

CHAPTER

26 Gender and Politics in Portugal

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Abstract

This chapter surveys the literature on gender and politics in Portugal, focusing on explanations for gender differences in political participation and representation. We map trends in women's inclusion in key areas of political life: from conventional to unconventional political participation, to the election of women to parliamentary parties (descriptive representation), and responsiveness to women's policy demands (substantive representation). Examining Portugal in comparative perspective, we highlight the crucial roles of state feminism, women activists within parties, and strategic incentives for parties to advance gender equality. We propose several avenues for developing future research which leverages the Portuguese case, including the downstream impacts of political gender quotas, intersectional and non-binary analysis, and the symbolic impact of women's inclusion in public life.

Keywords: [gender and politics](#), [participation](#), [gender quotas](#), [state feminism](#), [descriptive representation](#), [substantive representation](#)

Subject: [Comparative Politics](#), [Politics](#)

26.1 Introduction

HISTORICALLY, women have been excluded from political life, especially from positions of power, in most democracies.¹ Portugal is no exception; the context of 48 years of an uninterrupted authoritarian regime (1926–1974) deeply marred progress towards gender equality in Portuguese society. During the dictatorship, women had very few rights. In fact, the constitution established the equality of all citizens 'except for women, where natural differences and the family good are at stake' (Ferreira, 2011: 168). Over time, as the regime began to tilt towards liberalization, women gained more opportunities in education and the labour market. As a direct consequence of the emigration outbreak and the colonial war, many women took over financial support for their families, increasing women's employment rate considerably (Tavares, 2000; Ferreira, 2011).

However, it was only after the transition to democracy in 1974 that true political gains took place. While considerable progress has been made since then—in the first democratic elections in 1975, women made up 7.6 per cent of members of parliament (MP)s, whereas in 2020 they reached 40 per cent—only one woman has ever served as prime minister (Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, 1979–1980), there has never been a woman president, and the number of women mayors remains very low. Portugal has, therefore, achieved more gender balance in its representative bodies over time, but the most important positions of power continue to be reserved for men and its political institutions are influenced by embedded gender norms that tend to penalize women (Espírito-Santo and Sanches, 2020).

This chapter focuses on the path towards political gender equality in Portugal. We focus on two critical aspects of political life: participation and representation. Drawing on cross-national datasets, we present trends in Portuguese political participation and representation from a comparative perspective,

highlighting areas where large gains have been made (women's descriptive representation, policies to support gender equality such as parental leave tending to gender-neutrality), and areas where Portugal has made less progress towards gender equality compared to other countries (women's turnout, women in executive roles). Existing explanations for gender inequality in political participation and representation highlight the important role of factors like modernization, party ideology, women's movements, and state feminism. After reviewing these common explanations, we turn our attention to how different actors in Portugal (the state, political parties, and women) respond to the challenge related to gender equality. We also highlight the crucial role of state feminism and women activists within parties in Portugal's case. Furthermore, we emphasize the importance of party-strategic incentives: parties will shift women's representation and policies when they perceive feasible electoral gains to be had from doing so. We conclude by offering our perspective on future research agendas which would shed new light on pathways to political gender equality in Portugal.

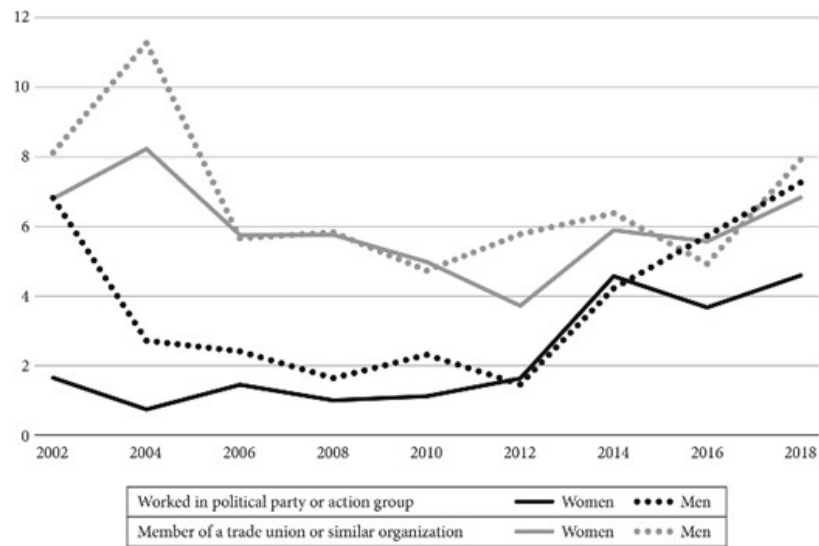
26.2 Participation

Not all citizens have the same propensity to participate in politics. Some sociodemographic groups are significantly less politically active than others. Among these groups are women, who participate less in political life in countries around the world. Several reasons have been offered to explain gender inequality in political participation. Disparities in socioeconomic resources between women and men usually emerge as relevant, especially educational attainment (Burns et al., 2001). But the most consensual group of reasons concerns political attitudes, in which the gender gap is particularly strong. Women are invariably less likely to be politically informed, interested in politics, and to feel politically effective (Alexander and Coffé, 2018; Fraile and Gomez, 2017; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer, 2012). Scholars have long attributed the substantial gender differences in political attitudes to unequal socialization between girls and boys, a thesis still supported by recent research (Fraile and Sánchez-Vitores, 2020). A related field of research highlights the fact that politics remains a male-dominated world and perceived as such by both women and men (e.g. Clayton, 2015).

26.2.1 Conventional Political Participation

The international literature finds gender inequality to be particularly pronounced when it comes to conventional forms of participation (besides voting), e.g. party membership and activism (Quaranta and Dotti-Santi, 2018; Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010). Also, in Portugal, men make up the majority of party members, with the partial exception of the left-libertarian party, the Left Block (BE) (Lisi, 2011). A survey fielded in 2014–2015 to party members of Portuguese political parties confirms this pattern: men make up between 69 per cent and 83 per cent of the total members of the sample (Espírito Santo et al., 2018). However, when we look at the entire population instead of just party members, the outcome is different. While in the beginning of the democratic regime, there were considerable differences in party membership, those differences have gradually diminished until they vanished towards the end of the 1990s, in contrast with the European level where they have remained (Baum and Espírito-Santo, 2007). More recent data (European Values Study, collected in 2020) confirms this trend: less than 1 per cent of the Portuguese sample is affiliated with a party and there is no difference at all between men and women.

The same lack of gender discrepancy is also observable both in terms of having worked in a political party or action group within the last 12 months and having been member of a trade union throughout the years (see Figure 26.1). Concerning unionization, Portugal seems to be following the international tendency for women's and men's rates to converge (Visser, 2019). Hence, in Portugal, the gender gap in conventional forms of participation (besides voting) is not very pronounced.

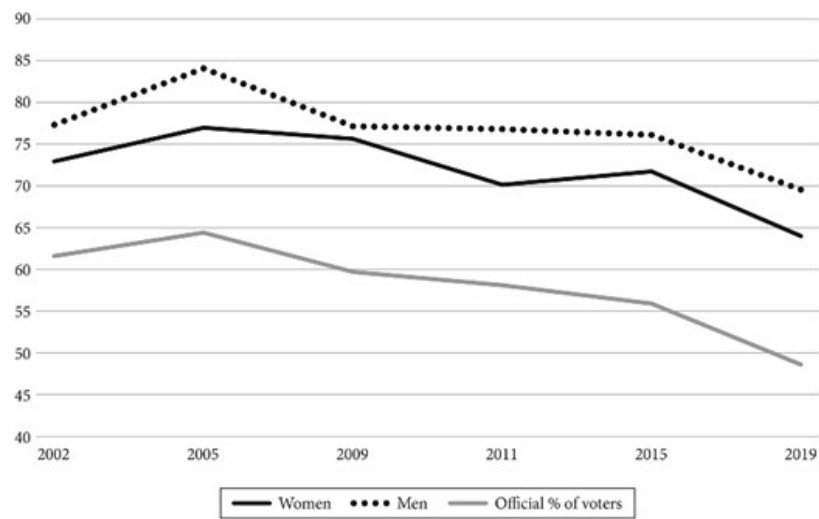
Figure 26.1

Percentage of women and men who have worked for a party and have been members of a trade union (2002–2018)

Source: European Social Survey. Design weight employed. Note: Differences between w/m were significant in the following years: political parties: 2002, 2004; trade unions: 2004.

There is a consistent finding that, since the 1990s, women in advanced democracies vote at least as much as men do (Alexander and Coffé, 2018; Marien et al., 2010; Inglehart and Norris, 2003), whereas during the 1960s and 1970s, they were clearly less likely to turn out to vote (Duverger, 1955; Verba et al., 1978). In fact, several studies from the mid-1990s onwards have even reported a reverse gender gap—with women more likely to go to the polls than men (Burns et al., 2001; Carreras, 2018; Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010; Conway et al., 1997). There may be several explanations for this. Carreras (2018) argues that women are more likely to see their participation in elections as a civic duty, but reasons such as the relatively little time and cognitive resources required for voting (Burns et al., 2001), the fact that voting is a private action, and that it is non-confrontational (individuals are alone in the ballot box) (Carreras, 2018) might well be assets. More recently, the lack of a gender gap in turnout and the reverse gender gap has been called into question; whereas there is no identifiable gender gap in first-order elections, it does seem to persist in second-order elections (Kostelka et al., 2019; Dassonneville and Kostelka, 2020).

p. 410 Portugal emerges as an atypical case concerning gender turnout. Between 1983 (the first year for which data is available) and 2002, there were no gender differences in turnout (Baum and Espírito-Santo, 2007), in line with the international trend. However, since then, women have been following the tendency to abstain slightly more than men (Cancela and Magalhães, 2020). That was particularly true in the 2005 and 2011 elections, as shown in Figure 26.2—elections in which the gender gap was statistically significant. Moreover, in Portugal, there have never been signs of a reverse gender gap. Altogether, these results support the new field of research which is revisiting the once well-established theory that there was no longer a gender gap in turnout (Kostelka et al., 2019; Dassonneville and Kostelka, 2020).

Figure 26.2

Percentage of women and men who voted in legislative elections (2002–2019)

Source: Portuguese post-election surveys (Available at: <https://dados.rcaap.pt/>.) Design weight employed except for 2009 and 2011, since it was not available. Note: Differences between w/m were significant in the following years: 2005 and 2011.

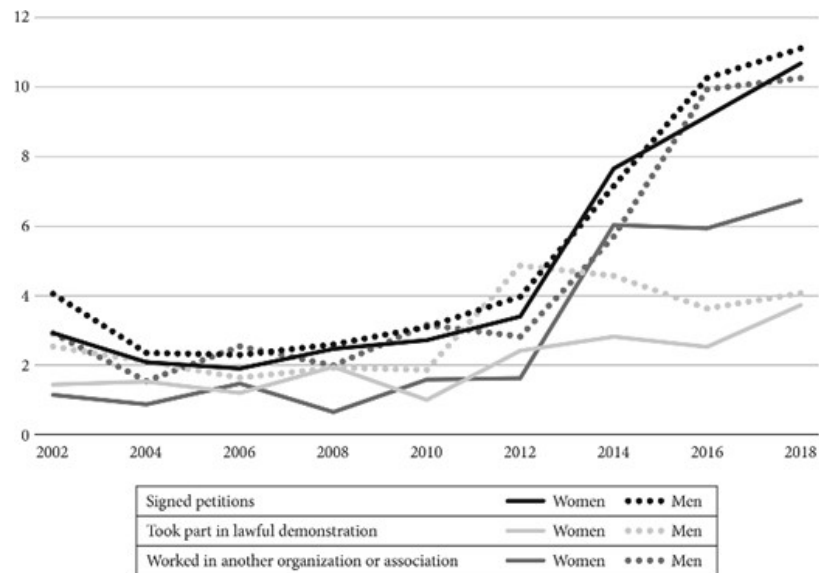
Gender differences in party preferences were never as marked as the classic electoral cleavages, such as class, region, or religion (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). Yet, before the 1980s, women were persistently seen as more conservative than men; after that date, in many Western countries, a gender dealignment appeared, with women shifting their preference to the left, the so-called ‘modern gender gap’ (Giger, 2009; Inglehart and Norris, 2003). At present, several studies report that women are significantly underrepresented among radical right voters (for an overview, see Coffé, 2018).

In general, in Portugal gender does not account for much in terms of electoral behaviour. Between the 1980s and the beginning of the new millennium there were signs of a modern gender gap emerging (Giger, 2009), but gender differences in voting have waned since then (Cancela and Magalhães, 2020). The trend changed in the most recent national election. A 2022 exit poll evidenced a clear modern gender gap for the first time, with women more likely to vote for left and centre-left parties and men more likely to vote for parties on the right, with the populist radical right party *Chega* the most male-dominated (Cancela and Magalhães, 2022). Moreover, Portuguese female voters are more favourable to same-sex marriage and abortion—though the latter is only significant before controls are introduced in the model (Prata et al., 2020).

p. 411

26.2.2 Unconventional Political Participation

With regards to unconventional forms of participation, findings from the comparative literature are far from uniform. Whereas some authors do show significant differences (Inglehart and Norris, 2003), others report that variation has disappeared. In fact, a growing field of literature notes that women are more active than men in some specific non-institutionalized forms of political participation, such as signing petitions, donating money, and boycotting products (Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010; Marien et al., 2010; Stolle and Hooghe, 2011). This might be explained by the fact that ‘non-institutionalised forms of political participation correspond more clearly to the notion of “lifestyle politics”, allowing citizens to give a political meaning to day-to-day activities’ (Marien et al., 2010: 205). Portugal seems to be following this trend towards the erosion of the gender gap, albeit at a slower rate.

Figure 26.3

Percentage of women and men who carried out non-institutionalised forms of political participation (2002–2018)

Source: European Social Survey. Design weight employed. Note: Differences between w/m were significant in the following years: petitions: none; demonstrations: 2010, 2012; work in organizations: all except for 2004 and 2014.

Until the late 1990s, there were substantial disparities in almost all forms of unconventional participation observed, including signing a petition or participating in demonstrations, although subsequently differences have been shrinking considerably (Baum and Espírito-Santo, 2007). The tendency towards gender convergence continues to this day (see Figure 26.3). With regards to signing petitions, differences are totally non-existent, whereas they are minor when it comes to participating in demonstrations, except for the years 2010 and 2012. Nevertheless, when considering work in organizations other than political parties (see Figure 26.3), women still emerge as significantly less participative. Moreover, it is not yet evident whether women post or share information about politics online less or as often as men, since the two European Social Survey rounds where this question was included (2016 and 2018) report different results. Altogether, female engagement in unconventional participation in Portugal, although overall on the rise, cannot be taken for granted in every form of participation.

26.3 Representation

Political theorists agree that women's inclusion in legislative institutions, processes, and outcomes is essential for democratic legitimacy (Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1995). Research on political representation in the gender and politics subfield typically focuses on descriptive or substantive representation, with some recent studies focusing on a third dimension, symbolic representation (e.g. Clayton, O'Brien, and Piscopo, 2019). In descriptive representation, representatives are seen to be typical of a larger class of persons whom they 'make present'. The idea, applied to gender, is that women in office constitute a 'politics of presence' (Phillips, 1995), and that women should be equally represented either for reasons of pure justice alone (women make up 50 per cent of most populations), or because numbers of women in office could be linked to symbolic or substantive gains for women. Symbolic representation refers to the extent to which representatives can serve as symbols, inspiring citizens' feelings and attitudes about, for example, how fair and effective politics and government are (Pitkin, 1967). Finally, substantive representation refers to the representation of women's policy demands.

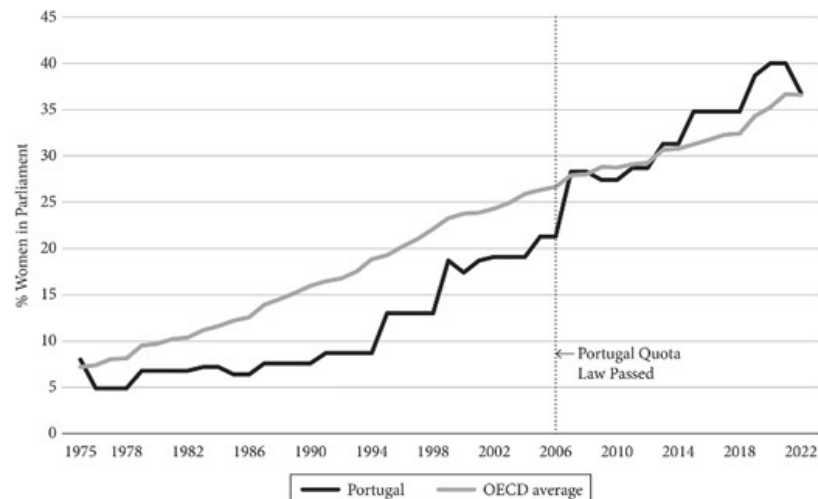
An important addition to this framework, particularly in the Portuguese case, is the theory of 'state feminism'. State feminism is a theory centred on the role of 'women's policy agencies' (state-based structures assigned to promote the rights, status, and condition of women) and women's movements as key actors in the policy process (McBride and Mazur, 2010). The representation of gender equality goals can also be achieved within state agencies. Portugal established one of the first women's policy agencies, now called the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), as early as 1970, still under dictatorship. It was created as a working group within a ministry, allegedly for the purpose of contributing to clean up the negative image of Portugal abroad.² Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) were involved from the beginning and their role was formally recognized in 1977, when the NGO section became a part of CIG's

advisory body. Because the CIG has this formalized channel of access to women's organizations, as well as the independence and resources needed to formulate and implement a 'women's agenda', it is coded by Weldon (2002) as one of the only women's policy agencies that can provide a form of political representation for women. In fact, notably in the last half of the 1970s, but also subsequently, as will be mentioned in Section 26.3.1, the CIG has managed to successfully shape legislative content in line with its proposals. Some examples are the Review of the Civil Code (and Law of Family Law in particular) of 1977, and the law on equal opportunities in the workplace and employment of 1979 (Monteiro and Ferreira, 2016).

26.3.1 Descriptive Representation: Parties, Women, and Quotas

Women's descriptive representation in Portugal has increased dramatically over the past 20 years. Figure 26.4 shows the evolution of women's descriptive representation in 23 advanced democracies from 1975–2022. It shows that while on average, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries gradually increased women's representation from 1975 to 1995, the situation in Portugal remained static. During this period, Portugal often ranks among the bottom five countries in the sample for share of women in national parliament. However, from 1995 onwards, some progress can be observed, and big leaps can be seen in some electoral years, including 1999 and 2009. As of February 2022, women make up 36.8 per cent of Portugal's national parliament, placing the country at 38th in worldwide rankings—a steep increase compared to 20 years ago, when women made up only 17 per cent of parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline), but a slight setback to the 2019 Portuguese elections (38.7 per cent).

Figure 26.4

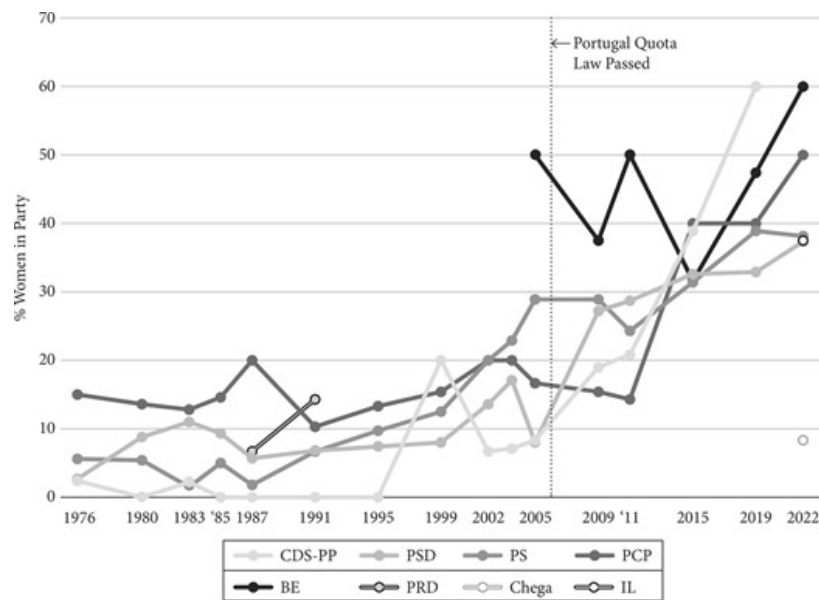


Women's descriptive representation in Portugal in 1975–2022: A comparative perspective

Source: Data from CPDS (Armingeon et al., 2020) and Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Research on descriptive representation in Portugal highlights three main explanations for this progress: party ideology, women activists, and gender quotas. Firstly, in Portugal, as in other advanced democracies, left-wing parties tend to be the main promoters of women's descriptive representation. Left-wing parties are more likely to select women and to put them in winnable positions compared to their counterparts on the right (Kittilson, 2006). Commitment to gender equality has been a longstanding element of socialist ideology, and new left-wing parties like the *Bloco de Esquerda* (BE) often make the gender issue central to their ideology (Duverger, 1955; Keith and Verge, 2018). However, historically, communist parties tended to reject feminism as undermining of the class struggle. Figure 26.5 shows that in Portugal the BE is typically the party most inclusive of women, followed by the social democratic *Partido Socialista* (PS). While the communist party, the *Partido Comunista Português* (PCP), included women earlier than other parties, the representation of women in the PCP stalled for a long period, from 1995 until 2011. Historically, the Christian democratic *Centro Democrático Social* (CDS-PP), and the centre-right *Partido Social Democrata* (PSD) have been the least inclusive of women, but these parties both show large boosts for women in parliamentary party delegations following the adoption of a national gender parity law in 2006. In 2022, *Chega* stands out for its extremely low percentage of women (8.3 per cent), while the liberal party (*Iniciativa Liberal*, (IL)) achieved the identical percentage of women as the PS and the PSD.

Figure 26.5



Share of women in major parliamentary party delegations* by political party in Portugal, 1975–2022

Source: Pordata (Available at: <https://bit.ly/317ne0c>). and Ministry of Internal Affairs (Available at: <https://www.legislativas2022.mai.gov.pt/candidatos>.) * All parliamentary party delegations with at least 5 MPs were included.

p. 415 Party ideology is closely related to the two other explanations for women’s descriptive representation in Portugal: women (or feminist) activists, and gender quotas. Left-wing parties are early adopters of voluntary quota measures within the party, whereas conservative parties tend to reject affirmative action measures (Kittilson, 2006). The PS instituted voluntary party quotas in 1988. The role of women activists within the PS was crucial in pushing the controversial party quota forward (Weeks, 2018). While at first the party quota was not very effective, Figure 26.5 shows that, by 2005, the PS had elected 29 per cent women, coming close to achieving its own target of 33 per cent.

National gender quotas offer a ‘fast track’ to increased numbers of women in office (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2005). Unlike party quotas, which typically only affect a self-selecting group of left-wing parties, national quota laws increase the share of women across parties, particularly if they include placement mandates and strong enforcement mechanisms (Schwindt-Bayer, 2009). The parity law in Portugal was passed in 2006, pushed through by the centre-left (PS). It required all candidate lists presented for local, national legislative, and European elections to include a minimum of 33.3 per cent representation of each gender, and neither sex could occupy more than two consecutive positions. Parties that did not comply were subject to fines. An article was added to the legislation requiring it to be reassessed 5 years later, but the idea of repealing it was never subject to serious debate. Instead, in 2019 the Assembly of the Republic voted to increase the threshold to 40 per cent and reject party lists that do not comply—while keeping the placement mandates unchanged—and all parties except for the PCP and the majority of the CDS-PP MPs voted in favour.

The parties most impacted by the quota law were those on the right of the political spectrum, the CDS-PP and the PSD. Both parties witnessed significant increases in women representatives in the party since 2009, when the quota was first implemented (see Figure 26.5). Explanations for quota law adoption in Portugal highlight the role of women activists, transnational policy diffusion, and state feminism, as well as the strategic incentives of male party leaders (Baum and Espírito-Santo, 2012; Monteiro, 2011; Weeks, 2018). The proposal was put forward by women activists within the social democratic party (PS) and was supported by the women in the party. The CIG provided a platform for party women to lobby for legislative gender quotas in the run-up to the adoption of the law in 2006 (Monteiro, 2011, Verge, 2013). Transnational policy diffusion also played a role, as key actors took inspiration from other European countries and organizations like the Socialist International (Baum and Espírito-Santo, 2012). Weeks (2018) points to the additional role of electoral threat, with the PS finally moving forward on quota legislation at a time when it faced challenges from a rising, socially progressive party further to the left (the BE).

Women’s inclusion in parliamentary parties is only one facet of descriptive representation. We know less about determinants of descriptive representation at the local level in Portugal, from local legislatures to executive roles like mayors, where women are still a small minority (but see Almeida, 2018; and Ruiz

Jiménez, 2009). Espírito-Santo and Santos (2021) show that the implementation of the quota law in 2009 increased the share of women elected in local politics, but women remain more underrepresented at the local and national levels compared to the European level. They argue that women are more likely to be included in European elections because these elections offer high district magnitude combined with good visibility of candidate lists (each party gets only one covering the entire country) and a focus on gender equality at the European Union (EU) level.

p. 416 **26.3.2 Substantive Representation of Women**

The Portuguese legacy of dictatorship and the democratic revolution of 1974 deeply shaped women's legal rights and social policies. The approval of the 1976 Constitution—which established the principle of equality between all citizens in Article 13—was a crucial moment. In 1974, the right to vote was extended to all adults without distinction of sex, race, religion, or economic or social status. Since then, the state has continued to contribute to gender equality efforts through the work of the CIG and several national action plans for gender equality since 1997, also coordinated by the CIG (Lombardo and Bustelo, 2012; Monteiro and Ferreira, 2016). The transformations towards gender equality in the beginning of the democratic regime were thus mainly the result of 'top-down' decisions deemed necessary for the construction of a modern democratic state (Amaral and Anjinho, 2012; Ferreira, 2011). In fact, although many women participated in the struggle against the dictatorship, scholars agree that there was no important public mobilization in defence of women's rights during the dictatorship (Cova and Costa Pinto, 2002). However, several women's groups (feminist or otherwise) flourished in Portugal throughout and after the democratic transition (Tavares, 2000). According to Melo (2017), the fact that those groups emerged mostly within left-wing and far-left parties—which led the transition process—created an environment propitious for women's demands, as long as they aligned with the socialist framework.

Thus, while the state plays a major role in women's substantive representation in Portugal, comparative studies highlight the importance of other factors too, including party ideology, women activists within and across parties, and gender quotas. Left-wing parties have been linked to a range of feminist policy outcomes (Huber & Stephens, 2000; Mazur, 2002). However, recent work challenges the primacy of party ideology, highlighting Christian Democrat and Conservative Party appeals to women voters through party quotas and work-family policies, for example (Morgan, 2013; O'Brien, 2018). In Portugal, the initial aftermath of the revolution led to the delegitimization of the political right; even parties on the right aligned their platforms with the ideology of socialism (Melo, 2017). Yet, the left is still more linked to feminist policy in Portugal than the right, and the PSD in particular has been criticized for failing to include women in its manifestos and decision-making bodies (Ruiz Jiménez, 2009). Women have worked behind the scenes in left-wing parties to achieve legislative gains on various fronts, such as voting, divorce, contraception, inclusion in the labour market, and equal pay. In recent years, the centre-left Socialist Party drove through important legislation including gender quotas in politics and in corporate boards, and shared parental leave tending to gender-neutrality (Escobedo and Wall, 2015; Espírito-Santo, 2018).

There is a long line of research investigating the link between women's descriptive and substantive representation, and this research tends to find that women representatives are more likely to represent women than men representatives (for a review, see Wängnerud, 2009), mainly concerning issues that particularly affect women and especially if those issues are not yet crystallized (Espírito-Santo et al., 2020; Mansbridge, 1999; Weeks, 2022). Emerging literature suggests that gender quotas can also lead to better policies for women through the mechanisms of added numbers of women in office and the increased salience of gender equality concerns (e.g. Clayton and Zetterberg, 2018; Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo, 2012; Weeks, 2019). Weeks (2022) argues that gender quotas lead to change especially on women's interests that lie outside of the main left-right (class-based) dimension in politics, such as ↪ work-family policies, because the law adds important salience to cross-cutting issues that parties would otherwise choose to ignore. Analysis of the substantive effects of the quota law in Portugal finds that women across parties worked together to introduce significant changes to family policy, for example through their membership on the Parliamentary Working Group on Parenting and Gender Equality. These policy changes include the extension of parental leave rights to same-sex parents and the extension of paid paternity leave (Weeks, 2022).

p. 417

The literature on gender and politics in Portugal offers considerable insights into the causes and consequences of women's inclusion in political life in advanced democracies. Our review highlights the unique role of state feminism in the Portuguese context, as well as the important impact of women activists, transnational policy diffusion, and the strategic considerations of (male) party leaders. Still, scholarly lacunae remain, and in this final section we focus on three promising areas for future research on gender and politics in Portugal: the effects of gender quotas beyond national-level descriptive representation, non-binary and intersectional analysis of gender in politics, and the symbolic representation of women.

The Portuguese case provides scholars with particular leverage to address research questions related to the effects of gender quotas beyond national descriptive representation. Quotas have proliferated in Portugal, moving from party-level voluntary quotas to a quota law for all levels of politics, to a quota law for corporate boards (Espírito-Santo, 2018). As our review highlights, a great deal of research sheds light on the causes of political gender quota adoption and its contribution to increasing the number of women MPs, but literature on the effects of quotas and women's inclusion on other important outcomes (such as legislative behaviour and substantive policy outcomes) is still scarce. Does women's inclusion in politics lead to other changes? So far, the emerging signs are mixed. For example, research shows some gender segregation in parliamentary committees, with women being more likely to be appointed to social issue committees (Espírito-Santo and Sanches, 2020). Moreover, after the quota law was introduced in Portugal, women's participation in legislative debates increased, although women elected via a quota face more constraints than the other female MPs (Fernandes, Lopes da Fonseca, and Won, 2021). We recommend that future studies use the Portuguese case to further investigate the downstream impact of political gender quotas at the local and regional levels, and the substantive effects of quotas beyond the numbers of women.

Another productive avenue for future studies is to move beyond gender as a binary and seriously consider intersections of gender and other forms of marginalization—race, class, education, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, and so on. Women are not a monolithic group with a singular set of preferences, and scholars agree that intersections of gender and other identities have unique impacts that are not simply cumulative (Hancock, 2007). Taking an intersectional approach requires specialized efforts with regards to data collection and analysis, including the explicit inclusion and coding of multiple identities, subgroup, or interactive analyses, and contextualizing intersectional data within systems of power. An initial foray into descriptive representation in the Iberian legislatures following an intersectional approach suggests that gender intersects with other markers of identity. Specifically, male MPs from ethnic minorities, with an immigrant background, disabled, or gay outnumber female MPs with similar characteristics (Espírito-Santo et al., 2019). Yet evidence suggests that Portuguese state institutions are slowly moving towards intersectionality. Alonso (2012) shows that Portugal is evolving towards a 'multiple equalities agenda' in new policy plans and institutional support. In addition, the CIG's scope has recently moved from focusing exclusively on gender equality to a combination of gender and other equalities. It is thus important to move beyond gender binaries in future work in order to accommodate the proliferating range of gendered identities (masculinities and femininities) relevant to the study of politics in Portugal. Recent work in this area suggests innovative and practical strategies for measuring gender as a continuum that future studies can draw on (e.g. Gidengil and Stolle, 2020).

Finally, recent research identifies new ways of measuring the symbolic representation of women—an area of representation which is comparatively underexplored in Portugal (but see Verge et al., 2020). For example, Clayton, O'Brien, and Piscopo (2019) use a survey experiment to evaluate the impact of gender representation on democratic legitimacy, showing that women's equal presence legitimizes decision-making processes and imparts trust. Given the rising levels of gender backlash (Piscopo and Walsh, 2020), it is crucial to understand what motivates public support for gender equality. How can we implement policies that are viewed as legitimate and likely to promote fair democratic representation, rather than social conflict? Future studies could represent important steps in this direction by investigating the impact of positive actions and public support for such actions over time, the determinants of violence against women in politics, and the role of social media in spreading (mis)information and misogyny.

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Notes

- 1 Ana Espírito-Santo and Ana Catalano Weeks contributed equally to this work.
- 2 "História da CIG", Comissão para a Cidadania e a Igualdade de Género. <https://www.cig.gov.pt/area-a-cig/historia-da-cig/> Accessed 21 March 2021.