

# How women in the executive influence government stability

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**Abstract:** Does the gender of prime ministers and cabinet ministers influence cabinet duration? We argue that the risk for early termination of cabinets decreases with women's presence in the executive. As scholars of social psychology indicate, women apply more consensual and compromise-oriented conflict resolution strategies. Disputes between or within governing parties, which ultimately lead to early termination, should therefore be less likely to emerge and escalate if the government is led by a woman or includes numerous female members. To test this rationale, we analyse a newly compiled, comprehensive dataset covering 676 governments in 27 European countries between 1945 and 2018 by relying on event history analysis. The results suggest that cabinets with a higher proportion of female cabinet members experience a lower risk of early cabinet termination. This article contributes to the study of women as political leaders through additional evidence for the gendered nature of leadership styles.

**Keywords:** cabinet stability, gender, governance, leadership style, women

## 1 Introduction

How do women in the executive influence government stability? Starting with the initial study by Lowell (1895), cabinet stability has been well-researched by a comprehensive set of literature (see e.g. Laver 1974; Saalfeld 2008; Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009; Warwick 1979). By now, scholars have a solid understanding of the effects of contextual, institutional, and party-level factors on government survival. However, this set of scholarly work does not take into account the transformation of politics in the last decades: While women were mostly absent from politics before the 1960s, they occupied 18.5 % of the positions as prime minister and, on average, 30.9 % of all government seats in European developed democracies at the end of 2018 (own data).<sup>1</sup> This development should have led to significant changes in the dynamics behind government survival and termination, since female and male political leaders display different behavioural patterns (see e.g. Carey et al. 1998; Childs 2000; Eagly and Carli 2004; Norris 1996; Rosener 1990).

We argue that the presence of women in the executive increases cabinet stability. One key risk that leads to the dissolution of governments is conflict within the cabinet, either between coalition parties or individual ministries (see e.g. Diermeier and Stevenson 1999; Krauss 2018). If the involved actors follow consensual rather than conflictual strategies, disputes are less likely to occur and escalate. How the head of government and the ministers behave as conflicts emerge is therefore decisive for government survival. That women are more likely to display a compromise-oriented and consensual leadership style than men has been revealed in previous research (Campus 2013; Eagly 1987; Volden et al. 2013) and is also visible in the day-to-day work of cabinets. For instance, different conflict resolution strategies became visible when the Merkel IV cabinet – a government well-known for a large number of internal conflicts both between coalition partners but also within parties – had to define a new climate protection strategy in 2019 and interests of various portfolios clashed. Disputes between the female minister of environment, Svenja Schulze (SPD), and the female minister of agriculture, Julia Klöckner (CDU/CSU), were

solved through direct communication and focused on the substance of the problem. By contrast, the male minister of transport, Andreas Scheuer (CDU/CSU), attacked the environmental minister on a personal level and through the media. Scheuer publicly claimed that Schulze intentionally achieved poor results for Germany at EU-level negotiations to get her interests through, referenced her policy proposals to communism, and limited scope for compromise by claiming his party would never support initiatives similar to the ones Schulze put forward (Kersting and Murphy 2019; Krämer 2018; Preker 2020; Welt 2019). Based on these observations, we propose that women's presence as ministers and prime ministers decreases the risk for early dissolution.

Our study provides empirical evidence for the link between cabinet duration and the gender compositions of cabinets based on original data for 676 governments in 27 European democracies. Covering the whole period after the Second World War, it is the most comprehensive dataset on women in governments to date. By exploiting the longitudinal and cross-sectional variation of the data, the analyses are able to disentangle the time trends towards enhanced cabinet stability and women's increasing presence in the executive. The findings reveal that the risk of early government termination is substantially lower for cabinets with a higher share of female cabinet members. In contrast to this substantial effect, the risk-reducing effect of having a female prime minister on the duration of governments does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

This article provides a comprehensive theoretical framework and an empirical analysis of the link between women in politics and cabinet stability. The main argument links women in politics directly to the mechanisms explaining government termination through the gendered nature of leadership styles. Thereby, the present research contributes to studies on cabinet stability by introducing the individual characteristics of the members of the executive as a new explanatory

factor beyond events, institutions, and rational choices of coalition parties. Additionally, we enrich the small but growing set of studies comparing the behaviour of male and female political leaders. This literature has not yet reached any conclusive evidence as to whether women in high-profile executive offices display the same feminine leadership style apparent in the behaviour of parliamentarians (Carey et al. 1998; Childs 2000, 2004; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2016; Genovese and Steckenrider 2013; Volden et al. 2013). The evidence presented in this article supports the idea of a distinctly feminine leadership style of ministers, characterized by compromise- and consensus-orientation.

## **2 The role of gender in explaining cabinet stability**

Given the importance of cabinet stability for the performance of the political system, a comprehensive set of literature aims to explain the survival and termination of governments. These studies can be summarised along three traditions: Firstly, game-theoretic research explains cabinet stability as a consequence of the rational choices of coalition parties (Diermeier and Stevenson 1999; Lupia and Strøm 1995). Secondly, critical events such as scandals, crises, or international conflicts have been highlighted as determinants of government survival (Browne et al. 1984; Frensdreis et al. 1986). Thirdly, the 'attributes' approach reveals how a broad variety of cabinet characteristics affect their likelihood of lasting. The institutional setting within which a government operates can influence cabinet stability. The power of the head of state (Strøm and Swindle 2002) or the Prime Minister (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009) to dissolve parliament is particularly relevant. The party composition of governments is a second attribute explaining survival. Having a majority in parliament (see e.g. Saalfeld 2008), being a minimal winning cabinet (see e.g. Laver 1974; Saalfeld 2008), and having ideological compactness within the government (see e.g. Saalfeld 2008; Warwick 1979), all have positive effects on cabinet stability.

The three sets of literature agree that conflicts within the government constitute a key explanation

for government termination. Once in office, policy-seeking actors will have disputes about concrete policy decisions. Dissent might emerge between coalition partners or ministers from the same party. If conflicts cannot be settled, coalition governments might break apart or parliaments might dissolve single-and multi-party governments to avoid deadlocks (Diermeier and Stevenson 1999). We argue that the likelihood for disputes to emerge, escalate, and lead to government dissolution, also depends on the leadership styles of the politicians in cabinet. The presence of a head of government and ministers who adopt consensual and compromise-oriented – as opposed to hierarchical and confrontational – strategies, reduces the risk for internal conflicts. This, in turn, increases the odds of government survival. Since women’s leadership style tends to be characterised by higher levels of collaboration than men’s, we hypothesise that the presence of a female prime minister and female ministers positively impacts cabinet stability.<sup>2</sup>

Women favour solving dissent and conflict through collaborative and compromise-oriented strategies, while men tend to opt for hierarchical and confrontational plans of action (Kellerman et al. 2007; March and Weil 2005; Norris 1996). Women’s leadership style has also been described as “democratic and consensual” (Campus 2013, p.16), highlighting the fact that they make use of interpersonal ties to find acceptable solutions for all actors involved through persuasion. Two main explanations for these gender differences in leadership style stand side by side: On the one hand, social role theory proposes that individuals adapt to societal expectations about appropriate behaviour, which are shaped by traditional role models, and these norms impede women from following more aggressive conflict resolution strategies (Eagly 1987). On the other hand, women might develop distinct behavioural patterns to overcome added barriers to success in politics, which involve supporting and collaborating with other actors (Volden et al. 2013).

Three sets of literature lend support to the argument that women are more consensus- and compromise-oriented than men: To begin with, research on women in top management positions

shows that female leaders aim to encourage participation in decision-making procedures, and tend to share power, while their male colleagues more frequently engage in top-down decisions (Eagly 2007; Rosener 1990). More effective communication skills are a key tool enabling women to successfully implement such strategies (Stanford et al. 1995, p.15). In the field of international relations, scholars interested in explaining conflicts and their intensity reveal that wars and violence occur less frequently under female leadership (see e.g. Caprioli and Boyer 2001; Maoz 2012). Known as the 'women and peace' hypothesis (Tessler et al. 1999), this second set of literature indicates that women are less belligerent than their male colleagues, are more willing to share resources and take other's preferences into account – even if this implies not being able to maximize their personal gains. Lastly, scholars of legislative behaviour revealed gender differences between male and female parliamentarians: Women tend to apply democratic and consensual strategies; they invest more time and effort into creating within- and across-party coalitions (Carey et al. 1998; Volden et al. 2013). When asked about their leadership style, female legislators stress their dedication to settling disputes by concessions on each side (Childs 2000, 2004). Overall, there are various cues that women are more compromise-oriented than men.

Because leadership styles are gendered in nature, we deduce that the presence of female prime ministers decreases the risk of government termination as a consequence of conflict within the cabinet. Since government members have to reach shared decisions, the intra-group dynamic is decisive for successful decision-making (Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993, p.1). The head of government has a leading function within the group and can help to maintain constructive interpersonal relations between cabinet members. A woman as prime minister will invest more effort in proactively integrating all relevant actors into decisions than male office-holders, which reduces the probability that major conflicts occur. If disputes between ministers emerge, female heads of government are better equipped to act as mediators, and support those involved in finding acceptable compromises. If the prime minister is part of the conflict, a woman tends to

prefer dispute settlement through consensual decisions instead of escalating the situation with top-down rulings. Overall, the tendency of female heads of government to engage in this compromise-oriented behaviour provides them with a strong tool to reduce the risk of conflict within the executive. Men as heads of government, in turn, have a higher propensity to let conflicts escalate and are not as well prepared to settle them. We thus hypothesize the following:

**Hypothesis 1:**

*The risk of early government termination is lower if the head of government is a woman instead of a man.*

Secondly, higher proportions of women in the executive can also enhance government stability by reducing the risk of intra-cabinet conflicts. If government members hold opposing positions, female ministers are more likely to actively search for compromise and make concessions, while male ministers should, according to the theory, prefer to push through their preferred outcome. Logically, every additional cabinet seat for a woman should, then, increase the overall degree of consensus-orientation within the executive and enhance government stability. Kanter (1977) originally introduced the argument that growing numbers of women lead to changes in organizational cultures (see also Dahlerup 1988). She argued that women tend to adapt to the behaviour of the dominant majority culture as long as their share within a group remains marginal. Their distinctiveness only becomes visible as their numerical strength increases. A comprehensive set of literature shows that women's visibility as tokens indeed decreases gender differences in leadership style (Nicolaou-Smokoviti and Baldwin 2000; Oshagbemi and Gill 2003). The more women are present in the executive, the more likely it is that they will show their distinct behaviour and utilise their compromise-oriented leadership style.

Notably, this rationale differs from the logic introduced in a recent study of the effect of female ministers on cabinet stability in thirteen European countries by Martin (2018). The author draws

on group polarization theory (see e.g. Brauer and Judd 1996; Brown 2000) to construct the argument that governments with more female members reach better policy decisions, which enables them to last longer. While this argument is intriguing, the relationship between the quality of government and early cabinet termination is subject to many confounding factors. We propose a direct link connecting the conflict resolution strategies of female ministers to the propensity that disputes within the government emerge as one of the main threats to cabinet stability. The argument developed in this study, hence, builds closely on previous literature studying cabinet duration. Nevertheless, like Martin (2018), we expect to find a positive relationship between the proportion of women in governments and their stability.

### **Hypothesis 2:**

*The higher the share of female cabinet members, the lower the risk of early government termination.*

In general, the logic applied in developing these two hypotheses might be extended to other actors involved in the government dissolution process, such as parliaments or presidents in semi-presidential systems. We decided to restrict our analyses to the members of the executive because of their central role for cabinet stability. Most importantly, cabinets can decide to step down without calling early elections, thereby giving other parties the possibility to form a new government. Moreover, previous research has shown that the powers of the head of government, such as the right to dissolve parliament, are powerful determinants of cabinet stability (Strøm and Swindle 2002).<sup>3</sup>

### **3 Research design**

Our dataset encompasses 676 governments from 27 countries between 1945 and 2018.<sup>4</sup> We relied on the country coverage provided by the ERDDA dataset (Andersson et al. 2014), which is also



used in other studies on cabinet stability, and extended its time frame until the year 2018. By including a large number of countries, we increase the external validity of our sample. Countries differ with regard to important institutional characteristics that relate to cabinet stability and women's presence in the executive, for instance the electoral system, the existence of an investiture vote, and democratic experience. Additionally, we study single-party as well as coalition cabinets since our theoretical argument relies on attributes of those who govern rather than an interaction between parties in government.

### *3.1 Dependent variable: Cabinet duration*

Our dependent variable is cabinet duration. We operationalize it as the absolute duration of a government in days and control for the length of the constitutional inter-election period (CIEP) in the analyses.<sup>5</sup> The variable is constructed by subtracting the cabinet start date from the cabinet end date. To distinguish between different ways of ending a cabinet, we create a variable that records the type of termination: conflictual, technical<sup>6</sup> as well as voluntary early elections<sup>7</sup>. We rely on data provided by the CPD (Müller and Strøm 2008) for the Western European countries until 1999, on the data on coalition governments in Western and Eastern Europe until 2015 by Krauss (2018) and coded the missing cabinets ourselves by relying on on- and offline records for the governments. In the main analysis, we display the models for conflictual terminations.

### *3.2 Explanatory variables: Women as prime ministers and ministers*

We constructed two explanatory variables: the gender of the head of government and the share of women in a given cabinet. The gender of the head of government (HoG) is operationalised as a dichotomous variable: it is coded 0 if the office is held by a man and is coded 1 if the office is held by a woman. The share of women in cabinet variable measures the number of female

government members as a percentage of all appointments in a given government. We take all members of cabinet into account, independent of their status as original, replacement, or interim member, and their position within the cabinet. Hence, for most countries, we count the prime minister/head of executive and the deputy prime minister(s) as well as all ministers with and without portfolio as members of the executive. The British case is an exemption, since a broader variety of high-level executives regularly attend cabinet meetings (e.g. Secretaries of State, the Leaders of the houses) and, as such, are included in our measure. If the same person holds several positions in a cabinet (at the same time or over time), we only count him or her once. This inclusive approach follows the rationale that all people directly involved in government decisions are decisive for cabinet survival.

To identify the gender of ministers and prime ministers, we gathered a full list of all cabinet members serving in democratic governments since 1945.<sup>8</sup> We hand-coded the gender of all ministers individually based on (1) language skills (if the coder knew that a first name or the ending of a last name is clearly associated with a sex) (28.9% of all ministers), (2) information provided by the political data yearbook *European Journal of Political Research* (1992-2002) (6.8%), and (3) texts and photos on government websites and in media reports (64.3%).

Looking at the distribution of these two variables, we find very few female prime ministers: only 4.44% of our cabinets are led by a woman. The first woman to serve as head of government in our sample was Thatcher in 1979. Of all 27 countries, 15 never had a female prime minister.

The share of women in government varies between 0% and 54.5% with a mean of 13.4% in our sample. Figure 1 presents box plots per decade and reveals a clear time trend. The median share of women in government increased from zero in the 1940s and 1950s, to 28.6% after 2010. The largest increases in women's presence in governments occurred in the last two decades. While

women's numerical strength in Scandinavian cabinets characterized them as outliers in the early decades, the share of women in government in these countries lies within the whiskers now.

[Figure 1 about here]

### 3.3 Control variables

We also control for a number of additional variables that potentially influence the stability of cabinets. First, we take temporal aspects into account by including the maximum possible cabinet duration and the length of the constitutional inter-election period (CIEP). The time left in the legislative term from the moment a government is formed varies depending on whether the government formed right after the election or came into office during the legislative term after another government failed. The amount of time that potential parties required to negotiate coalitions matter as well. Following the reasoning by Schleiter and Morgan-Jones (2009) and Saalfeld (2008), we assume that the lower the opportunity costs of terminating a cabinet early, the closer the next regularly scheduled election will be. This means that the risk of government termination should be higher if the maximum possible cabinet duration is short. The variable was constructed by subtracting the date of cabinet formation from the date of the next scheduled election and is measured in days. For cabinets that formed before 2012, we relied on the data provided by the ERDDA dataset (Andersson et al. 2014). For governments that entered office after 2012, we calculated the maximum possible cabinet duration ourselves by relying on data from the ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2019). Additionally, cabinet duration as the absolute number of days requires controlling for the length of the legislative term (Browne and Gleiber 1986). The data was collected by relying on on- and offline information about the electoral systems

in the countries under observation.

We further take differences between the cabinets in our sample into account. The variable 'ideological divisiveness' controls for potential for conflict within the government. On the one hand, this variable captures the likelihood that conflicts emerge in single-party compared to coalition governments. Intra-party conflicts might lead to early termination of single-party governments made up of only one party. On the other hand, the variable indicates the potential for tensions that emerge within coalition governments as a consequence of ideological differences. Diverging preferences of the governing parties are an additional threat to cabinet stability in coalition governments. Previous research has shown that instability of coalition cabinets is associated with higher ideological divisiveness among the parties forming the coalition (see e.g. Saalfeld 2008; Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009). The variable is operationalised as the difference between the most extreme parties in a coalition, on the left-right continuum, and takes the value '0' for single-party cabinets. The data originates from the Manifesto Project (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2018). We also include the minority status of a cabinet to capture the strength of the executive vis-a-vis the legislature. *Per definitionem*, minority governments do not have the support of a majority of representatives and are, therefore, more vulnerable to either a defeat in parliament, or to votes of no confidence (Saalfeld 2008; Strøm and Swindle 2002). Accordingly, we expect that the risk of early government termination is higher if the cabinet is a minority government. Minority status is a dichotomous variable, coded '1' if the government does not command a majority in the legislature and '0' otherwise. We relied on data provided by ParlGov to operationalise this variable (Döring and Manow 2019).

Lastly, we capture systematic differences between the parliaments. The effective number of parliamentary parties is included, as it signals both the number of outside options for the government parties as well as the complexity of the bargaining environment in general (Saalfeld

2008, p. 346). The risk of early cabinet termination should increase with a higher effective number of parliamentary parties. The data for this variable was also taken from the ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2019).<sup>9</sup>

#### **4 Empirical evidence for women’s risk-reducing effect on early government termination**

In this section, we test our theoretical expectations by relying on event history analysis. In comparison to normal regression analysis, this modelling strategy is able to handle censored data (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). Censoring in the case of cabinet duration means that a cabinet is treated as if it were still in office if it terminated due to technical reasons such as the end of the legislative term. We use Cox Proportional Hazards models as we do not have any theoretical expectations with regard to the shape of the hazard rate (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). The model, however, assumes that the hazards are proportional in the sense that they do not vary over time for different observations (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). If this assumption is violated, significance tests and coefficients might be biased (Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn 2001). In our case, the length of the CIEP as well as ideological divisiveness violate this assumption in most models. In order to overcome this problem, we interact these two variables with the natural logarithm of time as suggested by Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn (2001). Since our observations are clustered into countries, we run shared frailty models. This approach is similar to a fixed-effects regression and accounts for the fact that governments within countries might share many characteristics that increase the risk of early termination.

Table 1 displays the results of our analyses. The coefficients displayed are hazard ratios. Values below one signal a risk-reducing effect of the variable on early government termination due to conflict, whereas values above one indicate an increasing risk.

[Table 1 about here]

Our first hypothesis states that the risk of early government termination is lower if the head of government is a woman. Model 1 in Table 1 includes the results of the analysis for the effect of the gender of the head of government. The hazard ratio for this variable is below one but not statistically significant at conventional levels. While the heads of government are usually seen as the most important individuals in a cabinet, the effect of their gender does not seem to be strong enough to significantly reduce the risk of early government termination. A large standard error indicates substantial variation in the length of women-led governments, ranging from very short terms such as thirty days by Suchocka II in Poland or 62 days by Jäätteenmäki in Finland, to long-lasting governments like those led by Merkel in Germany or Brundtland in Norway. One potential explanation for this pattern might be that the effect of gender on the leadership style of prime ministers might not be as consistent as we originally expected. Another explanation could be that female party leaders tend to be elected into office during difficult times, as previous research has shown (O'Brien 2015). This, in turn, could influence the risk of early government termination and explain the inconclusive findings.

In Model 2 in Table 1, we test whether the share of women in the cabinet influences cabinet stability. Similar to the first analysis, the hazard ratio is below one and indicates a risk-reducing effect of women's presence in cabinets on conflictual cabinet termination. In contrast to the first analysis, however, this effect is statistically significant at the 1%-level. Figure 2 further illustrates the analysed relationship. The figure illustrates the survival hazards for cabinets with the minimum share of women in cabinet (0, solid line), the mean share of women in cabinet (13.5,

dashed line) and the maximum share of women in cabinet (54.6, dotted line). The x-axis shows the number of days since government formation whereas the y-axis displays the percentage of cabinets that have not yet been terminated. After a duration of 1000 days, the share of governments that survive up until this point is at around 45% if there are no female ministers, and at around 80% when the share of women in the cabinet is at a maximum, as in the case of Finland under Katainen I and Sweden under Reinfeldt II. Overall, this evidence provides solid support for the second hypothesis, namely that the risk of early cabinet termination decreases with women's presence in the executive.

[Figure 2 about here]

With regard to our control variables, we only find a coherent influence in both models for maximum possible cabinet duration, minority status, and ideological divisiveness. Consistent with our theoretical expectations, maximum possible cabinet duration decreases the risk of early government termination while minority status and the ideological divisiveness of a cabinet have a risk-increasing influence.

We have further tested the robustness of our findings by including seven additional model specifications. In a first series of robustness tests, we added a series of variables to test for omitted variable bias and endogeneity concerns. To begin with, we use inflation, growth, and unemployment as proxy variables for the quality of policy outcomes created by a cabinet. It is possible that cabinets with larger shares of female ministers are more durable because they make better policy decisions (Martin 2018). The variables are operationalised by subtracting the scores for inflation, growth and unemployment in the year the government was formed from the scores

of the year in which the government was terminated. These variables originate from the ERDDA dataset (Andersson et al. 2014). Second, we include decade dummies to control for time-effects. Over time, cabinets have become more stable (see e.g. Saalfeld 2008) and the representation of women has increased (see e.g. Hughes and Paxton 2019). Our findings could, therefore, be explained by a simultaneous increase in both cabinet duration and women's representation. Third, we also tested for the effect of a dummy variable that indicates whether a country belongs to Central or Eastern Europe (CEE). Previous research has shown that cabinet stability (Krauss 2018; Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009) and the representation of women (Hughes and Paxton 2019) are particularly low in these regions. Fourth, we include a dummy variable for Scandinavian countries since these countries traditionally display a more compromise-oriented political culture (see e.g. Green-Pedersen and Thomsen 2011) and have a higher rate of female participation in politics (Hughes and Paxton 2019). Fifth, we control for the ideology of the parliament since scholarly work on women in politics indicate that leftist parties tend to send more women to the legislature and the executive (Claveria 2014; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005). As a final test in this series, we also examine whether or not the median party in parliament is part of the government since this might increase cabinet duration (Saalfeld 2008). For all robustness checks, the results of our main explanatory variables remain substantially the same and do not shed doubts on the finding that the share of women in a given cabinet and its stability are systematically linked (see Table A.2 to A.7 in the Appendix).

In addition, we test whether our linear measure for the share of women in cabinet captures the effect appropriately. The literature engaging with women in organizations suggests that the effect of the share of women in government changes at certain cut-off points rather than unfolding in a linear manner (Dahlerup 1988; Kanter 1977). We test for non-linearity by including a nominal measure for the share of women in cabinet. The variable includes four categories: less than 5%, 5%-15%, 15%-30%, and more than 30% female cabinet members. The results can be found in Table



A.8. The findings indicate that the change in the coefficients from one category to the next mirrors the linear model. Hazard ratios decrease as the share of women within the category increases.

Finally, we ran a competing risks approach in which we distinguish between conflictual terminations, the pooled sample, as well as replacements and dissolutions. Replacements are those terminations that end with a new government being formed without new elections whereas dissolutions include those terminations that end in early elections (Diermeier and Stevenson 1999). Diermeier and Stevenson (1999) argue that these types of cabinet termination are inherently different since early elections reset the clock and completely change the balance of power in the parliament. The results of the competing risks approach can be found in tables A.9 and A.10. Our results, however, remain unchanged for all four types of terminations.

## **5 Conclusion**

In this article we have analysed the influence the gender of the political actors in the executive has on cabinet stability. We have argued that female prime ministers and cabinet members display a distinct leadership style that reduces the risk of early cabinet termination due to internal conflicts. We used original data for women in governments covering 27 European countries between 1945 and 2018 to underpin our arguments. The empirical analyses reveal that the risk of early cabinet termination decreases with higher proportions of female cabinet members. The duration of governments led by a woman, in turn, varies considerably, even though it is, on average, longer than the duration of governments led by a man. Therefore, our analyses indicate that women's increasing presence in politics increases government stability overall.

These insights contribute to the literature on government duration by introducing the individual-

level characteristics of the involved actors as explanatory variables. Previous literature has examined how party strategies (Diermeier and Stevenson 1999; Lupia and Strøm 1995), critical events (Brown et al. 1984; Frensdreis et al. 1986), and the institutional set-up of the government and parliament (Krauss 2018; Saalfeld 2008; Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009; Strøm and Swindle 2002; Timmermans and Moury 2006) affects government duration. We contribute to these explanations by showing that the behaviour of government members, which varies according to gender, also matters. Taking individual-level variables into account in future research can contribute to a better understanding of why governments last or terminate. Other characteristics of a prime minister and ministers that determine their leadership style might be differences in political professionalization, educational attainment, or age.

Moreover, this study enriches the small but growing set of research interested in how women make politics. Our findings suggest that female ministers are able to introduce different behavioural norms and change the nature of politics towards a more compromise-oriented setting. Beyond the outbreak of violent conflicts (see e.g. Caprioli and Boyer 2001; Maoz 2012; Tessler et al. 1999) and legislative behaviour (see e.g. Carey et al. 1998; Childs 2000, 2004; Volden et al. 2013), cabinet stability is another political phenomenon where the gender of the involved actors has a significant impact. To further enhance our understanding of women's role for government survival, future research could take different sets of actors, and their specific role in explaining cabinet stability, into account. For instance, the share of women in the legislature might influence the risk for government termination as a consequence of dissolution of parliament. Since women tend to be risk averse (see Ertac and Gurdal 2012; Nelson 2015) and might value the security of having a mandate and a certain party strength in the status quo, female legislators should be more reluctant to support calls for early elections than their male colleagues.

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## **Notes**

1. Figures include all EU member countries plus Iceland and Norway except for Croatia, Malta, and Cyprus.
2. We assume that women's presence in cabinets is endogenous to the degree of compromise-orientation in the executive. While women tend to have lower political ambition (Lawless and Fox 2013) and a higher aversion to competitive environments than men (Preece and Stoddard 2015), these patterns are less likely to persist for the highest political positions. Previous research indicates that, when it comes to posts in the executive, women's presence is mostly limited by institutional barriers and biased selection criteria of party gate keepers (see e.g., Barnes and Taylor-Robinson 2018).
3. Not all prime ministers and cabinets have the power to dissolve parliament (Goplerud and

Schleiter 2016).

4. The countries are the following: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.
5. This measurement approach allows for running a survival analysis, which is the established method in cabinet stability research.
6. All terminations that are non-discretionary such as termination due to the end of the legislative term.
7. In some countries, such as Denmark, cabinets sometimes call for voluntary early elections because they want additional approval for major policy reforms.
8. For that purpose, we made use of the website <http://www.kolumbus.fi/taglarsson/>.
9. Descriptive statistics for all variables can be found in Table A.1 in the Appendix.

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## Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Share of women in the cabinet

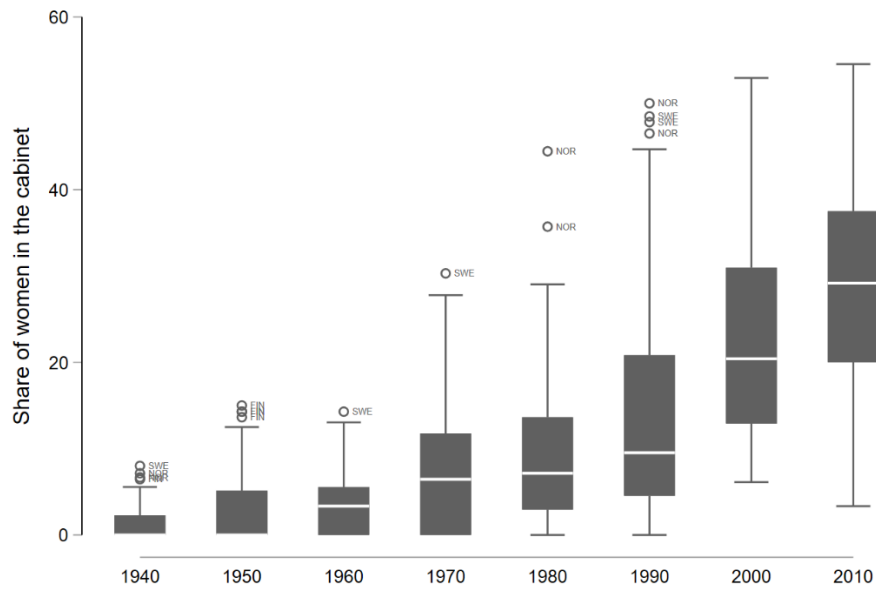


Figure 2: Effect of the share of women in the cabinet on cabinet duration

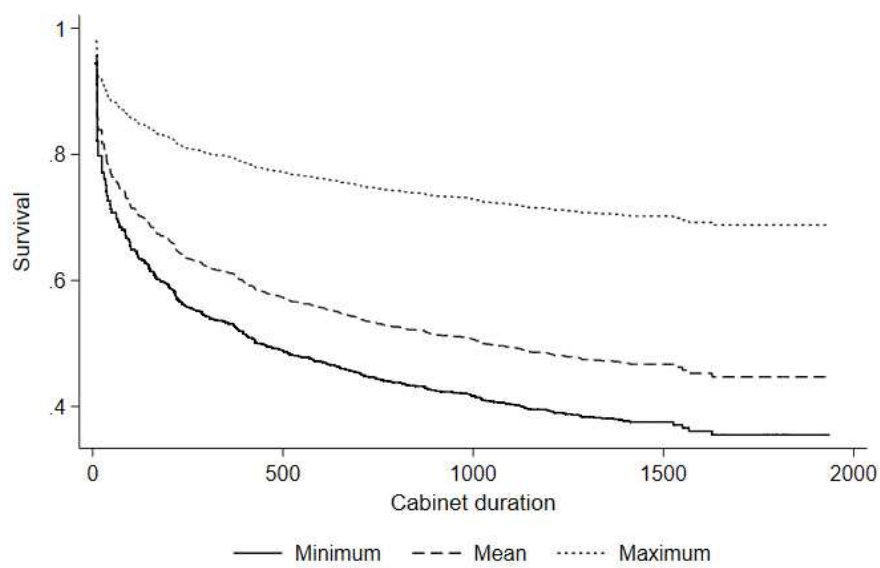


Table 1: Gender and stability

<b>DV: Cabinet duration</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>
<b>Explanatory variables</b>		
Gender HoG	0.820 (0.290)	\
Share women (cabinet)	\	0.982*** (0.005)
<b>Control variables</b>		
Max. poss. cabinet duration	0.999*** (0.0002)	0.999*** (0.0002)
Length of CIEP	0.296 (0.262)	0.319 (0.282)
Ideological divisiveness	0.972 (0.018)	0.974 (0.018)
Minority status	1.751*** (0.277)	1.715*** (0.270)
Effective number of parl. parties	1.074 (0.057)	1.122** (0.058)
<b>Time-variant coefficients</b>		
Length of CIEP $\times \ln(t)$	1.257 (0.180)	1.245 (0.178)
Ideological divisiveness $\times \ln(t)$	1.006** (0.003)	1.006* (0.003)
Observations	676	676
Number of failures	284	284
Log likelihood	-1613.278	-1607.606

With \*\*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \* $p \leq 0.10$ ; standard errors in

parentheses; coefficients displayed are hazard ratios;

rounded hazard ratios of 1.000 have been rounded up

to 1.001 or rounded down to 0.999 to signal the

direction.