

## Municipal-Level Gender Norms: Measurement and Effects on Women in Politics

**Authors :** Luisa Carrer, Lorenzo De Masi

**Abstract :** In this paper, we exploit the massive amount of information from Facebook to build a measure of gender attitudes in Italy at a previously impossible resolution—the municipal level. We construct our index via a machine learning method to replicate a benchmark region-level measure. Interestingly, we find that most of the variation in our Gender Norms Index (GNI) is across towns within narrowly defined geographical areas rather than across regions or provinces. In a second step, we show how this local variation in norms can be leveraged for identification purposes. In particular, we use our index to investigate whether these differences in norms carry over to the policy activity of politicians elected in the Italian Parliament. We document that females are more likely to sit in parliamentary committees focused on gender-sensitive matters, labor, and social issues, but not if they come from a relatively conservative town. These effects are robust to conditioning the legislative term and electoral district, suggesting the importance of social norms in shaping legislators' policy activity.

**Keywords :** gender equality, gender norms index, Facebook, machine learning, politics

**Conference Title :** ICSCSSNHC 2023 : International Conference on Social Cognitive Science, Social Norms and Human Cooperation

**Conference Location :** Montreal, Canada

**Conference Dates :** May 15-16, 2023