

## **Media and Gender in U.S. Politics**

**Milan Van Steenvoort**

*Abstract :*

Women remain substantially underrepresented in political office, a persistent gap shaping policy priorities and existing gender norms. Because news markets play a key role in informing voters, we study differences in news coverage between female and male politicians and assess whether these differences reflect gender bias or instead arise from gender differences in political behavior and constraints. We focus on the near entire universe of candidates to state legislative elections in the United States between 1973 and 2020. First, we document substantial differences in the amount and content of news coverage men and women receive. Second, we use a Difference-in-Differences strategy that compares, for a given candidate, how coverage varies across markets with differing gender norms, and whether this variation differs between male and female candidates. By holding candidate behavior constant, this approach allows us to isolate whether news coverage of identical political actors depends on local gender norms. Preliminary results suggest that more progressive local gender norms lead to a higher increase in the news coverage for women relative to their male peers.