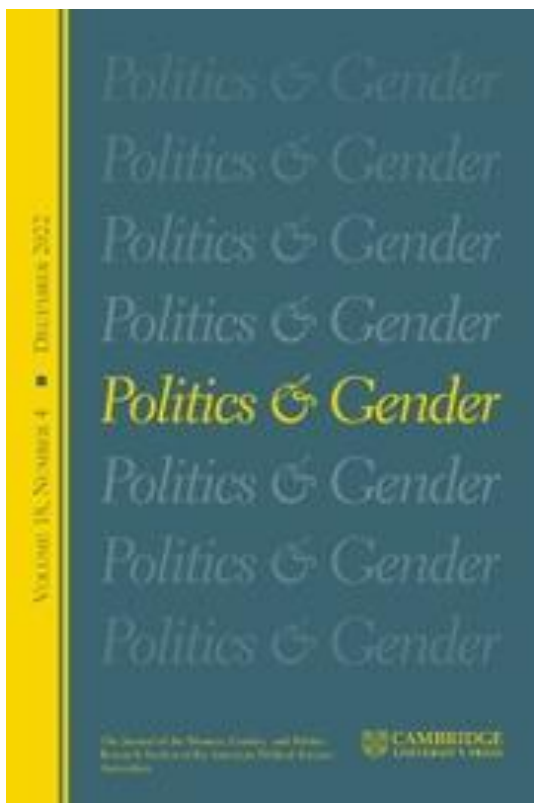


DIRECCIÓN DE SERVICIOS DE INFORMACIÓN Y ANÁLISIS ESPECIALIZADOS  
SUBDIRECCIÓN DE REFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA

# ALERTA HEMEROGRÁFICA

No. 381

NOVIEMBRE 2023



**Título:** *The Gender Gap in Issue Attention and Language Use within a Legislative Setting: An Application to the Italian Parliament (1948–2020).*

**Autor:** Luigi Curini, Silvia Decadri, Alfio Ferrara, Stefano Montanelli, Fedra Negri and Francesco Perit.

**Revista:** Politics & Gender, First View, pp. 1-30.

**Editorial:** Cambridge University Press.

**ISSN:** 1743-9248 (Online)

**Versión electrónica:** <https://bit.ly/47s6YnV>

**Nota:** Disponible para consulta en los servicios las Bases de Datos Institucionales para la Cámara de Diputados.

Si usted desea adquirir la publicación, favor de dirigirse a: Cambridge University Press  
University Printing House, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom.

Página web: [information@cambridge.org](mailto:information@cambridge.org)

Teléfono: +44 (0) 1223 358 33

### ABSTRACT:

We investigate the gender gap in issue attention among members of parliament (MPs) by applying automated text analytic techniques to a novel data set on Italian parliamentary speeches over a remarkably long period (1948–2020). We detect a gendered specialization across issues that tends to disappear as women’s shares in parliamentary groups increase. We then investigate whether women’s access to previously male-owned issues brings with it a different agenda, operationalized as a different vocabulary. We detect a U-shaped pattern: language gender specificity is high when female MPs are tokens in parliamentary groups with a large preponderance of men; it decreases when their shares start increasing and grows again when they constitute a considerable minority. We argue that this pattern is consistent with the theory of tokenism, and it is produced by the interlinkage of commitment to shared norms and the distribution of “activation thresholds” among female MPs.

### SUMMARY:

Abstract	1
Theoretical Framework: How Relative Numbers May Affect the Gender Gap in Issue Attention and Language Usage	3
Why Women’s Sidelining from Debates Dealing with “Masculine” Topics Is Detrimental to Representative Democracy	3
The Naive Adaptation of the “Critical Mass” Concept from Physics to Politics	5
Why We Apply the Critical Mass Argument to Parliamentary Groups Rather than to the Plenary Assembly	6
Women’s Language Usage as Proxy for Their Capability to Put Forward a Different Agenda	7

Data and Methods	11
The Italian Case	11
A Novel Data Set on the Italian Chamber of Deputies	12
Figure 1. Average percentage and standard deviation of women in parliamentary group over time	12
Measuring Issue Attention	13
Table 1. Labeled topic and key words	13
Variables and Model Specification	16
The Moderating Effect of Institutional Presence on the Gender Gap in Issue Attention	16
Figure 2. Gender gap in issue attention in the Italian parliament: Model 1.	17
Figure 3. Marginal effect of Female on topic saliency, conditional on Women Group: Model 2	18
Robustness Checks	18
Figure 4. First-difference version of Model 2: Women only (Model 4).	19
Figure 5. Marginal effect of Female on topic saliency, conditional on Women Group	20
Gender Specificity in the Vocabulary Used by Female and Male MPs	20
Figure 6. Marginal effect of Female on topic saliency, conditional on Women Group	21
The Gender Specificity Index	21
How Language Changes as Women's Presence Increases: The U-Shaped Pattern	22
Figure 7. Gender language specificity within topics: Speeches from 1975 to 2020.	23
Conclusion	24
Notes	26
References	27