

**Facty Friday**

# On gender quotas and female political representation

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## Increasing women's political representation increases spending on public health

A recent study analyzed the effect of gender quotas and female political representation on government spending priorities. It found that gender quotas causing large increases in women's political representation [lead to more public health spending and less military spending](#). Other studies have found similar effects – a review of studies in India found that [increasing female political representation increases public goods provision, especially health and education](#). These studies show that gender quotas lead to meaningful policy changes that directly affect citizens.

## Gender quotas can backfire and reduce political engagement

Another recent study analyzed the effect of Lesotho's subnational gender quotas on women's engagement with politics. It found that [having a quota-mandated female councilor reduced women's political engagement](#). The effect is caused by the quota itself, not by having a female councilor or by the perception that quota-mandated female councilors perform poorly. There is no reduction in women's political engagement where female councilors were elected without quotas, and citizens report that female councilors in quota districts perform as well as or better than councilors in non-quota districts. Rather, [quotas were perceived as illegitimate by many citizens because they were implemented without local buy-in or discussion; citizens also thought quotas were dictated to Lesotho by international groups rather than arising through domestic channels](#). This study shows that gender quotas may have unintended consequences, especially if implemented without the support of citizens.

***Do you have a study we should share for a future Facty Friday? Send an email to [drg.el@usaid.gov](mailto:drg.el@usaid.gov)!***

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