

FEM·ABLE



FEM-ABLE

Promoting women's participation
in the political domain

NATIONAL REPORT FOR SPAIN

Deliverable D2.2

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1. Overview of the Spanish political and social landscape

Spain, officially known as the Kingdom of Spain, is located in South-western Europe, occupying most of the Iberian Peninsula. The country, made up of 17 autonomous communities, also includes the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea, the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, and two autonomous cities in North Africa, Ceuta and Melilla. Spain is home to approximately 47 million people, making it the sixth most populous country in Europe and the third largest in terms of geographical area.

Spain is recognized as a developed country with a high standard of living, boasting the world's 14th largest economy by nominal GDP. Renowned for its rich cultural and historical heritage, Spain is a major global influencer in several areas, including language, with Spanish being the second most spoken language in the world, and tourism, as it consistently ranks among the top three most visited countries.

The country's political landscape is shaped by a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, with a multi-party system that has traditionally been dominated by two major parties. However, this dynamic has been evolving with the emergence of new political players. The social landscape, on the other hand, is marked by cultural and linguistic diversity, and ongoing discussions regarding autonomy and independence movements, gender equality, immigration, and other social issues.

1.1. Political landscape

Spain operates under a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, a political system where the monarch is the head of state within the parameters of the constitution. The monarch's role, currently held by King Felipe VI since 2014, is largely ceremonial. Nevertheless, the monarchy still holds important political and economic power, particularly in diplomatic and commercial relations. This has brought about important controversy surrounds the figure of the monarchy, which has in recent years been surrounded by numerous scandals of corruption and abuse of power. Spain has an important anti-monarchic republican movement since the rise of the Second Republic in the 1920's, but during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, the power of both the monarchy and the

church were consolidated. After Franco's death in 1975, the monarchy played a key role in the transition of government, cementing its existence in the Spanish political landscape until today.

The Spanish constitution, adopted in 1978, divides the government into three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The executive branch is composed of the President and the Ministry Cabinet. The presidential position is currently held by Pedro Sánchez of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) for the term 2018-2023. Once elected, and in accordance to agreements held within the different political parties to provide support to reach the required majority to rule, the President is nominated by the monarch and confirmed by the Congress of Deputies. The legislative power is vested in the Cortes Generales, consisting of two houses: the Congress of Deputies and the Senate. The Congress of Deputies, the lower house, is elected based on proportional representation. The Senate, the upper house, represents the autonomous communities of Spain. The judicial system is composed of the different courts, judges and magistrates.

Spain has a multi-party system with several influential parties. Traditionally, power has oscillated between the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), a center-left party, and the People's Party (PP), a center-right party. However, recent years have seen the rise of additional parties such as Podemos, a left-wing party; Vox, an extreme right-wing party with acute anti-immigration rhetoric; and, to a lesser extent, Ciudadanos, a center-right party. These parties represent a wide range of political ideologies, from socialism and liberalism to conservatism and right-wing populism.

Recent political developments have been shaped by issues such as the Catalan independence movement, corruption scandals, and the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2017, a controversial referendum on independence took place in Catalunya, leading to a major constitutional crisis. Political corruption has also been a significant issue, affecting several parties and leading to increased public disenchantment with the political class.

In terms of foreign relations, Spain is an active member of the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, and numerous other international organizations. The country has traditionally maintained close relations with Latin America due to historical and linguistic ties. It has also become a significant player in the Mediterranean region. In the EU, Spain often aligns itself with other Southern European countries on issues such as migration and fiscal policy.

Spain's international standing remains solid, although it faces challenges such as navigating the post-Brexit relationship with the UK, especially regarding the status of Gibraltar, and managing the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2. Social landscape

Spain is a diverse country with a variety of ethnic groups, languages, and religions. The majority of the population is of Spanish ethnicity, but there are also significant communities of other groups, including Moroccans, Romanians, and Ecuadorians. The official and predominant language is Spanish (Castilian), but other languages are also officially recognized in their respective autonomous communities, including Catalan, Galician, and Basque. As for religion, the majority of Spaniards are Roman Catholic, although the country is secular, and there are communities of other faiths, as well as a significant number of people who are non-religious.

Spanish society is generally seen as open and welcoming, with a strong emphasis on family ties, friendship, and socializing. It is known for its vibrant festivals, such as the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona and La Tomatina in Buñol. However, in recent years, there has been political and social tension around the traditions that use, abuse and/or kill animals as part of cultural festivities (such as bullfighting and rodeo-type of events). In 2010, Catalunya banned bullfighting, but the ban was overturned in 2016. Nevertheless, bullfighting no longer takes place in Catalunya, unlike the rest of the Spanish territory where the tradition is heavily engrained in local festivities.

The Spanish lifestyle is characterized by late meal times and the traditional afternoon siesta, although the latter is less commonly practiced in large cities and among younger generations. Work schedules are commonly structured around the siesta, meaning that many shops and business close between 2pm and 4pm. This obliges workers to undergo what is known as the “split schedule”, where the 8 hours of work are interrupted by a 2-3 hour break. The split schedule has of late been heavily criticised for making work-life balance overly difficult, particularly for women, who in Spain still carry the double burden of work inside and outside the household.

A number of social issues are prominent in Spain. Gender equality is a significant concern, with ongoing efforts to address gender-based violence and discrimination in the workplace. The rights of the LGBTQ+ community are generally well protected, with Spain being one of the first countries to legalize same-sex marriage in 2005. Immigration is another important issue, with debates surrounding the integration of immigrants and refugees.

Spain has also been grappling with the challenge of regional autonomy, especially in Catalunya and the Basque Country, where there are strong independence movements. This issue has led to tensions and divisions within Spanish society and has had significant political and social repercussions.

In terms of social movements, the Indignados (15-M) movement, which started in 2011, marked a significant shift. It arose in response to austerity measures, political corruption, and a perceived lack of true democracy. This movement played a role in shaping the political landscape and led to the emergence of the Podemos party, currently in a government coalition with the ruling party, PSOE.

The impact of these social issues on wider society and politics is substantial. The Catalan independence movement, for instance, has led to a constitutional crisis and continues to be a major point of contention in national politics. Social attitudes towards issues like gender equality and immigration also influence political discourse and policy-making. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had significant health and economic impacts, has been another major source of social and political tension.

As Spain moves forward, it faces several challenges and opportunities. The ongoing issues surrounding regional autonomy, particularly in Catalonia, may continue to cause friction. However, Spain's handling of these issues could lead to a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of national identity and autonomy. The post-pandemic recovery and the handling of the Ukraine-war will also be a critical task, with the potential to shape Spain's political and social landscape in significant ways. Ultimately, the country's future trajectory will be shaped by how effectively it navigates these challenges and leverages its diverse political and social landscape.

2. Historical background on the political participation of women in Spain

2.1 Evolution of the status of women in the Spanish context

Spanish women, traditionally confined to subordinate roles within family structures and excluded from public life, have experienced a myriad of societal shifts. These changes were largely due to the influence of feminist movements that emerged in two significant waves - from the mid-19th century to the 1920s and 30s, and from the 1960s to the 1980s. These movements, initially delayed due to factors such as limited industrial growth, a weak parliamentary system, and the strong influence of the Catholic Church, played pivotal roles in advancing social change towards gender equality. They facilitated women's entry into the workforce and academia, redefined concepts of citizenship and democracy, and championed women's suffrage and individual rights.

However, the Franco regime (1939-1975) imposed severe restrictions on women's rights, limiting their employment opportunities and prohibiting divorce, contraception, and abortion. This period witnessed a regression in women's societal status, but the feminist movement regained momentum in the 1970s. This revitalization drew impetus from theoretical concepts such as identifying patriarchy as the root cause of female oppression, contributions from Marxism, and a reinterpretation of gender norms.

The transition to democracy in the post-Franco era marked considerable improvements in women's status, with legal and societal reforms aiding their progress. In 1987, the introduction of a quota system by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) significantly enhanced female representation in the political sphere (for example, by 2008, the number of women in the Spanish Army reached the highest proportion in the European Union). By 2018, 41.2% of parliamentarians were women, and 58.8% of women were part of the labour force in 2019.

The democratic transition also saw the abolition of laws restricting married women's rights, the legalization of divorce, and the decriminalization of adultery. Furthermore, societal structures have significantly changed, with increased cohabitation rates and a rise in births outside of marriage.

Despite these advances, disparities persist. Women in Spain earn less than men in both the public and private sectors and are often depicted in traditional roles in the media.

Institutional measures have been implemented to improve women's situation, such as the establishment of the Institute of Women in 1983, the approval of laws providing comprehensive protection against gender violence, and the law for the effective equality of women and men. Reproductive rights have seen significant changes, with the legalization of contraception in 1978 and abortion upon request up to 14 weeks of pregnancy in 2010.

While feminist activism has somewhat subsided since the stabilization of democracy, primarily due to the achievement of primary objectives, women continue to strive for greater participation and personal expression. International Women's Day in 2018 saw over 250 demonstrations across Spain, showcasing the persistent spirit of advocacy for women's rights. Despite the substantial progress made, the struggle for complete gender equality continues.

Some key moments for women's rights

1933: Women gain the right to vote in general elections.

1975: The need for the husband's marital permission for women to undertake activities (such as opening a bank account, apply for a passport, sign a public deed or any type of contract, even with respect to the disposition of her own property, accept inheritances, appear in court by herself, choose a lawyer or exercise any commercial activity, amongst other limitations) is banned.

1978: Birth control is legalized.

1981: Divorce is legalized.

1983: The Institute of Women is created to promote gender equality.

2004: The Organic Law of Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence is approved.

2007: The Law for the Effective Equality of Women and Men is approved.

2010: The abortion law is expanded to allow voluntary termination of pregnancy up to 14 weeks.

2.2 History of feminism in Spain

2.2.1 First-wave feminism (end of XIX – beginning of XX)

Feminism in Spain during the mid-nineteenth century faced substantial challenges, as there were no well-organized feminist groups or significant debates on feminist issues. This was due to factors such as weak industrialization, limited influence of the Enlightenment, and strong Catholic conservatism.

Feminist ideals were seen as a threat to traditional values and were often branded as heresy with the aim of destabilizing family and social life. Women were confined to domestic roles and praised for upholding values of family and domesticity. The general consensus at this time was divided between those who believed women were biologically inferior to men and those who thought that women were not suited for jobs requiring intellectual rigor, instead being best suited for roles as wives and mothers.

Despite these challenges, some women, including Dolores Monserdà, Teresa Claramunt, and Maria de Echarri, began advocating for women's rights. Concepción Arenal even dressed as a man to gain access to university education, which was then closed to women. Emilia Pardo Bazán was another influential figure who criticized societal sexism and the educational disparity between men and women.

In the 1920s, the feminist movement in Spain began demanding women's suffrage, culminating in the creation of the National Association of Spanish Women (ANME). This organization, led by figures like Maria Espinosa, Benita Asas Manterola, Clara Campoamor, and Victoria Kent, actively campaigned for women's voting rights.

Women's suffrage was fully approved in Spain in October 1933 during the Second Republic (1931 – 1936), more due to the reformist project's coherence and policy than by suffragette mobilizations. This process saw a heated confrontation between Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent in the Constituent Cortes. Campoamor advocated for women's suffrage, arguing that women should learn

Key political figures

Victoria Kent (1892-1987) was a Spanish lawyer, politician, and feminist. She was one of the first women to graduate from law school in Spain and was a leading figure in the Spanish feminist movement. Kent was a member of the Republican Left party and served as a deputy in the Spanish parliament from 1931 to 1936. She was forced to flee Spain in 1939 after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Kent lived in exile until her death in 1959.

democratic values by exercising them. Kent, however, believed that women were not socially and politically prepared for voting and would be easily influenced by their husbands and the Church. Despite this, women's suffrage ultimately triumphed, marking a significant milestone in Spanish feminism.

2.2.2 Feminism during the Civil War and until the end of Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1936 – 1975)

Key political figures

Dolores Ibárruri (1895-1989) was a Spanish communist politician and trade unionist. She was known as "La Pasionaria" (the Passionate One) for her fiery speeches. Ibárruri was a member of the Communist Party of Spain and served as a deputy in the Spanish parliament from 1931 to 1936. She was forced to flee Spain in 1939 after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, returning to Spain after the death of Franco to occupy the presidency of the Communist Party until her death in 1989.

Key political figures

Clara Campoamor (1888-1972) was a Spanish lawyer, politician, and feminist. She was one of the leading figures in the campaign for women's suffrage in Spain. Campoamor was a member of the Republican Left party and served as a deputy in the Spanish parliament from 1931 to 1936. She was forced to flee Spain in 1939 after the Spanish Civil War. Campoamor lived in exile until her death in 1972.

In the post-war period and during the Franco dictatorship in Spain, there was a significant setback for women's rights and legal equality, which had advanced during the Second Republic. This regime imposed strict gender policies and discriminatory labor laws, limiting women's individual autonomy and reducing them to the status of upholders of social morality. Women were subjected to restrictive measures, such as needing marital permission to work or to conduct everyday tasks like opening a bank account.

However, towards the end of the 1960s, the Movement for the Liberation of Women arose, reigniting the debate on women's rights and reflecting the global interest in women's emancipation. This movement focused on issues like the concept of patriarchy, the origins of women's oppression, the role of the family, the sexual division of labor, and the reformation of public and private space division. It asserted that social change in economic structures could not occur without transforming the relations between sexes.

Key political figures

María Zambrano (1904-1991) was a Spanish philosopher, essayist, and poet. She was a leading figure in the Spanish intellectual movement and was a strong advocate for human rights and social justice. Zambrano was forced to flee Spain in 1939 after the Spanish Civil War. She lived in exile until 1984 and died in Madrid in 1991.

In the late 60s and early 70s, important feminist groups emerged in opposition to the Franco regime. One of the most significant was the clandestine Democratic Movement of Women (MDM), created in 1965 and linked to the Communist Party of Spain. The MDM promoted the organization of Spanish women and addressed specific issues affecting women.

Key political figures

Frederica Montseny i Mañé (1905-1994) was a Spanish anarchist and intellectual who served as Minister of Health and Social Assistance in the Government of the Spanish Republic during the Civil War. She is known as a novelist and essayist and for being one of the first female ministers in Western Europe. She was forced to exile in 1939, and died in France in 1994.

The death of General Franco in 1975 and the subsequent transition to democracy in Spain were fundamental to the recovery of civil and political rights, especially for women. The transition period saw a surge of feminist groups, both political and independent, all advocating for women's rights.

Despite some resistance from male politicians, even within progressive parties, the feminist movement continued to grow. Feminist bookshops, publishers, study groups, and centers were established, and important legal reforms, such as the Divorce Law of 1981 and the Law for

the Decriminalization of Abortion in 1985 in concrete cases (rape, danger to the mother's life and foetus unviability), were enacted. The 1978 Constitution didn't include all feminist demands, but it did set the legal context for further advancements in equality.

2.2.2 Third and fourth wave feminism (1980 – today)

In the democratic transition following the dictatorship, the first democratic governments began instituting changes such as the creation of the Women's Institute in 1983. Feminism became the driving force in delegitimizing violence against women and framing it as a social problem. The Women's Institute and feminist groups played a key role in bringing gender violence into the political agenda.

From 1996 to 2004, the first steps towards legislation addressing gender violence were made, including Organic Law 11/2003 and Law 27/2003. The media's role in highlighting high-profile gender violence cases was crucial in raising awareness and moving the issue into the political and public discourse. The celebration of the UN "International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women" since 2000 in Spain also contributed to increased social awareness.

From 2004 to 2011, significant advances were made in legislative development, leading to unprecedented formal equality. Notable laws include Law 39/2006, on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Attention to people in situation of dependency and the Organic Law 3/2007, for the effective equality of women and men. However, the debate over abortion rights caused significant controversy. The Organic Law 2/2010 legalized abortion in the first 14 weeks of gestation without the need for any justification. Despite this progress, the law has been criticized by both sides of the debate: religious groups for being too liberal, and feminist groups for not being liberal enough.

Key political figures

Carmen Alborch (1947-2018) was a Spanish writer, politician and socialist senator. She was Minister of Culture during the V Legislature for the Spanish Socialist party. Throughout her public career, she was a tireless fighter for women's rights and equality until her death in 2018 in Valencia.

Key political figures

Teresa Pàmies (1919-2012) was a leader of the Unified Socialist Youth of Catalonia (1937) and one of the founders of the Aliança Nacional de la Dona Jove (1937-1939). She married Gregorio López Raimundo, general secretary of the Unified Socialist Party of Catalunya (PSUC). She exiled in 1939 after the Civil War, and returned to Spain in 1971. She died in Granada in 2012.

Modern-day feminism in Spain is characterized by diversity and plurality, with different strands of feminism coexisting and intersecting, such as institutional, academic, ecofeminism, transsexual, queer theory, transfeminism, cyberfeminism, anarchofeminism, holistic, transnational, cross-cultural, transgressive, transsexual, transgender, and queer. The current challenge of the feminist movement is to build common, shared spaces while respecting the diversity

and multiplicity of the movement. Coordination among diverse feminist groups to ensure that the gains made in women's rights are not reversed is essential, particularly in a political climate where there are still strong political voices against the rights of women, particularly from right-winged parties who hold highly conservative agendas. Policies such as the prohibition of abortion, elimination of quotas, or legal efforts to backtrack specific measures to target gender violence are constantly on the Parliamentary table. Despite advances, the Spanish society remains divided in relation to the rights and role of women.

3. Current statistics about women's political participation in Spain

3.1 Congress and Senate

The current Speaker of the **Parliament (Congress of Deputies)**, Meritxell Batet, is a woman, born in 1973. She was first elected to the position on 21 May 2019 and was re-elected on 3 December 2019. The parliament consists of 350 members, with 201 men and 148 women. This constitutes a 42.41% representation of women. There is an electoral quota for women in place. Candidate lists must have a balanced proportion of women and men, so that candidates of either sex make up at least 40% of total membership. The first women who entered the parliament were Victoria Kent, Margarita Nelken and Clara Campoamor, taking their seat during the Second Republic in 1931. At that time, women could not yet vote, but they could be elected. The first woman to become a Speaker in the parliament was Luisa Fernanda Rudi Ubeda, from 2000-2004.

The **Senate** comprises 264 members, of which 161 are men and 103 are women, making the female representation in the Senate approximately 39.25%. The Senate has legislated candidate quotas, ensuring that candidate lists must have a balanced proportion of women and men, with each sex making up at least 40% of total membership. In the most recent election results, 126 men and 82 women were elected, representing approximately 39.42% of women. After the election or renewal, the total number of women in the Senate increased to 103, with 82 women directly elected and 21 indirectly elected. The first woman to become a senator was also in 1931. The Senate saw its first woman speaker in 1999, office held by Esperanza Aguirre Gil.

3.2 Other areas of political participation: results from the last evaluation of the Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities (PEIO 2014-2016)

The increased participation of women in political, economic, and social life, despite obstacles like persistent gender stereotypes and unequal distribution of familial responsibilities, can be attributed to improved education for women, their growing involvement in the labor market, and the enforcement of Organic Law 3/2007 on the effective equality of women and men. This law, along with other regulatory changes, have set standards for gender equality in various spheres of life.

Significant advancements from 2014 to 2016 include:

- Regulatory changes in the economic and market spheres, like Law 31/2014, which mandates that companies' boards of directors must ensure diversity in gender and experiences, and the new "Code of Good Government of the Listed Societies", urging companies to base their board appointments on a diversity of knowledge, experience, and gender.
- Initiatives by the General State Administration to promote gender equality in professional careers, like the pre-management training program developed by the Institute for Women and Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Energy, Tourism and Digital Agenda, and the Project Promote, aimed at promoting women's access to managerial positions and decision-making roles in companies.
- Support to the associative movement and foundational subjects regarding equality of opportunities. The annual call for IMIO grants to promote associative networks and participation in all societal scopes.
- Various initiatives and programs to study and monitor the degree of women's participation in different spheres of the economy, society, and politics, like the periodic reports by the General Directorate of Internal Policy and the updating of the Women in Figures database.

These measures have led to a positive impact on the political presence of Spanish women at the national, regional, local, and European Parliament levels. Despite the progress, further efforts are needed to ensure balanced gender participation and representation across all sectors.

3.3 EIGE power indicators for 2022

The Gender Equality Index (GEI) is a tool developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) to measure gender equality in the European Union. The GEI is based on a set of indicators that measure gender equality in seven domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, and violence.

Spain ranks 6th out of 27 EU Member States on the 2022 GEI, with a score of 74.6 out of 100. Spain's best performance is in the domain of health, with a score of 91.7 points. Spain's biggest improvement has been in the domain of power, with a score of 80.6 points.

Spain's performance in the Gender Equality Index for 2022



For more information on the different EIGE indicators for Spain, visit:

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/country/ES>.

In accordance to EIGE's Gender Statistics Database, for the realm of power indicators in Spain, the country has performed relatively well compared to the EU average in several areas:

- In **political power**, Spain scored 87.4. Women represented 44.9% of ministers, exceeding the EU average of 33.4%. Similarly, 41.5% of members of parliament were women, higher than the EU average of 33%. Notably, women made up 47.4% of members in regional assemblies, significantly surpassing the EU average of 29.4%.
- In **economic power**, Spain scored 75.7. Women held 34.7% of board positions in the largest quoted companies, compared to an EU average of 31.6%. Moreover, the share of women

board members in the central bank was 50%, considerably higher than the EU average of 26.4%.

- In **social power**, Spain scored 79.1. Women represented 56.4% of board members in research funding organizations, significantly exceeding the EU average of 40.3%. Women also held 40% of board positions in publicly owned broadcasting organizations, a slightly higher proportion than the EU average of 36.5%. However, in the national Olympic sport organizations, women made up only 28.7% of members of the highest decision-making body, which is still above the EU average of 20.2%.

4. Focus group to explore barriers and strategies regarding the political participation of women

4.1 Objectives of the focus group

Based on partner knowledge and initial desk research, the FEM-ABLE project identified a set of obstacles and barriers that might explain the reasons why women participate less in politics, and when they do, why they are chosen less than men candidates. Namely:

1. **Gender bias:** there may be conscious or unconscious bias against women in politics and leadership roles, making it more difficult for them to be taken seriously or gain access to opportunities.
2. **Stereotyping:** women may be stereotyped as being less competent or less ambitious than men, which can discourage them from pursuing leadership roles.
3. **Lack of role models:** when there are few women in leadership positions, it can be difficult for other women to envision themselves in those roles.
4. **Double standards:** women may face higher expectations and scrutiny than men when it comes to their behavior and performance in leadership roles.
5. **Work-life balance:** women may feel that the demands of political or leadership roles would make it difficult to balance their work and family responsibilities
6. **Glass ceiling and wage gap in political careers of women:** systemic barriers that prevent women from reaching higher positions and receiving equal pay as their men counterparts in the political field, such as preferential treatment, sexism, harassment and hostile work environment, limited networking opportunities (as many times these happen “after-hours”), lack of family-friendly policies, and lack of adequate promotion policies.

7. **Traditional assignment of administrative role to women within political organisations:** given the pervasiveness of gender roles within political organisations, women tend to take on tasks more related to administration, logistics, resource and team management, rather than more visible and directive roles focused on decision-making and on informing such decisions to staff and voter base.

Ultimately, the reasons why women are underrepresented in politics and leadership roles are complex and multifaceted. By hosting a focus group with women who have experience in political and leadership positions, we wish to explore the challenges that women face when attempting to break through these barriers and succeed in the traditionally men-dominated field of politics.

As such, ***the objective of the focus group was to validate the above barriers, identify additional barriers and identify strategies to address these barriers for Spain, based on the voice and experience of women who have faced leadership challenges and opportunities in their professional careers in the Spanish context.***

4.2 Participants and structure of the focus group

The focus group in Spain was held during a two hour session in evening of the 25th of April 2023 in the Associació de Famílies Monoparentals located at the city centre of Barcelona. The session was structured as follows:

- Welcome with snacks; signing of all consent forms and authorizations
- Presentation of participants
- Discussion focused on barriers for the participation of women in politics
- Discussion focused on strategies for the participation of women in politics
- Closing of the session

The session was attended by eight participants with experience in politics, including political party members, community leaders and activists. Participants were selected assuring diversity of in terms of age, origin, background and territorial representation within the Barcelona Province:

- Aminah Akram, Coordinator of Minhaj Diálogo at [Minhaj-ul-Quran International Spain](#)

- Anna Lemkow Tovias, Technical Secretariat of the Municipal Immigration Council for the area of [Drets Socials, Justícia Global, Feminismes i LGTBI de l'Ajuntament de Barcelona](#) / Candidate to the list of En Comú Podem of Sant Cugat
- Fátima Taleb Moussaoui, Intercultural mediator / Technician of the [Servei d'Interculturalitat de Sant Andreu](#) / Councilor for Participation and Coexistence of the [Ajuntament de Badalona](#) (2015-2018)
- Joana Dominguez, Vocal of International Cooperation of the [Xarxa de Consum Solidari](#)
- Pepa Martínez Peyrats, Director of [Lafede.cat - Federació d'Organitzacions per la Justícia Global](#)
- Lola López, Vocal and researcher at [Centre d'Estudis Africans i Interculturals](#) / Commissioner for Immigration, Interculturality and Diversity of Barcelona City Council (2015-2019)
- María Isabel Mata Gómez, Member of the board at [Associació de Dones Montserrat Roig de Sant Joan Despí](#) (2005-2013) / Vocal of the [Associació Impulsant de Sant Joan Despí](#) (2013-2016)
- Montse Álvarez i Mela, Member of the [Taula d'entitats de dones de Mataró Teixit de Dones](#) / Activist of Marea Blanca / Member of the project [Totes Plegades](#) / Director of the Grup de Teatre D de Dones / Candidate to the list of En Comú Podem of Mataró

The session was facilitated by:

- *Lead facilitator:* Meritxell Martínez Bellafont, Director at La Xixa Teatre, Certified Facilitator in Process-Oriented Psychology, expert in participatory Community Development processes and Theater of the Oppressed
- *Lead researcher:* Ana Fernández-Aballí, Research coordinator at La Xixa Teatre, PhD in Social Communication, specialized in participatory action research
- *Rapporteur:* Irina Arsova, Project manager at La Xixa Teatre, Certified as a community mediator, with studies in political science, international relations and human rights.

4.3 Results of the focus group: barriers, strategies and experiences faced by eight women leaders

4.3.1 Gender bias and stereotypes

Participants addressed the profound impact of gender bias and stereotypes, identifying these as significant barriers to women's participation in political and leadership spaces. They underscored the weight of intersectional discrimination, and shared their experiences of how gender bias intersected with multiple forms of discrimination such as age, origin, ethnicity, religion, among other identity traits. A particularly insidious example of these biases emerged in prejudices against Muslim women and those from various ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Participants expressed facing misguided perceptions about their literacy and education, understanding of local contexts, knowledge of the language, and constant questioning about the validity of their insights. Additionally, the participants shed light on the 'saviour complex' observed both among men and women as one of the most prominent ways to act upon intersectional gender biases. This well-intentioned yet harmful dynamic perpetuates biases and stereotypes, especially towards women from differing contexts (class, age, origin, etc.).

In response to these multi-layered challenges, the group proposed an array of strategies to counter the prevailing biases. Central to these was the emphasis on women asserting their agency, a stand against not just gender-based but intersectional biases and stereotypes as well. Participants highlighted the creation of safe spaces where women could freely share their experiences without judgment or discrimination. Such platforms could foster empathy and understanding among women from different backgrounds, building a supportive community that could act as a bulwark against societal prejudices.

Advocacy for a more intersectional understanding emerged as a key theme, emphasizing the need to view women's issues through a broader lens that considers aspects like race, religion, and cultural backgrounds. This perspective could inspire a more equitable and respectful attitude towards all women in order to facilitate their participation.

4.3.2 Role models

The participants acknowledged the importance of role models in inspiring and encouraging women's participation in politics. The lack of diverse women role models in political spaces, especially women of colour and women from diverse cultural backgrounds, is seen as a significant barrier. This absence can deter other women who might identify with these potential role models from engaging in political activities due to a perceived lack of representation and inclusion. A participant provided a compelling example of the power of role models. As a Muslim woman in politics, she noted the significance of her political involvement for other Muslim women. Her political participation inspired other Muslim women and women from similar backgrounds to engage in political activities, thus breaking down barriers and creating a more inclusive political environment.

"I have a hard drive with letters, emails, messages, people from Morocco, students, girls who have written to me to let me know how important it has been for them to see a Muslim woman take a political position. So I think that having a woman who takes the first step, allows other women to learn from her mistakes and take advantage of her achievements."

Conversely, participants also recognized the challenges presented by women politicians who adopt a more masculine or hostile approach to power. These women, while in positions of power, may not provide relatable or positive role models for other women. The aggressive form of politics they embody can serve to reinforce rather than challenge existing patriarchal structures, which can be discouraging for women who aspire to lead differently.

Participants suggest a few strategies to address the lack of role models, advocating for trainings and spaces that build confidence and foster leadership skills among women based on alternative models of exerting power that can be learnt from other cases around the globe (such as the governance models from Chiapas and other Global south experiences).

Participants suggested that women should take initiative and interact directly with entities and organizations, which can provide opportunities for networking and gaining visibility, potentially paving the way for more women to become role models in politics.

4.3.3 Double standards and scrutiny

The participants unanimously acknowledge the presence of double standards and the increased scrutiny that women typically face in political and leadership environments. They identified that actions and decisions made by women are often subjected to greater scrutiny compared to their male colleagues, creating an inherently challenging environment for women's participation. This heightened scrutiny generates a hostile environment, dissuading women from pursuing leadership roles and thereby contributing to their political marginalization.

Participants shared tangible illustration of these double standards and scrutiny, highlighting that unconventional or transformational leadership forms or strategies that are brought on the table by women are met with stronger opposition than if they were presented by men, eventually leading to the isolation of the woman leader. To illustrate, one participant pointed out that as she exhibits leadership traits similar to her male counterparts, she is often labelled as 'masculine' or 'confrontational', (while men are titled as exhibiting leadership skills for the application of the same strategies) highlighting the biased judgment women leaders face.

A participant shared her experience of advocating to prioritize the feminist perspective in her political list, moving it from the bottom to the top. The initial ranking mirrored the inadequate importance given to women's issues, showcasing a prevalent double standard regarding the value assigned to diverse political matters.

To address double standards and increased scrutiny, participants suggested taking a strategy of proactive assertiveness, emphasizing that women should not await permission or depend on external support to advance, but rather women should seize initiative and reject reliance on others for securing positions of power.

Participants also proposed fostering more inclusive environments that value diversity and are devoid of discrimination and bias. They highlighted the significance of integrating intercultural perspectives, arguing that such environments could help diminish the scrutiny experienced by women and advocate for more equitable treatment.

Lastly, participants recommended the cultivation of direct, horizontal relationships, arguing that this approach could enable women to traverse the political landscape more effectively, thereby diminishing the effects of double standards and scrutiny.

4.3.4 Work-life balance

Participants mentioned the difficulty of balancing personal and professional responsibilities. They acknowledge that women, in particular, face additional challenges when trying to participate in politics while also managing family and household duties. One participant who has two children discussed her own experience of trying to balance her political commitments with her personal life, mentioning how demanding it can be and the impact it has had on her ability to participate fully in politics.

"Now that my children are older I can finally start focusing not only on increasing my level of political participation, but also on improving my skills and confidence to be better prepared to face the challenges of being in a woman in politics."

Participants did not provide specific strategies to address work-life balance issues directly. However, they do discuss the importance of creating supportive environments for women in politics, which may help alleviate some of the challenges women face when trying to balance their personal and professional lives. They emphasize the importance of working together, sharing experiences, and learning from each other in these spaces.

4.3.5 Hostile work environment

Participants identified hostile work environments as a key obstacle to women's participation in political and leadership spaces. They articulated that such environments often emerge through aggressive communication tones and frequent interruption during meetings, establishing an unfriendly atmosphere for women. This hostility can incite feelings of discomfort and intimidation, consequently diminishing the likelihood of women's active participation and contribution of ideas.

Participants shared their encounters with hostile environments, shedding light on challenges arising not only from gender but also age, origin or religion; the more diversity, the more hostile the environment. They underscored that despite receiving support from their work teams and from community members and groups, peers in equal positions of power did not reciprocate similar support. Participants highlighted that hostility can stem from numerous factors, extending beyond gender discrimination. As such, loneliness was highlighted as a significant barrier, with one

"I felt very lonely among my peers, but very accompanied by the people from the communities to whom I owed my work, who still invite me to participate in their parties and events, as well as the technical team that accompanied me during my work in the City Council."

participant recounting her isolation among peers but noting the continued support she received from the communities she served and her technical team.

Additionally, participants recognized that many times women themselves can perpetuate hostility, emphasizing the importance of listening, disagreement, and supportive relationships.

The participants also touched on other specific issues, such as having faced aggressions both in the work place and in the public space, the systematic invisibility of women's work and skills, and the backlash faced by women wearing a veil on behalf of other women who do not share this practice, particularly in certain feminist spaces.

"My points of view were dismissed many times by other women, who would use the shield of sorority to avoid dissenting opinions. According to these women, putting other opinions on the table was a detriment of women take care of each other, and generated unnecessary confrontation."

A participant offered a strategy to combat hostile environments, proposing the establishment and open discussion of a gender protocol within organizations, addressed from an intersectional perspective. She asserts that this method has proven successful in her experience, as it draws attention to the hostility faced by women in the workplace and promotes open conversations on the subject, and generates organisational consensus on best ways to address such hostility.

The group's insights suggest that cultivating an inclusive and supportive atmosphere is crucial. This could involve promoting open communication, fostering empathy and understanding, and establishing spaces where women feel confident articulating their thoughts and ideas. Moving away from extremely hostile environments and build new, more inclusive spaces is also an option. Additionally, addressing the root causes of hostility, such as discriminatory attitudes and practices, can assist organizations in creating a more welcoming and empowering environment for women. Lastly, participants suggested revisiting the different feminist perspectives within the organizations, to assure that feminism and championing the participation of some women was not used in detriment of the participation of women with diversity in terms of origin, age, religion, ethnicity, cultural background or other identity trait that could become an axis of discrimination.

4.3.6 Administrative vs. decision-making roles

Participants discussed the disparity between administrative and decision-making roles as a barrier that hinders women's participation. They expressed that women are often relegated to administrative positions, which may limit their influence and access to decision-making processes. This disparity can perpetuate gender inequality within organizations, as women may not have the same opportunities to contribute their perspectives and shape outcomes.

“When my male colleague became president of the association, I suddenly became his Secretary, despite being second in command. Slowly, I started to be excluded from decision making meetings. When I confronted him about his attitude and why I was being left out, he said that he was trying to help me out by making things simpler for me.”

Participants suggest that it is crucial to recognize the different ways women may be limited in their roles and work to create more equitable opportunities for participation in decision-making processes. Participants propose strategies to address the barrier of administrative vs. decision-making roles, such as promoting more women into decision-making positions, ensuring equal representation in both leadership and administrative roles, and actively working to dismantle gender-based stereotypes that perpetuate the idea that women are better suited for administrative tasks. By assuring equal distribution of administrative tasks as a set prerogative, organizations can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive environment that encourages women's full participation in all aspects of the workplace.

4.3.7 Paternalism

Focus group participants identified paternalism as a substantial barrier to women's active involvement in political and leadership domains. This attitude often manifests itself in two ways: the 'saviour complex' and the dominance of male voices. These behaviours alienate women and obstruct sincere inclusivity and empowerment efforts. Paternalism, experienced from both men and women, can be intensified by various axes of discrimination, such as age, origin, and social class. This underscores the multifaceted nature of the issue and indicates the need for strategies that address these intersectional barriers to promote broader inclusivity and participation.

Inclusivity training among political organisations, and instituting protocols to ensure equitable speaking time during discussions can counteract these tendencies.

4.3.8 Resistance to change within organisations

The focus group participants previously identified the resistance to change within organizations as a significant barrier to women's involvement in political and leadership spaces. They shared their experiences, highlighting the challenge posed by deep-rooted attitudes and resistance within existing structures.

One participant revealed her experience of encountering resistance within her organization when she attempted to prioritize women's issues. This experience emphasizes the daunting challenge of navigating entrenched attitudes, which often deters women from assuming leadership roles or advancing their agendas.

The group identified an absence of teamwork mechanisms within and across various governance areas as another barrier. They also pointed out the issue of organizing participation spaces without the presence of those primarily affected by the topics under discussion. The reluctance to increase the involvement of groups directly impacted by policies, programmes, and actions under development was noted as another significant obstacle.

They discussed the resistance found within associations that are averse to changes in resource management. Participants pointed out that transformative participation often implies altering the way resources are distributed and managed, which tends to elicit significant opposition from both within and outside organizations.

One participant shared her successful lobbying experience within her political group to raise feminism from a secondary to a primary issue. This shift resulted in an increased representation of women, with females constituting 60% of their list, including many independent members. She suggested a strategy of symbolically listing feminism as the first axis or area in programmatic themes, thereby altering the perception of the topic's importance.

Another participant narrated her journey of establishing a feminist organization. Despite the initial challenges and dissolution of the association, she succeeded in attracting women from various backgrounds through events like literary dinners and eventually organized diverse workshops. However, she also acknowledged the resistance she faced from individuals who did not align with her vision. The participants noted that the associative fabric often resists changes in participation methods, marking yet another barrier to transformative participation.

4.3.9 Societal attitudes and cultural norms

Participants describe societal attitudes and cultural norms as barriers that hinder women's participation in various ways, and how many times women are not supported to rise above or challenge traditional roles. They discuss how women from diverse backgrounds face additional challenges due to stereotypes and prejudices. They also mention the pressure to conform to expectations and the difficulty of navigating complex dynamics within organizations and communities. Participants highlighted the tendency for women to wait for permission or support instead of asserting themselves, a behaviour that can stem from societal expectations and conditioning, and they emphasized the intersectionality of these norms, pointing out the additional challenges faced by women from different origins and beliefs.

To address these barriers, participants propose various strategies, such as creating safe spaces for women to share experiences, socialize, and support each other; fostering intercultural perspectives and diversity; and promoting women's empowerment through mentoring and encouragement. They also suggest increasing collaboration and working transversally within organizations and communities, implementing protocols to facilitate inclusive environments, and engaging men as allies and supporters.

"In very communal or horizontal groups, rising or standing out as an individual can be problematic. Although we have to be careful about stereotypes related to certain cultural norms. Sometimes we can fall in our own stereotype traps, and keep ourselves from taking a path that could lead to increased presence and participation."

4.3.10 Media influence

"The media, instead of asking about the work done, asked about this and that terrorist attack in some far away country. In the end I had to stop attending to the media unless it was specifically about my work at the City Council."

Participants describe media influence as a barrier that hinders women's participation by perpetuating stereotypes, focusing on aspects unrelated to their political work, and reducing their credibility. This can create a hostile environment for women in politics, particularly those from minority backgrounds. A participant provided a concrete example where the media would contact her not to discuss her mandate and work as a politician, but to comment on news related to terrorism solely because she is Muslim. This

demonstrates the media's tendency to reinforce stereotypes and divert attention from the participant's political accomplishments and qualifications. To address the media influence as a barrier, participants propose promoting media literacy and raising awareness about the importance of diverse representation in the media. Additionally, they suggest that journalists should be trained to avoid stereotypes and biases, focusing on the achievements and qualifications of women in public roles rather than unrelated aspects, such as their religion or background.

4.3.11 Training, mentorship, and support programs

The issue of insufficient support and training was highlighted by the participants, who emphasized the importance of such systems in cultivating self-confidence and leadership skills among women. They identified this absence as a considerable barrier to women's political participation and leadership roles.

Participants observed an interesting paradox concerning self-presentation. While men generally have no trouble showcasing their expertise, women, despite being equally or more knowledgeable, often retreat from asserting their expertise. This reluctance stems from the 'impostor syndrome,' a phenomenon where women often undervalue their expertise and doubt their accomplishments, leading to self-depreciation.

Strategies for addressing these barriers were also discussed, where participants emphasized the need for women to bolster their self-confidence and proposed the concept of a leadership academy or similar platform. Such a platform could provide a space for women to gain confidence and find their voice. Such a school would need to be created under a scope of feminist governance, drawing on positive and inclusive leadership examples both from the Global North and the Global South, rethinking and defining what a feminist approach to leadership is. There was a call to reassess who is included and excluded within these approaches, the type of participation that is encouraged, and the integration of interculturality in participation. Participants suggested that defining what constitutes feminist leadership and how it differentiates from existing political participation experiences would be beneficial.

Confronting the impostor syndrome would require the need to boost self-confidence, and was underlined as a strategic measure. Participants noted the tendency among women to frequently seek permission, which they believed stemmed from a lack of self-confidence. They suggested that fostering confidence, independence, assertiveness, and presentation skills, potentially through a leadership school, could be an effective strategy.

4.3.12 Inclusive and supportive environments

Participants expressed a strong consensus on the negative impact of isolation, the emotional toll of conflict, and the combative nature of existing leadership styles on women's participation in political and leadership roles. The lack of inclusive, supportive environments was identified as a significant barrier to their participation.

The absence of safe spaces was emphasized as a major issue by numerous participants. They highlighted the critical need for environments where women can socialize, share experiences, and build confidence. A lack of such safe spaces, they observed, impedes women's ability to access and navigate political arenas. Additionally, they drew attention to the emotional burden of conflict and the time it takes to heal the wounds inflicted by betrayal, lack of support, or belittlement, particularly by trusted individuals.

Many advocated for inclusive spaces where women could openly discuss personal experiences in the workplace without fear of judgment or retribution. Participants underscored the importance of an intercultural perspective, calling for greater inclusivity and understanding for women from diverse backgrounds and beliefs. The establishment of such inclusive spaces would not only foster empathy and connection but also contribute to women's confidence in their leadership abilities. Participants acknowledged the dual nature of power and its potential for both positive and negative impacts. The challenge, they noted, was to harness this power to create more inclusive and supportive environments.

Many participants spoke of successful interventions they had been a part of. One, in particular, shared the implementation of a protocol within her organization that sparked conversations about violence, thereby fostering a more comfortable environment. Practical measures such as setting speaking time limits during discussions to ensure fairness and inclusivity could be a useful strategy to put in place. However, the participants also recognized the challenges of maintaining these safe spaces or implementing inclusive strategies. They noted that such spaces or strategies, once established, often face sabotage and disruption.

To address these barriers, the group proposed three main strategies. First, they suggested generating and openly discussing protocols within the group as a means to identify and overcome obstacles women face in power spaces. Second, they recommended working closely with a support staff or "guardian angel," who could provide guidance and encouragement to women navigating political and leadership spaces. Thirdly, they proposed the creation of a support network among women who are in politics, to generate confidence, share experiences, and strengthen the sense of belonging to the institutions.

4.3.13 Role of men in gender equality

Participants generally acknowledged the importance of men's involvement in promoting gender equality and women's participation. They recognized that men play a crucial role in challenging traditional gender norms and supporting women in political and decision-making processes. They highlighted that the role of men in supporting women who hold power positions should be promoted from early ages, both from educational settings and from home.

"My son was my pillar of support. He told me every day 'Go for it, mom, you can do it! Tell me what I can do.'"

4.4 Summary of key strategies proposed by focus group participants

- **Creating safe spaces:** develop environments where women can share experiences, socialize, and support each other without judgment or discrimination. This fosters empathy, understanding, and a supportive community against societal prejudices.
- **Promoting intersectionality:** advocate for a more intersectional understanding of women's issues, taking into account aspects like race, religion, and cultural backgrounds, which can lead to a more equitable and respectful attitude towards all women.
- **Implementing training programs:** establish training spaces to build confidence and foster leadership skills among women, potentially through a leadership academy or similar platform designed with a feminist governance scope based on feminist perspectives that draw on positive experiences from the global north and the global south.
- **Encouraging proactive assertiveness:** promote a culture where women seize initiatives, interact directly with entities and organizations, and reject reliance on others for securing positions of power.

- **Fostering inclusive environments:** create environments that value diversity and are devoid of discrimination and bias, including the integration of intercultural perspectives.
- **Establishing gender protocols:** implement and openly discuss gender protocols within organizations, addressing issues from an intersectional perspective, promoting open conversations about the hostility women face in the workplace.
- **Promoting equal representation:** ensure more women get into decision-making positions, dismantling gender-based stereotypes that perpetuate the idea that women are better suited for administrative tasks.
- **Incorporating inclusivity training:** implement inclusivity training within political organizations and institute protocols to ensure equitable speaking time during discussions.
- **Creating support networks:** establish a support network among women in politics to generate confidence, share experiences, and strengthen a sense of belonging to institutions.
- **Engaging male allies:** promote the role of men in supporting women in power positions from an early age, both in educational settings and at home. They can help challenge traditional gender norms and support women in political and decision-making processes.

5. Results of the questionnaire

“Perceptions and attitudes on women's political participation”

5.1 Structure of the questionnaire and its analysis

As part of the research to further study the barriers and strategies underlying the political participation of women in Spain, we conducted a questionnaire on “Perceptions and attitudes on women's political participation”. The questionnaire was released during April 2023 through mailings and social networks, and was answered anonymously. In this section we present the results of the questionnaire, aimed at understanding voters' perceptions about the participation of women in politics and leadership positions. The study was designed to shed light on the respondents' attitudes towards various aspects of gender equality in the political sphere, including gender bias, role models, work-life balance, and strategies to enhance female representation.

A total of 95 individuals participated in the survey, including a mix of men and women from diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, and political affiliations. The survey comprised a series of 38 questions, where respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), as follows:

1. Totally disagree
2. Disagree
3. I am not sure
4. Agree
5. Totally agree

We analysed results based on two focuses:

- By overall responses regarding the different barriers and strategies:
 - Bias and stereotypes (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9)
 - Role models (Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13)

- Double standards and scrutiny (Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17)
- Work-life Bbalance (Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21)
- Other barriers (hostile work environments, media portrayals, cultural norms, etc.) (Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q32, Q33, Q34)
- Strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38)
- By demographic characteristics of the respondents:
 - All respondents
 - By gender (men / women)
 - By age (under 40 / 40 and over)
 - By education level (non-tertiary education / university degree or higher)
 - By political affiliation (left / non-disclosure or other)

In the analysis by demographic group, questions were grouped into four categories:

- 22 questions with a negative correlation to gender equality (a high score means less gender equality)
- 11 questions with a positive correlation to gender equality (a high score means more gender equality)
- 1 question on perception on leadership style differences between men and women
- 4 questions related to strategies to overcome gender inequality in politics.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked open ended questions about additional barriers and strategies, which were also analysed to identify additional information relevant to our research.

5.2 Demographics of respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were as follows:

- Total Respondents: 95 individuals

- Place of residence: all respondents resided in Spain (55 in Barcelona, 32 in other areas of Catalunya and 8 in other areas of Spain).
- Gender:
 - Men: 29 respondents, making up approximately 30.5% of the total participants.
 - Women: 66 respondents, constituting approximately 69.5% of the total participants.
- Age:
 - The average age of respondents was 45 years.
 - The youngest respondent was 19 years old and the oldest was 80 years old.
 - The median age of respondents was 45 years.
- Education:
 - Primary Education: 2 respondents (~2.1% of the total participants)
 - Secondary Education: 7 respondents (~7.4% of the total participants)
 - Post-secondary education (non-tertiary): 16 respondents (~16.8% of the total participants)
 - Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent: 32 respondents (~33.7% of the total participants)
 - Master's Degree or Equivalent: 26 respondents (~27.4% of the total participants)
 - Doctoral Degree or Equivalent: 12 respondents (~12.6% of the total participants)

Political Affiliation:

- Did not respond: 37 respondents (~38.9% of the total participants)
- Left: 55 respondents (~57.9% of the total participants)
- Right: 3 respondents (~3.2% of the total participants)

It should be noted that the political affiliation question was optional, and therefore, a significant number of respondents (approximately 38.9%) chose not to disclose their political leanings. The majority of those who did disclose their political affiliations leaned towards the left.

5.3 Overall results regarding barriers and strategies

5.3.1 Interpretation of results by barrier

Based on the average responses to the questions by all respondents, the following interpretations can be made:

Bias and stereotypes (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9). On average, respondents seem to recognize that gender bias and stereotypes negatively impact women in politics, with a strong agreement that stereotypes about women's abilities (Q1: 4.0), perception of women as emotional decision-makers (Q2: 3.7), and the need for women to downplay their femininity (Q3: 3.7) hinder their progress in politics. However, they also showed strong agreement that women are as capable as men in political leadership roles (Q4: 4.7), and that diverse representation in leadership positions is important (Q6: 4.4). The respondents disagreed with the statement that men candidates are usually better qualified (Q5: 1.9). Witnessing or experiencing gender bias or discrimination in politics (Q7: 3.8) and feeling discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of gender (Q8: 2.5) were also acknowledged, but to a lesser extent.

Role models (Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13). The presence of women in political leadership roles as a source of inspiration for other women to pursue political careers received strong agreement (Q10: 4.5). Respondents somewhat agreed with the availability of women political role models in their country (Q11: 3.9) and having had a female role model or mentor in a leadership position (Q12: 3.6). The statement that women frequently occupy leadership positions in their workplace or community (Q13: 3.4) received moderate agreement.

Double standards and scrutiny (Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17). There was strong agreement that women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men (Q14: 4.3), and that they are more likely to be criticized for their personal life choices compared to men (Q15: 4.4). The respondents also agreed strongly that women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles (Q16: 4.3), and that women in leadership face a "double bind" where they are expected to be both assertive and nurturing (Q17: 4.1).

Work-life balance (Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21). There's a moderate to strong agreement that it's challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to other career choices (Q18: 3.5), and in comparison to their male counterparts (Q19: 4.0). There's strong support

for the implementation of family-friendly policies in political organizations (Q20: 4.2), and moderate agreement that respondents have felt they had to choose between family responsibilities and pursuing a leadership role (Q21: 3.4).

Other Barriers (Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q32, Q33, Q34). On average, the respondents agree that wage disparities exist between men and women politicians (Q22: 3.5) and that women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, than their male counterparts (Q23: 4.3). There's moderate agreement about witnessing or experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace or politics (Q24: 3.2), and strong agreement that women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience (Q25: 4.1). There's also substantial agreement that women in political organizations are often limited to administrative roles instead of decision-making positions (Q26: 3.8). The highest level of agreement is seen regarding the need for political organizations to actively promote women to decision-making roles to achieve gender equality (Q27: 4.5). Respondents tend to agree that they have seen women being talked over or interrupted in meetings or discussions more frequently than their male counterparts (Q28: 3.9), and that societal norms and expectations limit women's political aspirations and opportunities (Q29: 4.1). Traditional gender roles and expectations discouraging women from pursuing political careers also get substantial agreement (Q30: 4.1). On the other hand, respondents are inclined to disagree that the cultural norms in their country support women's participation in politics (Q31: 2.8), and there's stronger disagreement that there are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in their community (Q32: 2.4). Respondents strongly disagree that the media in their country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately (Q33: 2.1), and they moderately agree that media coverage of women in politics often focuses on their appearance rather than their achievements and qualifications (Q34: 3.5).

5.3.2 Interpretation of results by strategy

The strategies suggested (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38) to increase the representation of women in leadership positions were highly rated by respondents, showing a strong consensus on the need for proactive measures:

- **Encourage women to pursue leadership roles from a young age (Q35):** With an average rating of 4.2, respondents showed strong agreement on the importance of encouraging women from a young age to consider leadership roles. This could potentially counteract

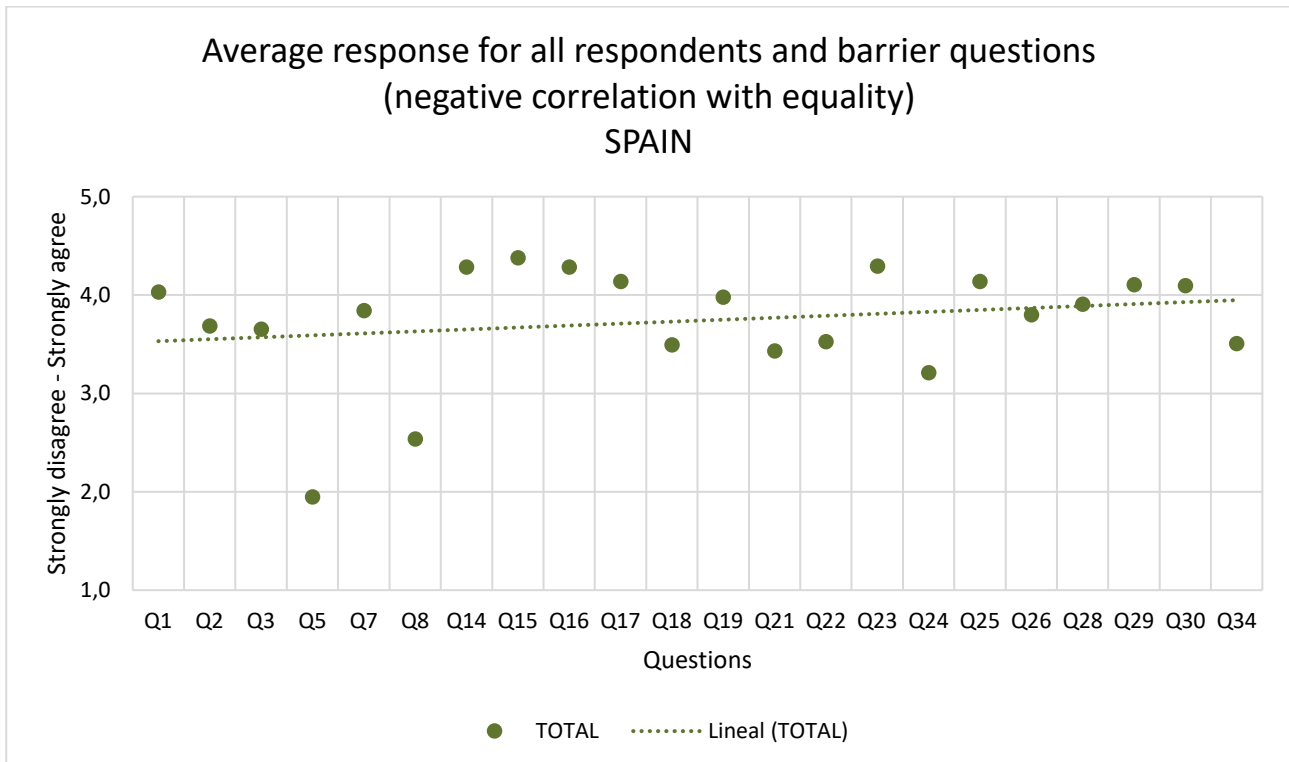
societal norms and stereotypes that discourage women from seeing themselves as leaders.

- ***Implement diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and in politics (Q36):*** This question received one of the highest ratings in the survey with an average of 4.5, suggesting a strong consensus among respondents on the need for policy interventions to promote diversity and inclusion. Such policies could include gender quotas, affirmative action, and measures to ensure a safe and supportive work environment.
- ***Provide mentorship and support for women in leadership positions (Q37):*** With an average rating of 4.2, respondents agreed on the importance of mentorship and support systems for women in leadership. This highlights the need for networking opportunities, training programs, and other forms of support that could help women build confidence, acquire necessary skills, and navigate the challenges they may face as leaders.
- ***Engage in awareness raising campaigns (Q38):*** The average rating of 4.3 indicates that respondents believe in the effectiveness of awareness-raising campaigns in changing perceptions and attitudes towards women in politics and leadership. This could include campaigns to highlight the achievements of women leaders, challenge gender stereotypes, and promote the benefits of diversity in leadership.

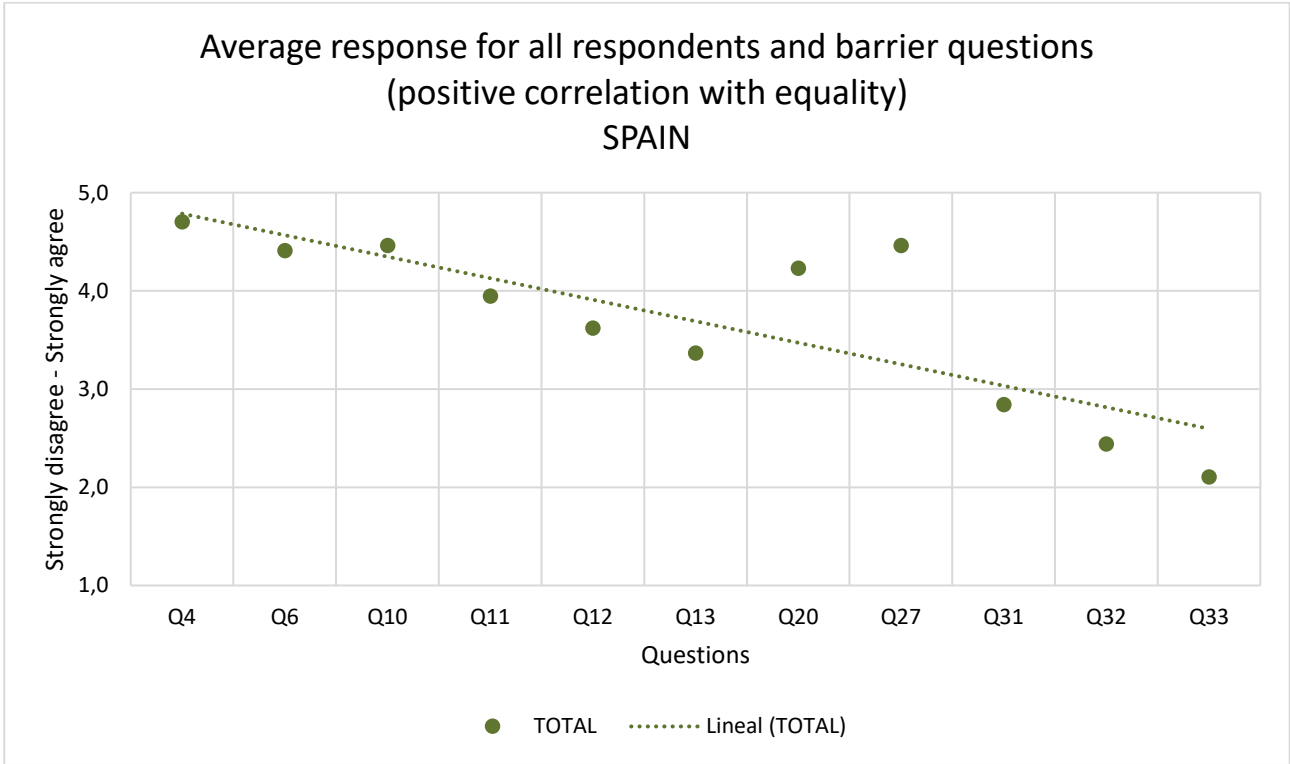
Overall, the data suggests that respondents recognize the existence of gender inequality in politics and leadership and believe in the need for proactive strategies to address this issue. They strongly agree on the importance of early encouragement, policy interventions, mentorship and support, and awareness raising as effective strategies to increase women's representation in leadership positions.

5.4 Results by demographic groups

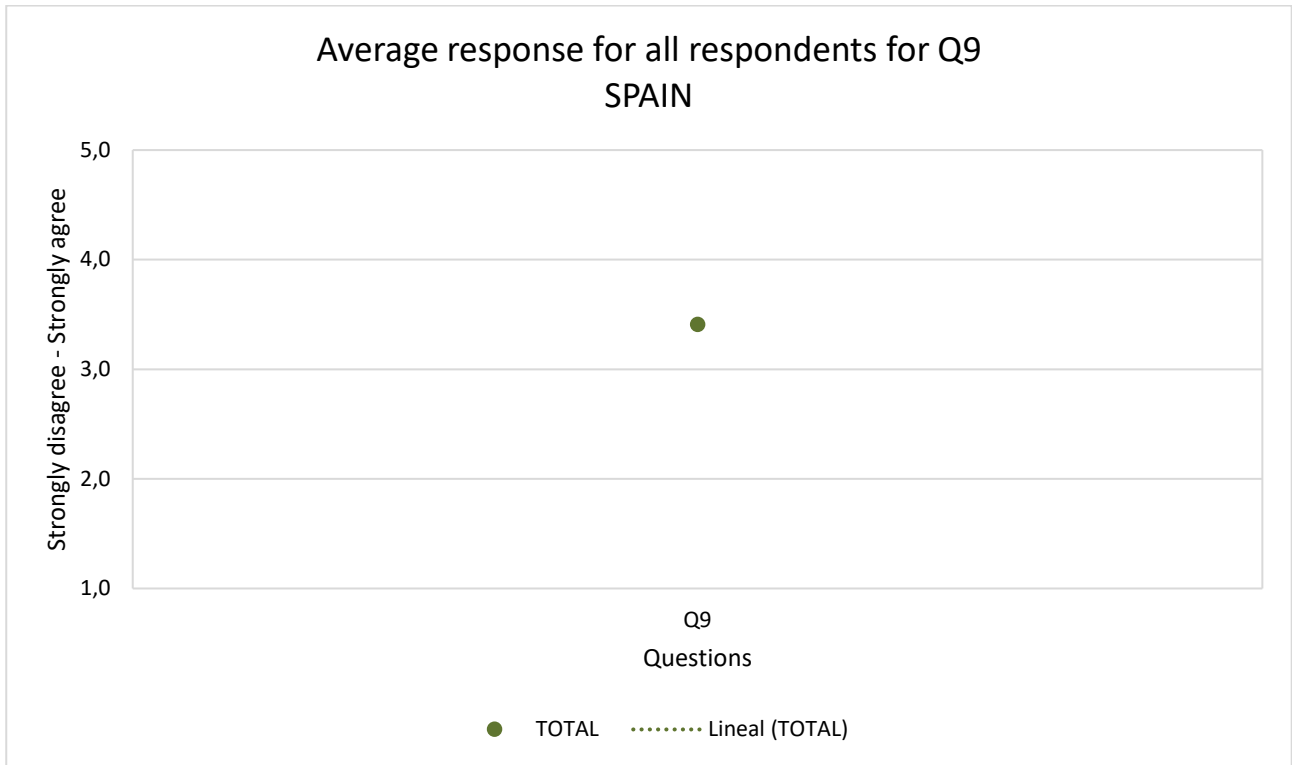
5.4.1 Interpretation of results for all respondents



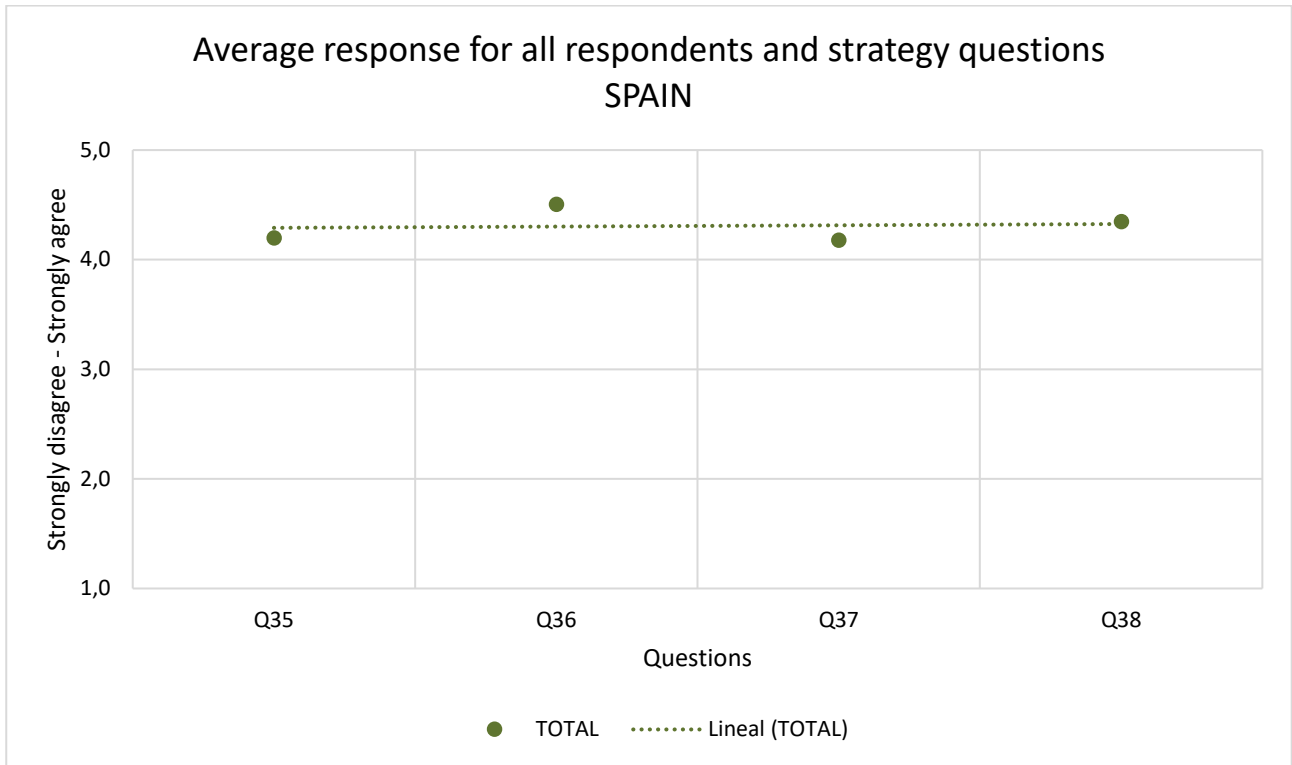
Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). The average responses to these questions suggest that the respondents generally recognize and acknowledge the existence of gender bias and inequality in politics. For instance, they agree that stereotypes about women's abilities hinder their progress in politics (Q1: 4.0), women politicians are often criticized for their personal life choices compared to men (Q15: 4.4), and that women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles (Q16: 4.3). However, it's important to note that not all respondents appear to have personally experienced these biases. For example, the responses to Q8 suggest that most respondents have not felt discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of their gender (Q8: 2.5).



Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). The responses to these questions show a generally positive attitude towards women in politics and leadership roles. Respondents strongly agree that women are as capable as men in political leadership roles (Q4: 4.7), and that having diverse representation in leadership positions is important (Q6: 4.4). They also generally agree with the notion that more women in political leadership positions would inspire other women to pursue political careers (Q10: 4.5). However, there are areas of concern, particularly with respect to existing conditions. For instance, respondents generally disagreed with the statement that there are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in their community (Q32: 2.4), and that the media in their country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately (Q33: 2.1).

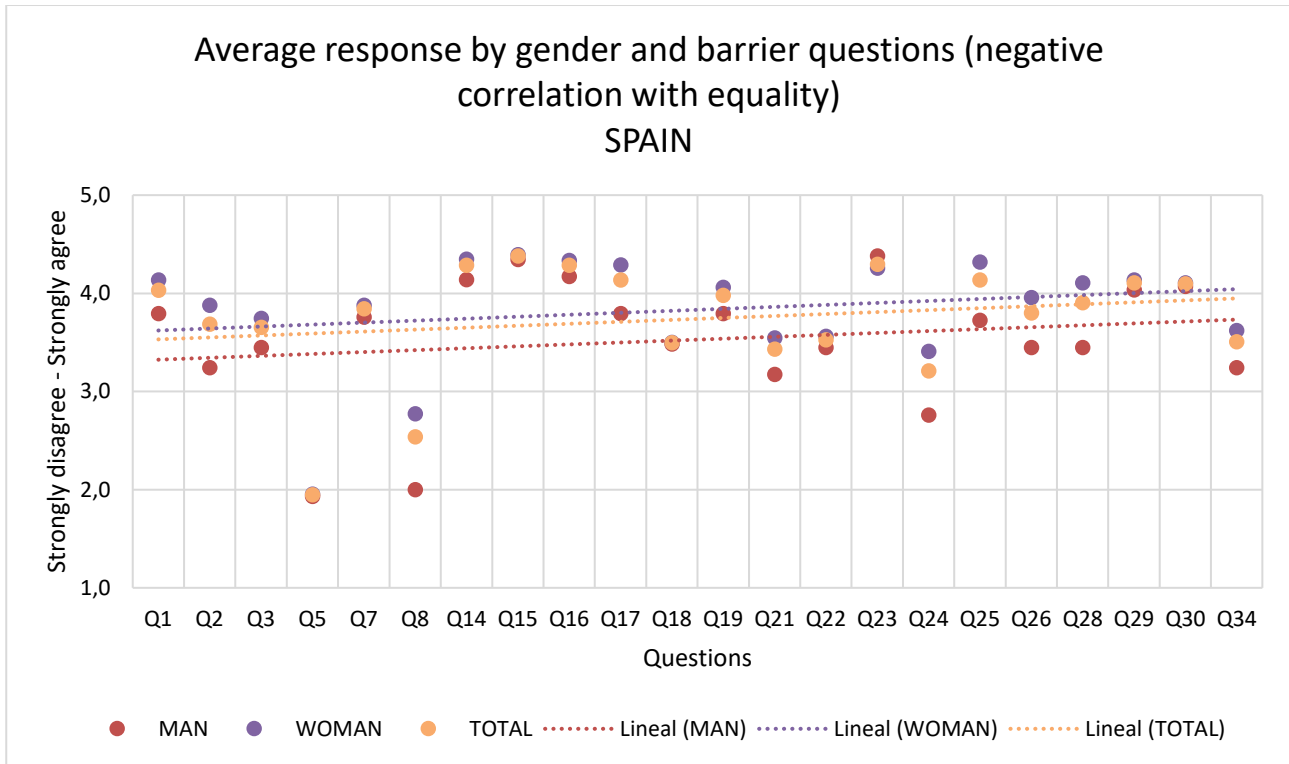


Respondents answers to Q9. The response to Q9, which states that men and women have different leadership styles, is somewhat neutral (3.4). This suggests that respondents are somewhat uncertain or divided about whether gender influences leadership style.

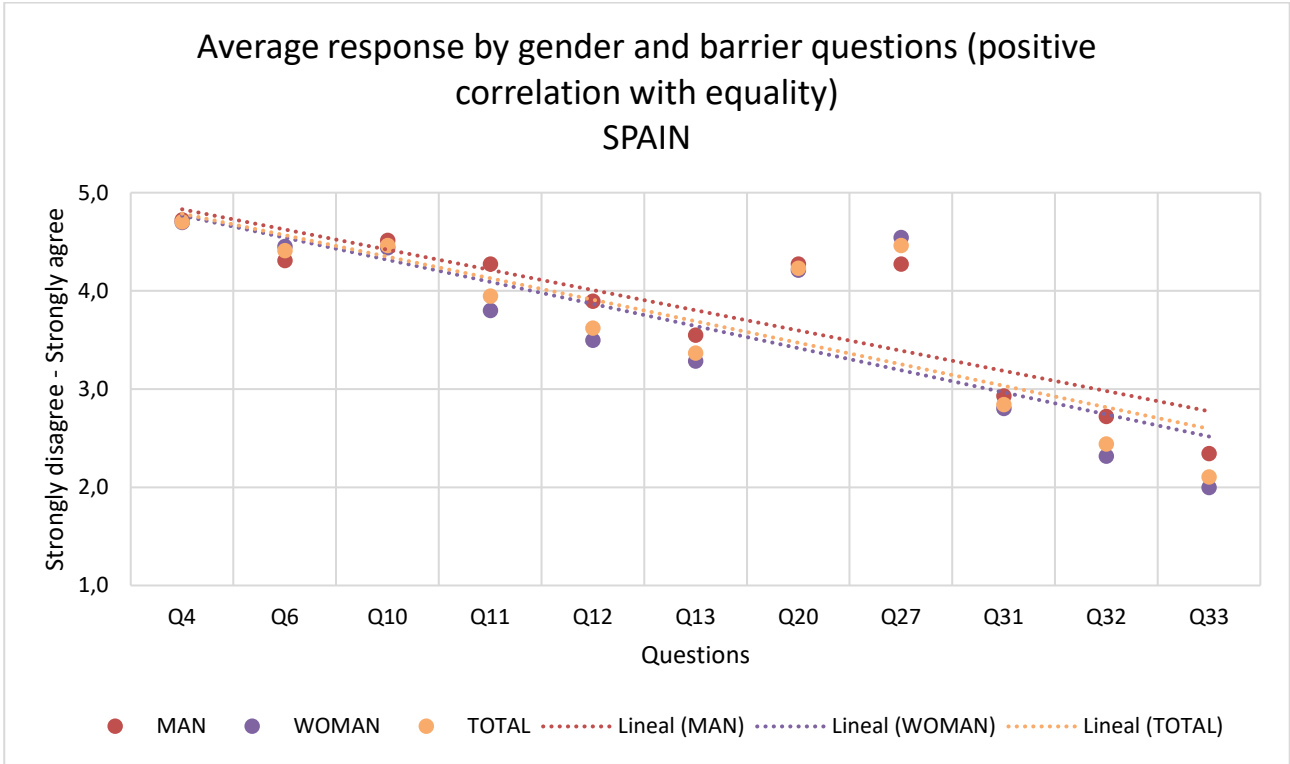


Respondents answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38). The responses to these questions suggest that respondents strongly support measures aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership positions. These include encouraging women to pursue leadership roles from a young age (Q35: 4.2), implementing diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and politics (Q36: 4.5), providing mentorship and support for women in leadership positions (Q37: 4.2), and engaging in awareness-raising campaigns (Q38: 4.3). Overall, the survey results suggest a recognition of gender inequality in politics and support for measures to increase women's representation in leadership roles. However, they also highlight perceived barriers and challenges, such as gender bias, media representation, and lack of equal opportunities.

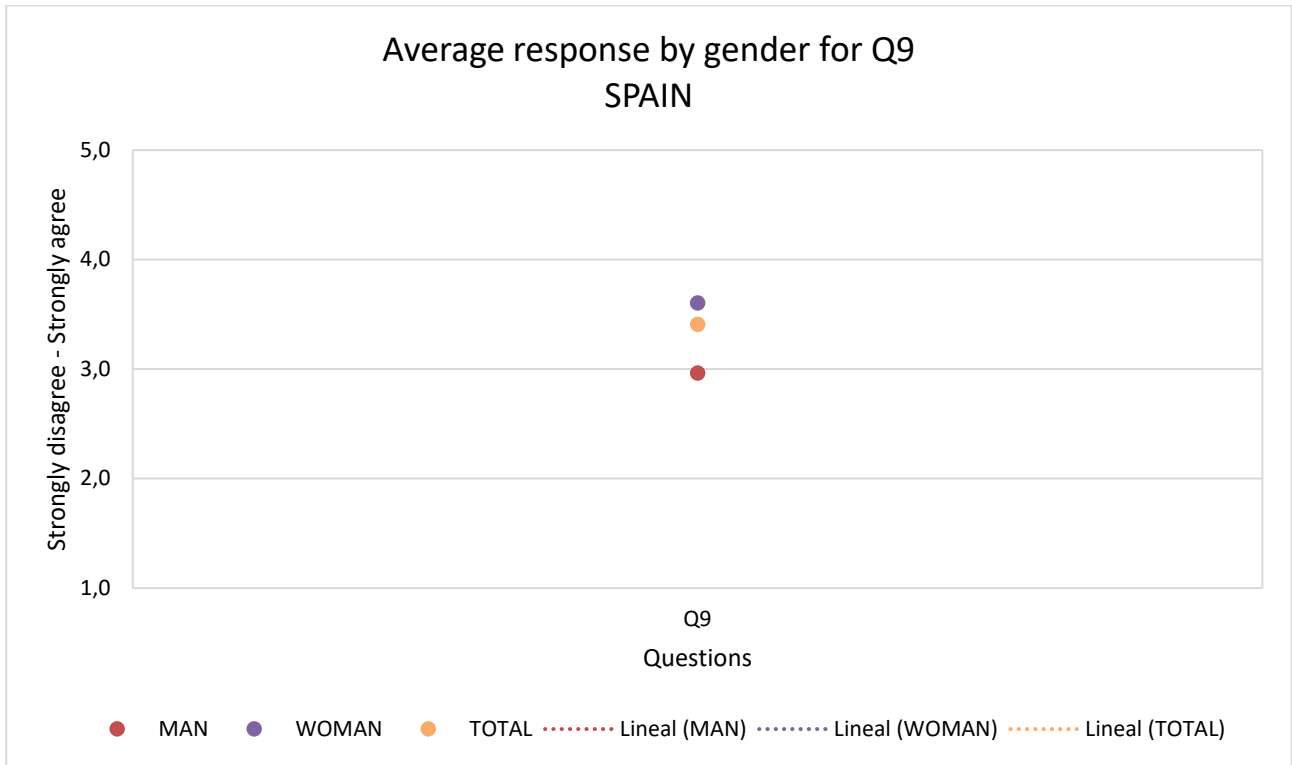
5.4.2 Interpretation of results by gender



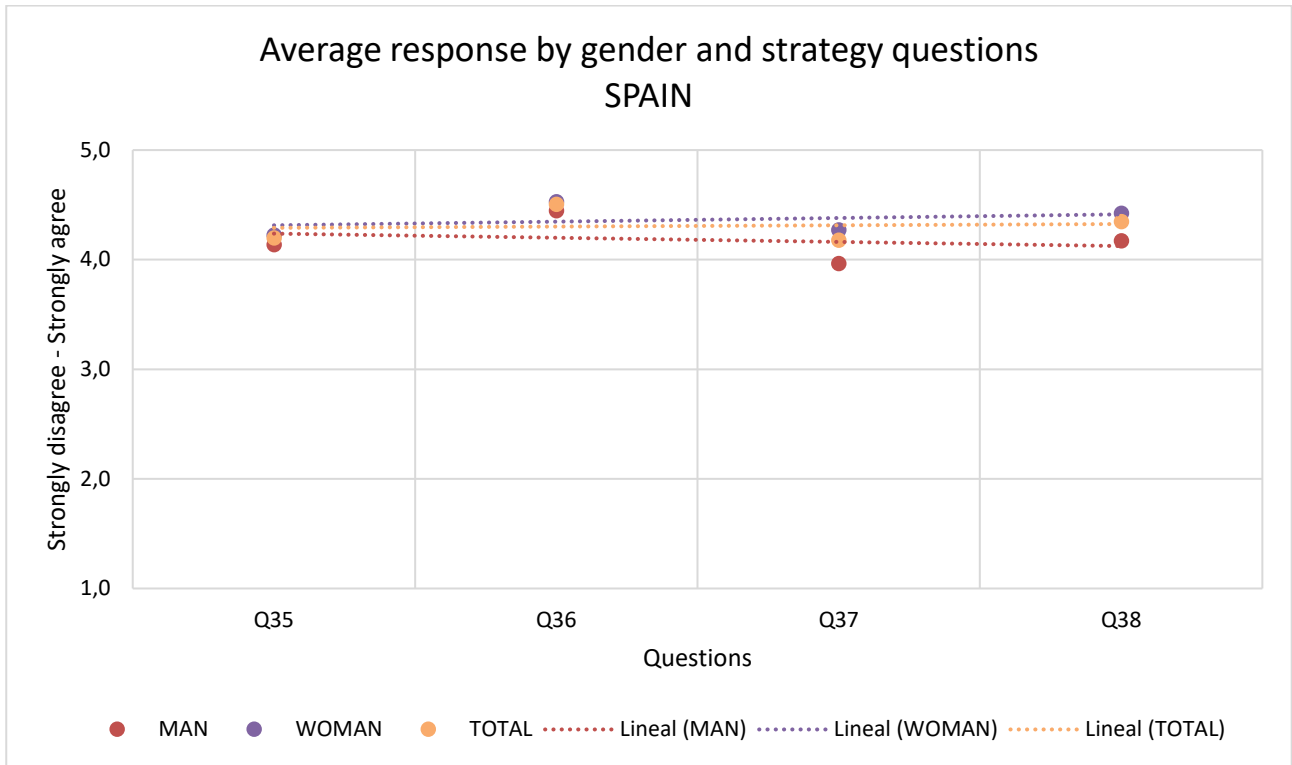
Barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality: For questions relating to barriers and biases that hinder gender equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34), women generally expressed higher levels of agreement than men. This could suggest that women are more aware of, or have experienced more, the gender biases and stereotypes prevalent in the political sphere. Notably, the widest gender discrepancies were observed in Q2 (women are perceived as emotional decision-makers: men 3.2, women 3.9) and Q24 (witnessed/experienced sexual harassment: men 2.8, women 3.4). This divergence might indicate that women perceive these specific issues as more significant barriers than men do.



Barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality. For questions highlighting positive aspects or advancements toward gender equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33), both genders generally exhibited high levels of agreement. Interestingly, men appeared more optimistic about the presence of female role models in political leadership (Q11: men 4.3, women 3.8) and their personal experiences with women role models or mentors (Q12: men 3.9, women 3.5). This could imply that men perceive greater gender balance in politics than women do.



Perception of leadership styles (Q9). When asked whether men and women have different leadership styles (Q9), women (3.6) agreed more than men (3.0). This suggests that women may perceive more gender-based differences in leadership styles compared to men.

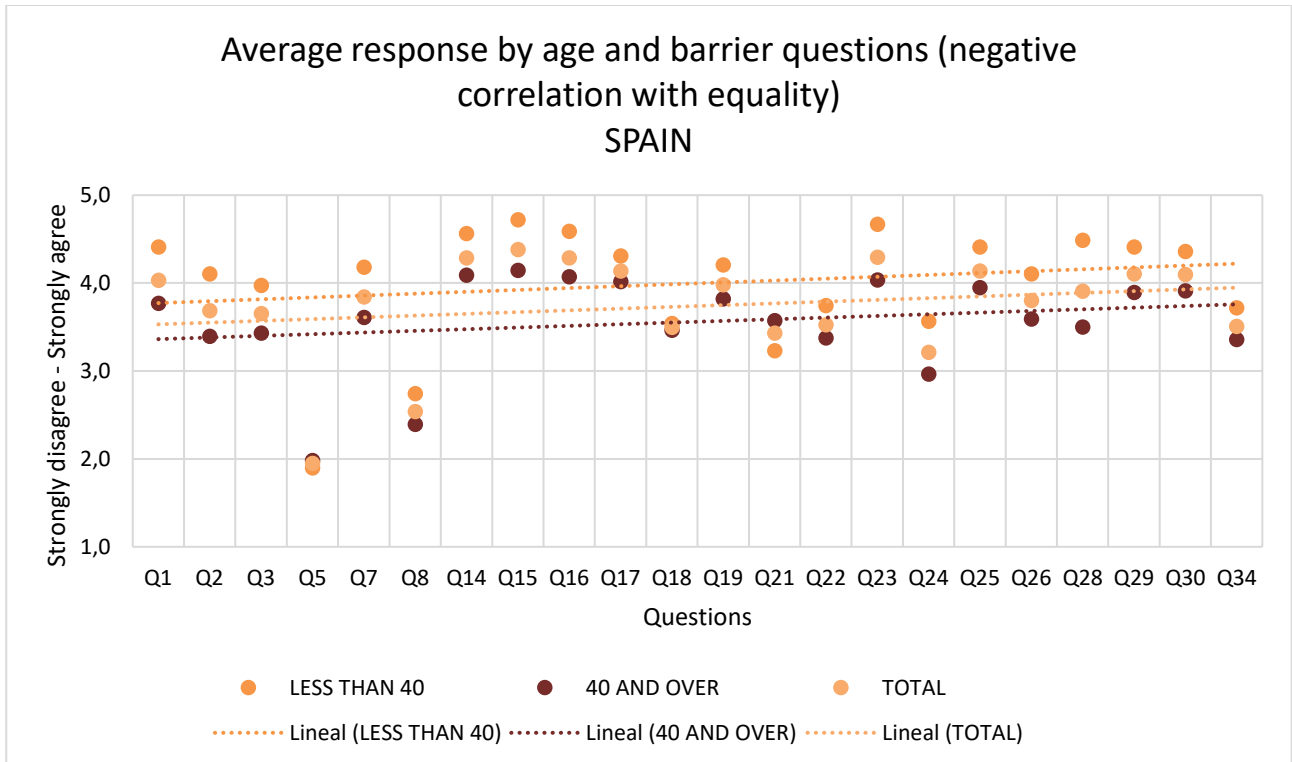


Strategies to overcome inequality. In response to strategies for overcoming gender inequality (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38), both genders demonstrated strong agreement, with women marginally more supportive. This indicates a shared understanding of the need for active measures to improve female representation in political leadership.

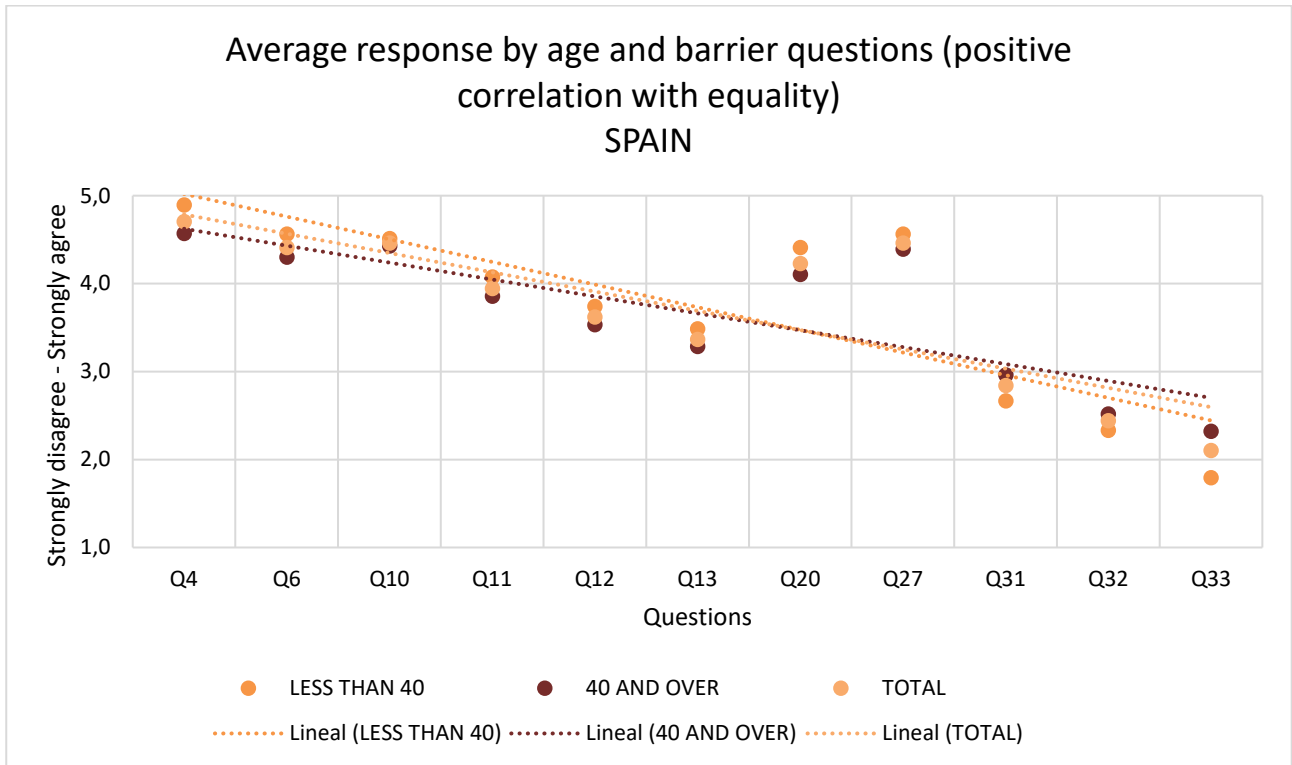
Overall difference in responses by gender

Overall, women tended to score higher in recognizing barriers to equality and supporting strategies for gender balance. This could reflect their personal experiences or heightened awareness of gender biases. Men, while recognizing these barriers, reported a slightly more optimistic view of gender balance in the political sphere.

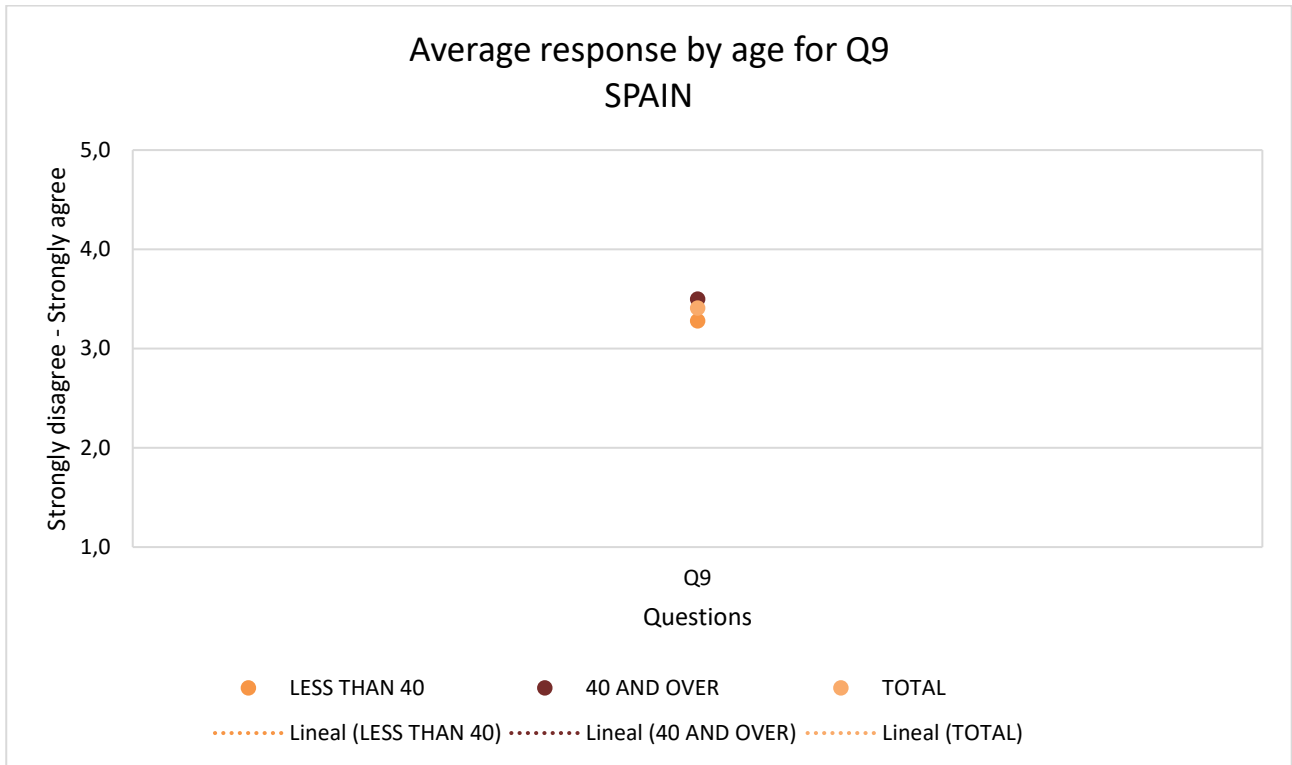
5.4.3 Interpretation of results by age



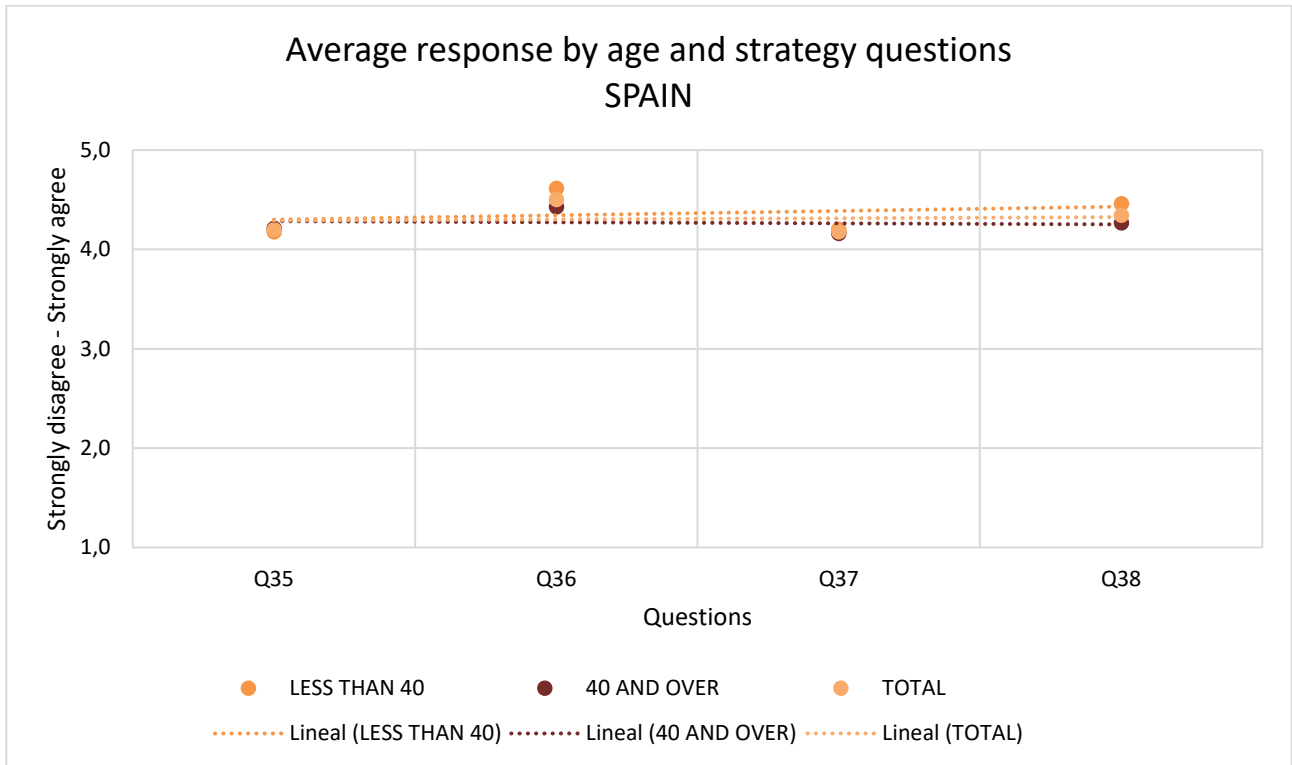
Barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). Generally, respondents under 40 agreed more strongly with these statements, implying they perceive more gender-based bias and inequality in the political field. This could be a reflection of younger generations being more sensitized and aware of gender bias and inequalities. This heightened awareness could also be due to more exposure to social issues through education and digital media.



Barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). In contrast to the previous set of questions, respondents under 40 also agreed more strongly with statements positively correlated with gender equality. They showed stronger belief in the capabilities of women in political leadership (Q4), the importance of diverse representation (Q6), the inspiring effect of women in politics (Q10), and the necessity of family-friendly policies in political organizations (Q20). This suggests a greater openness to gender equality and diversity among younger respondents.



Respondents' answers to Q9. There was not a significant difference between the two age groups' responses to Q9. Both groups slightly agreed that men and women have different leadership styles. This suggests that the perception of different leadership styles between genders is not strongly influenced by age.

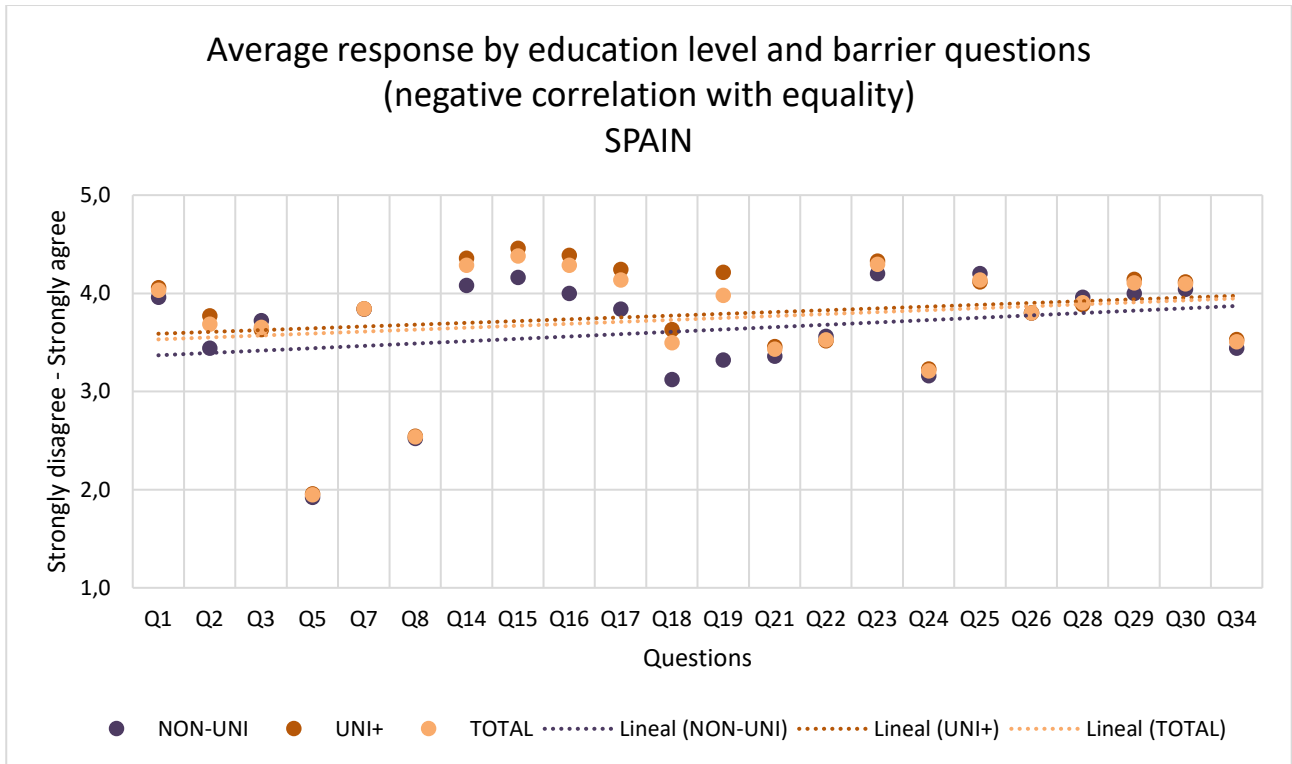


Respondents' answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38). Again, younger respondents generally agreed more strongly with the proposed strategies to increase women's representation in leadership positions. This could reflect a more proactive attitude towards achieving gender equality among younger generations.

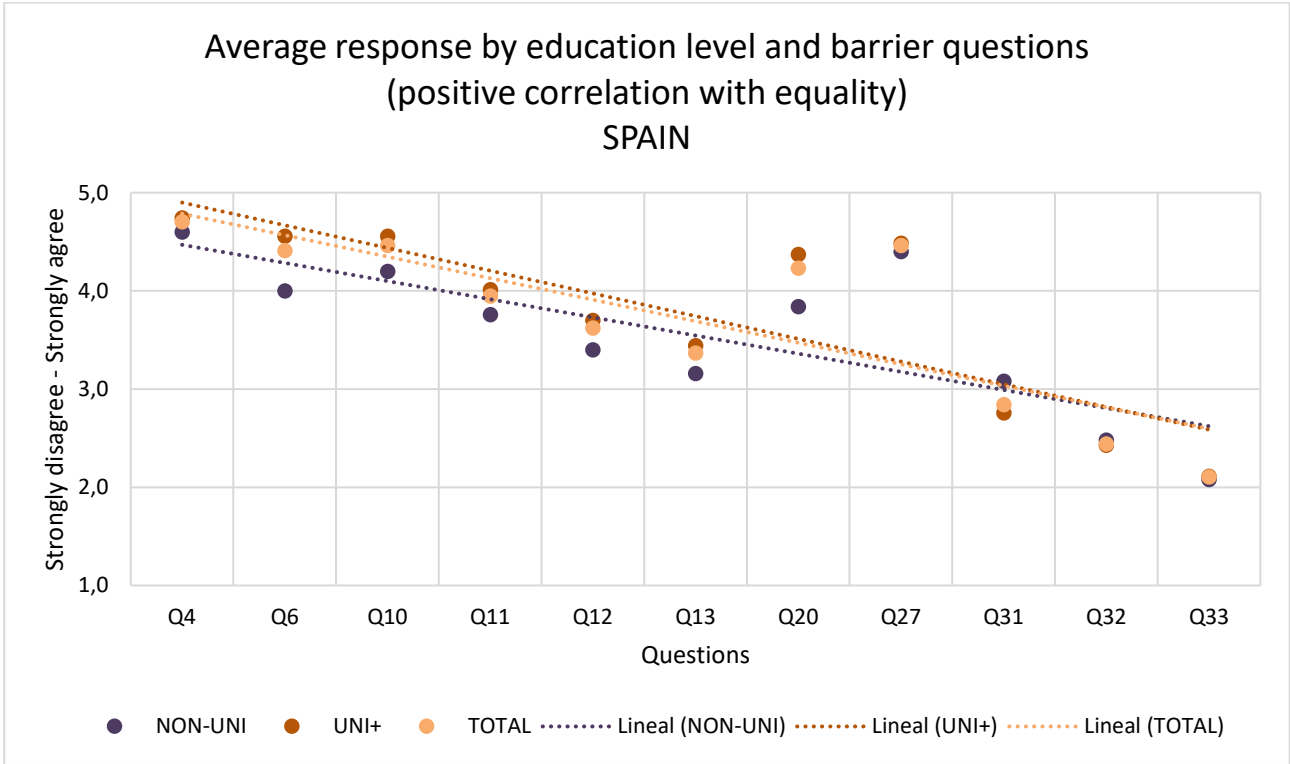
Overall difference in responses by age

In summary, younger respondents (less than 40 years old) tend to perceive gender inequality in politics more acutely and are more supportive of strategies to overcome these inequalities compared to older respondents. This difference may be due to a variety of factors, including heightened awareness of gender issues among younger generations, changes in societal attitudes towards gender equality, and the influence of education and digital media.

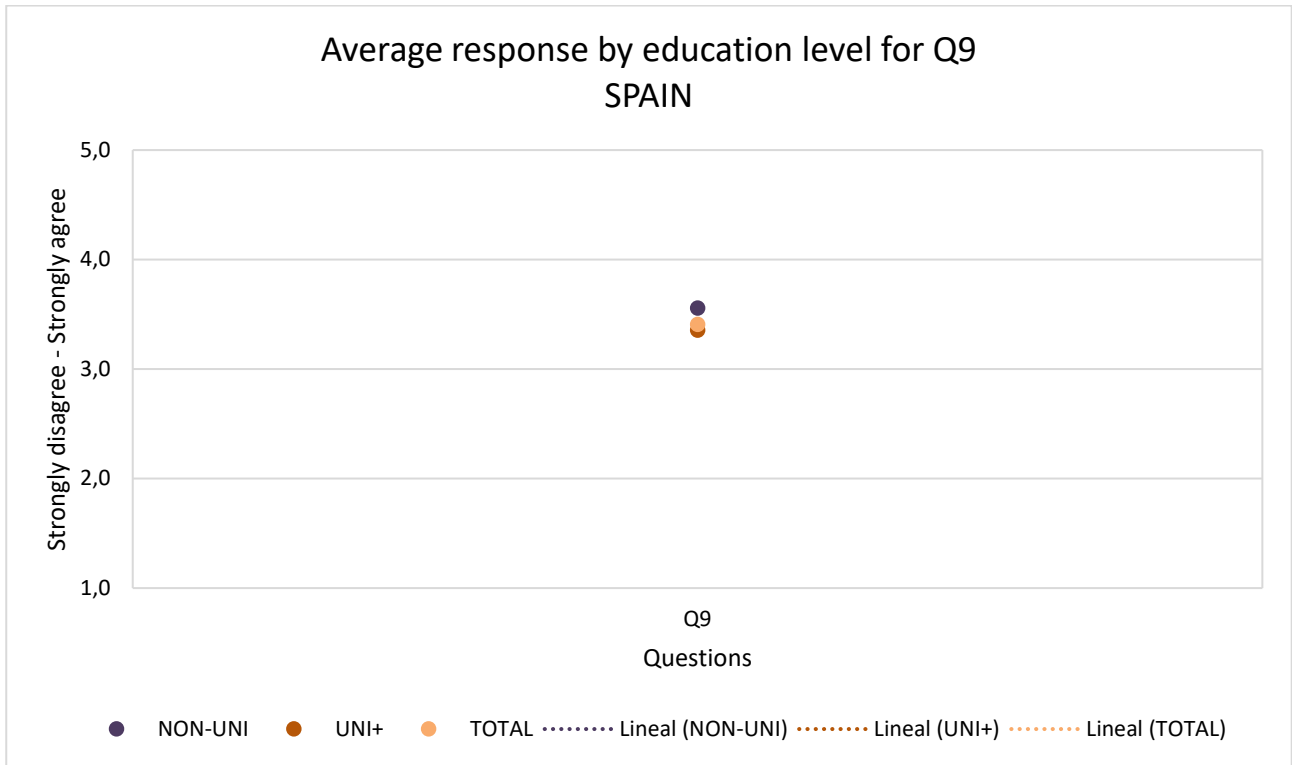
5.4.4 Interpretation of results by educational level



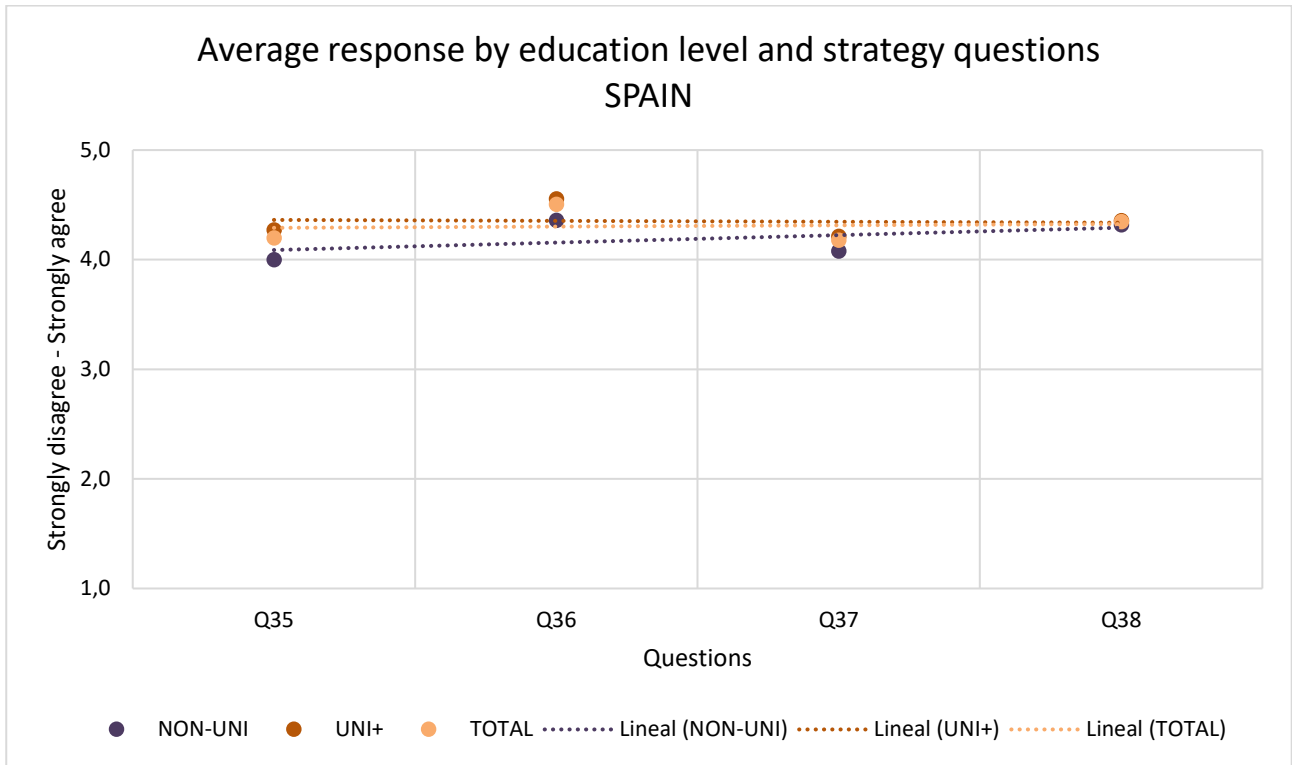
Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). For most questions, respondents with university education and above (UNI+) tend to agree slightly more with the statements, indicating a higher perception of gender bias and stereotypes in politics than those with non-university education. For example, for Q1 (stereotypes about women's abilities hinder their progress in politics), the UNI+ group average score was 4.1, while the non-UNI group scored an average of 4.0. This pattern repeats across most of the negatively correlated questions. One of the most significant differences is found in Q19 (It is more challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to their men counterparts) where the UNI+ group scored 4.2, significantly higher than the non-UNI group's 3.3. This could be due to a higher awareness of gender disparities in the UNI+ group.



Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). In general, the UNI+ group agreed more strongly with these positively correlated statements, indicating a higher belief in gender equality and the importance of women's participation in politics. For instance, for Q6 (Having diverse representation in leadership positions is important), the UNI+ group average score was 4.6, compared to 4.0 for the non-UNI group. This could suggest that the UNI+ group is more conscious of the importance of diversity in leadership roles.



Respondents answers to Q9. Q9 (Men and women have different leadership styles) received similar scores from both the non-UNI (3.6) and UNI+ (3.4) groups. This suggests a shared perception across both groups that men and women slightly exhibit different leadership styles.

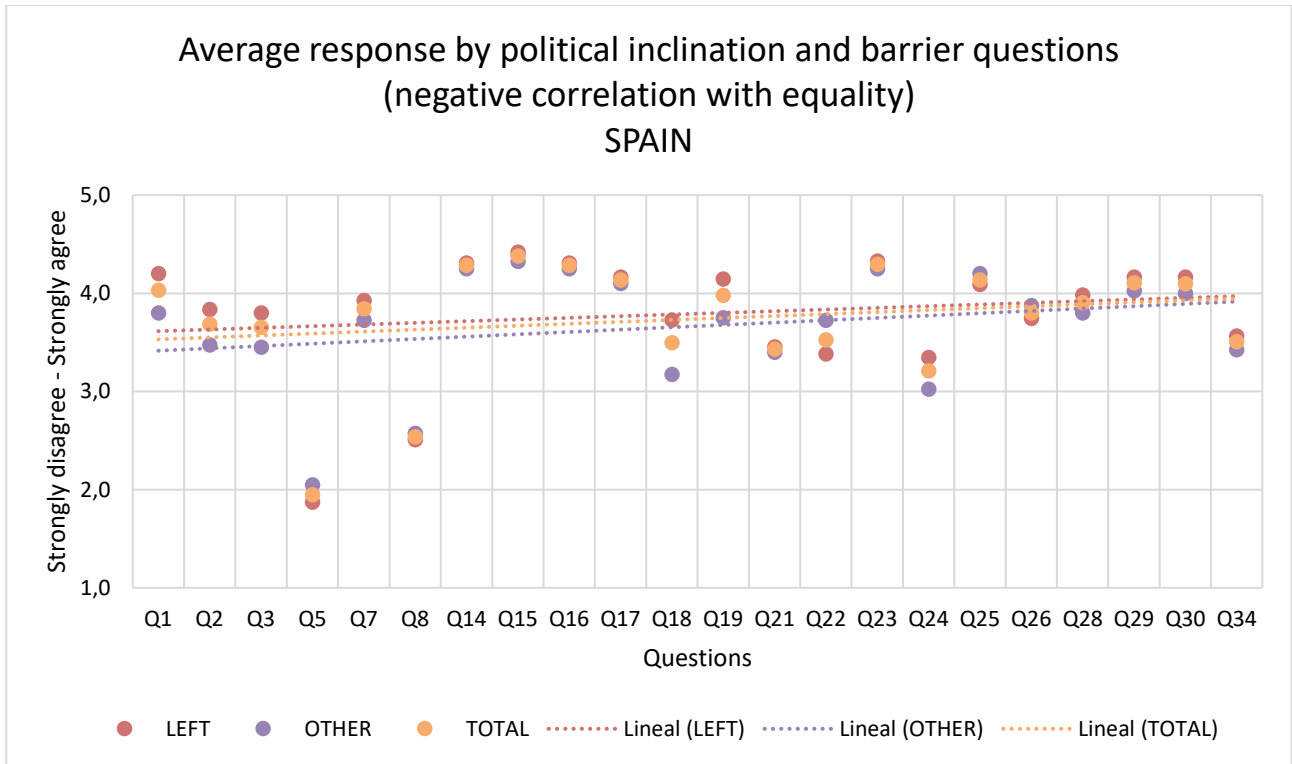


Respondents answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38). Both groups agreed fairly strongly with the strategies proposed to increase representation of women in leadership positions. However, the UNI+ group generally agreed more strongly. For example, on Q36 (implement diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and in politics), the UNI+ group scored an average of 4.6 compared to 4.4 from the non-UNI group. This may suggest a slightly stronger belief in proactive measures to promote gender equality among the UNI+ group.

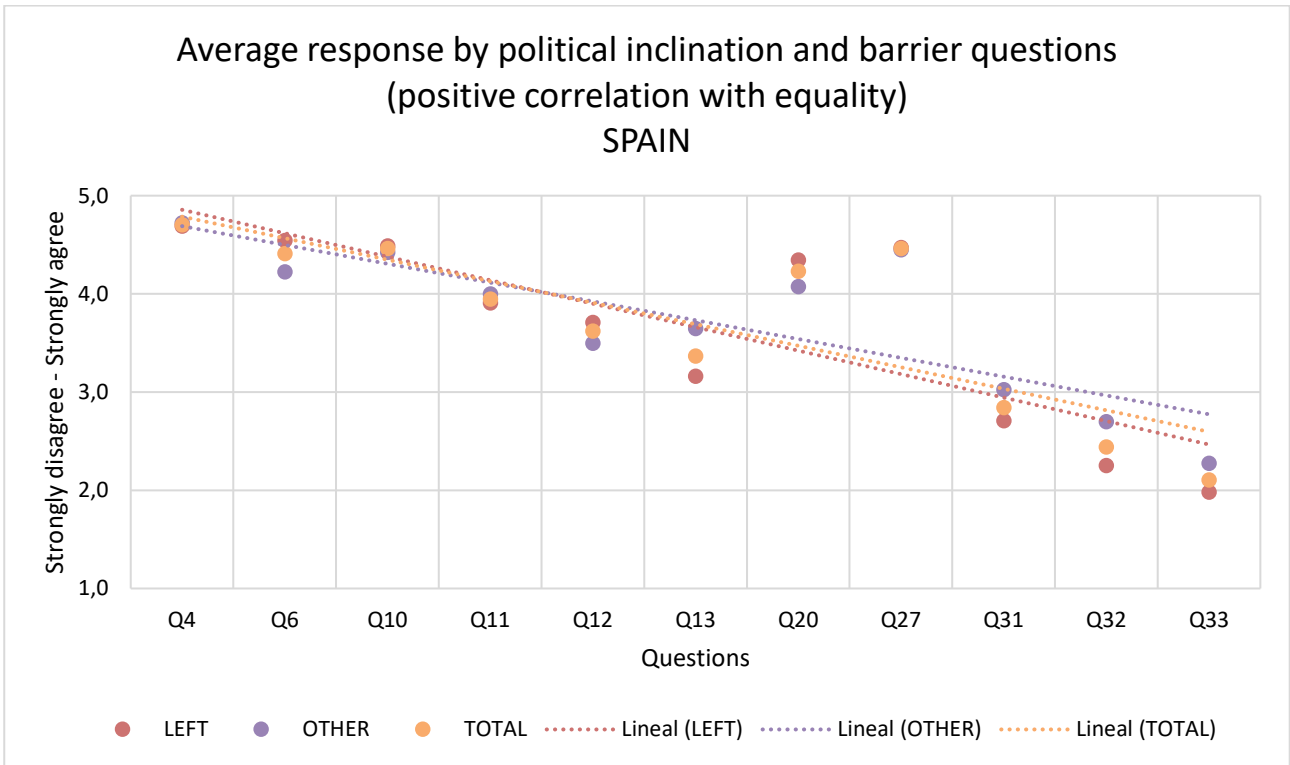
Overall difference in responses by educational level

Overall, respondents with university education (UNI+) tended to agree more with both negatively correlated and positively correlated statements about gender bias, stereotypes, and strategies to increase women's participation in politics. This could suggest that those with higher education are more aware of the complexities of gender inequality and the need for active strategies to promote gender equality. Conversely, those with non-university education tended to give slightly lower scores, possibly indicating a lesser degree of awareness or agreement with these issues.

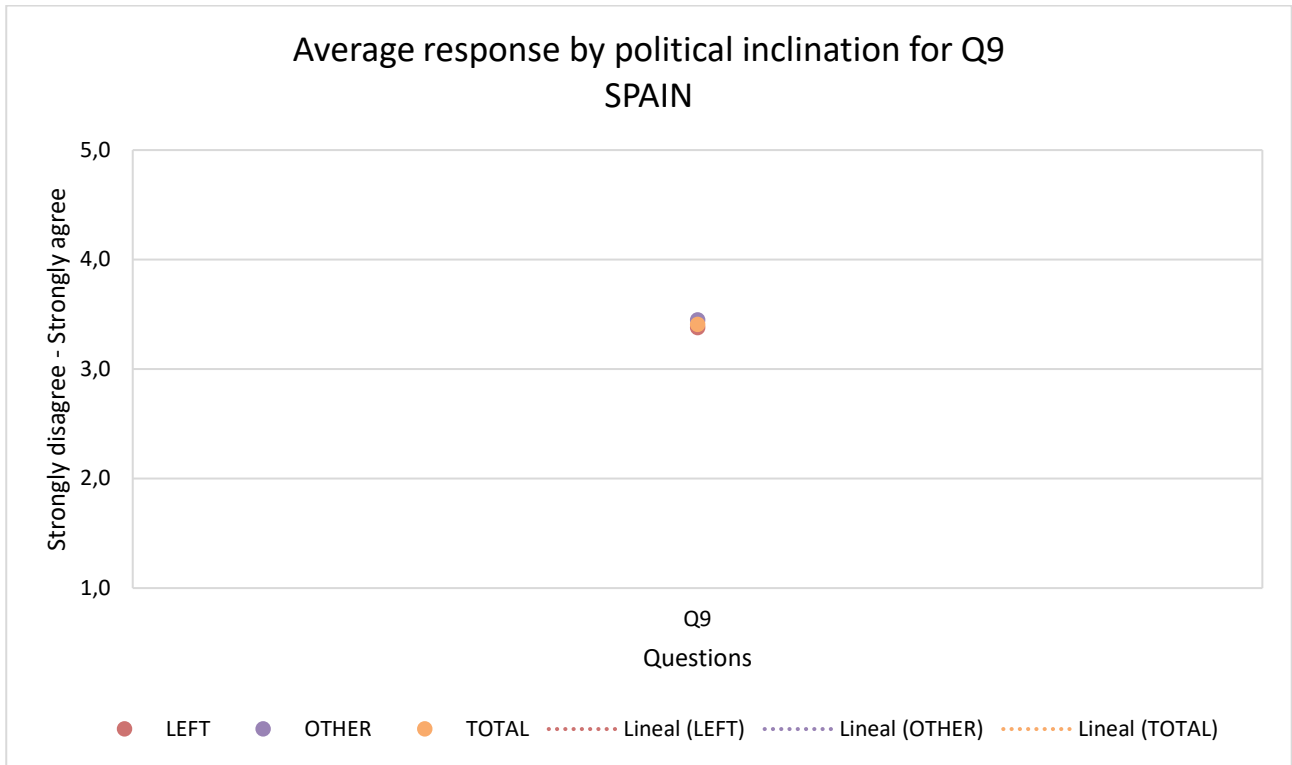
5.4.5 Interpretation of results by political inclination



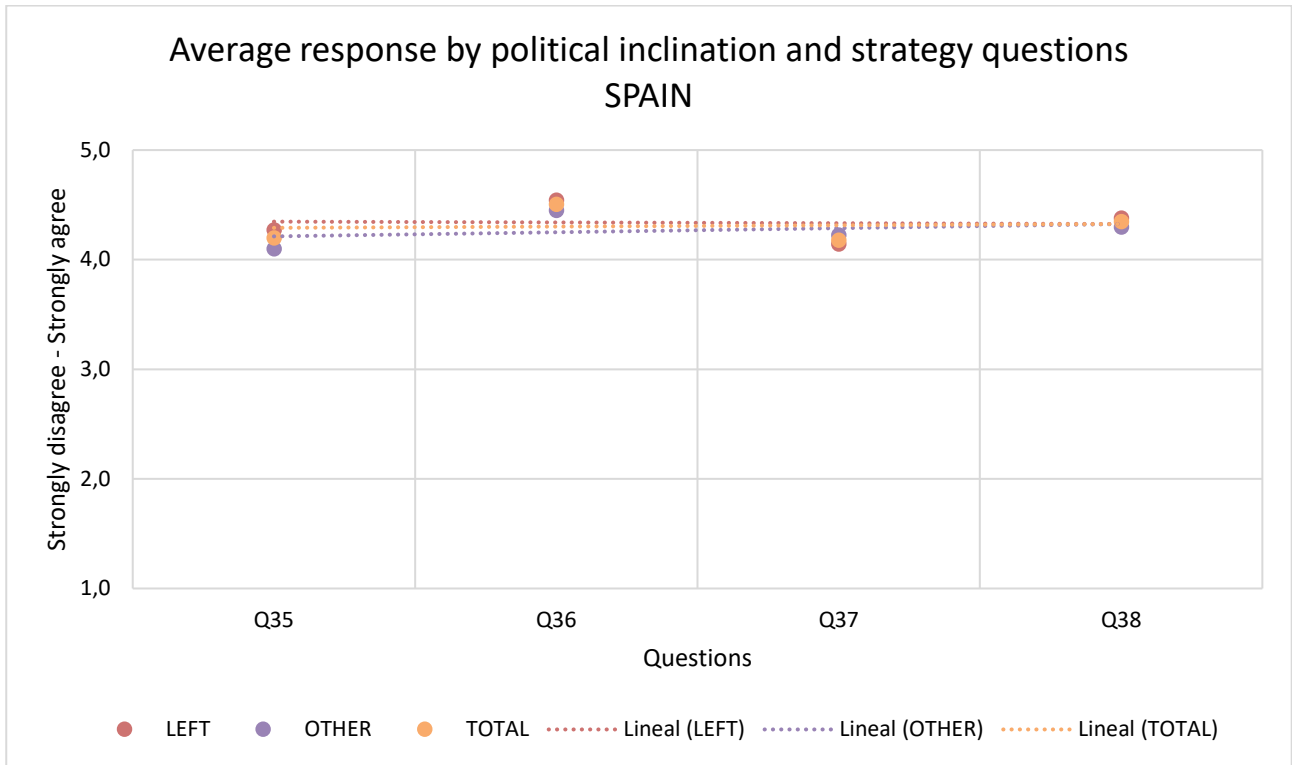
Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a negative correlation with equality (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q8, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q25, Q26, Q28, Q29, Q30, and Q34). The average responses to the barrier-related questions with a negative correlation to equality were generally higher for those who identified as "Left" compared to those who "Did not specify or Other" (other included right-wing, centre and non-right/left inclinations such as independentists). This suggests that the "Left" respondents were more likely to recognize the barriers and biases women face in politics, including stereotypes, the impact of personal appearance, and the challenges of work-life balance. The exceptions to this were Q5 (men candidates being better qualified) and Q8 (feeling discouraged from pursuing leadership due to gender), where the responses were slightly lower for the "Left" group. This might indicate that the left-leaning respondents may have a higher recognition and acknowledgment of gender bias issues, possibly due to their political ideology's emphasis on equality and social justice.



Respondents answers to barrier-related questions with a positive correlation with equality (Q4, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q20, Q27, Q31, Q32, and Q33). For questions that had a positive correlation with equality, the average responses between the "Left" and "Did not specify or Other" groups were fairly similar. However, the "Left" group rated slightly higher on Q4 (women being as capable as men in political leadership roles) and Q6 (importance of diverse representation in leadership positions), which could indicate a stronger belief in gender equality among the left-leaning respondents. In contrast, the "Did not specify or Other" group rated higher on Q13 (women frequently occupy leadership positions in their workplace or community), suggesting they might perceive more gender equality in their immediate environments.



Respondents answers to Q9. Responses to Q9 (men and women have different leadership styles) were very similar between both groups, indicating a general consensus that there are slight perceived differences in leadership styles between genders, irrespective of political affiliation or lack thereof.



Respondents answers to questions related to strategies (Q35, Q36, Q37, Q38). Responses to these questions were quite high across both groups, suggesting a common belief in the need for strategies to overcome gender inequality, such as encouraging women to pursue leadership roles from a young age, implementing diversity and inclusion policies, providing mentorship for women leaders, and engaging in awareness-raising campaigns. The "Left" group scored slightly higher on Q35 (encouraging women to pursue leadership roles from a young age) and Q38 (engaging in awareness raising campaigns), perhaps reflecting a greater emphasis on proactive and educational strategies within this political group.

Overall difference in responses by political inclination

Overall, the "Left" respondents tended to recognize barriers to gender equality more and had a slightly higher rating on strategies to overcome these barriers. This could be attributed to the traditional left-wing political ideology that often emphasizes equality and social justice. Meanwhile, the "Did not specify or Other" group had slightly higher perceptions of existing gender equality in their immediate environments but were similarly supportive of strategies to improve gender equality in politics.

5.4.6 Results of open-ended questions

When asked "Are there any other barriers or challenges that you believe hinder women's participation and election in politics? Please explain." The respondents mentioned a variety of challenges that impede women's participation in politics:

- **Societal Gender Norms:** Sexism and misogyny prevalent in different leadership contexts prevent women from gaining experience in leadership positions, which creates additional pressure in politics.
- **Media Coverage:** Women leaders often receive insufficient or lower quality coverage in the media compared to their male counterparts.
- **Intersectionality:** Factors like race, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic status create additional barriers for women's political participation.
- **Traditional Roles and Responsibilities:** Women often shoulder a disproportionate amount of familial and caregiving responsibilities, which limits their ability to participate in politics.
- **Political Climate:** The dominance of patriarchal, conservative ideologies in the political sphere poses significant challenges to women's political participation.
- **Discrimination within Parties:** Older male members in political parties often restrict opportunities for women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Negative Stereotypes and Bias:** The society's negative stereotypes and biases towards women hinder their political involvement.
- **Hostile Political Environment:** The often aggressive and hostile nature of politics can discourage women from getting involved.
- **Access to Education and Class Gap:** Limited access to education and social class disparities can deter women from political participation.
- **Fear of Outshining Men:** Men's fear of being overshadowed by successful women can lead to women being relegated to lower positions or chosen for less significant roles.
- **Work-Life Balance:** The need to balance work and family life, coupled with a lack of institutional support, can limit women's political participation.
- **Social Pressure and Stereotyping:** Women often face additional pressures and judgments based on their appearance and stereotypes.
- **Structural and Multifactorial Barriers:** The structural and multifactorial nature of the barriers makes the gap in political participation between men and women even larger.
- **Imposed Masculine Leadership Model:** The predominance of an authoritarian, hierarchical masculine model of leadership leaves little room for alternative approaches.
- **Sexual Orientation Discrimination:** Women's sexual preferences are often subject to scrutiny and judgment.
- **Lack of Diversity:** Diverse women, such as lesbians, trans*, and racialized women, face unique challenges and barriers.

- Cultural Change Needs: A need for cultural change to promote non-violent, inclusive, dialogic leadership that aligns with democratic values.
- Discrediting Women: Women are often discredited or devalued simply because of their gender.
- Neglect of Care Responsibilities: The current political system neglects the importance of care responsibilities, which are disproportionately shouldered by women.

Open comments have highlighted barriers, ranging from societal norms to structural issues, that combine to limit women's participation in politics. The input from respondents in open-ended questions are highly coincidental with the responses given by focus group participants.

Responses about what can be done to address barriers and promote gender equality in politics were as follows:

- Education and Training: Increased education and training on gender equality across different socialization contexts. This could be achieved through protocols, guidelines, best practices, and constant evaluation.
- Promoting Gender Perspective in Media: Encourage and support media to approach gender-related topics appropriately.
- Incorporate Intersectionality: Promote measures to incorporate intercultural and intersectional perspectives in the organization, promoting diverse women as leaders.
- Visibility and Sensitization: Increase the visibility of women in politics and sensitize society about the importance of gender equality in a positive manner.
- Addressing Domestic Responsibilities: One of the key issues is balancing family responsibilities, which still predominantly fall on women.
- Transform Society: True gender equality in politics can only be achieved by transforming all sectors of society, particularly its mode of production, and eradicating class disparities.
- Awareness Groups for Men: Create awareness groups for men to understand the importance of gender equality.
- Encourage Young People in Politics: Encourage the participation of young people in politics and gradual retirement of older politicians.
- Promote Collaboration: Work together and share knowledge and experiences.
- Start From Root: Like all gender inequality, the work starts from the root - childhood. Society needs to work on deconstructing ingrained gender biases.
- Increase Representation: Increase the representation of women in politics and give more visibility to women in traditional and digital media.
- Teach Equality: Teach equality from the base of education.
- Co-Education Programs: Implement co-education programs in educational, institutional, and domestic environments.
- Extra Support Staff: Provide extra support staff to help women balance their political careers with family responsibilities.

- Promote Role Models: Increase the quantity of female role models in politics, improve the image of women in politics, and ensure equal opportunities in this field.
- Deconstruct Stereotypes: Focus on deconstructing stereotypes and social patterns and raising awareness about existing privileges and the over-occupation of spaces.
- Promote Feminist Approach: Rather than focusing on 'jumping barriers', the focus should be on developing a new model that promotes a feminist approach.
- Promote Equality and Respect: Address equity and respect between men and women in institutes, do a lot of pedagogy among young people.
- Visibility to Diverse Women: Make diverse women visible and recognize their value in decision-making spaces.
- Reformulate Political Structures: Reformulate political structures and institutions, promote more sustainable work hours, establish more collective forms of governance.
- Empower Women's Role in Politics: Promote the role of women in politics and ensure parity on equal terms.
- Improve and Invest in Education: Enhance the quality of education and invest more in it.
- Effective Support: Provide effective support with measures such as personal assistants for people with disabilities, reinforce public services, home help for the elderly, and distribute work, time, and care.

5.4.7 Conclusions regarding questionnaire results

The survey provides a valuable understanding of the barriers and challenges that impede women's participation and election in politics, from both societal and structural perspectives. Respondents identified issues such as societal gender norms, media coverage, intersectionality, traditional roles, political climate, and more. These barriers not only limit women's participation in politics but also underscore the work that needs to be done to ensure equal opportunities and fair treatment for women in the political sphere.

Simultaneously, respondents shared a variety of suggestions to address these barriers and promote gender equality in politics. The proposed solutions ranged from education and training on gender equality, promoting gender perspectives in media, incorporating intersectionality, increasing the visibility of women in politics, encouraging young people's participation, to providing extra support staff for women balancing political careers with family responsibilities.

In analyzing the demographics, differences were observed in perspectives based on gender, age, education, and political inclinations. Women generally recognized more barriers to gender equality and expressed stronger support for strategies to improve gender balance than men. Younger and university-educated respondents were more likely to perceive gender bias and inequality, showing

greater support for strategies to overcome these barriers. Left-leaning respondents, too, were more likely to recognize the barriers and biases women face in politics, showing stronger support for strategies to overcome these barriers. These variations highlight the importance of targeted approaches when implementing policies and initiatives to promote gender equality.

In general, the results show strong consensus among respondents about the importance of gender equality, diverse representation, and the positive impact of women role models in political leadership. They agree that implementing diversity and inclusion policies, along with mentorship and awareness-raising campaigns, could help increase women's representation in leadership positions. However, the feedback also underscores the existing disparity in politics, indicating there is much to be accomplished. The low scores on questions related to media portrayal of women politicians, equal opportunities, and the cultural norms supporting women's participation in politics highlight this.

Therefore, this report stresses the need for continued efforts to promote gender equality in politics, which could be achieved through policy changes, education, and awareness initiatives. The findings should prove to be a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and activists striving for a more inclusive political environment for women in Spain.

In conclusion, while the respondents generally recognized the existence of gender bias and inequality in politics and strongly supported measures aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership roles, the data suggests a pressing need for continued efforts to address the barriers women face. Achieving gender equality in politics will require concerted and sustained action from all segments of society, transcending age, gender, educational level, and political affiliations.

6. Summary of key findings and national-specific recommendations

Based on the findings of the questionnaire and the focus groups, the following are recommendations to increase the equality of women and men in politics in Spain:

- **Education and awareness programs:** Develop and implement educational programs and initiatives to highlight gender equality and the importance of women's political participation. Begin this training from an early age to help break down ingrained gender biases.
- **Media sensitization:** Partner with media outlets to ensure fair and balanced representation of women in politics. Encourage the media to challenge and dismantle negative stereotypes and biases towards women.
- **Policy changes:** Implement policies that advance gender equality within political parties and institutions. Include quotas for female representatives and guidelines for equal opportunities in leadership roles.
- **Support for women in politics:** Provide comprehensive support for women in politics through mentorship programs, training, resources, and additional staff to balance political responsibilities with family life.
- **Promote diverse and equal representation:** Encourage and facilitate the participation of women from diverse backgrounds in politics, acknowledging and addressing intersectionality. Ensure a fair representation of women in decision-making positions, challenging gender-based stereotypes.
- **Transform society's perception:** Launch campaigns to shift societal norms and perceptions regarding women in politics. Celebrate successful women politicians as role models.
- **Promote work-life balance:** Advocate for a political environment that respects and allows for a healthy work-life balance, including flexible work hours and supportive parental leave policies.

- **Legislation and law enforcement:** Enhance laws against gender discrimination and sexual harassment in politics, ensuring these laws are enforced and offenders are held accountable.
- **Youth engagement:** Foster youth participation in politics, provide platforms for expressing views on gender equality, and promote the gradual retirement of older politicians to make way for younger generations.
- **Promote collaboration:** Encourage collaboration among politicians of all genders, fostering an inclusive political environment through knowledge and experience sharing.
- **Safe spaces:** Develop environments where women can share experiences, socialize, and support each other in a discrimination-free setting.
- **Promote intersectionality:** Advocate for a more comprehensive understanding of women's issues, considering factors like race, religion, and cultural backgrounds.
- **Training programs:** Implement training programs to boost confidence and leadership skills among women, using a feminist governance perspective based on positive and alternative experiences from both the Global North and the Global South. Encourage proactive assertiveness through training, by cultivating a culture where women seize initiatives, interact directly with organizations, and confidently strive for power positions.
- **Inclusive environments:** Create environments that value diversity and are free from discrimination and bias, embracing intercultural perspectives, based on organisational trainings, inclusivity training, protocols, and the implementation of measures to assure inclusivity and equal speaking time during discussions.
- **Establish gender protocols:** Implement gender protocols within organizations, promoting open conversations about the challenges women face.
- **Support networks:** Establish a support network among women in politics to enhance confidence, share experiences, and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Engage male allies:** Encourage men to support women in power positions from an early age, challenging traditional gender norms and supporting women in political processes.

Implementing these recommendations requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society, including government bodies, educational institutions, media, and civil society organizations. Together, these efforts can pave the way towards a more equitable and inclusive political environment for women in Spain.

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8. Annex 1: questionnaire items

Q1 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Stereotypes about women's abilities hinder their progress in politics.]

Q2 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in politics are often perceived as emotional rather than rational decision-makers.]

Q3 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women often feel the need to downplay their femininity or adopt more masculine traits to be taken seriously as leaders.]

Q4 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women are as capable as men in political leadership roles.]

Q5 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I usually feel men candidates are better qualified.]

Q6 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Having diverse representation in leadership positions is important.]

Q7 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have witnessed or experienced gender bias or discrimination in politics.]

Q8 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have felt discouraged from pursuing a leadership role because of my gender.]

Q9 Regarding gender bias and stereotypes faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Men and women have different leadership styles.]

Q10 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [The presence of more women in political leadership positions would inspire other women to pursue political careers.]

Q11 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I can easily identify women political role models in my country.]

Q12 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have had a women role model or mentor in a leadership position who inspired or supported me.]

Q13 Regarding role models of women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women frequently occupy leadership positions in my workplace or community.]

Q14 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in politics are judged more harshly for their appearance than men.]

Q15 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women politicians are more likely to be criticized for their personal life choices compared to men.]

Q16 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women are held to higher standards or face more scrutiny than men in leadership roles.]

Q17 Regarding double standards and scrutiny faced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in leadership face a "double bind" where they are expected to be both assertive and nurturing.]

Q18 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [It is more challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to other career choices.]

Q19 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [It is more challenging for women in politics to maintain a healthy work-life balance in relation to their men counterparts.]

Q20 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Political organizations should implement family-friendly policies to support women's participation.]

Q21 Regarding work-life balance experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have felt that I had to choose between family responsibilities and pursuing a leadership role.]

Q22 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Wage disparities between men and women politicians exist in my country.]

Q23 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in politics face more hostile work environments, including sexism and discrimination, than their men counterparts.]

Q24 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment in the workplace or in politics.]

Q25 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women are less likely to be promoted to leadership positions compared to men with similar qualifications and experience.]

Q26 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Women in political organizations are often limited to administrative roles instead of decision-making positions.]

Q27 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Political organizations should actively promote women to decision-making roles to achieve gender equality.]

Q28 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [I have seen women being talked over or interrupted in meetings or discussions more frequently than their men counterparts.]

Q29 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Societal norms and expectations limit women's political aspirations and opportunities.]

Q30 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Traditional gender roles and expectations discourage women from pursuing political careers.]

Q31 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [The cultural norms in my country support women's participation in politics.]

Q32 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [There are equal opportunities for women and men to pursue leadership roles in my community.]

Q33 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [The media in my country portrays women politicians fairly and accurately.]

Q34 Regarding other barriers experienced by women in politics, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: [Media coverage of women in politics often focuses on their appearance rather than their achievements and qualifications.]

Q35 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should...
[...encourage women to pursue leadership roles from a young age.]

Q36 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should...
[...implement diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace and in politics.]

Q37 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should...
[...provide mentorship and support for women in leadership positions.]

Q38 In order to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, we should...
[...engage in awareness raising campaigns.]

Open-ended question: Are there any other barriers or challenges that you believe hinder women's participation and election in politics? Please explain.

Open-ended question: In your opinion, what can be done to address these barriers and promote gender equality in politics? Please share your ideas or suggestions.

9. Annex 2: focus group questions

Questions to validate hypothesis:

- In what ways do you think gender bias or stereotypes might impact the political careers or aspirations of women?
- How do you think the presence or absence of women role models in politics influences the career choices or motivations of women interested in pursuing a political career?
- Do you believe that women in politics are held to different standards or face more scrutiny than their men counterparts? If so, can you provide examples or share your observations?
- What challenges do you think women might face in balancing work and family responsibilities while pursuing a political career?
- Can you discuss any systemic barriers, such as preferential treatment, hostile work environments (sexism, discrimination, etc.), or wage differences for similar responsibilities, which might limit the career progression of women in politics?
- In political organizations, do you think women are more likely to take on administrative or supportive roles instead of decision-making positions? If so, how do you think this impacts women's overall representation in politics?

Questions for the focus group to identify additional barriers:

- Are there any specific challenges or barriers you have faced in your political career that we have not discussed yet and that you would like to share?
- How do you think societal attitudes or cultural norms in your country impact women's participation in politics?
- In your opinion, what role does the media play in shaping the public's perception of women in leadership positions?
- In your experience, how does access to funding or resources for political campaigns differ between men and women candidates?

Questions to identify strategies to address barriers hindering women's participation in politics:

- In your opinion, what are some effective measures or initiatives that can help challenge gender bias and stereotypes in politics?
- How can political parties or organizations better support and promote women into leadership positions and decision-making roles?
- What type of training, mentorship, or support programs would you find valuable in overcoming the identified barriers in your political career?
- How can we create a more inclusive and supportive environment within political organizations that fosters gender equality and encourages women's participation?

- What role do you think men can play in promoting gender equality in politics and supporting women's political participation?

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