

# The Consequences of Gender Quotas for the Women of the European Parliament

Andrea S. Aldrich & William T. Daniel

Yale University & University of Nottingham

## Abstract

This project explores the effect of the introduction of gender quotas on the distribution of legislators' professional and political qualifications for the European Parliament (EP). The EP is a unique institution with respect to gender quotas because only seven of 28 member states have adopted the use quotas over the last several years. This means roughly one-third of all legislators are elected in quota systems. This project leverages this unique configuration to examine these legislators' professional and political backgrounds both before and after the introduction of simple quotas and placement mandates and compares them to patterns in member states that have never used quotas. While previous studies have shown that quotas can eliminate gendered differences in descriptive representation, we seek to test whether the use of quotas has a causal effect on the qualifications and career trajectories of legislators, whether male or female, that serve in the legislature. In doing so, we can assess the overall impact of quotas on the institution in terms of both gender equality and overall legislator competence.

## Project Objectives

- **Stage One:** preliminary investigation of the career paths of men and women serving in the most recent EP term (2014-2019) comparing members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from countries without quotas, those with simple quotas, and those with more structured quotas that included placement mandates. This is published in *Politics & Gender* (Aldrich and Daniel 2019).
- **Stage Two:** Expansion of the data on MEP careers to cover the history of the EP (1979-2019) and exploration of the potential causal effects of quotas on the careers of men and women.
- **Stage Three:** gathering qualitative evidence from interviews with MEPs, political party leadership, and leadership with the EP itself to fully understand the changing nature of gender equality and political careers in the EP.

## Data

- 4, 803 MEPs from serving from 1979-2019
  - 7 waves of Parliament-5 year terms
  - Unit of analysis is MEP per wave
  - Data on previous political experience, previous employment by sector, education, and age
  - Data on leadership within the EP and national political parties
- 28 European Union Countries with differential quota adoption
  - 1999: Belgium
  - 2004: France
  - 2009: Portugal, Spain, Slovenia
  - 2014: Poland and Greece
- 222 National European parties with variance across ideology, size, history, gender equality, percentage of women in the EP delegation, etc.
- Unique Data set combining individual, country and party data over time

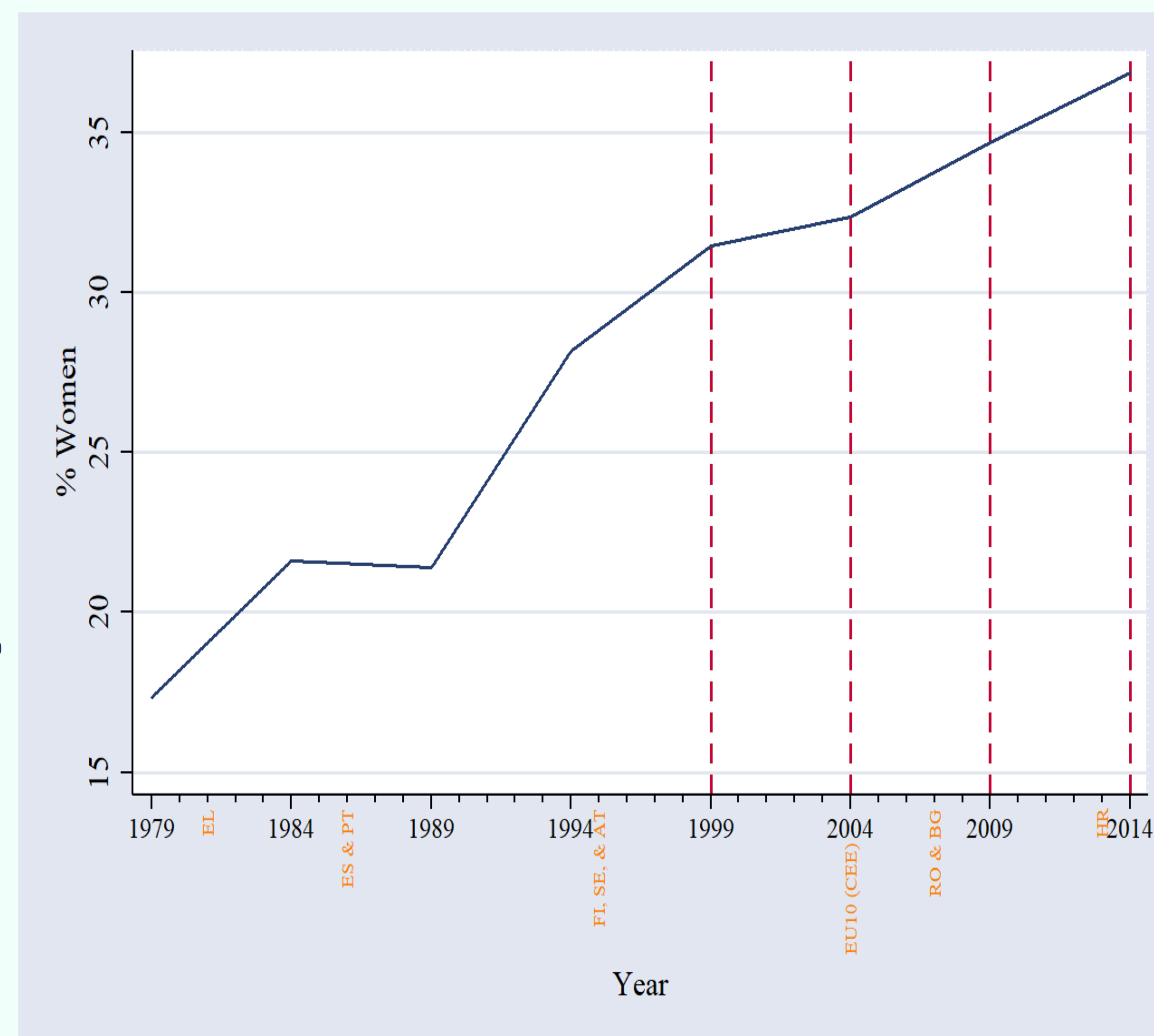


Figure 1: Women as a percentage of all MEPs

## Stage One: Descriptive Analysis A Snapshot of the 2014-2019 Session

	Professional Experience	Political Experience
No Quota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very little diversity among MEPs</li> <li>• Men and women mostly have careers in law or international affairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men more likely to have served as local and national politicians and party leaders</li> <li>• Women unlikely to have past political experience</li> </ul>
Quota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More diversity among MEPs</li> <li>• More equal distribution across a variety of careers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men more likely to have served as national politicians and party leaders</li> <li>• Women now also likely to be local politicians</li> </ul>
Placement Mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More diversity among MEPs</li> <li>• More equal distribution across a variety of careers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant differences between men and women</li> <li>• Both likely to hold all previous experience positions</li> </ul>

Figure 2: Career Paths to the European Parliament

Please note the conclusions above are taken from comparing difference between men in women in a variety of categories of previous experience for MEPs serving between 2014 and 2019 (Aldrich and Daniel 2019).

## Women in the EP 1979-2014

- Figure 1 shows the growth in women in the EP as percentage of all MEPs over time (1979-2014)
- The dotted lines represent the introduction of a quota in at least one member state.
- The different stages of EU enlargement are shown in yellow on the Year axis

## Stage two: Exploring a Causal Effect Analysis from 1979-2019

We are now examining changes in national party delegations because we assume that the introduction of quotas will have an unequal effect on parties within the adopting country. We will use a difference in difference approach to measure changes in:

- average competence in party delegations and across genders within parties (Besley et al, 2016)
- Assignment of leadership positions within parties in aggregate and across genders
- Overall legislative diversity in each parliamentary session (Barnes and Holman, Forthcoming)

## Conclusions

Thus far we have found a correlation between quotas and both the number of women elected to the EP and the career trajectories that bring women into the parliament. Overall, it also appears that the level of competence, measured in terms of previous experience increased in states that use quotas. We expect to find patterns of career development converge between men and women as quotas proliferate and get stronger (i.e. requiring placement mandates or plausible punishment for non-compliance).

## References

- Aldrich, Andrea S. and William T. Daniel. 2019. "The Consequences of Quotas: Assessing the Effect of Varied Gender Quotas on Legislator Experience in the European Parliament." *Politics & Gender*, 1-30.
- Barnes, Tiffany D. and Mirya R. Holman. N.d. "Gender Quotas, Women's Representation, and Legislative Diversity." *The Journal of Politics* (forthcoming)
- Besley, Timothy, Olle Folke, Torsten Persson, and Johanna Rickne. 2017. "Gender Quotas and the Crisis of the Mediocre Man: Theory and Evidence from Sweden." *American Economic Review* 107 (8): 2204-42.

**Acknowledgement:** we are thankful for funding for this project from the Macmillan Center for International and Area Studies and the Women's Faculty Forum at Yale University