The gender gap in public support for European integration

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Why are women less supportive of the EU than men?

Across the EU, women are less supportive of European integration than men. While this “gender gap” has been observed by numerous works on public EU support, the reasons remain widely unexplored. This study applies the two main explanations for gender gaps in others policy areas to the EU context.

Selected results of the multilevel regression analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Exponentiation of coefficient</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Exponentiation of coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-0.202</td>
<td>0.817</td>
<td>Interactions with respondent's sex:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>-0.124**</td>
<td>0.883</td>
<td>Women in socialdemocratic welfare states</td>
<td>-0.237***</td>
<td>0.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialdemocratic welfare regime</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td>Women in conservative welfare states</td>
<td>0.097**</td>
<td>1.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative welfare regime</td>
<td>0.264</td>
<td>1.302</td>
<td>Women with growing age</td>
<td>-0.006***</td>
<td>0.994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (centered around country mean)</td>
<td>0.004**</td>
<td>1.004</td>
<td>Women in white collar positions</td>
<td>-0.053**</td>
<td>0.949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar (compared to non-actives)</td>
<td>0.396***</td>
<td>1.485</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>-0.034**</td>
<td>0.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (centered around country mean)</td>
<td>0.058***</td>
<td>1.059</td>
<td>Women with longer full-time education</td>
<td>-0.012***</td>
<td>0.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-placement in political center (6 out of 10)</td>
<td>0.430</td>
<td>1.537</td>
<td>Women in the political center (6 out of 10)</td>
<td>-0.107**</td>
<td>0.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-placement in political center (5 out of 10)</td>
<td>0.304***</td>
<td>1.355</td>
<td>Women in the political center (5 out of 10)</td>
<td>-0.099**</td>
<td>0.906</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions: the utilitarian dynamics behind the gender gap

- growing gender gap across age groups; stable gender gap across occupational groups
- socialdemocratic and conservative welfare regimes influence the gender gap
- other country-specific conditions insignificant (dominant religion, strong Euroskeptic parties, budgetary contributions, socioeconomic development)

References


Utilitarian explanation:

People are driven by their material interests and try to maximize their benefits. The gender gap results from different material conditions of men and women.

With growing age greater gender gap:
- material conditions diverge with growing age
- women become less positive about EU than men

Across occupational positions stable gender gaps:
- men and women in low positions similarly skeptical of EU
- men and women in higher positions similarly positive about the EU

Socialization-based explanation:

People are driven by their values and socialization:
- women socialized stronger than men towards egalitarian values
- men put stronger emphasis on self-fulfillment

The gender gap results from the different values of men and women.

With growing age stable gender gap:
- women are early on more negative about the EU than men

With higher occupational position greater gender gap:
- in low positions, men and women both skeptical of EU
- in higher positions, women remain less supportive than men as women consider the situation of weaker parts of society more than men

Country-specific conditions

The size of the gender gap in EU support varies greatly between countries: Sweden has one of the greatest gaps of more than 14 percentage points difference in EU support among men and women. Luxembourg has the smallest gap with 0.5 percentage points. Which country-specific conditions account for this variation?

Data and method

- Eurobarometer standard surveys from 1995 to 2012, covering the EU-28 and the candidate countries Iceland, Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey
- EU membership question serves as binary dependent variable
- gender modeled as interaction term of respondent’s sex with other characteristics
- multilevel model: individuals at first level, countries at second level
- GENLINMIXED procedure in SPSS