

The Gender Publication Gap Revisited: Evidence from the *International Political Science Review*

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ABSTRACT


Since the 1990s, there has been consensus in the literature of a submission and publication gap that favors men. Important research in the intervening years has explored the many reasons for this output gap: imbalanced administrative workloads; bias in top journals against female-dominated subfields and methodological approaches; and lower confidence levels among women, sometimes known as the “Matthew effect.” However, in the intervening period, there has been a notable emphasis on recruiting more women into academia, and the importance of publishing for career development has intensified. Journal case studies have highlighted a growth in output by women academics but show that men are still overrepresented. Using a case study of the *International Political Science Review* (IPSR), we contribute to the emerging body of work that shows that the gender gap has diminished or even been eliminated. We present data on submissions and acceptances by gender, and we base our comparisons in the gender balance of the departments of submitting authors. The results are clear, for IPSR, the gender gap has closed and women now publish on a par with their men colleagues in their department.


During recent decades, it has almost been a truism that female scholars publish less than their male counterparts. Although the number of female academics has risen notably, the preponderance of research nevertheless argues that women are underrepresented in scholarly publishing (Saraceno 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted this view when reports emerged that female scholars were less likely to submit new research for publication and were less likely to initiate new research projects (Viglione 2020).

This article challenges the dominant view of a persistent gender gap in publishing. We contribute to the emerging but still scarce

body of work that argues that the gender gap has diminished considerably and that remaining differences in publication outputs to a great extent result from the underrepresentation of women in the discipline (Curtin 2013; Evans and Moulder 2011; Teele and Thelen 2017). Any research that studies publication differences between men and women must consider that despite important progress in the recruitment of female scholars, only slightly more than one third (34%) of political science academics worldwide are women (Abu-Laban, Sawyer, and St-Laurent 2018; Atchison 2018).¹ There also is the well-established point that women continue to be underrepresented in senior professorial ranks (Alter et al. 2020).

Three decades after the seminal studies in the field, it is timely to ask the question: Is there still a gender productivity imbalance in political science? This article uses a case study of the *International Political Science Review* (IPSR) to investigate the gender balance in publishing in political science. IPSR is an especially good test case for political science because it is a journal with a global reach and a record of subfield and methodological pluralism. Comparing the

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gender balance of submissions and publications relative to the gender balance of the departments of submitting authors, we find that there is only a small imbalance favoring men in submissions and no gender imbalance in publications.

We first discuss scholarship on gender publication patterns in political science. We then introduce *IPSR* and present data on its author profile and readership, as well as the data on submissions in 2019 and 2020. We next discuss our main findings. To conclude, we make recommendations for developing this important field of investigation.

WOMEN AND PUBLISHING IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

From a Google Scholar search of the period 2007–2023, we found 26 articles that discuss the gender balance in publications.² Many of these published articles used submission as the point of departure for their examination of publishing patterns. The consensus that emerges is that women submit to journals, especially highly ranked journals, in lower numbers compared to their men counterparts (Breuning and Sanders 2007; Teele and Thelen 2017; Young 1995). Of the 17 articles in our sample that considered submissions, all identified a gender gap in submissions. However, the scale of the gap varied considerably, from articles (authored or coauthored) by women in *International Organization* as low as 22% (Breuning and Sanders 2007) to journals such as *South European Politics and Society* that reported that women authors account for 38% of submissions (Verney and Bosco 2022).

We first discuss scholarship on gender publication patterns in political science. We then introduce IPSR and present data on its author profile and readership, as well as the data on submissions in 2019 and 2020.

Although submissions are the first step in the publishing process, acceptance rates are critical to understanding the final production of knowledge for the discipline. In the systematic review, 23 of the 26 articles addressed a gender gap in acceptances with articles by men, in all forms, as more prominent (see, e.g., Nedal and Nexon 2018). However, there is some nuance to this finding. Recent research—although continuing to report an overall gender gap that favors male authors in accepted articles—provides mixed findings regarding acceptance rates for men and women (Martinsen, Goetz, and Müller 2022). For example, Teele and Thelen (2017) reported that female authors face higher rejection rates. In their study of *World Politics*, Tudor and Yashar (2018, 870) pointed out that solo-author women and men had equal chances of being accepted (see also Stockemer et al. 2022). In contrast, Stockemer, Blair, and Rashkova (2020, 404) presented data on the acceptance rate of articles in *European Political Science* and demonstrated that acceptance rates for women are notably higher: male and female authors had acceptance rates of 45% and 60%, respectively. Furthermore, male-authored, coauthored, or male-led papers had double the rejection rate that female-led papers had (Stockemer, Blair, and Rashkova 2020, 404–5). The literature also has advanced arguments about why acceptance rates for women could be higher: women are less confident about their work and want to perfect it to a higher standard than men (König and Ropers 2018, 851) and women are

Table 1
Summary of Literature Search

Theme	Number of Articles Addressing This Aspect	Number of Articles That Find a Gender Gap Favoring Men
Gender Differences in Submission Rates	17	13
Gender Differences in Acceptances	23	15
Gender Differences in Authorship Type (Accepted Articles)	15	–
Gender Differences Discussed in Context of Gender Representation in the Discipline	6	–
Gender Differences by Professional Rank	6	–

Source: Authors' literature search. Total N=26.

more concerned about rejection than men (Stockemer, Blair, and Rashkova 2020).

Even when the acceptance rates of women are higher, the literature presents a clear picture: men publish more than women

(table 1). Yet, most of these studies do not consider the presence of women in the discipline. We believe that presence is an essential mediating variable in any discussion of productivity and output. A small number of articles have used the overall gender balance in the profession to contextualize their analysis. These studies provide mixed results. Cellini (2022) pointed out that in the Italian case, although the percentage of women at all levels of the profession had increased in the past decade, they still publish at a rate lower than the percentage of their representation in the discipline (see also Maliniak, Powers, and Walter 2013). Conversely, Evans and Bucy (2020) suggested that the gender gap has been eliminated in their work on *Political Communication and Press Politics*, which compares publication presence to the gender breakdown of membership in major associations (i.e., International Communication Association and American Political Science Association). More nuanced, Teele and Thelen (2017, 437) in their comparative study found that only four journals have a gender publication balance that aligns with the presence of women in the discipline. Importantly, they also showed that where gender imbalances exist, they permeate all levels of the discipline. Specifically, at the professor level, they showed that “although about 23% of full professors are women, only 11% of the full professors who write for these top journals are women, meaning that there is a gender gap of 12 points at the full professor level.”³

Our research builds on the few studies that consider women’s presence in the discipline to be an important mediating variable. Indeed, we deem it crucial to consider women’s presence in the discipline. The following example illustrates this point. We considered that there is no gender gap in publications at the individual level if there are 35% women in the discipline and an average of 35% of published authors are women. In this scenario, the average individual man would publish exactly the same number of articles as the average individual woman. We used *IPSR* as a case study to investigate whether a gender imbalance still exists in journal publishing when we systematically compared the presence of men and women in the discipline.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW

IPSR is a generalist political science journal and an association journal with a wide reach in terms of both its distribution and the profile of its submitting authors. *IPSR* is ranked Q1–Q2 of all political science journals and it is listed in both the Social Science Citation Index and Scopus. Thus, it is what might be considered a “respectable” journal, which creates an important demand factor among political science departments that encourage their colleagues to submit their work to “good” outlets. The journal receives from 250 to 300 submissions annually, it publishes five issues per year, and its acceptance rate oscillates slightly more than 20%. In 2020, *IPSR* received submissions from authors in 64 countries and it accepted manuscripts from authors in 23 countries. We acknowledge that authors are located predominantly in the Global North; however, *IPSR* is one of only a few political science journals with modest representation of authors from the developing world—and this pattern has been evident for some time (Lima, Morschbacher, and Peres 2018).

IPSR also is pluralist in its vision and practice: it accepts manuscripts from all areas of the discipline and it encourages methodological diversity. Importantly, *IPSR* has a long history of publishing high-quality research on gender and politics, the sub-disciplinary area with the highest concentration of female scholars. Moreover, although quantitative research methods have become the most common research approach in articles published in *IPSR*, qualitative research techniques feature in more than 30% of those published (Lima, Morschbacher, and Peres 2018). It is this track record of *IPSR* that situates it as an important test case to study patterns of publishing in political science. The journal is genuinely representative of the discipline.⁴ The pluralism of *IPSR* means that it provides a good overall reflection of the discipline. However, in terms of comparability, it may not fully reflect the author profile found in other journals whose authorship may be more US-based and have less thematic and methodological

diversity. Our study used articles submitted to *IPSR* from 2019 to 2020. The journal received 518 submissions from 884 authors during this period (Stockemer et al. 2022). The dataset included information on career stage, authorship type, and gender. Gender has been self-reported by submitting authors since 2018 at *IPSR*. Aligned with public commentary and academic research (Stockemer and Reidy 2024), our data also attest to a decline in the overall percentage of female submitting authors in 2020. Therefore, we suggest that the inclusion of 2020 data in the study makes this a strong test of gendered patterns in publication.

METHODS

To compare the gender ratio of submitted and published articles with the gender ratio in the discipline, we used the department and institution of each submitting author of every article to generate a dataset, which included the gender ratio of all faculty members and graduate students (Reidy and Stockemer 2024). Because departments are located worldwide, and there is good alignment between the overall gender breakdown in the profession (Abu-Laban, Sawyer, and St-Laurent 2018; Korkut and St-Laurent 2023) and the gender-authorship data (see table 1), we argue that the departments are a good representation of the professional pool of political scientists. We used institutional websites to generate much of these data and directly contacted departments by email. It was possible to gather data on the faculty profile for almost all submitting authors. However, the picture was more inconsistent for graduate students. Many departmental websites had no data, and responses to requests for information sometimes were incomplete.

FINDINGS

Of the 518 papers received, 69% of submissions were from male authors and 31% were from female authors. Reviewing the wider balance of men and women in the departments of submitting authors, we found that the percentage of male faculty members within the dataset of departments was 62% and the percentage of female faculty members was 38% (table 2).⁵ Because our submitting authors came from a diverse worldwide range of departments and research institutes, we argue that the departments of authors submitting to *IPSR* likely provided a robust representation of the gender breakdown in the international pool of political scientists.

For comparison, the final line in table 2 presents the overall gender balance in the profession worldwide as reported in the 2022 International Political Science Association (IPSA) gender-monitoring report (Korkut and Saint-Laurent 2023). Because IPSA is the association that owns *IPSR*, we considered it a relevant benchmark for the profession in this context. In terms of the overall balance of women in the profession, the percentages

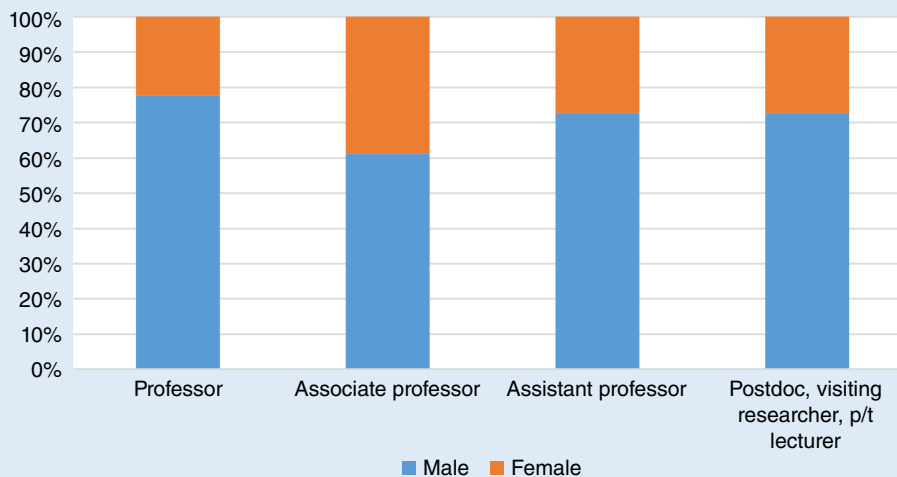
Table 2

Total Breakdown of Male versus Female Faculty and Graduate Students from Submitting Authors’ Department or Faculty (as of April 2022)

	Faculty Members		Graduate Students		Overall Total		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Overall Total (#)	15,914	9,877	1,961	1,861	29,613	17,875	11,738
Overall Total (Percentage)	62	38	51	49	100	60	40
IPSA Gender Monitoring Report 2023	–	–	–	–		64	36

Figure 1

Submissions by Gender and Professional Rank



Note: Each professional category is set at 100%. The overall professional breakdown is professor (25%); associate professor (32%); assistant professor (26%); and postdoctoral scholar, visiting researcher, and part-time lecturer (16%).

broadly matched the data from the departments in this study—that is, 36%—whereas the percentage of women authors submitting to *IPSR* is only slightly higher at 40%.

To contextualize table 2, we categorized the submissions by professional rank (figure 1). As expected, this highlighted a stark gender imbalance favoring men for full professors. However, in the ranks in which women academics are more strongly represented in the discipline (e.g., associate professor and assistant professor), the gender gap in submissions to *IPSR* was smaller. In more detail, for associate professors—the most productive rank for publishing—the gender ratio was the smallest. It was again somewhat higher for assistant professors and postdoctoral scholars. The finding that the associate and full professor ranks comprise the majority of submissions is somewhat in contrast to previous US work, which noted that tenure-track (usually assistant) professors are more likely to publish articles than their more senior peers, who have a greater proclivity to publish books (Djupe, Smith, and Sokhey 2022, 38–40).

Regarding authorship type, figure 2 shows the gender breakdown of single- and multi-authored work. Of the manuscripts submitted to *IPSR*, 22% were single-authored by men and 8% were single-authored by women. Of the remaining 70%, the breakdown was 47% men and 23% women. This translates broadly to a 2:1

percentage of accepted articles for female faculty was 40%. These percentages also imply that there is no gender gap. Indeed, they suggest that women are performing marginally ahead of their percentage representation in the discipline. When we expand the analysis to include graduate students, the positive performance of female scholars is amplified further. Of the graduate students in our data, 37% were female and their acceptance rate was 64%. However, the overall numbers are low for graduate students, which implies that we must interpret this result as a good indication rather than a definitive finding. The number of graduate students publishing in top-ranked journals usually is modest; however, including this level is important because it is reasonable to assume that graduate students who publish are likely to become the next generation of faculty members.

Further evidence of the disappearing gender gap in political science publishing emerges when we examine the total proportion of published papers from the *IPSR* sample (derived from tables 2 and 3): 57% of accepted papers were submitted by male authors and 43% by female authors. This challenges the conventional wisdom that there is a persistent and notable gender imbalance in publishing. Furthermore, the data highlight that, in fact, male authors underperform relative to their personnel ratio in political science departments, which is 62% (see table 2), or 60% including graduate

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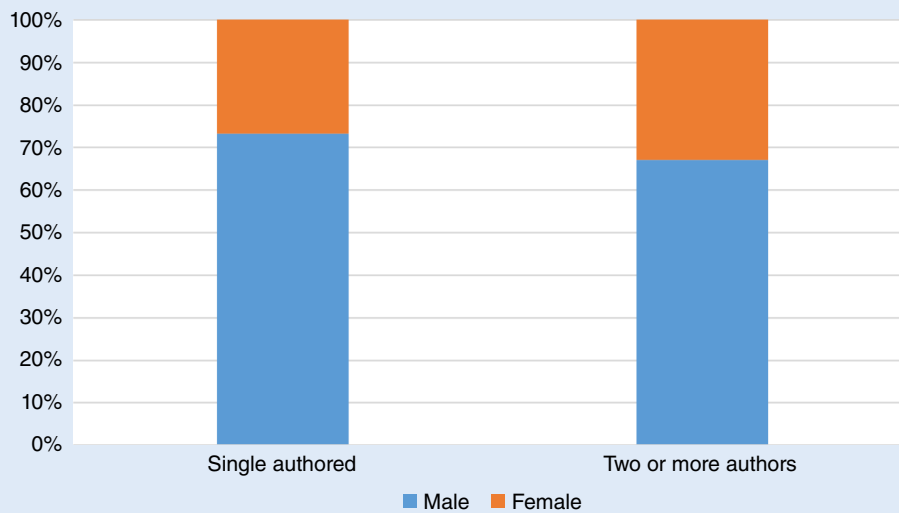
ratio, which aligns with the overall representation of men and women in the profession.

The acceptance rate for *IPSR* from 2019 to 2020 was 26%⁶: 21% for male authors and 35% for female authors. Table 3 highlights that the percentage of female faculty from submitting authors' departments in the dataset was 30%; table 4 shows that the total

students. Female authors overperform, with female faculty in the discipline at 38%, or 40% including graduate students, whereas their share of total accepted papers was 43%. Overall, our data show that publication and gender ratios within the discipline are much closer than in previous decades and can be attributed to a proportional and reasonable variance. The data show only a slight

Figure 2

Authorship Type by Gender (%)



Note: Each authorship category is set at 100%.

Table 3

Total Male and Female Author Submissions

	Faculty Members		Graduate Students		Overall Total Submitted	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total Submitted (#)	461	195	94	56	555	251
Total Submitted (Percentage)	70	30	63	37	69	31

Table 4

Total of Accepted versus Rejected Submissions of Male and Female Authors

	Faculty Members		Graduate Students		Overall Total		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Total Accepted (#)	108	73	9	16	117	89	206
Total Accepted (Percentage)	60	40	36	64	57	43	100
Total Rejected (#)	353	122	85	40	438	162	600
Total Rejected (Percentage)	74	26	68	32	73	27	100

under- and over-performance of male and female authors, respectively, which demonstrates that female authors are not underrepresented in publication relative to their male counterparts.

respectively. Yet, this minor submissions gap disappears at the acceptance stage. These percentages also illustrate that male authors are not, as Saraceno (2020, 59) stated, “overpublished” relative to their share of submitted manuscripts. That is, whereas

Assuming that men and women continue to publish at approximately equal rates, this also implies that the gender gap in publishing will only erode if there is parity in academia.

In summary, we find that there is only a slight submissions gap in political science—69% male to 31% female (see table 3)—whereas presence in the field is 60% to 40% for males and females,

male authors submit marginally more manuscripts than female authors (Closa et al. 2020, 428), they are published in proportion to their presence in the field.

CONCLUSION

Our findings demonstrate that structural factors are essential in understanding publication patterns. To determine the existence of a gender gap in publications, we must examine the pool of possible submitters. If one gender is overrepresented in the profession of political science, it is only logical that this gender also is overrepresented in submissions and accepted articles in the field. However, as long as the percentage of women in the profession largely matches the pool of authors, then there is broad parity in publishing. This finding emerges from one journal and—although the case for its generalizability to the discipline as a whole is strong—overall, it is a small pool of articles. Additionally, due to the way that we structured the data collection, the data analyzed did not include a gender breakdown of coauthorship structure. This type of analysis is important and missing from this research. Thus, it would be valuable to have more extensive analyses among a wider array of journals and with a larger pool of submissions, and especially to revisit some of the Q1-ranked journals in the field. Further highlighting the point about presence in the field, the data from *IPSR* show that male professors at full professor rank outnumber female professors in their submission of manuscripts. Although there are no global data on the precise breakdown of academics by rank, we assume that women's share at this rank is the lowest. It is interesting that women are more heavily represented in the other ranks (especially the associate professor rank).

Finally, this article should not be considered a call to inaction or an indication that deep structurally gendered imbalances in the discipline have been resolved. On the contrary, the most obvious recommendation is that it is essential for more women to be recruited. In past decades, women have increased in number in the profession, and they have become substantively more visible in different roles, including publications. Nevertheless, they still comprise only approximately one third of the profession. In other words, whereas women are the global majority, they remain a minority in academia. Assuming that men and women continue to publish at approximately equal rates, this also implies that the gender gap in publishing will only erode if there is parity in academia. Considering that achieving parity is a slow process, we likely will continue to see more articles by male scholars in the short and medium terms. This poses real challenges for the types of questions that are asked, the way research is conducted, and how knowledge is created.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research documentation and data that support the findings of this study are openly available on the *PS: Political Science & Politics* Harvard Dataverse at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/9ENYOD>.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research. ■

NOTES

1. This overall percentage masks important variation: 48% of members of the Icelandic Political Science Association are women whereas only 12.3% of Japanese political scientists are women (Abu-Laban, Sawyer, and St-Laurent 2018, 7).

2. The material is clustered predominantly in journals with a specific focus on the profession (e.g., *European Political Science* and *PS: Political Science & Politics*), but the issue also has been covered in regional and national journals.
3. Hancock, Baum, and Breuning (2013) also made this point, highlighting that women scholars are concentrated in the PhD student and assistant professor levels.
4. Finally, *IPSR* has a long track record of gender balance in its editorial teams. The first female editor was appointed in 1995, and she was followed in that role by another woman, appointed in 2011. Since then, three more women have served as editor. The journal had an all-female editorial team from 2016 to 2019 and a gender-balanced team since 2020. Women account for more than 40% of the editorial board.
5. Specifically for graduate students (see table 2), the breakdown is 51% male and 49% female.
6. There is a small difference between the annual acceptance rate for the journal and the acceptance rate for the articles included in this research that results from missing data on authors.

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