



## Progressive momentum and the dynamics of political competition: The case of #metoo

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### *Abstract:*

While the hashtag #metoo and the surrounding debate have received significant attention in the public, research on its effects on political competition is still rare. We address how a potentially progressive momentum affects citizens' attitudes and party mobilization, using the example of the issue of gender equality. Specifically, we ask whether #metoo led to progressive change or an authoritarian backlash.

We use survey data to compare individuals' gender attitudes and party preferences before and after #metoo with a quasi-experimental approach. Additionally, we analyze social media accounts of political parties from seven European countries, combining a dictionary approach and the content analysis of posts to study changes in the salience of and party positions on gender equality issues in the months preceding and following #metoo. Importantly, we distinguish progressive and traditional, but also femonationalist responses in order to capture nuances of a potential backlash.

At the individual level, we find that survey respondents generally report more feminist attitudes after #metoo. In addition, people state a stronger preference for progressive parties - both effects are independent of respondents' ideological predispositions. At the party level, the salience of gender equality issues increased, even among right-wing parties. Our findings not only contribute to understanding the political consequences of #metoo, they also have implications for literature on party competition and representation by showing how progressive momentum can affect the demand and supply side of political competition. For the role of gender in political competition, they suggest that politicization can potentially be beneficial for progressive parties.