

# Political paths and gender in Latin America. An analysis of the trajectories of legislative elites<sup>1</sup>

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## I. Introduction

Since the first United Nations World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975, greater focus has been brought to women's representation and its impact on decision-making structures. However, it was only after the second Conference in Nairobi in 1985 that concrete actions began to achieve greater equality in representative institutions, with governments and parliaments committing themselves to the promotion of gender equality.

Thanks to the establishment of quotas and other reforms aimed at promoting their political participation, the growing number of women who have actively entered politics has generated widespread debate about the type of representation they are expected to exercise.<sup>2</sup>

In Latin America, most studies on women's participation in politics have taken a descriptive approach, focusing on barriers to their entry into representative legislative bodies as well as on the impact and effectiveness of gender quotas as mechanisms for overcoming those barriers. The region remains far from achieving parity representation, but the arrival of women to representative positions across recent decades allows attention to focus on the characteristics and attitudes of policies and light to be shed on questions of gender differences in political representation.

This chapter offer a contribution in this direction by asking whether Latin American legislators are different in terms of their political background, given biases present in the very structures that impact on social and political organizations. The aim is to provide empirical evidence on whether the theoretical arguments maintained by gender institutionalism

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<sup>2</sup> Here we find it obligatory to quote the classic distinction made by Hannah Pitkin on the concept of representation. In her seminal work *The Concept of Representation* (1985 [1967]), this author underlines its multidimensional character and identifies five dimensions, each defining an aspect of political life: representation as "authorization", as "accountability", as "descriptive", as "symbolic", and as "substantive action". This work also emphasizes the distinction between the descriptive and the substantive; the former refers to the characteristics of the people elected, permitting determination of whether they reflect the population in its social composition (Pitkin, 1985). According to this perspective, representation implies being in the place of others, but without necessarily acting on behalf of others (Sartori, 1992).

regarding political careers constitute an explanatory framework for apprehending the distinct profiles of male and female legislators in the region. To this end, the chapter considers variables relating to political and legislative careers, political experience, relative levels of dedication to politics, and positions taken regarding the remuneration of women parliamentarians in Latin America. The data used to explore these assumptions derive from the PELA-USAL project,<sup>3</sup> which provides an enormous wealth of empirical evidence to verify, both diachronically and longitudinally, the individual profiles and attitudes of Latin American women legislators in comparison with their male counterparts over the past 25 years.

First, attention is focused on the changes brought about by institutional frameworks that have favored the arrival of women into the parliamentary arena. Next, some theoretical arguments used by the literature to explain political paths – especially those seeking to unravel the differences between men and women – are presented. The fourth section contains empirical evidence that reveals the sociodemographic characteristics of Latin American women legislators, exploring whether gender-differentiated political profiles are prevalent. Finally, conclusions are given as drawn from the analysis.

## **II. From the politics of presence to the politics of difference**

Argentina in 1991 was the first country to implement a quota law, precursor to a path later taken by many others.<sup>4</sup> Since that time, women's participation in the region's legislative bodies has increased and currently stands at 27% in the lower or single-chamber legislatures and 26% in the upper chambers (see Annex Table 2). making Latin America a leading territory (Jones, 2004) and a model for other regions.

Initially, the electoral equality measures implemented in Latin America established minimum percentages of female candidates (or minimum and maximum by gender) that varied between 20% (Paraguay) and 40% (Costa Rica, Mexico, and Ecuador before the latest reforms) (Caminotti, 2016). However, as a result of lessons learned and the challenges posed by

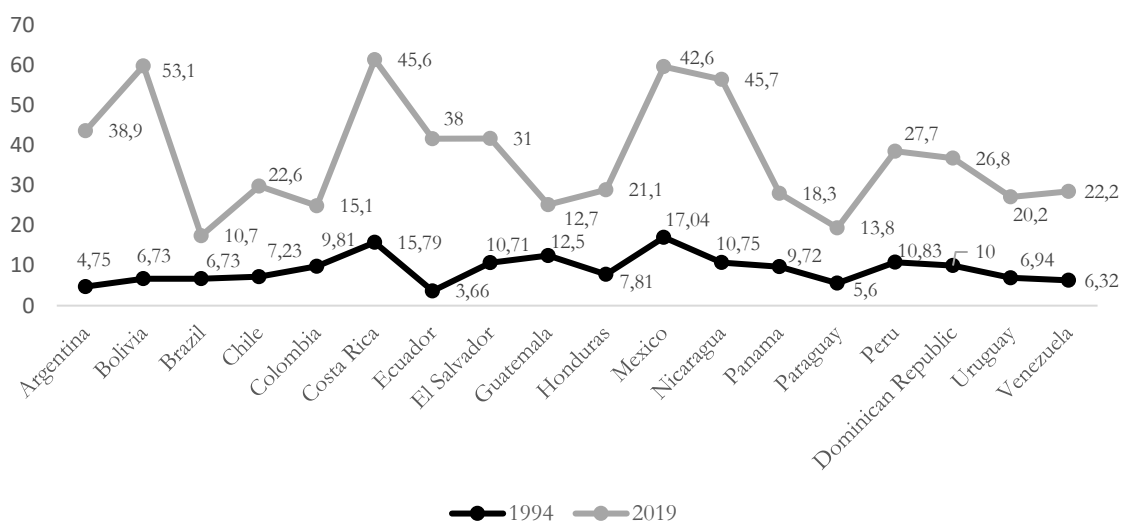
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<sup>3</sup> Data on the studies analyzed can be found in the Annex (Table 1).

<sup>4</sup> The Latin American countries that have incorporated some type of quota or gender parity mechanisms of a legal nature are: Argentina (1991, 2017); Bolivia (1997, 1999, 2010); Brazil (1995, 1997, 2009); Chile (2015); Colombia (2011); Costa Rica (1996, 2009); Ecuador (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2009); El Salvador (2013, on a transitional basis); Honduras (2000, 2004, 2012, 2017); Dominican Republic (1997, 2000); Mexico (1996, 2008, 2011, 2014); Nicaragua (2012); Panama (1997, 2017); Paraguay (1996); Peru (1997, 2000); Uruguay (2009, 2017) and Venezuela (1997). In the latter, the quota law was declared unconstitutional.

implementation of these quotas (Archenti & Tula, 2014, 2017), together with the emergence of new regional agreements for parity democracy, countries including Ecuador, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Argentina have gone beyond minimum percentages to adopt gender parity in candidacies for elected office.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1: Evolution of the presence of women in lower or single-chamber legislatures in Latin America (1994-2019)**



Source: the authors, based on data from the IUP (Inter-Parliamentary Union), available at [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)

Quota or gender parity laws strengthened the framework for protecting the political rights of Latin American women (Alanís Figueroa, 2017; Choque Aldana, 2013) and had positive effects on their descriptive representation. Although countries have traveled different paths, with advances and setbacks, and with varying results in their efforts to increase the presence of women in representative institutions, the contrast with the recent past is stark: in the mid-1990s, women occupied (on average) only one of every ten seats in congresses, while today seven countries in the region (Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, and Nicaragua) have surpassed the “critical mass” of national women legislators<sup>6</sup> (Dahlerup, 1993), as shown in Figure 1.

<sup>5</sup> In Panama, gender parity applies only to primary elections, and in Honduras to parties that do not select their candidates through such elections. In Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Mexico, parity has achieved constitutional status.

<sup>6</sup> The concept of “critical mass” refers to a minimum threshold of representation that minority groups must reach or exceed in order to have their own voice, independent from the majority. In this sense, it is understood that reaching at least 30% implies a positive evaluation in terms of descriptive representation.

Gender quotas were created to reduce the various barriers to women's entry into the public sphere and, specifically, into elected office<sup>7</sup> (Larsrud & Taphorn 2007: 9). In this sense, these are rules that can provoke different structures of opportunity for the election of women, in interaction with other elements of the political system including the electoral system.<sup>8</sup>

In debates around the use of quotas, supporters made a series of "consequentialist" arguments (Htun & Jones, 2002: 35) regarding the potential impacts of incorporating more women into decision-making positions. They underlined the need to integrate a specifically feminine vision into politics, so as not to lose this precious social resource, and to achieve the inclusion of subjects previously excluded from or marginalized by the political agenda. More pointedly, women needed space in politics to guarantee the promotion and defense of their specific gender interests (Johnson, 2006: 174).

Discussions around increasing women's access to parliaments invariably generates debate on the levels of representation required for women to make a difference. Critical mass theory suggests that women are substantially represented when their numbers reach a certain level, leading to the interpretation that, as their presence increases, the likelihood that women's interests and perspectives will be represented also increases. However, a greater presence does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with transformation in decision-making. This reasoning was the starting point for the emergence of studies aimed at verifying the existence or absence of differences between men and women in terms of legislative behavior.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> There are different types of quotas, which can be organized into three groups: a) legal quotas; b) voluntary quotas or party quotas; and c) reserved seats. While in Europe party quotas were the most common, in Latin America legal quotas have been the most used (Krook, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Numerous authors have shown some electoral designs to be more favourable to the success of women running for elected office, specifically in national legislatures (Krook, 2009; Norris, 1985; Rule, 1987). The literature agrees that the electoral systems most likely to succeed in terms of legislative elections for women are those using proportional representation formulae, as opposed to those with majority characteristics (Darcy, Welch & Clarke, 1994; Htun & Jones, 2002; Matland, 1998; Meier, 2003; Norris, 1985; Rule, 1987). In turn, it is argued that medium or large constituencies tend to increase women's chances of winning a legislative seat (Htun & Jones, 2002; Norris, 1985; Rule, 1987), and that closed lists are more favourable scenarios for women's success in legislative elections (Htun & Jones, 2002; Krook, 2009; Tul, to 2015). For more information on this topic see Batlle (2017).

<sup>9</sup> Work that examines the work of women legislators from the angle of substantive representation uses various approaches and ways of looking at the phenomenon. In this regard, Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) argue that there are two distinct conceptualizations of women's substantive representation, namely: (1) as a process of articulation around women's issues and interests; and (2) as a concrete and tangible result of a process whose outcomes are laws and public policies for women. No doubt both conceptualizations start from the assumption that women and men have different ways of doing politics. Contrary to Franceschet and Piscopo (2008), Celis *et al.* (2008) argue that women's political representation does not exclusively involve introducing women's interests into the political and legislative agenda, but that it also involves introducing women's perspectives into the various agenda items. This "footprint" or female perspective is often marked by women's own life experiences and their positions in social structures historically marked by discrimination and marginalization

The arrival of women to power has therefore made it possible to examine in greater depth some of the elements that make up substantive representation (Pitkin, 1985). Nonetheless, as regards descriptive representation, essential questions remain to be resolved; it is not only the number of women who in power that matters, but also who they are, what their political careers have been, and whether they are different from men. Not much work along these lines has been done on the subject of this chapter: the profiles of women legislators in the region. The following section discusses arguments concerning this issue already extant in the literature on gender.

### III. Generalized political trajectories?

The political trajectories of representatives are conditioned not only by the skill or ability of politicians or by the policies they advance, but also by the existence of certain incentives marked by the institutional structures that configure the rules of access to elected positions, both in nationally and within political parties. Specific institutional arrangements, as seen above, have been vital to women's arrival to positions of power. Still, such arrangements do not account for recruitment processes, who might aspire to such positions, or what characteristics may inform those who have already reached power.

In general terms, the literature has analyzed processes of the professionalization of politicians through empirical work focusing on their sociodemographic characteristics, the components or elements that make up political professionalization, and the impacts of this phenomenon on quality and on political careers.<sup>10</sup> Schlesinger's (1966) seminal work on political ambition had vast influence on career-oriented analyses. For this author, ambition affects political careers by shaping the strategies of individuals. Thus, career actions will be marked by both opportunity structures and the type of ambition that a politician maintains.<sup>11</sup> Among the works making further advances in this direction are Black (1972), Borchert (2001), and

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(Cerna, 2015). A large part of the studies on substantive representation seek to test whether women legislators drive and promote projects around women's rights. This would not be the case merely because women legislators are considered natural bearers of innate interests, but because they form part of a generalized (gendered) social order that shapes their way of visualizing and confronting social problems (UNDP, 2015: 13). As suggested by the notion of "politics of presence" elaborated by Phillips (1999), the social experiences of those they represent (and whether these are women or men) influence the processes of deliberation and decision-making.

<sup>10</sup> On this subject, see Hughes (1997); Parry (2005); Verzichelli *et al.* (2005); Coller (2008); Alcántara (1999, 2012); Borchert (2003); Borchert and Zeiss (2003); Rodríguez Teruel (2011); Rosón (2011); Barragán (2016); or Cabezas Rincón (2014).

<sup>11</sup> Other classic theoretical arguments used to analyse the motives that shape politicians' strategies in individual terms are those maintained by Mayhew (1974) and Fiorina (1974). For these authors the goal of re-election by legislators shapes individual political actions in a strategic way.

Herrick and Moore (1993). This agenda has also seen essential development in Latin America,<sup>12</sup> where the desire or ambition to occupy positions beyond the Legislative Branch has been shown to be relevant, both in terms of national or local executive office as well as at the state level (in federal systems of greater political decentralization). Moreover, for the region, this literature has been complemented by work that considers the influential weight of other institutional factors relating to the electoral system (Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008), or of political parties (Benton, 2007; Chasquetti, 2010) or within parliaments, which can frame and condition the pattern of a political career.

Elsewhere, works have focused on describing the biographical trajectories of representatives, taking into account the individual political capital (Joignant 2012) acquired in processes of socialization. In this regard, and from a more gender-sensitive perspective, the literature argues that the different structures of political opportunity enjoyed by men and women will influence their recruitment and career paths, due to the existence of processes within organizations (including political parties) that mark representations of ‘male’ and ‘female’, thus contributing to the reproduction of generalized patterns (Acker, 1992; Broadbridge & Hern, 2008). These are gender conditions, affecting both political institutions and actors.

This view gains strength in the analysis of political recruitment found in Norris and Lovenduski (1993). Taking the UK Parliament as a case study, these authors examine the obstacles faced by candidates for office at different stages of the recruitment process, expressed as a model of supply (motivations to take a political step) and demand (elements that intervene in the probability of being elected).

Following Norris and Lovenduski’s (1993) model, it is possible to delimit the factors that impact on the selection process of women candidates. Regarding the supply of candidates, Fox and Lawless (2014) show that women have lower levels of political ambition than men because, when deciding whether become a candidate, women put greater value on their current situation and family responsibilities. This lower ambition has a relation with traditional processes of socialization where women are less encouraged to enter politics, meaning that gender roles and stereotypes would mark both the motivation for political competition and the chances of being selected by political parties. Also on the supply side, the political capital that candidates may bring – in resources like party experience, political connections, training, or experience in political institutions – becomes relevant. Works by

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<sup>12</sup> See Martínez Rosón, (2011); Chasquetti, (2010); Samuels, (2003); Leoni, Pereira and Rennó, (2004); Langston and Aparicio, (2008); Cordero Vega and Funk, (2011).

Bjarnegard (2013) or others more focused on Latin America (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2014, or Caminotti *et al.*, 2011) consider the relevance of political capital networks such as access to information or material resources to the construction of political careers and the generation of electoral financing. On the demand side, obstacles to access to political positions have mainly been explained through the interrelation of formal and informal institutions, and by the role of political parties as perpetuators of gender bias in the political arena<sup>13</sup> (Htun, 2002).

One way to summarize how institutions act differently during the selection of men and women is proposed by Krook (2010), who groups institutional practices into three types: systemic, practical, and normative. Formal rules define the systemic type, as elements of the electoral system; the practical class would include informal institutions under which the party elites operate; and the normative is given by the interpretative frameworks and social representations that perpetuate inequality between men and women.

To understand the weight that these structures exert on political paths, it is necessary to first gather information on the profiles of male and female politicians. Table 1 below contains a summary of the main works focused on empirically capturing, through questionnaires or analysis of curricula, differences between the men and women who make up the parliaments of different countries.

As can be seen, the works represented are mostly case studies, with notable exceptions like that of Rosenbluth *et al.* (2015), which to date constitutes the most ambitious study in terms of its empirical evidence and the number of countries analyzed.

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<sup>13</sup> Ohmura, Bailer and Selb (2017), taking Germany as a case study, find that the obstacles to women's equal access to political office result from interactions between the organizational rules of political parties and the lower political ambition ascribed to women, given the difficulty of combining family burdens with political careers.

**Table 1. Similarities and differences between male and female legislators**

		Similarities			Trajectory and occupation	Differences			Trajectory and occupation
		Sociodemographic variables				Sociodemographic variables			
Author(s)	Country	Age	Edu-cation	Marital status & family	Age	Edu-cation	Marital status & family		
Studlar and McAllister (1991)	Australia					≠		≠	
Valiente <i>et al.</i> (2003)	Spain		=			≠		≠	
Uriarte and Ruiz (1999)	Spain		=				≠	≠	
Josefsson (2014)	Uganda		=		=				
Murray (2010)	France					≠		≠	
Vergé (2011)	Catalan Parliament					≠	≠	≠	
Palma de Mallorca (2016)	Mexico		=			≠		≠	
Rosenbluth <i>et al.</i> (2015),	84 countries					≠		≠	
Franceschet and Piscopo (2012)	Argentina					≠		≠	
Franceschet and Piscopo (2014)	Argentina				=	≠	≠	≠	
Mateos Díaz (2009)	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and the Dominican Republic		=					≠	
Schwindt-Bayer (2011)	Argentina, Colombia and Costa Rica				=				

Source: the authors.

The absence of comparative studies and the fact that these all collect different information works against a systematic and coherent comparison of countries. Despite this, in general terms, two axes can be identified along which these authors have captured significant differences between male and female legislators: the first contains variables relating to the sociodemographic characteristics of the political elite (here age, educational level, and marital status and family responsibilities), and the second includes variables related to the careers and occupations of male and female legislators.

Concerning the sociodemographic axis, the findings show that the level of education seems to be equal to that of men or slightly higher among women arriving to parliament (Studlar & McAllister, 1991; Valiente *et al.*, 2013; Uriarte & Ruiz, 1999; Josefsson, 2014; Murray, 2010; Vergé, 2011; Palma, 2016, and Mateos Díaz, 1997). These women also tend to younger; only Franceschet and Piscopo (2014) in their work on Argentina find women politicians in that



country to be older than their male counterparts. Another result is that despite differences between countries and between the periods analyzed, male legislators are married in a much higher proportion than female legislators, while the latter assume greater responsibility in the domestic sphere, which affects the likelihood of further developing their political careers (Valiente *et al.*, 2013; Uriarte & Ruiz, 1999, Rosenbluth *et al.*, 2015; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2012; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2014).

The data on political history and occupation prove to be heterogeneous, and it remains inconclusive whether this heterogeneity is due to the distinct social and political contexts of the countries examined or to methodological factors, given that the authors collect different variables. Although Josefsson (2014) finds that in Uganda men and women have similar political experience, other studies find marked differences according to gender. Studlar and McAllister (1991) found that female Australian politicians had longer careers within the party than did males, similar to female Mexican politicians, who have more experience than men in running their parties (Palma, 2016). However, this experience (Schwindt-Bayer, 2011) does not lead to women taking executive positions, which are characterized by male predominance, as found by Murray (2010) for France, Vergé (2011) for Catalonia, and Franceschet and Piscopo (2014) for Argentina. In terms of professions, analyses coincide in showing that male politicians have pursued more liberal, technical (Valiente *et al.*, 2013 and Murray, 2010) and business-related professions (Rosenbluth *et al.*, 2015), while female politicians pursue occupations closer to administration, services (Valiente *et al.*, 2013 and Mateos Díaz, 1997), and the public sector (Rosenbluth *et al.*, 2015), as well as lower-income jobs (Murray, 2010).

While this work constitutes a significant advance in understanding the characteristics of women and men in politics, the unsystematic collection of information and analysis inherent in this diversity of studies prevents a more meaningful view of political trajectories according to gender. Similarly, the absence of comparative studies for Latin America justifies the need for greater focus on the region's legislative elites. The following section describes the sociodemographic characteristics of the men and women who have made up the region's parliaments in recent decades, and the elements that have differentiated their political careers.

#### IV. Political profiles of women and men legislators in Latin America

Table 2 presents the main sociodemographic characteristics of the Latin American parliamentary elites that make up the PELA-USAL database, quantifying the interviews carried out with a total of 8,369 deputies during the different legislatures constituted in Latin American countries from 1994 to 2018. As can be seen, 19% of the interviewees were women, while 79% were men. The percentage of female legislators present in the database (see Figure 2) shows a similar evolution to that of their political incorporation into legislative bodies, as shown in Figure 1. On the other hand, like the work described in the previous point, the data show confirm that female legislators are slightly younger than their male peers, with an average age of 46 years compared to 48.

**Table 2. Sociodemographic characteristics of parliamentary elites in Latin America (1994-2018)**

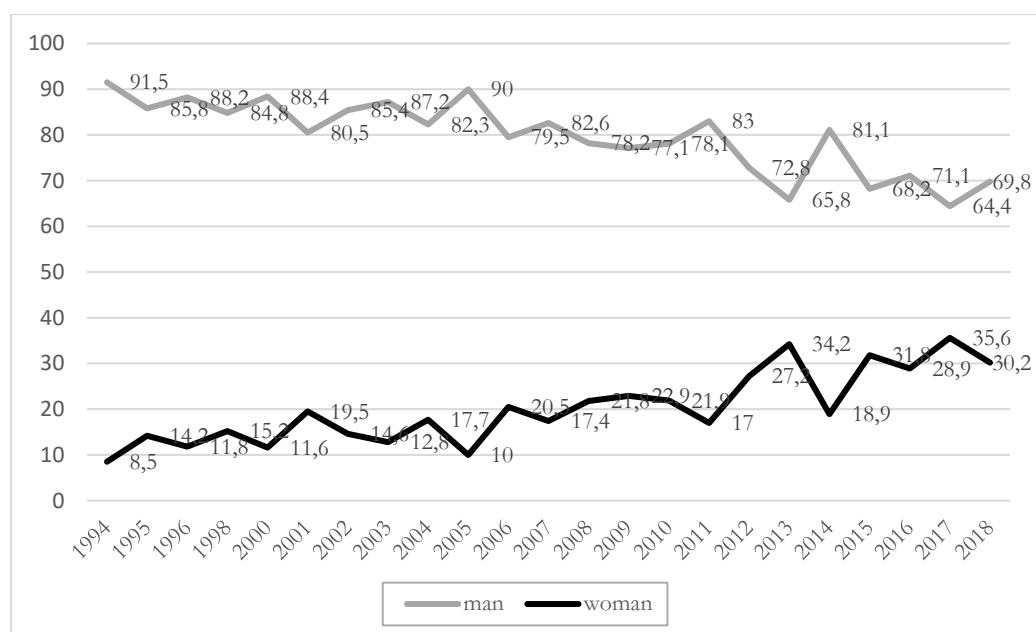
		Men	Women
N		6759	1610
Percentage		79%	19%
Educational level	No studies	0.3%	0.3%
	Primary studies	2%	2,4%
	Secondary studies	8.6%	8,3%
	University studies	57.0%	54,3%
	Postgraduate studies	31.2%	33,2%
Average age		48.17	46.15
Medium ideological location		5.05	4,64
Marital status	Married, living together as a couple	83.1%	57.2%
	Other situations (single, divorced, widowed)	16.4%	41.9%

Source: PELA-USAL.

Two variables reflect stark differences among legislators: ideology and marital status. Concerning ideology, women were traditionally considered to hold positions closer to the right. The explanations put forward included that the influence of religion and conservatism moved women to vote for right-wing parties in greater numbers than men (Duverger, 1955; Lipset, 1960), referred to in analyses of electoral behavior as the “traditional gender gap” (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). However, more recent studies show a reversal of this trend (Inglehart & Norris, 2000; Norris, 1999; Edlund & Pande, 2002), resulting in the so-called “modern gender gap” (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), especially among younger women voters. Women’s current preference for the left has been associated with increased advocacy by left-wing parties for social policies favorable to equality and family reconciliation (Iversen & Rosenbluth, 2006), reflecting more progressive attitudes and political preferences (Norris,

1988; Inglehart & Norris, 2000; Studlar *et al.*, 1998; Caughell, 2016). The PELA-USAL data are consistent with these findings, showing that Latin American women legislators claim an average ideological position (at 4.64) to the left of their male counterparts (at 5.05) (see Table 2). In the same way, when the figures in the database are segmented between right-wing and left-wing parties<sup>14</sup> (see Table 3), women represented in parliaments are shown to participate more in left-wing than in right-wing parties.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 2. Percentage of male and female legislators interviewed per year of PELA-USAL fieldwork (1994-2018)**



Source: PELA-USAL.

**Table 3: Legislators in parties of the left and right**

	Man		Woman	
	N	%	N	%
Left-handed games	3648	55,5	980	62,74
Right-wing games	2925	44,5	582	37,25
Total	6572	100	1562	100

Source: PELA-USAL.

<sup>14</sup> To carry out this segmentation, the database was divided taking into account the average location of the relevant political parties on the left/right scale. The parties placed (by the legislators) between 1.0 and 4.9 are considered left-wing, while those placed above 5 are considered right-wing parties.

<sup>15</sup> However, these data should be taken with caution, as they may be reflecting the fact that women are able to reach representative positions more easily within left-wing parties. In any case, analysis of this difference is beyond the scope of this chapter.

In terms of marital status, the most striking difference is that 83% of male legislators are either married or living with a partner, compared to 57% of women legislators. This enormous contrast coincides with the findings of empirical analyses, and it may be the clearest reflection of how gender roles impact political trajectories by limiting women's careers, since family responsibility and child-rearing are assumed by women to a greater extent. This situation can be said to affect access, mobility, and promotion in the world of work, and the same applies to political occupations, as numerous studies have highlighted.<sup>16</sup> Political careers require an intense level of dedication, and schedules are not always regular but are subject to changes caused by political situations, making it difficult to reconcile family life. This reality impacts on the decision to take an initial step towards politics – recruitment on the supply side, in the terms of Norris and Lovenduski (1993) – especially among women who are mothers, thereby delaying entry into the political world, and informing the fact that women legislators tend to have fewer children than their male colleagues<sup>17</sup> (Rosebluth *et al.*, 2015).

The data here presented explore the sociodemographic profiles of the legislative elite in Latin America, but to understand whether gender serves to segment the political paths of men and women, it is necessary to focus further on political trajectories, which are the subject of the following section.

#### **IV.1. Political trajectories and gender in Latin America**

The variables used to check whether men's political careers differ from women's in Latin America are related to both political and legislative careers, political experience, career length, level of dedication, and perception of remuneration.<sup>18</sup> Analysis of these variables in this

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<sup>16</sup> See Mincer and Polachek (1974); Goldin and Polachek (1987); Hochschild and Machung (1989); Wood, Corcoran and Courant (1993); Ruhm (1998); Lundberg and Rose (2000); Mandel and Semyonov (2005); Aisenbrey, Evertsson and Grunow (2009).

<sup>17</sup> In their analysis of 84 countries, Rosenbluth *et al.* (2015) find that around 20% of women legislators are childless, compared to 16% of men legislators and that, among mothers, 20% have just one child compared to 10% of single parents. In the same way, almost half of male legislators have three children or more, compared to only one-third of female legislators.

<sup>18</sup> The questions from which the variables for analysis have been selected were essentially as follow (translated): i) 'In which political party or parties have you been a member, and for how many years?'; ii) 'Have any of your relatives been involved in politics, even if they are not currently involved?'; iii) 'In which years you have been a Member of Parliament?'; iv) 'In terms of your political career, do you hold or have you held any elected office (*i.e.* mayor, councillor, etc.) outside your position as a Member of Parliament? And appointed office (*i.e.* Minister or other managerial position)? And any office within your political party (*i.e.* Secretary General, organizer, delegate, etc.)?'; v) 'Do you currently devote yourself solely to your activity as a Member of Parliament, or do you combine it with other paid activities?'; vi) 'How do you consider your remuneration as a Member of Parliament: more than sufficient, sufficient, insufficient, or very insufficient?'; and vii) 'Would you say that your

chapter is exploratory, and a first attempt at understanding whether the structures generated have an impact on political careers. To answer this question, several analyses of variance have been carried out (see Annex Table 3), the results of which<sup>19</sup> are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4. Profiles of political trajectory by gender**

	Variable	Media		Sig.
		Men	Women	
Trajectory	Years in politics	34.08 (13.67)	29.32 (13.94)	***
	Family members in politics	0.50 (0.50)	0.55 (0.49)	**
	First time elected	0.628 (0.48)	0.741 (0.43)	***
	Number of legislatures in congress	1.57 (0.90)	1.34 (0.69)	***
	Publicly elected positions	0.40 (0.49)	0.34 (0.47)	***
	Appointment fees	0.37 (0.48)	0.36 (0.48)	
	Charges in the game	0.66 (0.47)	0.63 (0.48)	
Dedication and remuneration	Exclusive dedication	0.56 (0.49)	0.75 (0.42)	***
	Opinion on remuneration	2.70 (0.75)	2.84 (0.75)	***
	Compensation comparison	3.05 (1.18)	3.37 (1.12)	***

Source: the authors, based on PELA.

Typical deviations in brackets.

\*\* Significant relationship to confidence level 0.05.

\*\*\* Significant relationship to confidence level 0.01.

Most of the variables here analyzed show that the men and women who reached the parliaments of their respective countries during the period covered differed in their trajectories and career perceptions. Although most legislators of both sexes began their careers within a political organization, and had similar experience vis-à-vis their parties in occupying positions of responsibility, there were marked differences in terms of length of careers, degrees of dedication, and starting positions.

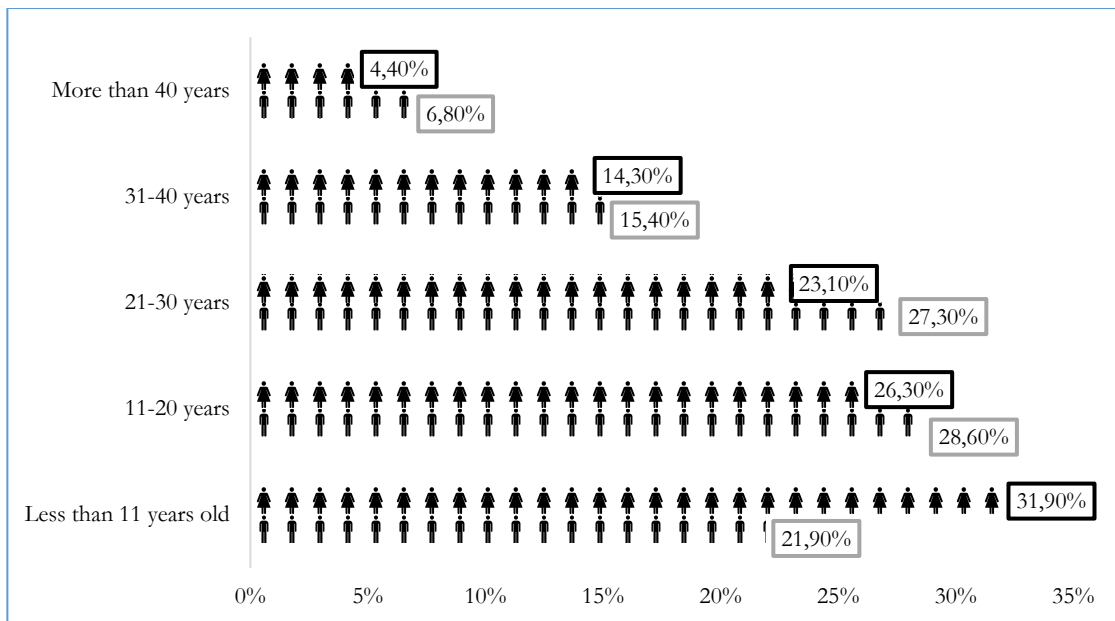
Women legislators have had shorter political careers, five years shorter on average than those of men. Still, as Figure 3 shows, an analysis of data grouped by years of political involvement shows that the percentage of women who have been in politics fewer years is exceptionally higher than that of male legislators. Other variables likewise reflect shorter and more fleeting careers among women legislators, such as the fact that they are more likely to be taking their seats for the first time (74.1% versus 62.8%) and to remain in office for no longer than one term.

**Figure 3. Years in politics, by gender (1994-2018)**

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current income as a Member of Parliament in relation to your previous activity is much lower, somewhat lower, more or less the same, somewhat higher, or much higher?

<sup>19</sup> Ordinal variables with wide and equivalent runs were treated as continuous variables, while nominal or ordinal variables were transformed into dummy variables, grouping the responses by coding them in the values 0 and 1. This is the way they have been introduced, both in the analysis of variance and in the descriptive treatment of their means and standard deviations throughout the text.

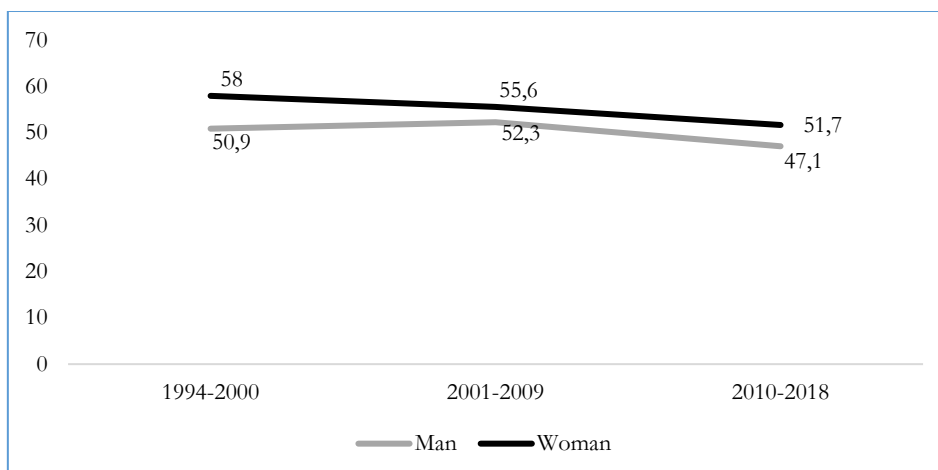


Source: PELA-USAL.

Although the data on political careers in Latin America show that the time spent in parliament is short for both men and women, compared with congresses in other regions, the time spent in the legislative body is statistically significantly shorter for women legislators. Thus, the percentage of women in parliament for the first time is more than 10 percentage points above that of their male counterparts, and women legislators who have remained in their posts for more than one legislature is 23.8%, compared to 34.7% for men. Lower re-election rates are an obstacle to women's political careers, preventing them from accumulating the same political capital as men.

These differences also affect their political trajectories beyond parliament: years of dedication to politics are fewer for Latin American women legislators than for men. Similarly, their political experience before time spent in the legislature is statistically significant, and the percentage of women who held prior elected positions is lower than that of men, even though (as mentioned) their careers within the party have not been different.

**Figure 4. Family members in politics**



Source: PELA-USAL.

One issue traditionally mentioned as discriminatory in political trajectories, especially for women, is the weight that the family exerts<sup>20</sup> when deciding whether to dedicate oneself to politics (Uriarte, 1997; Martin, 2010, 2014; Martin & Urquiza, 2012). The influence of family ties in Latin American politics is very relevant, given that more than half of legislators, regardless of gender, come from families where politics has had a fundamental influence. Similarly, the PELA-USAL data corroborate the existence of differences between men and women: among female legislators, the percentage of those who have (or have had) a relative involved in politics is higher. However, this difference shows a lower statistical strength than other variables analyzed. Figure 3 delves into this question through a longitudinal analysis of the data, revealing how in recent decades the relevance of having family members in politics has decreased, especially for women legislators.

One aspect of particular incidence impacting the decision to remain linked to the political world is that of remuneration. In this sense, Squire (1988) maintains that political careers in legislative bodies are conditioned not only by the ambition to occupy other positions, but also by the remuneration received. Salary is moreover associated with the conception of politics as a profession (Alcántara, 2012), allowing the possibility of devoting oneself solely to public work.

The data show that positions in Latin America are indeed structured by gender in a significant and particularly noticeable way. The percentage of women representatives who dedicate themselves exclusively to their tasks in the legislative body is almost 20 percentage points above that of male representatives. As seen in Section III, studies that have analyzed

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<sup>20</sup> Political family ties generate a kind of capital related to political networks and sympathies, connections, reputation, or material resources (Barragán, 2016).

politicians' previous professions have highlighted that women politicians are more likely to come from lower-paid jobs, which is an incentive to enter into politics and pursue that career exclusively, because it means an improvement in their income levels.

However, beyond the fact that representatives receive a salary for their work in parliament that permits them to focus on that office exclusively, the effects of income from political dedication to a career are connected to the perception of whether or not salaries are sufficient. In this sense, the differences by gender are again stark. Women legislators claim that their political office has improved their remuneration more markedly, in comparison to men, and they tend to consider the salary more than sufficient.

## **Conclusions**

Over the past three decades, Latin American countries have undergone legal and institutional changes that have responded to women's demands for inclusion and increased their presence within political institutions. Without a doubt, this greater presence of women in positions of popular representation has increased the interest of academia in women's political participation, in both its descriptive and substantive dimensions.

Many studies have emphasized descriptive representation, focusing on the number of women coming to power and the obstacles they must overcome. However, studies have been relatively few that analyze in comparative terms the profiles of women legislators who have come to power and the political trajectories they have followed. This chapter represents a step forward in that regard. Using data from the PELA-USAL project, from 1994 to 2018, the chapter has focused on the sociodemographic characteristics of the men and women who have composed the region's parliaments, as well as on the factors that differentiate the paths they have followed, answering the question of whether political paths are generated in Latin America.

The findings in relation to the sociodemographic variables are consistent with the evidence found in other research, confirming that female legislators are younger than their male peers, but with similar levels of education; thus the establishment of quotas has not led to the entry of representatives with relatively low levels of preparation, as has been argued by detractors of such mechanisms. Similarly, the data support the so-called "modern gender gap" (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), showing that women legislators maintain more left-wing positions than men, also confirming a particularly noticeable difference in the region in terms of marital status. The percentage of male legislators who are married or living with a partner



is 30% higher than that of female legislators in the same situations, and this may be taken as a clear indication that reconciling family life and working life is more difficult for women politicians.

Concerning political careers, the chapter has explored the existence of statistically significant differences in the political and legislative careers, levels of dedication, political experience, and positions on remuneration of women parliamentarians in Latin America. Although the data show that both women and men begin their political careers in political organization, and that they have similar experience holding appointed positions within their parties, differences in most of the variables tested prove relevant. Thus, it can be said that generalized trajectories are indeed prevalent.

Women legislators have shorter political careers, tend to be holding legislative office for less time, and are less likely to have held elected office before winning their current seat, and a higher percentage are serving in parliament for the first time, compared to male legislators. When they hold a representative office, women representatives do so exclusively, while men are more likely to combine their legislative tasks with other activities. Women gaining positions in the legislative body have generally led to an improvement in their remuneration, which they consider to be sufficient to a greater extent than do male legislators.

Therefore, although the increases in recent years in the number of women in positions of popular representation has been notable, cultural patterns and informal practices persist in political institutions, revealing that asymmetrical relations continue to perpetuate the subordination of women within Latin American politics.

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**Annex Table 1. Data Sheet of the Studies Analyzed**

COUNTRY	LEGISLATIVE PERIOD (STUDY NUMBER)	INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED	% OF THE TOTAL OF THE CHAMBER	DATE OF FIELDWORK
Argentina	95-97 (06)	68	26.46	August-September 1996
	97-01 (05)	124	49.81	May-June 1998
	03-07 (51)	105	40.86	April-June 2004
	07-11 (67)	110	42.80	March-June 2008
	09-13 (73)	70	27.24	March-July 2010
	11-15 (87)	67	26.07	July 2012 - February 2013
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>544</b>		
Bolivia	93-97 (10)	74	56.92	August-September 1996
	97-02 (09)	98	75.38	July-August 1998
	02-06 (47)	80	61.54	July-September 2003
	06-10 (62)	98	75.38	August-September 2006
	10-14 (81)	97	74.62	September-October 2010
	15-20 (98)	93	71.54	November-December 2015
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>504</b>			
Brazil	03-07 (55)	134	26.12	July-December 2005
	07-11 (75)	129	25.15	july-december 2009
	11-14 (102)	114	22.22	July-December 2011
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>377</b>		
Chile	93-97 (04)	93	77.50	August-October 1994
	97-01 (03)	89	74.17	April-July 1998
	01-05 (42)	88	73.33	August-October 2002
	06-10 (60)	90	75.00	August-November 2006
	10-14 (77)	86	71.67	June-July 2010
	14-18 (96)	68	43.87	October-November 2015
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>513</b>		
Colombia	98-02 (13)	88	54.66	July-August 1998
	02-06 (46)	95	57.23	May-June 2003
	06-10 (59)	107	64.46	August-September 2006
	10-14 (83)	91	54.82	January-April 2011
	14-18 (95)	83	50.60	August-October 2014
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>459</b>			
Costa Rica	94-98 (16)	52	91.23	September-October 1994
	98-02 (15)	49	85.96	August-September 1998
	02-06 (43)	51	89.47	May-June 2002
	06-10 (56)	57	100.00	June-July 2006
	10-14 (78)	56	98.25	June-July 2010
	14-18 (93)	55	96.49	June-July 2014
	18-22 (108)	44	77.19	August-September 2018
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>364</b>		
Dominican Republic	94-98 (30)	62	51.67	May-September 1995
	98-02 (29)	103	69.13	July-September 2000
	02-06 (44)	118	78.67	April-August 2003
	06-10 (64)	94	52.81	October-November 2006
	10-14 (82)	78	41.05	February-April 2011
	16-21 (103)	61	32.11	March-April 2017
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>516</b>			
Ecuador	96-98 (24)	72	87.80	August-September 1996
	98-02 (23)	112	92.56	August-September 1998
	02-06 (45)	98	98.00	March-April 2003
	09-12 (72)	95	76.61	september-october 2009
	13-17 (90)	94	68.61	July-August 2013
	17-21 (104)	88	64.23	June-July 2017
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>558</b>		
El Salvador	94-97 (08)	46	54.76	August-September 1994
	97-00 (07)	58	69.05	April-June 1997
	00-03 (27)	64	76.19	August-September 2000
	03-06 (48)	80	95.24	August-September 2003
	06-09 (58)	72	85.71	August-September 2006
	09-11 (70)	68	80.95	June-July 2009
	11-15 (88)	65	77.38	September-October 2011
	15-18 (106)	56	66.66	October-November 2015
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>585</b>		

COUNTRY	LEGISLATIVE PERIOD (STUDY NUMBER)	INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED	% OF THE TOTAL OF THE CHAMBER	DATE OF FIELDWORK
Guatemala	95-99 (19)	63	78.75	August-September 1999
	00-04 (38)	79	70.54	August-September 2002
	04-08 (52)	121	76.58	september-october 2004
	08-12 (68)	97	61.39	April-May 2008
	12-16 (85)	87	55.06	July-August 2012
	16-20 (100)	78	49.37	August-September 2016
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>525</b>		
Honduras	94-97 (12)	67	52.34	August-September 1994
	97-01 (11)	71	55.47	July-August 1998
	01-05 (40)	102	79.69	October-September 2002
	06-10 (57)	91	71.09	July-August 2006
	10-14 (74)	91	71.09	March-April 2010
	14-18 (92)	82	64.06	May-June 2014
	18-22 (109)	92	71.87	May-June 2018
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>596</b>			
Mexico	94-97 (02)	123	24.60	June-July 1995
	97-00 (01)	126	25.20	March-April 1998
	00-03 (37)	124	24.80	May-September 2001
	03-06 (50)	124	24.80	March-September 2004
	06-09 (63)	128	25.60	August-December 2006
	09-12 (79)	98	19.60	August-December 2010
	12-15 (89)	90	18.00	August-December 2012
	15-18 (99)	98	20.00	March-May 2017
	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>910</b>		
Nicaragua	96-01 (17)	70	76.09	August-September 1998
	02-06 (39)	60	65.22	September-October 2002
	07-12 (66)	69	75.00	May-June 2007
	12-17 (86)	52	56.52	May-June 2012
	17-21 (105)	59	64.13	August-September 2017
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>310</b>			
Panama	99-04 (41)	64	90.14	September-October 2002
	04-09 (53)	68	95.77	October-November 2004
	09-13 (71)	65	91.55	september-october 2009
	13-19 (94)	47	66.20	September-October 2012
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>244</b>			
Paraguay	93-98 (22)	47	58.75	August-September 1996
	98-03 (21)	65	81.25	August-September 1998
	03-08 (49)	56	70	August-September 2003
	08-13 (69)	72	90	October-November 2008
	13-18 (91)	55	68.75	June 2013 - August 2014
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>295</b>			
Peru	95-00 (32)	87	72.50	October-December 1995
	01-06 (31)	83	69.17	August-October 2001
	06-11 (61)	96	80.00	August-September 2006
	06-11 (80)	80	66.67	August-September 2010
	11-16 (84)	93	71.54	October-November 2011
	16-21(107)	73	46.92	October-November 2016
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>512</b>			
Uruguay	95-00 (34)	73	73.74	August-September 1996
	00-05 (33)	68	68.69	March-July 2001
	05-10 (54)	86	86.87	March-April 2005
	10-15 (76)	79	79.80	May-June 2010
	15-20 (97)	69	69.70	August-September 2015
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>375</b>			
Venezuela	93-98 (36)	69	34.85	March-April 1995
	00-05 (35)	100	60.61	October-November 2000
	15-21 (101)	67	38.92	March-April 2016
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>236</b>			
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS:</b>		<b>8,370</b>		

Source: the authors based on PELA-USAL.



**Annex Table 2. Percentage of Women in the Lower Chambers of each country, by legislative period**

COUNTRY	LEGISLATIVE PERIOD (STUDY NUMBER)	PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN THE CHAMBER
Argentina	95-97 (06)	20.36
	97-01 (05)	27.6
	03-07 (51)	30.7
	07-11 (67)	40.0
	09-13 (73)	38.5
Bolivia	93-97 (10)	6.73
	97-02 (09)	10.19
	02-06 (47)	17.83
	06-10 (62)	14.65
	10-14 (81)	30.12
Brazil	03-07 (55)	9.09
	07-11 (75)	9.43
Chile	93-97 (04)	7.23
	97-01 (03)	8.93
	01-05 (42)	10.12
	06-10 (60)	12.66
	10-14 (77)	13.92
Colombia	98-02 (13)	12.17
	02-06 (46)	10.86
	06-10 (59)	9.7
	10-14 (83)	13.58
	14-18 (95)	20.9
Costa Rica	94-98 (16)	15.79
	98-02 (15)	19.3
	02-06 (43)	35.01
	06-10 (56)	38.6
	10-14 (78)	38.6
	14-18 (93)	33.3
Dominican Republic	94-98 (30)	10
	98-02 (29)	16.01
	02-06 (44)	17.03
	06-10 (64)	19.7
	10-14 (82)	20.8
	16-21 (103)	26.8
Ecuador	96-98 (24)	3.66
	98-02 (23)	14.63
	02-06 (45)	16
	09-12 (72)	32.26
El Salvador	94-97 (08)	10.71
	97-00 (07)	16.67
	00-03 (27)	9.52
	03-06 (48)	10.71
	06-09 (58)	16.67
	09-11 (70)	19.05
	11-13 (88)	26.19
Guatemala	95-99 (19)	12.5
	00-04 (38)	8.85
	04-08 (52)	8.23
	08-12 (68)	12.03
	12-16 (85)	13.29
	16-20 (100)	12.7
Honduras	94-97 (12)	7.81
	97-01 (11)	9.38
	01-05 (40)	7.03
	06-10 (57)	25

COUNTRY	LEGISLATIVE PERIOD (STUDY NUMBER)	PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN THE CHAMBER
	10-14 (74)	19.53
	14-18 (92)	25.78
Mexico	94-97 (02)	14.1
	97-00 (01)	17.04
	00-03 (37)	15.92
	03-06 (50)	23.73
	06-09 (63)	22.13
	09-12 (79)	24.48
	12-15 (89)	36.78
Nicaragua	96-01 (17)	10.75
	02-06 (39)	20.65
	07-11 (66)	20.65
	12-17 (86)	42.39
Panama	99-04 (41)	9.86
	04-09 (53)	16.67
	09-14 (71)	8.45
	14-19 (94)	18.31
Paraguay	93-98 (22)	5.6
	98-03 (21)	8
	03-08 (49)	8.8
	08-13 (69)	13.6
	13-18 (91)	16.8
Peru	95-00 (32)	10.83
	01-06 (31)	18.33
	06-11 (61)	27.5
	06-11 (80)	27.5
	11-16 (84)	22.31
Uruguay	95-00 (34)	6.92
	00-05 (33)	11.54
	05-10 (54)	12.35
	10-15 (76)	11.54
	15-20 (97)	19.23
Venezuela	93-98 (36)	6.32
	00-05 (35)	11.41
	15-21 (101)	16.97

Source: the authors based on PELA-USAL.

**Annex Table 3. Analysis of Variance Results**

		ANOVA					
			Sum of squares	gl	Half a quadratic	F	Sig .
Trajectory	Years in politics	Intergroups	8224.68	1	8224.68	54.000	0.000
		Intra-groups	1171555.29	7692	152.308		
		Total	1179779.97	7693			
	Family members in politics	Intergroups	2.074	1	2.074	8.306	0.004
		Intra-groups	2065.414	8273	0.250		
		Total	2067.488	8274			
	First time elected	Intergroups	16.20	1	16.202	71.912	0.000
		Intra-groups	1829.94	8122	0.225		
		Total	1846.14	8123			
	Number of legislatures in congress	Intergroups	60.50	1	60.500	79.788	0.000
		Intra-groups	5369.96	7082	0.758		
		Total	5430.46	7083			
	Publicly elected positions	Intergroups	5.006	1	5.006	21.061	0.000
		Intra-groups	1757.200	7393	0.238		
		Total	1762.206	7394			
	Appointment fees	Intergroups	0.070	1	0.070	0.299	0.584
		Intra-groups	1003.303	4289	0.234		
		Total	1003.373	4290			
	Charges in the game	Intergroups	0.506	1	0.506	2.246	0.134
		Intra-groups	943.334	4189	0.225		
		Total	943.840	4190			
Exclusive dedication	Intergroups	47.278	1	47.278	202.282	0.000	
	Intra-groups	1943.184	8314	0.234			
	Total	1990.462	8315				
Remuneration	Opinion on remuneration	Intergroups	25.149	1	25.149	43.741	0.000
		Intra-groups	4696.209	8168	0.575		
		Total	4721.358	8169			
	Compensation Comparison	Intergroups	84.615	1	84.615	61.907	0.000
		Intra-groups	7911.070	5788	1.367		
		Total	7995.685	5789			

Source: the authors based on PELA-USAL.