



Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche



ISTITUTO di RICERCA sulla CRESCITA ECONOMICA SOSTENIBILE
RESEARCH INSTITUTE on SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Gender balance in Italian electoral system: some empirical reflections on determinants

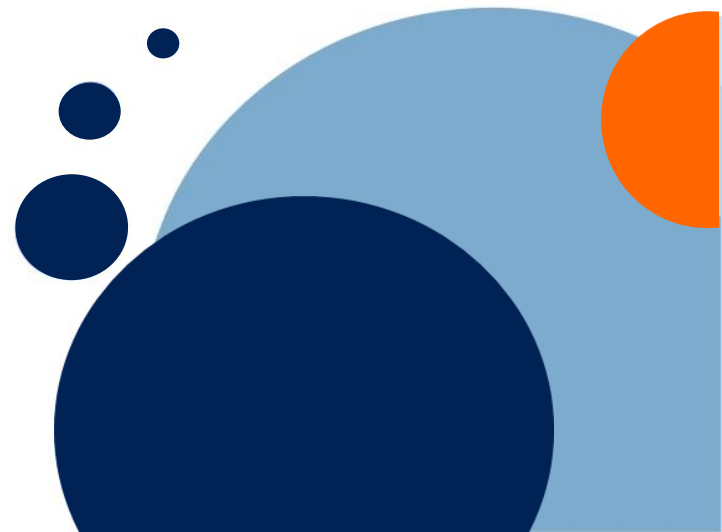
Igor Benati, igor.benati@ircres.cnr.it

Greta Falavigna, greta.falavigna@ircres.cnr.it

Lisa Sella, lisa.sella@ircres.cnr.it

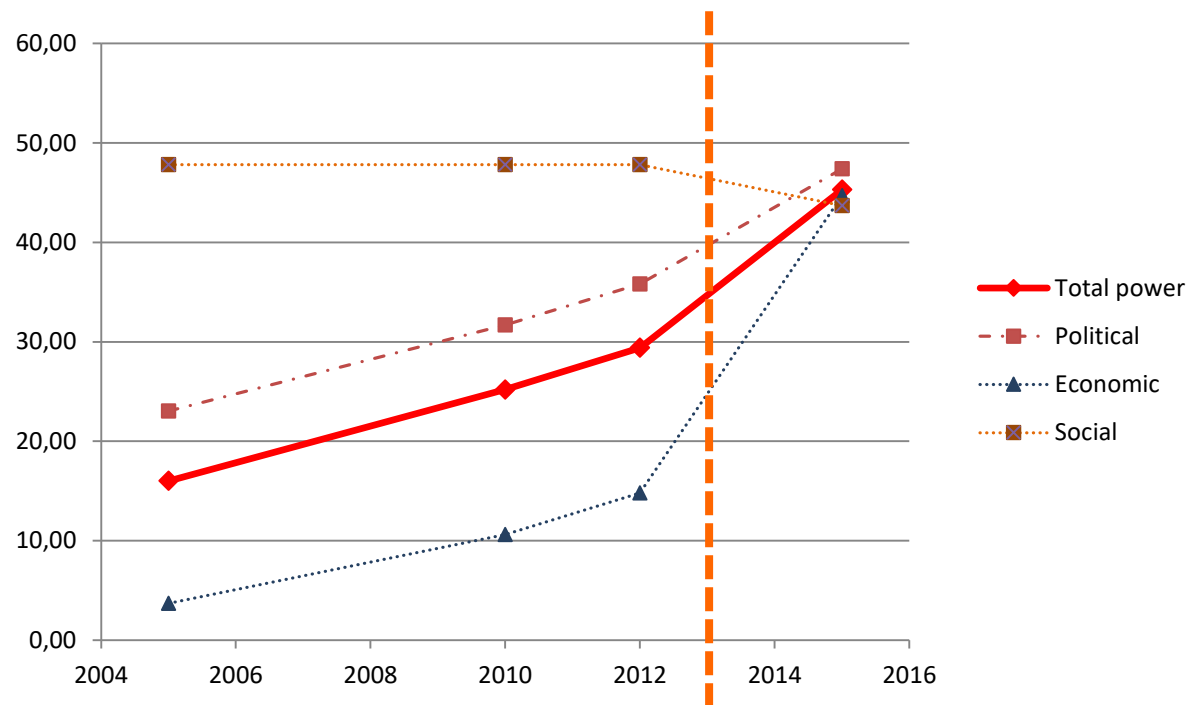
AISRE 2018, 17-19 Settembre

**SO.07.1: La valutazione dell'efficacia delle politiche
per la società e per le comunità locali**



- ✓ Women still face many difficulties in being included in political decision-making: Participation in political competition is not a sufficient condition to fulfill important positions
- ✓ A seminal work on explanatory factors for gendered paths in political participations identifies three types of determinants (Welch, 1977):
 - **Structural factors**, i.e. socio-economic characteristics defining individuals (education, employment, work, income, legal and political structures, discrimination and institutional barriers)
 - **Situational factors** related to individual choices (marital status, family arrangement)
 - **Socialization factors** (childhood, adult political socialization, personal relations)
- ✓ Welch finds that social organizations as well as family, labour market and public engagement affect women behaviour **discouraging political participation**
- ✓ Many countries have introduced **electoral rules** to speed up the process of gender rebalancing in politics (Italy, too)

- ✓ In Italy, political institutions are considered as **patriarchal power** (Sartori, Tuorto and Ghigi 2017): Italian women are still underrepresented in political activities, most of all if compared with other Western democratic countries (Guadagnini 1993; Morales 2009)
- ✓ Sartori, Tuorto and Ghigi (2017) show that:
 - men participate more than women to any form of political activity (*visible political activities*)
 - women appear to be less informed and less interested to political discussions (*invisible political activities*)
 - **family situation** negatively affects both men and women w.r.t. visible political activities, whereas the effect of **domestic works** is negative only for women
 - **cultural constraints** are an additional explanation for the Italian gender gap in politics



National Law 23/11/2012, n. 215 Gender balance norms in municipal elections

If population > 5000

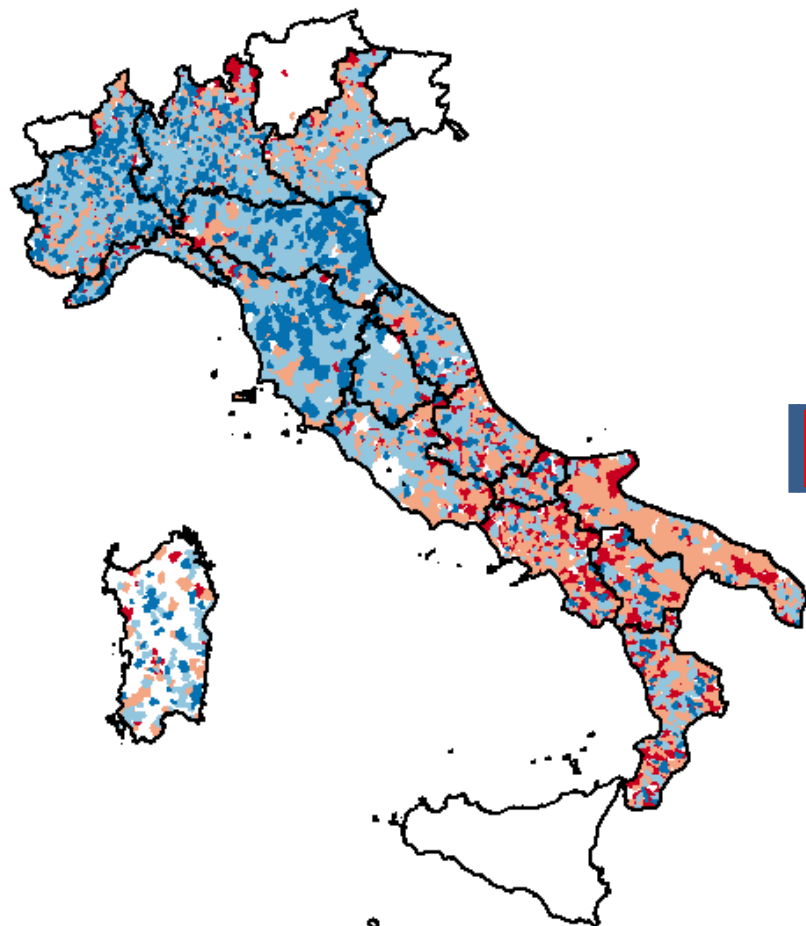
- **List quote**: no gender can be over represented (threshold 2/3)
- **Double gender preference**: electors can express two preferences if candidates have different sex

Determinants of female participation in municipal elections

- ✓ This presentation aims at **empirically** verifying the main determinants of female participation in political competition at the local level (i.e. **quote of female candidates** on whole participants in municipal elections)
- ✓ New norms aim at fostering female participation, both directly (electoral norms, candidates and concil members) and indirectly (parties financing, political communication, gender-mainstreaming, reconciliation policies), but ...
- ✓ ***Gender gap shows very different paths at local levels***
- ✓ What else? ***Which is the role of social and cultural aspects?***
- ✓ This work is based on **SVEGLIE**, an evaluation project commissioned to **CNR** by the **Italian Department of Institutional Reforms**, aiming at studying the **impact of gender balancing norms** at different institutional levels
- ✓ SVEGLIE allowed us the access to **municipal data on electoral candidacy**, which are not publicly available

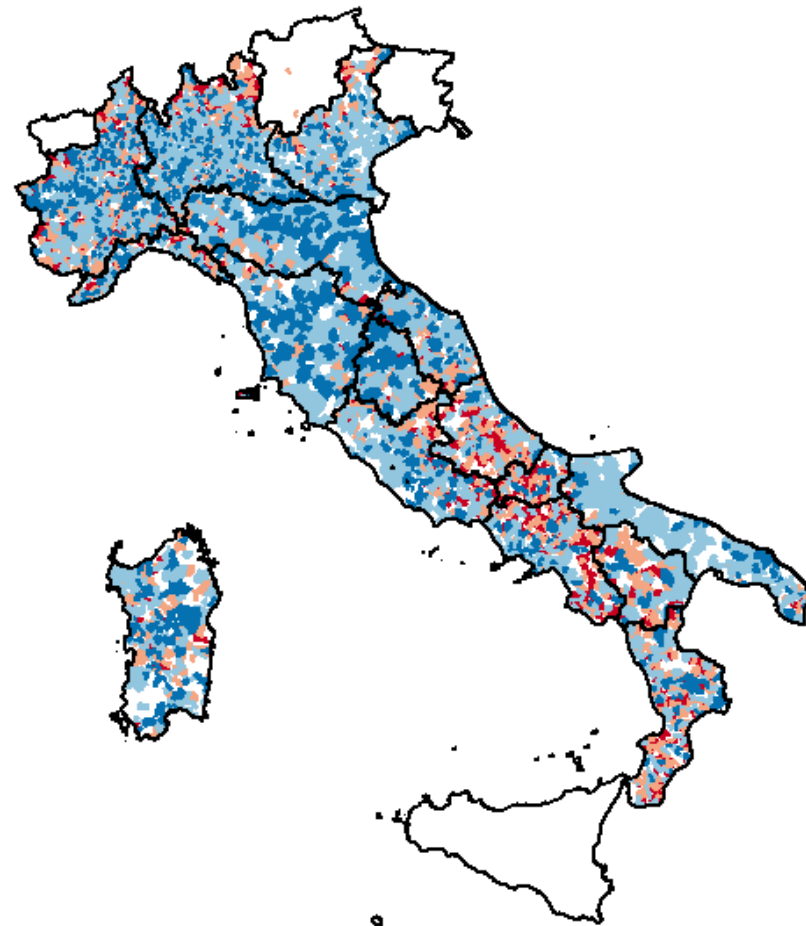
Women's participation to electoral competition

Women candidate quota (before reform)

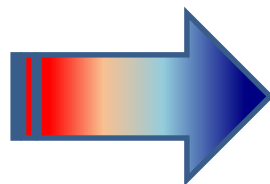


.3661972 - .8181808
.2701422 - .3658537
.1792929 - .2698413
1.00e-06 - .1789474

Women candidate quota (after reform)



.4342105 - .7777768
.3428572 - .4341637
.2368421 - .3421053
1.00e-06 - .2352941



- ✓ *Dependent variable*: data on candidates (#males, #females) in Italian municipal elections were released by the Italian Ministry of Interior
- ✓ No data are available for municipalities from special administrative Regions (so called Special or Autonomous Regions)
- ✓ *Regressors*: Reliable **socio-demographic and economic statistics at the municipal level are very scarce**; most variables are available for the census-year only (2011)
- ✓ **Unbalanced panel data** in the range **2008-2016**, which includes **gender balance reform** at the municipal level (from 2013 on)
- ✓ Panel data models allow us to capture both **cross-section** and **time-series** information, **getting rid of the endogeneity bias** typical of gender studies

- ✓ Robust Hausman tests (Mundlak, 1978) suggest to adopt **fixed-effect panel data models**, but this implies **ruling out time-invariant variables**, which are numerically relevant in our dataset
- ✓ Double empirical strategy
 - **Two-step fixed-effect estimation** regressing time-invariant variables on the predicted unobservable individual effect (by municipality)
 - **Correlated random-effect panel data model**, which allows us to estimate both between (cross-section) and within (time-series) effects without imposing orthogonality between regressors and individual unobservable effects

Fixed-effect estimation (within transformation)

$$Y_{it} - \bar{Y}_i = \beta_1(X_{it} - \bar{X}_i) + \beta_2(u_{it} - \bar{u}_i) + (\varepsilon_{it} - \bar{\varepsilon}_i)$$

Y = quote of female candidates on the whole

i = municipality

X = time-variant observed variables

u_i = individual unobserved fixed-effects

ε_i = residual

- ✓ Individual (municipality) effects (u_i) are predicted using time-variant regressors in a robust fixed-effect model (heteroskedasticity correction)
- ✓ Predicted u_i are regressed against time-invariant variables by robust OLS techniques

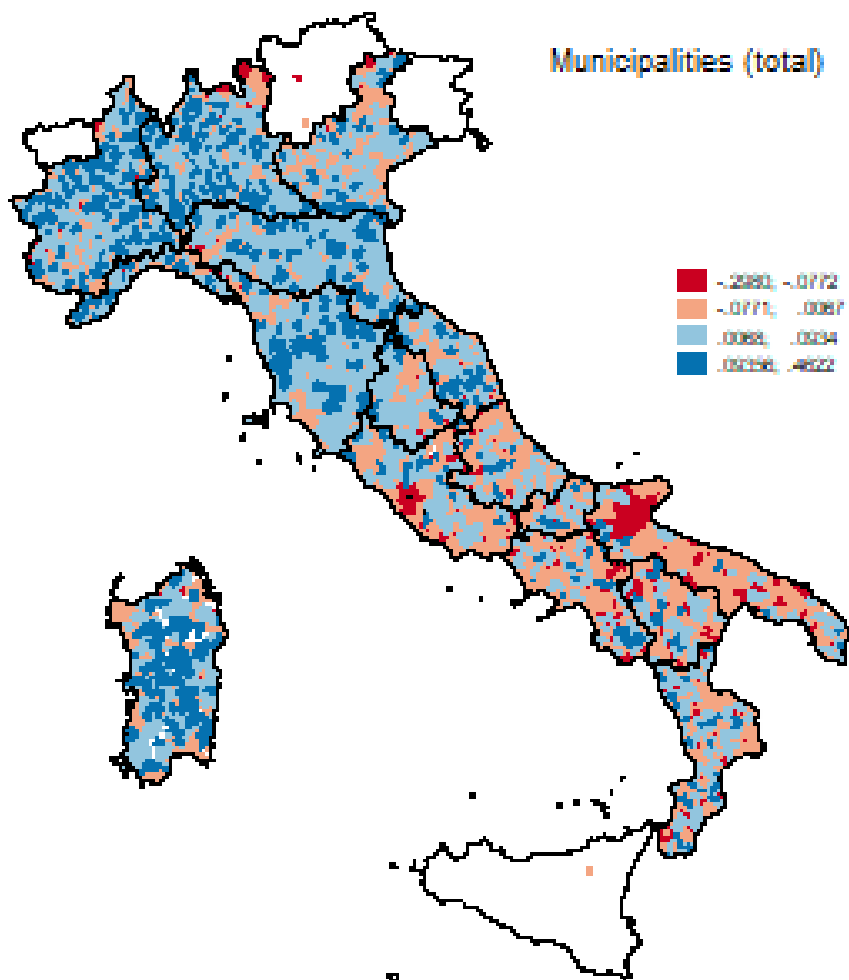
TIME-VARIANT VARIABLES	(1) %women_cand
Norm	0.087*** (0.006)
1.Norm#Pop_<3000	-0.027*** (0.004)
1.Norm#Pop_3001-5000	benchmark
1.Norm#Pop_5001-15000	0.069*** (0.004)
1.Norm#Pop_>15000	0.059*** (0.005)
Degree electoral competition (#Lists)	0.005*** (0.001)
Female quota in population	0.013 (0.181)
Average family dimension	-0.018 (0.014)
Time dummies	Yes
Dummy_2013	-0.026*** (0.010)
Constant	0.274*** (0.099)

Total observations (unbalanced panel)	12,827
Total municipalities	7,036
R-squared (within)	0.420
Rho	0.551

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

- ✓ Gender balancing norms significantly foster female participation in electoral competition (direct effect)
- ✓ Different effect of the norm by demographic dimension
- ✓ «Cultural» effects also in small municipalities, where the norm is ineffective
- ✓ When the norm is introduced (2013) the political system is not completely ready (dummy_2013 < 0)
- ✓ No significant effect of family dimension (but negative sign)
- ✓ High relevance of nonobservable factors (high rho)



- ✓ u_i represent the unobservable individual effect
- ✓ Higher u_i imply higher quota of female candidacy (after controlling for gender rebalancing norms and degree of electoral competition)
- ✓ Different distribution by geographic dimension (North West & Center; North East; South & Insulae)
- ✓ OLS regression on time-invariant variables (most from 2011 census data) to analyze main determinants

TIME-INVARIANT VARIABLES	(2) fe_u
North West	benchmark
North East	-0.006** (0.003)
Center	0.001 (0.004)
South & Insulae	-0.027*** (0.005)
Female activity rate 2011	0.002*** (0.000)
Per capita income 2011	0.002*** (0.001)
Unemployment rate 2011	0.001** (0.000)
Female 2nd education rate 2011	-0.001*** (0.000)
Male 2nd education rate 2011	-0.005 (0.006)
Urbanization, low	benchmark
Urbanization, medium	-0.014*** (0.003)
Urbanization, high	-0.033*** (0.003)
Mountain area	-0.012*** (0.003)
Migrant quote 2010	0.072*** (0.025)
Female housewife rate 2011	-0.004 (0.024)
Constant	-0.076*** (0.015)

Total municipalities	6,949
R-squared	0.098
R-sq adj	0.0965

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Female electoral participation is supported by

- ✓ Female activity rates (social capital?)
- ✓ Economic conditions (reconciliation?)
- ✓ Unemployment rates (civil negotiation?)
- ✓ Multicultural context (resident migrants)

Female electoral participation is undermined by

- ✓ Educational level (misspecified)
- ✓ Urbanization degree
- ✓ Closed cultural context (mountain area)

General CRE model

$$Y_{it} = \theta Gt + \delta Zi + \gamma X_{it} + u_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Y = quote of female candidates on the whole

i = municipality

G = aggregate time effects

Z = time-invariant observed variables

X = time-variant observed variables

u_i = individual unobserved fixed-effects

ε_i = residual

✓ Large N and small T

✓ Covariance between u_i and X_{it} allowed; strict exogeneity of ε_{it}

«Modified» Mundlak (1978) approach

$$Y_{it} = \theta Gt + \delta Zi + \gamma_1(X_{it} - \bar{X}_i) + \gamma_2\bar{X}_i + ui + \varepsilon_{it}$$

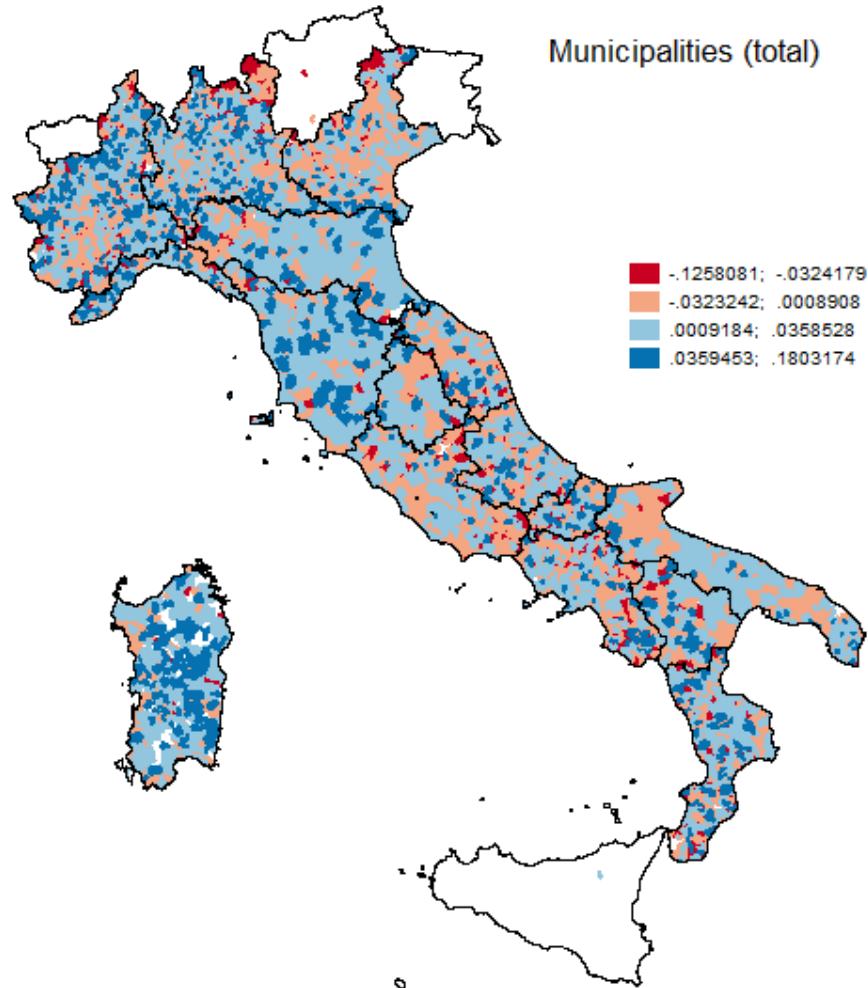
γ_1 = fixed-effect estimator (time-series within-subject information)

γ_2 = between-effect estimator (cross-sectional information)

- ✓ Heteroskedasticity robust estimation
- ✓ Results similar to two-step fixed-effect model, but time-invariant observables are now directly related to female candidacy
- ✓ Some regressors now show significant effects (average family size, female quota) in accordance with literature

Correlated random-effect panel estimation

VARIABLES	(3) %women_cand	Cont.	
Norm	0.134*** (0.004)	Female activity rate 2011	0.002*** (0.000)
1.Norm#Pop_<3000	-0.082*** (0.004)	Per capita income 2011	0.002*** (0.001)
1.Norm#Pop_3001-5000	-0.060*** (0.004)	Unemployment rate 2011	0.001** (0.000)
1.Norm#Pop_5001-15000	0.000 (0.003)	Female 2nd education rate 2011	-0.001** (0.000)
1.Norm#Pop_>15000	benchmark	Male 2nd education rate 2011	-0.002 (0.006)
Time dummies	Yes	Urbanization, low	Benchmark
BE electoral competition	0.001*** (0.000)	Urbanization, medium	-0.010*** (0.003)
BE female quota in population	0.406*** (0.082)	Urbanization, high	-0.021*** (0.004)
BE average family dimension	-0.015*** (0.006)	Mountain area	-0.012*** (0.002)
FE electoral competition	0.005*** (0.001)	Migrant quote 2010	0.101*** (0.025)
FE female quota in population	0.038 (0.182)	Female housewife rate 2011	0.030 (0.027)
FE average family dimension	-0.042*** (0.014)	Constant	0.003 (0.044)
North West	Benchmark	Total observations (unbalanced panel)	12,700
North East	-0.003 (0.003)	Total municipalities	6,953
Center	0.003 (0.004)	R-sq (within)	0.420
South & Insulae	-0.028*** (0.005)	R-sq (between)	0.209
		rho	0.308
		Robust standard errors in parentheses	
		*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	



- ✓ CRE u_i represent the **unexplained «cultural» effect**
- ✓ Different distribution by geographic dimension?
- ✓ Open issue: what about socio-cultural determinants?
 - More census (time-invariant) variables
 - Analyse: %women elected, success rate

Are our results supported by the literature?

- ✓ Married women participation in politics declines because they are more involved in domestic works (Schlozman, Burns and Verba 1994; Sayer 2005; Teorell, Torcal and Montero 2007; Morales 2009; Sartori, Tuorto and Ghigi 2017)
 - ✓ Negative BE and FE coefficients for average family size
 - ✓ Find more variables describing family situation
- ✓ Women prefer to get involved in small-scale activities, that can be incorporated into daily life (Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2005)
 - ✓ Negative effect of urbanization degree
- ✓ Women with higher social capital are more likely to participate to political activities (Chibber 2002; Lowndes 2004)
 - ✓ Positive effect of female activity rate
 - ✓ The negative effect of female secondary education rate is probably due to misspecification (tertiary education rate)

Are our results supported by the literature?

- ✓ Quaranta (2016a, 2016b) show that overall, marriage, divorce and childcare affect political participation of women and men in different way, depending on the reference **cultural model of society**
- ✓ Studies on participation in associations in Italy focused on **North/South differentials**, showing that the participation rate in association is lower in the South than in the North (Banfield *et al.* 1976; Putnam 1993; La Valle 2006; Almond and Verba 2015)
- ✓ In particular, Putnam (1993) suggests that cultural underdevelopment is the first cause of low association propensity in Southern Italy, whose roots date back in the 12th century
 - ✓ **Unobservable individual effects show different geographical paths**
(higher in the North, lower in the South)
- ✓ Further work: %women elected, success rate

Discussion and future work

- ✓ Technicality: comparing fixed- and simple random-effect models in terms of variance (precision)
- ✓ Data sources: finding other municipal-level explanatory variables affecting the propensity of women to be involved in political activities
- ✓ Cultural (contagion) effects:
 - Introducing the effect of gender-rebalancing norms at the regional level (regional councils)
 - Estimating interaction variables between the norm effect variable and dummy variables of regions (1.norm#regional_dummy) with the aim to detect eventual reinforcement effects between municipality norms and regional norms

Thank you for your attention

References

- Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (2015). *The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Princeton university press.
- Cavarero, A. (2002). *Stately bodies: Literature, philosophy, and the question of gender*. University of Michigan Press.
- Chibber, P. (2002). Why are some women politically active? The household, public space, and political participation in India. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 43(3-5), 409-429.
- Coffé, H., & Bolzendahl, C. (2010). Same game, different rules? Gender differences in political participation. *Sex roles*, 62(5-6), 318-333.
- Guadagnini, M. (1993). A 'partitocrazia' without women: the case of the Italian party system. *Gender and Party Politics*, Londres, Sage Publications.
- La Valle, D. (2006). La partecipazione alle associazioni in Italia. Tendenze generali e differenze regionali. *Stato e mercato*, 26(2), 277-306.
- Lowndes, V. (2004). Getting on or getting by? Women, social capital and political participation. *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 6(1), 45-64.
- Morales, L. (2009). *Joining political organisations: Institutions, mobilisation and participation in Western democracies*. ECPR Press.
- Putnam, R. D. (1993). *La tradizione civica nelle regioni italiane*. Mondadori.

References

- Quaranta, M. (2016a). Life Course, Gender, and Participation in Voluntary Organizations in Italy. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27(2), 874-899.
- Quaranta, M. (2016b). Leaving home, finding a partner and having kids: Gender differences in political participation across the life course in Italy. *Acta Politica*, 51(3), 372-397.
- Sartori, L., Tuorto, D., & Ghigi, R. (2017). The Social Roots of the Gender Gap in Political Participation: The Role of Situational and Cultural Constraints in Italy. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 24(3), 221-247.
- Sayer, L. C. (2005). Gender, time and inequality: Trends in women's and men's paid work, unpaid work and free time. *Social forces*, 84(1), 285-303.
- Schlozman, K. L., Burns, N., & Verba, S. (1994). Gender and the pathways to participation: The role of resources. *the Journal of Politics*, 56(4), 963-990.
- Stolle, D., Hooghe, M., & Micheletti, M. (2005). Politics in the supermarket: Political consumerism as a form of political participation. *International political science review*, 26(3), 245-269.
- Teorell, J., Torcal, M., & Montero, J. R. (2007). 13 Political participation. *Citizenship and involvement in European democracies: A comparative analysis*, 334.
- Verba, S., Burns, N., & Schlozman, K. L. (1997). Knowing and caring about politics: Gender and political engagement. *The Journal of Politics*, 59(4), 1051-1072.
- Welch, S. (1977). Women as political animals? A test of some explanations for male-female political participation differences. *American Journal of Political Science*, 711-730.