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WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
IN A PAKISTANI METROPOLIS:
NAVIGATING GENDERED
HOUSEHOLD AND POLITICAL SPACES

Policy Report

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Kuraishi, Asad Liaqat and Fatiq Nadeem

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Women’s Political Participation in a Pakistani Metropolis: Navigating Gendered Household and Political Spaces

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Executive Summary¹

The challenge of women’s political participation in Pakistan’s big cities

Pakistan adopted universal adult suffrage in 1956, granting all women and men aged 18 and above the de jure right to vote. However, severe gender inequalities in electoral participation have persisted since 1970 when the first national assembly elections were held on the basis of universal adult franchise.

At the time of the 2018 general elections, women comprised forty-four percent of registered voters – indicating approximately 12 million missing women in the vote register. Equally important, the male–female gap in voter turnout in the 2018 general elections stood at 9.1 per cent, with 11 million fewer women exercising their right to vote than men. Pakistan will need to address this gender inequality in electoral participation if it is going to transition to a gender inclusive democratic polity. This will require overcoming the twin challenges of gender inequality in voter registration and turnout.

Gender inequality in voter registration has been recognized as an important challenge by the Elections Act 2017.² The Election Commission of Pakistan’s (ECP) efforts added about 10.6 million men and 9.1 million women to the electoral rolls since the election of May 2013, a total increase of 19.7 million voters that brought the size of Pakistan’s current electorate to 105.9 million (FAFEN 2018a). While reducing the gender gap in voter registration is a necessary condition for building a gender inclusive democracy, it may not be sufficient if the gender gap in turnout remains high. It is for this reason that the Elections Act 2017 also recognizes reducing the gender inequality in voter turnout as an important goal. The focus of the Act is to provide redress for situations in which community, elite or group-based restraints by agreement constrain women from exercising their right to vote. The legislation enables the ECP to order re-polling in a set of

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² Section 47 of the Elections Act 2017. The legislation not only requires ECP to publish disaggregated data of registered men and women voters in each National and Provincial Assembly constituency, it also requires the use of special measures if the male-female gap in registration exceeds ten percent in a constituency.

constituencies or polling stations if it finds evidence ‘of an agreement restraining women from casting their votes’ or if women voter turnout is extremely low.⁴

However, the Election Act 2017’s emphasis on community and group-based restraints and on constituencies where women’s turnout is extremely low, has primarily focused attention and effort on rural constituencies.⁵ Considerably less attention has been paid in Pakistan’s national debate to understanding the magnitude and causes of the gender gap in turnout and registration in the metropolitan cities. **Analyzing gender gaps in metropolitan cities is important because the population of Pakistan’s million-plus cities grew at close to 4 per cent per annum between 1998 and 2017 – double the national population growth rate.**

This report shows that the largest city in each of Pakistan’s four provinces did much worse in terms of gender inequality in voter turnout in the 2018 general election compared to the remaining constituencies of each province. The difference is highest in the Punjab province, with the gender gap in turnout in the metropolis of Lahore⁶ (12.5 per cent) being double the gap in the rest of the province (6.3 per cent). In contrast, there is a much smaller gender gap in voter registration between the largest city and the provincial average in the other three provinces. Building a gender inclusive democratic polity will require Pakistan’s big cities to overcome their high turnout gap.

The gender gap in participation in big cities is puzzling because it exists in spite of an ongoing structural transformation that has narrowed the gender gap in educational attainment. Hillygus (2005) and Sondheimer and Green (2010) have established a causal link between education and voter turnout, and though it is unclear that this works equally well outside the USA, it can be expected that an increase in women’s education should at least help close some part of the gender gap in voting. In 1990, the gender gap in educational attainment among young adults in Pakistan’s urban areas was large (10 per cent), but within a period of 20 years this gap has virtually closed. The narrowing gap in educational attainment has not, however, impacted the high gender gap in political participation in Pakistan’s big cities.

The report argues that it would not be possible to forge an effective agenda of action to address the gender inequality in participation in big cities without recognizing that it is a product of a complex dynamic between women, social attitudes in households and the gendered nature of political space and political engagement. The main aim of the report is to provide an understanding of this complex dynamic by unpacking the constraints women face in exercising political agency. It is led by a simple question – why does a gender gap in political participation exist in a big city context?

We answer this question by using evidence from qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with close to 250 women and men and an original baseline citizen survey of 2,500

³ Section 9 of the Elections Act 2017.

⁴ Section 9 (1) of the Elections Act 2017 states that “If the turnout of women voters is less than ten percent of the total votes polled in a constituency, the Commission may presume that the women voters have been restrained through an agreement from casting their votes and may declare, polling at one more polling stations or election in the whole constituency, void.”

⁵ Of the 564 polling stations identified by the ECP where no women were allowed to cast their vote in the 2008 Election, less than nine percent were metropolitan city constituencies (Jamil 2014, Dastageer and Safdar 2018 and Fatima 2018, FAFEN 2018a).

⁶ Lahore is the capital city of the Punjab province with a population of 11.1 million.

randomly selected households across 7 of Lahore's 14 national assembly constituencies and one third of the city's local government electoral wards. Within each household, one man and one woman member were randomly selected and interviewed, providing us with a total sample of 5,000 respondents. We also draw on an original turnout survey that validated the turnout of women and men in Election 2018 by observing indelible ink marks on the thumbs of the respondents within two days of the elections.

Can community or group-based restraints by agreement explain Lahore's high gender inequality in political participation?

Standard explanations for Pakistan's large gender gap in political participation highlight the use of overt restrictions against women voters imposed by male family and community members (Gazdar 2003; Bari 2005; Giné and Mansuri 2011; NCSW 2018). This is seen as a consequence of patriarchy and deeply embedded conservative social norms, and this explanation underpins the choice of instruments provided in the Elections Act 2017.

The report uses evidence to argue that Lahore's high gender gap in political participation cannot be explained by communities, elites or groups restraining women from voting by agreement. Women in the focus groups did not cite any cases of restraint by agreement, nor did they overwhelmingly believe that they were forbidden to vote by men, social and political elites and the community. This gives us reason to believe that existing legislation may provide blunt instruments to deal with the real reasons for the participation gap in metropolitan contexts like Lahore.

Existing legislative instruments may also lack bite because evidence shows that the primary space shaping women's engagement with politics is the household and not the community. We find that a majority of women (58 per cent) report discussing politics within the household. In comparison a majority of men (54 per cent) report discussing politics with other men outside the household. We also find that men are critical nodes that influence women's engagement with politics in households; nearly 50 per cent of women report discussing politics with the men in their household.

Our research identifies three major reasons for why women turn out to vote in lower numbers than men in Lahore's elections.

1. *Attitudes of males as gatekeepers within households affects women's turnout*

The report finds that men are important gatekeepers of women's political engagement within households. An area of convergence across women in all our focus groups is the view that they need to seek permission from men in the household before engaging in any activity outside the home or interacting with anyone outside it.

In this context, it is important to understand men's attitudes and norms because they influence and shape women's engagement with politics. The report presents original evidence on men's views about women's political engagement and the conditions under which they believe it is appropriate for women to vote.

Our evidence shows that 8.3 per cent of men in our sample thought it was not appropriate for women to vote in a general election, and this finding is associated with an 11 per cent lower turnout of women in these households compared to other households. We also find that 54.9 per cent of men thought it was not inappropriate to stop women in their household from voting if they

voted differently from them and 43.4 per cent thought it was not inappropriate to stop women from voting if there were chances of fights breaking out at the polling station. Women's turnout in households where men hold these views was 4.5 per cent and 8.6 per cent lower in the 2018 general elections respectively, compared to other households.

The field survey data also shows that 30.4 per cent of men thought it was not appropriate for women to speak their minds about politics and 64 per cent thought it was not appropriate for women to become political party workers. These households had a 7 per cent lower turnout of women in the 2018 general elections. **Therefore, not only are men important gatekeepers mediating women's political participation in a metropolitan context, their attitudes and norms were important determinants of women's electoral turnout in the 2018 general election.**

2. Gendered nature of political space and engagement affects women's turnout

We also find that political space in Lahore is highly gender segregated and underpinned by low contact between women and political party representatives and their workers. The report examines the impact of the gendered nature of political engagement between voters and political party organizations and their workers.

We find that women were 3 times less likely than men to have been mobilized by political parties in the run up to the 2013 general election or to have made contact with political representatives after elections to resolve their issues. When women do make contact with representatives, it is largely mediated by men from the household.

It is unsurprising then that a common refrain heard from women in focus groups is that 'they feel that they are invisible to political parties and that their issues don't matter to them'⁷. The report provides a novel measure of political invisibility by asking women and men respondents whether they think that their union council chairperson or local government ward councilor⁸ knows them. We find a big gender gap in this measure of political invisibility, with 4 times more men reporting that their local government representatives know them relative to women. **We find that political invisibility was an important determinant of women's turnout;** a one standard deviation increase in political invisibility among women is associated with a 6 percentage point lower turnout in 2018.

3. Women's knowledge of politics and elections affects their turnout

We also find large gender gaps in women's political self-efficacy; interest in politics; and knowledge of politics. We would expect this in a context where political space is gender segregated and men within households are important nodes that shape and influence women's engagement with politics.

These findings suggest that the gendered nature of social and political spaces in Lahore are not only lowering the political self-efficacy of women, they are also socializing them as less informed members of the polity. We also find that women's political self-efficacy and knowledge are correlated with turnout; a one standard deviation increase in women's political

⁷ Cheema et. al. (2018).

⁸ The union council is the lowest unit of local government in Punjab. Each union council is headed by a chairperson and its council has representation from 6 ward councilors who are elected on the basis of first-past-the-post from a politically delimited electoral ward.

self-efficacy is associated with a 6 percentage point higher turnout and a one standard deviation increase in political knowledge is associated with a 1.5 percentage point higher turnout.

Why is it important that women turn out to vote?

As recognized by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, ensuring 'gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.' **Ensuring gender equality in political participation is also important because we find that at least in some public policy domains in metropolitan cities, the issues that matter to women are different from the issues that matter to men.** Women are an important constituency for the provision of clean drinking water and curbing inflation, with 18.3 per cent and 16.1 per cent respectively citing these as the most important public policy issue in the run up to Election 2018, compared to 9.2 per cent and 9 per cent of men in the sample. **Gender equality in electoral participation has the potential to change which issues are represented in the political arena and strengthen a constituency for critical issues such as those covered by SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation).**

We also find that women are a nascent but pivotal constituency for achieving the goal of equal representation of women in parliament; 61 per cent of women say that it is appropriate for women to stand as candidates in elections, compared to 34.5 per cent men. Equal representation of women has been an important demand of the Women's Movement; the Women's Parliamentary Caucus of Pakistan, the National and Provincial Commissions on the State of Women and civil society organizations.

An agenda for action

Taken together, the evidence suggests that the gender-gap in political participation in a metropolis like Lahore reflects complex dynamics. Therefore, addressing this challenge will require concerted and collaborative action by women's movements and civil society organisations (CSOs), political parties, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus of Pakistan, the National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women, the ECP, and academia. **The concluding section of the report provides the contours of an agenda for action to stimulate a debate on the types of interventions that have the potential to reduce gender inequality in political participation in Pakistan's metropolitan context.**

Key Words: Pakistan, elections, women's political participation, voting, gender gap.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Author Details.....	7
Table of Figures.....	8
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	10
1. The Challenge of Women’s Political Participation in Pakistan’s Big Cities.....	11
2. Methodology and Sampling.....	15
3. Community and Group-Based Restraints on Women’s Political Participation.....	18
4. Gendered Household Spaces: Households, Male Gatekeepers and the Challenge of Women’s Political Participation.....	19
5. Gendered Political Spaces and the Challenge of Women’s Political Participation.....	24
5.1. The Participation Challenge and Women’s Political Knowledge, Self-Efficacy and Interest.....	29
6. Gendered spaces and women’s turnout.....	30
6.1. Turnout in the 2018 general election and men’s views about women’s political engagement...	31
6.2. Turnout in the 2018 Elections and women’s knowledge of politics.....	32
6.3. Turnout in the 2018 Elections and political invisibility.....	33
6.4. Turnout in the 2018 Elections and political self-efficacy.....	33
7. Why does women voters’ turnout matter?.....	33
8. An Agenda for Action.....	35
References.....	38

Table of Figures

Figure 1.1: The gender gap in turnout.....	11
Figure 1.2: The gender gap in registration.....	12
Figure 1.3: The gender gap in political participation.....	12
Figure 1.4: The gender gap in the likelihood of political participation.....	13
Figure 1.5: The gender gap in the likelihood of going shopping for own clothes or shoes to a market outside the neighborhood.....	13
Figure 1.6: The gender gap in discussing political issues or topics with others.....	14
Figure 3.1: Women and men’s attitudes about the appropriateness of women voting.....	18
Figure 3.2: Complex dynamic of women's political participation.....	19
Figure 4.1: With whom do respondents discuss politics?.....	20
Figure 4.2: Attitudes about gendered political spaces.....	21

Figure 4.3: Attitudes about gendered household spaces	21
Figure 4.4: Men’s attitudes towards granting permission	22
Figure 4.5: Men and women’s attitudes about the conditions under which it is not inappropriate for men to stop women from voting	23
Figure 4.6: Men’s attitudes about whether it is not appropriate for women to speak their minds about politics or become political party workers	24
Figure 5.1: Contact with political party representatives in the days leading up to the 2013 general election	25
Figure 5.2: Contact with union council chairpersons or councilors during past year	25
Figure 5.3: Channel of contact with union council chairpersons or councilors during past year	26
Figure 5.4: Gender gap in perception of political invisibility	28
Figure 5.5: Gender gap in political knowledge	29
Figure 5.6: Gender gap in political self-efficacy and interest	30
Figure 6.1: The correlation between women’s turnout in the 2018 general election and men’s views about women’s political engagement	31
Figure 6.2: Individual correlates of women’s turnout in the 2018 general election	32
Figure 7.1: Do you think it is appropriate for women to stand in elections as candidates?	34
Figure 8.1: Complex reinforcing dynamic affecting women's turnout	35

Acronyms and Abbreviations

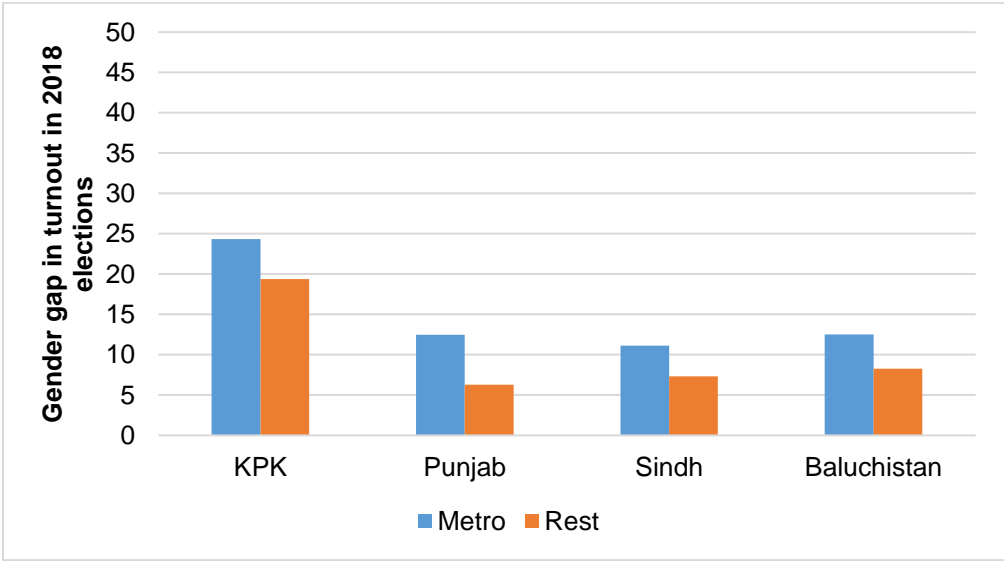
A4EA	Action for Empowerment and Accountability
AF	Aurat Foundation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
DVEC	District Voter Education Committee
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDEAS	Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
NA	National Assembly
NCSW	National Commission on the Status of Women
OSF	Open Society Foundation
PS	Polling Stations
PCSW	Punjab Commission on the Status of Women
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
SAP-PK	South Asia Partnership Pakistan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

1. The Challenge of Women’s Political Participation in Pakistan’s Big Cities

Is the challenge of women’s political participation more acute in Pakistan’s big cities? Figures 1.1 and 1.2 answer this question by comparing the gender gap in political participation in each province’s largest city to the average for the remaining constituencies in each province.

Figure 1.1 compares the gender gap in voter turnout in the 2018 general elections. It shows that each province’s largest city does much worse in terms of gender inequality in voter turnout in comparison to the average for the remaining constituencies. The difference is highest in Punjab, with the gender gap in turnout in Lahore (12.5 per cent) being double that in the rest of the province (6.3 per cent).

Figure 1.1: The gender gap in turnout

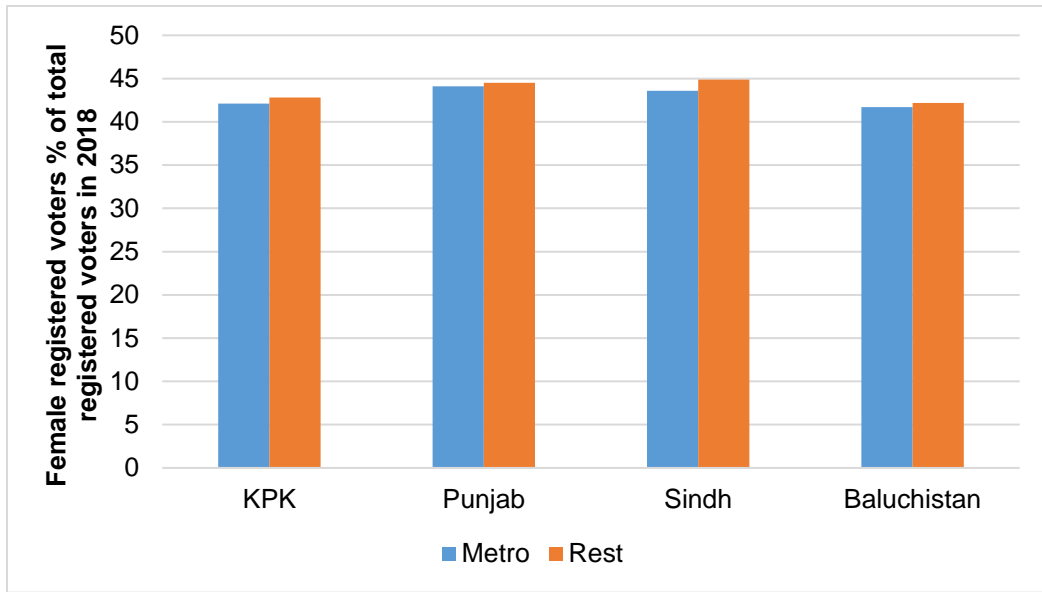


Source: ECP 2018 General Election Data

Figure 1.2, however, shows that there is only a small gender gap in voter registration between each province’s largest city and the average for the remaining constituencies in the province. This may be in no small part because of state led efforts that added about 10.6 million men and 9.1 million women to the electoral rolls between the 2013 and 2018 elections, bringing the size of Pakistan’s current electorate to 105.9 million voters.⁹ Almost 4.3 million women voters were added just between October 2017 and May 2018 (FAFEN 2018a). Though a gender gap in registration remains, with approximately 12 million fewer women on the electoral rolls than men, Figure 1.2 does suggest that while big cities are not outliers within their provinces in terms of the gender gap in voter registration, it is on gender equal turnout that they lag acutely.

⁹ PCSW Punjab Gender Parity Report (2018) also confirms that by the end of 2017, of every 5 women holding a CNIC, 4 had registered their vote.

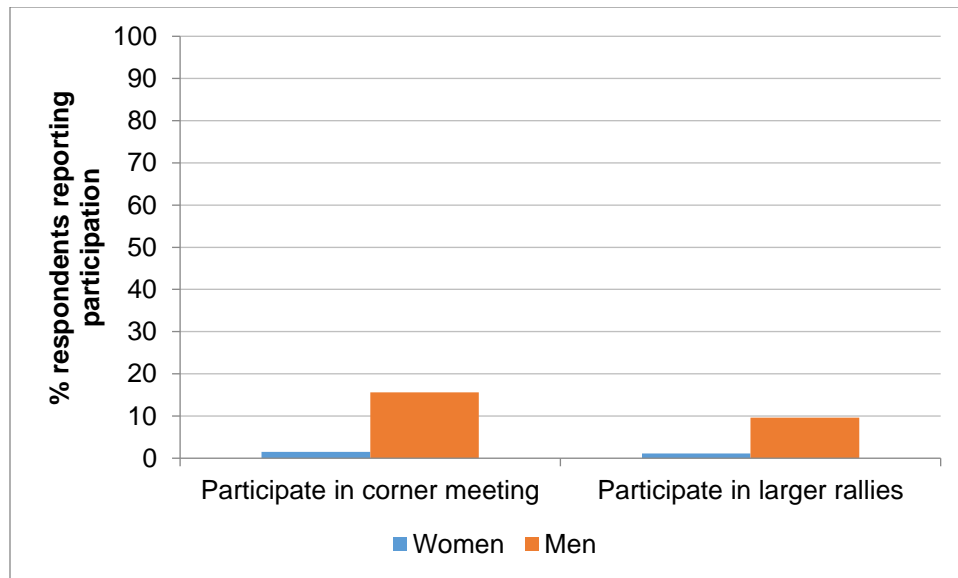
Figure 1.2: The gender gap in registration



Source: ECP 2018 General Election Data

We use our field survey data to assess whether Lahore faces gender gaps in broader measures of political participation. We asked respondents if they had participated in corner meetings or rallies organized by political parties at any time over the last one year. Figure 1.3 shows that a gender gap in such participation does exist in Lahore – participation in corner meetings and rallies is low in general but many more men than women participate in these. In fact, the participation of women is almost non-existent at 1.5% and 1.1% respectively.

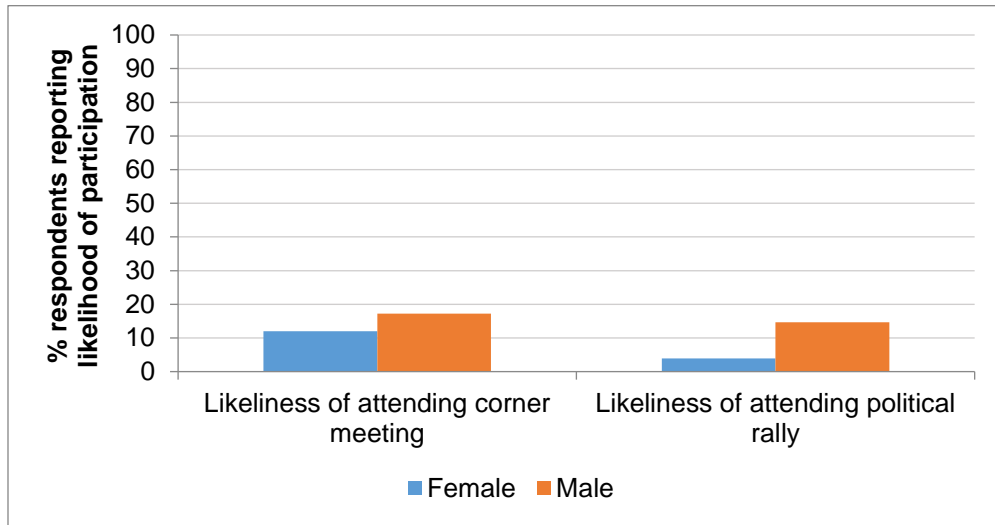
Figure 1.3: The gender gap in political participation



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

Since Election Day 2018 was still two months away at the time of the survey, we also asked respondents about their likelihood of attending corner meetings and/or rallies organized by political parties in the coming months. Figure 1.4 shows that a gender gap also exists in the likelihood of political participation, and that the gap is much larger for the likelihood of participation in political rallies compared to corner meetings.

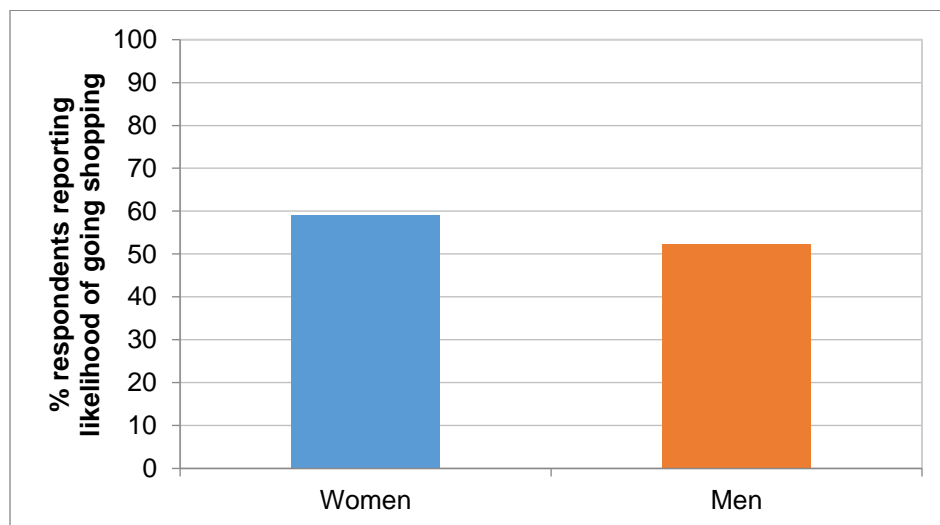
Figure 1.4: The gender gap in the likelihood of political participation



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

The gender gap in political participation is brought into sharp relief when we analyze the gender gap in market participation. Figure 1.5 plots the likelihood reported by women and men respondents of going shopping for their own clothes and shoes to a market outside their immediate neighborhood. Interestingly, we find a much smaller gender gap in market participation compared to political participation. This suggests that constraints to women’s political participation exist in a context where women’s social mobility does not appear to be equally constrained.

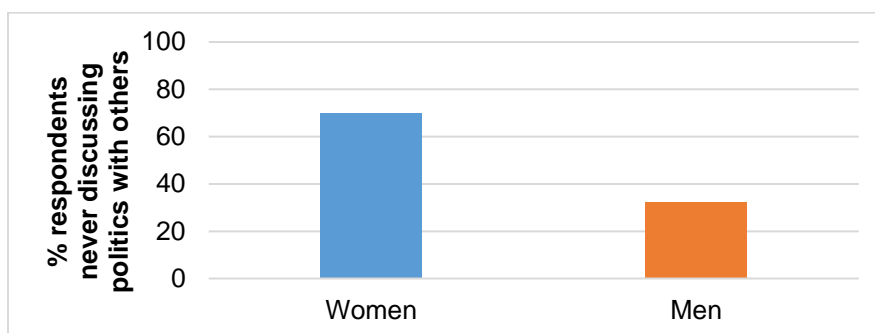
Figure 1.5: The gender gap in the likelihood of going shopping for own clothes or shoes to a market outside the neighborhood



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

Figure 1.6 plots the gender gap in political engagement reported by survey respondents. We measure political engagement by asking respondents how often they discuss political issues or topics with other people. We find a staggering gender gap in political engagement with twice as many of our women respondents (70 per cent) reporting that they never discuss political issues or topics with others as compared to our male respondents (32 per cent).

Figure 1.6: The gender gap in discussing political issues or topics with others



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

The evidence suggests that the challenge of gender inequality in Lahore is not only restricted to the gender gap in electoral turnout, it is equally prevalent in terms of broader measures of political participation. This high gender gap in political participation and engagement does not bode well for Pakistan emerging as a gender inclusive democratic polity.

This report uses evidence to unpack the causes underpinning the gender gap in political participation in a metropolitan city context. It looks beyond the creation of democratic spaces for women's participation to look instead at the constraints that women face in being able to navigate social and political spaces and exercise political agency within them. It is led by a simple question — why does a gender gap in political participation exist in a big city context? We believe that answering this question allows us to interrogate the nature of the social and political contract that exists between women, households and political parties in metropolitan Pakistan, and that doing so in an urban context allows us a focused lens on the particularly tenacious constraints that women continue to face as citizens even when the more severe constraints do not exist.

The next section provides the details of the methodology and sampling. Section 3 asks whether Lahore's high gender gap in political participation can be explained by community or group-based restraints by agreement on women exercising their right to vote. Section 4 highlights the importance of households, not communities, as the primary space that shapes women's engagement with politics. It establishes the importance of men within households as important nodes that shape and influence women's engagement with politics. Section 5 describes the gender segregated nature of Lahore's political space and shows that it is underpinned by low contact between women and political party representatives and their workers. It shows that the gender segregated nature of political space has created a strong perception of 'political invisibility' among women. Section 6 shows that the gendered nature of household and political spaces in Lahore are socializing women as less informed members of the polity and is lowering their political self-efficacy and interest in politics. Section 7 uses correlation analysis to show that women's turnout in the 2018 general elections is strongly associated with men's views about women's political engagement, women's knowledge of politics and elections; their political self-efficacy and

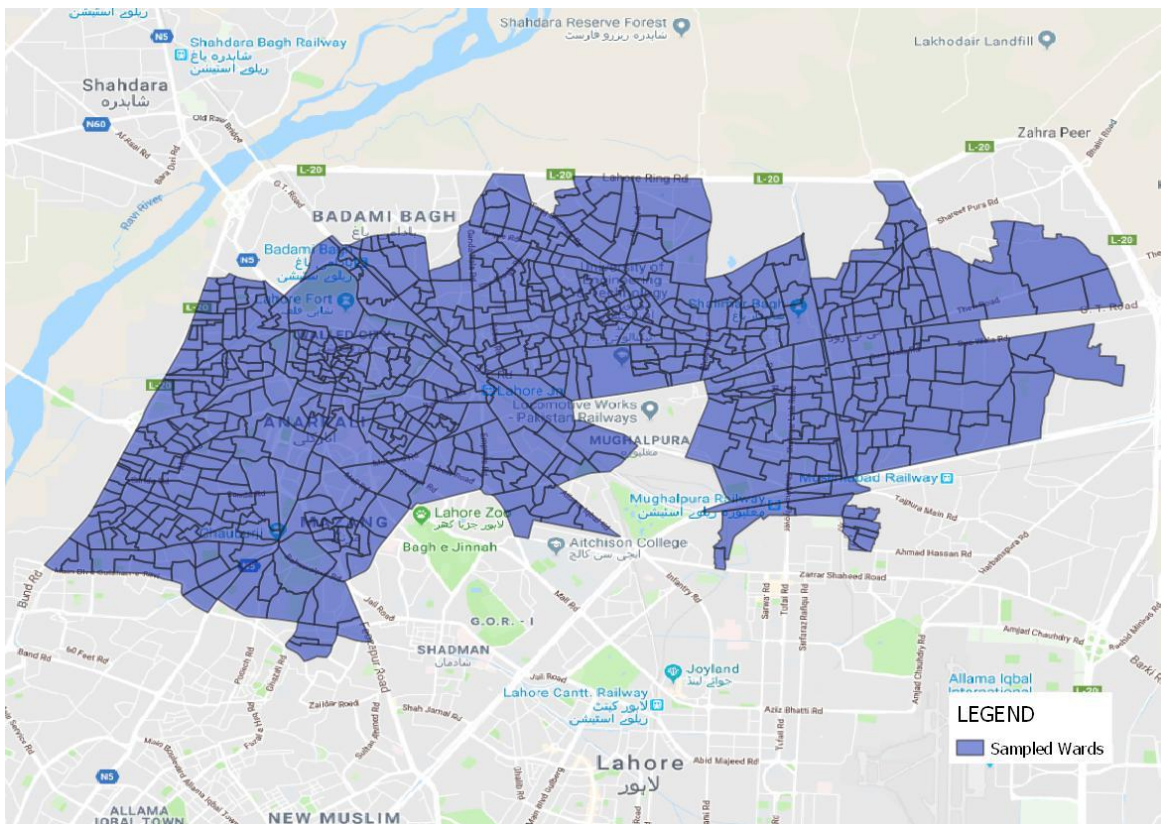
their perception of their own political invisibility. Section 8 shows that women’s turnout in elections matters because their participation can substantively change the issues that are represented in the political and legislative arena. Section 9 proposes the contours of an agenda for action to stimulate a debate about interventions that can address the high gender gap in political participation in a metropolitan context.

2. Methodology and Sampling

The report uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to unpack the causes underpinning the high gender gap in political participation in Lahore, Pakistan’s second largest city with a population of 11 million residents.

The quantitative analysis is based on a primary survey: the IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018). The survey was conducted in Lahore two months before the election of 25th July 2018. The survey consists of a random sample of 2,500 households across seven of the city’s 14 national electoral constituencies (NA-124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130), and 94 Union Councils (lowest unit of local government) that comprise the city’s densely populated core metropolitan area (Map 2.1). Each union council is divided into 6 wards – we include all 6 wards from a random subset of 30 Union Councils, and randomly select 5 out of 6 wards for inclusion in the study from the remaining 64 Union Councils. This gave us a total sample of 500 wards, our primary unit of randomization, that represent one-third of the city’s local government electoral wards.

Map 2.1: Sample union councils and wards in Lahore



Source: ECP and Punjab Local Government and Community Development Department constituency maps.

Within each ward, enumerators surveyed 5 households at baseline in an overall total of 2,500 households, and within each household they surveyed two individuals (a randomly selected man and woman) giving us a total sample of 5,000 individuals (50 per cent male and 50 per cent female). A household was visited by a pair of enumerators (one male and one female), each of whom conducted the survey with a respondent of the same gender.

To select 5 households within a ward, we dropped a location pin at a random point within each ward boundary. The pair of enumerators proceeded to the pin location for a ward, selected the nearest household to the right for the first survey, then selected four other households in the ward using the right hand rule, selecting the 7th household to the right of the last household included in the sample. A household was excluded from the sample if the dwelling was locked/empty, if all members of the household were not registered to vote, if all members were registered to vote outside of Lahore, or if there was not at least 1 adult woman and 1 adult man with a CNIC¹⁰ available and willing to be surveyed.¹¹ In any of these situations, the enumerator skipped the dwelling and proceeded to one immediately to the right of it. Within the household, respondents were selected by listing all eligible (over the age of 18 and possessing a CNIC) respondents of a particular gender in order of age. After the listing was complete, a random number generator programmed in the survey tablet generated a number n, and the enumerator asked to speak with the nth listed eligible individual to conduct a baseline survey, conditional on oral consent.

The primary survey was complemented with the IDEAS-A4EA Turnout Survey that validated the actual turnout of women in Election 2018 by observing the indelible ink mark on the thumbs of the respondents within two days of the election. This was because the ink marks are less visible for women after this period. The turnout survey was able to verify the ink marks of 81 percent of the sample of 2,500 women. The results on women's turnout presented in the report are based on the sample for which indelible ink marks were verified.

The primary field survey was preceded by qualitative interviews with men and focus group discussions with women in a sample of polling stations in 3 out of the 14 national assembly constituencies that had been sampled for the field survey. In order to pick the sample for the qualitative work we constructed a database of women's turnout in the 2013 General Elections at the polling station (PS) level and used this to randomly pick one high and one low turnout polling station from within a shortlist of the top four high and low turnout polling stations within each constituency.

¹⁰ Computerized National Identity Card, which is required to vote.

¹¹ We restrict the sample to households with individuals who could plausibly cast a vote (have a CNIC and are registered in Lahore). We were able to verify this because the survey was conducted after the preparation of electoral rolls for the 2018 General Election.

The final sample of polling stations for the qualitative work is presented in Table 2.1. Within each sample polling station, we picked a random sample of two neighborhoods stratified by their economic status and conducted the focus groups and interviews here.

Table 2.1: Polling station sample for the qualitative study

Polling Station Name	Women's Turnout in 2013 General Election (%)	
PS Wasa Office Katcha Ravi Road	32.9	Low
PS Farooqi Girls High School Kareem Park Ravi Road	57	High
PS Government Sheikh Sardar Higher Secondary School Garhi Shahu	42.9	Low
PS Government Technical Training Institute, Pak German Centre, Mughalpora	67.8	High
PS CDGL Girls Primary School, Mohalla Islamabad, Shadipura	37.1	Low
PS Road Pir Shah, Mehmood Graveyard, Mehmood Booti	61.3	High

Source: ECP 2013 General Election Data

We used two types of qualitative methods to collect data in these neighbourhoods: focus group discussions (FGDs) with women, and open-ended interviews with men in the same localities. The choice of methods, and the decision to use different ones for men and women, are based on the results of our pilot in one constituency in Lahore city.

We conducted our pilot during a by-election in NA-120 in September 2017, in which we observed that speaking to males in a focus group setting about women's issues made them unresponsive. They would quickly deviate from the topic at hand and talk about more general political problems. This happened in a few focus groups, so we changed our strategy in the pilot and conducted one-on-one male interviews. In this setting, men were more comfortable discussing issues related to women's political participation. In contrast, speaking with women alone in one-on-one interviews did not draw them out the same way that a group setting did, in which they would quickly and enthusiastically get involved in the conversation. We also tried running mixed FGDs, to see if men and women would be able to discuss their different perspectives on women's political participation with one another. However, we discovered that in this mixed setting men quickly took over the discussion, and women tended to either remain quiet or then agree with the men.

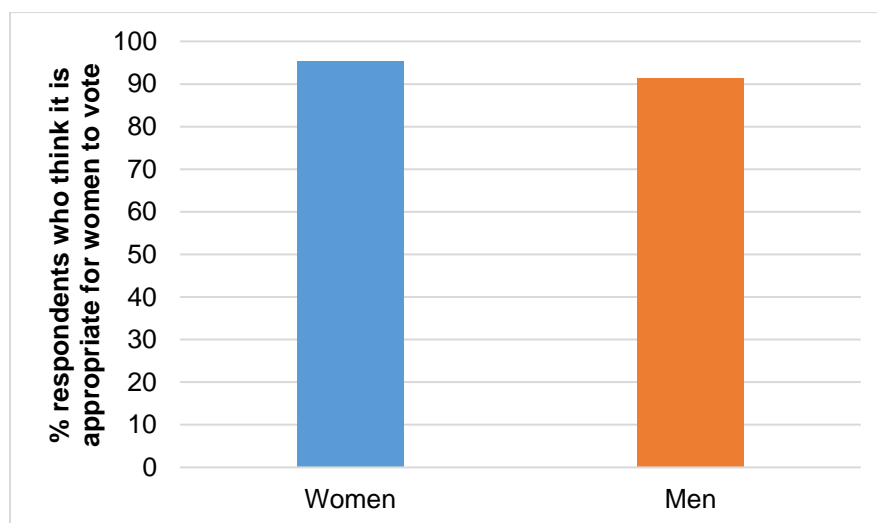
Based on this experience, we decided that the most effective strategy was to run structured FGDs with women, and open-ended, conversational interviews with men. For the FGDs, we separated women by age group, speaking separately to women of over 35 years of age, and younger ones of less than 35 years. This was based on a concern that younger women may not speak openly in the presence of their mothers, mothers-in-law, aunts, and so on. In all, we conducted 24 FGDs with women (four per polling station across different age groups), and about 48 interviews with men (eight per polling station across different age groups) between late December 2017 and early March 2018. Both the FGD and interview instruments were developed iteratively over many rounds during the piloting phase. We worked closely with our partners Aurat Foundation (AF) and South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK) in conducting these FGDs and interviews. SAP-PK helped organise these through their local networks, and AF helped conduct the FGDs with our team.

3. Community and Group-Based Restraints on Women’s Political Participation

A popularly accepted reason for why women do not vote as much as men do in Pakistan is social conservatism and the restrictions that patriarchal social norms put on women’s agency and mobility. Pakistan is categorized as a ‘classic patriarchy’ with all of its attendant restrictions on women, exercised through male control over female productive and reproductive work (Momsen and Townsend 1987). This is manifested in various ways in terms of political behavior – women are not expected to participate actively in politics but are also not expected to step out of the house unless it is absolutely necessary. This is the practice of *purdah*, which refers not only to women veiling in public but also to the complete segregation of women and men, and restrictions on women interacting with non-familial male actors from outside the household – the concept of women belonging inside the *chaar diwari* (literally, four walls) that prevails in many northern South Asian societies.

Our evidence from the field in Lahore, however, reveals that this is a more nuanced story. While it is true that patriarchy exists and places constraints on women’s political behavior, this doesn’t appear to manifest itself in the form of overt restrictions being placed by community, group or elite agreement on women exercising their right to vote. Women in all our focus group sites did not overwhelmingly believe that they were forbidden to vote by men and the community. This finding is reinforced by our field survey data, Figure 3.1 shows that over 90 per cent of our women and men respondents state that it is appropriate for women to vote in elections.

Figure 3.1: Women and men’s attitudes about the appropriateness of women voting



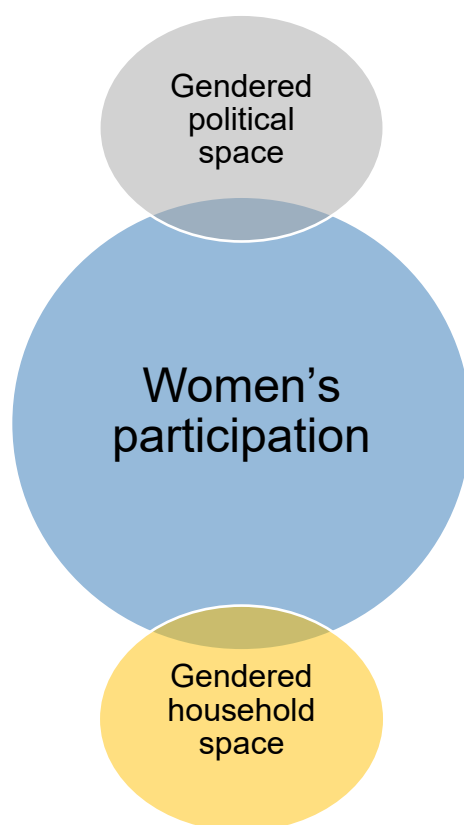
Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

Many women also dismissed *purdah* as a reason for why women did not vote, claiming, ‘one can vote even while wearing a veil that covers one’s face’ (FGD 16, PS Garhi Shahu, 2 February 2018). Barring a few respondents, most said that it did not matter if the polling station was mixed or segregated, the standard response was: ‘those who have decided to vote, will ultimately vote despite all odds’ (FGD 16, PS Garhi Shahu, 2 February 2018). In fact, one respondent even said,

'there are so many women at the polling stations and the security arrangement is tight' (FGD 16, PS Garhi Shahu, 2 February 2018). Others in the group agreed with this observation.

This suggests that the gender gap in political participation in Lahore cannot really be explained by overt restrictions being placed by community, elite or group agreements on women voting. Nor does it seem to be an outcome of *purdah* or a demand for segregated polling stations. The factors that constrain women from voting lie in other spaces. Our explanation regarding this challenge looks at constraints that arise from two interactions that take place in two distinct spaces: gendered household spaces and gendered political spaces (Figure 3.2). We look at both these factors in the following sections.

Figure 3.2: Complex dynamic of women's political participation

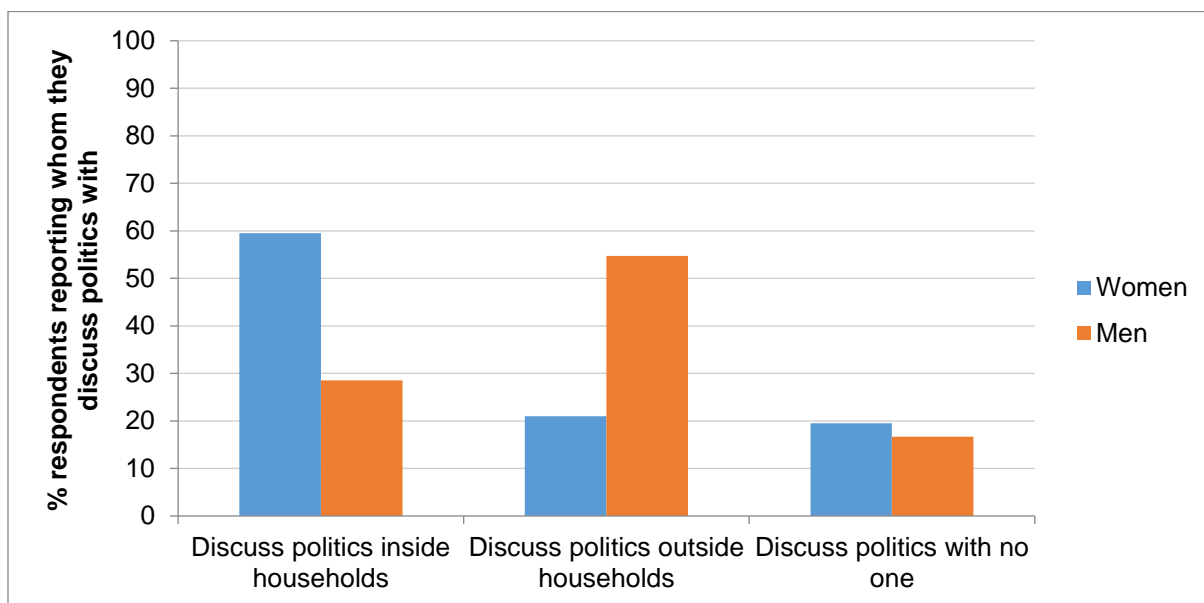


4. Gendered Household Spaces: Households, Male Gatekeepers and the Challenge of Women's Political Participation

We find that the household, not the community, is the primary space that shapes women's engagement with politics. One way to gauge the importance of the household in influencing the nature of women's political engagement is to analyze with whom women and men discuss politics. The IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018) asked both women and men respondents this

question. Figure 4.1 shows big differences in the responses of women and men in our sample. Whereas 54 per cent of men discuss politics with others outside the household, a majority of women (58 per cent) in our sample report discussing politics within the household. Furthermore, nearly 50 per cent of women report discussing political issues and topics with men in the household. This suggests that not only is the household a primary space that defines the nature of women’s political engagement, males within households are critical nodes that shape and influence this engagement.

Figure 4.1: With whom do respondents discuss politics?

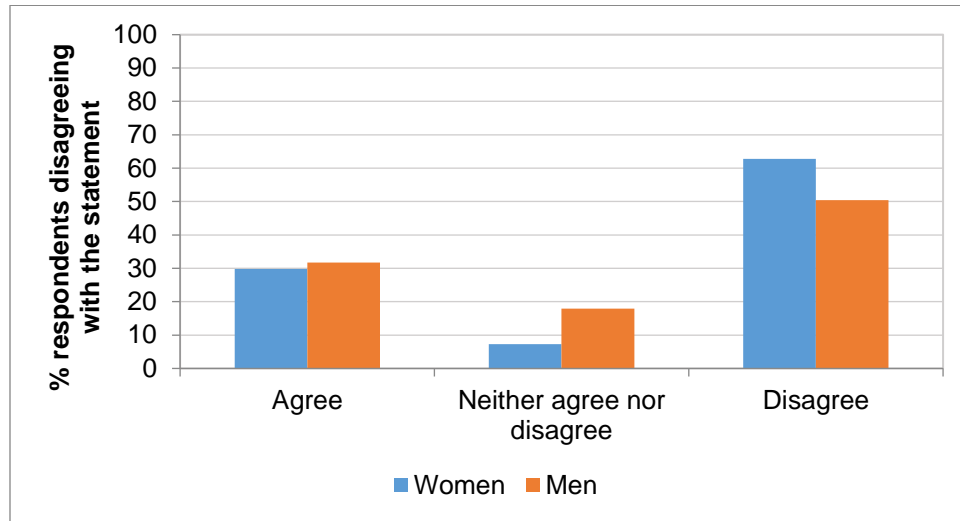


Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

There is a large literature that explains high gender gaps in women’s turnout in a range of international contexts through a socialization of gender roles that may discourage women from participating in politics, with women’s domain being the private space of home and men dominating the public and political space (Spain 1993; Chhibber 2002; Gazdar 2003; Mumtaz and Salway 2009; Chopra and Zambelli 2017).

To understand the context that shapes women’s political engagement it is important to understand the attitudes of women and men within households regarding the socialization of gender roles. The IDEAS-A4EA Survey asked women and men respondents whether they agree or disagree with the statement that discussing political matters is solely a man’s and not a woman’s job. Figure 4.2 shows that a majority of male respondents (50.4 per cent) and an even bigger majority of women (62.8 per cent) disagree with this statement. However, nearly a third of women and men respondents agreed with the statement, suggesting that a significant minority subscribes to gender segregated political roles. It appears that Lahore is a divided society in terms of attitudes regarding women and men’s role in politics.

Figure 4.2: Attitudes about gendered political spaces

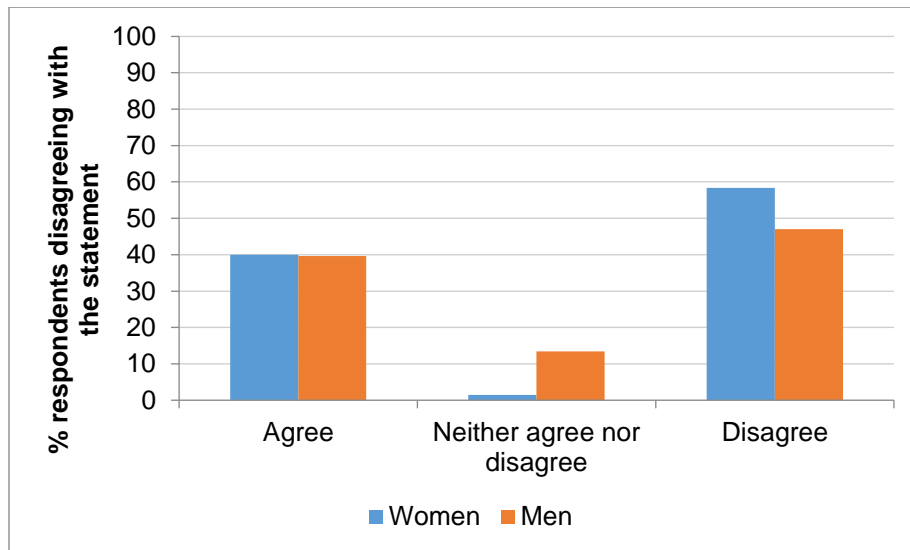


Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

Note: This figure is based on responses to the statement that “discussing political matters is solely a man’s job, not a woman’s”.

We also find a divided society regarding attitudes towards the gendered division of household responsibilities. We asked women and men respondents whether they agree or disagree with the statement that household chores are solely a woman and not a man’s job. Again, Figure 4.3 shows that a near majority of men (47 per cent) and a majority of women (58.4 per cent) disagree with this statement. However, 40 per cent of men and women in our sample agree with this statement reinforcing our earlier finding that a significant minority exists that believe in gender segregated roles.

Figure 4.3: Attitudes about gendered household spaces



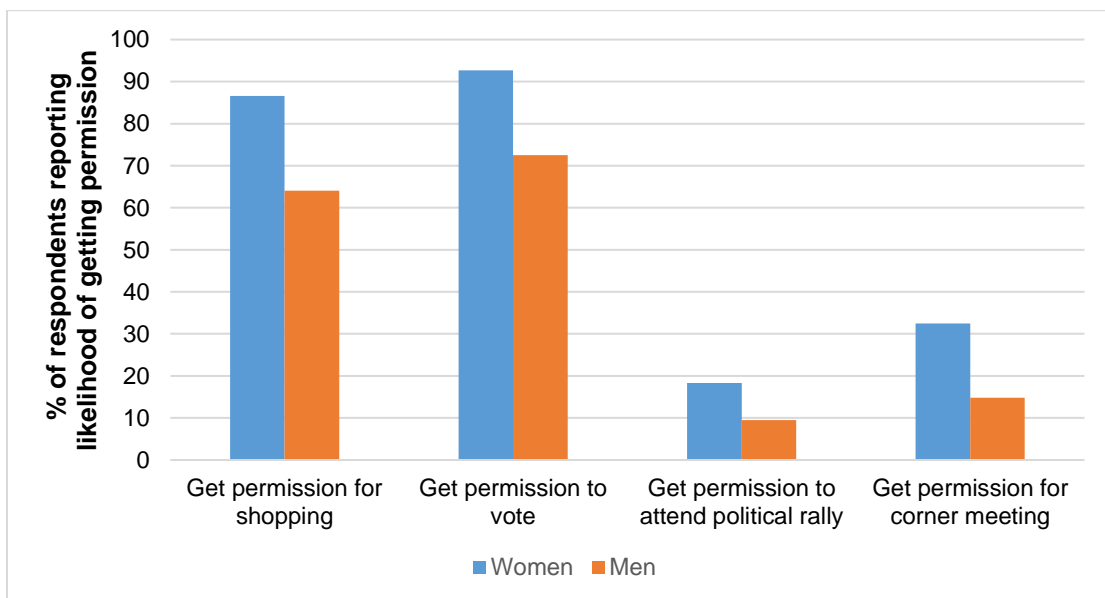
Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

Note: This figure is based on responses to the statement that “household chores are solely a woman’s and not a man’s job”.

As the household is a primary space influencing women’s political engagement, it is important to assess the importance of men as gatekeepers within households. An area of convergence across women in all our focus group sites is the view that they need to seek permission from men in the household before engaging in any activity outside the home, or interacting with anyone outside it. This was more severe in some focus groups where women reported not being able to step out of their homes alone, even to see their neighbors. In many other focus groups, women were far more social and interacted more openly beyond the boundaries of their own home, but it was generally accepted that they should seek their husbands’ permission in order to step out, even to drop off or pick their children up from school.

The IDEAS-A4EA Survey enumerated men’s attitudes towards permissions by asking women respondents whether they would get permission from the men if they wanted to go by themselves to shop for their own clothes outside the neighborhood, or vote, or attend political corner meetings, or attend political rallies. Figure 4.4 shows that men are much more likely to grant permissions when it comes to shopping outside the neighborhood and voting, but become extremely restrictive when it comes to granting permission for women to attend corner meetings and political rallies. This provides further evidence for the gendered nature of political spaces in particular – even when men may not be very socially conservative and may not restrict women’s mobility in general, women’s active engagement with politics is discouraged.

Figure 4.4: Men’s attitudes towards granting permission

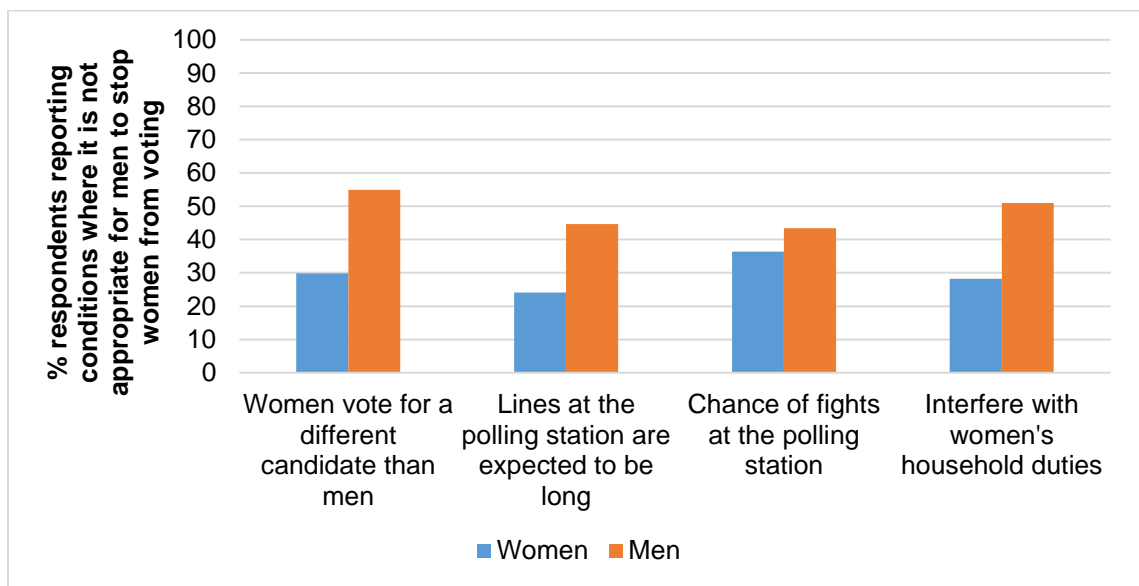


Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

We also find that permissions reflect a subtle bargain between men and women that is contingent upon men’s perception of whom women support politically, the environment at the polling station and the impact voting would have on household duties. We asked women and men respondents whether they think it is not inappropriate for men to stop women from voting if: they vote differently from them; the lines at the polling station are too long; there are chances of fights breaking out at the polling station; or it interferes with women’s household duties.

Figure 4.5 reveals two important findings. First, a majority of men think it is not inappropriate to stop women from voting in cases where women vote differently from them or women going out to vote interferes with their household duties. A near majority of men think it is not inappropriate to stop women from voting if there is an expectation of long queues and fights breaking out at the polling station. Second, women’s attitudes diverge significantly from men’s except in cases where there is a perception that fights are likely to break out at the polling station. The diverging gender attitudes on these issues suggests that in many cases refusal of permission by men is going to constrain women from exercising their autonomous choice as citizens.

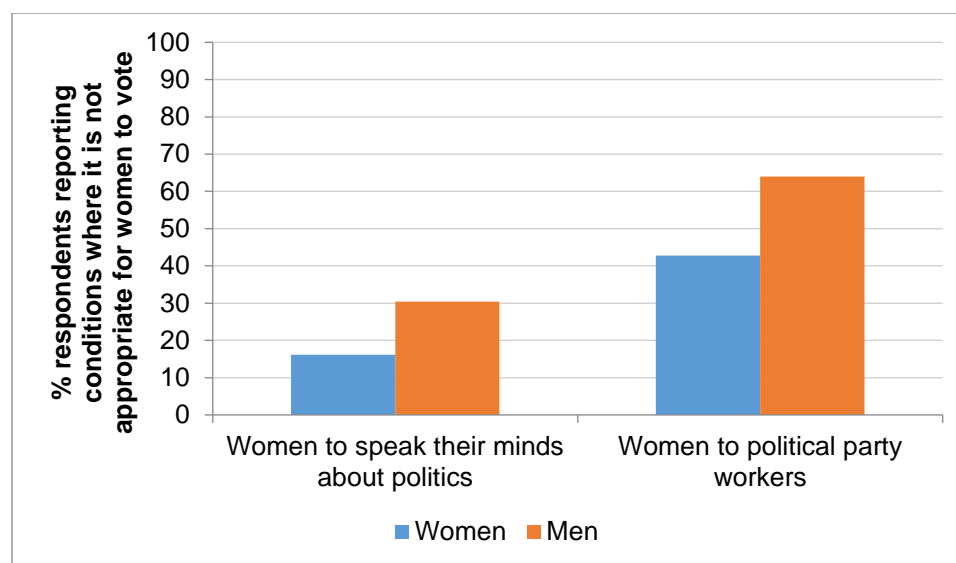
Figure 4.5: Men and women’s attitudes about the conditions under which it is not inappropriate for men to stop women from voting



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

We also asked respondents whether it is not appropriate for women to speak their minds about politics and to become political party workers. Again, we find a significant minority of men (30 per cent) who think it is not appropriate for women to speak their mind about politics (Figure 4.6). However, we find an extremely large majority of men (64 per cent) who think that it is not appropriate for women to become political party workers. Interestingly, there is a major divergence between men and women’s views to these questions. This opens up the possibility that in a significant proportion of households men are likely to constrain women from participating in politics even if they want to engage in it.

Figure 4.6: Men's attitudes about whether it is not appropriate for women to speak their minds about politics or become political party workers



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

Not only is the household an important space shaping and influencing women's engagement with politics, we find that men are important gatekeepers mediating this engagement. We find considerable variation in the attitudes of men with a majority agreeing that it is not inappropriate for men to stop women from exercising their right to vote if they vote differently from them or if it interferes with their household duties. However, a significant minority of men disagree with these attitudes, suggesting that space exists for mobilizing households where men do not hold restrictive attitudes. There is good reason to be optimistic about mobilizing men and women in households to increase women's political participation, especially as women themselves have more liberal attitudes than men about women's engagement with politics. Section 7 analyzes the correlation between male attitudes towards women exercising their right to vote and women's turnout in the 2018 general election.

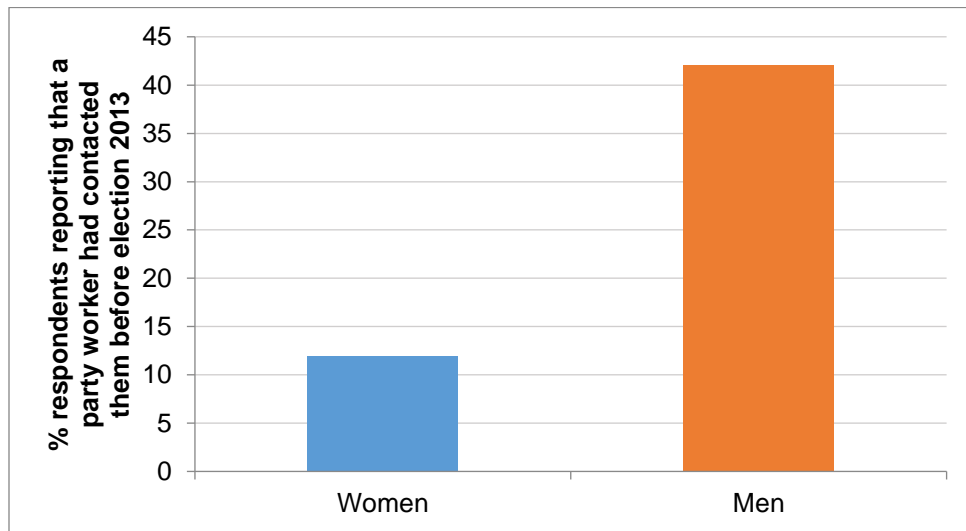
5. Gendered Political Spaces and the Challenge of Women's Political Participation

The IDEAS-A4EA Survey was designed to examine the role played by local political organizations in reinforcing the gendered nature of political participation in big cities. Recent literature finds that "engagement with the political process is one of the most direct and important factors in predicting (women's political) participation" (Kittlison 2016). In the case of rural India, Prillaman (2017) suggests that patterns of mobilization that exclude women develop in a system of 'family-centered clientelism' in which parties target households as units and seek only to mobilize the (usually male) head of household. We explore whether the exclusion of women from political contact is resulting in a 'gendered psyche' that makes women feel invisible and irrelevant to the electoral

process. Constraints resulting from political engagement are usually underemphasized and analyzing their significance is an important contribution of this report.

We asked respondents whether a political party representative had visited their household in the days leading up to the previous 2013 general election. Figure 5.1 shows that only 12 per cent of women, as compared to 20 per cent of men report that a political party representative had visited their household in the days leading up to the 2013 election.

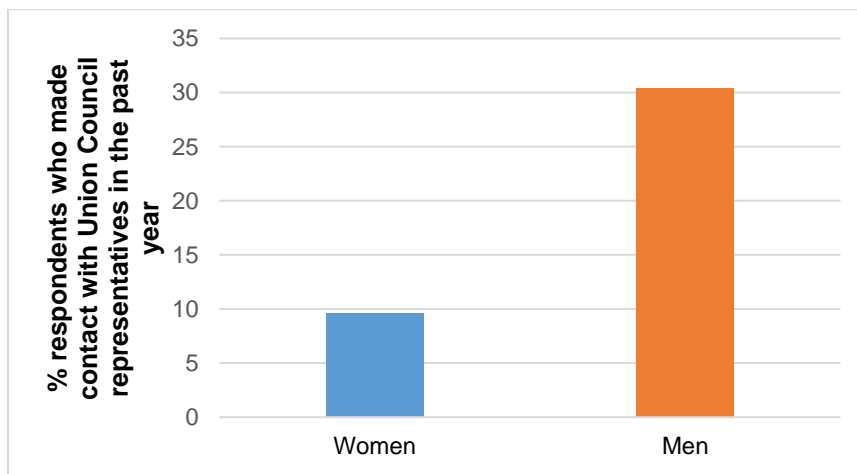
Figure 5.1: Contact with political party representatives in the days leading up to the 2013 general election



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

The survey also asked respondents about post-election interaction with local party representatives over service delivery, development and other issues. Respondents were asked whether they had directly or indirectly contacted union council chairpersons or councilors in the past year. Figure 5.2 shows that 90 per cent of women report no contact, which is much higher than the lack of contact reported by men (70 per cent).

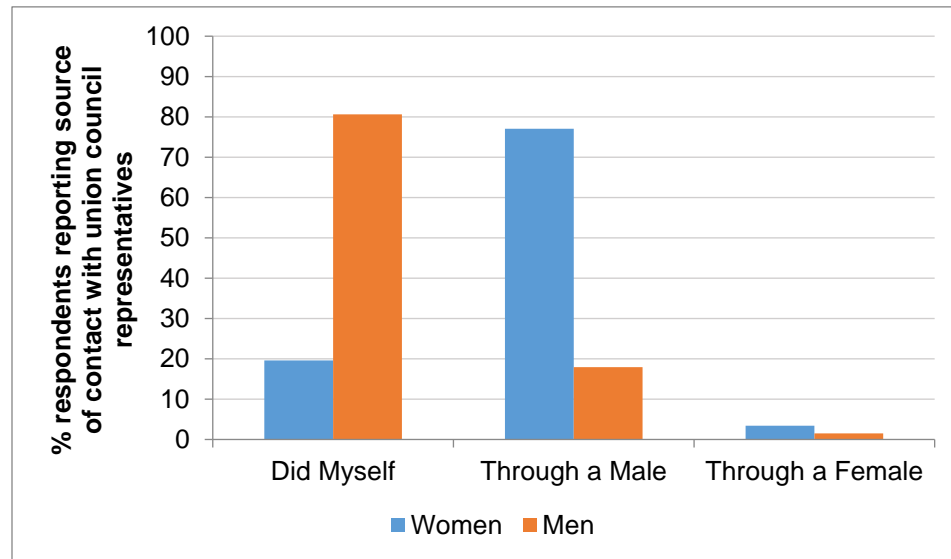
Figure 5.2: Contact with union council chairpersons or councilors during past year



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

Figure 5.3 shows that whereas nearly 80 per cent of men who made contact reported doing so themselves, more than three-fourths of women made contact indirectly and through a male member of the household.

Figure 5.3: Channel of contact with union council chairpersons or councilors during past year



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

Taken together the evidence suggests that political interaction in Lahore is highly gender-segregated. There is little contact between women and political party representatives and the contact that exists is largely mediated through men in the household.

One consequence of the gender segregated nature of Lahore’s political space is that women feel invisible to politicians and political parties. This is by far the most common reason given by our focus group respondents for why there is a gender gap in voting in Lahore.¹²

At the beginning of each FGD, we provided women with the percentage of registered women who had turned out in their locality for the 2013 election and the magnitude of the gender gap and asked their opinion on why they thought this existed. The most commonly provided reason for this is best described as the feeling of being left out of the political process and being invisible to the state and to political actors. In one FGD we were told that all the campaigns leading up to the 2013 elections were focused on men and the issues they faced. In another we were told that ‘no one talks to women when it comes to asking for votes, all the persuading and luring tactics are used on men’ (FGD 8, PS Mehmood Booti, 24 January 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, & Khan). This makes a difference, they told us, because:

‘Men have different issues than women. If a politician approaches a man in this community and asks about his needs, the man might say he wants better roads to be constructed or maybe there should be a graveyard in the vicinity. If the same question is asked of a woman, she will have different demands and she will ask for a school or a hospital to be constructed in the neighborhood’ (FGD 10, PS Mehmood Booti, 25 January 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, &

¹² This section draws heavily on Cheema et. al. (2018).

Khan). And yet, *'no one comes to talk to us'* (FGD 13, PS Katcha Ravi Road, 15 February 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, & Khan).

The general sense was that if party workers and politicians had engaged more with local women, their turnout in 2013 would have been better, and that if this was their aim for the 2018 election, then parties would need to come and speak with women directly about their needs. Women have almost no direct interaction with political actors. Parties are largely represented by male party workers who engage with men outside the home; politicians spend no substantial time in constituencies with anyone, and certainly not with women; and even at election time, politicians move through the neighborhoods without directly engaging with women on substantial issues. One respondent explained:

'Most political party members and workers talk to the men in our families and do not attempt to engage with us. We would appreciate it if someone made an effort to communicate with us women, and if we find some merit in what they are saying, we will support them regardless of the political party' (FGD 5, PS Shadipura, 2 January 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, & Khan).

Women pointed out repeatedly, in every discussion and in every constituency, that they are a severely under-provided for group. The neighborhoods we worked in had poor access to public provision in general, and this affected both men and women, but women were very clear on the fact that their preferences are different from those of men, and that it is particularly the services that most affect their lives inside their homes that are underprovided. This then leads to increased pressure on their workload: lack of clean drinking water means added work around getting it from municipal pumps (though in some neighborhoods the distance is so large that this falls to the men); lack of good sewerage systems adds extra work in keeping their homes clean and food safe; lack of solid waste management adds an extra burden of getting rid of garbage and keeping the entrances to their homes usable and presentable; and irregular gas supply means that meals are not ready on time and families cannot be fed. All of this leads to delays in regular household chores that then lead to domestic discord.

One woman summed up the sentiments of many when she said, *'these issues are only a burden for women because it multiplies our stress of running the household. All of our work stops, we waste a lot of time'* (FGD 15, PS Garhi Shahu, 2 February 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, & Khan). Another woman added, *'men leave in the morning, these issues are all for us women. Men don't realise how hard things are at home'* (FGD 7, PS Mehmood Booti, 24 January 2018; FGD 20, PS Kareem Park, 26 February 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, & Khan). A major issue is that women bear the brunt of men's anger when, for example, a shortage of gas and water means that the food is not ready on time, or clothes are not washed, or ironed when there is no electricity for 12 hours a day. Also, when sewerage systems do not work or if there is no running water, *'Men can go to the mosque to use the toilet, but we cannot go anywhere else, even if it is working in our neighbour's house'* (FGD 21, PS Garhi Shahu, 27 February 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, & Khan).

Women, therefore, bear a double burden of the under-provision of public services: they are deprived of basic services themselves, but also bear the responsibility of keeping their households operational under circumstances that they have no control over. Women discussed changes in sleeping hours so that they could ensure water was collected for the day at public taps during the

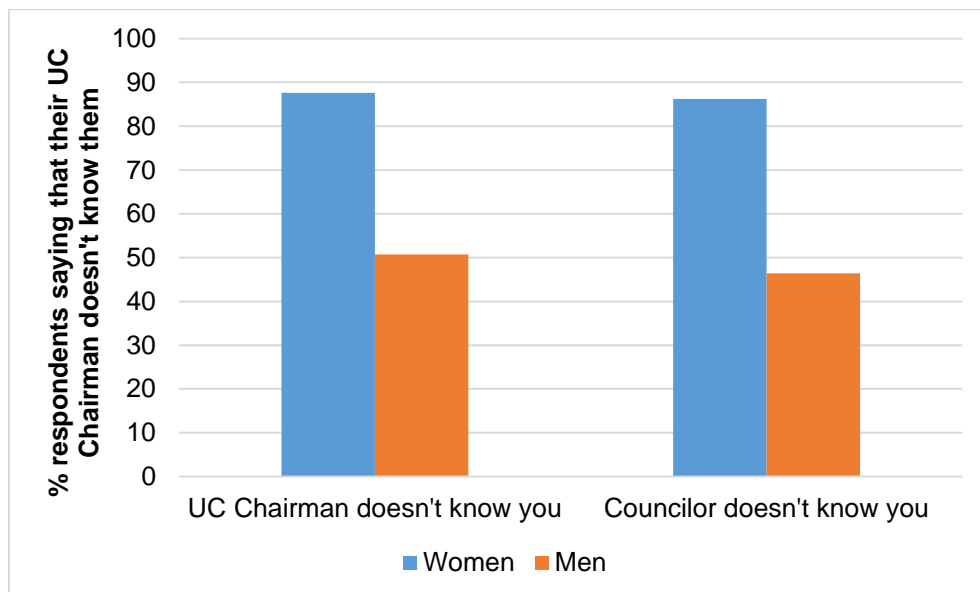
hours in which it was available, or that food was cooked early in the day when the gas supply is better.

Women seemed particularly irritated, rather than comforted, by the fact that politicians turn up at their doorsteps in election years. *'They only come to ask for votes. If they come after the elections and actually work to fix the state of our neighborhoods, they may get more votes'* (FGD 15, PS Garhi Shahu, 2 February 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, & Khan). This sentiment was repeated many times in different forms.

Interestingly, men seemed to agree with the perception that women in particular were invisible to politicians. A male respondent stated, *'the reason the turnout of women is low is because the women feel that the politicians aren't listening to their issues. Thus, they don't feel the need to go out and vote for them'* (male interview 8, PS Mughalpura, 2 March 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, & Khan). Another said, *'women feel that they are not a part of the political scene. Politicians don't talk about women and thus they feel excluded'* (male interview 5, PS Garhi Shahu, 27 February 2018) (Liaqat, Cheema, Mohmand, & Khan).

We are able to measure the perception of political invisibility among our respondents by asking them whether they think that their union council chairperson or local government ward councilor knows them. We find a big gender gap in this measure with greater than 1.5 times more women reporting that their local government representative does not know them relative to men (Figure 5.4). Finding a large gap in women's perception of political invisibility is unsurprising after the emphasis laid on this factor in the focus groups and given the gender segregated nature of political space in Lahore.

Figure 5.4: Gender gap in perception of political invisibility



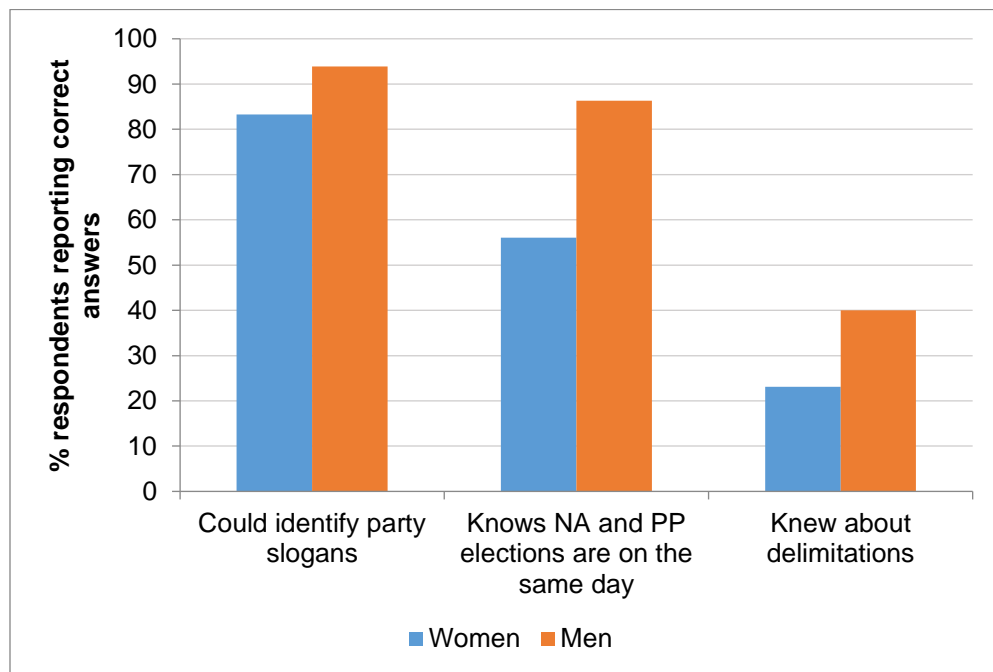
Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

5.1. The Participation Challenge and Women’s Political Knowledge, Self-Efficacy and Interest

This section has shown that women in Lahore have limited engagement with political parties and their agents. We also highlighted the importance of household males as nodes of influence shaping women’s political engagement (section 4). Recent literature has shown that women’s engagement with the political process and the socialization of gender roles are not only important determinants of political participation but may also affect women’s political knowledge and self-efficacy (Lawless and Fox 2005; Giné and Mansuri 2011; Preece 2016). This section documents the gender gap in women’s self-efficacy and political knowledge, in which we would expect significant gaps given the contours of Lahore’s social and political context.

The IDEAS-A4EA Survey was designed to test the political knowledge of respondents. Questions on political knowledge were related to elections, given that the survey was conducted in the run up to a general election. We asked respondents whether they: knew that national and provincial elections happened on the same day; could identify the symbols and slogans of the main political parties and knew that a fresh delimitation had occurred before the 2018 general election. Figure 5.5 shows that a gender gap exists in responses to all these questions and the gender gap is particularly acute for the questions relating to knowledge about delimitations and knowledge about whether the NA and PP elections happen on the same day. These findings indicate that Lahore’s existing social and political structure is socializing women as less informed members of the polity.

Figure 5.5: Gender gap in political knowledge

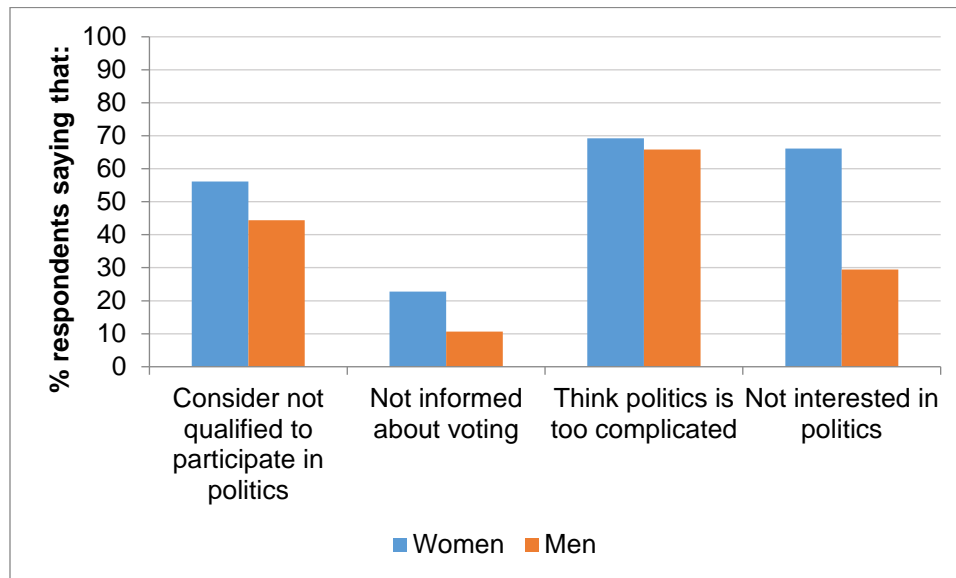


Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

We also included questions in the survey to assess the political self-efficacy of our respondents. The survey asks whether respondents consider themselves qualified to participate in politics, well informed about voting, and whether they think politics is too complicated. Figure 5.6 reports the percentage of respondents who say that they do not consider themselves well qualified for politics, do not think they are informed about how to cast their vote in the next elections, and think that

politics and government is too complicated for a person like them. In addition, it also reports the percentage of respondents who say that they are not interested in politics. We find significant gender gaps in self-reported political self-efficacy (except on the question that they think politics is too complicated) and political interest among our respondents (Figure 5.6). Women are not only being socialized as less informed members of the polity but political and social spaces are also lowering their political self-efficacy. Section 6 analyzes the correlation between women’s knowledge of politics and elections and women’s turnout in 2018.

Figure 5.6: Gender gap in political self-efficacy and interest



Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

6. Gendered spaces and women’s turnout

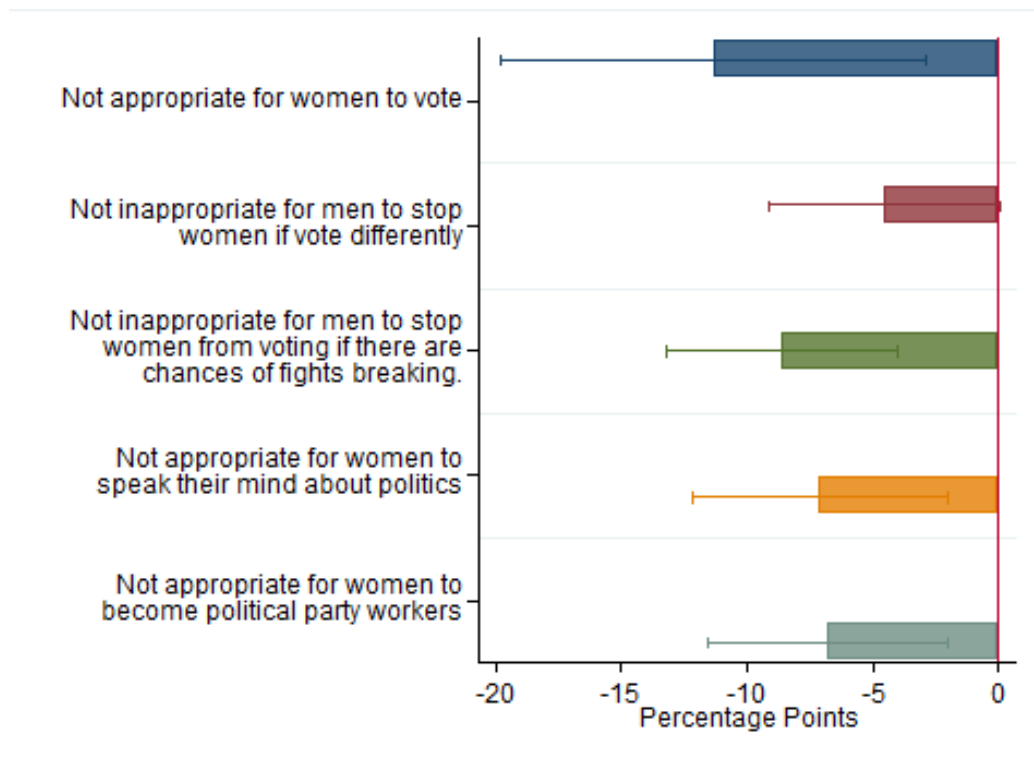
Do men’s attitudes about women’s political engagement and when it is appropriate from them to vote affect women’s turnout? Does women’s political self-efficacy and knowledge of politics and elections affect women’s turnout? Does women’s perception of political invisibility affect their turnout? These are important questions to ask because we have presented rich evidence that shows that the political space in Lahore is highly gender segregated and men within households constitute important nodes influencing women’s political engagement. We also find that women are being socialized as less informed members of the polity and the current structure of politics and households is lowering women’s political self-efficacy. This section analyses the correlation between these factors and women’s turnout.

We use the IDEAS-A4EA Turnout Survey to measure turnout in the 2018 general elections among women respondents. The turnout survey uses observed indelible ink marks to measure turnout (see details in Section 2). We use the field survey to measure men’s attitudes, women’s knowledge of politics and elections and women’s perception of political invisibility.

6.1. Turnout in the 2018 general election and men’s views about women’s political engagement

We find that men’s views about women’s political engagement and conditions under which it is appropriate for them to vote is a significant correlate of women’s turnout in our Lahore sample in the 2018 general election. The IDEAS-A4EA Survey found that 8.3 per cent of men thought it was not appropriate for women in their household to vote in a general election. Figure 6.1 shows that this finding is associated with an 11 per cent lower turnout of women in these households compared to other households.

Figure 6.1: The correlation between women’s turnout in the 2018 general election and men’s views about women’s political engagement



Sources: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018) and IDEAS-A4EA Turnout Survey (2018)

Note: Correlation coefficients are estimated using an OLS regression with women respondent turnout (measured through the IDEAS-A4EA Turnout Survey) as the dependent variable and men’s agreement/disagreement with statements that: (1) it is not appropriate for women to vote, (2) it is not inappropriate for men to stop women from voting if they vote differently from them (3), it is not inappropriate for men to stop women from voting if there are chances of fights breaking out at the polling station, (4) it is not appropriate for women to speak their mind about politics and (5) it is not appropriate for women to become political party workers; as the independent variables. In our outcomes we control for age, education, assets, and joint family to calculate these regressions.

The Field Survey also found that 54.9 per cent of men thought it was not inappropriate to stop women in their household from voting if they voted differently from them and 43.4 per cent thought it was not inappropriate to stop women from voting if there were chances of fights breaking out at the polling station. Figure 6.1 shows that households where men hold these views had a 4.5 per cent and 8.6 per cent lower turnout of women respectively.

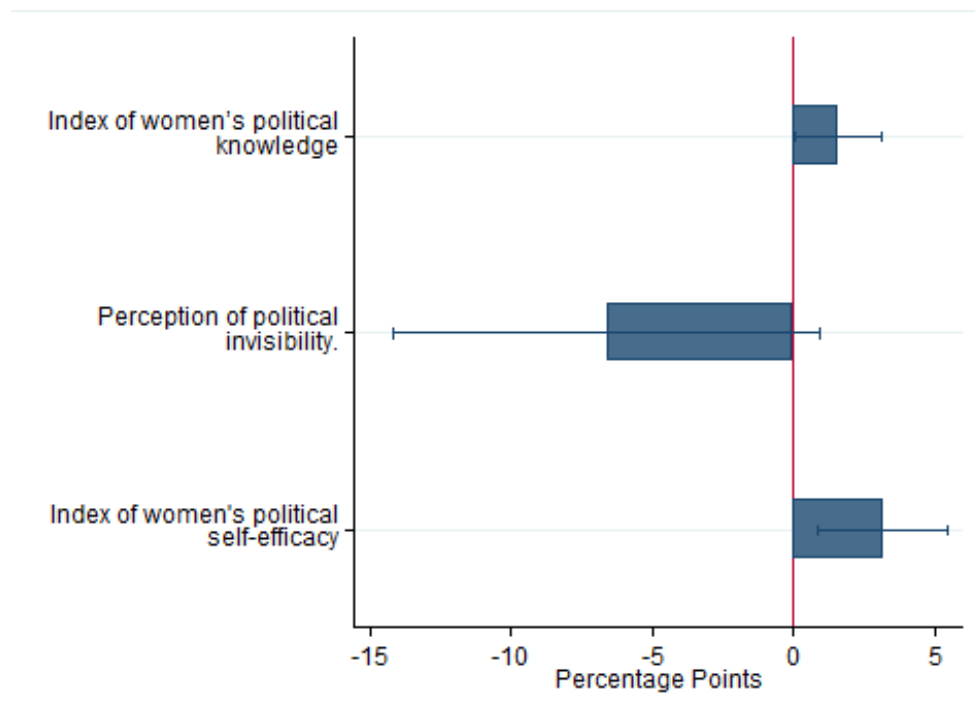
The evidence also shows that 30.4 per cent of men thought it was not appropriate for women to speak their mind about politics and 64 per cent thought it was not appropriate for women to become political party workers. Figure 6.1 shows that households where men hold these views had a 7 per cent lower turnout of women in the 2018 general elections.

We find that men are not only important gatekeepers mediating women’s political participation, the attitudes and norms held by men are an important determinant of women’s electoral turnout.

6.2. Turnout in the 2018 Elections and women’s knowledge of politics

We also find that women’s knowledge of politics is a significant correlate of turnout in the 2018 general elections. We use a Political Knowledge Index for this analysis, which is created on the basis of correct answers to questions about respondents’ knowledge of slogans and election symbols of Pakistan’s four main political parties. A higher value of this index indicates higher knowledge based on correct answers to these questions. Figure 6.2 shows that a one standard deviation increase in women’s knowledge about politics is associated with a 1.5 percentage point higher turnout.

Figure 6.2: Individual correlates of women’s turnout in the 2018 general election



Sources: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018) and IDEAS-A4EA Turnout Survey (2018)

Note: Correlation coefficients are estimated using an OLS regression with women respondent turnout (measured through the IDEAS-A4EA Turnout Survey) as the dependent variable and the independent variables are an index of women’s political knowledge, an index of their political self-efficacy and their perception of political invisibility. In our outcomes we control for age, education, assets, media, joint family, interest in politics and access to internet to calculate these regressions.

6.3. Turnout in the 2018 Elections and political invisibility

We find that poor political knowledge strongly correlates with women's interest in politics and that appears to be a result of low contact between political parties and women voters. We have already documented evidence from focus groups which highlights the emphasis women attached to the feeling 'that they are invisible to political parties and that their issues do not matter.' Is the perception of political invisibility among women an important correlate of their turnout in the 2018 general elections?

We analyze this by correlating our measure of turnout against our survey-based measure of women's perception of political invisibility. As explained in section 6, we measure the perception of political invisibility by asking respondents whether their union council chairperson or local government ward councilor knows them. Figure 6.2 shows that a one standard deviation increase in women's perception of political invisibility is associated with a 6 percentage point lower turnout.

This evidence suggests that the failure of political parties to deepen the base of women workers and leaders is an important facet of disengagement of women from politics in metropolitan cities like Lahore.

6.4. Turnout in the 2018 Elections and political self-efficacy

We also find that women's political self-efficacy is a significant correlate of turnout in the 2018 general elections. We use a Political Self-Efficacy Index for this analysis, which is created on the basis of responses to the following statements: (1) I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics as a citizen; (2) I think I am well informed about the process of how to cast my vote in the next election; and (3) politics and government isn't that complicated for a person like me. A higher value of this index indicates higher political self-efficacy. Figure 6.2 shows that a one standard deviation increases in women's political self-efficacy is associated with a 3 percentage point higher turnout.

7. Why does women voters' turnout matter?

This report analyzes the constraints that women face in being able to use social and political spaces and exercise political agency within them. We have placed particular attention on unpacking the factors that explain women's low political participation, which is responsible for Lahore's high gender gap in turnout. It is pertinent to ask why it matters that women voters turn out to cast their votes on election day.

As recognized by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, ensuring 'gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.' Ensuring gender equality in political participation is also important because existing research from a variety of contexts shows that women hold systematically different preferences from men over state policy and what public goods and services they want to see provided in their communities.

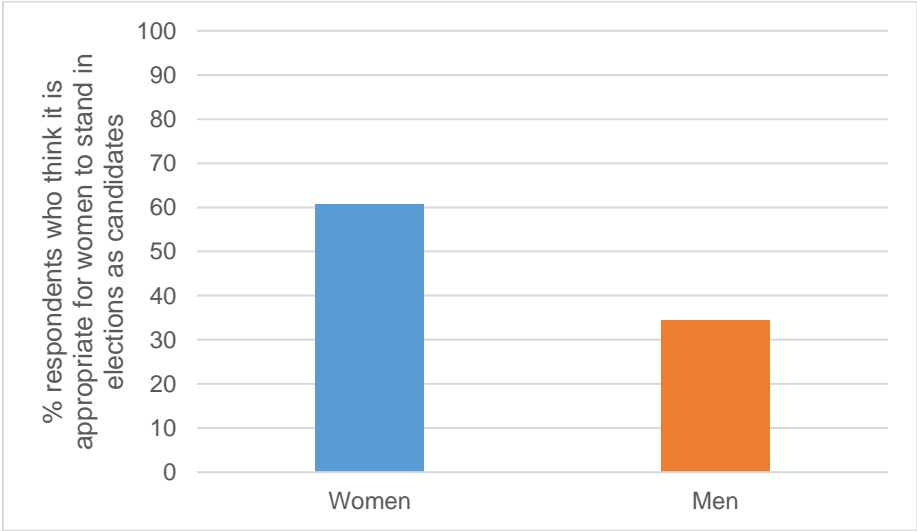
Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson (2016) show that women in sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to prefer drinking water projects, and less likely than men to choose bridges and roads. Olken

(2010) found similar patterns in Indonesia, and Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) in India, and they suggest that men’s and women’s differential preferences are based on the gendered division of labour in the household and in society. Eichenberg (2003) found that women had distinctly different preferences on issues of foreign policy and defense spending – they were less supportive of military interventions and more sensitive to the consequences of war than men. Evidence from the US and Europe, following the extension of suffrage, suggests that when women participate in higher numbers as voters, policies shift in line with their distinctive preferences, which has the potential to transform relationships of influence and power (Corder and Wolbrecht 2016). The flip side of this is that if women systematically under-participate, their preferences risk going unheard and unrepresented.

We also find that, at least in some public policy domains in metropolitan cities, the issues that matter to women are different from the issues that matter to men. Women are an important constituency for the provision of clean drinking water and curbing inflation with 18.3 per cent and 16.1 per cent respectively citing these as the most important public policy issues in the run up to Election 2018, compared to 9.2 per cent and 9 per cent of men in the sample. This suggests that greater gender equality in electoral participation could substantively change what issues are represented in the political arena and strengthen a constituency for critical issues such as those covered by SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation).

Similarly, we find that 61 per cent of women in our sample say that it is appropriate for women to stand as candidates in elections compared to 34.5 per cent men (Figure 7.1). This suggests that women are a nascent but pivotal constituency for equal representation of women in parliament, which has been an important demand of the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus of Pakistan, the National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women and civil society organizations. Greater gender equality in political participation is extremely likely to translate into a larger political constituency in support of gender equality in parliamentary representation.

Figure 7.1: Do you think it is appropriate for women to stand in elections as candidates?

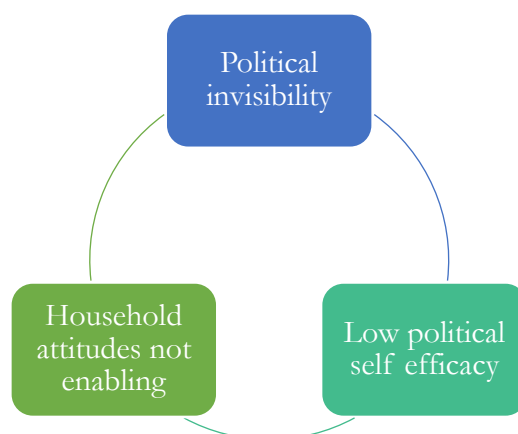


Source: IDEAS-A4EA Baseline Citizen Survey (2018)

8. An Agenda for Action

The evidence presented in this report suggests that the gender-gap in political participation in a metropolis like Lahore reflects complex, mutually reinforcing social dynamics (Figure 8.1). Therefore, addressing this challenge will require concerted and collaborative action being taken by the women’s movements, the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus of Pakistan, the National and Provincial Commission on the Status of Women, political parties, ECP, civil society organizations (CSOs) and academia. The purpose of this section is not to provide a comprehensive plan of action but to stimulate debate on the types of actions that have the potential of help address the gendered political participation challenge.

Figure 8.1: Complex reinforcing dynamic affecting women's turnout



An effective agenda for action should not restrict its focus to low women turnout polling stations or constituencies. Its objective should be the elimination of the gender gap in political participation. This implies the need to devise a set of actions that go beyond the instruments currently available in the Elections Act 2017.

Voter education campaigns appear to be a promising instrument that can be used to increase women’s turnout in the metropolitan context.¹³ We evaluated a non-partisan voter education campaign conducted by two reputable CSOs, Aurat Foundation and SAP-PK, in Lahore before the 2018 General Election. The 20-minute campaign was designed to educate women voters and contained messages to motivate them to vote. It included an additional component that targeted men and was designed to motivate them to act as enablers for women exercising their right to vote on Election Day.

We evaluated three variants of the campaign using a randomized-control-trial (RCT) design. Variant 1 targeted only women in a random set of our sample households, variant 2 targeted only

¹³ PCSW (2018) suggests the establishment of District Voter Education Committees (DVECs) under the Voter Education Plan 2012-13 to enhance voter participation, disseminate awareness materials, and engage with a wide range of stakeholders including, political parties, civil society organizations, women, disabled persons and minority communities.

men in a random sample and variant 3 targeted both. We find that voter education campaigns can have a large impact on women's participation provided the campaign targets men in the household. **However, we find that education campaigns are not effective in increasing women's political self-efficacy and interest, nor are they effective in changing the gendered nature of political space. This suggests that women voters' education campaigns have the potential to be effective if they are embedded in a more radical agenda of action.**

A radical agenda for action will require a concerted effort by political parties to engage with women directly and reduce their perception of being 'politically invisible'. It will be difficult for political parties to reach women voters unless they deepen the cadre of women workers and give women greater representation in the pool of candidates that they nominate to contest elections on general seats. Political parties may have fears that under the current conditions mobilizing women may alienate their male voters. However, the findings in this report suggest that there is a significant proportion of households where men are unlikely to be alienated if women are mobilized, and the loss of male voters is likely to be more than made up by the women's vote, provided that the party platforms appeal to them. **However, an important message from the report is that to mobilize women, parties will need to engage with them and address their concerns. The need for politicians to connect better with female constituents has also been recognized by NCSW (2018). Parliament and ECP can catalyze the engagement between politicians and women by introducing an amendment in the Elections Act 2017 that requires a winning member of parliament to obtain a minimum threshold of the women's vote.**

A radical agenda for action must include a demand for greater representation of women as electoral candidates and mandated reservations of ministerial and mayoral office for women. The commitment to reform local governments in Punjab, KP and Islamabad provide an excellent opportunity to demand the revival of the proviso in the 2001 Local Government Ordinances that reserved one-third of local council seats for women. In addition, it is important to reserve one-third of mayoral seats for women as well. Evidence from a study of women's mandated representation through local-level gender quotas in the context of Indian local government suggests that having a woman representative in an area can lead to greater provision of goods prioritized by female citizens (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004), and raise adolescent girls' aspirations and educational attainment (Topalova, Pande, Duflo, & Beaman, 2012). Moreover exposure to women representatives can also lead to long-term transformation of stereotypes about women in leadership roles (Beaman, Chattopadhyay, Topalova, Duflo, & Pande, 2009).

Another instrument that may have promise in reducing women's 'political invisibility' is the institutionalization of women citizens' collectives that give them voice as citizen auditors of public service delivery and in budgeting. In India, studies have found that women's participation in economic networks (self-help groups) with other women increases their activity in local politics, through channels of increased civic skills, greater information and higher capacity for collective action (Prillaman 2017); or that women's engagement in a participatory community driven development project increases the likelihood of women attending and speaking out at village meetings. In parallel, they find that in village councils with women representatives, women citizens who speak are more likely to be heard (Parthasarathy, Rao, & Palaniswamy, 2017).

It is important that the agenda for action is informed by a collaboration between academia, women's movements, political parties, National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women and civil society organizations that deepens research on understanding the types of constraints to women's political participation that manifest themselves in Pakistan's diverse context. Such research can further deepen our understanding of the intersectional nature of constraints that women face, and the multi-faceted approaches that are required to ensure that they are able to contribute in equal measure to the consolidation of democracy in Pakistan.

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