

Women Held Back: The Depressing Effect of Institutional and Norms-Based Barriers on Female Representation in Corrupt Contexts*

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1 Introduction

Cross-national studies find a negative relationship between female political representation and corruption in politics (Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti 2001; Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2019; Swamy et al. 2001). Many attribute this relationship to stereotypes of women as more honest and trustworthy than men (Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti 2001; Ulbig 2007; Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Dolan 2013; Barnes and Beaulieu 2014, 2018; Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2019). Others contend that the negative relationship stems from women's historical exclusion from power networks and patronage opportunities (Tripp 2001; Goetz 2007; Frank, Lambsdorff, and Boehm 2010) or from females' purported discomfort with violating valued political norms and risk aversion (Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2017; Barnes and Beaulieu 2018). Research that uses term limits to understand incumbency advantage in light of corruption revelation illuminates yet another plausible mechanism (Pereira and Melo 2015).

Despite consistent empirical support for a negative relationship between women's political representation and corruption, we know little about the complex gender dynamics of political corruption (understood as the use of public office for private gain). It remains unclear whether and how the revelation of corruption among male and female incumbents impacts electoral contestation and outcomes for female candidates. In recent years, scholars including Eggers, Vivyan, and Wagner (2018) and Pereira (2020) have conducted survey experimental research on these topics in an attempt to fill this knowledge gap. Eggers, Vivyan, and Wagner (2018) find that British respondents (especially females) express an intent to sanction misconduct among female incumbents more harshly. Pereira (2020) uncovers a disproportionate backlash against corrupt female politicians in Mexico. Though these studies help to advance our understanding of the complex gender dynamics of political corruption, they cannot explain dynamics beyond the survey framework.

This chapter begins to address these gaps. We address the following questions: Does corruption revelation, understood as the public release of information about public officials' involvement in corruption, impact electoral contestation and outcomes for female candidates? If so, what mechanisms underlie uncovered complex gender dynamics?

Before engaging with these questions, we review related literature with an eye to prominent institution-based and norms-based mechanisms underlying gendered electoral dynamics in corrupt contexts. Next, we introduce the Brazilian case, outline our research design, and describe our use of data from a randomized auditing program of Brazilian municipalities. After that, we introduce our results. We find that the probability of having at least one female mayoral candidate increases with the incidence of revealed corruption both in general and among municipalities with male incumbents but is unaffected by the incidence of revealed corruption among female incumbents. We also find that the probability of a female candidate winning the election remains unchanged, irrespective of the corrupt incumbent's gender.

In relation to our second question, we find that the institution of term limits, the ensuing incumbency advantage, and the descriptive gender norm of female exclusion from access to financial resources jointly safeguard those in power to the detriment of female challengers. Along with the theme of this book, we interpret these findings as reflecting a tension in the role of descriptive and injunctive norms. Most of the literature focuses on the role of descriptive norms, which suggests that an increase in support for female candidates would automatically lead to electoral successes. However, our findings make sense as we consider the role of injunctive norms, as they suggest a gap between expected and actual behavior. We conclude with a discussion on possible steps to mitigate both corruption and political gender imbalances, suggesting that revisiting more malleable institutional tenets and campaign finance laws may be productive initial steps to repudiate our uncovered electoral double standard.

2 Corruption and Women's Representation: What's the Connection?

Scholars concede that women's political involvement is negatively associated with public perceptions of corruption (Ulbig 2007; Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Barnes and Beaulieu 2014) as well as with observable indicators of corruption (Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2019; Brollo and Troiano 2016). Many attribute this to stereotypes and gender norms-based mechanisms.

Conventional wisdom suggests that the negative association between women's involvement in politics and corruption persists because women are perceived to be more honest than men (Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti 2001; Ulbig 2007; Dolan 2013; Barnes and Beaulieu 2014). The literature on gender stereotypes in politics lends support to this assertion, claiming that, in comparison to their male counterparts, female politicians are not only perceived to be less corrupt but also to be more empathetic, compassionate, helpful, and consensus-building (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Morgan 2015; Funk, Hinojosa, and Piscopo 2019). Voters draw upon these positive and reinforcing stereotypes in moments of duress, resulting in favorable evaluations of female candidates (Funk, Hinojosa, and Piscopo 2019).

Relatedly, scholars posit that women's representation is likely to reduce corruption in contexts where corruption is particularly risky. For example, Esarey and Chirillo (2013) argue that women, in comparison to men, are more reluctant to engage in and approve of corruption in comparison to their male counterparts in democracies (where corruption is stigmatized), but are equally likely to engage in corruption in authoritarian regimes (where corruption is less stigmatized). Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer (2017) test this claim with a study of eighty democracies over the past twenty years and find that the prospects for accountability in democratic societies dissuade women from engaging in corruption more than men. Experimental evidence, as covered in Frank, Lambsdorff, and Boehm (2010), further corroborates the perspective that high probabilities of detection serve as greater deterrents among female politicians than male politicians

Increasingly, scholars allege that the negative association between corruption and female representation stems, not solely from characteristics stereotypically associated with women, but from descriptive gender norms and practices of long-standing female exclusion from both public and political life. For example, many claim that female representation reduces corruption because women have limited opportunities to engage in corruption as a result of their historical exclusion

from power networks and patronage opportunities (Tripp 2001; Goetz 2007; Branisa and Ziegler 2010; Sundström and Wängnerud 2014; Bauhr and Charron 2020). Barnes and Beaulieu (2018) affirm that the descriptive gender norms shape public perceptions of male and female politicians' unique susceptibilities to engage in malfeasant behavior.

The research of Barnes and Beaulieu (2018) shows that several of the previously mentioned stereotype- and descriptive gender norm-based mechanisms may be at play in shaping the public's gendered perceptions of corruption among their political representatives. However, they argue that these mechanisms may manifest differently for men and women. Specifically, they claim that men are more likely to perceive female politicians to be honest and, relatedly, less prone to corruption due both to females' perceived sentiments of risk aversion and high levels of integrity. Women, they claim, are more likely to perceive female politicians as honest due to their awareness of the extent to which women have been and remain informally marginalized.

In review, research on gender and politics identifies and provides empirical evidence in support of gender stereotype- and descriptive norms-based mechanisms underlying the negative relationship between women's political representation and corruption. Although some scholars have begun to move away from concentrating on female politicians in office to address the way that gender stereotypes and descriptive norms resonate with voters, research assessing the explicit operation of these stereotypes and descriptive norms in real-life electoral contests in corrupt-laden environments is limited. In part, this stems from inattention to the complex gender dynamics of political corruption. Though Eggers, Vivyan, and Wagner (2018) and Pereira (2020) uncover a gendered electoral double standard - whereby female incumbents are disproportionately punished in elections for their involvement in malfeasance - it remains unclear whether this finding translates to real-life electoral contests and, if so, whether gender stereotype- and descriptive norms-based mechanisms underlie this result. Put differently, we know little about whether and how corruption revelation among male and female incumbents shapes election dynamics and outcomes.

Although it may be intuitive to concentrate on gender and politics research to identify linkages associated with the gendered electoral dynamics of corruption revelation, mainstream political science research identifies an institution-based mechanism to supplement the role of stereotypes and norms. From this research, it follows that the institutions of term limits and reelection paired with the political overrepresentation of men in politics may underlie observed gendered dynamics surrounding political corruption. These specific institutions privilege incumbents (who are

predominantly male), providing them with the name recognition, resources, and connections to guard against electoral sanctioning, even in the face of corruption.

In fact, the literature suggests that voters forgive incumbent politicians that exhibit otherwise good performance (see De Vries and Solaz 2017 for a review). For illustration, Pereira and Melo (2015) show that Brazilian mayors guard against the negative electoral consequences of corruption through increased public spending. Jucá, Melo, and Rennó (2016) also provide support for this mechanism, suggesting that corrupt incumbents can effectively offset some electoral sanctioning following corruption revelation with increased campaign spending (Senters and Winters 2018). Although not yet, to our knowledge, evaluated with a gendered lens, there are compelling reasons to believe that term limits and incumbency advantage may help to account for gendered electoral dynamics in corrupt contexts.

As implied in our review of the literature, scholars have yet to explore the reinforcing nature of norms-based and institution-based mechanisms. In this chapter, we consider the complex gender dynamics of political corruption in the context of Brazil. In the next section, we introduce pertinent background information and make a case for our decision to focus on the country.

3 The Brazilian Case: Corruption and Gender

Corruption is an enduring and omnipresent feature of Brazilian politics and society, dating back to the colonial era and continuing in the twenty-first century. It traverses both local and national politics, manifesting in varied forms ranging from high profile corruption scandals - including the *Mensalão* (“big monthly payment”) Scandal of 2005 to the *Operação Lava Jato* (“car wash”) Scandal that surfaced in 2014 - to local malfeasance in the areas of procurement and public works. Transparency International has captured this corruption and consistently ranked Brazil’s level of corruption as high to middling in comparison to other countries around the world. In 2020, Brazil was ranked 94 out of 180, where 1 is cleanest and 180 most corrupt (Transparency International).

Since Brazil's recent transition to democracy in the late 1980s, it has developed numerous reforms to combat corruption at all levels of government. At the national level, Brazil has adopted constitutional provisions to guide the federal bureaucracy toward merit-based recruitment, vested increased power in the Public Prosecutors Office and audit courts, and guaranteed full press freedom (Pereira 2016; Carson and Prado 2014; Senters and Winters 2018). In addition, it has expanded the powers of the judiciary to investigate elected and appointed officials and adopted more stringent legislation regulating the punishment of individuals and companies implicated in corruption (Pereira 2016; Carson and Prado 2014; Senters and Winters 2018). Breaking with historical patterns of impunity, these reforms have facilitated the conviction of 174 people, including several high-profile politicians, implicated in Brazil's *Operação Lava Jato* Scandal (The Economist 2021).

At the local level, Brazil has increased the number and authority of monitoring and accountability-enhancing institutions and programs. The most prominent and widely studied of these programs is the randomized auditing of Brazilian municipal expenditures under the Comptroller General's Office (*Controladoria-Geral da União*, CGU). In the early 2000's, then Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva authorized the CGU to organize a program that randomly selects municipal governments to audit their expenses. The program initially examined the accounts of twenty-six randomly selected municipalities (one in each Brazilian state) but was quickly expanded to investigate approximately double the number of Brazilian municipalities per lottery. Auditors involved in this program investigate irregularities in municipal expenditures by assessing accounts, reviewing documents, examining public works, and interviewing community members. They, then, report any uncovered malfeasance to the Federal Court of Auditors (*Tribunal de Contas da União*, TCU), public prosecutors, local legislatures, and the media.

Scholars rely on data from the CGU audits to study the effects of corruption revelation. In their study of municipal audits, Ferraz and Finan (2008) conclude that voters punish incumbent mayors seeking reelection who have been revealed as corrupt through audits. Pereira and Melo (2015) push back, finding that revealing corruption harms incumbents but less so if they have engaged in high levels of public spending. Relying on this same data, De Figueiredo et al. (2011) show that corruption depressed turnout in the 2008 mayoral elections. More recently, Funk and Owen (2020) find that municipalities selected for auditing made greater improvements in service delivery in comparison with municipalities not selected for auditing. As these studies corroborate, audit data produced through the CGU program enhances our understanding of the dynamics

surrounding corruption and corruption revelation. However, there is still much we can learn from them, especially relating to the gendered dynamics of corruption.

4 Data, Hypotheses, and Research Design

Between 2003 and 2015, the CGU selected municipalities for auditing through lottery. Also at random, the program determined how many and which budget areas or service orders to cover. Throughout this period, the program organized 40 lotteries, involving 2,369 audits across 1,949 municipalities. Reports of audit findings are public, and local media outlets actively publicize findings to increase voters' awareness of political malfeasance in their communities (Ferraz and Finan 2008).

Figure 1 shows the distribution of audits over time by lottery wave. Except in its initial stages, the program selected 60 municipalities for auditing per lottery. However, implementation problems often led to a smaller number of municipalities actually being audited. A notable case is the 36th lottery in 2012, in which a CGU employee strike prevented the execution of more than half of the audits.

As previously mentioned, the random selection in the CGU audits creates opportunities to estimate the causal effects of corruption revelation. To do so, scholars rely on different measurement strategies. For example, Ferraz and Finan (2008) rely on mere counts of corruption violations from CGU audits, whereas Avis, Ferraz, and Finan (2018) leverage CGU classifications of infraction severity in service orders (available beginning with the 20th lottery) to calculate the total number of moderate and severe infractions per audited municipality and divide it by the total number of service orders.

We use the operationalization of corruption in Avis, Ferraz, and Finan (2018) as our primary explanatory variable. As they argue in defense of their measure, moderate and severe infractions

are clear instances of corruption that are hard to distinguish from each other in magnitude. Additionally, audits vary over time in the number of service orders they cover, so a continuous measure of corruption that averages over the total number of service orders is desirable to ensure comparability. To extend our coding before the 20th lottery, we use machine-coded categories from previous work using supervised learning on audit report documents to reproduce the original CGU classification (Diaz 2021).¹ Figure 2 depicts the distribution of our continuous corruption variable over both election year and lottery number and confirms coding comparability over time.

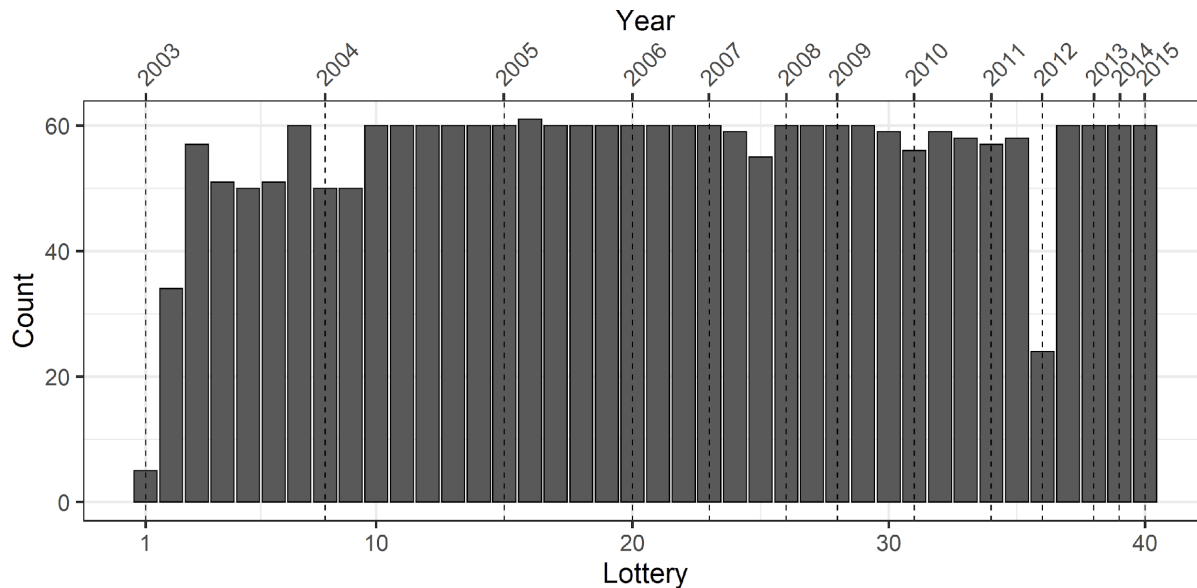


Figure 1: Distribution of audits over time. Dashed lines indicate the beginning of the corresponding year.

For our primary analyses, we use two binary outcome variables constructed with data from the Brazilian Electoral Court (*Tribunal Superior Eleitoral*).² Both outcomes capture support for female candidates. With the first, we consider whether at least one female candidate contests a mayoral election in each municipality-election year. We chose this measure over the number of female candidates given that about 30% (6,668 out of 22,501) of the municipality-election years in Brazil in the period under study have at least one female candidate, yet only 4% (963) have more than one. The percentage only gets smaller as the number of female candidates increases.

¹ These machine-coded categories tend to underestimate large outliers (see the Appendix in Diaz 2021). Since this leads us to underestimate true effects, we are unconcerned.

² This data is available through the *Centro de Política e Economia do Setor Público* at *Fundação Getulio Vargas*: <http://cepespdata.io/>.

With the second outcome variable, we consider whether a female candidate wins a mayoral election in each municipality-election year. We prefer this measure over female candidate vote shares because it avoids selection bias (as we only observe female candidate vote shares in municipalities with at least one woman running for mayor).

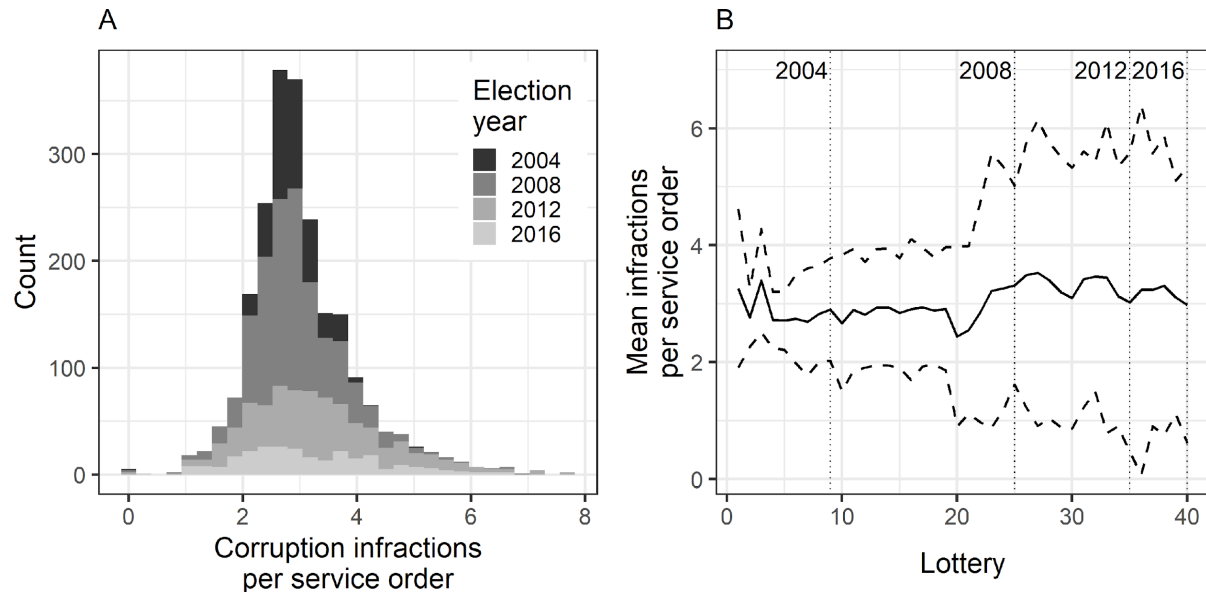


Figure 2: Distribution of the number of corruption infractions per service order by election year (Panel A) and by lottery number (Panel B). Associated election years are denoted with a colored scale in Panel A and with dotted vertical lines in Panel B. Dashed lines in Panel B denote 95% confidence intervals.

With this data, we estimate the effect of audit-uncovered corruption infractions on both operationalizations of female electoral support using linear probability models with election year fixed effects and clustered standard errors by election year. Since we cannot assume that our corruption variable is zero in non-audited municipalities, we restrict our analysis to consider solely the subset of audited municipalities.

In line with Funk, Hinojosa, and Piscopo (2019), we hypothesize a positive relationship between corruption and support for female candidates. However, we suspect that this relationship is nuanced and diverges on the basis of the gender of the corrupt incumbent. More pointedly, we hypothesize that corruption among male incumbents will increase support for female candidates and, as an extension of Eggers, Vivyan, and Wagner (2018) and Pereira (2020), that corruption

among female incumbents will decrease support for female candidates.

After estimating and reporting the results of our primary models, we construct and assess supplementary models to shed light on potential underlying institution-based and descriptive norms-based mechanisms. With respect to institution-based mechanisms, we posit that term limits and reelection may underlie gendered electoral dimensions of corruption. Following research conceding that voters forgive corrupt incumbents that exhibit otherwise good performance (De Vries and Solaz 2017), we suspect that reelection-eligible incumbents revealed to be corrupt will guard against electoral sanctioning with good performance in other areas. We hypothesize that institution-motivated incumbent behavior paired with long-standing descriptive gender norms of women's exclusion from politics and limited access to financial resources for campaigning will, in turn, disincentivize female challengers from contesting elections and dampen female candidates' electoral prospects.

To probe these mechanisms with supplementary models, we leverage other facets of the election data relating to term limits as well as campaign finance data. We first estimate variants of our primary models with our sample divided between municipalities with first-term (reelection eligible) and second-term (term-limited) mayors. This provides a preliminary test of the institution-based mechanism - whether the institutions of term limits and reelection privilege incumbents (who are predominantly male), providing them with the name recognition, resources, and connections to guard against electoral sanctioning, even in the face of corruption.

Second, we estimate additional models to assess implications of the institution-based mechanism and the interactive influence of this mechanism with the descriptive gender norms. We estimate models similar to our primary analyses albeit with term-limited male incumbent and pooled male and female incumbent samples disaggregated by audit lottery year. We also estimate the effect of corruption revelation on campaign donations and spending both for female candidates and reelection eligible candidates. The latter provides insight into the descriptive gender norms-based mechanism through exploring female candidates' access to campaign resources.

To assess facets of the descriptive norms-based mechanism, we calculate four additional outcome variables capturing the proportion of total municipal campaign donations and expenses allocated to female candidates and reelection eligible incumbents and pair these with our measure of corruption. Our models focus only on municipality-election with at least one female candidate and with incumbents that do not face term-limits, since campaign donations and expenses are

unobservable otherwise. Limited reporting of campaign finances further reduces our sample sizes: Out of all the municipality-years considered, only about 5% have female candidates reporting their campaign donations and expenses and 15% have incumbents eligible for reelection reporting their finances. Though imperfect, these models are instrumental in shedding light on facets of the descriptive gender norms-based mechanism under consideration.

In what follows, we report our primary and supplementary empirical results.

5 Results

Figure 3 depicts the effect of a one-unit increase in the number of corruption infractions per service order on both the probability of having at least one female mayoral candidate (left) and the probability of electing a female mayor (right) for the sample of all eligible municipalities, a sample restricted to eligible municipalities with male incumbents, and a sample restricted to eligible municipalities with female incumbents. Estimations calculated with these different samples allow us to test our primary hypotheses.

From estimations calculated with the pooled sample, we find that a one-unit increase in corruption increases the probability of at least one woman running for mayor by about 3.5% but has no distinguishable effect on a female candidate winning the election. Figure 3 also suggests that the positive marginal effect on female electoral contestation is driven primarily by electoral dynamics in municipalities with male incumbents (as results from our models estimated with samples of exclusively male incumbents alone are substantively and statistically similar).

The point estimates associated with our models estimated with samples of female incumbents are negative for both outcome variables, but the wider confidence intervals cover zero. However, only about 8% (180/2213) of municipality-years in our sample (and 1% (180/22501) of the total number of municipality-years in our dataset) have female incumbents. It follows that while point estimates support the idea that voters punish female politicians implicated in corruption more harshly than their male counterparts, the only conclusion that we can draw from our data is that such a scenario is rare.

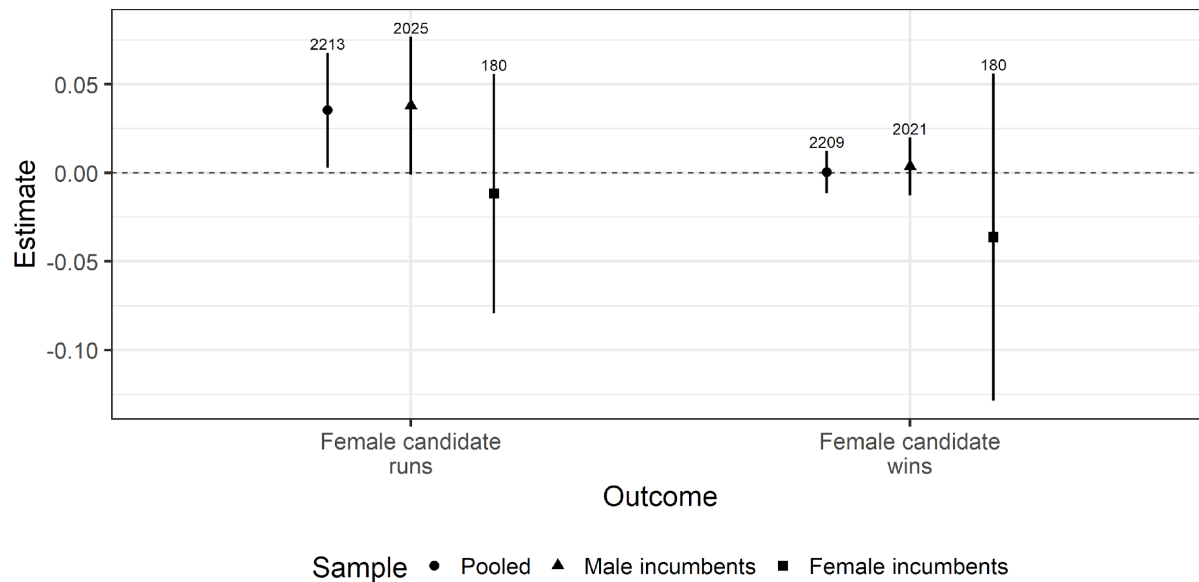


Figure 3: Effect of corruption infractions on the probability of a woman running for mayor and the probability of a female candidate winning the election by incumbent gender. Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Numbers on top indicate sample sizes

Taken together, these results suggest that exposing corruption increases the probability of female candidates contesting local elections, especially when the implicated corrupt incumbent is male, but it does not affect their chances of winning elections. *Do institution- and norms-based mechanisms work together to account for this outcome?* Our supplementary models address this question.

To assess the viability of the institution-based mechanism, we leverage the rule preventing Brazilian mayors from holding office for more than two consecutive terms. It follows from this rule that mayors in their first terms have reelection incentives, whereas mayors in their second terms do not (Ferraz and Finan 2011). We expect reelection-eligible corrupt incumbents to guard against electoral sanctioning with good performance in other areas and, in doing so, to disincentivize female challengers from contesting elections. If this is true, then the effect of increasing corruption on the probability of female candidates contesting elections should not exist where the incumbent mayor is reelection eligible. Put differently, this effect should only exist where the incumbent mayor is term-limited and lacks incentives to offset electoral penalties.

Figure 4 presents the results of models similar to those used for Figure 3 but with our sample

further divided between municipality-election years with first-term (reelection eligible) and second-term (term-limited) mayors. In line with our hypotheses associated with the institution-based mechanism, most results displayed in Figure 4 are indistinguishable from zero. Most importantly, we find no effect of increasing corruption on the probability of female candidates contesting elections where the incumbent mayor is reelection eligible. However, as expected, we do find a positive non-zero effect of corruption revelation on the probability of at least one female mayoral candidate contesting an election in municipalities with term-limited, male incumbent mayors. With this sample, a one-unit increase in corruption leads to a 6% increase in the probability of at least one female mayoral candidate contesting the election.

We interpret our results as preliminary evidence in support of a facet of the institution-based mechanism: reelection eligible, male incumbents successfully leverage incumbency advantage to counter the rise of female challengers in corruption-laden environments. It is only in the absence of incumbent advantage that female candidates act on corruption-induced support for their candidacies and contest open-seats.

While we cannot discern whether incumbent spending is *motivated* by a desire to offset public concern with malfeasance, we can probe an additional implication of it. If female candidates act on a corruption-induced boost in support for their candidacies in open-seat elections, we should expect corruption revelation to have a larger effect on the probability that female candidates will contest elections in audit lotteries closer to elections in comparison with audit lotteries further from elections. Prospective female candidates will be increasingly likely to contest elections in light of favorable circumstances stemming both from corruption revelations close to elections and term limits.

Figure 5 displays estimates assessing this implication. These models are similar to those used for both Figures 3 and 4 but with term-limited male incumbent and pooled male and female incumbent samples disaggregated by audit lottery year.

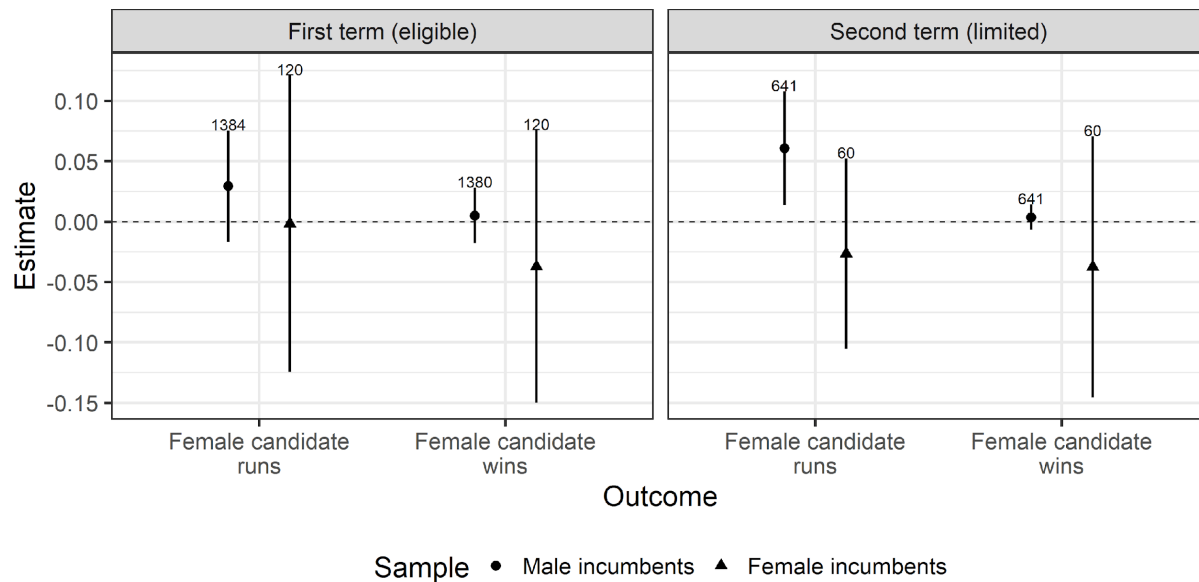


Figure 4: Effect of corruption infractions on the probability of a woman running for mayor and the probability of a female candidate winning the election by incumbent gender and term in office. Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Numbers on top indicate sample sizes

The point estimates and confidence intervals in Figure 5 suggest that the effect of corruption revelation on the probability of a female candidate contesting an election increases when municipalities are audited closer to elections (lottery year 4). This provides additional affirmation of an institution-based mechanism underlying our primary results. Chiefly, institutions may serve to safeguard those in power to the detriment of female challengers.

In sum, irrespective of the sample selected, our results as depicted in Figures 3-5 coalesce around the same causal story: Exposing corruption increases the probability of female candidates contesting local elections, especially when the implicated corrupt incumbent is male, but it does not affect their chances of winning elections. We observe this phenomenon primarily in municipalities with term-limited male incumbents and in municipalities selected for auditing and revealed to be corrupt in the year leading up to elections. This serves as preliminary evidence that the institutions of term limits and reelections impede female candidates' political prospects in corruption-laden environments. To reiterate, we suspect that descriptive gender norms serve to reinforce these institution-based disadvantages. Specifically, we anticipate that conventions of

gender disparities in access to power, patronage networks, and, especially, financial resources further deny female candidates' electoral opportunities.

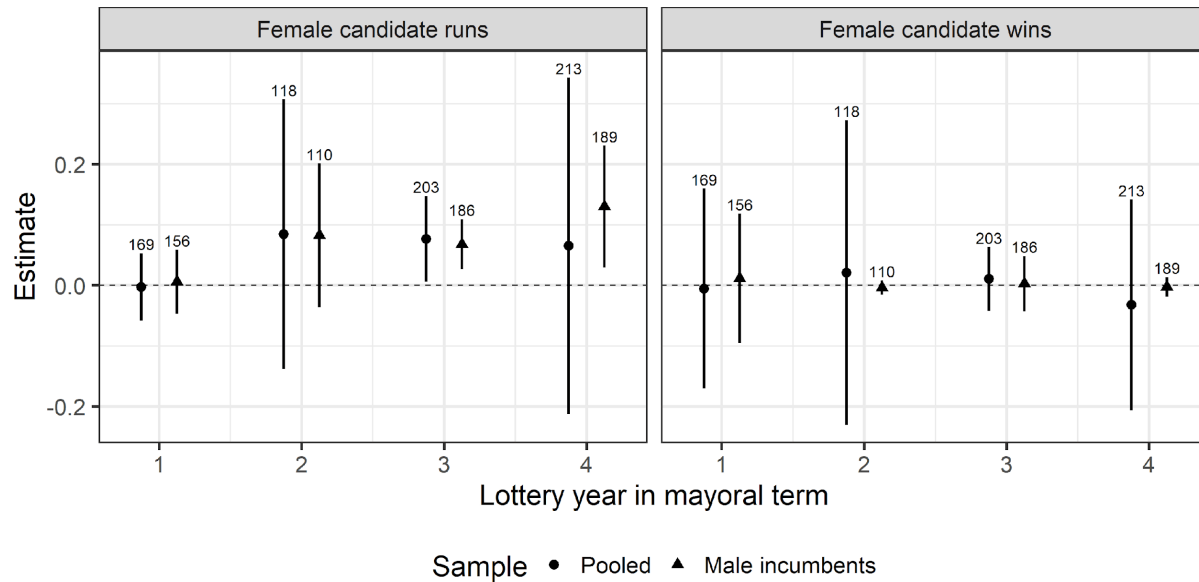


Figure 5: Effect of corruption infractions on the probability of a woman running for mayor and the probability of a female candidate winning the election in a sample of municipalities with term-limited incumbents distinguished by the year in the mayoral term in which the municipality was selected for auditing. Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Numbers on top indicate sample sizes. We exclude the sample of municipalities with female incumbents to facilitate visualization.

To explore evidence of these descriptive norms, we analyze the effect of corruption revelation on campaign donations and spending both for female candidates and reelection eligible candidates in the pooled sample and in municipalities with male incumbents. Though corruption revelation may inspire female candidates to contest office and increase public support for female candidates, we suspect that female candidates remain at a comparative disadvantage in terms of campaign donations and expenses in corrupt-laden environments. However, if corruption revelation leads reelection-eligible mayors to concentrate on performance delivery, they may be distracted from campaigning. As a result, we may not observe any effect of corruption revelation on their campaign donations or expenses. Figure 6 evaluates these possibilities with estimates

from eight different linear regression models using the proportion of the total campaign donations and expenses in each municipality corresponding to female candidates and reelection-eligible incumbents.

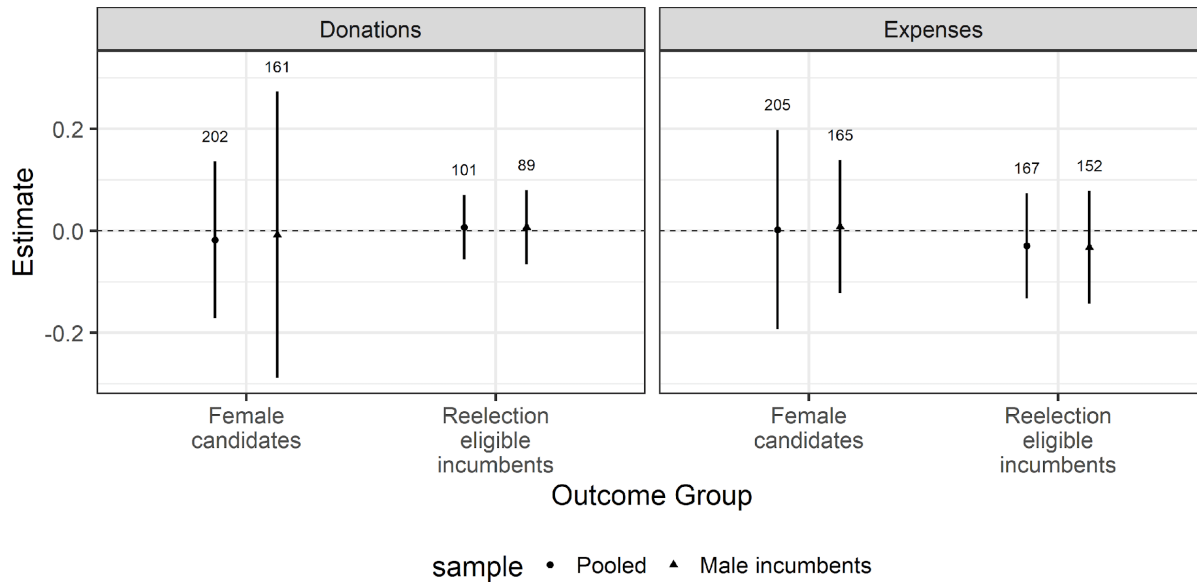


Figure 6: Effect of corruption infractions on the proportion of the total campaign and donations and expenses among female candidates (conditional on having at least one female candidate running for mayor) and among incumbent mayors (conditional on the incumbent being eligible for reelection). Each point estimate comes from a different model using a different outcome variable. Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Numbers on top indicate sample sizes

Figure 6 suggests that increasing corruption, regardless of sample, does not influence the share of campaign donations going to female candidates nor their share of the total campaign expenses. This serves as preliminary evidence that descriptive gender norm-based mechanisms help to explain female candidates' inability to increase their electoral prospects in light of corruption revelation. Descriptive gender norms appear to be less impactful, though, in explaining both the share of donations going to reelection eligible incumbents (the majority of whom are male) and the share of their total campaign expenses. Rather, our results may be interpreted in line with the component of the institution-based mechanism asserting that incumbents revealed to be corrupt may preoccupy themselves with delivering good performance (as opposed to campaigning). While missing data prevents us from providing a more conclusive picture, we interpret our findings as

suggestive evidence in favor of this argument. This also highlights the tension between descriptive and injunctive norms. On the one hand, descriptive norms may create the mechanistic expectation among voters and partisan gatekeepers that female candidates are more viable candidates in reaction to corruption. On the other hand, considering injunctive norms allows for a gap between expected and actual behavior. Incumbents may use their positions of power to leverage this gap and influence the outcome of elections through their performance in office.

6 Conclusion

To our knowledge, this is the first study of the complex gender dynamics of political corruption in real-world electoral contests. We find that corruption revelation inspires female candidates to contest elections but that corruption does not increase female candidates' prospects of winning. As our research suggests, female candidates experience difficulties translating corruption-induced support for their candidacies into electoral victories due both to institutions that protect (male) incumbents from electoral sanctioning (e.g. term limits and incumbency advantage) and descriptive gender norms that disadvantage female candidates (e.g. female exclusion from access to financial resources required for campaigning). We conclude that this empirical pattern makes sense only if we move beyond the mechanistic effect expected from the role of descriptive norms and allow for the gap between expected and actual behavior suggested by injunctive norms. Several policy recommendations to promote accountability and gender equity in politics follow from these findings.

Our research suggests that the institution of term limits and accompanying incumbency advantage may impede accountability and disempower capable female candidates. To facilitate accountability under existing institutional structures, governments should consider conditioning the transfer of federal funds to municipal governments on corruption evasion.

This change would likely increase the prospects for accountability and may indirectly aid female candidates' electoral prospects in light of corruption revelation. The alternative is to consider supplementary institutional reforms that address political gender imbalances directly, such as strictly enforced gender quotas. If designed appropriately, they may enhance gender equity in politics and promote accountability by elevating the profile of capable female candidates challenging corrupt incumbents. However, if gender electoral quotas are limited in empowering

women when unaccompanied by the mobilization of domestic constituencies in support of the quotas, as Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) suggest, accompanying policy reforms aimed at targeting gender norms may be warranted.

Despite corruption revelation among incumbent males, we find that female candidates remain disadvantaged in terms of financial resources to use for campaign purposes. Policies ought to be adopted to provide women with equal opportunities to contest office (irrespective of the status of corruption). In recent years, Brazil, specifically, has adopted several novel measures related to campaign finance and advertising to induce more gendered equity in political opportunities. These measures have mandated that political parties give female candidates at least 30 percent of advertising time and at least 30 percent of their campaign funds (up from a required 5 percent of funds). In addition, civil society has worked to counter women's conventional exclusion from power and patronage opportunities through the development of "an app that collects platforms of women running for office, a column about those women in Brazil's largest newspaper and a video campaign about them on social media" (Osborne 2018). At face value, these reforms appear to have great potential to empower female candidates (especially in light of corruption revelation), but their actual impact remains unclear. Future research ought to extend the time period considered in this chapter to learn more about the effectiveness of these reforms and further enhance their efficacy.

Finally, future research on the complex intersection of gender, corruption, elections, institutions, and norms should extend our study elsewhere. Although pervasive corruption and the country's unique municipal auditing program provide us with a rich opportunity to study the complex gender dynamics of political corruption in Brazil, scholars should actively investigate these dynamics in other countries. Such studies could contribute to a cumulative body of knowledge to inform more widely applicable strategies and policies to reduce the spread of malfeasance, improve prospects for accountability, and enhance female political representation around the world.

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