

VOTING AND GENDER. AFFIRMATIVE POLITICS IN ITALY

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Introduction

Discrimination against women in politics has a long history. In most countries universal suffrage was extended to women only decades after it was introduced for men. Although the right to be elected was granted to women at the same time of the right to elect, de facto the share of elected positions held by women is still very small, if not marginal even in fully fledged democratic systems (Dahlerup, 2002; Matland, 2002, and more in general International Idea). To increase this share many countries, including Italy have in recent times introduced quotas for women in their electoral rules. Although there is a huge descriptive literature on quota systems, analytical studies are still very few. This paper is a contribution to this tiny literature. It examines, using a model of voter utility maximization, how the, still occasional, introduction of quota systems for women in Italy has impacted on the number of votes received by women and, through this, on their chances of being elected.

The paper is divided into three main sections plus the conclusions.

The first section provides an illustration of quota systems and of their likely impact on the probabilities of women to be elected in different electoral systems. The scattered experience of electoral quotas in Italy is also illustrated. The second section presents a voter random utility model that is built to analyse the impact of quotas and of other factors on the gender choice of voters. The model is then tested with reference to the elections of regional councils of 1995 and 2000 in section three.

1. Quota systems and their properties

1.1. Varieties of quotas systems.

Gender quotas in elections can have a distinct origin. They can be introduced by law (constitutional or ordinary), or through discretionary decisions by political parties. Sweden provides an outstanding example of the latter system: the main parties reserve at least 50 per cent of their lists to female candidates. Legally enforced quotas and discretionary quotas by parties are not mutually exclusive. The usual pattern is that parties build on the quotas introduced by law, by expanding them.

Quota systems differ fundamentally in their object. In fact, we can distinguish between systems based on reservation of seats in legislative assemblies and systems based on reservation of candidacies. They results are obviously different.

Reservation of seats ensures that a given (ex ante determined) number of women will be elected. In a first past the post system, a given number of electoral districts will be reserved only to candidates of the same gender. With proportional representation each district will elect the same (also ex ante determined) proportion of seats by gender. In both cases, voters can decide, by choosing the party, whom will be elected, but they have no possibility of impacting on the distribution by gender of elected persons. They cannot increase, or decrease, the share of women, or male, elected. An example of this system has been implemented in the Indian municipality elections. (Chattopadhyay, Raghavendra and Duflo 2004).

A slightly weaker version of the reservation of seats system is provided by closed list systems, if the law prescribes gender quotas and the order in which candidates are presented in the lists. The electoral law for the French Senate provides an illustration. It prescribes that each list has to include alternatively one man and one woman. (It could be the reverse, of course).

With closed systems voters cannot choose among candidates; they can only choose the list. Closed systems can ensure almost equal representation of genders, depending on the gender that gets the first place on the list². Closed list systems, however, are not immune to strategic behaviour by those parties, which are against the election of women, as the French experience illustrates. Many parties decided to split themselves, presenting in the same electoral district distinct lists with only one, male, candidate each, thus undermining completely the system of quotas. (See, Maniquet, Frechette and Morelli, 2005).

Reservation of candidacies is the mildest form of affirmative electoral action. It is used in a number of countries, including Italy. It ensures a given minimum number of candidacies by gender, but it does not ensure that this minimum number will be elected. It is the voters who will decide the distribution by gender. In other words, reservation of candidacies combines some compulsion upon parties with incentives for voters. Compulsion derives from the limits imposed on the choice of candidates. Incentives for voters come from the wider choice offered in terms of gender of candidates.

Reservation of candidacies aims at solving (or alleviating) two distinct problems. Barriers for women to entry into the electoral arena are the first problem, since parties are traditionally dominated by males. If there is collusion between parties about the exclusion of female's candidates, reservation of seats is the only way to reduce barriers.³ The second problem is a direct consequence of the first. Since there are few women on election lists, voters have a restricted choice that turns to the disadvantage of women

² If lists get an odd number of seats the gender that occupies the first place on the list will get a majority of seats. The highest possible majority for the advantaged gender will be of two-thirds.

³ One could also imagine that incumbent women are against quotas since they reduce their chances to be re-elected

politicians. The rationale of quotas of candidacies is that there is no anti-female bias of voters. Rather electoral fortunes of women are constrained by the limited range of choice given to voters. This is, in fact, the main hypothesis that is tested in this paper.

1.2. Quotas and electoral systems

Electoral systems are also impacting differently on the electoral fortunes of genders. More precisely, quotas of candidacies have a different effectiveness in distinct electoral systems (FPTP). For the sake of brevity, we restrict the illustration to a typical majoritarian system - namely, the first-past-the post system - and a pure proportional system of representation (PR).

In FPTP, once women are inserted into the list, they have higher chances to be elected than in a PR system. This is because voter choices are more restricted. Voters with a gender bias, who happen to have a female candidate in their district, have to change party if they want to express their bias. In a PR system voters with an anti female bias do not need to change party to express it. They have just to select male candidates. Moreover, in PR systems the chances of women to be elected could be imperilled by an increased dispersion of votes brought up by the wider choice of female candidates. In other words, quotas can ensure increases in the number of votes to women, but can not necessarily increase the chances of women to be elected. Dispersion is expected to increase with the increase in the size of districts, while by definition it does not take place in single candidate districts; that is, in FPTP systems.

Both electoral systems are not proof to strategic behaviour of political parties. In a FPTP system parties can dilute, or even eliminate, the impact of quotas by presenting women in districts where the chances of winning are low, and reserving strong districts (where the chances are high) to male candidates. This is exactly what happened in France in the 2002 elections of the lower house, according to Maniquet, Frechette and Morelli (2005). The argument of these authors is even stronger. They maintain that the introduction of a quota (varying between 48 and 52 per cent) of female candidates was welcomed by (male) party leaders because, given the presumption of a widespread anti female bias of French voters, quotas increased the chances of male candidates to run against a weaker, female candidate. In PR systems party leadership could assign female candidates to the lowest part of the list, thus decreasing jointly their visibility and their chances of being elected. To fight this latter impediment to the electoral fortunes of women, some national regulations impose also the alternance of candidates of distinct genders on election lists. Again, we will try to test in this paper the impact of the position on lists on the chances to be voted.

1.3. Affirmative electoral policies in Italy

Italy has a very short and scattered experience with gender quotas. Quotas have been used once (1994) for the Lower House in the national parliament; once (1999) for the European parliament; once (1995) for municipal and provincial elections, and twice (1995 and 2005) for regional elections (but only in a few regions in 2005).

Quota systems for the election of municipal and provincial councils and for the Lower House implied that a single gender could not be assigned with more than 75 percent of candidates. However, for the Lower House the quota only applied to the 25 per cent of the seats that are assigned according to the proportional representation system. In other words, quotas could only ensure to women a maximum share of one sixteen of total seats (25 per cent out of 25 per cent). The share of candidacies reserved to women in regional councils was slightly higher: 30 per cent⁴.

In 1995 the Constitutional Court declared quotas *as unconstitutional*, stating that “According to the Court, the fundamental right of equal access to elective offices, as established by Art. 3 and 51 of the Constitution cannot be subjected to special treatment on the basis of sex.”(Guadagnini, 1998, page 99) The decision of the Constitutional Court required the introduction of constitutional amendments to allow the insertion of gender quotas for elections.

In 2003 a constitutional reform included two separate provisions related to gender equality in political representation. The first provision refers to the European, the national parliaments and the municipal and provincial councils. Article 51 states that “citizens of one or the other sex are eligible for public office and for elective positions under equal conditions, according to the rules established by law. To this end, the republic adopts specific measures in order to promote equal chances for men and women”.

The second provision refers to Regions, which have autonomous powers concerning the election of their councils. Article 117 states that “Regional laws have to remove all obstacles which prevent the full equality of men and women in social, cultural, and economic life, and promote equal access to men and women to elective offices”.

A quota of 30 per cent of seat was thereafter introduced for the European election of 1999⁵. Furthermore, a system of reduction of refund of electoral expenses for those parties that had not

⁴ The law 277 of August 4, 1993 concerning the election of the Lower House stated that for the share of seats reserved to the proportional system (25%) each list must be formed by candidates of both sexes listed in alternative order. The law of February 23, 1995 for the elections in ordinary statute regions stated that in each regional and provincial list no one of the two sexes has to be represented by more than two thirds of the candidates.

⁵ Article 3 of Law 90 of April 8, 2004 on equal opportunities.

complied with their obligation concerning the shares was also introduced. Finally, parties could not present electoral lists with more than one candidate if both genders were not represented.

The constitutional reform induced a number of regions to introduce quotas (Lazio, Puglia, Toscana, Abruzzo, Calabria and Valle d'Aosta) for the election of 2005.

Elections to regional councils are the most suited for applied analysis on voter behavior concerning gender choices. In fact, the model we build in this paper will be tested with reference to them. This is because the number of electoral districts and of seats assigned in regional councils is much higher than for the national parliament. However, regional elections present a problem for the testing the impact of quotas on the number of *elected* female candidates. This is because of the rather complex electoral system for regions that mixes a majoritarian and a proportional component. The total number of women elected may depend, not on the number of the votes they receive, but rather from the electoral fortunes of the parties where they are enlisted. More specifically, the party coalition that gets the plurality of seats will receive a “majority premium”; that is, an increase in the number of seats allocated to it that exceeds the number determined on the basis of the votes received.

1.4. Effectiveness of Italian quotas

The percentage of women in the Italian Parliament is very low. Italy is only 78 in the international ranking of countries according to the number of seats in the national parliament assigned to women.

However, as reported in table 1 that follows, quotas seems to have a slightly appreciable impact, since the share of seats assigned to women in 1994, where the quota system was working, is higher than that of the following elections, when no quotas applied.

Table 1. **Share of seats in the Italian Lower House assigned to women, 1994 -2001.**

Year	Upper House	Lower House
1994	8,6%	with quotas 15,1%
1996 no quotas	8%	11,1%
2001 no quotas	8.1%	11,5%

Source: for 1994 Guadagnini (2003); for 1996/2001 *Women in national parliaments* – www.ipu.org

A similar pattern shows up for the elections to the European Parliament. The percentage of women elected increased from 11,5% in 1999 to 19, and 23% in the year 2004, when the quota system was introduced.

Table 2. Share of seats assigned to women in the elections for the European Parliament, 1999 and 2004

	EUROPE 1999	ITALY 1999 (without quotas)	EUROPE 2004	ITALY 2004 (with quotas)
Total seats	626	87	732	78
Seats won by women	195	10	221	15
%	31,1%	11,50%	30.19%	19.23%

Source: Italy: Presidenza del consiglio dei ministri – Ministero Pari opportunità - www.pariopportunita.gov.it

Regional councils are not an exception, as can be seen in table 3 that follows. In this case we have three electoral rounds to observe (although the third one is incomplete, as mentioned before). Quotas seem to impact on the electoral fortunes of women.

Table 3. Share of seats assigned to women in regional elections. 1995, 2000 and 2005

Regions	1995	2000	2005
Abruzzo	10.00%*	2.33%	17.07%*
Basilicata	6.67%*	10.00%	10.71%
Calabria	9.52%*	2.33%	4.08%
Campania	6.67%*	5.00%	10.17%
Emilia-Romagna	18.00%*	14.00%	10.20%
Lazio	17.46%*	12.24%	17.91%*
Liguria	15.56%*	7.50%	10.26%
Lombardia	14.44%*	11.25%	15.19%
Marche	12.50%*	12.50%	15.38%
Molise	13.33%*	3.33%	
Piemonte	16.67%*	11.67%	16.13%

Puglia	12.70%*	0.00%	2.86%*
Toscana	16.00%*	12.00%	24.62%*
Umbria	16.67%*	13.33%	13.79%
Veneto	7.81%*	15.00%	10.17%
Totale	13.80%	9.85%	12.93%

* elections with quota

Source: for 1995 and 2000 Presidenza del consiglio dei ministri – Ministero Pari opportunità - www.pariopportunita.gov.it; for 2005 Ministero degli interni – Anagrafe Amministrazioni Locali, 2005 Toscana e Puglia siti collegio regionale.

2. A Random Utility Model for the voter.

We start with the assumption that voters are rational in the sense that they vote to maximize their perceived utility. However, there are many errors in this maximization because of imperfect perceptions and optimization, as well as the errors made by the analyst to measure exactly all the relevant variables. In this kind of setting, McFadden (1974), (following Thurstone 1927), assumed that utility is a random function. We follow McFadden (1974) and, in the context of an election process, we assume a random utility model for the voter.

Suppose that the individual faces a number of choices equal to J where we define $j=1, 2, 3, \dots, J$. We can define an underlying latent variable Y_{nj}^* which denote the utility of voter n associated with choice j.

The observed Y_{nj} are defined as

$$Y_{nj} = 1 \text{ if } Y_{nj}^* = \text{Max}(Y_{n1}^*, Y_{n2}^*, Y_{n3}^*, \dots, Y_{nJ}^*) \quad (1)$$

$$Y_{nj} = 0 \text{ otherwise}$$

More specifically, the utility that the nth voter will make choice j is given by

$$Y_{nj}^* = V_{nj}(X_{nj}, Z_n) + \varepsilon_{nj} \quad (2)$$

$$Y_{nj} = 0 \text{ otherwise}$$

Where V_{nj} is the deterministic part of the utility function and Z_n are individual-specific variables (voter-specific variables) and ε_{nj} is a residual that captures both the unobserved variations in the attributes of the choices, the errors in the perception of the individual and what the analyst cannot observe. X_{nj} is the vector of values of the attributes of the jth choice as perceived by the nth individual. If the residual are independently and identically distributed with the type I extreme value distribution, whose cumulative distribution function is

$$F(\varepsilon_j < \varepsilon) = \exp(-e^{-\varepsilon}) \quad (3)$$

it has been demonstrated (Maddala 1983) that the probability of individual n to make choice j is given by the following:

$$P_{nj} = \Pr ob(Y_{nj} = 1) = \frac{e^{V_j}}{\sum_{k=1}^J e^{V_k}} \quad (4)$$

In our model, the deterministic part of the utility function, $V_{nj}(X_{nj}, Z_n)$, will be defined as follows:

$$V_{nj} = \beta X_{nj} + \alpha_j Z_n \quad (5)$$

Where Z_n is a $p \times 1$ vector of individual-specific variables and X_{nj} is $q \times 1$ vector of values of the attributes of the j th choice as perceived by the n th individual. α_j is a $1 \times p$ vector of parameters; β is a $1 \times q$ vector of parameters. Note that the number of β 's does not depend on the number of choices. While the number of α_j 's is equal to $J-1$.

Then, the probability that voter n makes choice j is the following:

$$P_{nj} = \Pr ob(Y_{nj} = 1) = \frac{e^{\beta X_{nj} + \alpha_j Z_n}}{\sum_{k=1}^J e^{\beta X_{nk} + \alpha_k Z_n}} \quad (6)$$

This framework will allow us to estimate the probability that voter n will choose candidate of type j and with the estimated parameters, α_j 's and β 's, it is possible to simulate how the probability of voting candidate of type j changes when the independent variables change. Similar types of model have been estimated by McFadden (1974).

3. The empirical specification

3.1 Sample and sources of data

This paper utilizes data on candidates for four Italian regions in the 1995 and 2000 elections. We selected the three Italian regions that had elections in 2005 with a new regional electoral law re-introducing gender quotas (Toscana, Puglia, Lazio) and a region that did not re-introduce gender quotas in 2005 as a baseline (Piemonte). The data used in this study are based on the information collected from the web site of the *Italian Ministry of Home Office* (Ministero degli Interni) or directly obtained from the *Central Office for Electoral Services* (Direzione Centrale Servizi Elettorali) of the same Ministry. The total number of candidates is equal to 5239 corresponding to all the candidates participating to the *proportional share* of the elections in the four regions for the two years (1995, 2000).⁶ The unit of

⁶ The analysis of 2005 election is carried out separately to take into account differences among the new regional laws in terms of gender quotas and electoral systems proposed and it is not part of the present paper.

observation is the candidate. Tables A1 and A2 in the appendix list the variables used in the empirical specification and report some descriptive statistics of the variables used.

The variables used in the estimation are the following: region, electoral district, year of election, gender of the candidate, age of the candidate, position of the candidate in the list, share of votes obtained by the candidate, being an incumbent, percentage of women on the list, share of votes obtained by the list, party position on liberal policies.

The variable incumbent has been constructed using the database of the *administrators of local governments* (Anagrafe degli Amministratori degli Enti Locali) of the Ministry. It corresponds to the presence in the year before the elections of the candidates in the councils and government bodies of the region, provinces and major cities. There is a broad literature on incumbency advantage and more in particular on the effect of this factor on women’s election. The idea is that women are underrepresented in legislature because the vast majority of incumbents are men and incumbents have an advantage mainly due to the visibility that a public office can give them. The result can be a perpetuation of male representation.

The variable related to the party position on liberal policies is taken from an expert survey, carried out by Benoit and Laver (2005), aimed to assign party positions on a range of policy dimensions in 47 countries. Different dimensions were available among which we chose the dimension labelled “Social”. This dimension is defined as been in favour of liberal policies on matters such as abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia. This variable is used to differentiate between parties on the base of their position in the political space.

Table A2 in Appedix A reports some descriptive statistics of the variables.

Table 4 reports the number of female candidates for the proportional component of the regional elections in the two years. The percentage of female candidates largely decreased in all the four regions. Puglia is the region that registered the higher variation.

The percentage of women elected in the two years for the proportional component of the regional council decreased in Toscana, Lazio e Puglia. It only increased in Piemonte. (see table A3 in Appendix A).

Tab. 4 Percentage of women candidate in our sample

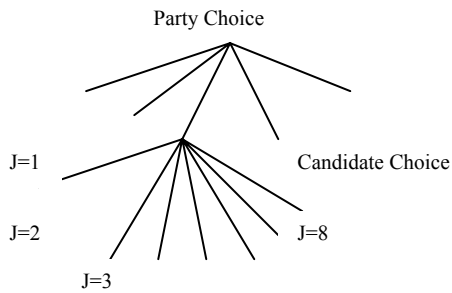
Regions	1995	2000
Piemonte	36.97%	23.73%
Toscana	36.27%	23.57%
Lazio	35.37%	17.96%
Puglia	34.95%	13.94%
Total	35,9%	19,4%

3.2 Empirical specification and results

We assume a structure for the decision making process of the voter of the following type: first the voter chooses the party and secondly chooses the type of candidate. The model explains the voter's choice of candidate of type j , given the choice of the party. So while the model explains the choice of the candidate, it does not explain the choice of the party.

The following voter decision tree helps to illustrate the assumed voter decision process.

Graph 1: Decision Tree for the voter



If we take into account the gender of the candidate, his/her position in the list and the previous political position (incumbent or not), we can assume that the voter can choose among 8 types of candidates.

So we define $j=1,2,\dots,8$, and we have the following types of candidates:

1. Man, top of the list incumbent
2. Man, top of the list, non-incumbent
3. Man, bottom of the list, incumbent
4. Man bottom of the list, non-incumbent
5. Woman, top of the list incumbent
6. Woman, top of the list, non-incumbent
7. Woman, bottom of the list,, incumbent
8. Woman bottom of the list, non-incumbent

Moreover we use a dataset which only contains personal characteristics of the candidates and the shares of votes they got. This choice allows us to observe the votes given by the voters and the characteristics of the candidates but we do not observe personal characteristics of the voter. Ideally, it would be better to have a model that explains the voter's choice among candidates on the basis of the personal characteristics of the voter. Unfortunately, the available data do not allow us to estimate such a model. Voters in our model are defined on the basis of their party's choices. Given the lack of the personal characteristics of the voter (age, education, income etc.), we use the characteristics of the party as proxies of the personal characteristics of the voter. In other words, voters only differ on the basis of the party they choose and not on the basis of their personal characteristics.

The model is estimated on equation (6); the deterministic part of the utility function is defined as follows. The individual specific variables (Z_{it}) are the variables that are already specified at the moment in which the voter choose the candidate. The estimated specification includes: a proxy of the district size (number of candidates in the district), position of the party in terms of liberal policies, percentage of women in the list (see appendix A for an exact definition of the variables).

The variables X_{nj} are the attributes of the j th choice i.e. they change with the choice of candidate j th. In our model, they are age of the candidate and age squared. Because age is observed only for the candidate that has been voted (one of the j), the age for the other feasible but not chosen candidates is calculated taking the average for each j -type of candidate in the list.

Table 5 reports the estimated coefficients and their standard errors; all the variables are significantly different from 0 at a 5% confidence interval.

Table 5. Estimates of the conditional multinomial logit

Number of obs =	27,641,206.000 (*)							
LR chi2(30) =	2258672.320							
Prob > chi2 =	0.000							
Pseudo R2 =	0.127							
	Man top of the list incumbent	Man top of the list non-incumbent	Man bottom of the list incumbent	Man bottom of the list non-incumbent	Women top of the list incumbent	Women top of the list non-incumbent	Women bottom of the list incumbent	Women bottom of the list non-incumbent
Constant	3.43	2.77	3.24	2.81	4.79	0.57	1.01	0.00
	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.04	
Liberal Policies	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.02	-0.08	-0.02	0.07	0.00
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Length of the List	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03	0.00	-0.09	0.01	-0.06	0.00
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Percentage of women in the list	-4.63	-3.59	-4.57	-4.56	-3.76	-0.83	-1.90	0.00
	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.07	
Age	-23.08	-23.08	-23.08	-23.08	-23.08	-23.08	-23.08	-23.08
	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04
Age squared	24.08	24.08	24.08	24.08	24.08	24.08	24.08	24.08
	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05

(*) The unit of analysis is the voter. Each voter faces a group of alternatives that is given by the different types of J available in the list voted. The number of observations is given by the sum of alternative J among which each voter can choose.

In table 6 we report the observed and predicted values of the probability that voter n makes choice j :

$$P_{nj} = \text{Pr ob}(Y_{nj} = 1) = \frac{e^{\beta X_{nj} + \alpha_j Z_n}}{\sum_{k=1}^J e^{\beta X_{nk} + \alpha_k Z_n}} \quad (6)$$

We observe that the predicted probabilities are very close to the observed ones. (Table 6).

Table 6: Observed and predicted probabilities

	Number of observations	Predicted	Observed
J1: man top of the list incumbent	191	42.09%	41.96%
J2: man top of the list non-incumbent	451	37.75%	41.62%
J3: Man bottom of the list incumbent	178	39.56%	41.98%
J4: Man bottom of the list non-incumbent	679	45.38%	41.42%
J5 Women top of the list incumbent	28	29.57%	27.62%
J6 Women top of the list non-incumbent	220	12.38%	14.24%
J7: Women bottom of the list incumbent	29	27.16%	24.97%
J8: Women bottom of the list non-incumbent	472	14.71%	15.23%
Men	1499	41.97%	41.62%
Women	749	15.06%	15.78%

In order to comment on the estimated parameters, we simulate an increase in the percentage of women in each list. We simulate the application of a quota of 35%, 45% and 55% of women for each list. The micro-simulation consists of applying the estimated parameters to equation (6), and calculating for each voter the estimated probability after the change. Table 7 reports the average simulated probability of voting for candidate of type j . *Ceteris paribus*, the probabilities of a female candidate to be voted increase if the number of women in the list increases. This implies that, given a constant length of the list, the votes are re-distributed to female candidates.

These increases are the largest for non-incumbent women and they increase with the size of the quotas. One possible explanation for the large increase in the probability that the voter chooses a non-incumbent woman is that non-incumbent candidates would have not being included in the list if the quota were not implemented and therefore they could not be voted for. It seems like that voters would like to vote for non-incumbent female candidate but, in the absence of quotas, they can't. In the absence of quotas, their preferences cannot be expressed.

The estimated parameters describe the correlations in our data. Our simulations are based on the assumption that these parameters only reflect a causal connection between votes for women and number of women on the list. In reality they probably also reflect a common factor influencing both (in some districts or regions there could be a bias against women that affects both the number of women in the list and the way in which voters vote). Hopefully, any common factor is controlled for by the inclusion of the other variables especially variables defining the party in each district (length of the party). In addition, in half the sample the number of women in the list can be considered exogenous due to the presence of quotas in 1995.

Table 8 reports simulated increases in the length of each list. The simulations show that an increase in the length of the list increases the probabilities for non-incumbent to be voted (the effect is larger for non-incumbent women than for non-incumbent men) and decreases the probability of incumbent to be voted (the effect is larger for incumbent women respect to incumbent men). This result confirms the

presence of a dispersion effect: the shorter the list the more the votes concentrate on incumbent candidates.

Table 9 reports simulated decreases in the index reporting the position of parties in favor of liberal policies. The index ranks from 1 to 20, where 1 indicates that the party is very much in favor of liberal policies (abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia) and 20 that the party is against them. We observe that the probabilities of voters to vote a female candidate increases with the party becoming more liberal.

Table 7: Average of the estimated probabilities before and after an increase in the % of women in each list.

	Predicted probabilities	Simulation of a 35% quota (35% quotas – predicted)	Simulation of a 45% quota (45% quotas – 35% quotas)	Simulation of a 55% quota (55% quotas – 45% quotas)
J1:man top of the list incumbent	42.09%	40.27%(-1.82)	38.03%(-2.24)	35.08% (-2.95)
J2: man top of the list non-incumbent	37.75%	39.58%(-1.83)	39.74% (-.16)	39.23% (-.51)
J3: Man bottom of the list incumbent	39.56%	38.58% (-.98)	37.52% (-1.06)	35.54% (-1.98)
J4: Man bottom of the list non-incumbent	45.38%	43.30% (-2.08)	41.33% (-1.97)	38.40% (-2.93)
J5 Women top of the list incumbent	29.57%	29.99% (+.42)	30.27% (+.28)	30.29% (+.02)
J6 Women top of the list non-incumbent	12.38%	13.73% (+1.35)	16.38% (+2.65)	19.91% (+3.53)
J7: Women bottom of the list incumbent	27.16%	28.10% (+.94)	29.55%(+1.45)	32.46% (+2.91)
J8: Women bottom of the list non-incumbent	14.71%	16.34% (+1.61)	18.99%(+2.65)	23.81%(+4.82)
Men	41.97%	41.24% (-0.73%)	39.98%(-1.26%)	37.89%(-2.09)
Women	15.06%	16.54%(+1.48%)	19.06%(+2.52%)	23.24%(+4.18%)

Table 8: Average of the estimated probabilities before and after an increase in the length of the list in the districts.

	Predicted	20% Increase length of the list in the district	40% Increase length of the list in the district	60% Increase length of the list in the district
J1:man top of the list incumbent	42.09%	41.51%	40.93%	40.34%
J2: man top of the list non-incumbent	37.75%	37.81%	37.86%	37.90%
J3: Man bottom of the list incumbent	39.56%	39.10%	38.64%	38.20%
J4: Man bottom of the list non-incumbent	45.38%	45.57%	45.76%	45.94%
J5 Women top of the list incumbent	29.57%	27.09%	25.04%	23.31%
J6 Women top of the list non-incumbent	12.38%	12.68%	12.99%	13.31%
J7: Women bottom of the list incumbent	27.16%	26.68%	26.22%	25.79%
J8: Women bottom of the list non-incumbent	14.71%	14.81%	14.91%	15.01%
Men	41.97%	41.95%	41.92%	41.89%
Women	15.06%	15.10%	15.16%	15.24%

Table 9: Average of the estimated probabilities before and after a decrease in the position of the party on liberal policies (a decrease indicate that parties become more liberal).

	Predicted	20% decrease	40% decrease	60% decrease
J1:man top of the list incumbent	42.09%	41.45%	40.79%	40.11%
J2: man top of the list non-incumbent	37.75%	37.90%	38.03%	38.13%
J3: Man bottom of the list incumbent	39.56%	40.35%	41.14%	41.92%
J4: Man bottom of the list non-incumbent	45.38%	44.77%	44.16%	43.53%
J5 Women top of the list incumbent	29.57%	33.12%	36.86%	40.70%
J6 Women top of the list non-incumbent	12.38%	13.02%	13.71%	14.44%
J7: Women bottom of the list incumbent	27.16%	25.15%	23.19%	21.31%
J8: Women bottom of the list non-incumbent	14.71%	15.02%	15.33%	15.65%
Men	41.97%	41.75%	41.52%	41.28%
Women	15.06%	15.50%	15.96%	16.45%

Conclusions

In this paper, we have started an exploration of the effectiveness of affirmative electoral action in Italy. Traditionally, but not unusually, the country has a small number of female elected politicians. To increase this number, quotas, based on a minimum share of candidacies reserved to either gender, have

been introduced for elections at all levels of government. Their introduction has been delayed because of, among other things, an initial verdict by the Supreme Court that quotas are unconstitutional. Quotas are small – they do not exceed 30 percent of total candidates – and apply only to seats that are allocated on the basis of the proportional system in local, regional, and national elections.

In general, the introduction of quotas has brought an increase in the share of elected women, which remains tiny.

The paper has explored, with the help of a voter random utility maximization model, the impact of quotas on voter choices. More precisely, the model has been tested with reference to the elections of regional councils in 1995 and 2000 and to the seats allocated according to the proportional system.

The results confirm that the insertion of a higher share of women in party lists increases significantly the probabilities that voters will choose a woman. Secondly, the length of lists is a factor that reduces the probability that voters will vote for an incumbent candidate, with a larger effect if the candidate is a female incumbent, thus confirming the importance of the dispersion effect.

Finally, the chances of women of being voted are higher in those political parties that give more weight in their electoral platforms to typical liberal values. This confirms indirectly the existence of a gender bias in Italian voters.

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Appendix A

Tab. A1 Description of the variables

Individual Variables	Description
Region	Piemonte, Toscana, Lazio, Puglia
Electoral District	Provinces
Year of Elections	1995, 2000
Sex of the Candidate	0 if male, 1 if female
Age of the Candidate	Year of election minus date of birth
Position of the Candidate in the list	Rank of the candidates in the list: =1 if in the first half; =2 if in the second half.
Preference	Votes obtained by the Candidate.
Being an incumbent	0 if non incumbent, 1 if incumbent. Incumbent is a candidate having a seat in the regional, provincial or city council (only major cities) in the year previous the elections.
Percentage of women candidates in the list	Women candidates in the list on the total number of candidates in the list (%).
Dimension of the District	Number of candidates in one list.
Party position on liberal policies	Index reporting the position in favor of liberal policies (abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia). Rank from 1 to 20. 1 favor, 20 opposition. Source: K. Benoit and M. Laver, 2005, Expert Survey.

Tab. A2 Descriptive statistics

	Obs	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Sex of the Candidate	5239	0.262	0.43980	0	1
Age of the Candidate	5239	45	0.11094	18	86
Position of the Candidate	5239	1.61	0.48751	1	2
Preferences	5239	1190.62	2383.27	0	28652
Dummy Being Incumbent	5239	0.107	0.30924	0	1
Dimension of the Electoral District	5239	16.29	12.2880	1	35
Percentage of women in the list	5239	0.262	0.15149	0	1
Party position on liberal policies	5239	9.81	5.96227	2.021	18.515

Tab. A3 Percentage of women elected in the proportional component of the four regions

Regions	1995 with quotas	2000 no quotas
Piemonte	12.5%	14.89%
Toscana	12.5%	7.69%
Lazio	10.20%	8.51%
Puglia	7.84%	0%
Total	10,6%	7,8%