male and Female CEOs Differ in How They Reached the Top?" *The Leadership Quarterly* 25 (2): 245–66.
- Flabbi, Luca, Mario Macis, Andrea Moro, and Fabiano Schivardi. 2019. "Do Female Executives Make a Difference? The Impact of Female Leadership on Gender Gaps and Firm Performance." *The Economic Journal* 129 (622): 2390–2423. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/uez012>.
- Gompers, Paul A., and Sophie Q. Wang. 2017. "Diversity in Innovation." Working Paper 17-067, Harvard Business School. https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/17-067_b5578676-e44c-40aa-a9d8-9e72c287afe8.pdf (accessed March 3, 2023).
- Haack, Kirsten. 2014. "Gaining Access to the 'World's Largest Men's Club': Women Leading UN Agencies." *Global Society* 28 (2): 217–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2014.887558>.
- Haack, Kirsten. 2017. "Women, Organizational Crisis and Access to Leadership in International Organizations." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 38 (2): 175–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2016.1219581>.
- Haslam, S. Alexander, and Michelle K. Ryan. 2008. "The Road to the Glass Cliff: Differences in the Perceived Suitability of Men and Women for Leadership Positions in Succeeding and Failing Organizations." *The Leadership Quarterly* 19 (5): 530–46. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.07.011>.
- Holmes, Georgina. 2020. "Feminist Institutionalism." In *United Nations Peace Operations and International Relations Theory*, eds. Kseniya Oksamytna and John Karlsrud. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 214–35.
- ILO (International Labour Organization). 2018. *Women and Men in The Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*. 3rd ed. Geneva: ILO.
- Jankowski, Michael, Kamil Marcinkiewicz, and Anna Gwiązda. 2019. "The Effect of Electing Women on Future Female Candidate Selection Patterns: Findings from a Regression Discontinuity Design." *Politics & Gender* 15 (2): 182–210. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X19000096>.
- Johnson, Carol, and Blair Williams. 2020. "Gender and Political Leadership in a Time of COVID." *Politics & Gender* 16 (4): 12. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X2000029X>.
- Kenny, Meryl. 2007. "Gender, Institutions and Power: A Critical Review." *Politics* 27 (2): 91–100.
- Kenny, Meryl. 2014. "A Feminist Institutional Approach." *Politics & Gender* 10 (4): 679–84. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X14000488>.
- Kunze, Astrid, and Amalia R. Miller. 2017. "Women Helping Women? Evidence from Private Sector Data on Workplace Hierarchies." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 99 (5): 769–55. https://doi.org/10.1162/REST_a_00668.
- Mackay, Fiona, and Georgina Waylen. 2009. "Feminist Institutionalism." *Politics & Gender* 5 (2): 237–80. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X09000178>.
- McKinsey & Company. 2019. "Women in the Workplace: Lean In." <https://leanin.org/women-in-the-workplace/2019> (accessed March 3, 2023).
- Presbitero, Andrea, Roberta Rabelotti, and Claudia Piras. 2014. "Barking Up the Wrong Tree? Measuring Gender Gaps in Firm's Access to Finance." *Journal of Development Studies* 50 (10): 1430–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2014.940914>.
- Prügl, Elisabeth. 2016. "Neoliberalism with a Feminist Face: Crafting a New Hegemony at the World Bank." *Feminist Economics* 23 (1): 30–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2016.1198043>.
- Ryan, Michelle K., S. Alexander Haslam, and Tom Postmes. 2007. "Reactions to the Glass Cliff: Gender Differences in the Explanations for the Precariousness of Women's Leadership Positions." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 20 (2): 182–97. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534810710724748>.
- Shepherd, Ben, and Susan Stone. 2017. "Trade and Women." Working Paper 648, Asian Development Bank Institute. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/224666/adbi-wp648.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2023).

- Skaggs, Sheryl, Kevin Stainback, and Phyllis Duncan. 2012. "Shaking Things Up or Business as Usual? The Influence of Female Corporate Executives and Board of Directors on Women's Managerial Representation." *Social Science Research* 41: 936–48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.01.006>.
- Thomson, Jennifer. 2018. "Resisting Gendered Change: Feminist Institutionalism and Critical Actors." *International Political Science Review* 39 (2): 178–91.
- UN Women. 2017. "UN Secretary-General's Message for International Women's Day." March 7. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/3/statement-sg-international-womens-day-2017> (accessed March 3, 2023).
- Valls Martínez, María del Carmen, and Salvador Cruz Rambaud. 2019. "Women on Corporate Boards and Firm's Financial Performance." *Women's Studies International Forum* 76: 102251. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.102251>.
- Virick, Meghna, and Charles R. Greer. 2012. "Gender Diversity in Leadership Succession: Preparing for the Future." *Human Resource Management* 51 (4): 575–600. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.214>.

Maria V. Sokolova is Adjunct Faculty at the International Institute in Geneva: Sokolova.mar@gmail.com

Alisa DiCaprio is Chief Economist at R3: alisa.dicaprio@r3.com

Nicole Bivens Collinson is President, International Trade and Government Relations, at Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, P.A.: nbc@strtrade.com

Zyra Quirante is an Attorney at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law: zyraquirante@gmail.com

Cite this article: Sokolova, Maria V., Alisa DiCaprio, Nicole Bivens Collinson, and Zyra Quirante. 2023. "Beating the Odds: Women's Leadership in International Organizations." *Politics & Gender* 19, 1087–1109. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X23000107>