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“That Bloody Woman” Syndrome?

The Popularity of Female Leaders Worldwide

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Abstract:

In this paper, we seek an answer to the question whether female politicians are less popular than male politicians. For doing so, we empirically analyse gender differences in the feeling thermometer ratings of political leader. While there is a burgeoning experimental literature on the role of gender in candidate evaluations, by focusing on the evaluations of real political leaders, we take into account that citizens' evaluations of leaders are influenced by the ways in which the candidates and their opponents campaign and are portrayed in the media. Our work also extends previous work by, for the first time, investigating gender differences in the evaluation of political leaders comparatively. Drawing on the data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)-project, our analyses cover 40 countries worldwide – with substantial variation in terms of gender equality and women political empowerment, factors that likely moderate how female politicians are perceived by the public.

Ruth Dassonneville is an Assistant Professor at the Département de science politique of the Université de Montréal. Her research interests include electoral behaviour, dealignment, economic voting, compulsory voting, and woman and politics. She is chairholder of the Canada Research Chair in Electoral Democracy.
