

The Partisan Gap among Women in Elective Office: 2020 and Beyond

[Laurel Elder, PhD](#)
Professor of Political Science
Hartwick College
elderl@hartwick.edu
laurelelder.com

Paper prepared for presentation at The 2021 State of the Parties Conference, November 4-5, 2021. Virtual. I would like to thank Hartwick College for providing funding for this project. I would also like to thank Hartwick student Lia Porpeggia '22 for her outstanding research assistance.

The Partisan Gap among Women in Elective Office: 2020 and Beyond

The 2020 elections resulted in much to celebrate for those who believe American democracy is stronger—more legitimate, more representative, and produces better policy outcomes—when our elected officials more accurately reflect the population. Women now form a record breaking 31 percent of state legislation. The 117th Congress, which convened in January 2021, has more women members than any other Congress in U.S. history.

When women's progress in obtaining elective office is examined through the lens of political party, however, we see two strikingly different realities. Democratic women are well represented, while Republican women in elective office remain at low levels. Of the 143 women in Congress, 73 percent are Democrats. Democrats are also two-thirds of the women in state legislatures. The partisan gap is also highly visible when we look at women as a percent of their party's caucuses. Women form 46 percent of Democrats in state legislatures, and 39 percent of Democrats in Congress. In contrast, women form only 19 percent of Republican state legislators and 15 percent of Republicans in Congress (See Figures 1 and 2). While women in general are somewhat more likely to affiliate as Democrats than Republicans, the partisan gap among women in Congress and state legislatures significantly exceeds the partisan gap among women in the electorate.

This study seeks to answer two related questions: What explains the partisan gap among women in elective office? Will the partisan gap among women in office begin to close or widen further in future elections? This study applies the theoretical framework established in my recent book [*The Partisan Gap*](#) (NYU Press 2021) to the 2020 election and beyond. I argue that long-

term, structural changes in American electoral politics including the ideological, regional, and racial realignments of the parties as well as the distinctive cultures of the two parties have created an electoral and political environment conducive to the advancement of Democratic women office seekers, but have created a much more challenging landscape for Republican women seeking office. At first glance, the strong performance of Republican women candidates in 2020, with some news outlets declaring 2020 to be “The Year of Republican Women,” appears to challenge the partisan gap framework (Ewall-Wice and Navarro 2020). However, I argue that the structural factors behind the advantage of Democratic women over Republican women in state legislatures and Congress remained active even in 2020 and that the partisan gap will remain a defining feature of American electoral politics for the near future.

This research is important for several reasons, both theoretical and normative. Plentiful research has examined how American partisan politics have undergone ideological, regional, and racial realignments over the past half century, but insufficient attention has been paid to the consequences of these realignments for women’s representation. By centering analyses of these party realignments on gender, this study provides a critical and long overdue broadening of these theories. Secondly, much of the research seeking to understand why women continue to have low levels of representation in U.S. political institutions focuses on women as a cohesive group—seeking to understand why women still only compose 27 percent of Congress and 31 percent of state legislatures. Yet, when we break down women’s representation by party, we see that vastly different dynamics are at play. By looking separately at women in elective office by party, this study provides a more precise understanding of the reasons for women’s continued underrepresentation and what needs to be done in order to help women achieve parity in office. Finally, although many associate women’s issues with a progressive policy agenda, the reality is

that close to half of American women lean in a more conservative direction and these women are dramatically underrepresented in government. To have a truly representative government it is important to have moderate and strongly conservative women in elected positions, just as it is important to have descriptive representation for progressive women.

The Ideological Realignment and the Partisan Gap among Women in Elective Office

Over the past several decades the Democratic and Republican Parties have polarized ideologically, with the Democratic Party becoming modestly more liberal and the Republican Party moving significantly to the right. Political scientists Matt Grossman and Anthony Hopkins demonstrate empirically that the Republican Party has become, at its core, a party organized around the central motivating principle of ideological conservatism (2015, 2016). This is important as conservatism has long been associated with lower levels of women's representation (Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994).

The ideological polarization of the parties extends to most issues, including issues of gender equality in the private and public spheres. Although at one point in the 20th century, the Republican Party was arguably more progressive on issues of gender equality than the Democratic Party—it embraced the Equal Rights Amendment in its platform before the Democrats did for example—the parties have undergone a significant ideological realignment on these issues (Wolbrecht 2000). An ideology more supportive of traditional gender roles and hostile towards feminism has taken root in the Republican Party (Elder and Greene 2012, 2015; Elder, Greene and Lizotte 2021). In its most recent platform, the Republican Party emphasizes traditional conservative family values and makes no mention of the importance of women's political leadership (Och 2018). Only a minority of Republicans in the electorate, 37 percent,

agree that the United States would be better off if there were more women serving in public office (Cooper et al. 2016). In contrast, the Democratic Party has become more vocal and active in supporting gender equality and making gender parity in elective office a goal. Today, 77 percent of Democrats feel the United States would be better off if there were more women serving in public office (Cooper et al. 2016).

The ideological polarization of the parties tracks very closely with the emergence of the partisan gap among women in elective office. Across the 1970s and 1980s, there were not many women in Congress or in state legislatures (see Figures 1 and 2) but those that did serve were equally likely to be Republicans and Democrats. Starting in the early 1990s, the partisan gap among women in elective office began to emerge. The Democratic Party's commitment to equality for women in the public sphere, and its support for policies designed to help women balance career and family appears to have created a welcoming environment for women thinking about a political career (Elder 2012, 2015, 2018). Over the last several decades the number of Democratic women has been on a strong upward trajectory in state legislatures and Congress. Democratic women are on track to reach, if not surpass, parity within their caucus at both the state and national level.

Figures 1 and 2 about here

In contrast, for much of the past three decades progress for Republican women has stalled. As of 2021, only 19 percent of Republican state legislators are women, which is the same level of representation that Republican women had three decades ago (Figure 1). There are actually 15 states where women form a *smaller* portion of Republican state legislators today than

they did three decades ago (Table 1). The lack of meaningful progress among Republican women in elective office since the early 1990s is a striking contrast to the steady progress of Democratic women. It is also surprising given that the last three decades were a period of considerable educational and professional advancement for women and an overall conducive electoral environment for Republicans. The timing suggests that the conservative shift of the Republican Party has fostered an electoral environment that has made it comparatively more difficult for Republican women to consider running for office or be recruited by their party. Given the Republican Party's greater emphasis on traditional values and hostility towards feminism, Republican women who work, especially mothers who work, may feel less encouraged to run for office within their party. Republican women may feel that their candidacies are not needed and perhaps not even wanted by their fellow partisans.

Figures 1 and 2 show that even though 2020 was a bad year for Democrats and a good year for Republicans, the overarching dynamics of the partisan gap among women in elective office did not change. Even though Democrats overall lost seats in state legislatures and Congress, women actually increased their representation among their Democratic colleagues in both Congress and state legislatures. In fact, the partisan gap between the representation of women among Democratic and Republican state legislators actually widened in the wake of the 2020 election (Figure 1, Table 1). Moreover, correlation and multivariate regression analyses (not shown here) reveal that there is a significant negative relationship between the levels of representation of Republican women in state legislatures with the level of conservatism in a state (Elder 2021, 2018).¹ In other words, not only are Republican women severely underrepresented, but their levels of representation are lowest in conservative states, where their party holds the

¹ The measure of state ideology comes from Berry et al. (1998) and is updated through 2016 by Fording (2018).

majority and they would have the most opportunities to influence policy. In contrast, the ideology of states no longer has any correlation with representation for Democratic women; Democratic women are achieving meaningful levels of representation in both liberal and conservative states (Elder 2021, 2018).

Regional Realignment in Congress and its Impact on Partisan Gap

Another structural change to the American party system has been the regional realignment of the parties. Across the 20th century and into the 21st century, the regional bases of the two parties in Congress have undergone significant shifts, which is critical because geographical regions have long had a profound impact on women's representation (Norrander and Wilcox 2005). Table 1 shows women as a percent of Republicans and Democrats in state legislatures overall and by region,² over a three decade period, from a time when the partisan gap had not yet emerged to 2019, and then again in 2021, so that we can assess if the 2020 election altered regional patterns. Table 2 shows similar data but for the House of Representatives and Congress.

Tables 1 and 2 show how the most pronounced and consequential regional party shifts have been in the South. Over the last half century, Republicans made tremendous gains in the South, while losing seats in the Northeast and West. The South is now the unquestionable power base of the Republican Party and the region of greatest opportunities for Republican candidates. Yet, the South has long been the region of the country most hostile to women's candidacies due to its more traditional and conservative culture (Norrander and Wilcox 2015). The Southern

² Regions are defined following Klinkner and Schaller (2006) analysis of regional partisan realignments in Congress.

climate used to act as a barrier for women in both parties, but as a result of conservatism becoming concentrated almost exclusively on the Republican side of the partisan aisle, the Southern electoral landscape only acts to constrain Republican women.

Tables 1 and 2 about here

As of 2021, the South remains the region where Republican women have the fewest seats. Women form only 15 percent of Republican state legislators in the South compared to 19 percent nationally (Figure 3). There is only one southern state legislature, Florida, where women form more than 20 percent of Republicans (Table 1). Similar patterns characterize women's representation in the House and in Congress. The number of Republicans holding seats in Congress from southern states more than doubled from 1989 to 2021 (59 to 121), yet these gains have not yielded many more Republican women (Table 2). In the 117th Congress, women form only 9 percent of Southern Republicans, which is lower than all other regions (Figure 4). Republican women have their lowest levels of representation in the region of the country that is the power base of their party, and the region that offers the most opportunities for Republican advancement and leadership.

Figures 3 and 4 about here

In contrast, Democratic women have made big inroads among their party's representatives in all regions of the country. Women now form 50 percent or more of Democratic state legislators in The Midwest and the West (Figure 3). Women form over half of Democratic

state legislators in 24 states including southern states such as Florida, Georgia, and Kentucky (Table 1). Democratic women also perform well in all regions of the country in Congress. Women form 54 percent of Congressional Democrats from the Midwest, 43 percent of Congressional Democrats from the West, and 41 percent of Congressional Democrats from the South (Figure 4).

Figures 3 and 4 about here

In summary, the regional realignment of the parties has played a modest role contributing to the partisan gap among women in elective office. The concentration of Republican power in the South, combined with the ideological polarization of the parties, has created a challenging electoral environment for Republican women in the region of the country where Republicans have the most opportunity. While Republican women posted modest gains in all regions of the country in the 2020 elections, the underlying regional dynamics of the partisan gap appear unchanged. The South remains the most challenging environment for Republican women. Meanwhile, as legislative seats have turned over and opened up, Democratic women have been strategic and successful at seizing these opportunities, in all regions of the country.

The Partisan Gap and Women of Color

A third structural change in American electoral politics has been the racial realignment of the parties. Americans of color were blocked from meaningful participation in electoral politics, including office holding, for much of American history. The passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) in 1965, opened the doors to increased political inclusion by Black Americans and other

Americans of color. The VRA led to a dramatic influx of voters of color into the electorate and made it illegal for states to draw congressional district lines in a way to dilute the voting power of African Americans and other protected minority groups. In response to Supreme Court decisions, state governments created more majority-minority districts, and these districts have been the best opportunity for individuals of color, whether men or women, to enter elective office. These important legal and structural changes to American electoral politics led to a significant increase in representation by Black Americans and Latinos in elective office.

Reflecting their formal and informal exclusion from national electoral politics, women of color entered Congress later than white women and later than men of color. Despite these barriers, since the 1980s, women of color have increased their numbers in elective office at a faster rate than non-Hispanic white women (Figure 5). As a result, women of color now form 43 percent of members of Congress of color, while white women form only 22 percent of white members of Congress.

Figure 5 about here

The comparatively stronger performance of women of color compared to white women holds true for all non-white racial and ethnic groups. In 1987, women composed five percent of Black members of Congress and now women form 40 percent of the Black members of Congress. The first Latina did not enter Congress until 1989 with the election of Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. In the 117th Congress women form 29 percent of the Latinx members of Congress. Women now form a stunning 58 percent of the Asian American/Pacific Islander members of Congress. In comparison, white women only form 22 percent of white members of Congress.

The success of women of color in winning election to the House and Senate is particularly striking given the double bind of racism and sexism that they face. While political ambition among women of color remains an area in need of greater attention, Brown and Dowe (2020) present compelling evidence that black women have run and won seats, not as a result of party recruitment and support, but rather despite a lack of such support. Dowe (2020) uses the term “radical imagination” to capture the decision making process among Black women to run for elective office. Bejarano (2013) as well as Garcia Bedolla, Tate and Wong (2014) argue that women of color are better positioned than white women to tap into pre-existing political and organizational networks, and benefit more from both racial and gender based group solidarity.

The strong performance of women of color relative to white women has contributed to the partisan gap because of the strong Democratic partisanship of the women of color. Due to the ongoing partisan realignment over race—characterized by the Democratic Party coming to embrace a civil rights and racial justice issues while the Republican Party has taken on increasingly conservative positions on race and immigration, a trend further exacerbated by Donald Trump’s explicit appeals to racial and ethnic resentment as a candidate and President—women of color in elective office are overwhelmingly Democratic. The 117th Senate convened with four women of color serving in it, and they are all Democrats (Catherine Cortez-Masto, Tammy Duckworth, Mazie Hirono, and Kamala Harris who vacated her seat on January 20th and assumed the vice-presidency) and 90 percent of the women of color in the 117th House are Democrats. A similar dynamic exists in state legislatures, with women of color, especially Black women, driving the success of Democratic women. A full 61 percent of the Democratic women in southern state legislators are women of color including 100 percent of the Democratic women

in Alabama's state legislature, 92 percent in Mississippi, and 87 percent in Alabama (CAWP 2021).

Taken together, the comparative success of women of color in obtaining seats in elective office compared to white women, combined with their heavily Democratic partisanship, has played a modest but driving role behind the partisan gap. If women of color were represented in Congress at the same, lower rate as white women—in other words, if women of color only represented only 22 percent of those of color in Congress rather than 40 percent—there would be dramatically fewer women in Congress and more specifically dramatically fewer Democratic women. Thus without the strong performance by women of color in winning elections, the partisan gap among women would still exist, but it would be considerably smaller.

Party Culture and Recruitment

A final factor behind the partisan gap of women in elective office concerns party culture and its implications for recruitment. In the 1980s, political scientist Joe Freeman (1986) argued that the two major parties had distinctive cultures. In their more recent analysis of party culture, Grossman and Hopkins explicitly build on Freeman's analysis of party culture and argue that the Democratic party is best understood "as a coalition of social groups seeking concrete government action" as opposed to the Republican Party, which is structured around ideology and more specifically conservatism (Grossman and Hopkins 2015, 119). Drawing on extensive interview data reviewed in my book, I argue that the distinct cultures of the two parties have resulted in increasingly more robust recruitment efforts for Democratic women compared to Republican women (Elder 2021). Explicit encouragement and recruitment is particularly important when it comes to women candidates because women are more likely than men to need

encouragement from others in order to conceive of themselves as candidates (Lawless and Fox 2018).

Freeman (1986) characterized the Democratic Party as having an open and decentralized culture, where power flows upwards, and where group identities and group-based activism are viewed as legitimate and valuable. As a result, the Democratic Party views activists making group-based demands and groups vying to shape party policy as the norm, rather than as an act of disloyalty towards the party or the party's liberal ideology. Cooperman and Crowder-Meyer further reaffirm this characterization of the Democratic Party culture arguing that "The Democratic Party is essentially organized to hear and respond to group-based demands." (2018, 111). The Democratic Party's distinctive culture has promoted the recruitment of women in several reinforcing ways. It has allowed feminists and those seeking to increase the representation of women in elective office to enter the party structure, to make group-based demands, and to have their demands viewed as legitimate. Secondly, as more individuals and groups committed to gender equality in public office have become integrated into the Democratic Party, especially in leadership roles, they are able to reinforce and deepen the Democratic Party's commitment to recruiting women. Finally, the Democratic Party's open culture where groups vie to shape policy as the normal course of action, rather than as an act of disloyalty, has allowed it to partner productively with an extended network of groups, most notably EMILY's List, that are committed to increasing women's representation. Rather than seeing such groups as competitors or disloyal segments of the party, the Democratic Party has, to a significant degree, integrated them into the party structure.

In contrast, several aspects of the Republican Party culture create a more challenging environment for Republican women interested in political careers. The Republican Party has a

hierarchical, top-down culture, which embraces individualism, rejects group-based claims, and holds a strong commitment to gender-neutral recruiting (Och 2018). Explicit efforts to recruit women are only supported by a small faction within the party, which must fight against a dominant party culture viewing such efforts as problematic forays into the identity politics of the left. Indeed the modest success of Republican women in achieving elective office in 2020 is in part due to women in the Republican party—especially Representative Elise Stefanik—challenging Republican party culture (and receiving considerable pushback) to call out the lack of women in the party as a problem and specifically recruit and fund women candidates, starting early in the 2020 election cycle (Abramson 2019). Additionally, the hierarchical nature of Republican Party culture, with its emphasis on party and ideological loyalty, has undermined the party's ability to partner effectively with an extended network of groups focused on increasing Republican women's representation in elective office (Elder 2021).

Conclusion

Democratic and Republican women started making inroads into elective office at about the same time, but today Democratic women far outnumber their Republican women colleagues in state legislatures and Congress. The progress of women in elected office over the past several decades has quite simply been a tale of two parties, with Democratic women making consistent impressive gains, while representation for Republican women remains low. Although Republican women made modest gains in 2020, the overall size and structure of the partisan gap remains very much in place. This study argues that several overlapping and reinforcing dynamics in American politics including the regional, racial, and ideological realignments of the political

parties have contributed to the emergence and continuation of the partisan gap among women in office and are likely to continue reinforcing the partisan gap in future elections.

The progress of Democratic women in elective office has been fairly remarkable. Women are now close to 40 percent of Democrats in Congress and 46 percent of Democrats in state legislatures. Women form the majority of Democrats in 24 state legislatures. Democratic women have strong levels of representation in all regions of the country, and in both liberal and conservative states. Their success is driven in part by the “radical imagination” and remarkable success of women of color, who are disproportionately Democratic (Dowe 2020). The continued progress of Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, and Indigenous women in achieving elective offices, which seems likely, will serve to reinforce and expand the partisan gap. There is also now a self-reinforcing dynamic at work. Women in elective office tend to be more committed than men to the idea that recruiting more women is a priority, and also tend to have more women in their social networks where much recruitment takes place (Sanbonmatsu 2006). This holds true for women in both parties (Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu and Carroll 2018; Elder 2021). But there are now many more Democratic women in elective office and leadership positions to carry out this recruitment work. The robust recruitment infrastructure on the Democratic side, led by EMILY’S List, is likely to ensure there are strong women candidates in place when a political opportunity arises to gain a seat.

The Republican Party’s conservative ideology and the view among many in the party’s elite and partisans that explicitly recruiting women is inappropriate identity politics or simply not needed, makes it harder for those interested in recruiting Republican women to achieve success. The consequences of this culture remain visible. In 2021, the Republican Party pushed one of its women members, Liz Cheney, out of a leadership position and much of the party infrastructure is

working against her re-election (Martin 2021). Moreover, as long as the most plentiful opportunities for Republican office-holding and advancement remain in the South, this will contribute to a comparatively less favorable electoral environment for Republican women. The challenging environment of the South for women can be seen in the Republican competition to replace Senator Richard C. Shelby (R, AL). Republican Katie Britt, who served as Chief of Staff to Richard Selby as well as having other relevant experience, is running for the open seat, yet former President Donald Trump and a Republican House member Mo Brooks, who is also running for the seat, dismissed her as an “assistant” and “unqualified”. The Republican Party did not condone or respond to these sexist comments (Gonzalez 2021). Similarly, Republicans also failed to elect a woman, the widow of the former Republican member, to an open seat in Texas in a heavily Republican district (Weigel 2021).

Given the continuation of the ideological and racial polarization of the parties, along with the much more robust recruitment efforts on the Democratic side of the partisan aisle, the partisan gap is likely to remain a prominent feature of American politics for elections to come. The stakes surrounding the partisan gap are huge. As women have become better represented among Democratic Party officials, we have seen the Democratic Party work towards policies such as paid family leave, universal pre-K, expanded health care, and increased minimum wage which are critical in achieving gender equality.

On the Republican side, the continued low levels of representation of women holds potentially negative consequences for the viability of the party. Even high profile members of the Republican Party themselves have indicated that the overwhelmingly white, male composition of their party-in-government threatens the future viability of their party (Abramson 2019). Moreover, conservative and Republican women have policy priorities and perspectives on issues

that are distinctive from Republican and conservative men (Barnes and Cassese 2017; Deckman 2016). Without women gaining meaningful representation among Republicans in elective office, their distinctive views are not able to shape Republican Party priorities, internal discussions, and policy outcomes. Finally, the gains of Republican women are significant to all those who value women's representation, as there is no path for women to achieve proportional representation and hence gender equality in elective office without women's representation increasing in both the Democratic and the Republican Parties.

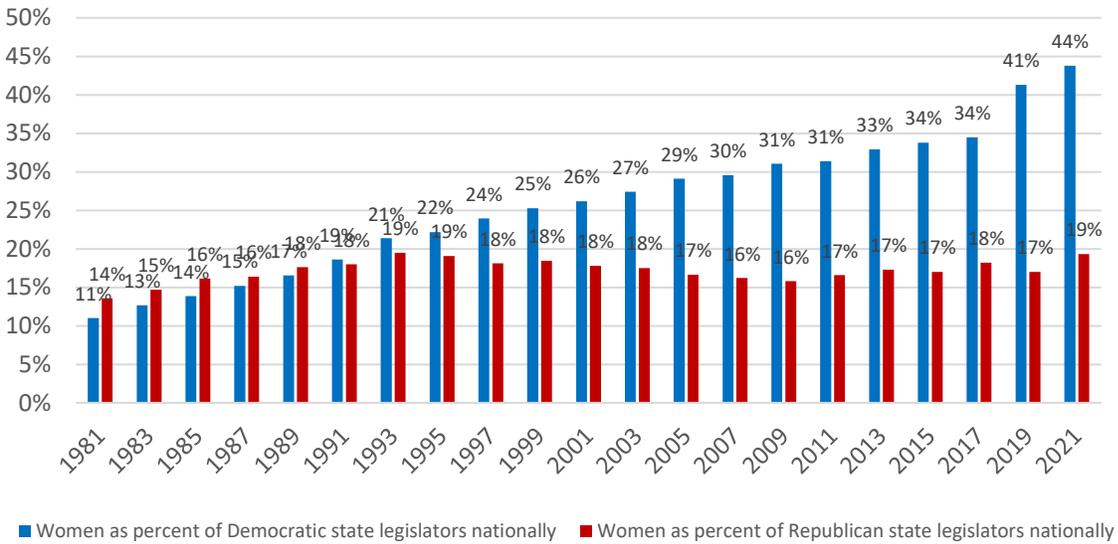
References

- Abramson, Alana. 2019. "Congresswoman Elise Stefanik has a Plan to get more Republican Congresswomen Elected." *Time*. May 9. www.time.com
- Barnes, Tiffany D., and Erin C. Cassese. 2017. "American Party Women: A Look at the Gender Gap within Parties." *Political Research Quarterly* 70 (1): 127–141. doi: 10.1177/1065912916675738
- Bejarano, Christina E. 2013. *The Latina Advantage: Gender, Race, and Political Success*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Berry, William D. Evan J. Ringquist, Richard C. Fording, Russell L. Hanson. 1998. "Measuring Citizen and Government Ideology in the American States, 1960-93." *American Journal of Political Science*, 42(1): 327-348.
- Brown, Nadia E. and Pearl K. Dowe. 2020. "Late to the Party: Black Women's Inconsistent Support from Political Parties." In *Good Reasons to Run: Women and Political Candidacy*, Ed. Shauna L. Shames, Rachel I. Bernhard, Mirya R. Holman, and Dawn Langan Teele. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. Pp. 153-166.
- Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). 2020. "Women in Elective Office." Center for American Women in Politics. www.cawp.rutgers.edu.
- Cooper, Betsy, Daniel Cox, Rachel Lienesch, Robert P. Jones. 2016. "The Divide over America's Future: 1950 or 2050?" *PRRI*. www.ppri.org.
- Crowder-Meyer, Melody, and Rosalyn Cooperman. 2018. "Can't Buy Them Love: How Party Culture among Donors Contributes to the Party Gap in Women's Representation." *The Journal of Politics*, 80 (4): 1211–1224. doi: 10.1086/698848
- Deckman, Melissa. 2016. *Tea Party Women: Mama Grizzlies, Grassroots Activists, and the Changing Face of the American Right*. New York City: NYU Press.
- Dittmar, Kelly, Kira Sanbonmatsu, and Susan J. Carroll. 2018. *A Seat at the Table: Congresswomen's Perspectives on Why Their Presence Matters*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dowe Pearl K. Ford. 2020. "Resisting marginalization: Black women's political ambition and agency." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 1–5. doi: 10.1017/S1049096520000554.
- Elder, Laurel. 2021. *The Partisan Gap: Why Democratic Women Get Elected, but Republican Women Don't*. NYC: NYU Press.

- . 2018. "Why So Few Republican Women in State Legislatures?" in, *The Right Women: Republican Party Activists, Candidates, and Legislators*. Eds. Malliga Och and Shauna L. Shames. Praeger: Santa Barbara, CA. pp. 157-175.
- . 2014. "Contrasting Party Dynamics: A Three Decade Analysis of the Representation of Democratic versus Republican Women State Legislators," *The Social Science Journal*, 51(3): 377-385.
- . 2012. "The Partisan Gap among Women State Legislators." *Women, Politics & Policy*, 33(1): 65-85.
- Elder, Laurel and Steven Greene. 2012. *The Politics of Parenthood: Causes and Consequences of the Politicization and Polarization of the American Family*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- . 2016. "Red Parents, Blue Parents: The Politics of Modern Parenthood." *The Forum: A Journal of Applied Research in Contemporary Politics*. 14(2): 143–167. doi: 10.1515/for-2016-0013
- Elder, Laurel Steven Greene and Mary-Kate Lizotte. 2021. "[Feminist and Anti-Feminist Identification in 21st Century United States](https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2021.1929607)." *Journal of Women Politics & Politics*. 42(3): 243-259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2021.1929607>
- Ewall-Wice, Sarah and Aaron Navarro. 2020. "[Year of the Republican Women: GOP Adds Record Number of Women to Congress](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/year-of-the-republican-women-gop-adds-record-number-of-women-to-congress/)." CBS News. November 20.
- Freeman, Jo. 1986. "The Political Culture of the Democratic and Republican Parties." *Political Science Quarterly*. 101(3): 327-356.
- Garcia Bedolla, Lisa, Katherine Tate, and Janelle Wong. 2014. "Indelible Effects: The Impact of Women of Color in the U.S. Congress." In *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present and Future*, third edition. Eds. Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox. Oxford University Press. 235-252.
- Gonzalez, Nathan. 2021. "[Sexist Comments Followed by Silence Mar Alabama Senate Race](https://www.rollcall.com/2021/08/04/s sexist-comments-followed-by-silence-mar-alabama-senate-race/)." Rollcall. August 4, 2021.
- Grossmann, Matt, and Hopkins, David A. 2015. "Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats." *Perspectives on Politics* 13:119–39.
- . 2016. *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats*. Oxford University Press.
- Klinkner, Philip A. and Thomas F. Schaller. 2006. "A Regional Analysis of the 2006 Midterms." *The Forum* 4(3): Article 9. <bepress.com/forum/vol4/iss3/ast9>

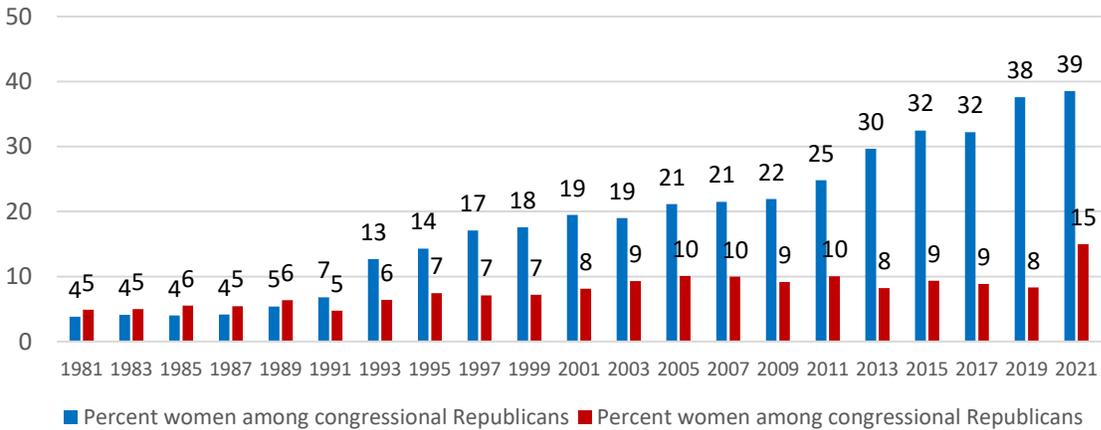
- Lawless, Jennifer L. and Richard L. Fox. 2010. *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, Jonathan. 2021. [Liz Cheney's Consultants are Given an Ultimatum: Drop Her, or Be Dropped](#). The New York Times. October 21, 2021.
- NCSL. 2021. "State Partisan Composition." National Conference of State Legislatures. www.ncsl.org.
- . 2021. "Women in State Legislatures for 2021." National Conference of State Legislators. www.ncsl.org
- Norrander, Barbara and Clyde Wilcox. 2014. "Trends in the Geography of Women in the U.S. State Legislatures." In *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present and Future. Third Edition*, Eds. Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox. Oxford UK: Oxford University Press,
- Och, Malliga. 2018. "The Grand Old Party of 2016." In *The Right Women: Republican Party Activists, Candidates, and Legislators*." Eds. Malliga Och and Shauna L. Shames. Praeger, Denver, CO. pp. 3-24
- Palmer, Barbara and Dennis Simon. 2006. *Breaking the Political Glass Ceiling: Women and Congressional Elections*. Routledge.
- Sanbonmatsu, Kira. 2006. *Where Women Run: Gender & Party Politics in the American States*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Weigel, Dave. 2021. "Texas Voters Brush Aside Trump Endorsement and Name Jack Ellzey the Winner in a House Special Election in Texas" *The Washington Post*. July 27, 2021.
- Wolbrecht, Christina. 2000. *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Figure 1: Women as a Percent of Democratic and Republican State Legislators, 1981-2021



Source: Center for American Women and Politics and National Conference of State Legislatures

Figure 2 Women as percent of Democrats and Republicans in Congress (Senate and House Combined), 1981-2021



Source: Center for American Women and Politics and Congressional Research Service 2021

Table 1: Women as a percent of Democrats versus Republicans in state legislatures over time

Region/State	Percent Dem women in 2019	Percent Dem women 2021	Change in Percent Dem women from 1989-2021	Percent Republican women 2019	Percent Republican women 2021	Change in Percent Rep women 1989-2021
National Total	42	46	+29	17	19	+1
The Northeast	40	43	+23	19	22	+1
Connecticut	33	35	+15	34	32	+8
Delaware	34	45	+43	8	5	-14
Maine	51	55	+26	21	30	-5
Maryland	49	51	+17	16	18	1
Massachusetts	30	34	+11	18	15	-8
New Hampshire	47	50	+5	16	24	-5
New Jersey	38	36	+32	18	21	+8
New York	41	43	+25	14	14	+10
Pennsylvania	33	36	+28	21	25	+19
Rhode Island	40	47	+32	21	19	-8
Vermont	44	50	+22	29	26	0
West Virginia	15	12	-7	14	12	-1
The South	37	42	+32	13	15	+5
Alabama	42	43	+37	7	7	+3
Arkansas	33	45	+37	21	17	+18
Florida	45	53	+40	20	24	+7
Georgia	58	61	+44	12	13	+2
Kentucky	41	61	+57	12	16	+6
Louisiana	21	23	+20	14	17	+17
Mississippi	18	21	+13	11	13	+7
North Carolina	38	42	+29	15	14	-3
Oklahoma	48	50	+40	14	14	+10
South Carolina	22	25	+17	12	14	+4
Tennessee	26	28	+24	12	14	-1
Texas	39	44	+32	12	13	+4
Virginia	43	42	+34	11	16	+8

Table 1 (Continued)

Region/State	Percent of Democrats who are women in 2019	Percent Dem who are women in 2021		Percent of Republicans who are women in 2019	Percent Rep who are women in 2021	
The Midwest	45	51	+32	18	19	+2
Illinois	46	53	+40	16	17	-6
Indiana	44	45	+32	26	17	+12
Iowa	45	47	+33	17	16	+1
Kansas	45	44	+25	20	21	-3
Michigan	49	51	+39	25	23	+10
Minnesota	42	51	+31	20	20	+2
Missouri	44	53	+31	17	15	+2
North Dakota	48	57	+45	16	17	+4
Ohio	49	49	+38	14	21	+13
South Dakota	38	45	+34	21	27	+15
Wisconsin	49	54	+37	14	18	-9
The West	47	50	+27	22	23	+3
Alaska	27	36	+31	47	29	+5
Arizona	50	57	+49	29	34	+3
California	36	32	+23	17	32	+13
Colorado	63	62	+52	23	18	-11
Hawaii	30	32	+20	50	40	-16
Idaho	52	53	+43	26	27	+4
Montana	52	54	+35	15	21	+13
Nevada	64	74	+66	29	40	+24
New Mexico	42	53	+46	23	26	+9
Oregon	52	53	+42	21	32	+17
Utah	70	70	+65	11	11	+2
Washington	51	55	+31	29	23	-2
Wyoming	42	44	+34	12	15	-3

Source: Center for American Women in Politics and National Conference of State Legislators

Table 2 Regional Realignment in the Congress and Women's Representation, 1987-2021

	Democrats			Republicans		
	1987	2019	2021	1987	2019	2021
Northeast	House 5% (3/66)	House 30% (21/70)	House 30% (20/69)	House 15% (6/41)	House 10% (2/21)	House 14% (3/22)
	Congress 5% (4/80)	Congress 27% (25/91)	Congress 27% (24/90)	Congress 12% (6/51)	Congress 17% (4/24)	Congress 20% (5/25)
South	House 3% (3/89)	House 40% (20/50)	House 43% (21/49)	House 0% (0/51)	House 3% (3/98)	House 9% (9/99)
	Congress 3% (3/107)	Congress 38% (20/53)	Congress 41% (21/51)	Congress 0% (0/59)	Congress 4% (5/121)	Congress 9% (11/121)
Midwest	House 5% (3/62)	House 48% (19/40)	House 53% (20/38)	House 6% (3/48)	House 7% (4/54)	House 14% (8/56)
	Congress 4% (3/75)	Congress 50% (24/48)	Congress 54% (25/46)	Congress 7% (4/60)	Congress 9% (6/70)	Congress 14% (10/72)
West	House 7% (3/41)	House 39% (29/75)	House 41% (29/70)	House 5% (2/34)	House 15% (4/27)	House 26% (8/31)
	Congress 6% (3/51)	Congress 41% (37/90)	Congress 43% (37/87)	Congress 4% (2/50)	Congress 16% (6/38)	Congress 25% (10/40)
Total	House 5% (12/258)	House 38% (89/235)	House 40% (90/226)	House 6% 11/174	House 7% 13/200	House 14% (28/208)
	Congress 4% (12/220)	Congress 38% (106/282)	Congress 39% (107/274)	Congress 6% (12/220)	Congress 8% (21/253)	Congress 14% (36/258)

The figures in parentheses are the raw number of Democratic/Republican women in the region over the total number of Democrats/Republicans in the region. Geographic regions are based on Klinkner and Schaller (2006).

Figure 3 Women as a percent of Democratic and Republican state legislators by region in 2021

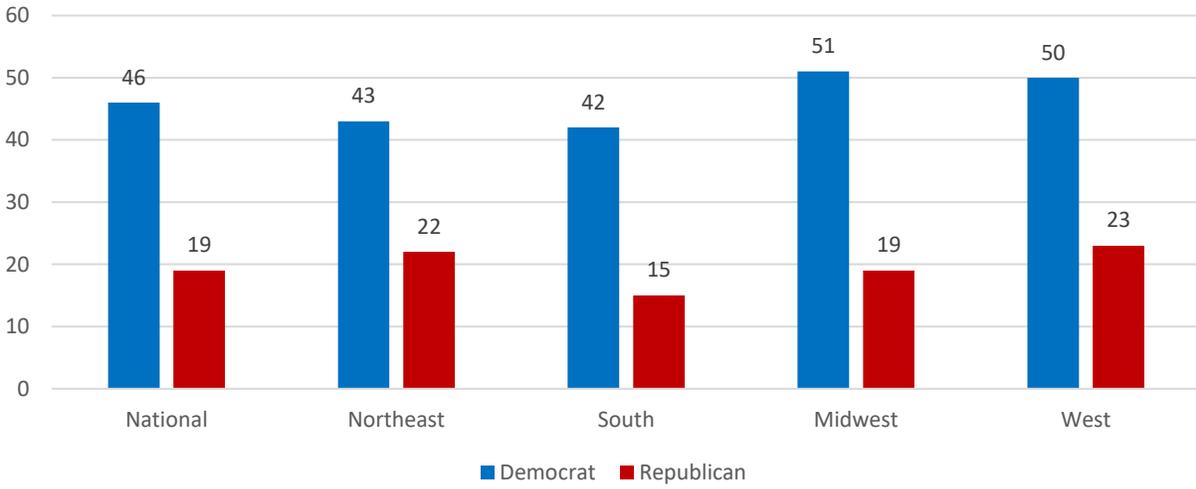


Figure 4 Women as a Percent of Congressional Democrats and Republicans in Congress as of 2021

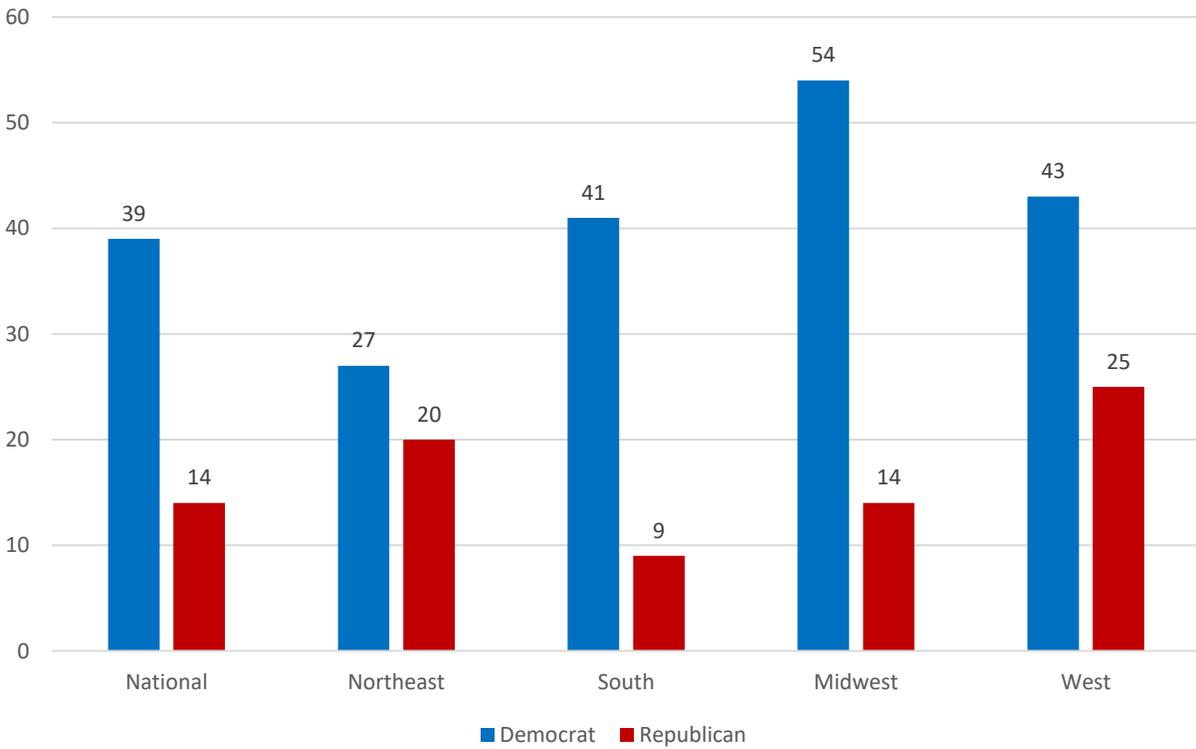


Figure 5 Women as Percent of White Members of Congress versus Members of Congress of Color, 1987-2021

