

## Gender Bias in Primary Elections? Survey Says No

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**Abstract:** As political party has become the central determinant of vote choice, voters tend to support the candidate who shares their party affiliation, regardless of whether that candidate is a man or a woman. There is no consensus, however, regarding the extent to which gender stereotyping or bias affects voters' evaluations in primaries, a setting in which voters cannot rely on partisanship as a heuristic. Based on surveys with actual voters set to cast ballots in five actual open seat gubernatorial primaries pitting a man against a woman in 2022, we find that, absent the party cue, voters don't rely on gender stereotypes when assessing candidates or casting ballots. We do find that a small segment of the primary electorate holds sexist attitudes, and those attitudes can shape perceptions of candidates' strengths and weaknesses. But these attitudes are far less prevalent or determinative than popular accounts and much of the experimental research suggests. Our results underscore the importance of turning from experimental settings to real-world primaries when assessing the impact of gendered attitudes in contemporary U.S. politics.

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## Gender Bias in Primary Elections? Survey Says No

Whether women systematically navigate more difficult electoral terrain when they run for office remains an unsettled question. On one hand, high-profile examples of sexist behavior toward women in politics abound. When illness in 2023 kept Senator Dianne Feinstein from full engagement on the Senate Judiciary committee, for example, colleagues, pundits, and voters called for her resignation.<sup>1</sup> Former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi found it “interesting,” that she’s “never seen them go after a man who was sick in the Senate in that way.”<sup>2</sup> Democratic Congresswoman Katie Porter, who entered the primary to replace Feinstein, dealt with sexist allegations, too. Several former employees claimed that she was an “abusive” boss who created a toxic work environment. According to Jennifer Palmieri, Hillary Clinton’s 2016 communications director, “We too often embrace the notion that working for demanding men shows how tough we are,” whereas working for a demanding woman is perceived as “humiliating.”<sup>3</sup> In announcing her campaign for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley had to deal with a national discussion, prompted by CNN’s Don Lemon, about whether women in their 50s were “past their prime” (Haley was 51 at the time).<sup>4</sup> The women who ran for president in 2016 and 2020 similarly experienced attacks on their personality, appearance, and personal attributes. They were publicly advised to “smile more,” “stop yelling,” and demonstrate

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<sup>1</sup> Mini Racker and Eric Cortellessa, “Why Some Democrats Are Calling for Dianne Feinstein to Resign,” *Time*, April 13, 2023. Accessed at: <https://time.com/6271860/dianne-feinstein-judges-resign/> (May 2, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Jared Gans, “Pelosi on Calls for Feinstein to Resign: ‘I’ve never seen them go after a man who was sick in the Senate,’” *The Hill*, April 13, 2023. Accessed at: <https://thehill.com/homenews/house/3948358-pelosi-on-calls-for-feinstein-to-resign-ive-never-seen-them-go-after-a-man-who-was-sick-in-the-senate> (May 2, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Katelyn Fossett, “Katie Porter and the ‘Bad Boss’ Problem,” *Politico*, January 13, 2023. Accessed at: <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/women-rule/2023/01/13/katie-porters-bad-boss-problem-00077874> (May 2, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> David Bauder, “CNN’s Don Lemon Regrets Saying Nikki Haley Past Her ‘Prime,’” *Associated Press*, February 16, 2023. Accessed at: <https://apnews.com/article/don-lemon-nikki-haley-e40445ae824a56e3548c17a029a80775> (May 2, 2023).

more “stamina” (Dittmar 2017). The list goes on and on. A Google search for “women in politics” and “sexism” produces nearly 400,000 hits.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the landscape for women in American politics has improved dramatically in recent decades. Women running for Congress raise as much money and are just as likely as men to win their races (Burrell 2014; Fox 2021; Thomsen 2020). On the campaign trail, male and female candidates tend to emphasize the same issues (Dolan and Lynch 2017; Hayes and Lawless 2016). And the news media tend to cover women and men similarly, even when that sometimes means deriding male candidates for their appearance, demeanor, or age (Bystrom et al. 2004; Hayes and Lawless 2016). Cue Chris Christie’s weight,<sup>6</sup> Ron DeSantis’ boots,<sup>7</sup> or Pete Buttigieg’s youth.<sup>8</sup>

Reconciling these competing accounts has become a cottage industry in the study of gender and elections. Indeed, it has animated a large body of scholarship that is often predicated on the assumption that gendered attitudes play a central role in voters’ calculations. Women may not be less likely than men to win elections, the argument goes, but they may have to overcome obstacles on the campaign trail – obstacles often embedded in gender stereotypes and sexism – that men don’t. After all, a long line of research argues that voters view women as political leaders only reluctantly, believe they are poorly suited to handle key issues like terrorism and foreign affairs, and think they are less decisive and not as well-suited to elected office as men (e.g., Bauer 2017; Cassese and Holman 2018; Dolan 2010; Lawless 2004; Schneider and Bos 2014; 2019). Women can succeed, according to this logic, but only by having superior credentials or a better campaign than their male opponents (e.g., Anzia and Berry 2011; Fulton 2012). An implication of this argument is that women

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<sup>5</sup> Google search conducted by authors on May 1, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Devan Cole, “Chris Christie Speaks Out about Relentless Attacks on His Weight: ‘I Think It’s Made Me Tougher,’” *CNN*, November 21, 2021. Accessed at <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/15/politics/chris-christie-weight-attacks-cnntv/index.html> (May 16, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Christina Cauterucci, “Ron DeSantis Embraces the High Heel,” *Slate*, March 7, 2023. Accessed at: <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2023/03/ron-desantis-shoes-boots-high-heels.html> (May 16, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Frank Bruni, “Is Pete Buttigieg Just Too Young to Be President?” *New York Times*, December 14, 2019. Accessed at: <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2023/03/ron-desantis-shoes-boots-high-heels.html> (May 16, 2023).

may need to prove to voters – including those who already support them – that they are “electable” (Green, Schaffner, and Luks 2022; Nelson 2021).

This conventional wisdom has proven sticky, even when empirical evidence suggests otherwise. As political party has become the primary determinant of vote choice, voters tend to support the candidate who shares their party affiliation, regardless of whether that candidate is a man or a woman (Dolan 2014; Hayes and Lawless 2016; Ono and Burden 2018; Teele, Kalla, and Rosenbluth 2018). In the face of evidence that gender stereotypes and bias do not work to women’s detriment in general elections, some scholars have turned their attention to primary elections – the thousands of contests every cycle in which voters cannot rely on party identification as a heuristic for assessing candidates. There is no consensus, however, regarding the extent to which gender stereotyping or bias affects voters’ evaluations of primary candidates.

We argue (1) that there is little reason theoretically to expect gendered attitudes to affect voting behavior, even in primary elections; and (2) that assessing the impact of gendered attitudes requires moving from an experimental setting to real world primaries. Based on surveys with actual voters set to cast ballots in five open seat gubernatorial primaries pitting a man against a woman in 2022, we find that, absent the party cue, voters don’t rely on gender stereotypes when assessing candidates or casting ballots. We do find that a small segment of the primary electorate holds sexist attitudes, and those attitudes can shape perceptions of candidates’ strengths and weaknesses. But these attitudes, while certainly problematic, are far less prevalent or determinative than popular accounts and experimental research suggest.

### **Gendered Attitudes in Primary Elections**

For decades, scholars have identified various ways that gendered attitudes permeate the electoral arena. When it comes to voters, there are two sets of attitudes that can theoretically work to

the detriment of female candidates. First, there is sexism, which encompasses both hostile and benevolent dimensions and focuses on prejudice toward women and women's participation in public, or male-dominated, spaces (Glick and Fiske 2001; Winter 2022). These attitudes of prejudice include the idea that women achieve at the expense of men and, in doing so, deviate from their expected spheres. Cassese and Holman (2019, 57) describe sexism as “a set of system-justifying beliefs that underlie support for traditional gender roles in society and politics.”<sup>9</sup>

Gender stereotypes, the second type of attitude, are different. They are ideas and beliefs about what women and men are like, the abilities they possess, and the behaviors and activities appropriate for each. They translate into the political world in the form of trait and issue strengths voters accord to women and men running for office. Political scientists regularly argue that “voters hold preferences for male officeholders and rely on gender stereotypes to infer candidate traits, issue competencies, and ideologies” (Fulton 2012, 304). This can create a situation in which “voters perceive female candidates as lacking pivotal leadership qualities” (Bauer 2017, 280), or one in which women “are simply not seen as having qualities requisite for the politician role” (Schneider and Bos 2014, 259; see also Dittmar 2015).

Although there's little question that some people still hold sexist and gender stereotypic conceptions of society, the growth in partisan polarization has rendered the sex of a candidate incidental in the minds of most voters. In a world where partisan loyalties dominate voter decision-making, candidate sex (or any other characteristic) is likely to exert minimal influence on voters' attitudes. In fact, a meta-analysis of 67 survey experiments finds, overall, that female candidates do better than men in a wide range of voter evaluation and vote choice situations (Schwarz and Coppock 2022).

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<sup>9</sup> These beliefs are often rooted in fear of, and anger about, men's displacement or the disturbance of traditional norms (Valentino, Wayne, Ocenio 2018).

That's why primary elections are an important site for understanding voters' reactions to female candidates. Primaries provide one of few opportunities to examine candidate assessments without the influence of political party dwarfing all other considerations. If voters can't fall back on partisan signals in choosing a candidate in a party primary, they may rely on other cues, such as the sex of the candidate and gendered attitudes. In comparing partisan and nonpartisan statewide Supreme Court elections, for example, Badas and Stauffer (2019) find that partisanship is the primary influence on vote choice in partisan states. In nonpartisan states, however, female voters are more likely to support female candidates.

But even in primaries, there are reasons to expect that gendered attitudes will play only a minimal role. Foremost, gender stereotypes are waning among the American public writ large. Increasingly, Americans see women and men as having similar leadership styles and competencies in business and politics (Horowitz, Igielnik, and Parker 2018). Recent work on voters in actual elections finds that most people evaluate both female and male candidates as possessing important traits and issue competencies; only small minorities of voters rely on gendered assumptions (Dolan 2014; Fridkin and Kenney 2009; Hayes and Lawless 2016; Lefkofridi, Giger, and Holli 2019). Some recent research even identifies a trend of voters routinely evaluating women higher than men on a range of stereotypically "male" traits and issues competencies, such as leadership, competence, experience, and the ability to handle economic issues (Dolan 2014; Fridkin and Kenney 2009; Hayes and Lawless 2016). To be sure, gendered attitudes might play a role when sex and gendered issues feature prominently in a campaign.<sup>10</sup> But given that these instances are few and far between, there's just not much opportunity for stereotypes or sexism to emerge (Dittmar 2015; Hayes and Lawless 2016; 2022).

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<sup>10</sup> Voters with more sexist views, for example, were more likely to support Donald Trump and less likely to have positive feelings toward Hillary Clinton in 2016 (e.g., Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018; Valentino, Wayne, and Ocenio 2018).

Second, gender stereotypes serve as information shortcuts employed by voters who don't know much about candidates (Macrae and Bodenhausen 2001; McDermott 1997). Yet primary voters, who comprise just a small fraction of the electorate,<sup>11</sup> tend to be disproportionately interested in politics (Sides et al. 2018). As such, they are the voters most likely to access information about the election and the candidates. This dramatically reduces the need for primary voters to rely on stereotypes or sexist attitudes when evaluating candidates (Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstein 2020).

Despite this logic, much of the research pertaining to gender in primary elections is not well-suited to test it. Primary elections do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, candidates are the sum total of many different factors – including their incumbency status, prior experience, campaign activities, and the local context in which they run. Yet the bulk of scholarship that examines voters' reactions to female candidates – much of which uncovers evidence of gendered attitudes – is experimental or hypothetical (e.g., Barnes and Beaulieu 2014; Bauer 2017; Brown, Heigberger, and Shocket 1993; Ditonto 2017; Fox and Smith 1998; Fridkin, Kenney, and Woodall 2009; Hayes and Lawless 2022; Holman, Merolla, and Zechmeister 2011; 2016; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; 1993b; King and Matland 2003; Lawless 2004; Sweet-Cushman 2022). Relying on fictitious candidates can provide important insights into how candidate sex might influence voters when all else is completely equal. But this approach is limited in what it can say about how gendered attitudes might operate in the complex environment of real-world elections, where no two campaigns are identical.

Moreover, because scholars create hypothetical candidates and conditions, it is no surprise that for every experiment that finds evidence of gender stereotyping, there's another that reaches a different conclusion. King and Matland (2003) and Bauer (2017), for example, find that Republican

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<sup>11</sup> Joshua Ferrer and Michael Thorning, "2022 Primary Turnout: Trends and Lessons for Boosting Participation," Bipartisan Policy Center, March 6, 2023. Accessed at: <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/2022-primary-turnout/> (May 10, 2023).

voters judge hypothetical female Republican candidates more harshly than Democrats do. Cassese and Holman (2018) find that female candidates, particularly Democrats, are vulnerable to campaign attacks based on feminine trait and policy stereotypes. Hayes and Lawless (2022) and Winter (2022) find no deficit in evaluations or vote choice for female candidates among their party's voters.<sup>12</sup> Specific candidate descriptions and experimental conditions likely influence the findings across experimental work.

This is not to suggest that high-profile examples of sexism and gender stereotyping – such as those with which we opened this paper – are entirely a thing of the past. Nor does it call into question the specific findings in any one experiment. But it is to say that widespread, systematic gender bias may no longer exist to pose fundamental challenges for women on the primary campaign trail. In light of the record number of women running in primaries in recent election cycles, it is particularly important to test our argument in a real-world setting.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Gubernatorial Primary Election Study**

Primary elections are an important venue for studying the impact of gendered attitudes on voters' decisions because there is no partisan cue on which to rely. But that's not the only reason. Primaries are also the contests by which the vast majority of general election candidates are chosen in the United States. Given the lopsided partisan nature of so many locales, these races are often the main hurdle for candidates to surmount. And winning a primary nomination confers party support and credibility on candidates when they find themselves heading into a competitive general election

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<sup>12</sup>These null results are supported by the one recent study of actual primary voters, which finds that more sexist voters offered lower evaluations of Democratic women *and* men seeking the 2020 presidential nomination (Utych 2021).

<sup>13</sup>Kelly Dittmar, "The 2022 Primaries Are Over. Here's What You Need to Know about Women Nominees," Center for American Women and Politics, September 27, 2022. Accessed at: [ps://cawp.rutgers.edu/blog/2022-primaries-are-over-heres-what-you-need-know-about-women-nominees](https://cawp.rutgers.edu/blog/2022-primaries-are-over-heres-what-you-need-know-about-women-nominees) (May 10, 2023).



as well. Despite the importance of primary elections, relatively little work focuses on voter reactions to real-world primary candidates.<sup>14</sup>

To examine the potential impact of gendered attitudes in primaries, we focus on gubernatorial elections. This provides an easy test for stereotypes and sexist attitudes to influence voters' decisions (and thus a hard test for our argument). Previous literature suggests that voters hold different expectations for candidates for executive office and may even gender stereotype executive positions themselves (Fox and Oxley 2003; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b). Further, in any given election cycle, the number of women seeking a gubernatorial nomination is relatively low. With less exposure to female governors – only 49 women have ever served as governor, and 18 states have never elected a woman to the position<sup>15</sup> – voters who might be inclined to rely on gendered attitudes will be on fertile ground.

We conducted surveys of voters in five U.S. states holding primary elections for governor in Summer 2022: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, and Wisconsin. Each of these primary elections featured one woman competing against one man for an open seat (see Table 1). We focused on open seat races because the overwhelming majority of incumbents face little real competition. These contests saw variation in party, primary type, sex of the winning candidate, and vote share. Importantly, the races featured candidates who were relatively evenly matched in previous electoral experience (see Appendix A). None of these contests included a sacrificial lamb and in no case was the winner a foregone conclusion.

The main survey questions focused on two types of gendered attitudes: sexism and gender stereotypes. We included measures to gauge respondents' attitudes about gender bias as well as their

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<sup>14</sup> A growing body of literature addresses gender differences in electoral outcomes, levels of party support, fundraising opportunities and successes, and the impact of electoral rules and district demographics (Barnes, Branton, and Cassese 2016; Hassell and Visalvanich 2019; Hennings and Urbatsch 2016; Kitchens and Swers 2016; Lawless and Pearson 2008; Ondercin and Welch 2009; Thomsen 2019).

<sup>15</sup> "History of Women Governors," Center for American Women and Politics. Accessed at: <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/levels-office/statewide-elective-executive/history-women-governors> (May 10, 2023).

assessments of candidates’ traits and issue competencies. In addition, we asked voters to give each candidate a favorability score and tell us for whom they already voted or planned to vote. We also included questions pertaining to respondents’ media habits and demographic profile. (See Appendix B for the survey instrument.)

**Table 1. 2022 Gubernatorial Primaries Included in the Study**

<b>State</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Vote Share</b>
Colorado	June 28	Republican	<i>Greg Lopez</i>	Male	46%
			<i>Heidi Ganahl</i>	Female	54
Maryland	July 19	Republican	<i>Dan Cox</i>	Male	52
			<i>Kelly Schulz</i>	Female	44
Arizona	August 2	Democratic	<i>Marco Lopez</i>	Male	23
			<i>Katie Hobbs</i>	Female	72
Wisconsin	August 9	Republican	<i>Tim Michels</i>	Male	47
			<i>Rebecca Kleefisch</i>	Female	42
Florida	August 23	Democratic	<i>Charlie Crist</i>	Male	60
			<i>Nikki Fried</i>	Female	35

*Notes:* Vote shares don’t add up to 100% because of write-ins and candidates who withdrew from the race, but still appeared on the ballot. Winning candidates are in italics.

We conducted each survey during the week leading up to the state’s gubernatorial primary. Fielded by Civiqs, the sample for each survey included only registered voters who were eligible to vote in the upcoming race. In closed primaries (Maryland and Florida), we surveyed only co-partisans. In semi-closed contests (Colorado and Arizona), we included unaffiliated voters as well. In Wisconsin, which holds an open primary, we included in the sample any registered voter – including Democrats – who said they planned to vote in the Republican primary. Designing the sample this way represents an improvement over most experimental work because we restrict the sample to

people eligible to vote in the primary and who plan to do so (see Appendix C).<sup>16</sup> Overall, Civiqs collected responses from 2,522 voters across the five states.

### **Gendered Attitudes in Candidate Assessments: Traits, Issues, Favorability, and Vote Choice**

The premise that gendered attitudes on the part of voters create a political landscape that's more complex for female candidates is predicated on the assumption that voters assess women and men running for office through a gendered lens. Thus, the first step in our analysis is to examine whether respondents evaluated the candidates in their gubernatorial primary elections consistent with traditional gender stereotypes about traits and issues.

Put simply, they did not. We began by presenting respondents with three traits and asked them to assess how well each described the candidates running in the primary. One of the traits (provides strong leadership) is “masculine” and the other (really cares about people like me) is “feminine.” Because some literature suggests that women are less likely than men to be perceived as qualified for public office (Bauer 2020), we included that as well. The data presented in the top half of Table 2 reveal little difference in how voters perceive male and female candidates; most rated women and men as exhibiting all three characteristics. The small, but statistically significant differences in trait evaluations uniformly benefit female candidates.

With regard to issues, the story is similar. Voters did confer an edge to female candidates when it came to their ability to handle abortion, a “women’s” issue. But that wasn’t at the expense of their perceived competence to handle two traditionally “men’s” issues. We uncover no gender differences in how well voters thought the candidates would address the economy or crime.

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<sup>16</sup>In most experiments, Independents are randomly assigned to either a Democratic or Republican condition. Yet election rules and contexts are far more complex. In open and semi-open primaries, independents can choose their primary, and in closed primaries, independents cannot participate. Our research design captures these dynamics.

**Table 2. Voters' Assessments of Candidate Traits and Issue Strengths**

	<b>Male Candidate</b>	<b>Female Candidate</b>
<b>Traits</b>		
Provides strong leadership	63 % *	66 %
Really cares about people like me	61 *	66
Qualified	66 *	70
<b>Issues</b>		
Economy	69	70
Crime	70	70
Abortion	63 *	71

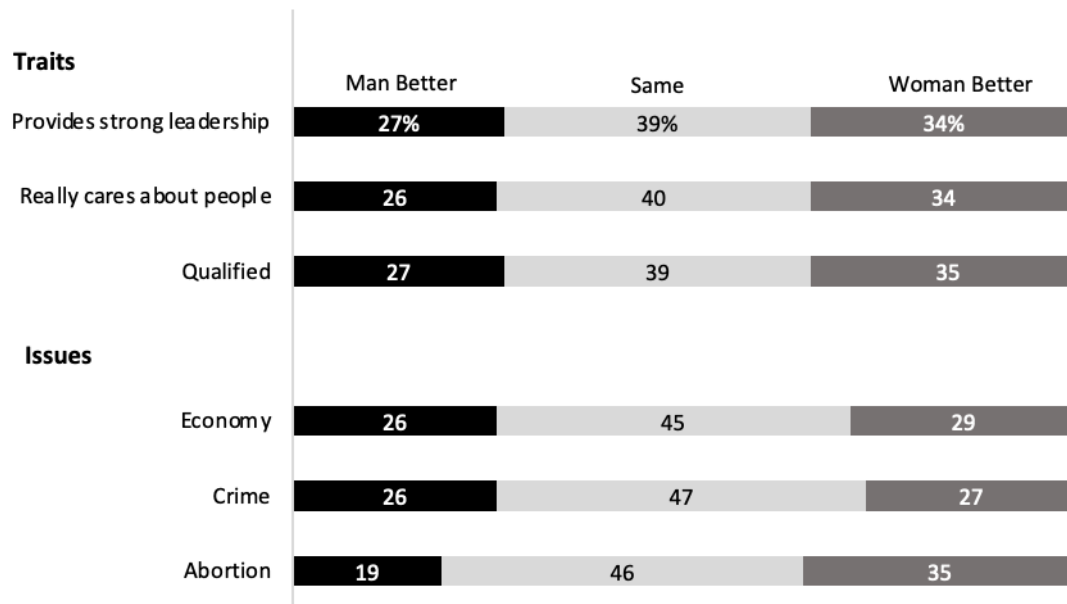
*Notes:* Trait entries indicate the percentage of respondents who thought the term described each candidate “extremely” or “quite” well. Issue entries indicate the percentage of respondents who thought the candidate would handle the issue “extremely” or “quite” well. N ranges from 2,474 to 2,507 depending on the question. \*  $p < .05$ .

Although there appears to be no disadvantage for women on the batteries of traits and issues, the data presented in Table 2 are rather blunt. They don't speak to individual voters' direct comparisons of the candidates. It's possible, for instance, that even though most voters think the women and men running for governor are capable, those who don't are particularly hard on women. So, Figure 1 offers another view of these candidate evaluations: whether a voter rated the two candidates on his/her ballot the same on each trait and issue or whether the voter gave an advantage to one candidate over the other.

The results are consistent with the claim that gender stereotyping is not prevalent in gubernatorial primaries. For traits, approximately 40 percent of voters saw no difference between the candidates. That percentage rises to the mid-40s when it comes issues. But the 55-60 percent of voters who didn't assess the candidates equally did not rely on stereotypic conceptions for their evaluations. While it's true that about one-third of respondents contended that the female candidate had an edge on empathy – a finding consistent with gender stereotypes – one-third also rated the woman higher than the man on leadership and qualifications – a finding that counters gender

stereotypic expectations. We see a similar pattern for issue competencies. Once again, voters conferred an edge to female candidates on abortion, the one “women’s” issue, but there is no difference in perceived competence on the economy or crime, the two “men’s” issues.

**Figure 1. Gender Advantages within Each Race**



*Notes:* Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who rated the male and female candidates on their ballot the same or gave one of the candidates an advantage on each trait or issue. Differences between the female and male candidate being “better” are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) for leadership, empathy, qualifications, and abortion. In all four cases, women were perceived as superior to men. N ranges from 2,474 to 2,507 depending on the question.

Beyond trait and issue assessments, we also measured voters’ favorability of each candidate and their vote choice (for early or absentee voters) or intended vote choice (for Election Day voters). On a scale from 0 – 10, female candidates averaged a favorability score of 7.4, compared to male candidates’ 7.2 ( $p < .05$ ). This small, but statistically significant difference once again speaks to an electoral arena in which voters do not systematically favor male candidates. In fact, 44 percent of respondents reported voting for or intending to vote for the woman, compared to 38 percent who

said they had or would vote for the man in the race ( $p < .05$ ).<sup>17</sup> Neither of these findings suggests that women were disadvantaged in their party's primary.

And when we move to a multivariate context, we see why. Consider the regression equations presented in Table 3. In each equation, the dependent variable is whether the respondent voted for the woman in the race. In column 1, the main predictors of interest are respondents' net trait and issue assessments. For each trait and issue, we subtracted a respondent's evaluation of the male candidate from that of the female candidate. If the respondent rated the two candidates the same on the trait or issue, then the net assessment is 0. If the respondent gave the woman a higher score, then the assessment is positive. Negative assessment scores indicate that the respondent preferred the male candidate. (See Appendix D for variable coding.)

Gender stereotypes are not the only gendered attitudes that can affect female candidates' success, though. An extensive body of scholarship finds that more sexist voters are less likely to support women (Bock, Byrd-Craven, and Burkley 2017; Bracic, Israel-Trummel, and Shortle 2019; Knuckey 2019; Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018; Sides, Tesler, Vavreck 2020). Thus, we also include a measure of respondents' sexist predispositions. Our index is comprised of the two hostile sexism items that most efficiently gauge sexist attitudes: (1) Women seek to gain power by getting control over men; and (2) Women exaggerate problems they have at work (see Schaffner 2021).<sup>18</sup> Nearly 20 percent of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with each statement.

Notably, despite some sexist attitudes among respondents, the sexism scale is not a significant predictor of voting for the woman. For all six trait and issue measures, though, respondents who gave the woman the edge were more likely to vote for her; those who gave the edge to the man were more likely to vote for him (column 1). These results hold controlling for the

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<sup>17</sup> At the time of the survey, 16 percent of voters remained undecided.

<sup>18</sup> We find the same result when we add to the scale an item that asks respondents whether they agree that "Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than most women."

respondent's net favorability score for the two candidates, thereby suggesting that it's not just an overall impression of the candidates, but specific views of their traits and issue competencies that affect vote choice. They also withstand controls for a host of relevant political and demographic variables known to influence vote choice (column 2).<sup>19</sup> And the results are similar when we rely on a composite score to gauge relative candidate assessments (column 3).

**Table 3. Voting for the Female Candidate in the Gubernatorial Primary**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Net Candidate Assessments			
Leadership	1.127 (.221) *	1.091 (.231) *	-
Empathy	.695 (.204) *	.756 (.216) *	-
Qualifications	1.126 (.208) *	1.206 (.222) *	-
Economy	.661 (.262) *	.599 (.274) *	-
Crime	.524 (.255) *	.488 (.273)	-
Abortion	.650 (.179) *	.649 (.188) *	-
Overall net assessment	-	-	.823 (.068) *
Favorability	.722 (.090) *	.700 (.091) *	.701 (.091) *
Sexism index	.079 (.076)	-.027 (.096)	-.026 (.095)
Following campaign	-	-.239 (.140)	-.243 (.138)
Gender (female)	-	.286 (.242)	.284 (.240)
Age	-	-.001 (.008)	-.002 (.008)
Education	-	.091 (.121)	.106 (.118)
Democrat (with leaners)	-	.191 (.264)	.120 (.256)
Constant	.354 (.290)	.312 (.872)	.347 (.863)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.859	.858	.855
N	1,623	1,489	1,489

*Notes:* Entries are logistic regression coefficients (and standard errors) predicting a vote for the female candidate. Positive candidate assessments reflect an advantage for the female candidate and negative scores indicate an advantage for the male candidate. \*  $p < .05$ .

To see the power of these candidate assessments, consider the substantive impact they exert on a respondent's probability of casting a ballot for the female candidate. The average Democratic woman in the sample who sees no difference between the male and female candidate on traits or

<sup>19</sup>The results are similar when we restrict the analysis to Democratic or Republican primaries (see Appendix E).

issues has a 0.61 probability of voting for the woman.<sup>20</sup> If she rates the woman, overall, as stronger on one trait and one issue, that probability climbs to 0.89. The opposite is also true. Democratic women who view the male candidate as having a net advantage on one trait and one issue are more likely to vote for him (the probability of casting a ballot for the woman in the race is only 0.23). The pattern is the same regardless of respondent sex or party. Male Republicans who see no difference between the candidates have a 0.51 probability of voting for the woman in the race. That climbs to 0.84 when they give her an advantage on two of the six traits and issues and falls to 0.16 when they think her male opponent is stronger on two dimensions. Across the board, traits and issues shape vote choice. And because assessments of traits and issues are not a product of systematic gender stereotyping, women do not face a disadvantage at the polls. Quite the contrary – female candidates have an edge (smaller among Republicans, but still there), all else equal.

The absence of gender stereotyping generally holds in each of the five state primaries when we assess them separately. In the Republican primary in Colorado, for example, Heidi Ganahl outranked her male opponent on all three traits, two issues, and mean favorability (see Appendix F). In Arizona, Democrat Katie Hobbs held a statistically significant edge over her male opponent on all seven measures. It's hardly surprising that both women went on to win their primary contests. The reverse was true in Maryland, where Republican Dan Cox outperformed his female opponent across the board and, ultimately, claimed a victory on primary day. At the end of the day, the winning candidate in four of the five contests we analyzed was the one whom voters evaluated more positively across a range of dimensions, regardless of sex. Only in Wisconsin did the candidate with the small advantage on traits and issues lose the race. Of course, only in Wisconsin did three other candidates who dropped out of the race still appear on the ballot. Those candidates won a combined

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<sup>20</sup> Predicted probabilities are based on the regression coefficients in Table 3, column 3. All continuous variables are set at their means and dummy variables held at their modes.



11 percent of the vote, more than double the margin of Tim Michels' victory over Rebecca Kleefisch.<sup>21</sup>

### **Sexist Attitudes as a Moderator**

In the absence of party cues, primary voters appear to use other central criteria – issues and traits – and not gendered considerations to evaluate candidates. Given that roughly 70 percent of sample respondents reported following the gubernatorial primary in their state “very closely” or “fairly closely,” most voters had enough information to mitigate any need to fall back on gender as a cue, either for knee-jerk sexism or more subtle stereotyping.

We do know, however, that roughly 60 percent of respondents did not evaluate the male and female candidates in their races equally. Although the majority of that 60 percent viewed the female candidate as superior, we did uncover a preference for male candidates among roughly one-quarter of the respondents (see Figure 1). Certainly, there are many non-gender related reasons to prefer one candidate over another – a more effective campaign, a better match on issue priorities and preferences, etc. But nearly 20 percent of respondents did express sexist attitudes on our general measures of sexism. These attitudes don't directly affect vote choice (see Table 3), but they could work indirectly through candidate trait and issue assessments. Before drawing general conclusions about the extent to which gendered attitudes play a role in real-world primaries, it's important to assess whether sexism affects certain voters' candidate evaluations.

To examine the relationship between sexist attitudes and net candidate assessments, we created a measure of the total number of points by which the respondent favored the male over the

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<sup>21</sup> Shawn Johnson, “Trump-Backed Tim Michels Wins Republican Primary for Wisconsin Governor,” *Wisconsin Public Radio*, August 10, 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.wpr.org/trump-backed-tim-michels-wins-republican-primary-wisconsin-governor> (May 16, 2023).

female candidate on the three traits and three issues combined.<sup>22</sup> A score of 0 means that the respondent's overall assessment of the two candidates was equal. Positive scores indicate a higher net assessment for the man, and negative scores indicate a higher net assessment for the woman. The mean is -0.6, indicating that the candidates are well matched, but the women have a very slight edge overall (the median is 0).<sup>23</sup>

As expected, respondents with more sexist attitudes did, in fact, score male candidates higher than female candidates on issues and traits. The mean net assessment score for a respondent who “strongly disagrees” that that women try to control men and that women exaggerate the problems they have at work is -2.113. In other words, the least sexist respondents gave female candidates, on average, an edge of a little more than 2 points on the net trait and issue assessment scale. Those high in sexism – they “strongly agree” that women try to control men and exaggerate the problems they have at work – ranked the male candidate higher than the female candidate, by quite a bit (their average net score is 4.769).

Disaggregating these results by party is important given that surveys show that Democrats are more than twice as likely as Republicans to say that society needs to do more to bring about gender equality;<sup>24</sup> and are significantly more likely than Republicans to say it's important to elect

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<sup>22</sup>The score ranges from -18 to +18. A score of -18 means that the respondent thought the woman was better than the man by 3 full points on each of the six indicators (each trait and each issue had four response options: extremely well (4), quite well (3), not too well (2), not well at all (1)). A score of -6 means that the woman has an overall edge by 6 points. That could result from a respondent rating the woman one category higher than the man on each of the six traits and issues, two categories higher than the man on three measures, or any combination of responses that net the female candidate six extra “points” on the scale.

<sup>23</sup>In CO and AZ, the female candidates had an overall net advantage and went on to win their races. In FL and MD, the opposite was true; the male candidates had the overall advantage and won their races. In WI, the female candidate had a net positive assessment of 0.47 points but lost her race.

<sup>24</sup>Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Kim Parker, and Renee Stepler, “Wide Partisan Gaps in U.S. over How Far the Country Has Come on Gender Equality,” *Pew Research Center*, October 18, 2017. Accessed at: <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/10/18/wide-partisan-gaps-in-u-s-over-how-far-the-country-has-come-on-gender-equality/> (May 5, 2023).

more women to political office (Dolan 2010)<sup>25</sup> and to believe that gender discrimination is a major reason there aren't more women in politics.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the pattern is similar among our respondents. Democratic women in the sample were three times as likely as Republican women (24% versus 8%) to believe that it's "very important" to elect people who share their gender ( $p < .05$ ). When it comes to perceptions of discrimination, more than three-quarters of Democrats, compared to 17 percent of Republicans, thought women face a lot ( $p < .05$ ). Republicans were four times more likely than Democrats (17% versus 4%) to contend that men in the United States face a lot of discrimination. Today's political parties and their voters see the world through very different lenses with regard to the gendered elements of life for women and men. Thus, Figure 2 plots the relationship between sexist attitudes and net candidate assessments by respondent party.

Three important findings emerge from the figure. First, for both Democrats and Republicans, as sexist attitudes increase, so does the male candidate's perceived strength on politically relevant issues and traits. Second, Republicans are significantly more likely than Democrats to hold sexist views. On the two hostile sexism items we employ, 30 percent of Republicans, compared to just five percent of Democrats, said that women exaggerate problems they have at work. Fully 26 percent of Republicans, compared to five percent of Democrats, believed that women seek power by getting control over men. Overall, the median sexism score for Democrats in the sample is 2 (out of a possible 8); this means that the respondent "strongly disagrees" with both of the sexism statements we provided. The median Republican score, by contrast, is 4.

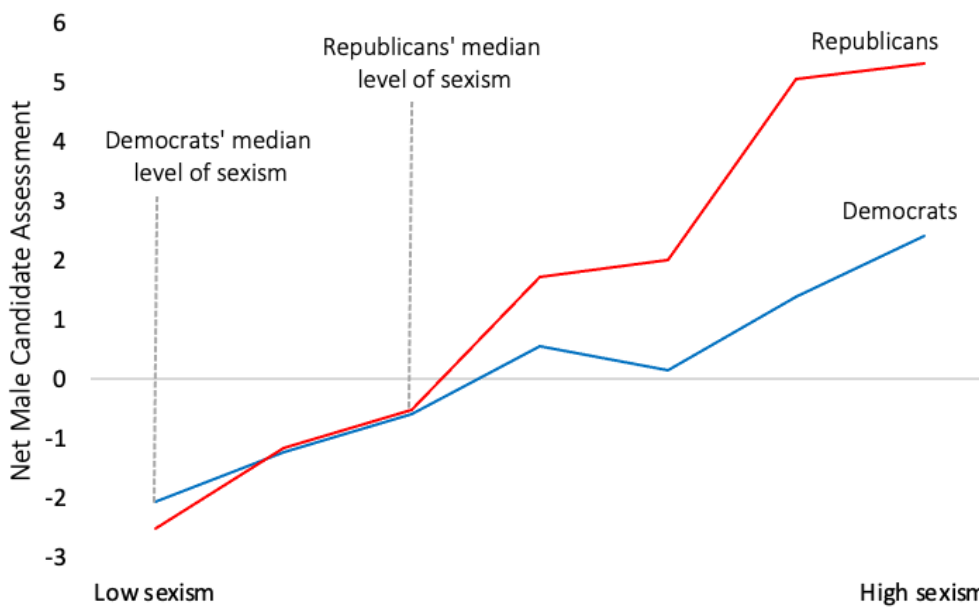
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<sup>25</sup> Jennifer De Pinto, "Women Think U.S. Would Be Better Off with More Women in Office," *CBS News*, January 19, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/women-think-u-s-would-be-better-off-with-more-women-in-office-cbs-news-poll/> (May 5, 2023).

<sup>26</sup> "How Americans View Women in Politics, in 6 Charts," McCourt School of Public Policy, March 6, 2020. Accessed at: <https://mccourt.georgetown.edu/news/how-americans-view-women-in-politics-in-6-charts/> (May 5, 2023).

The third finding, however, may be the most important. At the median level of sexism for both parties, the female candidate has an edge. Granted, it's far greater for Democrats, where the net assessment is -2.06. At the median sexism score for Republicans, that advantage drops to -0.51. But it's still an advantage. Even if they're less positive than Democrats, most Republicans still assessed the female candidate in their race more positively than they did her male opponent.

**Figure 2. The Relationship between Sexist Attitudes and Candidate Evaluations**



Notes: The x-axis measures respondents' sexist attitudes (on a scale from 2 – 8). Positive net male candidate assessments reflect an overall advantage for the male candidate on the set of three traits and three issues.

Although sexist voters still exist, we may have reached a point in time where there just aren't enough of them in primary elections to make much of a difference. Sexist Republicans, for example, are especially likely to assess male candidates more favorably than female candidates. Those highest in sexism, on average, awarded the male candidate an extra five points in the overall assessment. But these people are a dying breed – only 26 Republicans in our sample of 1,056 scored an eight on the sexism scale; only 64 scored a seven or an eight. Those high in sexism, then, account for just six

percent of the GOP sample. In most elections, that is too small a proportion of the electorate for sexist views to be determinative, even indirectly.

## **Conclusion**

As the number of female candidates steadily increases and their novelty fades, questions about whether and when voters support them continue to engage scholars. At a time of significant partisan polarization in American politics, a significant body of research demonstrates that voters overwhelmingly support the candidate of their party regardless of sex. Even absent partisan cues, though, our analysis of five gubernatorial primaries in 2022 uncovers no evidence that voters evaluate candidates through a gendered lens. Rather, voters chose the candidates they saw as best positioned on issues and traits. And on four of the six traits and issues we examined, they viewed women more positively than men. On the other two, they saw no gender difference. Further, we find no evidence that voters relied directly on sexist attitudes when casting ballots. Although these attitudes can work their way into candidate trait and issue assessments, the share of sexist voters – almost all of whom vote in Republican primaries – is too small to be determinative.

The first main contribution of this study, therefore, is to demonstrate the lack of systematically gendered forces in primaries, at least when one man is competing against one woman. This is not to suggest that sexism and gender politics are absent from American elections. Numerous examples of women and men being subjected to gendered analysis as they run for president are easy to itemize – whether Chris Christie, Pete Buttigieg, or the six Democratic women who sought their party’s nomination in 2020. Individual female candidates may still sometimes be asked who will care for their children if they win or be condemned for a voice too high or a neckline too low. And the 2016 presidential election certainly highlighted societal struggles with definitions

and demonstrations of masculinity. No one who observes American elections could suggest that gender is irrelevant.

But it is possible to reconcile examples of gendered attitudes, even explicit sexism, with an electoral playing field that does not pose systematic challenges for female candidates. The two can coexist. Indeed, there is little in the way of evidence that voters substitute sexist attitudes for core political considerations at the ballot box. The factors that generally influence candidate success – party, incumbency, experience, political context – are the same for women and men. As a result, women will win or lose elections based on any number of relevant political considerations, just as men will. Cultural conversations about gender may make it salient when Monday morning quarterbacking about a female candidate’s loss. But empirical and electoral evidence overwhelmingly suggest that women who lose elections don’t lose because they’re women or because they failed to overcome obstacles presented by gendered attitudes in the minds of the electorate.

The second major contribution this study makes is to highlight the importance of focusing on real-world elections. For decades, the work that examines how gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes affect voters’ reactions to female candidates has been primarily experimental. In the beginning, this made sense; the number of female candidates was too small to allow for any meaningful analysis of voters who had the opportunity to vote for women.<sup>27</sup> This is no longer true, yet studies of real-world primary elections remain rare.

In some ways, this methodological choice hampers our understanding of reality. Although experimental designs can do an excellent job isolating candidate sex, subjects – by design – are often given few criteria other than candidate sex on which to base their evaluation. In actual elections, however, voters typically experience a campaign, where they can learn about a candidate’s family,

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<sup>27</sup> “Past Candidate and Election Information,” Center for American Women and Politics. Accessed at: <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/election-watch/past-candidate-and-election-information> (May 18, 2023).

occupation, political experience, fundraising ability, presentation style, political priorities, and policy preferences. Further, candidates run for a particular office at a particular time in a particular place against a particular opponent or opponents. When voters evaluate candidates and ultimately cast ballots, they have a litany of criteria to consider, and they may or may not base their decisions on the same criteria in all elections. Despite the fact that scholars sometimes caution that their experimental results are not intended to be generalizable, warnings to women about the challenges they'll face on the campaign trail often emerge from them. This has contributed, at least in part, to a status quo that assumes and expects female candidates to face a more challenging electoral environment than men do.

Yet our findings, based on an analysis of five gubernatorial primaries in which a woman ran against a man, paint a more positive picture of the landscape for women than the conventional wisdom assumes. Thus, it would behoove us to recognize that the gap between the hypotheticals of an experiment and the reality of an election might be more significant than on many other gendered topics. As scholars continue to examine the gendered nature of campaigns and elections, we should seek to rely on the actions of real-world voters to inform our understanding.

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**Appendix A. Backgrounds of Candidates Included in the Gubernatorial Primary Election Study**

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<b>State</b>	<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Previous Experience</b>
Colorado	Greg Lopez Heidi Ganahl	Latino White	Parker, CO mayor University of Colorado Regent (statewide office)
Maryland	Dan Cox Kelly Schulz	White White	State Delegate Commerce and Labor Secretary (statewide office)
Arizona	Marco Lopez Katie Hobbs	Latino White	Former mayor; Border Protection chief of staff Secretary of State
Wisconsin	Tim Michels Rebecca Kleefisch	White White	Businessman Former lieutenant governor
Florida	Charlie Crist Nikki Fried	White White	Member of Congress; former governor Commissioner of Agriculture (statewide office)

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## Appendix B. Gubernatorial Primary Election Study Survey Instrument

**Colorado Republicans** [Other states follow the same pattern with different candidate names and party]

1. Do you intend to vote in the upcoming Republican primary election in Colorado this year?
  - Yes
  - No
  
2. In your opinion, how well does the phrase **“provides strong leadership”** describe Greg Lopez, a Republican candidate for Governor in Colorado?
  - Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
  
3. In your opinion, how well does the phrase **“really cares about people like me”** describe Greg Lopez?
  - Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
  
4. In your opinion, how well does the phrase **“qualified”** describe Greg Lopez?
  - Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
  
5. In your opinion, how well does the phrase **“provides strong leadership”** describe Heidi Ganahl, a Republican candidate for Governor in Colorado?
  - Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
  
6. In your opinion, how well does the phrase **“really cares about people like me”** describe Heidi Ganahl?
  - Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
  
7. In your opinion, how well does the phrase **“qualified”** describe Heidi Ganahl?
  - Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
  
8. Below you will see a list of issues. How well do you think Greg Lopez, a Republican candidate for Governor in Colorado, would be at handling each issue? How well do you think Greg Lopez would handle **the economy**?
  - Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all

9. How well do you think Greg Lopez would handle **crime**?
- Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
10. How well do you think Greg Lopez would handle the **issue of abortion**?
- Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
11. How well do you think Heidi Ganahl, a Republican candidate for Governor in Colorado, would be at handling each issue? How well do you think Heidi Ganahl would handle **the economy**?
- Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
12. How well do you think Heidi Ganahl would handle **crime**?
- Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
13. How well do you think Heidi Ganahl would handle the **issue of abortion**?
- Extremely well
  - Quite well
  - Not too well
  - Not well at all
14. How favorable is your impression of Greg Lopez, a Republican primary candidate for Governor in Colorado?
- Unfavorable Favorable  
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
15. How favorable is your impression of Heidi Ganahl, a Republican primary candidate for Governor in Colorado?
- Unfavorable Favorable  
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
16. If the primary election for the Republican candidate for Governor were being held today, who would you vote for?
- Greg Lopez
  - Heidi Ganahl
  - I wouldn't vote
  - Unsure
17. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women."
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree



18. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.”
- Strongly agree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly disagree
19. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “Women exaggerate problems they have at work.”
- Strongly agree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly disagree
20. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “The government can be trusted to do what is right most of the time.”
- Strongly agree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly disagree
21. How much discrimination do you think **women** face in the United States?
- A great deal
  - A lot
  - A moderate amount
  - A little
  - None at all
22. How much discrimination do you think **men** face in the United States?
- A great deal
  - A lot
  - A moderate amount
  - A little
  - None at all
23. How closely have you been following news stories about the Republican gubernatorial primary election campaign this summer?
- Very closely
  - Fairly closely
  - Not too closely
  - Not at all closely
24. How often do you pay attention to what’s going on in government and politics?
- Always
  - Most of the time
  - About half of the time
  - Some of the time
  - Never

25. In the last month, where did you get your information about the governor's race in Colorado? Check all that apply.
- Local television news
  - National television news broadcasts (like *CBS Evening News*, *ABC World News Tonight*)
  - Cable television (such as Fox News, CNN, or MSNBC)
  - National newspaper (like the *New York Times*)
  - Local newspaper (either print or online)
  - National news website (like CNN.com)
  - Candidate website or social media site (like Twitter or Facebook)
  - Campaign ads
  - I haven't followed the race
26. People can prefer political candidates for a variety of different reasons. How important is it for you that people elected to represent your interests are [RESPONDENT SEX]?
- Not at all important
  - Only somewhat important
  - Very important
27. People can prefer political candidates for a variety of different reasons. How important is it for you that people elected to represent your interests share your race?
- Not at all important
  - Only somewhat important
  - Very important
28. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, Independent or what?
- Strong Republican
  - Not very strong Republican
  - Independent closer to the Republican Party
  - Independent
  - Independent closer to the Democratic Party
  - Not very strong Democrat
  - Strong Democrat
  - Other party

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**Appendix C. Sample Respondents in Each State**

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	<b>Colorado</b>	<b>Maryland</b>	<b>Arizona</b>	<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>Florida</b>
Primary type	Semi-closed	Closed	Semi-closed	Open	Closed
Party registration					
Democrat	0 %	0 %	79 %	19 %	100 %
Republican	68	100	0	50	0
Unaffiliated	32	0	21	31	0
N	528	370	542	546	536

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*Notes:* In all states, 100 percent of sample respondents reported that they planned to vote or had already voted in the primary about which we asked. Democrats in Wisconsin, for example, planned to vote in the GOP gubernatorial primary.

### Appendix D: Variable Description and Coding in the Multivariate Analysis

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
<b>DEPENDENT VARIABLE</b>				
Voted for the Woman	0, 1	0.54	0.50	Indicates whether respondent voted for the female candidate (1) or the male candidate (0).
<b>GENDERED ATTITUDE VARIABLES</b>				
Leadership	-3 – 3	0.07	1.23	Indicates the difference in respondent’s assessments of how well “provides strong leadership” describes the male and female candidate. For each candidate, assessments ranged from “not well at all” (1) to “very well” (4). This variable subtracts the male candidate’s score from the female candidate’s score, so positive numbers reflect an advantage for the female candidate.
Empathy	-3 – 3	0.13	1.25	Indicates the difference in respondent’s assessments of how well “really cares about people like me” describes the male and female candidate. For each candidate, assessments ranged from “not well at all” (1) to “extremely well” (4). This variable subtracts the male candidate’s score from the female candidate’s score, so positive numbers reflect an advantage for the female candidate.
Qualified	-3 – 3	0.12	1.28	Indicates the difference in respondent’s assessments of how well “qualified” describes the male and female candidate. For each candidate, assessments ranged from “not well at all” (1) to “extremely well” (4). This variable subtracts the male candidate’s score from the female candidate’s score, so positive numbers reflect an advantage for the female candidate.
Economy	-3 – 3	0.04	1.13	Indicates the difference in respondent’s assessments of how well the male and female candidate would handle the economy. For each candidate, assessments ranged from “not well at all” (1) to “extremely well” (4). This variable subtracts the male candidate’s score from the female candidate’s score, so positive numbers reflect an advantage for the female candidate.

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
<b>GENDERED ATTITUDE VARIABLES – continued</b>				
Crime	-3 – 3	0.00	1.13	Indicates the difference in respondent’s assessments of how well the male and female candidate would handle crime. For each candidate, assessments ranged from “not well at all” (1) to “extremely well” (4). This variable subtracts the male candidate’s score from the female candidate’s score, so positive numbers reflect an advantage for the female candidate.
Abortion	-3 – 3	0.24	1.25	Indicates the difference in respondent’s assessments of how well the male and female candidate would handle abortion. For each candidate, assessments ranged from “not well at all” (1) to “extremely well” (4). This variable subtracts the male candidate’s score from the female candidate’s score, so positive numbers reflect an advantage for the female candidate.
Overall net assessment	-18 – 18	.60	6.54	Indicates the total difference in assessments of the male and female candidate on all three traits and three issues. A score of -18 means that the respondent thought the woman was better than the man by 3 full points on each of the six indicators. This variable subtracts the male candidate’s score from the female candidate’s score, so positive numbers reflect an advantage for the female candidate.
Favorability	-10 – 10	.27	3.73	Indicates the difference in respondent’s favorability score for the male and female candidate (on a scale on 0 – 10 for each). This variable subtracts the male candidate’s score from the female candidate’s score, so positive numbers reflect an advantage for the female candidate.
Sexism index	2 – 8	3.55	1.47	Indicates how strongly respondent agrees with the following two statements: “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men”; and “Women exaggerate problems they have at work.” For each, responses range from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (4). This variable sums the scores on the two questions.

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
<b>CONTROL VARIABLES</b>				
Following campaign	1 – 4	2.91	0.82	Indicates how closely the respondent reported following the gubernatorial campaign. Responses range from “not at all closely” (1) to “very closely” (4).
Gender (female)	0, 1	0.41	0.49	Indicates whether respondent identifies as a woman (1) or not (0).
Age	18 – 96	60.74	14.64	Indicates the respondent’s age at the time of the survey.
Education	1 – 5	3.81	0.95	Indicates respondent’s highest level of education. Ranges from some high school (1) to a post-graduate degree (5).
Democrat	0, 1	0.44	0.50	Indicates whether respondent self-identifies as Strong Democrat, Democrat, leaning Democrat (1) or not (0).

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**Appendix E. Voting for the Female Primary Candidate, by Party**

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	<b>Democratic Primaries</b>		<b>Republican Primaries</b>	
Net Candidate Assessments				
Leadership	.734 (.281) *		1.669 (.408) *	
Empathy	.752 (.290) *		.959 (.346) *	
Qualifications	1.482 (.286) *		.894 (.408) *	
Economy	.385 (.399)		.723 (.405)	
Crime	.432 (.359)		.579 (.447)	
Abortion	.784 (.237) *		.400 (.330)	
Overall net assessment	-	.812 (.083) *	-	.824 (.128) *
Favorability	.674 (.107) *	.665 (.106) *	.854 (.175) *	.791 (.190) *
Sexism index	-.060 (.148)	-.059 (.146)	-.036 (.134)	-.041 (.131)
Following campaign	-.193 (.193)	-.225 (.188)	-.264 (.217)	-.314 (.212)
Gender (female)	.584 (.313)	.585 (.303)	-.203 (.428)	-.259 (.411)
Age	-.002 (.011)	-.002 (.011)	.000 (.012)	.000 (.011)
Education	.093 (.168)	.127 (.163)	.002 (.186)	.039 (.181)
Constant	.273 (1.129)	.267 (1.116)	.898 (1.373)	.957 (1.347)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.845	.840	.864	.859
N	836	836	653	653

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*Notes:* Entries are logistic regression coefficients (and standard errors) predicting a vote for the female candidate. Positive assessments reflect an advantage for the female candidate and negative scores indicate an advantage for the male candidate. \*  $p < .05$ .

**Appendix F. State Specific Trait, Issue, and Favorability Assessments**

	Colorado		Arizona		Maryland		Wisconsin		Florida	
	<i>Greg Lopez</i>	<i>Heidi Ganahl</i>	<i>Marco Lopez</i>	<i>Katie Hobbs</i>	<i>Dan Cox</i>	<i>Kelly Schulz</i>	<i>Tim Michels</i>	<i>Rebecca Kleefisch</i>	<i>Charlie Crist</i>	<i>Nikki Fried</i>
<b>Traits</b>										
Provides strong leadership	61 % *	68 %	59 % *	80 %	69 % *	56 %	57 %	54 %	71 %	70 %
Really cares about people like me	61 *	68	63 *	77	67 *	53	48 *	55	68	74
Qualified	63 *	70	60 *	82	71 *	57	51 *	64	85 *	74
<b>Issues</b>										
Economy	65 *	72	63 *	80	75 *	59	61	61	82	77
Crime	69	71	65 *	79	78 *	59	62	61	79	76
Abortion	62 *	67	63 *	83	71 *	50	53 *	57	70 *	87
<b>Mean favorability score</b>	7.2 *	7.4	7.0 *	8.4	7.7 *	6.5	6.1 *	6.4	8.0	7.9
<b>N</b>	523		538		327		545		534	

*Notes:* Trait entries indicate the percentage of respondents who thought the term described each candidate “extremely” or “quite” well. Issue entries indicate the percentage of respondents who thought the candidate would handle the issue “extremely” or “quite” well. Mean favorability scores are on a scale from 0 – 10.