

CHAPTER 3. CITIZENSHIP: EMPOWERING WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a global issue. Women suffer discrimination and violence in all parts of the world, rich and poor. Any society that seeks equal rights and equal opportunities for all citizens must extend those rights and opportunities to women. This raises moral and legal issues that should be of concern to all citizens of the world. At the same time, violence against women is a critical issue for social and economic development. When violence is directed against women, some of the issues raised are specifically economic. In this chapter we will first outline why violence against women is a problem for economic development. After that we will introduce our research, which shows how women's access to politics can be part of the solution.

Box 3.1. Setting the scene

Intimate partner violence, according to the World Health Organization 'occurs in all countries, irrespective of social, economic, religious or cultural group'. Findings from population-based surveys of women from 35 countries around the world suggest that at least 10 and up to 69 per cent of women have been physically assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives, with at least 3 and up to 27 per cent assaulted in the last year. (Source: WHO 2002.)

Grief and rage in India. 'Yes, the gender gap in education in India is closing. Yes, many more women are now in the labour force than ever before. And yes, political quotas and reservations have increased the percentage of women in elected office. But blocking the transformative potential of this evidence of progress is an age-old patriarchal system which regards women as inferior to men and its toxic interaction with the new global culture of consumerism and its relentless sexualisation of women's bodies.'

'The young woman who was raped had been one of the few from her village who had made it into college, she had a promising professional career ahead of her and she was the citizen of a country with a long track record of democracy and increasing numbers of women elected into office. None of this was sufficient to protect her from a sexual assault the sheer ugly brutality of which has brought thousands of horrified and grieving protestors onto the streets across the country.

'Named "Nirbhaya" ("without fear") by some of the press who, in an unusual show of sensitivity have not revealed her real name, the woman was returning home from the cinema with a male friend at 9 o'clock in the evening. They boarded a bus in the belief that it would take them closer to home. Instead her companion was beaten badly and she was subjected to an extended period of rape and violence that left her brutalised and unconscious. Their naked bodies were thrown out of the moving bus to be found by passersby. Nirbhaya recovered sufficiently to give a statement to the police but died on the 29th December. She was named "fearless" because of the fight she put up against her attackers (she left teeth marks on at least one of their bodies), because of her determination that her attackers be brought to justice and because of her struggle to live, despite horrific injuries to her internal organs'. (Source: 'Grief and rage in India: making violence against women history?' by Naila Kabeer on openDemocracy, 12 June 2014, at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/naila-kabeer/grief-and-rage-in-india-making-violence-against-women-history>, accessed 1 July 2014.)

In Scotland 'the recent rise in recorded rapes may be viewed to some extent as a positive trend reflecting greater awareness and lower tolerance of rape, coupled with increased confidence in the police response to rape rather than simply an actual increase in rape'. (Source: 'Rising rape figures in Scotland could actually be a step forward', by Oona Brooks on The Conversation, 14 July 2014, at <https://theconversation.com/rising-rape-figures-in-scotland-could-actually-be-a-step-forward-29109>, accessed 16 July 2014.)

VIOLENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Why is violence against women a development problem?

Violence, including the expectation, threat, and fear of violence was introduced as a theme of Unlocking Development in Chapter 1. In that chapter, our focus was primarily on setbacks to growth from outbreaks of community violence associated with ethnic conflict and civil war. Just such an episode of community violence framed one of the case studies in Chapter 2: organised violence around a contested election in Kenya threatened to disrupt the flower exports around which farmers and flower distributors had carefully built up networks over many years.

In this chapter we address everyday violence against women as an issue in economic development. The focus of our report is on how to bring about long-run growth, and one of the risks to growth that we have already emphasised is the frequent setbacks arising from organised conflict. Wars in Africa and elsewhere often claim the media headlines. Yet the immediate costs of everyday violence against women around the world may be many times larger than the costs of warfare.

Anke Hoeffler and James Fearon, two of the world's experts on conflict, have noted:

For each battlefield death in civil war, about nine times as many people are killed in interpersonal disputes, including many killings related to drug-trafficking, intimate partner violence (of all homicides, 7 per cent female and 5 per cent male), and killing of children (7 per cent). About 43 per cent of all female homicide victims were killed by a current or former intimate partner.¹

According to the same estimate, the global cost of violence against women (including 'intimate partner' homicides and assaults, and other sexual violence) is around half the total human costs of all violence. It exceeds the human costs of organised violence by 20 to 30 times. The annual sum involved is thought to be more than \$4.5 trillion per year. How much is that? It is more than 5 per cent of global GDP. It is as much in one

year as the total value of all development assistance to poor countries over all the years since 1945.²

What are the channels through which violence against women affects economic development? Societies that suppress women's rights by law, stealth, or violence pay a very large price for male supremacy. This price is paid in the moment and through many future periods. Relevant research is summarised in a recent World Bank report.³ Some of the immediate effects emerge from studies that show women who suffer intimate partner violence are unable to work while they recover (Nagpur, India; Vietnam), and are substantially less productive and earn less when they return to work (Nagpur, India; Tanzania). Other studies show that the effects of violence are persistent. Not surprisingly, when women suffer violence they are more likely to suffer long-term health problems. These go beyond the consequences of injury and include raised incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and depression. The children of violent relationships are more likely to be abused themselves, and their health, education, and life chances are also impaired. Perhaps the most persistent damage is revealed by the finding that, when women suffer domestic violence, their children are much more likely to be involved in violent relationships when they grow up.

Thus, violence against women does lasting harm to women and their families, and this harm is passed on to the next generation. Violence against women also makes economic development less sustainable. In other words, the whole of society is impoverished – and remains poor.

The damage to development arises because violence and the fear of violence stand in the way of women's market access and limit their capacity to realise entrepreneurial potential. Chapter 2 showed, for example, that when women engage in developmental activities such as business formation, they face multiple obstacles. Some of these obstacles appear to be laid in their paths by men. When family relations threaten their autonomy, women are less effective entrepreneurs. Violence is one factor that keeps women 'in their place', that is out of the market and out of business leadership. In order to play their full part in economic development, women must be free of violence directed against them because of their gender.

More generally, the suppression of women's rights and opportunities is one aspect of a limited-access society, as discussed in Chapter 1. In limited-access societies nearly all women are excluded from business and politics, and they are also silenced in the public arena so that their exclusion goes unremarked. If an open-access society rests on the rule of law, then it is undermined by violence and the fear of violence, including violence against women. If the purpose of economic development is to expand the control that ordinary people can exercise over their own lives, then this purpose is confounded as long as women fear violence and are afraid to participate fully as citizens, providers, and entrepreneurs.

In short, an open-access society is not only essential if economic development is to be sustained, but it must specifically include women's access to power as well as wealth.

The problem of violence against women begins with silence

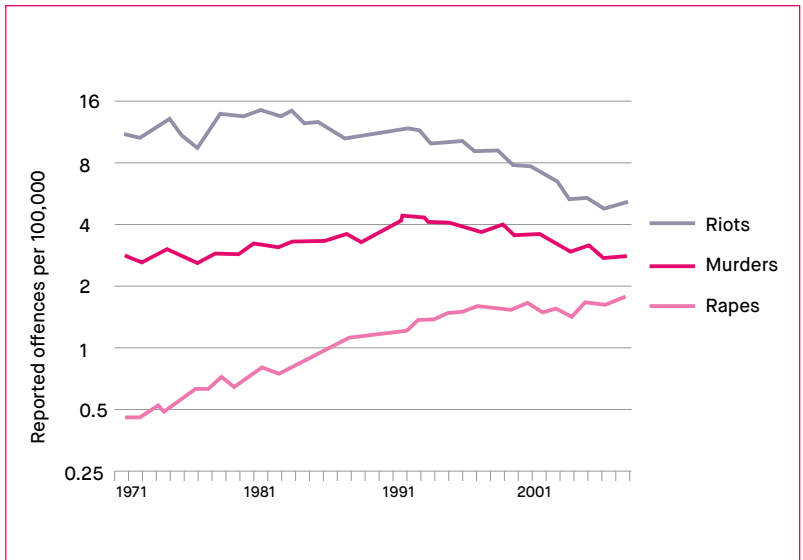
In many parts of the world, violence against women is considered to be normal or is thought to bring shame upon the victim. The result is that much violence against women is hidden by silence. A problem that is hidden cannot be addressed. In this chapter we will show that, when women have greater access to politics, gender violence is better managed. The main reason for this is that it is exposed and brought out into the open.

Violence against women is an acute problem in many developing countries. But this is not always apparent from crime records. In 2010, for example, 79 countries reported the number of rapes to the United Nations. According to these figures the median incidence of rapes per 100,000 people in all those countries in that year was just over 20. The world's most dangerous country was apparently Botswana, with more than 90 rapes per 100,000; second most dangerous was Sweden with more than 60. At the other extreme, India reported less than 2 per 100,000; safest in the world was apparently Egypt, with only one per million.⁴ From these figures we do not learn much about the real distribution of sexual violence around the world, but we can reasonably infer quite a lot about the willingness to report and record sexual violence. In other words, it is likely that Swedish women

report a higher proportion of assaults, while most Indian women who are assaulted suffer in silence.

India provides the evidence base of the present chapter. Figure 3.1 allows us to describe trends in three categories of violent crime in India over more than three decades. Homicide and riotous assembly are forms of violence that are less affected by under-recording. India’s homicide rate rose, then fell; it was never high by the standards set by the African countries discussed in chapter 1. Rates of collective violence expressed in riotous assembly have halved. But reported rapes, less than one per 100,000 in 1971 (the year that these records begin), have quadrupled.

Figure 3.1. Violent crime rates in India, 1971 to 2007



Source: *Numbers of offences in India: National Crime Records Bureau (2007)*. India’s population: *Maddison (2010)*.

A recent incident drew worldwide media attention to India. In New Delhi on the night of 16 December 2012, a 23-year old girl and a male friend returning from a movie boarded what appeared to be a passenger bus.⁵ In the following days the world learned about the savage gang rape of the girl

and her eventual death. As one observer noted, the incident was unusual for India, but not for its brutality. What was unusual was that, instead of apathy, the attack elicited public outrage at home and abroad. Thus it served to bring to light India's hidden burden of violence against women.

After heated debate over how to deter gender violence, the Indian government has placed its bet on a law that calls for stringent punishment of perpetrators of rape and violence against women, including the option of the death penalty. Others are demanding fast-track courts, with increased policing and CCTV surveillance on the streets. In this charged atmosphere, a less dramatic but still effective agency has been overlooked: women's political representation.

HOW DO FEMALE POLITICIANS AFFECT CRIME OUTCOMES AGAINST WOMEN?

The problem of cause and effect

Our research shows that more women in elected political office can have a surprisingly powerful impact on the outcomes of crimes against women.⁶

How do we reach this conclusion? In normal circumstances it would be difficult if not impossible to identify cause and effect. Suppose we see a change in crime outcomes and, associated with it, a change in women's political representation. These changes might be seen over time in a region, or they might be seen comparing two regions. We could then make up a plausible story that links women's political representation (the cause) to crime outcomes (the effect). But should we believe that story? The problem is that changes in women's representation are commonly a result of changes in preferences and attitudes more generally in society. These attitudes include the way that people think about women – including crimes against women. Under these circumstances it is impossible to know what is driving the effect. Was it the women representatives who caused the change in criminal behaviour? Or was it the underlying changes in society that caused the change in behaviour – and also got the women elected? Usually, it's impossible to tell.

Indeed, many would give credence to an opposite story. There is widespread scepticism that female leaders in developing countries have made any difference at all to their constituents' welfare.⁷

Our research overcomes the problem of inferring causation by means of a large-scale natural experiment (see Box 2.2 on page 52). This experiment was made possible by a legal reform to the Indian system of local government, called Panchayati Raj (see Box 3.2). The reform was introduced in 1993. It required that one third of all seats would be reserved for female candidates; the other two thirds would continue to be available to both male and female candidates, but in practice they would continue to be contested largely by men. Thus one-third of all seats in these councils, and also one-third of all chairperson positions across councils, were now reserved for women. The result was a dramatic increase in the number and proportion of women in political office.

The effect of the reform is confirmed by a comparison with assemblies that continue to lack quotas for women. In the legislatures of India's federal states over the past three decades, for example, only 5.4 per cent of members have been women.

Box 3.2. The reform of Panchayati Raj

India is a federal state of 36 states and territories. Each state has its own government and state-level legislature. Panchayati Raj concerns local government below the state-level.

Panchayati Raj is the name that India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru gave to the Indian system of local government. The word raj means 'rule' and a panchayat is literally an assembly of village elders. In fact, Panchayati Raj institutions now comprise elected councils in villages (panchayats), an intermediate level (panchayat samitis), and the district level (zila parishads).

The reform of Panchayati Raj was enacted in 1993, but implemented across India's states at different times. This was for several reasons; it is important to the design of our research that none of these reasons had any relationship to trends in violent crimes against women.

Another reason was lawsuits that challenged specific aspects of the reform and led to different delays in different states. Bihar, for instance, conducted its first Panchayati Raj election only in 2001, because of a lawsuit over representation of 'other backward castes' in Panchayati Raj institutions.

In our research, we examine the effects of the resulting increase in women's local political representation on documented crimes against women. How does the reform help us to identify cause and effect? At first sight a national reform would not seem like a promising case to study, because the effect of the reform might be expected to be the same everywhere. What creates the opportunity for researchers is that the reform, although enacted in 1993, was implemented at varying times across different states of the country. Just as important, as explained in Box 3.2, the reasons why the reform was implemented more rapidly in some states than in others had nothing to do with pre-existing levels of gender crime, and they also had nothing to do with any attitudes and preferences in society that would have made gender crime more or less acceptable.

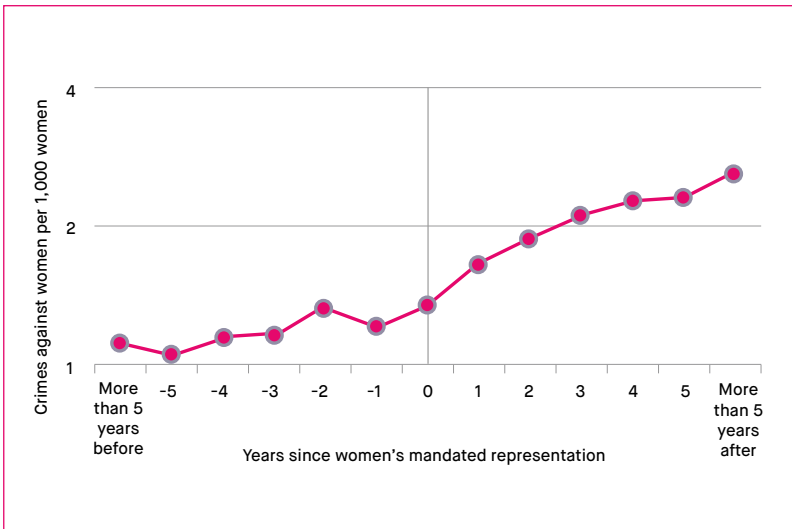
In other words, even if attitudes to women in Indian society were changing, the changes were unrelated to the size and timing of the increases in women's local political representation. At any given moment, many districts were being 'treated' by a sudden, exogenous increase in the number and proportion of women in political office, while other districts were not being treated in the same way. The untreated districts make up a control group. By observing many such moments from start to finish of the reform, and pooling all the information, we can cleanly identify the effects on crime of the cause: women's representation.

To summarise, unique features of India's reform make it the single largest natural experiment worldwide in the effects of increasing the number and proportion of women in political office. It is not surprising, therefore, that it has been a focus of many studies on how women leaders affect citizen outcomes. Our research is one of these studies.

A rise in gender crimes: bad news or good?

When we compare rates of offending before and after the implementation of the reform across states we find that more women political representatives led to an increase in documented crimes against women. We illustrate this from country-wide crime data in two ways. Figure 3.2 shows that in each district offences against women rose steeply following the increase in women’s representation. Figure 3.3 shows the same numbers in another way, indicating that a 23 per cent increase in reported gender crimes can be attributed specifically to implementation of the 1993 reform. This included an 11 per cent rise in the number of reported rapes and a 12 per cent increase in kidnappings of women.

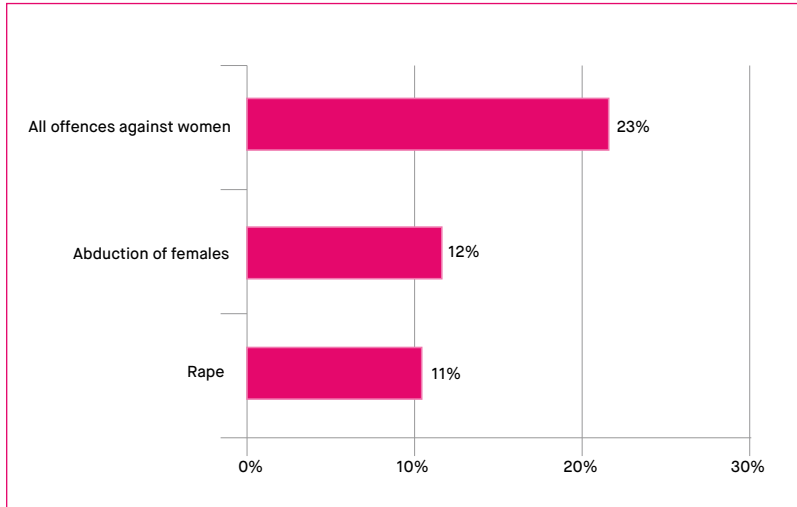
Figure 3.2. Year-by-year effects of women’s empowerment on reported crimes against women



Source: Iyer et al. (2012).

Notes: Each data point represents the impact of women’s representation on the total of reported crimes against women after a given number of years. The vertical line at year zero on the horizontal axis represents the time the reform was implemented in each of India’s federal states. The actual date varied across the states as explained in Box 3.2.

Figure 3.3. Estimated changes in reported offences against women following implementation of the Panchayati Raj reform



Source: Iyer et al. (2012).

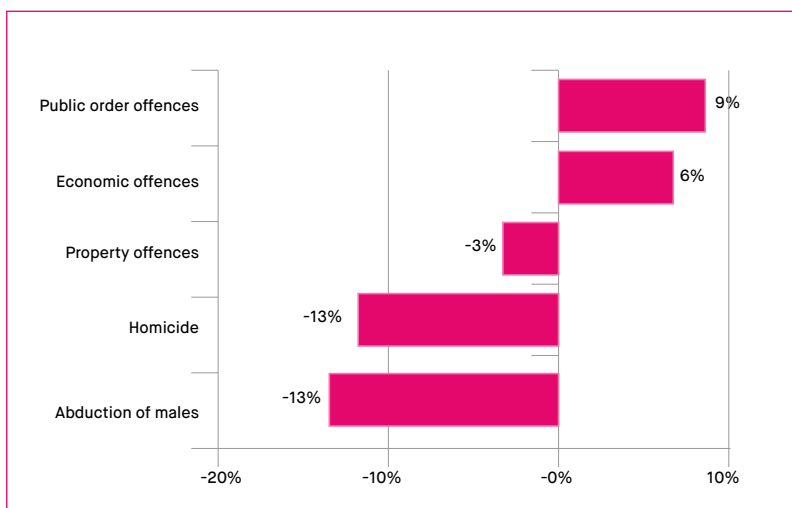
Notes: Crime variables are the number of offences per 1,000 women. Results control for demographic characteristics, real per capita state GDP, policy strength per capita, state and year fixed effects and state-specific time trends. Statistically, not all results shown are significantly different from zero.

At first sight this is disheartening. Indian opponents of mandated representation for women warned that women were inexperienced in governance; they predicted that pushing women into leadership roles would worsen outcomes for everyone. An alternative interpretation is also possible: perhaps rising gender crime statistics were driven by a backlash against women in political office. Either way, one might wonder whether the data are telling us the critics were right.

Several other pieces of evidence encourage optimism. First, it is not true that female leadership has led to worse outcomes for everyone. Figure 3.4 shows clearly that there was no surge in reported crime outcomes unrelated to women. As women moved into legislative seats, public order offences and economic offences rose modestly, but property offences, homicides, and male abductions fell. We attach particular significance to

the evidence on homicides. It is not easy to hide a body; homicides are much harder to conceal than other crimes, and it should go without saying that homicide statistics are unaffected by the willingness of the victim to report the offence. From this evidence, it is more or less certain that we are looking at a decline in underlying violent crime.

Figure 3.4. Estimated changes in other reported offences following implementation of the Panchayati Raj reform



Notes: Crime variables are the number of offences per 1,000 population, except abduction of males which is measured per 1,000 males. Results control for demographic characteristics, real per capita state GDP, policy strength per capita, state and year fixed effects and state-specific time trends.

As for violence against women, other evidence shows clearly what happened. There was no increase in underlying rates of offending but there was an increase in the proportion of offences against women that victims were willing to report and document. In other words, the increase in recorded crimes against women is actually good news. The mechanism driving this seems to be that where women moved into political office the police became more responsive to gender crimes; this encouraged women victims to step forward and speak out, so that reported crimes rose.

A lack of police responsiveness has long been identified as a major problem in India. A study in the state of Rajasthan found that on average the police registered only half of all cases of sexual harassment and domestic violence.⁸ Typically they did this only when a male relative reported it on behalf of a female victim. In contrast, our survey data show that when village councils have female leaders, women are significantly more likely to say that they will lodge a complaint with the police should they become victims of a crime. Men's responses, in contrast, are unaffected.

Our data also refutes the idea that higher rates of reported gender crime reflected a male backlash against women in politics. Women from villages with female leaders were not targets for gender-based abuse at a higher rate than women from other villages. This supports the contention that higher rates of documented gender crime under women political representatives have not been driven by an increase in underlying crime.

Another nationwide survey has looked directly at how women and men interact with the local police. Women in villages with female council heads reported greater satisfaction in their contacts with the police as well as a lower likelihood of being asked to pay bribes.⁹ In contrast the experience of men was neither better nor worse if the village council head was a woman.

Finally, we can consider direct evidence on police actions. In the average state, our evidence shows, arrests for crimes against women increased by 31 per cent after the state implemented political representation for women.

Taken together, our evidence shows clearly that, where women have raised their profile in local government, female victims have benefited from greater responsiveness and willingness to act on the part of the police.

WHAT DO WOMEN ACTUALLY DO IN POLITICS?

Women's voice

What is it that female political representatives do that leads to these effects? It is important to be aware that the local government reform did not suddenly give women direct authority over the courts or the police. Law

and order are not a local government subject, and local representatives cannot change police priorities or redirect resources to fight or prevent crime. Whatever women leaders have done to change crime outcomes has happened in some other way.

A study of village meetings gives a clue: women are 25 per cent more likely to speak up if the village council leader is a woman.¹⁰ To be heard, one must first speak – and female council members and council heads seem to give women more confidence to do so.

Another clue is found by asking at what level women's participation in politics has made the greatest difference. There are three levels of local government at which India's 1993 reform increased the participation of women: the district, sub-district and village level. We made use of the fact that during any election cycle only a third of district council headships within any state are randomly assigned to women (whereas a third of the members across all these councils are women). This allows us to calculate the marginal impact of a female district council head, over and above the impact of women leaders and council members at sub-district level. This marginal impact is small. What this means is that the greater effect of female political representation on crime reporting is at lower levels. In other words, for victimized women to find a voice, the proximity of women leaders does matter. Our conclusion can be linked to the finding that women are more empowered to speak up in village meetings where the council is led by a woman.

The idea that women's voice is the critical factor is consistent with what women say when they are asked what would make the police be more responsive to them. In the State of the Nation Survey, women victims strongly believe that the police are 10 percentage points more likely to listen to them sympathetically and to take action if they go to the police station accompanied by a locally influential person. Nearly half of respondents identified their village council member as the locally influential person they would turn to in case of difficulty.¹¹

As U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor has put it,

Our experiences as women or people of colour affect our decisions ... Hence, one must accept the proposition that a difference there will be [made] by the presence of women or people of colour on the bench. Personal experiences affect the facts that judges choose to see.¹²

In the Indian context, it is clear that the gender of our leaders matters. It is not that women have captured the courts or the police. Rather, the female identity of their political leader has changed how women – and policemen and policewomen – are responding to gender crimes.

Women's political representation brings other benefits

What else can female political representatives achieve? With good reason, the primary focus of this chapter is on gender-based crime. The assurance of personal safety and fair treatment under the law are two of the most fundamental aspects of civil society. At the same time, having more women in politics can make other differences too.

Two recent studies examine this issue, adopting a different approach to the problem of cause and effect. They compare post-election outcomes when female candidates are winners, compared with male winners. Again, the challenge is to avoid attributing outcomes to a female politician that might be driven by underlying attitudes or preference among the voters that elected her. Both studies solve this problem by looking only at constituencies with closely contested outcomes. When the election is close (with less than a 5 per cent margin between votes for the winner and runner-up), it is plausible to think that the election could have gone either way. In other words, the gender of the winner was decided to a large extent by chance. Hence, average differences in outcomes after the election that are associated with the gender of the winner were probably caused by the winner's gender difference, not by something else that the research failed to measure.

One of these studies shows that having more female politicians in Indian state-level legislatures results in lower rates of neo-natal mortality. This effect arises through better access to information, better health infrastructure, and

more use of health care facilities and antenatal care visits. The other study shows that Brazilian cities with female mayors have better health outcomes, show fewer irregularities in public procurement practices, and also receive more discretionary federal transfers. Meanwhile, women mayors hire fewer temporary staff members to achieve their objectives. In other words, they achieve better outcomes with fewer resources.¹³

In the Indian local-government context, objectors to mandated women political representatives held strong preconceptions about how effective women leaders would be. They maintained that politically inexperienced and otherwise disadvantaged women would be overruled or manipulated by their spouses or other powerful local interests. An influential study refutes these fears. In providing public goods under Panchayati Raj, it shows, female village leaders have provided a better match with women voters' preferences, for example more water and more roads in West Bengal, and more water but fewer roads in Rajasthan. This is despite the fact that women leaders began with low literacy levels and socio-economic status, and had little experience, ambition or political prospects until they assumed leadership positions.¹⁴

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: ANOTHER CASE OF MISSING WOMEN?

A global perspective

Despite the advantages that women politicians have been found to bring to the table, they remain underrepresented in government in most countries. Indeed, the worldwide average for the proportion of women legislators (based on 187 countries) today stands at 20 per cent, clearly far short of women's share in the population.

While the 1993 law in India has mandated that the minimum proportion of women representatives locally should be one third (higher in some recent cases), women constitute just 11 per cent of political representatives in the national parliament and 14 per cent at the state level.

It might be supposed that women are likely to play a larger role in the political systems of more developed economies. A few examples suggest

that this intuition might be misleading, however. Female legislators account for only 8 per cent of the national parliament of wealthy Japan. The wealthier United States does somewhat better with 18 per cent, and the United Kingdom beats that with 23 per cent. But Senegal reaches 43 per cent and yet is one of the poorest countries in the world. Among European countries the highest share, 45 per cent, belongs to Sweden, but the highest figure in the world is reported by Rwanda at 64 per cent.

Figure 3.5. Women representatives in the national legislature, 117 countries



Sources: Shares of women in the lower (or single) house of the national legislature are taken from the *Women in National Parliaments* dataset of the Inter-Parliamentary Union at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed 1 July 2014). GDP per head in 2013 is from *The Conference Board Total Economy Database, January 2014*, available at <http://www.conference-board.org/data/economydatabase/> (accessed 1 July 2014).

As a further check, Figure 3.5 plots rates of female representation in the lower house of parliament against GDP per head of each country in a large selection of developed and developing countries. A striking result is that women's political participation does not show any kind of significant pattern with respect to a country's level of economic development. There is somewhat wider variation among poorer countries than among richer ones, as can be seen by comparing Senegal and South Africa (both over 40 per cent) with Yemen and Qatar (zero or close to zero).

So – what keeps women out of politics?

Women's participation in politics could lag behind their population share for several reasons. In democracies voters, both male and female, may be prejudiced against female candidates. In multi-party democracies, even if voters are unbiased, political parties may avoid selecting women for winnable seats. Finally, women themselves may not aspire to hold office, and this could be because they are deterred by biased voters or biased parties, or because they carry a double burden of duties at work and in the home, or for still other reasons.

Research on closely contested elections to the state legislatures in India can show which of these factors is keeping women out of politics.¹⁵ In state elections, political parties must decide on the pool of candidates they will field across different constituencies. This is unlike local government elections, where political parties are not involved. The researchers find that having a female winner in a particular constituency does not induce major political parties to put forward new female candidates from the same or other constituencies. Female winners are 9.2 per cent more likely to be fielded as their party's candidate for the next election compared with male winners – an important consideration in India where many incumbent representatives do not seek re-election. At the election after that, however, when the female candidate has won twice, their reselection advantage drops off to 4.3 per cent. So, one factor in women's poor political prospects seems to be political parties' lack of enthusiasm. In contrast voter turnout, male or female, is not affected by a candidate being female. This suggests that voter bias is not the key factor that is keeping women out in this context.

This is not to deny that some voter bias is at work. In India, villages with female local government leaders have lower levels of corruption. They provide more public goods, and the quality of the public goods they provide is at least equal to that found in male-headed villages. Despite this, female village leaders are rated below their male counterparts. In Brazil, despite achieving comparable or better outcomes for health and education, with lower levels of corruption, female city mayors are 20 per cent less likely to be re-elected than male mayors.¹⁶

However, unfamiliarity with female candidates seems to play a role in this regard. Indeed, greater exposure to women leaders tends to reduce voter bias against them. In West Bengal, male village voters with prolonged exposure to women as local council leaders (10 years, or two election cycles) have been found to be more likely to associate women with political roles in implicit association tests; in fact, they ranked political campaign speeches delivered in a female voice higher than those with identical content delivered in a male voice. The end result was that villages in West Bengal with longer (10-year) exposure to women leaders had a significantly larger share of women council leaders than those with no exposure (18.5 versus 11 per cent).¹⁷

Finally, do Indian women have an interest in seeking office and confidence in their capabilities comparable to those of men? On the evidence they are not shrinking violets. In West Bengal women reported feeling as competent as their male counterparts in executing their duties after a couple of years of experience. Constituencies with one round of reservation in Mumbai saw a 7.5 per cent increase in the proportion of female candidates contesting open seats the next time around. This was already building on a 10-fold increase in the number of female candidates in the first round of reservation itself. Even in the villages of West Bengal, twice reserved constituencies were found to have doubled the proportion of female candidates in those with no reservation (10.1 per cent vs. 4.8 per cent).¹⁸

The case for quotas

Earlier we offered three possible reasons for women's absence from politics: voter bias, party bias, and women's lack of interest. The Indian experience of mandated reservation suggests that voter bias and women's lack of interest cannot be the whole story. If anything, mandating women's political representation appears to draw more women into the political sphere, especially in comparison to selection processes that can be manipulated by political parties and incumbent male politicians. Just as importantly, women's lack of extensive political experience does not seem to handicap their interest or performance either.

This is consistent with the international picture. Over the last twenty years, the world has seen a push for political quotas for women in many countries. These have taken various forms. Most common have been voluntary quotas, sometimes in combination with other methods. The next most common method has been to legislate a minimum proportion of female candidates. Least popular is the reservation of seats, the method used in India. A study of women's participation in politics confirms that, while the proportion of women among elected representatives bears no relation to a country's income level, it is dramatically affected by political quotas. There are clear differences among types of quota, however. Imposing a quota for female candidates raises the share of women in the national parliament by around 20 per cent of the initial level, whereas reserving seats for women raises their representation by around 60 per cent.¹⁹

WHAT ABOUT GENDER CRIME IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES?

Similar, but also different

Whatever the crime statistics say, there is not much doubt that the status of women in developed countries is considerably better than in most developing nations, including India. Even in developed countries, however, the recording of crimes against women is fraught with complications.

A good starting point is domestic violence, the most common form of violence against women in developed countries. In the United States, about 75 per cent of all violence against women is perpetrated by domestic partners, with poor women disproportionately affected. In 2001, women in the United States reported 590 thousand incidents of rape, sexual and other assaults at the hands of intimate partners. However, survey data suggest that in the US only 20-50 per cent of cases of such violence are actually reported to the police.²⁰ And even more seriously, on average, four women are killed each day by a partner. Typically the investigation then exposes a history of previous incidents that were not reported or did not trigger intervention.

One measure that has been widely implemented across US states over the past 20 years is mandatory arrest laws. The District of Columbia and 22 states have laws that mandate or at least strongly recommend that when domestic violence is reported everyone accused of abusive behaviour is arrested. Ironically, this seems to have resulted in 'too much' police responsiveness: According to one recent study homicide rates are about 50 per cent higher today in US states with mandatory arrest laws than those without.²¹ These measures appear to have backfired in tackling gender violence because they have reduced the likelihood that victims report incidents to the police. In other words, the certainty of a partner's immediate arrest, weighed against the possibility of continued abuse in future, might persuade a woman not to report violence. As a result, abuse would go unreported until it escalated to homicide.

Other evidence shows that women who do report domestic violence, leading to their partner's arrest, often drop charges. Studies in the 1970s and 1980s found that this happened in at least 50 and up to 90 per cent of cases. However, women who drop charges are four times more likely to suffer future violence than those who do not.²² Women often return to the same partner as well. In a national survey, victims of physical assault suffered an average of 4.5 years of victimisation by the same partner, enduring seven assaults in that time period.²³ 'No-drop laws' that require prosecution of a person charged with assault to proceed, even when the victim wishes to drop charges subsequently, have induced a 14 per cent increase in calls reporting domestic violence, but they have not had any effect on violence against women measured by homicide and hospitalisation rates.²⁴

On a related note, in the US military, female victims who are typically lower level officials were said to be widely discouraged from reporting abuse. Either on their own, or due to active discouragement by their peers and seniors, victims often choose not to report abuse due to emotional distress and the potentially adverse impact on their careers.

Meanwhile, a new and vicious form of gender crime that has recently drawn considerable attention and discussion is abuse using social media

online. The lack of official understanding of this new form of crime and the associated lack of police responsiveness has been a source of frustration for women victims.²⁵

Overall, it seems that institutional responses to gender violence in developed countries have also not been very effective. As in much poorer countries, there is under-reporting. Public awareness, in contrast, is often greater. Police responses are sometimes too little and sometimes too much. In short, Western societies are also in need of a more holistic and nuanced discussion of how to encourage reporting and intervene more effectively to reduce violence against women.

Women's political representation in developed countries

In the absence of good research evidence, one can only speculate as to whether the presence of more women in the political domain will lead to the more nuanced approach that is needed. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that in the numerous sexual harassment cases that arose in the US military in 2012/13, the key politicians who initiated legislative action were all women: US senators Kirsten Gillibrand, Claire McCaskill and Barbara Boxer.²⁶

As Figure 3.5 demonstrates, most developed countries do no better than others in women's representation in the legislature. If a developed country operates a quota system it is typically limited to requiring the inclusion of women in party candidate lists. Some countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, have no quotas at all.²⁷ Not surprisingly, and in contrast to the Indian experience in local government, the proportion of women who enter politics or express an interest in doing so has risen little in the US over time.²⁸

Some other developed countries, such as Spain and France, operate candidate quota systems, but the evidence suggests that these can be manipulated by political parties.²⁹ Male politicians who might lose out to female competitors seem to play a role in keeping down the proportion of female politicians that succeed in winning seats. Both countries have fixed deadlines for achieving set proportions of women in the legislature,

so there is hope that women's participation will rise over time. Other developed countries should seriously consider initiatives to expand women's political participation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Gender-based violence is prominent among the constraints that bind women into a subordinate position in the family and in society. Lacking autonomy, women are prevented from emerging in society and in the economy.

Crimes against women remain a stubborn concern in developing countries, and to a lesser extent, in developed countries. A significant factor everywhere is that reporting such crimes is challenging for women. The result is that gender crime is severely under-reported.

The reasons range from a lack of nuanced police responsiveness to a host of other psychological, emotional and economic costs. In India, our research shows, police indifference is a major factor. In the United States an opposite factor seems to be involved: police responses may sometimes be too aggressive, as with mandatory arrest laws.

In the short term we need to encourage the reporting of gender crimes. In the long term we need to reduce their true incidence. In today's changing social terrain, gender relations are often under strain because enabling women to speak out against violence and the capacity for police to intervene appropriately may defy long standing social norms that govern men and women's behaviour.³⁰ To avoid violent fallouts from these social stresses demands nuanced responses.

Where is the nuance to come from? An essential element in any strategy for dealing with gender crime should enable women to be seen and heard in public life and present at the policy-making table. Specifically:

- Our research in India has shown that more women in political office raise the number of documented crime against women. This sounds bad, but actually the news is good. There is no increase in underlying gender crime, but more gender crimes are being reported.

- Police activism in documenting and dealing with gender crimes is higher in areas with more female political representatives. Associated with this is increased willingness of female victims to report the crime. Victims are more willing to come forward because they anticipate the police are more likely to hear them when women leaders are in charge.
- Women politicians have the biggest impact on giving a voice to female victims when they are present at the local government level, where they are closest to female victims.
- Reporting of crimes against women, including domestic violence, is also a problem in developed countries. There too, institutional responses often discourage reporting and fail to reduce offending.
- Political participation rates for women are low in many countries across the world. The typical developed country is no better than a developing country in this respect. Reserved seats for women, followed by legislative candidate quotas, may be the most effective way to encourage more women into politics.

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ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER 3

This chapter sums up research listed in the references under Iyer, Mani, Mishra, and Topalova (2012). One of the researchers, Anandi Mani, is also an author of this policy report.

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3. A recent World Bank report: Klugman et al. (2014: 74-75).
4. A sample of 79 countries: as reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/data.html> (accessed 15 October 2014).
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7. Skepticism: 'Women hurting women', by N. D. Kristof, *The New York Times*, September 29, 2012.
8. Lack of police responsiveness: 'For rape victims in India, police are often part of the problem', by G. Harris, *The New York Times*, January 22, 2013. A study in Rajasthan: Banerjee et al. (2012).
9. Data are from the Millennial Survey (2002), which covers 36,542 households in 2,304 randomly selected villages in India.
10. A study of village meetings: Beaman et al. (2010).
11. The State of the Nation (2009) survey includes 14,404 respondents from 17 major states of India.
12. The words quoted are from Sotomayor (2002).
13. One of these studies: Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras (2014). The other study: Brollo and Troiano (2013).
14. An influential study: Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004).
15. Research on closely contested elections: Bhalotra et al. (2013).
16. In India: Duflo and Topalova (2004). In Brazil: Brollo and Troiano (2013).
17. In West Bengal: Beaman et al. (2009).
18. In West Bengal: Beaman et al. (2009). In Mumbai: Bhavnani et al. CHECK (2009).
19. A study of women's participation in politics: Pande and Ford (2011).
20. Survey data: Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998); Minnesota Crime Survey (2003); and Tjaden and Thoennes (2000a), using data from the National Criminal Victimization Survey.
21. According to one recent study: Iyengar (2009).
22. Studies in the 1970s and 1980s: Parnas (1973); Field and Field (1973); and Ford and Regoli (1992).
23. In a national survey: Tjaden and Thoennes (2000a; 2000b).