

# Does Access to Power Make Women as Newsworthy as Men?

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## Abstract

Women are underrepresented in the media. This paper studies the impact of access to power on the gender gap in media coverage. We collected data on media mentions of all the individuals who accessed a minister position for the first time in France over the period 1970-2017. Using event-study designs and text analysis methods, we show that access to power equalizes the quantitative and reduces the qualitative gender gap in media coverage. This effect persists at least six years after access to power, regardless of whether these politicians remain in government. We provide evidence that these results are not due to improvements in career opportunities, the rarity of female politicians or access to networks of journalists. We argue that women become intrinsically newsworthy because of the news value of power. We discuss the implications for gender quotas.

**JEL codes:** D72, J16, J71

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# 1 Introduction

In 2020, about 24% of news stories worldwide contained female protagonists. As the media can impact behaviors, attitudes and role models, this imbalance is considered as reinforcing and perpetuating gender inequality (Jensen and Oster, 2009, La Ferrara *et al.*, 2012, Kearney and Levine, 2015, Riley, 2022, Ang, 2023, Zussman, 2023). This argument is particularly relevant in politics where media visibility is essential and where women are underrepresented (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007, Durante *et al.*, 2019, Wang, 2021). It is therefore important to understand what determines the newsworthiness of individuals.

A growing literature shows that female politicians receive less and different media coverage than men (Van der Pas and Aaldering, 2020). But how does the media treatment of women changes when they reach positions of power? Although simple, this question has received little attention. On the one hand, most studies have documented a gender gap in media coverage among candidates and at one point in time. This gap could persist in positions of power, and perhaps intensify if seeing women in such positions would be considered as incongruent or create resentment. On the other hand, the media are known to value power. Women in top positions could therefore benefit from the news value of power to receive increased and less biased media coverage. As individuals in positions of power are likely to be scrutinized and considered as role models, providing evidence on this question would help us understand how the media influence our perception of gender.

Our paper attempts to bridge this gap. We document how the gender gap in media coverage changes after access to power. To perform this analysis, we collected data on media coverage of all the individuals who accessed a position of minister for the first time in France over the period 1970-2017 (Section 3).<sup>1</sup> Our data come from the three main French daily newspapers. For each individual, it covers a period of time ranging from one year before to six years after their appointment to a ministerial position. Our empirical strategy relies on event-study models surrounding access to power. The time span of our data allows us to measure the short term effect and its persistence over time, regardless of whether these politicians remain in government.

We first study the impact of access to the position of minister on the gender gap in media coverage. Before access to power, female politicians are about 20 p.p. less likely to receive monthly media coverage than male ones (Section 4.1). After access to power, we

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<sup>1</sup>In the United-States or the United Kingdom, these positions correspond to secretaries of states.

show that both women and men receive more media coverage and we find that the gender gap entirely disappears. This effect persists over time at least six years after appointment. It holds across different media outlets, types of news articles and definitions of the outcome variable.

We also find that the qualitative gender gap in media coverage is reduced after access to power (Section 4.2). Using a machine learning approach, we first show that the content of news articles mentioning women and men becomes more similar after access to power. This result is robust to using two different topic models and a random forest classifier. Using dictionary-based methods and large language models, we also study the prevalence of topics related to personal characteristics of politicians such as gender, family, personality, physical appearance and the tone of coverage. We find significant changes in the mention of these topics in the first month after access to power for both women and men. However, there is limited evidence that these patterns differ between women and men. The only noticeable difference concerns the greater depiction of female ministers as mothers during the first month after access to power.

Are the results mainly explained by access to the position of minister? To answer this question, we study alternative credible channels (Section 4.3). We first investigate the influence of differential selection of women and men into the position of minister. We find little support for this channel. The timing of appointment as minister seems equally exogenous for women and men. Moreover, the results hold when the selection of women is more likely to be exogenous such as in the context of a gender quota introduced in 2012 or sudden majority changes. We then rule out the possibility that the results are driven by women being appointed to specific sub-positions within government. We also show that our results are robust to a variety of alternative methodological choices.

Next, we explore the mechanisms explaining our findings (Section 5). An obvious mechanism would be that media attention is entirely focused on specific positions in society. Women would therefore come from positions that are less newsworthy than the ones occupied by men. Access to power would provide women similar career opportunities to men, equalizing their media coverage. To enquire, we first focus on the period before access to power. We implement a Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition to determine which portion of the initial gender gap in media coverage can be explained by differences in observable characteristics. Using detailed data on previous positions occupied by politicians, we find that career differences explain at most 30% of the initial gap. Second, we show that the results

hold within a matched sample of men and women with similar career experiences. Third, we focus on the period after leaving government. We show that men and women remain equally newsworthy for at least two years after leaving the position of minister, despite pursuing different career trajectories. These results suggest that women acquired intrinsic newsworthiness after having occupied a position of power.

What explains this finding? We argue that our results are consistent with the influence of stereotypes and the news value of power (Bennett, 1990). The media would index their attention to politicians according to their proximity with power. Women would be deemed less likely of access to power before appointment and therefore receive less media coverage. After access to power, the media would update their belief on the worthiness of women to exercise power. To provide evidence on this channel, we replicate our analysis on two positions farther away from power: Upper House senators and Lower House member of Parliament. We find that access to these positions has a weaker effect on the gender gap in media coverage. This suggests that the closer a position is to power, the more it evens out the gender gap in media coverage.

To bolster this interpretation, we assess the validity of alternative mechanisms suggested in the literature. We show that the results are unlikely to be due to the news value of rarity as women do not become more newsworthy in contexts where female politicians are rarer. Additionally, access to an improved network of journalists seems unlikely to explain the findings. Women are not covered by significantly different journalists after access to power.

Finally, we discuss the policy implications of our results for gender quotas (Section 6). In recent decades, over 130 countries have introduced gender quotas to increase the number of women in political positions.<sup>2</sup> Would these quotas also make women as newsworthy as men? Although our evidence are suggestive, they suggest that newly appointed women in a context of gender quotas benefit from increased media coverage. It implies that the introduction of gender quotas could reduce the underrepresentation of women in the media.

This paper contributes to the existing literature in three ways.

First, we document how access to positions of power can equalize the gender gap in media coverage. The media representation of politicians has a crucial influence on their perception and role model effects. The gender gap in media coverage can therefore impact both the demand and the supply of female politicians, which have been shown to be

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database>

lower for women than for men.<sup>3</sup> Yet, the drivers of the gender gap in media coverage remain unclear. The existing literature in political sciences and communication has mostly established the existence of this gap among candidates and at one point in time (Kahn, 1994). It has also studied the link between media attention and politicians' characteristics (Van Der Pas, 2022, Yildirim *et al.*, 2023) or the institutional context (Thesen and Yildirim, 2023). To our knowledge, very few studies chart the media trajectory of politicians over their career and it remains questionable whether the gender gap in media coverage can be undone over a career, and under which circumstances.

Second, we establish our results in a context of gender quotas. In this context, it is debatable whether women would benefit from increased media coverage or see their legitimacy questioned. By showing that women become more newsworthy, our results suggest that quotas have the potential to improve the representation of women in the media. This indirect effect of gender quotas has received little attention in the literature. Existing papers have mostly focused on the consequences of quotas on policymaking (Chattopadhyay and Dufo, 2004, Bagues and Campa, 2021, Lippmann, 2022), voter perception (Beaman *et al.*, 2009, De Paola *et al.*, 2010), the quality (Besley *et al.*, 2017) and future careers of politicians (O'Connell, 2020). They have also studied other types of policies to promote female access to political positions (Baltrunaite *et al.*, 2019).

Third, our findings improve our understanding of media biases. The existing literature has shown how the media can selectively cover events because of supply-side factors such as advertising revenues (Beattie *et al.*, 2021), preferences of media owners (Enikolopov *et al.*, 2011), the influence of local governments (Zhuang, 2022), demand-side factors such as readers' ideologies (Gentzkow *et al.*, 2014) or the rarity of an event (Mastrorocco *et al.*, 2023). It has also quantified media biases against multiple demographic groups (Rao and Taboada, 2021, Ash *et al.*, 2022). The sources of these biases remain unclear (Shor *et al.*, 2015). We show how access to power makes individuals newsworthy, which is consistent with media attention being driven by the news value of power. This has broader implications to understand the underrepresentation of several demographic groups in the media. Politicians belonging to groups traditionally absent from power could be deemed less news-

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<sup>3</sup>On the demand side, this literature has shown that female politicians often suffer from discrimination from voters or parties (Esteve-Volart and Bagues, 2012, Casas-Arce and Saiz, 2015, Le Barbanchon and Sauvagnat, 2021, Lippmann, 2021). On the supply side, studies have highlighted that women display lower political ambition (Fox and Lawless, 2004), lack role models (Gilardi, 2015, Bhalotra *et al.*, 2017, Baskaran and Hessami, 2018), and have a lower likelihood to recontest (Wasserman, 2023).

worthy, because of lower expectations regarding their likeliness to exercise power.

## 2 Institutional Background

### 2.1 The Position of Minister

In France, ministerial positions are at the top of the political hierarchy. They are usually considered as the sixth most important positions in France, the first five ones being occupied by single individuals.<sup>4</sup>

Ministers are appointed by the president of the Republic on the advice of the prime minister. They can be appointed at any time, at the beginning or during a term. To be appointed, the only requirements are to be French and over 18. It is not necessary to be a member of Parliament. The number of ministerial positions has varied over time, depending on arbitrary choices made by the President of the Republic. Between 1970 and 2022, governments have included 21 to 45 ministers at the same time. As a consequence, some ministerial titles and attributions can disappear, be modified, or created over time.<sup>5</sup>

Ministers exercise the executive power. They are generally in charge of an administration. They can elaborate public policies and propose new laws. Within the position of minister, there exists a honorific hierarchy. It distinguishes by order of importance: (i) ministers of state, (ii) full ministers (iii) delegated ministers and (iv) secretaries of state. Ministers of state and full ministers usually have more prominent responsibilities. Delegated ministers and secretaries of states are often placed under the supervision of a full minister.<sup>6</sup>

In theory, there is no time limit for ministerial office. In practice, there is a substantial degree of turnover. Over the period 1970-2017, newly appointed ministers remained at their position for about 12 months on average. They can be subsequently appointed to

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<sup>4</sup>This ranking comes from the order of precedence for official ceremonies established by French law. The first five positions are: the President of Republic, the Prime Minister, the Presidents of the two Chambers of Parliament and the two former President of Republic.

<sup>5</sup>For instance, a ministerial position in charge of equality between women and men was created in 1974. It was suppressed in 1976, reintroduced in 1978 under a different title, suppressed again in 1993, and reintroduced again in 1998. Additionally, the attributions of permanent ministerial positions such as the ministry of Health can be modified over time, to be enlarged or diminished. This matters for the analysis because it prevents us from adding fixed-effects at the ministerial level.

<sup>6</sup>see <https://www.vie-publique.fr/fiches/19466-quest-ce-quun-ministre-detat-ministre-delegue-secretaire-detat>

another ministerial position. In this case, the average time spent in government is 23.5 months.

## 2.2 Women's Presence in Government

The context of France is representative of changes in women's presence in politics occurring in the past decades in many developed countries. Women used to be almost completely absent from the political sphere in the early 1970s and have gradually accessed top political positions in the ensuing decades, benefiting from the introduction of gender quotas which we exploit in the analysis. The first female full minister was appointed in 1974. Then, the proportion of female ministers gradually evolved with each election and majority changes (see Figure A1). It stood at 10% in the early 1980s and rose to almost 30% in 1997 following the victory of the main left-wing party. It stabilized at this level and increased again to almost 50% in 2012 after the return of the left to power and the voluntary introduction of a gender quota.

# 3 Data

## 3.1 Sources

**Information on ministers** - We collected data on the composition of all the governments over the period 1958-2017. This allows us to identify individuals who occupied a government position for the first time over the period 1970-2017.<sup>7</sup> For each individual, we retrieved the date corresponding to the first nomination to government which we call "access to power". We know the appointment date, the title of the position, the exit date and whether this individual subsequently held another ministerial position. For each minister, we also collected data on their career trajectory. We are able to identify whether and when they have occupied a political position before appointment and after leaving government.<sup>8</sup>

**Media coverage** - For each individual, we collected data on media coverage from three

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<sup>7</sup>We narrow the sample to the 1970-2017 period for two reasons. First, it allows us to identify individuals who access a government position for the first time (assuming that those who had not been ministers from 1958 to 1970 never occupied this position in the past). Second, the first female full minister was appointed in 1974.

<sup>8</sup>We collect this information from personal websites and Wikipedia. We have data on 3 political positions: Lower House member of Parliament, Upper House senator and mayor.

national daily newspapers in France: *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Libération*. Our data include both the printed and online articles when available. We selected these newspapers because they were considered as the three main national newspapers during the period studied. They are therefore likely to have a noticeable impact on society.<sup>9</sup> We searched for articles containing an exact match for the first and last names of politicians on Europresse and Proquest Historical Newspapers.

For each individual, the time span of the main data set covers one year before and six years after appointment. We have chosen a 6-year horizon since the longevity record of a government over the 1970-2017 period is 5 years. For each news article, we know the date, the title and whether a politician is mentioned in the content. Additionally, within a 1-year window from the date of appointment, we have access to the exhaustive content of the news article. We perform the content analysis on this narrowed time frame. Finally, to study persistence after exiting government, we complement these data with news coverage of these politicians for two years after they left government.<sup>10</sup>

## 3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Over the period 1970-2017, there were 527 individuals who accessed a minister position for the first time. They received 424,144 media mentions from 373,276 unique articles, over a period of time ranging from one year before and six years after access to power. Table B1 provides descriptive statistics on ministers. 24.6% of them were women. On average, men (women) spent about 410 (400) days in government. Men were more likely to have been elected in the past and had spent significantly longer in these positions (20 vs 7 years). They were also more often appointed to a highly ranked minister position.

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<sup>9</sup>They also have diverse political ideologies: *Le Monde* is considered as France's leading daily newspapers and is supposed to stand on the center-left of the political spectrum, *Le Figaro* is considered right-wing, and *Libération* is considered left-wing (see <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/149270/european-press-roundup>). See Section B for more detailed information on newspapers in France.

<sup>10</sup>We collected additional data in order to perform the analysis on the full balanced sample over a two years horizon. In practice, as nearly 95% of politicians occupy a ministerial position for less than 4 years, we had to collect additional data for less than 5% of the sample.



## 4 The Effect of Access to Power

### 4.1 Impact on Media Mentions

#### 4.1.1 Methods: event-study

Our goal is to understand how the gender gap in media coverage changes after women and men are appointed minister. In order to study this question, we use an event-study strategy around the time of appointment. We estimate the following equation:

$$Y_{i,t} = \sum_l \mu_l D_{i,t}^l * Gender_i + \sum_l \gamma_l D_{i,t}^l + \alpha_i + \lambda_t + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

Where  $i$  is the subscript for the individual level,  $t$  for the month level.  $D_{i,t}^l$  correspond to the event time dummies, where  $l > 0$  designates the time periods following the appointment as minister. Since the data set includes media coverage on individuals ranging from 12 months prior to 72 months after appointment as minister,  $l \in [-12, +72]$ .  $Gender_i$  is a dummy that equals 1 if the individual  $i$  is a woman. The individual fixed-effects  $\alpha_i$  control for time invariant characteristics. The time fixed-effects  $\lambda_t$  control for time-variant characteristics such as a potential change of media coverage of politicians over time. We do not include the uninteracted  $Gender_i$  variable in the equation as it is already included in the individual fixed-effects. Standard errors are clustered at the individual level.

We chose  $l = -2$  as the reference period. This choice is motivated by a potential anticipation effect in  $l = -1$ . Newspapers may start looking for future ministers, or individuals likely to become ministers may try to increase their media coverage. Both effects could lead  $l = -1$  to be part of the post-treatment period. To avoid this potential issue, we therefore use an earlier period as reference point.<sup>11</sup>

The main coefficients of interest are the  $\mu_l$ . To ease interpretation, we display conversions of the estimates in percentages by calculating  $V_l \equiv \mu_l / (E[Y_{-2}^M] - E[Y_{-2}^W])$ , where the superscript  $M$  ( $W$ ) designates men (women).  $V_l$  captures the variation of the gender gap in media coverage relatively to the reference period  $l = -2$ . When  $V_l = 100\%$ , it means that the gender gap has entirely disappeared relatively to the reference period.

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<sup>11</sup>As the anticipation effect could already be present in  $l = -2$ , we also also show that the results are robust to using different time periods with  $l \in [-6; -1]$ .

The identification strategy can be seen as a difference-in-differences. Both men and women experience the treatment, i.e. appointment as minister, but its intensity varies.<sup>12</sup> Our identification assumption is that the timing of appointment is equally exogenous for women and men. In other words, we assume that the difference between the media coverage of male and female politicians would have remained the same in the absence of appointment as minister. We provide evidence in favor of this assumption by testing whether  $\mu_l = 0$  when  $l < 0$ . Additionally, our results on media mentions are conditional on the existence of an initial gender gap in media coverage before appointment. In Section 5.1, we study potential drivers of this gap and show that observable characteristics are unlikely to explain this gap, which is in line with results from the literature (see for instance [Van Der Pas, 2022](#)).

The estimation of Equation 1 is performed on a balanced panel ranging from 12 months prior to 72 months after appointment as minister. This data set includes 44,268 observations (527\*84).

#### 4.1.2 Results

We start the analysis by describing the evolution of the gender gap in media coverage surrounding access to power. In Figure 1, we observe that in the 12 months preceding access to power, about 60% of male politicians receive monthly media mentions. This share is lower for women, averaging at around 40%. In the first month after appointment, the gender gap vanishes and all the politicians receive at least one media mention. This share gradually declines and reaches 60% six years later.

**Extensive margin of media coverage** - We estimate Equation 1 using a dummy that equals one if an individual receives media coverage in a given month as outcome variable. Figure 2 displays the main results. In the 12 months preceding access to government, we observe that the difference between male and female politicians is stable. None of the coefficients are individually significant and the point estimates remain close to zero.<sup>13</sup> Following appointment as minister, the point estimates indicate that the gender gap is reduced by 100% in the first month. This effect appears stable up to 30 months. Then, point estimates decline slightly. In the last month, the gender gap is reduced by 66% and

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<sup>12</sup>This is comparable to empirical strategies identifying child penalties (as in [Angelov \*et al.\*, 2016](#) or [Kleven \*et al.\*, 2019](#)).

<sup>13</sup>The pre-event coefficients are also jointly non significant (F-stat= 0.9).

the coefficient is significant at the 5% level.

Importantly, all the confidence intervals related to  $l > 0$  include the 100% threshold indicating that the gender gap has disappeared (only 3 do not include it). This suggests that access to power makes women as newsworthy as men.

**Importance of the media coverage** - One could wonder whether these news articles put ministers in the spotlight or only provide lists of existing members of government. To enquire, we distinguish between media articles that mention only one minister and those that list several ministers. We define two dummy variables that equal to one when a minister is mentioned in these two types of articles. Figure 3 displays the results. The effect holds for the two outcome variables. Point estimates are higher for articles including multiple politicians but the difference is not statistically significant. Additionally, in Figure C1, we use an alternative measure of the importance of the coverage by distinguishing short and long news articles. Results hold for both types of articles.

**Intensive margin** - The previous results concern the extensive margin. To study the intensive margin, we estimate Poisson pseudo-likelihood regressions with fixed-effects using the count of media articles as outcome variable. Figure C2 displays the results. We observe positive coefficients for all the months following appointment. In the first month, the incidence rate ratio is about 2. This indicates that, relatively to male ministers, the number of media articles mentioning women increases twice more. However, when restricting the sample to politicians with positive media mentions for each month, estimates are no longer significant and shrink in magnitude (Figure C3). This suggests that the effect is mostly driven by the extensive margin.

**Results across newspapers** - We also test whether the results are similar across media outlets. This would reinforce the interpretation that women have become newsworthy, independently of readerships and editorial lines. We estimate Equation 1 separately for each media outlet. The results are described in Figure C4. We find essentially similar estimates across the three newspapers.

## 4.2 Impact on News Content

The previous results suggest that the quantity of media coverage is equalized after access to power. In this section, we study how the content of the media coverage changes after access to power.

### 4.2.1 Methods: text analysis

**Machine Learning Approach** - We first construct a metric summarizing gender differences in the content of news articles. As there exists several ways of constructing this metric, we rely on multiple methods. In the main results, we use a topic model based on the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA, [Blei \*et al.\*, 2003](#)). This method models each document as a finite mixture over an underlying set of topics. It has been used in several papers in economics.<sup>14</sup> Practically, it automatically finds  $K$  topics occurring in the corpus of articles. For each article, it constructs  $K$  variables indicating the distribution of the  $K$  topics. To determine the  $K$  number of topics, we compute the coherence score of the LDA over different numbers of topics (see [Figure C5](#)). This score measures the similarity between the words making up the topics to determine how interpretable the topics are for humans. We select  $K = 50$  as it provides the highest coherence score ([Tables C2](#) and [C3](#) display the lists of topics). Using these 50 variables, we compute the euclidian distance between female and male politicians for each month surrounding their appointment as minister. If the content of news article becomes more alike, we expect this metric to decrease after the date of appointment.

As robustness checks, we first implement BERTopics, an alternative topic model which relies on a large language model ([Grootendorst, 2022](#)). We estimate changes in the distribution of topics across articles mentioning women and men. Alternatively, we also use the accuracy of a classifier as outcome ([Peterson and Spirling, 2018](#)). We train a random forest model to predict the probability that a news article mentions a female or a male politician. We train the model separately on each month using a term frequency-inverse document frequency (TF-IDF) transformation to the pre-processed text. If the content of news article becomes more alike, we expect the accuracy of the classifier to decrease after appointment as minister. It would indicate that it is more difficult to distinguish between articles mentioning male and female politicians.<sup>15</sup>

The main advantage of the machine learning approach is that we do not need to manu-

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<sup>14</sup>See for instance [Hansen \*et al.\* \(2018\)](#).

<sup>15</sup>Another approach could be to use word embeddings on politicians' names and compare the distance between women and men before and after access to power. However, this method appears inadequate in our context for two reasons. First, the accuracy of this method depends on the size of the data sets and some politicians receive little media coverage before accessing to power making this algorithm difficult to apply on them. Second, female politicians receive less media coverage before accessing to power making the algorithm less accurate on women.

ally select keywords associated to topics of interest. It provides a metric relevant to answer the question: "how does the content of news articles differ between female and male politicians *overall*?". The main limitation of this measure is that it does not allow us to study a specific topic. For this task, we use a dictionary-based approach and sentiment analysis.

**Dictionary-based approach** - We estimate Equation 1 using a set of outcome variables related to the topics of interest. To select the topics, we rely on the most recent meta-analysis on gender differences in news coverage in politics (Van der Pas and Aalders, 2020). It shows that female politicians are more often portrayed in terms of their gender, family, physical appearance and personality traits.<sup>16</sup> They can also receive more negative coverage than male politicians.

To select the keywords, we rely on existing dictionaries when it is possible. Table C1 displays the list of keywords associated to each of topic. For *gender*, we select the keywords ourselves. For *family* and *physical appearance*, we select the top 15 words associated to the lexical fields of these two words, as provided by the leading commercial software for French language (*Antidote*). For *personality*, we rely on the work of psychologists who mapped lexicons into the Big-5 personality traits for the French language (Boies *et al.*, 2001). We apply the dictionaries on a window of 10 words surrounding the mention of the name of a politician, in line with standards on word embeddings (we test alternative window sizes in the appendix). For each minister, we compute a set of dummies indicating whether these topics are associated to them in a given month.

For *sentiment analysis*, our main approach relies on a pre-trained large language model to classify the sentiment of sentences mentioning ministers. We compute a dummy equal to 1 if the negative sentiment is dominant. We then calculate the monthly share of news articles with negative sentiment for each minister.<sup>17</sup> As a robustness, we also use a pre-defined dictionary for sentiment analysis to compute the negativity score of the targeted sentences.<sup>18</sup>

**Sample** - As we have data on the content of news article on a 1-year horizon around the time of appointment, we perform the text analysis on a balanced panel ranging from 12 months prior to 12 months after appointment as minister. This data set includes 12,648

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<sup>16</sup>These topics can also undermine the popularity of female politicians (Rohrbach *et al.*, 2023).

<sup>17</sup>We use DistilCamemBERT which is a large language model fine-tuned for sentiment analysis on the French language (<https://huggingface.co/cmarkea/distilcamembert-base-sentiment>). For each sentence, the model provides a probability indicating whether the sentiment is negative, neutral or positive. It is derived from CamemBERT the state-of-the-art language model for French.

<sup>18</sup>We use the Valence Aware Dictionary for sEntiment Reasoning from the *nltk* package on Python.

observations (527\*24).

## 4.2.2 Results

**Machine Learning Approach** - The results are described in Figure 4. In the months preceding appointment as minister, the euclidian distance is about 0.117. After appointment, this distance decreases by nearly 32% to reach about 0.08. The reduction of this distance suggests that gender differences in the content of news articles have narrowed. These results are robust to using an alternative topic model (Figure C6), an alternative distance measure (Figure C7) and a random forest classifier (Figure C8). The accuracy of the classifier is about 86% in the twelve months prior appointment, and decreases to about 80% after appointment. This suggests that the content of news articles mentioning female and male politicians has become more alike after their appointment as minister.

**Dictionary-based approach** - The results are displayed in Figure 5. Each graph depicts a topic as defined in Section 4.2.1. We observe that the probability to mention the gender, family, personality traits, physical appearance and use a negative tone increases significantly in the first month after access to power. However, none of the coefficients related to the interaction between event dummies and gender are significant. This suggests that the patterns are similar for both women and men.

One could wonder how these results vary using more detailed dictionaries. To enquire, we study sub-groups of keywords for topics related to *Personality* and *Family*. For *Family*, the only gender difference is displayed in Figure 6, where we observe that women are more often depicted as mothers, relatively to men as fathers. This effect is again concentrated in the first month after access to power. As for *Personality*, the results are displayed in Figure C9. We observe that the media stress more often the conscientiousness, the intellect and the honesty of both male and female politicians after appointment, without any discernible gender difference.

Another potential limitation of these results is the focus on topics discussed in the literature. To explore potential gender differences, we run a LASSO regression to determine the most predictive words of gender (Table C4). Women seem more often associated with quotas (parity) and the rest of the words is difficult to interpret. We test how the mention of quotas varies around access to power using a dummy that equals 1 if this word is mentioned. Similarly to motherhood, we find an effect concentrated on the first month after access to power (Figure C11).

Overall, we find limited evidence indicating that newspapers depict women differently from men after access to power. If anything, the results point towards a narrowing in the differences between the content of news articles mentioning men and women. The only gender differences we detect appear in the first month after access to power, which suggests that the reactivation of stereotypes could be only a short term effect in the media.

### 4.3 Alternative Channels

We are inclined to conclude that the previous results are due to access to power, which equalizes the media coverage of women and men. In this section, we study alternative channels that could modify this interpretation.

#### 4.3.1 Influence of Selection

Our identification assumption is not that individuals are selected randomly. It consists in assuming that the timing of appointment to the position of minister is equally exogenous for both women and men. This assumption would be violated if the future media coverage of politicians had a different effect on the probability to appoint men and women. For instance, women could be appointed because of their expected future media presence, and men because of their personal network.

**Common Trend** - The first reason to be skeptic of the influence of selection on the results is the existence of a common trend before appointment. In the 12 months before appointment, the gender difference in media coverage appears stable. This suggests that the exogeneity of the timing of appointment is similar for both women and men.

**Gender Quota** - To further question the influence of selection, we exploit two institutional features of the context where the timing of appointment is arguably more exogenous to the individual media coverage of ministers. The first consists in the introduction of a 50% quota in the government in May 2012. During the 2012 presidential campaign, the left-wing candidate promised to introduce a quota in case of victory. After his election, the quota was implemented and increased the share of female ministers by more than 20 p.p. from 26.5% in April to 48.6% in May 2012. It has been enforced by all the subsequent governments. Appointments as ministers in May 2012 were therefore conditional to the victory of the left-wing candidate. As this victory was arguably difficult to predict months

in advance, focusing on this context reduces the selection concern.<sup>19</sup>

We compare the impact of access to power on the gender gap in media coverage before and after the introduction of this quota. The estimation results are described in Figure 7 graph (a).<sup>20</sup> The effect of access to power seems similar in both periods. If anything, the coefficients are less precisely estimated in the pre-quota period but the scaled effects are similar in magnitude. This suggests that women appointed in a context of a gender quota also benefit from an increased media presence.<sup>21</sup>

**Majority Changes** - Our identification assumption relies on the unexpectedness of the timing of appointment. We focus on majority changes following presidential elections, where the timing is likely to be more unpredictable. In this case, the appointment as minister is conditional to the victory of the presidential candidate, which is difficult to predict. We restrict the sample to the governments formed after the 11 majority changes occurring from 1970 to 2017. The sample includes 305 politicians, with 25.9% of women. Figure 7 graph (b) depicts the results. We observe that they are essentially similar to the ones obtained with the full sample.

Overall, while we do not rule out that selection exists, it does not seem to drive the results. The timing of nomination does not appear to be determined differently by future shocks to the media coverage of men and women.

### 4.3.2 Gender Differences in Sub-positions

The positions of ministers are not all identical. There exists (i) a hierarchy within these positions and (ii) different domains ministers are in charge of. As women and men are nominated to different extents to these sub-positions (see Table B1), this raises the question as to whether this difference can drive media coverage.

To enquire, we estimate Equation 1 and include variables controlling for the characteristics of these positions interacted with the event-time dummies. If these characteristics were driving the results, we would expect the coefficients related to the interaction between event time dummies and gender to decrease in magnitude. Figures C16 and C17 display

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<sup>19</sup>François Hollande was chosen as the left-wing candidate in October 2011 (7 months before appointment). He was initially considered an outsider and benefited from the withdrawal of Dominique Strauss-Kahn in May 2011 (12 months before appointment).

<sup>20</sup>Figure C12 displays the descriptive trends.

<sup>21</sup>A potential limitation of this result is the existence of a temporal trend favouring female representation in the media. We investigate this possibility in Section 5.2.2. We do not find any evidence supporting this possibility.



the results for respectively hierarchical and topical differences. We observe that the coefficients are essentially similar when controlling for these characteristics which suggests that these differences do not drive the results.

### 4.3.3 Additional Robustness

**Pre-event reference period** - We selected  $l = -2$  as the reference period to scale the point estimates. It could be questioned whether the anticipation effect is already present in  $l = -2$ . To demonstrate the robustness of our results, we replicate the analysis using different reference periods  $l \in [-6; -1]$ . The results are displayed in Figure C18 and essentially unchanged.

**Event window** - We analyzed our data at the monthly level. One could wonder how this choice impact the results. In Figure C19, we replicate the analysis using time intervals of 3 months. The interpretation of the results is similar.

**Alternative estimation method** - A recent econometrics literature shows that identification and inference can be misleading in the context of staggered event studies design (Goodman-Bacon, 2021, de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfoeuille, 2020, Callaway and Sant’Anna, 2021). As individuals are appointed as ministers over the period 1970-2017, one could wonder to what extent our results are driven by the issue highlighted in this literature. To investigate, we implement the estimator of Borusyak *et al.* (2021). The results are depicted in Figure C20. They are essentially similar to the ones obtained with the main regression.<sup>22</sup>

## 5 Mechanisms

Why does access to power equalize the media coverage of male and female politicians? This section attempts to answer that question. We seek to understand which characteristic women obtain by accessing to power that seems rewarded by the media.

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<sup>22</sup>We prefer using this estimator as a robustness test for multiple reasons. First, our main regression allows us to obtain comparable results across outcomes and specifications. Second, our setting differs from examples outlined in the econometric literature on event studies in two ways. Our results suggest that the effect is concentrated on the first period following access to government and relatively stable afterwards, which weakens the potential influence of negative weights (Kleven, 2023). Additionally, individuals are not observed over the entire time period.

## 5.1 Extrinsic and Intrinsic Newsworthiness

An obvious mechanism explaining our results would be that media attention is focused on positions, not individuals. Individuals would only be extrinsically newsworthy, because of their position, rather than intrinsically, because of their personal characteristics. If this was true, we would observe that women occupied less newsworthy positions before being appointed minister. After leaving government, they would then have similar career opportunities to men, which would explain the persisting disappearance of the gender gap.

Descriptive statistics support this view (Table D1). Before appointment, the gender gap in the share of politicians occupying a political position is 22 percentage points, with 84% (65%) of men (women) doing so. After leaving government, this gender gap is reduced to 13 percentage points. Could this explain the effect of access to power? To answer this question, we provide three pieces of evidence.

**Decomposing the gap before appointment** - We analyze the period before access to power. We implement a Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition to determine which portion of the initial gender gap in media coverage can be explained by differences in observable characteristics. We use the following variables: a set of dummies indicating whether an individual had been elected MP, senator or mayor in the past, the number of times an individual has been elected, the cumulated time spent in these positions and the age at appointment. The decomposition results are displayed in Figure 8. We are able to explain at most 30% of the initial gap. This suggests that the majority of the difference cannot be explained by experience and career differences.

**Matching on political experience** - We test whether the effect of access to power is a byproduct of the preexisting gap driven by observable characteristics. We perform propensity score matching to create a sample of women and men with similar experience before appointment.<sup>23</sup> Then, we replicate the analysis of Section 4.1 on this sample. Figure D1 displays the results. Although the magnitude of the effect is smaller, the main results hold on this sample.

**Persistence after leaving government** - We focus on the period after leaving government. During this period, politicians pursue different career trajectories. If newsworthiness is due to their current position, we should observe a reappearance of the gender gap in media coverage. We use an event-study approach and control for time-varying positions they

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<sup>23</sup>Details on the matching procedure and balance checks are provided in Section D.1.

occupy. For each minister, we identify the month in which she/he leaves government.<sup>24</sup> We estimate the following equation:

$$Y_{i,t} = \sum_l \mu_l D_{i,t}^l * Gender_i + \sum_l \gamma_l D_{i,t}^l + \delta X_{i,t} + \alpha_i + \lambda_t + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (2)$$

Where  $i$  is the subscript for the individual level,  $t$  for the month level.  $D_{i,t}^l$  correspond to the event time dummies,  $Gender_i$  is a dummy that equals 1 if the individual  $i$  is a woman,  $\alpha_i$  control for time invariant characteristics and  $\lambda_t$  control for time-variant characteristics.  $X_{i,t}$  corresponds to variables accounting for other political positions an individual  $i$  occupies at time  $t$ . We construct two variables indicating for a given month (i) whether a former minister occupies any political position, (ii) and the number of political positions a minister occupies at the same time. The main coefficients of interest are the  $\mu_l$ . As in Section 4.1, we display conversions of the estimates in percentages by calculating  $V_i \equiv \mu_l / (E[Y_{-2}^M] - E[Y_{-2}^W])$ , where the superscript  $M$  ( $W$ ) designates men (women).

As compared to the model outlined in Section 4.1.1, there are three differences. First, the event times  $l \geq 0$  correspond to months *after leaving government* while  $l < 0$  correspond to months *before appointment*.<sup>25</sup> This also allows us to directly compare the results on persistence with those on access by using  $l = -2$  as a reference period. The second difference relates to the time span of the data. Here,  $l \in [-12; 24]$  as we have data on media coverage of all the politicians up to two years after they left government. Third, we estimate Equation 2 with and without controls for other political positions. If newsworthiness is purely extrinsic, we expect  $V_i$  to shrink once we control for time-varying positions. We estimate Equation 2 on a balanced panel ranging from 12 months prior to 24 months after exiting government. In total, we have 18,972 observations (527\*36).

Figure 9 displays the results. In graph (a), we observe the descriptive trends. Before appointment, about 60% (40%) of male (female) politicians receive monthly media coverage. After leaving government, this gender gap seems to have disappeared. The proportion of former ministers covered ranges from 90% in the first month to 70% about two years later. In graph (b), we show that the reduction of the gender gap is statistically signif-

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<sup>24</sup>Note that some individuals switch positions within government. In this case, we define the event as the time in which these individuals leave their last position within government.

<sup>25</sup>In the appendix, we show how the results vary when we use  $l < 0$  corresponding to the months before leaving government.

icant. Point estimates indicate that the gender gap narrowing ranges from 50 to 100% in the two-year interval. Additionally, this does not seem to be due to improved career opportunities for women. Estimates are essentially similar when we control for the current political positions of these ministers.<sup>26</sup>

Overall, the evidence presented in this section suggests that career differences cannot explain the initial gap as well as the persisting disappearance of this gap. This suggests that women have acquired intrinsic newsworthiness because of their ministerial position.

## 5.2 Why do Women Become Intrinsically Newsworthy?

The literature suggests three main reasons why female politicians would be underrepresented in the media: the news value of power and stereotypes, the rarity of women at the top and gendered networks (Van der Pas and Aaldering, 2020). In this section, we assess the relative importance of these mechanisms.

### 5.2.1 The News Value of Power and Stereotypes

A potential mechanism explaining why women become more newsworthy is the influence of the news value of power and stereotypes. This idea is in line with Bennett (1990) who argue that news are valued more when closer to power. Journalists would index individuals depending on their proximity with power. In our context, female politicians could be considered as less likely to exercise power before appointment, relatively to male politicians. Once appointed as ministers, journalists would update their belief. They would see these women as equally likely to exercise power as male politicians, which would increase their newsworthiness.

**Results on lower-ranked positions** - An implication of this idea is that accessing positions farther from power would produce a weaker effect on the newsworthiness of politicians. To provide evidence on this hypothesis, we replicate the analysis on two positions just below that of minister in the political hierarchy: (i) Upper House senators and (ii) Lower House members of Parliament (MP). We collected data on the media coverage of all the newcomers who access these two positions for elections occurring after 2000 by the

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<sup>26</sup>In the appendix D.1, we show that the results are robust to using alternative outcomes. As a few politicians are reappointed within government, we also show that the results are robust to excluding this subsample.

three same national newspapers.<sup>27</sup> This includes the 2001, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017 elections for Upper House senators (2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017 elections for Lower House MP). The total sample includes 447 Upper House senators and 953 Lower House MP (See Section D.4 for more information on the election systems). For each individual, we collect data on the media coverage they receive from the three newspapers for an equal amount of time before and during their term. For Upper House senators (Lower House MP), the time interval is 6 (5) years on both sides of the election year as the term lasts 6 (5) years. We then estimate Equation 1 on these two samples. As the media coverage is significantly lower for these two positions, we set the time unit at the yearly level.

In both positions, female newcomers receive significantly less media coverage than male ones in the year preceding their election. Future Upper House female senators (MP) are about 21 (12) p.p. less likely to be mentioned in newspapers. How does this gap vary when they access the position? Figure 10 provides the answer. Point estimates of the scaled effects are substantially lower than for ministers. In graph (a), we observe that access to the position of Upper House senator reduces the gender gap by 65% in the first year. This effect ranges from 55 to 86% in the first five years of their term relatively to the year preceding their election. As for the last year of their term, the scaled effect is stronger in magnitude, standing at 106%. The effects are significant for all the years and confidence intervals include the 100% threshold, indicating that we cannot rule out that the gender gap has completely disappeared. Looking at graph (b), access to the position of Lower House MP has a milder effect on the gender gap in media coverage. The gender gap is reduced by 22% in the first year. This effect ranges from 28 to 48% in the subsequent years, and increases to 64% in the last year. Confidence intervals include 100% only for the third year and last year although a closer look at the coefficients suggest that the 100% threshold is excluded from the intervals at the 10% significance level. Additionally, we stress that these analyses are performed on the entire population of newcomers in Parliament making the point estimates informative *per se*.

Overall, the picture that emerges is that access to these two lower-ranked positions reduces the gender gap in media coverage to a lower extent than access to the position of minister. For senators, the gender gap seems to be narrowed significantly, if not entirely.

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<sup>27</sup>One could question whether the results would differ using regional newspapers. We chose to focus on national newspapers as it is (i) likely to have more societal impact than regional ones, (ii) to represent a significant achievement, and (iii) comparable with the previous analysis.

For MPs, the gender gap appears to decrease only slightly. This suggests that the effect of position on media coverage is less strong for lower-ranked positions.<sup>28</sup>

**Heterogeneity Depending on Time in Government** - To provide further evidence on this mechanism, we study the heterogeneity of the persistence depending on the time spent in government. This variable can be seen as the treatment intensity. Individuals who have held a ministerial position for longer are more likely to be considered as powerful. We estimate Equation 2 and interact the main variables  $D_{i,t}^l * Gender_i$  with a continuous variable measuring the number of days an individual has spent as government minister.<sup>29</sup> Figure 11 displays the triple interaction estimates. Before appointment, we observe that the estimates are non significant, probing evidence in favor of the common trend. After leaving government, although some coefficients are imprecisely estimated, the magnitude of the point estimates becomes more positive and the coefficients are more likely to be significant as we move away from the event date. This suggests that individuals are more likely to remain intrinsically newsworthy when they have held positions of power for longer periods of time.

### 5.2.2 Alternative Mechanisms

**The news value of rarity** - Another potential reason explaining our results is due to the news value of rarity. The media would consider women newsworthy because they are rare in positions of power. If this was true, we would expect female politicians to receive more media coverage in contexts where there are fewer female ministers. To investigate, we study the heterogeneity of the results over time. The share of female ministers has gradually increased from their complete absence in the early 1970s to parity in 2012 (see Figure A1). We use the econometric specification described in Section 4.1.1 and interact the variables  $D_{i,t}^l * Gender_i$  with a linear trend. Results are displayed in Figure D6. We observe that the effect does not vary as the share of female ministers increased, suggesting that women in positions of power do not receive an increased media coverage when they are rare.

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<sup>28</sup>This could also explain why previous papers in the literature have not found that the gender gap in media coverage is explained by gender differences in positions. For instance, [Van Der Pas \(2022\)](#) establishes a robust gender gap in media coverage among MPs of six European countries.

<sup>29</sup>One could also wonder whether there are gender differences in time spent in a ministerial position. In Figure D10, we show that the distribution of time spent in governments appears similar for both women and men.

To reinforce this interpretation, we study the heterogeneous impact of access to power among male politicians. If access to power had an equalizing impact independently of gender, we should observe a similar effect within the sample of men when comparing men with a high media exposition to men with a low media exposition. To study this mechanism, we update the empirical strategy described in Section 4.1.1 in two ways: (i) we replace the *Gender* dummy in the econometric specification with a dummy that equals 1 if the individual had a media coverage below the median of the sample in the 12 months preceding access to power, (ii) and we restrict the sample to men. Results are displayed in Figure D7. We find that access to power also equalizes the media coverage of these two types of men. The main difference appears in the longer term whereby point estimates appear to differ but the difference is not statistically significant.

**The role of gendered networks** - Another possibility that could explain why women become intrinsically newsworthy is related to journalists' networks. This argument suggests that journalists have a preference for covering people who are similar to them and whom they know well (Ash *et al.*, 2022). Since journalism is a male dominated profession, journalists would have a preference for covering male politicians. Access to power could therefore enable female politicians to get to know a greater number of journalists. These journalists would include them in their contact list and develop a pattern of referring to them.

To test this argument, we use information on the identity of news article's authors. As most French first names are gendered, we create a dummy variable equal to 1 if the journalist has a feminine first name (and 0 otherwise). We are able to infer the journalist's gender in 261,451 news article (62% of articles).<sup>30</sup> As expected, news articles are predominantly written by men (62.7%) and about 45% (35%) of news articles mentioning female (male) politicians are written by a female journalist. If gendered networks explained the increased newsworthiness of women, we would expect female politicians to be more often covered by male journalists after access to power.

We estimate Equation 1 using the aforementioned variable as the outcome. The results are described in Figure D8. It can be seen that the gender of journalists covering female politicians does not change significantly after access to power, relatively to male politicians.

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<sup>30</sup>We use the package *gender\_guesser* in Python. In the remaining articles, information on the author is missing (21% of articles) or include multiple names (17% of articles, in this case we do not define a variable related to the journalist's gender).

The event time coefficients are slightly negative but non significant (except for three months at the 10% level). Therefore, it appears that female politicians remain more often covered by female journalists both after and before their access to power. This suggests that women already had access to a network of journalists sufficient to be newsworthy before gaining power. Only the value of news related to them seems to have changed.

## 6 Policy Implications for Gender Quotas

The previous results indicate that women appointed to top positions benefit from increased media attention. This raises the question as to whether women who owe their appointment to a quota policy would also benefit from increased media attention. In the wake of the introduction of gender quotas in over 130 countries, this question appears particularly relevant.

In theory, the answer to this question is ambiguous. On the one hand, newly appointed women because of a quota could be considered like any other politician. They would reach positions of power and consequently receive increased media attention. On the other hand, the media could question their legitimacy. The existing literature has shown that women who benefit from gender quotas can suffer from a backlash and see their competency questioned.<sup>31</sup> It is unclear whether the media would perpetuate this type of behavior. Additionally, quota women could also behave differently and seek less media attention.

Previous results point towards the first possibility. We found that women who access a position targeted by a quota benefit from increased media attention. This was established for both ministerial (Figure 7) and, to a lesser extent, parliamentary positions (Figure 10). We should nonetheless remain cautious about interpreting these results as the causal effect of a quota. Although these analyses focus on newcomers, we are not able to distinguish between women who owe their appointment to this quota and those who would have accessed the position in any case. If anything our results should be interpreted as obtained in a context of gender quota.

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<sup>31</sup>See for instance [Franceschet and Piscopo \(2008\)](#) who provide evidence on these behaviors in politics or [Leibbrandt \*et al.\* \(2018\)](#) who identify a similar mechanism in an experimental setting.



## 7 Conclusion

In this study, we consider whether access to power makes women as newsworthy as men. Analyzing data from major newspapers covering politicians appointed as ministers for the first time in France over the period 1970-2017, we find that the gender gap in media coverage disappears after access to power. Before being appointed ministers, female politicians are about 20 p.p. less likely to receive monthly media coverage than men. Once minister, this gender gap disappears completely due to the increased media attention women receive. This is also accompanied by an increased similarity in the content of news articles mentioning women and men. We show that these results are robust to different estimation methods, outcomes and are unlikely to be due to differential selection or gender differences in sub-positions within government.

We argue that these findings are likely to be caused by the news value of power. We first provide evidence that women have become intrinsically newsworthy. Then, we show that the effect of position on the gender gap in media coverage is weaker for positions farther from power and that it lasts longer for individuals who held a position of power for a longer time period. Finally, we rule out alternative potential mechanisms relying on the news value of rarity or gendered networks of journalists.

From a public policy perspective, these findings are relevant to understand the sources of the lower representation of women in the media. Our results suggest that power has the ability to make individuals newsworthy. This raises the question as to whether increasing the number of women in top political positions through quota policies would also increase women's representation in the media. Our findings, albeit suggestive, point towards a positive answer.

Our results suggest new research avenues. First, we observed that women receive less media coverage before being appointed to top positions. Future research could attempt to determine at which career stage the gender gap in media coverage appears. Second, we used data from national newspapers. It would be interesting to replicate this analysis using less mainstream newspapers or social media, which are increasingly used to obtain information. The biases against women may be stronger there, and the mechanisms different. Finally, other demographic groups remain underrepresented in the media as well as in politics. It would be interesting to test whether the news value of power can also contribute to improving their representation in the media.

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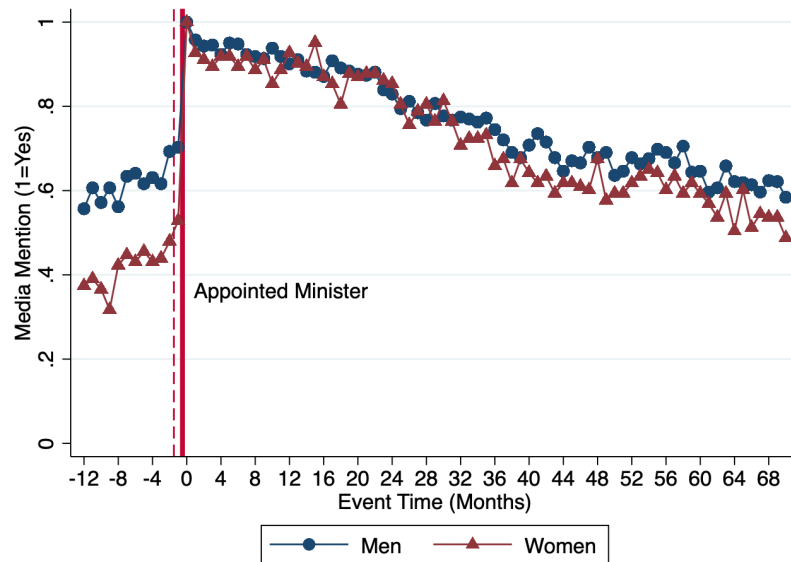
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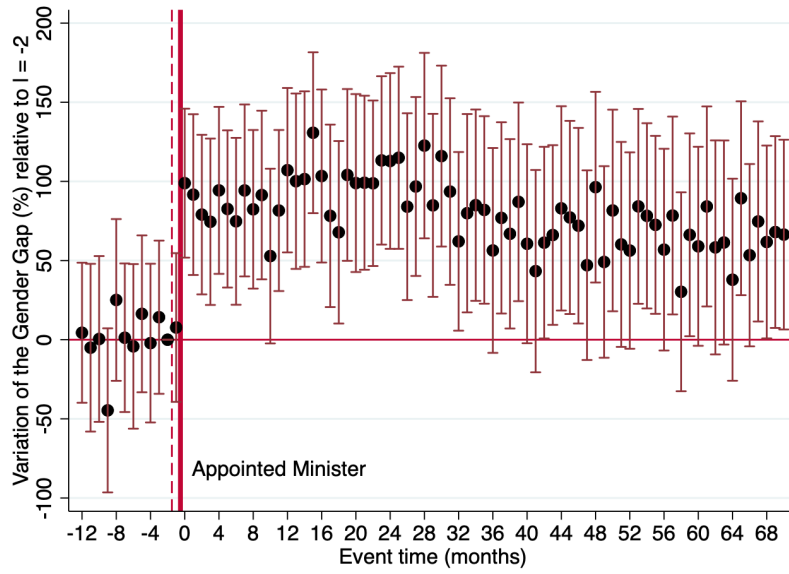
# Figures

Figure 1: Media Mentions and Access to Power



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of the three main French daily newspapers on all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The y-axis corresponds to the share of individuals who receive at least one media mention. The x-axis corresponds to the month with respect to the date where the individual is appointed minister ( $x=0$ ).

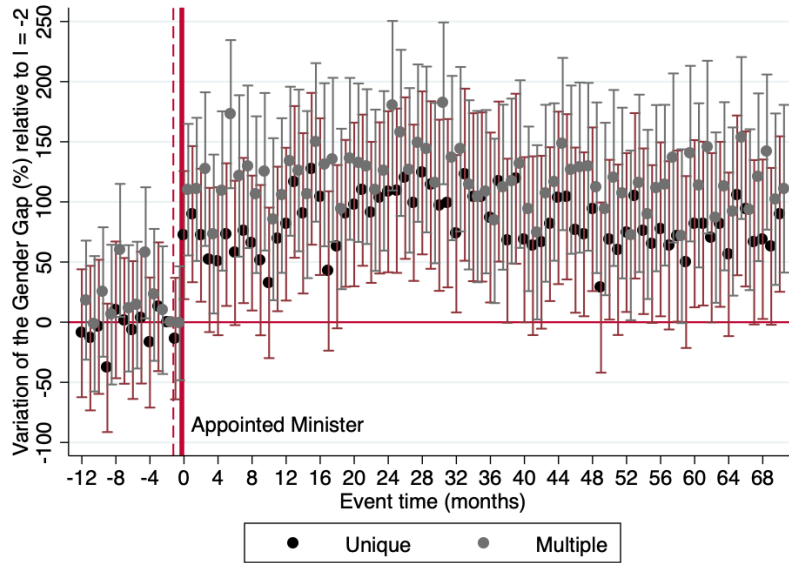
Figure 2: Impact of Access to Power on the Gender Gap in Media Mentions



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

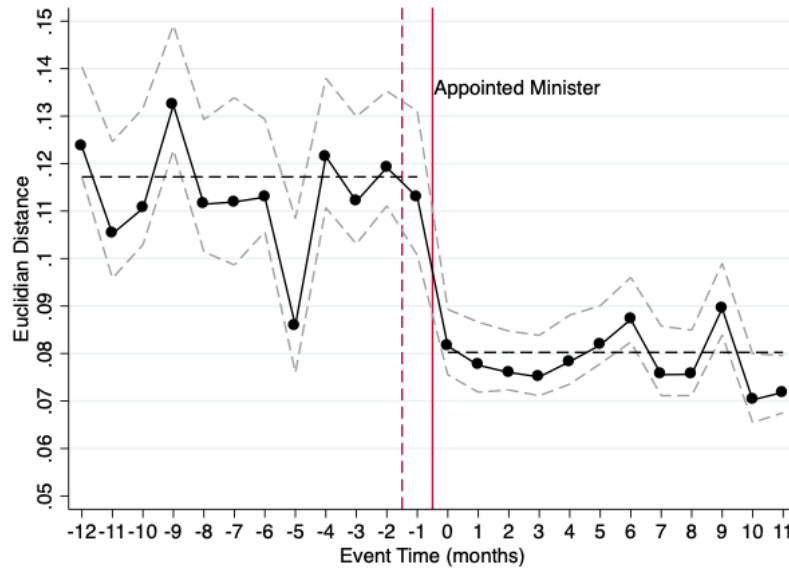


Figure 3: Is the Media Coverage Meaningful?



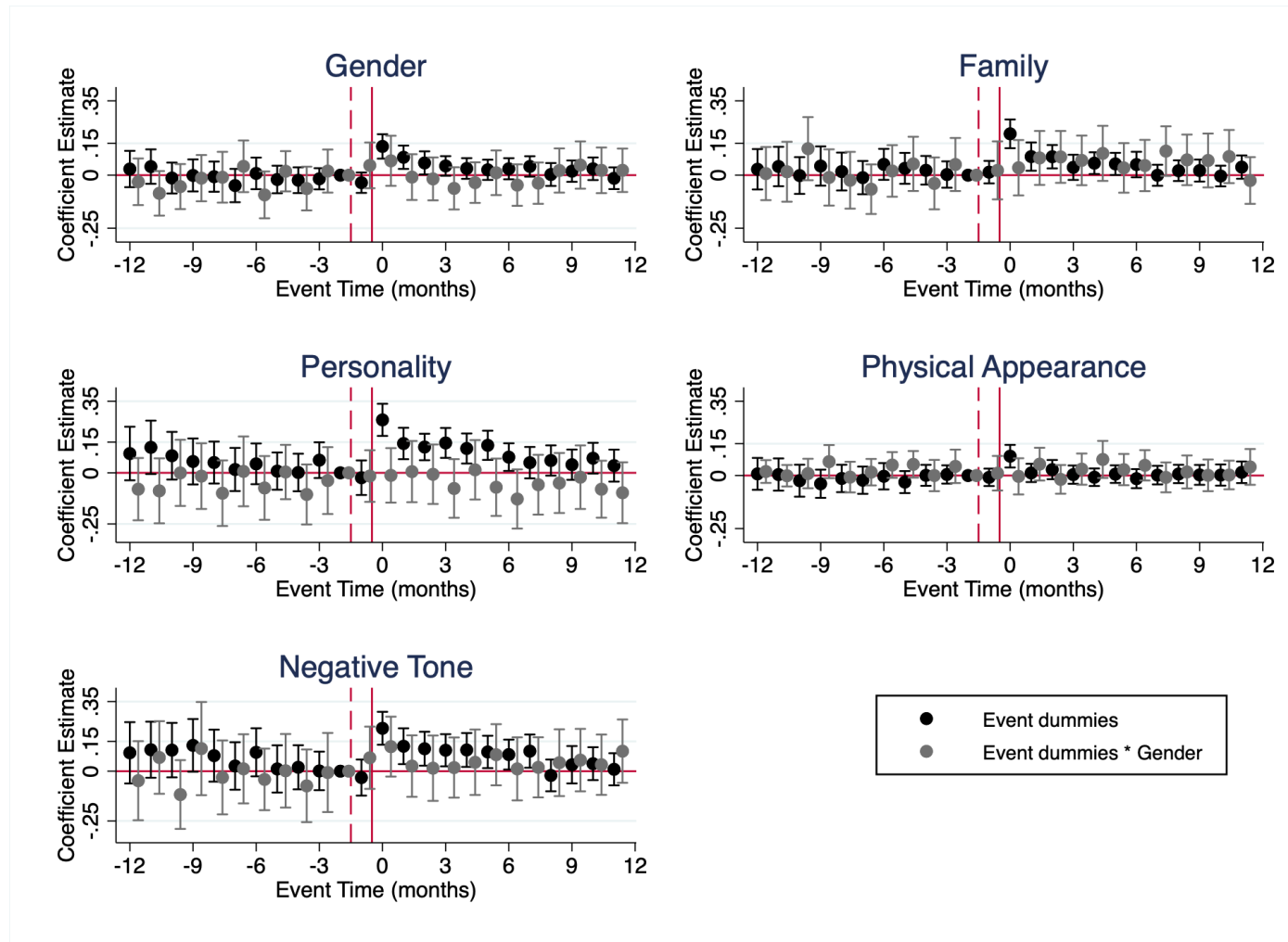
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). "Unique" ("Multiple") indicates that the outcome variable is a dummy that equals one if an individual is the only minister mentioned (mentioned with other ministers) in a news article. Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure 4: Impact of Access to Power on the Content of News Articles - LDA Approach



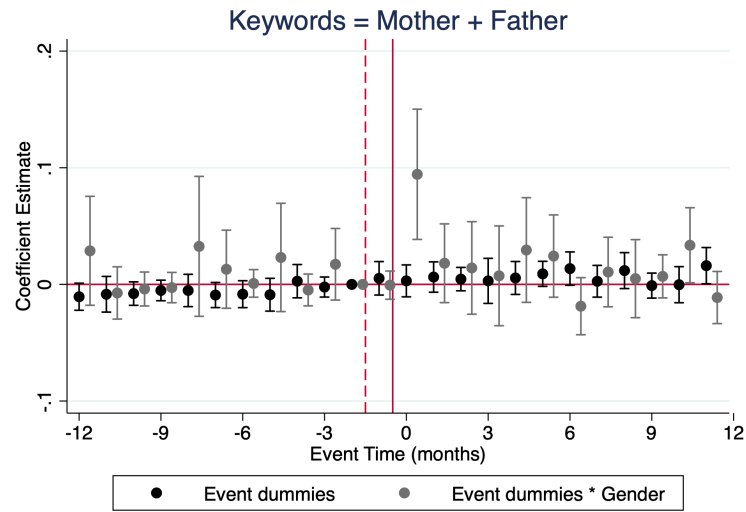
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment. The y-axis depicts the euclidian distance between the distribution of topics across news articles covering female and male politicians. The x-axis corresponds to the months with respect to the appointment date. The vertical (dashed) red line corresponds to (one month prior) the appointment date. 95% confidence intervals are obtained with bootstrap.

Figure 5: Impact of Access to Power on the Content of News Articles - Dictionary-Based Approach



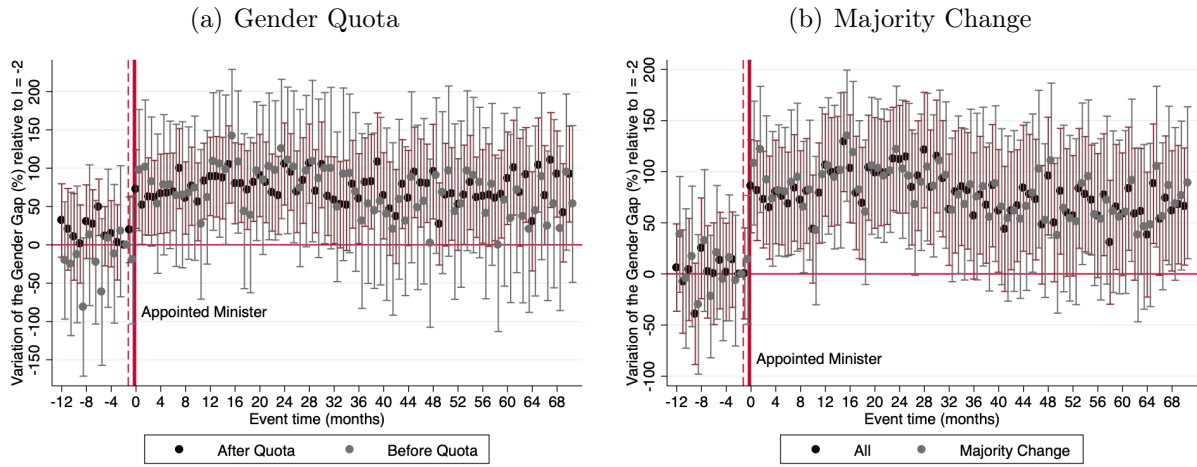
Notes: the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment. Dictionaries used to compute the outcome variables are displayed in Table C1. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows coefficients related to event time dummies and event time dummies interacted with gender, relatively to the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure 6: Impact of Access to Power on the Content of News Articles - Focus on Family



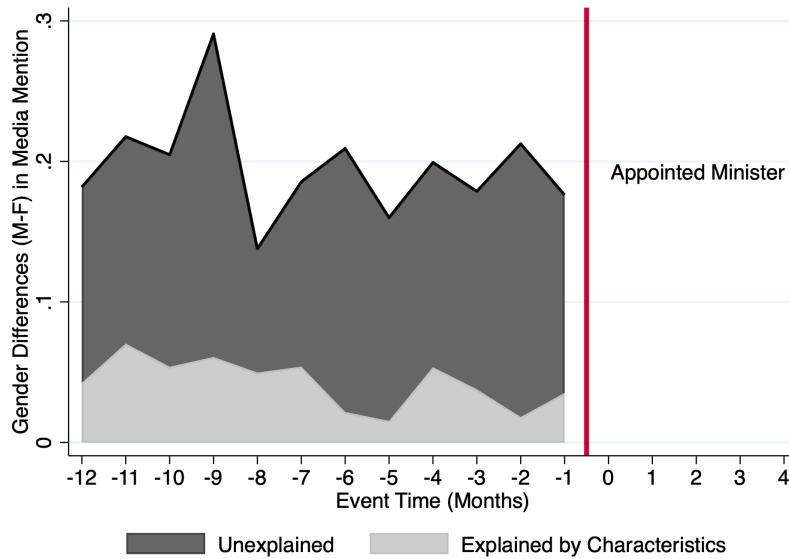
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients relative to the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure 7: Influence of Selection



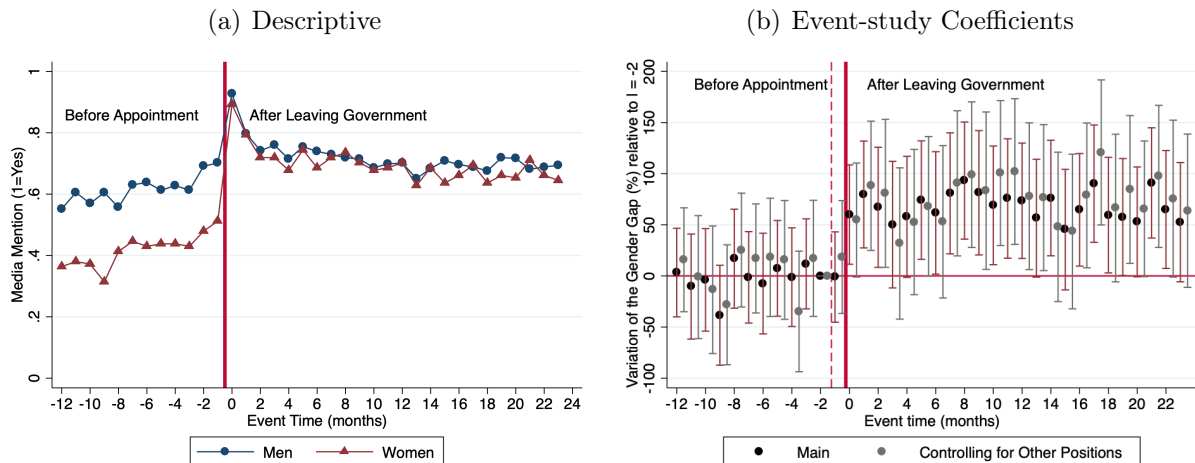
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level. In graph (a), "After Quota" ("Before Quota") corresponds to the sample of politicians appointed after the introduction of a 50% gender quota in May 2012 (strictly before May 2012). In graph (b) "All" include all the ministers in the sample. "Majority change" includes only ministers appointed in the context of a majority change.

Figure 8: Decomposing the Gap Before Appointment



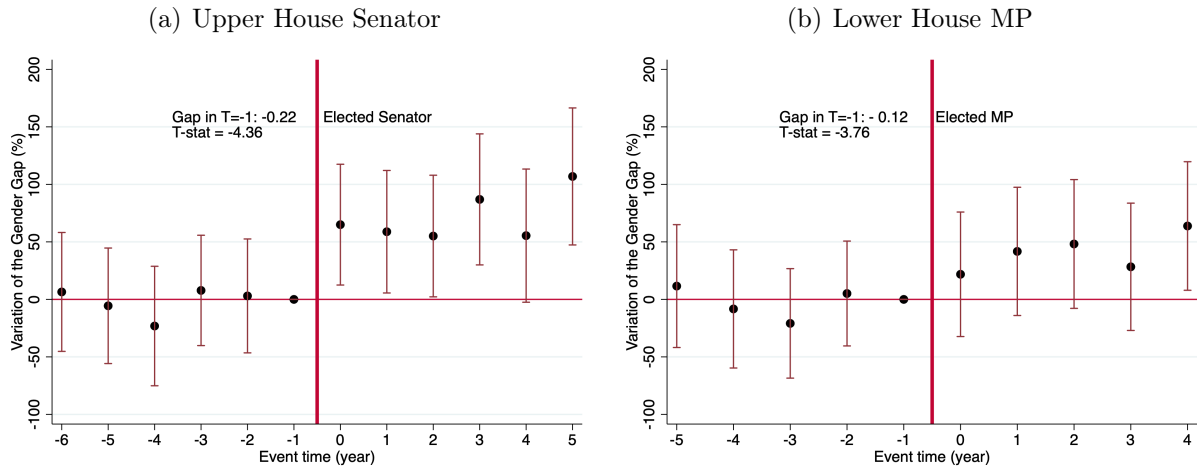
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of the three main French daily newspapers on all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017. The time span is restricted to the 12 months before appointment. The figure displays results from a Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition. The outcome variable is a dummy that equals 1 if the individual is mentioned in the media. Characteristics include a set of dummies indicating whether an individual had been elected MP, senator or mayor in the past, the number of times an individual has been elected, the cumulated time spent in these positions and the age at appointment.

Figure 9: Persisting Effect After Leaving Power



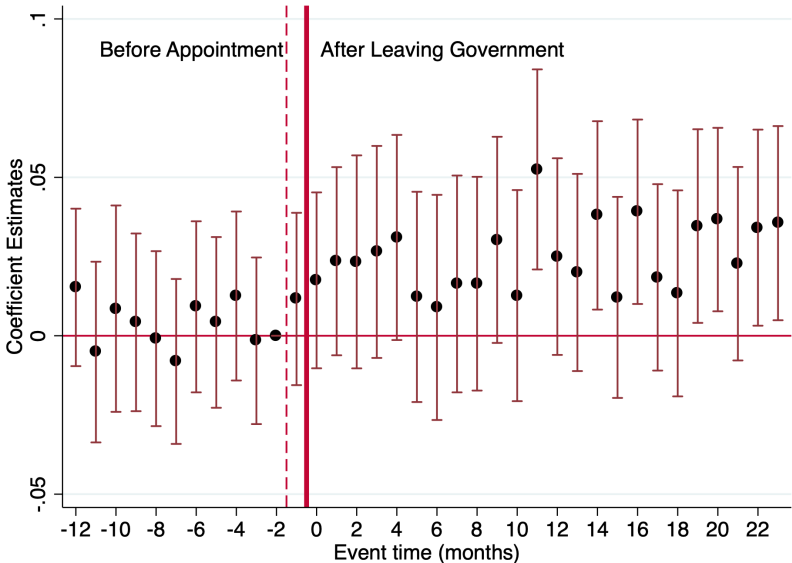
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time period to the right (left) of the vertical line corresponds to 2 (1) years after leaving the government (before appointment). Graph (a) depicts the share of politicians who are mentioned at least once in the media on a given month. Graph (b) shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (2) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). "Controlling for Other Positions" correspond to a specification controlling for (i) whether an individual occupies another political position and (ii) the number of other political positions occupied by an individual for a given month. Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure 10: Replicating the Analysis on Lower-Ranked Positions



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who were elected as Upper House senators (graph a) or Lower House MP (graph b) during the period 2000-2017 by the three main daily French newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (5) years surrounding the election date for Upper House Senators (Lower House MP). The vertical red line corresponds to the election time. The figure shows event time coefficients as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference year ( $l = -1$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure 11: Heterogeneous Effect Depending on Time Spent in Government



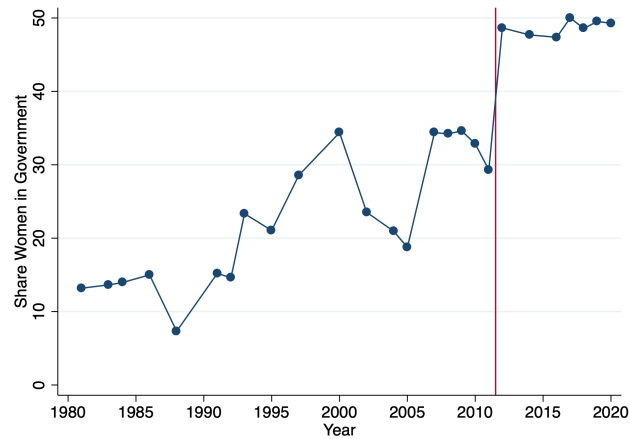
Notes: the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time period to the right (left) of the vertical line corresponds to 2 (1) years after leaving the government (before appointment). The figure shows coefficients estimated from Equation (2) corresponding to the interaction between the event time dummy, gender and the number of days spent in government (per hundred). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.



# Appendix

## A Institutional Background

Figure A1: Evolution of the share of women in government



*Notes:* the data come from the composition of governments over the period 1980-2022.

## B Data

Table B1: Descriptive Statistics

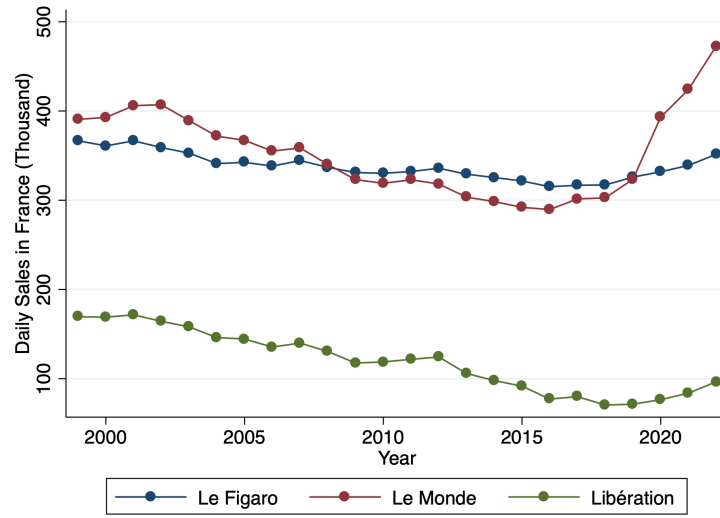
	<i>Men</i>				<i>Women</i>			
	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Age at Appointment	49.96	8.56	29	74	47.73	8.67	30	69
Elected Before Appointment (1=Yes)	0.84	0.37	0	1	0.65	0.48	0	1
MP Before Appointment (1=Yes)	0.66	0.48	0	1	0.45	0.50	0	1
Senator Before Appointment (1=Yes)	0.25	0.43	0	1	0.12	0.33	0	1
Mayor Before Appointment (1=Yes)	0.58	0.49	0	1	0.30	0.46	0	1
N Years Elected Before Appointment	20.17	17.69	0	83	6.93	7.93	0	34
Number of Days In Government	411.10	339.35	9	1829	400.46	386.83	31	1829
Feminine Domain (1=Yes)	0.14	0.35	0	1	0.30	0.46	0	1
High Ranked Minister (1=Yes)	0.32	0.47	0	1	0.26	0.44	0	1
Observations	403				123			

*Notes:* the data come from the government official website. It includes all the politicians who became ministers for the first time over the period 1970-2017. The list of ministers associated to a "feminine domain" is given in Section C.4.

In France, there are 7 national daily newspapers for political and general information: *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Libération*, *Aujourd'hui en France*, *Les Echos*, *La Croix*, *L'Humanité*.<sup>32</sup> We selected *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *Libération* for two reasons. First, we attempted to obtain a sample of newspapers with diverse political ideologies. These three newspapers allow us to have one right-wing (*Le Figaro*), one left-wing (*Libération*) and one newspapers that stands on the center (*Le Monde*) of the political spectrum. Second, they are among the most circulated newspapers over the period. Figure B1 displays the average daily sales of these three newspapers over the period 1999-2020.

<sup>32</sup><http://csmf.fr/layout/set/print/ARTICLES/La-Presses/CSMP-La-PQN/La-presse-quotidienne-nationale>

Figure B1: Evolution of the sales of newspapers

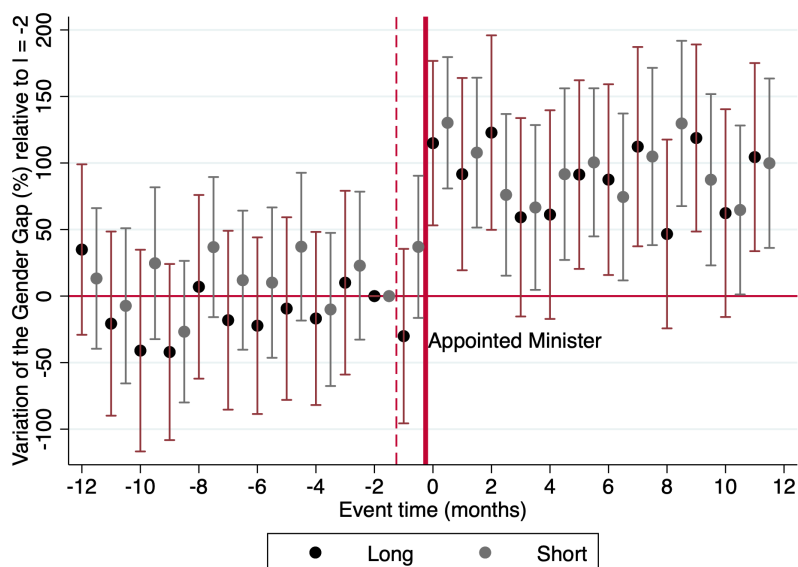


Notes: the data come from the official sales of newspapers.

## C Main Analyses

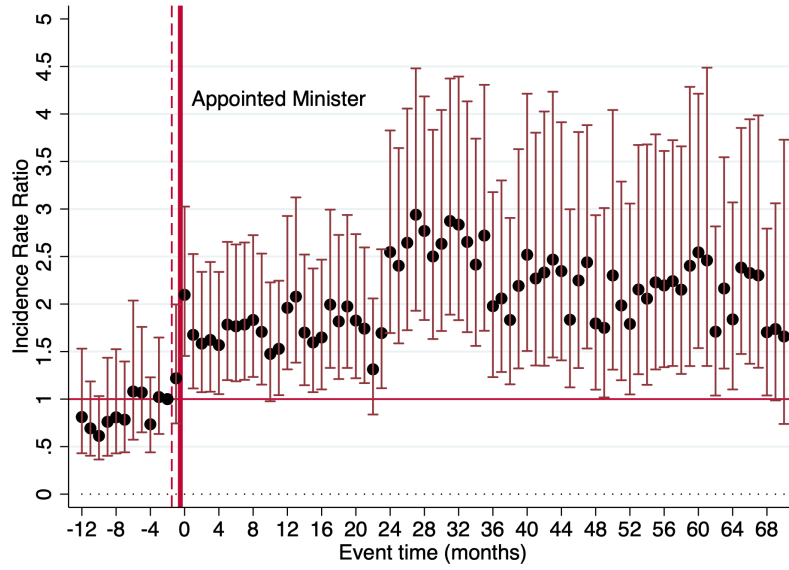
### C.1 Impact of Access on Media Mentions

Figure C1: Impact of Access to Power - Distinction Between Long and Short Articles



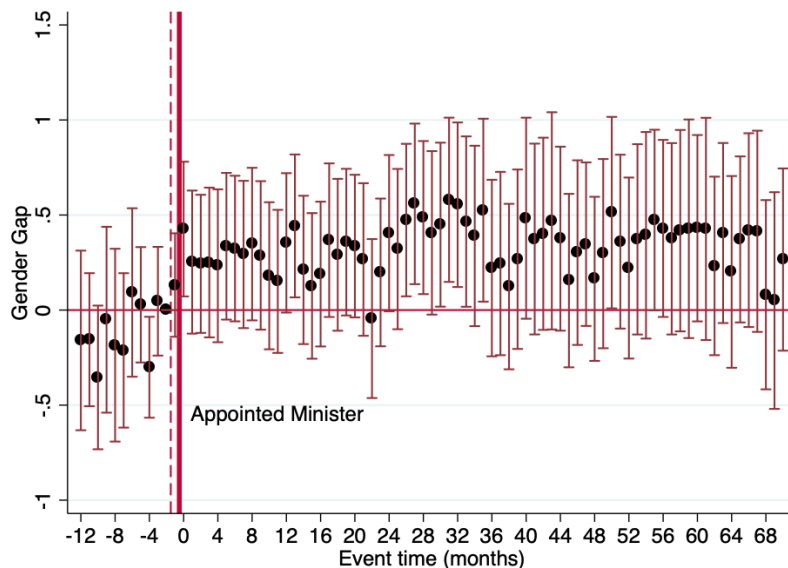
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment as we know the content of news articles only during this period. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level. "Long" ("short") designate news articles whose text is above (below) the median length

Figure C2: Impact of Access to Power - Count of media coverage



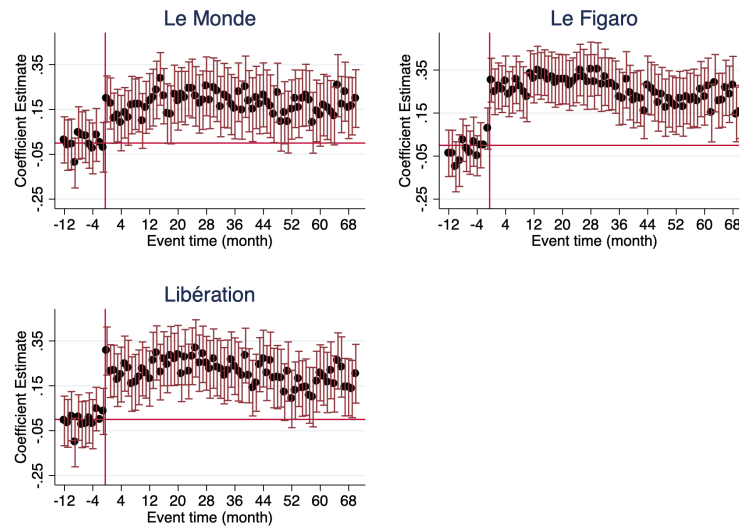
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) with Poisson pseudo-likelihood regression (with multiple levels of fixed effects) where the dependent variable is the number of monthly news articles mentioning a politician. Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure C3: Impact of Access to Power - Count of media coverage among politicians with positive media coverage



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The sample is restricted to politicians with a positive number of media mentions for each month. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) with Poisson pseudo-likelihood regression (with multiple levels of fixed effects) where the dependent variable is the number of monthly news articles mentioning a politician. Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure C4: Impact of Access to Power across Newspapers



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970–2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). "Unique" ("Multiple") indicates that the outcome variable is a dummy that equals one if an individual is the only minister mentioned (mentioned with other ministers) in a news article. Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.





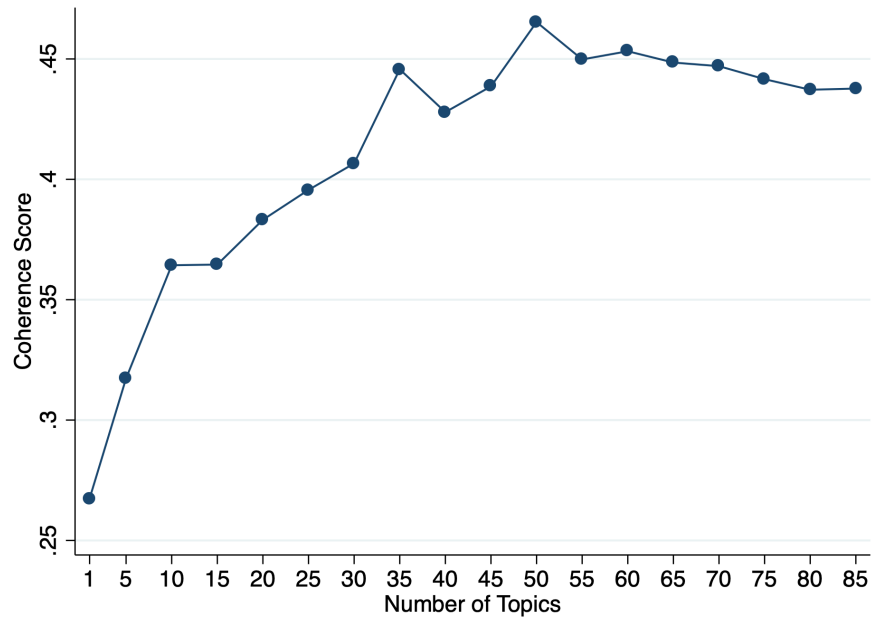
## C.2 Impact of Access on News Content

Table C1: Dictionaries

Subtopic	Keywords (Translated)	Original Keywords (French)
<i>Panel A: Gender</i>		
Woman	woman, miss	femm, madam
Man	man, mister	homm, monsieur
<i>Panel B: Family</i>		
	family, child, father, mother, parent, son, sister, brother, daughter, marriage, home, life, siblings, couple, spouse	famill, enfant, père, mère, parent, fils, soeur, frère, fille, mariage, maison, vie, fratrie, couple, épouse
<i>Panel C: Physical Appearance</i>		
	unattractive, advantage, impressive, athletic, androgynous, nice, slender, unsightly, chubby, frail, atypical, all-purpose, versatile, ugly, stocky	ingrat, avantageux, imposant, athlétique, androgyne, avenant, longiligne, disgracieux, rondouillard, frêle, atypique, passe-partout, complexé, laid, trapu
<i>Panel D: Personality (Big-5)</i>		
General	personality	personnalite
Extraversion	dynamic, active, energetic, enthusiastic, quiet, shy, bold, enthusiastic, talkative	dynamique, actif, énerget, enthousiasm, tranquille, silencieux, timide, audacieux, enthousiaste, bavard
Agreeableness	hostile, indifferent, courteous, cruel, understanding, incomprehensible, abrupt, kind	hostile, indifferent, courtois, cruel, comprehensif, incomprehensif, brusque, gentil
Conscientiousness	organized, responsible, efficient, hard-working, orderly, disciplined, irresponsible, inefficient, careless, careful, negligent	organise, responsable, applique, efficace, travailleur, ordonne, discipline, irresponsable, inefficace, imprudent, minutieux, negligent
Emotional Stability	calm, emotional, impatient, serene, angry, masculine, possessive, relaxed, nervous, laid-back, jealous	calme, emotif, impatient, serein, enerve, masculin, possessif, relax, nerveux, decontracte, jaloux
Intellect	competent, imaginative, artiste, complex, intelligent, talent, curious, creator, original, incompetent, creativity, inventor	competent, imaginatif, artiste, complexe, intelligent, talent, curieux, createur, original, incompetent, creativite, inventeur
Honesty	faithful, unfair, loyal, sincere, honest, sincerity	fidele, injuste, loyal, sincere, honnete, sincerite

*Notes:* List of dictionaries used to classify news articles.

Figure C5: Coherence Score for multiple topics



*Notes:* The graph displays coherence score for different number of topics obtained with a Latent Dirichlet Allocation topic model. The coherence measure is 'c\_v'.

Table C2: List of LDA Topics - Part 1

Topic	Top 5 keywords (Translated)	Top 5 keywords (stemmed French)
1	france, nuclear, factory, gas, site	franc, nucleair, usin, gaz, sit
2	sir, council, mayor, president, secretary	monsieur, conseil, mair, president, secretair
3	million, euros, france, company, subsidy	million, euros, franc, entrepr, aid
4	minister, government, first, state, chief	ministr, gouvern, prem, etat, chef
5	left, social, parliamentarian, politics, green	gauch, social, deput, pol, vert
6	theater, show, france, intermittent, festival	theatr, spectacl, franc, intermittent, festival
7	france, army, military, pay, sir	franc, arme, militair, pay, monsieur
8	france, state, economy, minister, finance	franc, etat, econom, ministr, financ
9	poll, round, eliminate, vote, incumbent	voix, tour, elimin, vot, sort
10	police, town, mayor, neighborhood, resident	polic, vill, mair, quart, hab
11	france, islam, muslim, law, religious	franc, islam, musulman, droit, relig
12	transport, france, price, consumption, product	transport, franc, prix, consomm, produit
13	environment, water, energy, ecology, nuclear	environ, eau, energ, ecolog, nucleair
14	minister, politics, former, council, president	ministr, pol, ancien, conseil, president
15	reform, government, minister, president, state	reform, gouvern, ministr, president, etat
16	euros, finance, fiscal, billion, tax	euros, financ, fiscal, milliard, impot
17	politics, abstention, sir, town, green	pol, abst, monsieur, vill, vert
18	share, right, candidate, election, politics	part, droit, candidat, elect, pol
19	more, all, as, done, good	plus, tout, comm, fait, bien
20	france, group, operator, business, euros	franc, group, oper, entrepr, euros
21	lebanon, beyrouth, patriarch, structure, atlas	liban, beyrouth, patriarch, structure, atlas
22	france, economy, growth, billion, down	franc, econom, croissanc, milliard, baiss
23	region, regional, local, state, community	region, regional, local, etat, collectiv
24	case, justice, judge, sir, investigation	affair, justic, jug, monsieur, enquete
25	france, tv, channel, public, audio-visual	franc, telev, chain, public, audiovisuel
26	president, minister, first, elysee, chief	president, ministr, prem, elys, chef
27	student, school, child, establishment, jail	elev, ecol, enfant, etabl, prison
28	housing, law, town, project, construct	log, loi, vill, projet, construct
29	candidate, constituency, round, list, parliamentarian	candidat, circonscript, tour, list, deput
30	ecology, minister, airport, german, project	ecolog, ministr, aeroport, allemand, projet

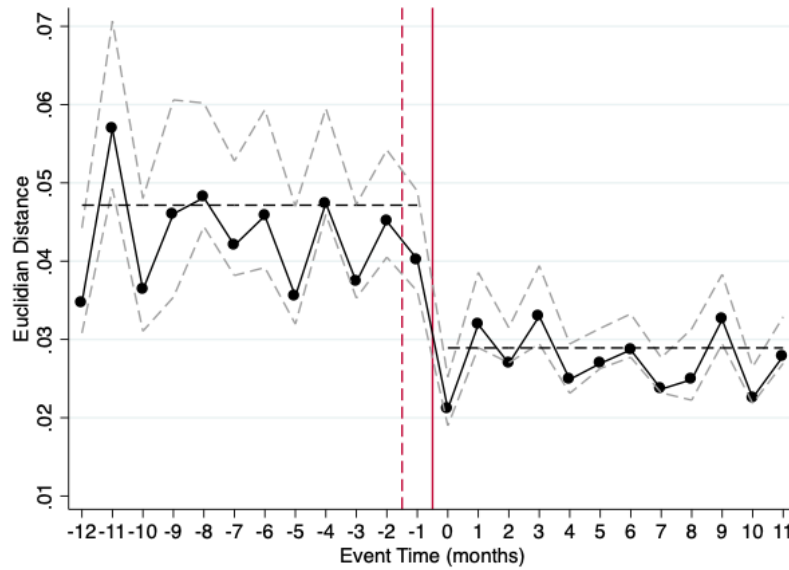
*Notes:* The table displays the list of topics obtained when applying a LDA topic model ( $K = 50$ ) on the entire set of news articles published in a one year window surrounding access to power.

Table C3: List of LDA Topics - Part 2

Topic	Top 5 keywords (Translated)	Top 5 keywords (stemmed French)
31	woman, child, doctor, health, family	femm, enfant, medecin, sant, famill
32	parliamentarian, law, assembly, text, group	deput, loi, assembl, text, group
33	social, work, salaried, business, job	social, travail, salar, entrepr, emploi
34	law, council, text, project, right	loi, conseil, text, projet, droit
35	health, hospital, sanitary, sick, epidemic	sant, hopital, sanitair, malad, epidem
36	france, sport, club, team, game	franc, sport, club, equip, match
37	minister, director, cabinet, council, sir	ministr, directeur, cabinet, conseil, monsieur
38	education, teach, school, national, minister	educ, enseign, ecol, national, ministr
39	study, university, research, teach, format	etud, univers, recherch, enseign, format
40	european, europe, union, commissioner, france	europeen, europ, union, commiss, franc
41	hunt, hunter, nature, environment, bird	chass, chasseur, natur, environ, oiseau
42	minister, sir, first, government, delegate	ministr, monsieur, prem, gouvern, delegu
43	france, play, select, blue, game	franc, jou, select, bleus, jeu
44	union, strike, protest, movement, union	syndicat, grev, manifest, mouv, syndical
45	trade, small-medium business, craftsmanship, chamber, business	commerc, pme, artisanat, chambre, entrepr
46	immigrant, france, foreigner, asile, pay	immigr, franc, etrang, asil, pay
47	culture, museum, artist, art, france	cultur, mus, artist, art, franc
48	france, politics, all, pay, has to	franc, pol, tout, pay, faut
49	social, left, politics, minister, first	social, gauch, pol, ministr, prem
50	france, sir, american, president, diplomate	franc, monsieur, americain, president, diplo- mat

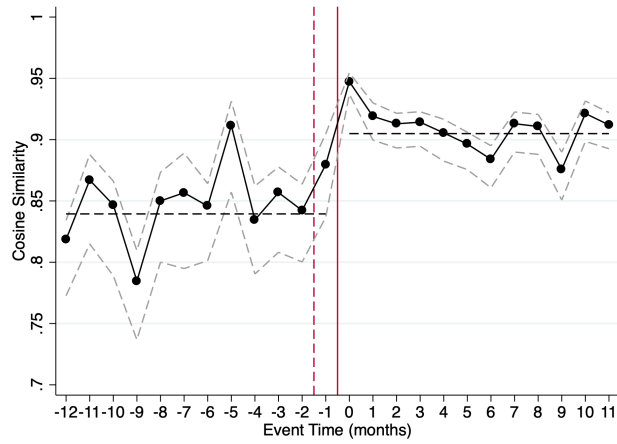
*Notes:* the table displays the list of topics obtained when applying a LDA topic model ( $K = 50$ ) on the entire set of news articles published in a one year window surrounding access to power.

Figure C6: BERTopics Approach



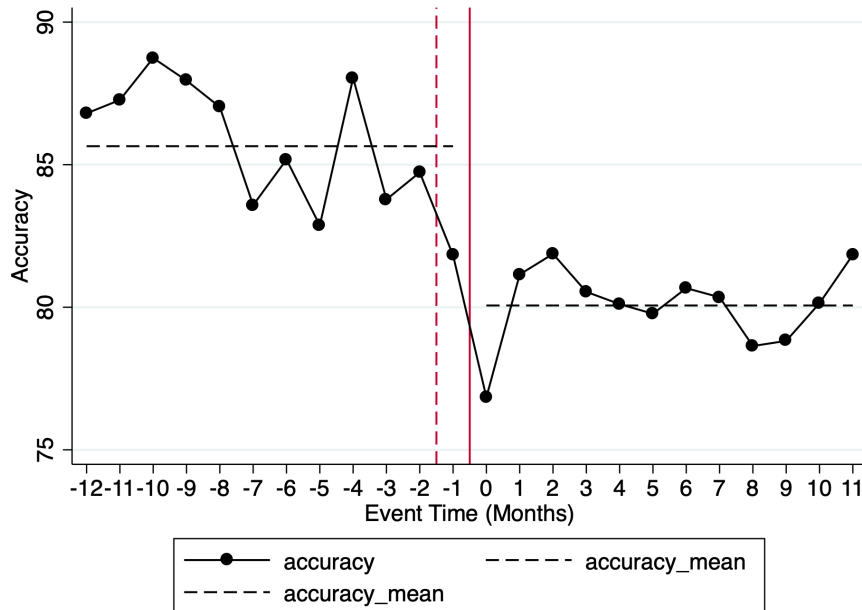
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment. The y-axis depicts the euclidian distance between the distribution of topics across news articles covering female and male politicians. Topics were obtained using BERTopics. The model automatically selected 103 topics. The x-axis corresponds to the months with respect to the appointment date. The vertical (dashed) red line corresponds to (one month prior) the appointment date. 95% confidence intervals are obtained with bootstrap.

Figure C7: Cosine Similarity Index



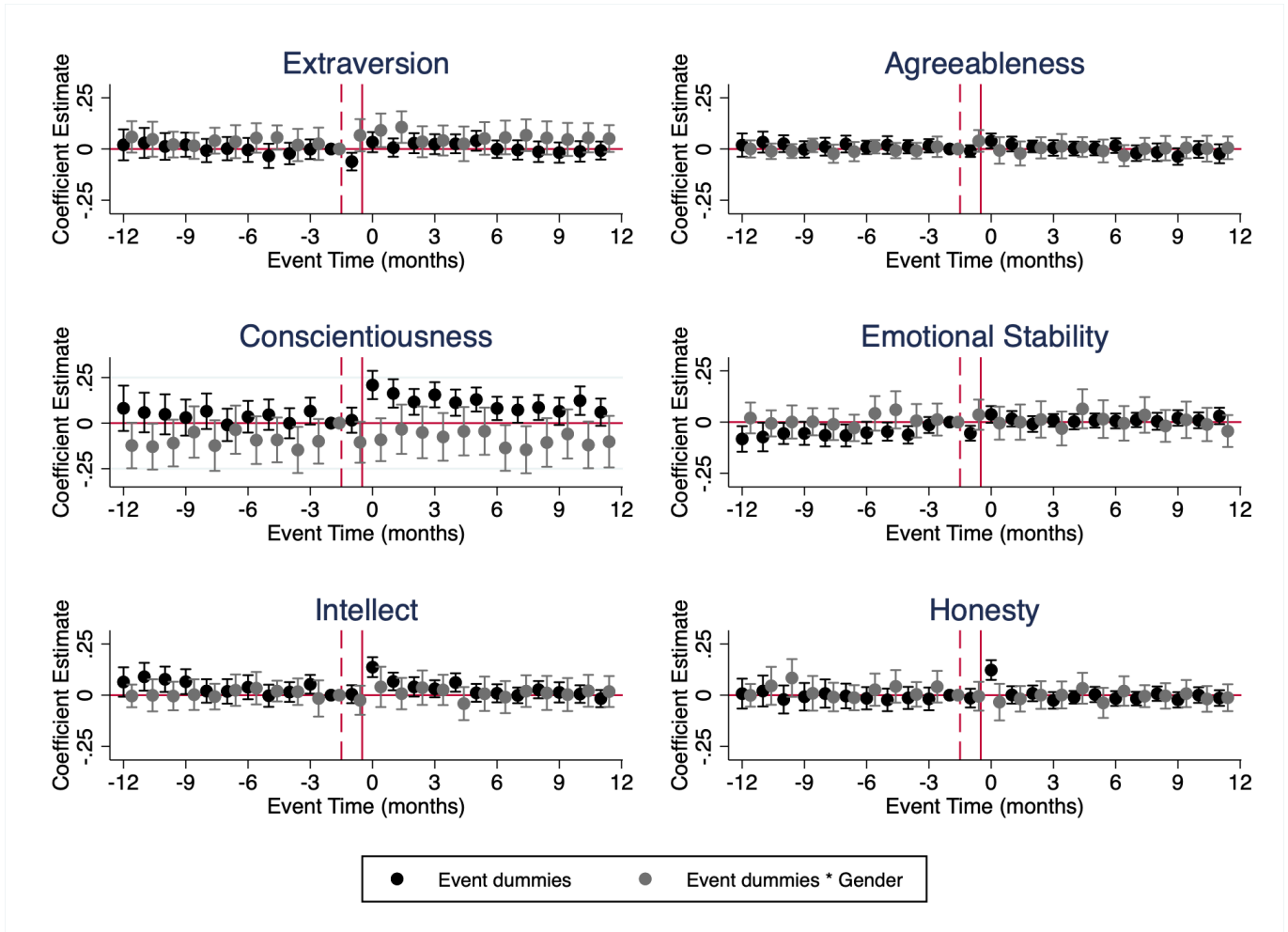
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment. The y-axis depicts the cosine similarity index between the distribution of topics across news articles covering female and male politicians. The x-axis corresponds to the months with respect to the appointment date. The vertical (dashed) red line corresponds to (one month prior) the appointment date. 95% confidence intervals are obtained with bootstrap.

Figure C8: Random Forest Approach



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment. The graph displays the accuracy score with a random forest classifier. The dependent variable is the gender of a minister. The explanatory variables are the processed content of the news articles. For each month, we apply a TF-IDF transformation to the pre-processed text. We select the top 3000 expressions containing 1 to 3 words (unigrams, bigrams and trigrams), after excluding expressions that appear in more than 80% of the documents. We train the random forest classifier on 80% of the news articles for a given month. The figure shows the monthly accuracy obtained on the test data set containing 20% of the monthly articles. A decreased accuracy is interpreted as an indication that words used in articles depicting female and male ministers are more similar.

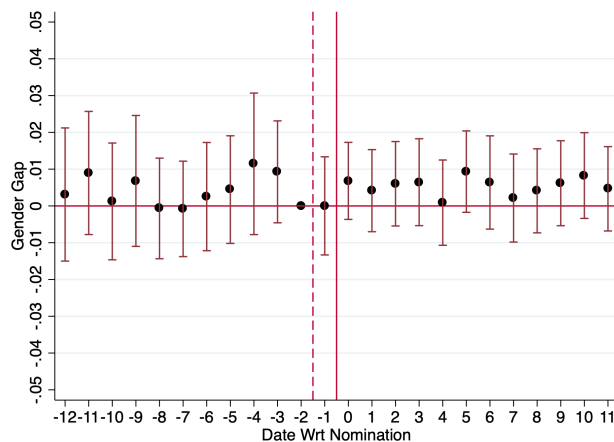
Figure C9: Dictionary-Based Approach - Focus on Personality



Notes: the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment. Dictionaries used to compute the outcome variables are displayed in Table C1. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows coefficients related to event time dummies and event time dummies interacted with gender, relatively to the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.



Figure C10: Dictionary-Based Approach - Negative Tone using Dictionaries (VaDER)



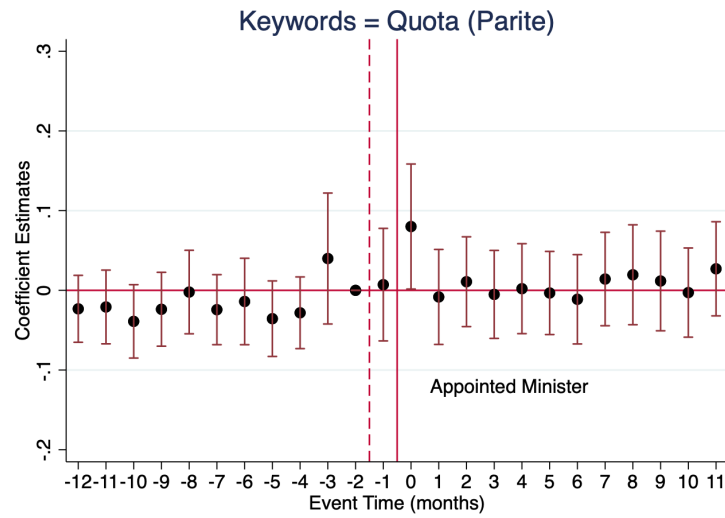
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment. This graph uses a dictionary to compute the sentiment of news articles. The graph in the main results display a sentiment analysis using a large language model.

Table C4: Top 10 words to predict the gender of ministers

	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	English Translation	French stemmed	English Translation	French stemmed
1	withdrawal	retr	parity	parit
2	reach	atteindr	hotel	hotel
3	act	acte	moment	moment
4	replay	rejou	renewed	reconduit
5	channel	canal	strong	fort
6	sleeve	manch	sexual	sexuel
7	compulsory	obligatoire	mister	monsieur
8	protest	protest	lifted	lev
9	strike	grev	obvious	evident
10	reunite	reun	reassure	rassur

*Notes:* the data come from news articles mentioning ministers in their first month after appointment over the period 1970-2017. The table shows the top 10 words to predict gender obtained with a Lasso linear model with iterative fitting (package *LassoCV* on python). Explanatory variables consist in a TF-IDF transformation of the pre-processed text using unigrams and bigrams with expressions that appear in less than 80% of documents and a maximum number of features of 3000. Columns 1 and 2 (resp. 3 and 4) display English translation and original French stemmed words of the top 10 words associated with male (female) politicians.

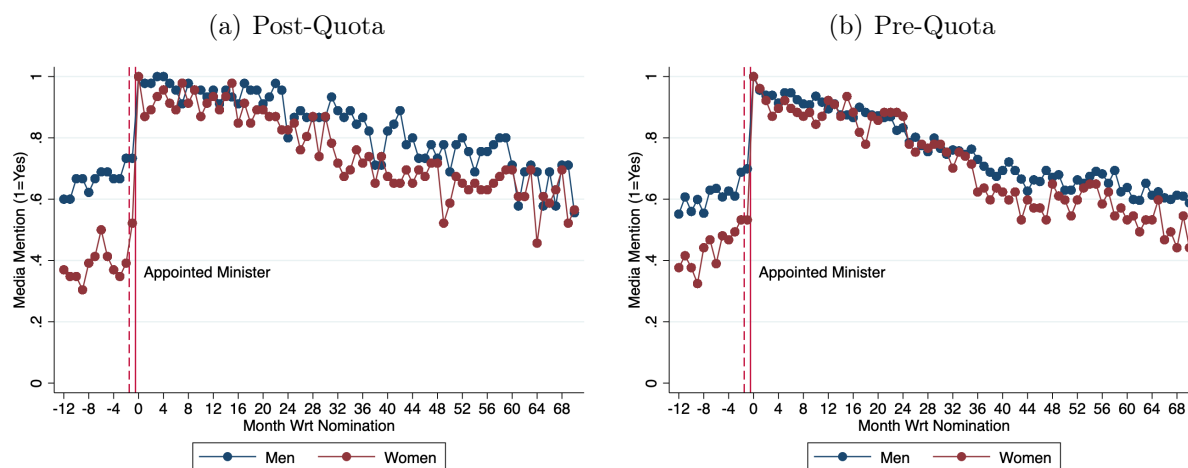
Figure C11: Impact of Access to Power on the Content of News Articles - Focus on Quotas



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 1 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients relative to the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

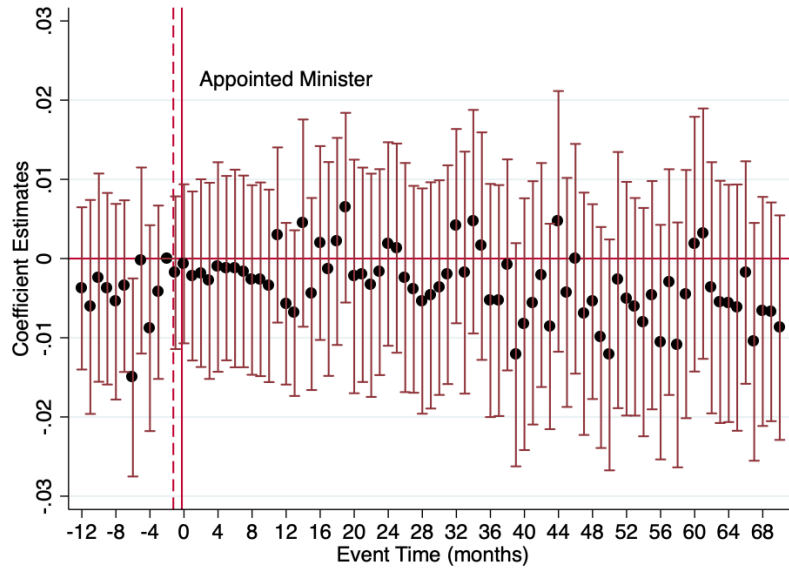
### C.3 Studying the Influence of Selection

Figure C12: Gender gap in Media Coverage and Gender quotas



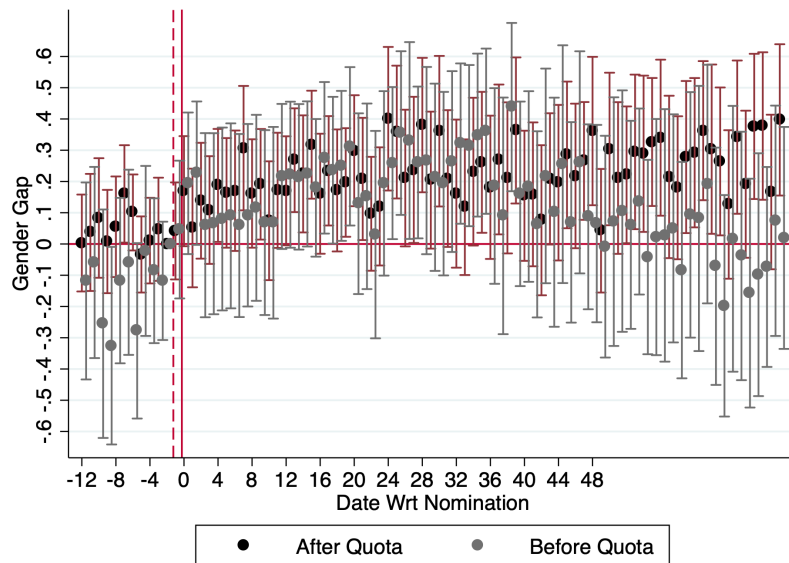
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of the three main French daily newspapers on all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The y-axis corresponds to the share of individuals who receive at least one media mention. The x-axis corresponds to the month with respect to the date where the individual is appointed minister ( $x=0$ ). Graph (a) "Post-Quota" includes politicians appointed after 2012 and the introduction of a 50% gender quota. Graph (b) "Pre-Quota" includes politicians appointed before 2012.

Figure C13: Gender gap in Media Coverage and Gender quotas - Interaction with Time Trend in the period pre-quota



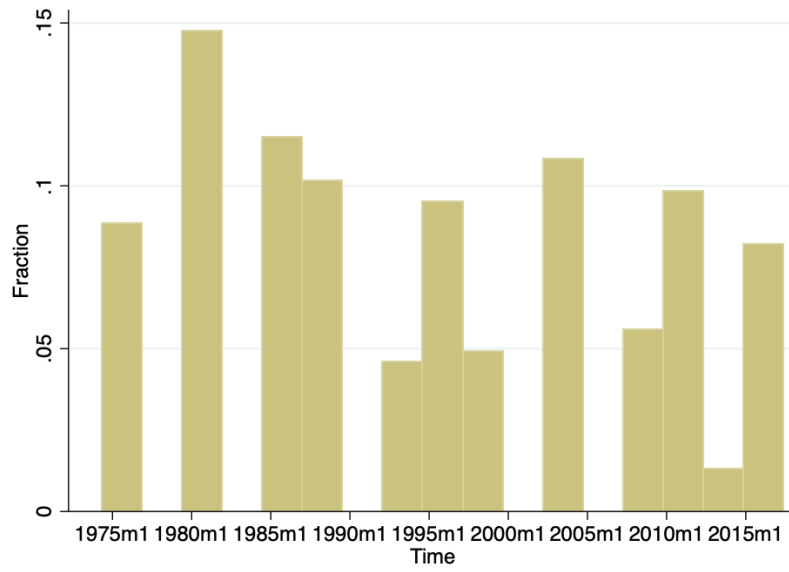
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The sample is restricted to politicians appointed before 2012. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients interacted with "Gender" and a time trend estimated from Equation (1). The reference month is  $l = -2$ . Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure C14: Gender gap in Media Coverage and Gender quotas - Narrow Window



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage from the three main daily French newspapers on all the politicians who access a minister position for the first time over the period 1970-2017. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The sample is restricted to politicians appointed between 2007 and 2017. The outcome variable is a dummy that equals one if an individual receives media coverage. Each coefficient corresponds to the gender gap. The omitted month is the one before access to power.

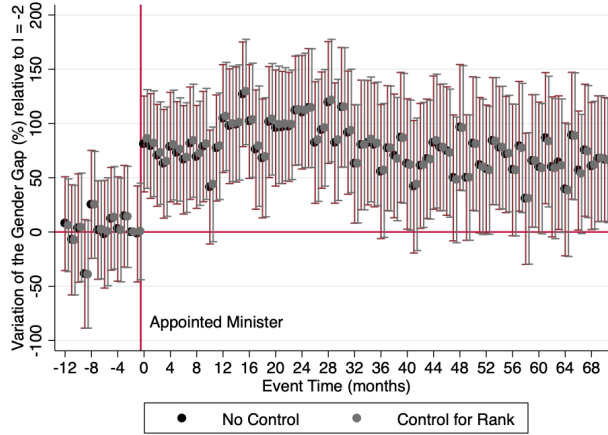
Figure C15: Majority Changes and Share of Appointments over time



*Notes:* the figure shows the distribution of appointments occurring after majority changes during the period 1970-2017.

## C.4 Gender Differences in sub-positions

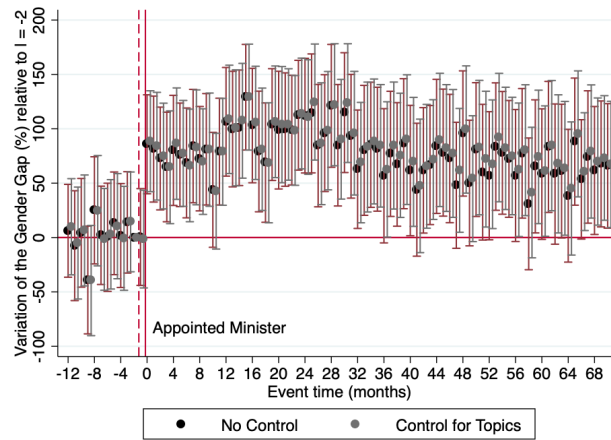
Figure C16: Mechanism: Control for Hierarchical Rank



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). "Control for Rank" correspond to a specification controlling for the ministerial rank (2 categories) interacted with event-time dummies. Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

As explained in Section 2, the number of ministers per government and their attributions are not fixed over time. For instance, the Ministry of Economics has also sometimes been in charge of the industry. This depends entirely on the will of the President of the Republic who may create, suppress or modify pre-existing ministerial positions. Therefore, in our dataset, there are 378 ministerial titles. We pool these titles in three categories. We rely on the list used by [Bagues and Campa, 2021](#) and distinguish topics that are more likely to be closer to the interests of men, women and those that are neutral. The masculine topics are *agriculture, housing, industry, infrastructure, transport*. The feminine topics are *education, family, gender equality, health, social, solidarity, and youth*.

Figure C17: Mechanism: Control for Ministerial Responsibilities

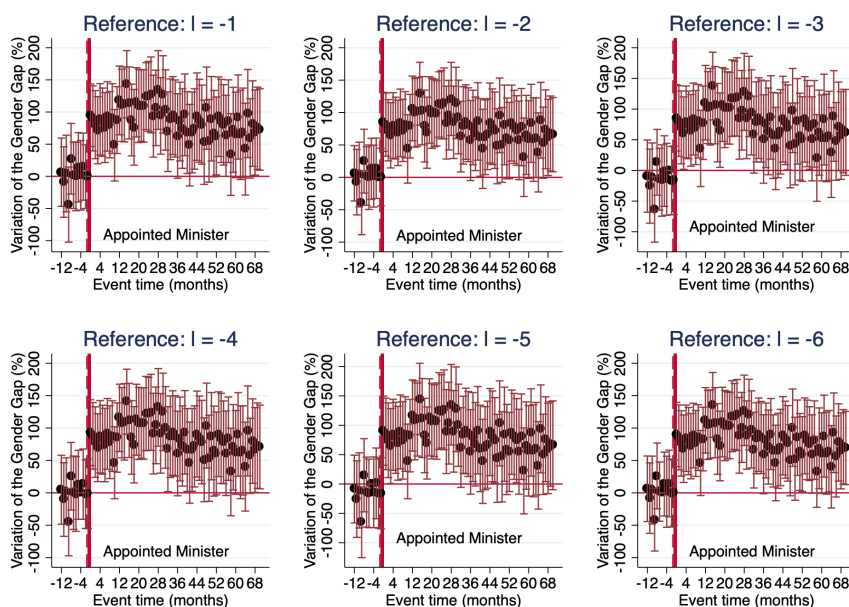


*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). "Control for Ministerial Responsibilities" correspond to a specification controlling for domains the minister is in charge of (2 categories) interacted with event-time dummies. Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.



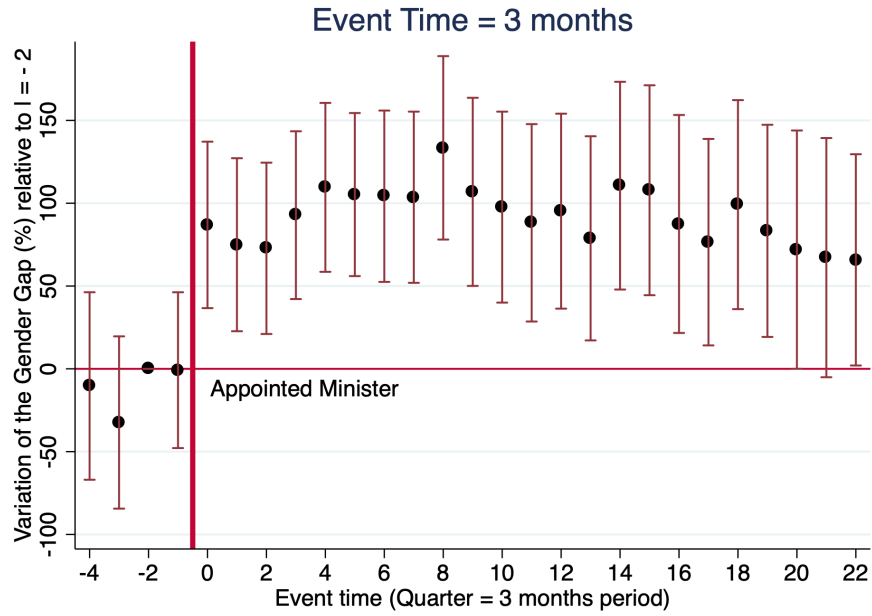
## C.5 Additional Robustness

Figure C18: Robustness - Using different reference periods



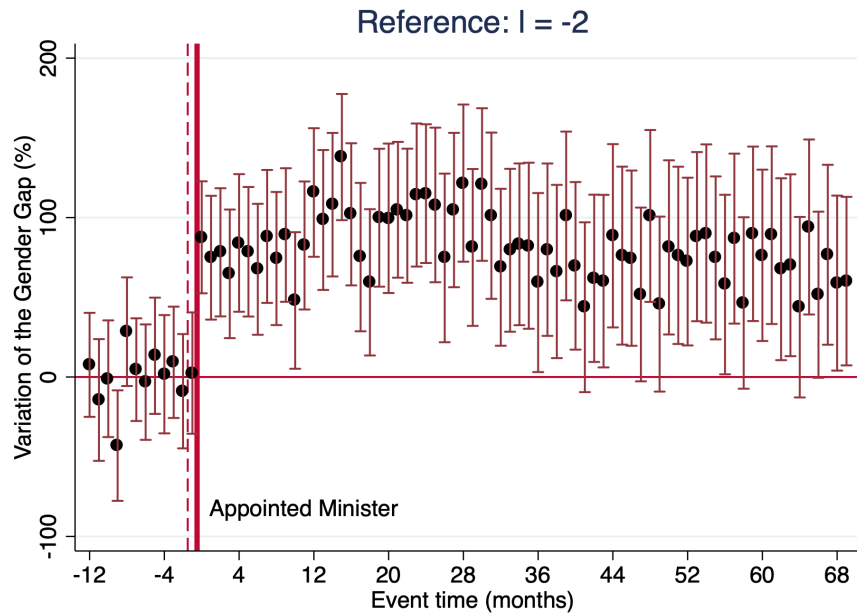
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l \in [-6; -1]$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure C19: Robustness - Event time = 3 months



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time (3 months period) coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference quarter ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Figure C20: Robustness - Alternative Estimation Methods



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference quarter ( $l = -2$ ). The estimation method comes from [Borusyak \*et al.\*, 2021](#). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

## D Mechanisms

### D.1 Extrinsic vs Intrinsic Newsworthiness

Table D1: Descriptive Statistics on Career Trajectories

	<i>Men</i>				<i>Women</i>			
	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
<i>Panel A: Before Appointment</i>								
Elected (1=Yes)	0.84	0.37	0	1	0.65	0.48	0	1
Elected as MP (1=Yes)	0.66	0.48	0	1	0.45	0.50	0	1
Elected as Senator (1=Yes)	0.25	0.43	0	1	0.12	0.33	0	1
Elected as Mayor (1=Yes)	0.58	0.49	0	1	0.30	0.46	0	1
Observations	403				123			
<i>Panel B: After Leaving Government</i>								
Elected (1=Yes)	0.72	0.45	0	1	0.59	0.49	0	1
Elected as MP (1=Yes)	0.45	0.50	0	1	0.37	0.48	0	1
Elected as Senator (1=Yes)	0.08	0.27	0	1	0.05	0.22	0	1
Elected as Mayor (1=Yes)	0.34	0.48	0	1	0.11	0.31	0	1
Observations	403				123			

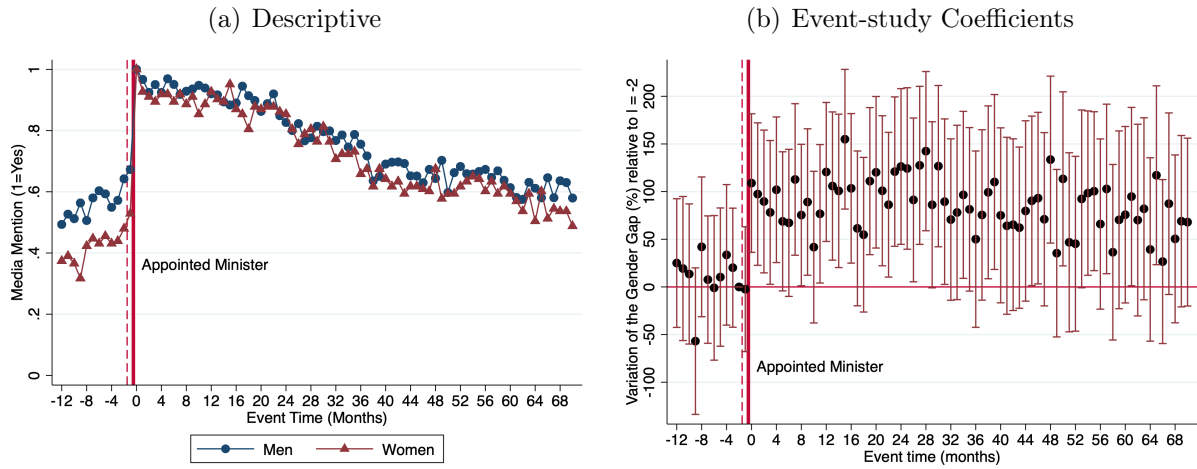
*Notes:* the data consist in the career paths of appointed ministers in politics one year before and two years after appointment. Political positions include Lower House MP, Upper House Senator, Mayor and other local positions (elected at the regional or *Département* level).

Table D2: Propensity Score Matching and Balance Checks

Data	Full Sample	Matched Sample
<i>Dep. Var.: Years of Experience in an Elected Position</i>		
Woman (1=Yes)	-13.24*** (1.64)	-0.78 (0.83)
Mean Male Ministers	20.14	7.68
Observations	526	504
<i>Dep. Var.: N Elected</i>		
Woman (1=Yes)	-0.99*** (0.14)	-0.01 (0.09)
Mean Male Ministers	2.06	1.08
Observations	526	504
<i>Dep. Var.: Elected Senator (1=Yes)</i>		
Woman (1=Yes)	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)
Mean Male Ministers	.24	.13
Observations	526	504
<i>Dep. Var.: Elected Mayor (1=Yes)</i>		
Woman (1=Yes)	-0.27*** (0.05)	0.02 (0.04)
Mean Male Ministers	.57	.28
Observations	526	504
<i>Dep. Var.: Elected MP (1=Yes)</i>		
Woman (1=Yes)	-0.21*** (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)
Mean Male Ministers	.65	.45
Observations	526	504
<i>Dep. Var.: Age At Appointment</i>		
Woman (1=Yes)	-2.23** (0.88)	0.06 (0.75)
Mean Male Ministers	49.89	47.6
Observations	526	504

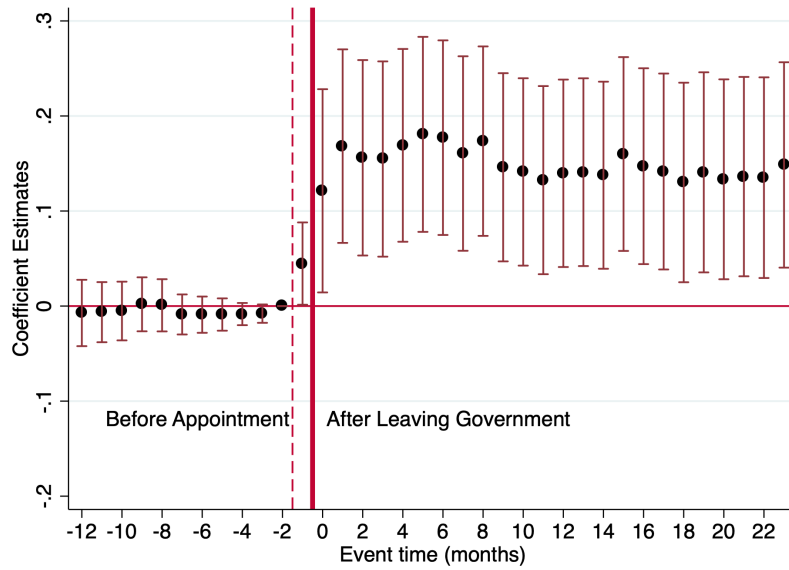
*Notes:* the data consist in the career paths of appointed ministers in politics one year before and two years after appointment. Political positions include Lower House MP, Upper House Senator, Mayor and other local positions (elected at the regional or *Département* level).

Figure D1: Effect of Access to Power - Matched Sample



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of the three main French daily newspapers on all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. In graph (a), the y-axis corresponds to the share of individuals who receive at least one media mention. The x-axis corresponds to the month with respect to the date where the individual is appointed minister ( $x=0$ ). In graph (b), the figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

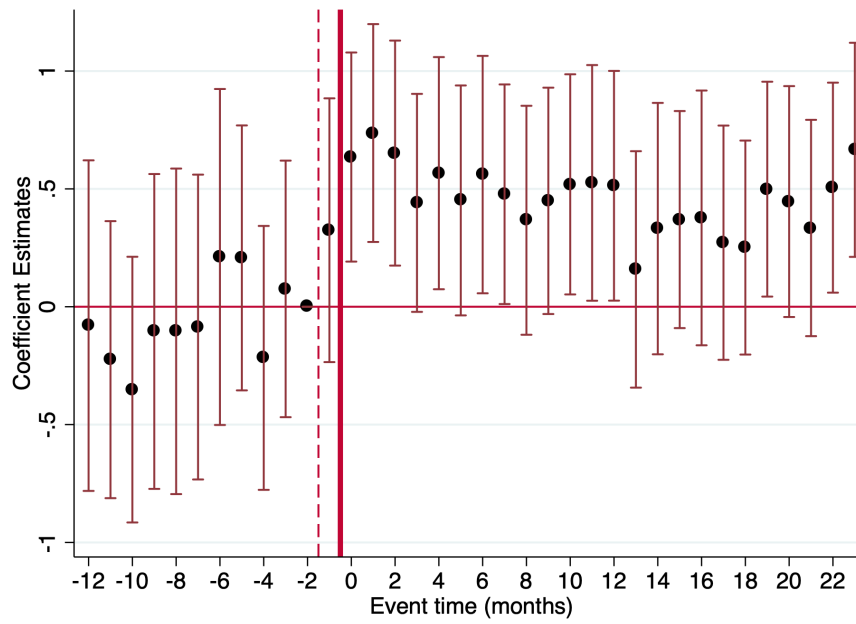
Figure D2: Gender Differences in the Probability to Occupy Another Political Position



*Notes:* the data consist in the career paths of appointed ministers in politics. The time period to the right (left) of the vertical line corresponds to 2 (1) years after leaving the government (before appointment). The outcome variable is a dummy that equals one if an individual occupies a political position different from that of minister. Political positions include Lower House MP, Upper House Senator, Mayor and other local positions (elected at the regional or *Département* level). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

As in section 4.1.2, we use alternative outcomes to measure the media coverage of politicians: (i) a count variable corresponding to the number of news articles and (ii) dummy variables distinguishing between news articles that mention only one vs multiple ministers. The results are displayed in Figures D3 and D4. They both suggest that the reduction of the gender gap persists after leaving a position of power.

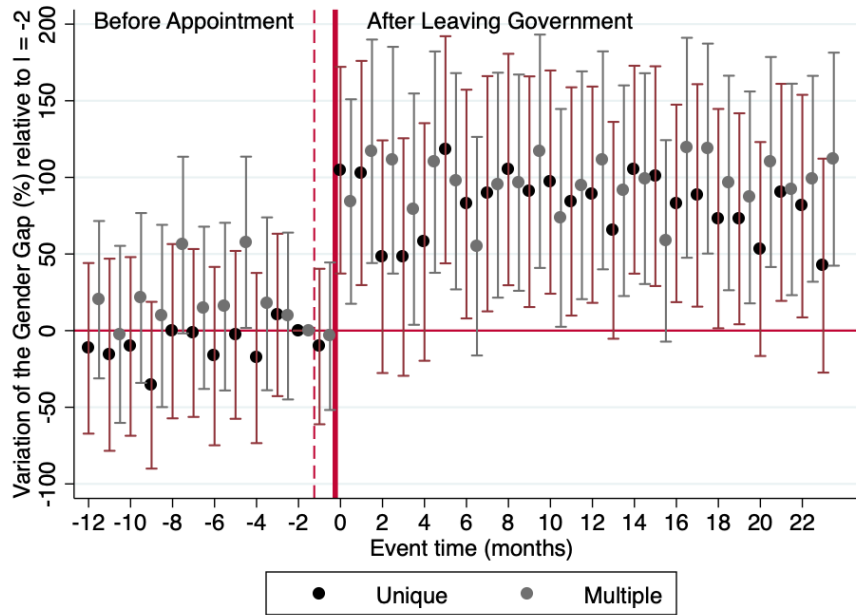
Figure D3: Alternative Outcome - Count variable



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time period to the right (left) of the vertical line corresponds to 2 (1) years after leaving the government (before appointment). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.



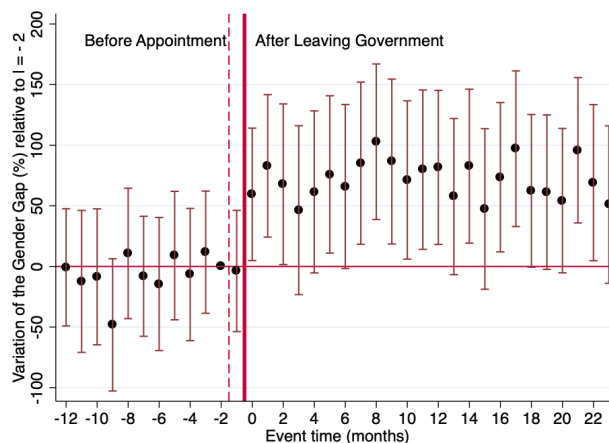
Figure D4: Alternative Outcome - Unique vs Multiple



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time period to the right (left) of the vertical line corresponds to 2 (1) years after leaving the government (before appointment). The figure shows shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (2) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). "Unique" ("Multiple") indicates that the outcome variable is a dummy that equals one if an individual is the only minister mentioned (mentioned with other ministers) in a news article. Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

Politicians may return to government a few months after this event. This could potentially bias the results if this situation occurs to different extents for women and men. We first stress that reappointment is not common. About 96% of politicians are not reappointed within two years after their first exit. This proportion is slightly higher for female (97.81%) than for male politicians (95.71%). Could it influence the results? We estimate Equation 2 on the sub-sample of politicians who are not reappointed. The results are presented in Figure D5. They are essentially similar, suggesting that gender differences in reappointment are unlikely to influence the results.

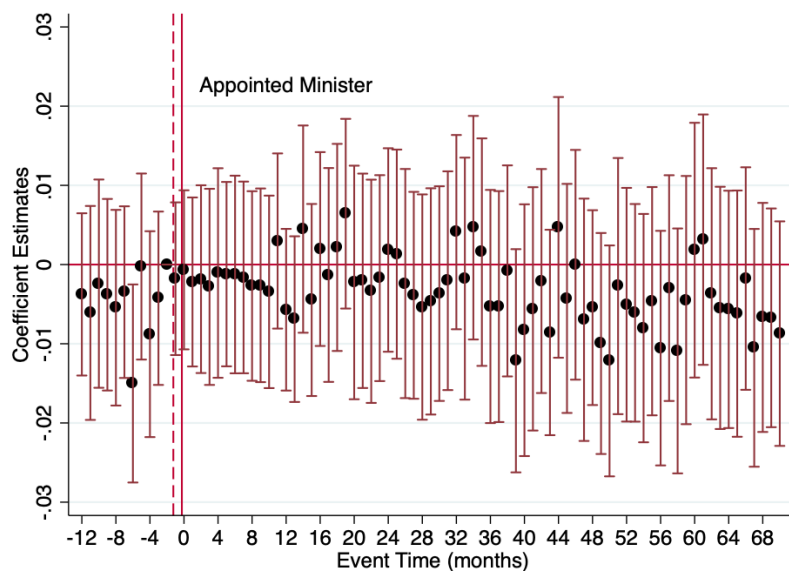
Figure D5: Impact of leaving power among politicians who remain permanently out of government



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The sample is restricted to politicians who remain permanently out of government. The time period to the right (left) of the vertical line corresponds to 2 (1) years after leaving the government (before appointment). The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (2) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

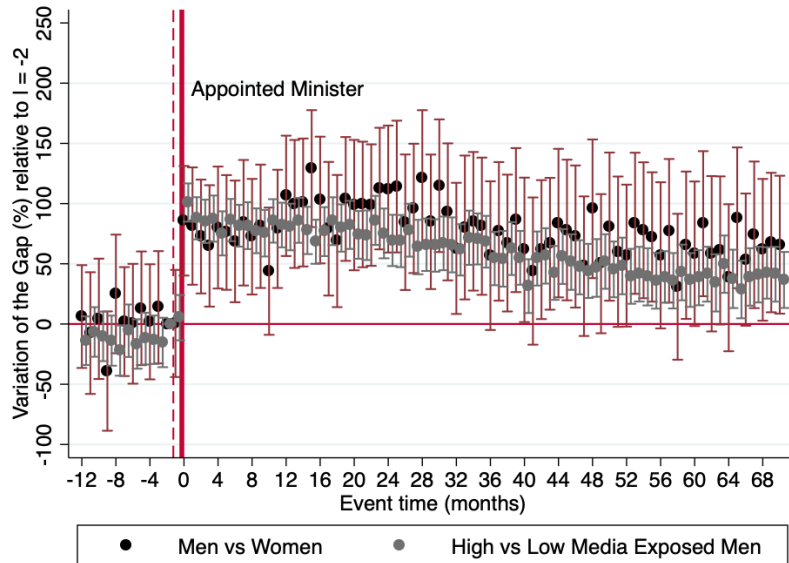
## D.2 The News Value of Rarity

Figure D6: Mechanism: Effect over time



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The sample is restricted to politicians appointed before 2012. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients interacted with "Gender" and a time trend estimated from Equation (1). The reference month is  $l = -2$ . Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

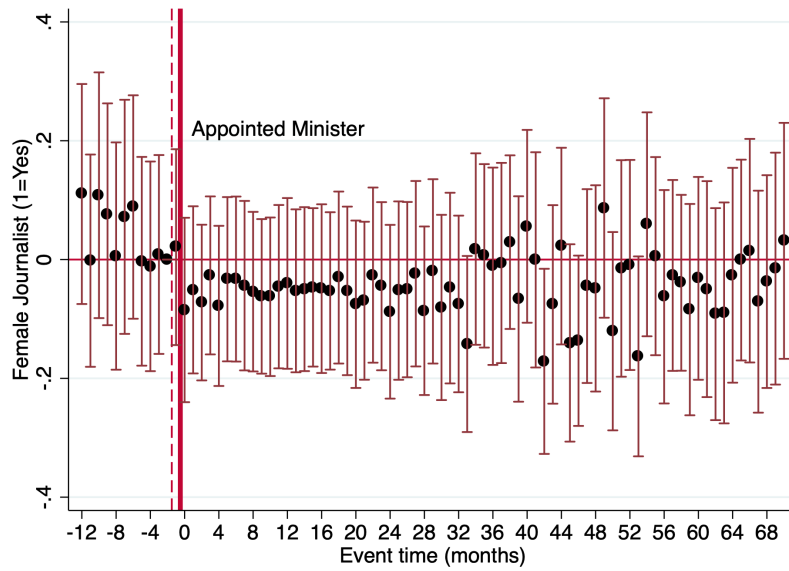
Figure D7: Mechanism: Media Presence before nomination



*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). "Main" compares women and men. "High vs Low Media Exposed Men" compares men who had a high media exposition (above the median) with men who had a low media exposition before appointment (under the median). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

### D.3 The Role of Gendered Networks

Figure D8: The Role of Gendered Networks



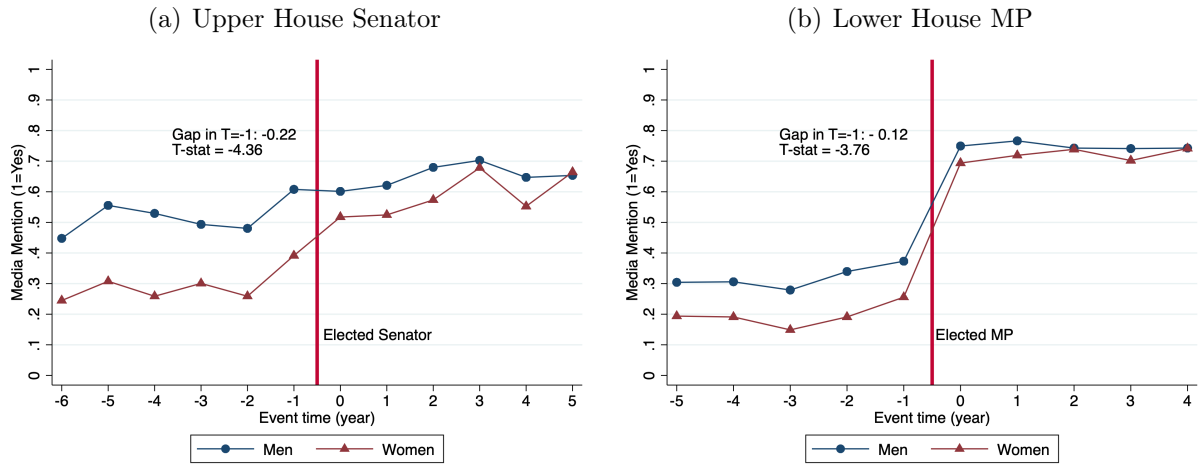
*Notes:* the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who became ministers for the first time during the period 1970-2017 by the three main French daily newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (1) years after (before) appointment. The vertical red line corresponds to the time where the individual is appointed minister. The figure shows event time coefficients estimated from Equation (1) as a percentage of the gender gap in the reference month ( $l = -2$ ). The outcome is a dummy variable that equals 1 (0) if the journalist is a woman (man). Confidence intervals are represented at the 95% level.

#### D.4 Stereotypes and the News Value of Power

**Lower House Electoral System** - The elections for the Lower House (legislative elections) occur every 5 years in France and aim at electing 577 representatives (*Députés* in French) in 577 constituencies. Parliamentarians are elected by direct universal suffrage. The election system follows a two-round plurality voting rule system. Starting in 2002, financial incentives were introduced to force political parties to nominate women. If a political party does not nominate 50% of women, its public funding will be reduced proportionally to the gender gap in nomination. Between the 2002 and 2012 elections, the share of female legislators increased from less than 10% to 27%.

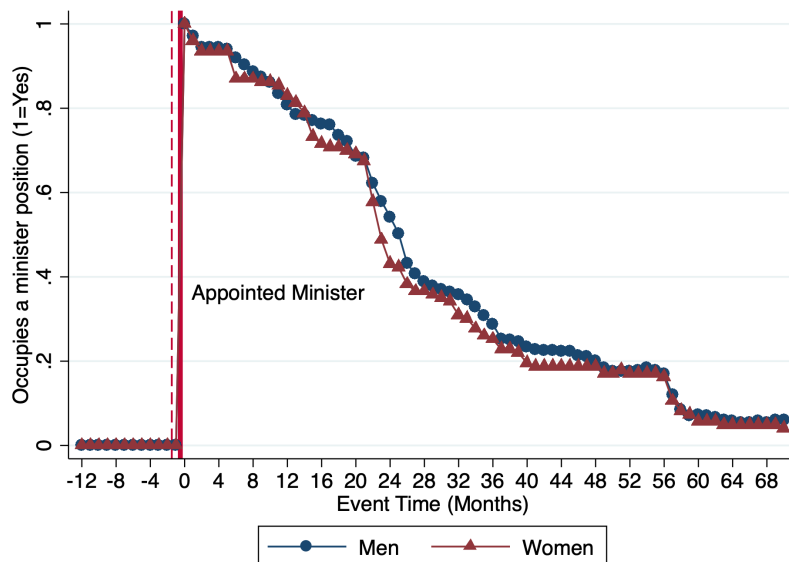
**Upper House Electoral System** - Elections to the Upper House (Senate) aim at electing 348 representatives in 103 constituencies. Senators are elected by indirect universal suffrage where only locally elected politicians can vote. Elections are staggered and half of the Senate is renewed every 3 years. There are two types of constituencies, depending on the number of senators that have to be elected (which depends on the population size). In the first type of constituencies where strictly more than 3 candidates are elected (52% of constituencies), the election system is one of proportional representation and follows a closed list system where votes are counted at the level of a list. Since 2000, these lists have to comply with a gender quota and include 50% of women with a strict alternation between candidates of opposite sex. In the second type of constituencies where strictly less than 4 candidates are elected (48% of constituencies), the election system follows a two-round plurality voting system.

Figure D9: Media Mention and Access to the positions of senators and MP



Notes: the data come from media coverage of all the politicians who were elected Upper House Senators (graph a) or Lower House MP (graph b) during the period 2000-2017 by the three main daily French newspapers. The time span of the data covers 6 (5) years surrounding the election date for Upper House Senators (Lower House MP). The vertical red line corresponds to the election time. The figure shows the share of politicians receiving media coverage on a given year.

Figure D10: Time Spent in Government



Notes: The data come from the composition of governments during the period 1970-2017. The figure shows the share of individuals who are in a position of minister for a given month relative to their appointment date. The x-axis corresponds to the month with respect to the date where the individual is appointed minister ( $x=0$ ).