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# Explaining Gender Gaps in Legislative Committees

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## ABSTRACT

Legislative committees are often the epicenter of parliamentary influence, so their composition matters. Men are widely overrepresented in prestigious, influential committees, with women concentrated in low-status committees. These gender gaps have repercussions for power, visibility, careers, and policy outcomes. Yet the puzzle of *why* committees are gendered remains unsolved. Combining insights from quantitative and qualitative methods, we offer two major advances. We develop the literature on committee allocations, providing the first comprehensive gendered analysis. And we show how gender permeates all aspects of political careers from socialization to the political summit, leading to deep-rooted inequalities of power, influence, and opportunity.

## KEYWORDS:

Parliaments ; committees ; careers ; France ; stereotypes

## Introduction

Parliamentary committees are often the epicenter of influence within legislatures (Longley and Davidson 1998; Strøm 1998). They provide deliberative and scrutiny functions, and may revise or even initiate legislation. Allocation of legislators to these committees is of central importance to the distribution of power within a legislature, as some committees are considered more powerful, prestigious, and influential than others (Bækgaard 2014; Heath et al 2005; Munger 1988). Sitting on the “right” committee can enable legislators to advance their policy or career goals (Crisp et al 2009; Frisch and Kelly 2006). Ambitious legislators may also prefer less burdensome committees that can be combined with other career-enhancing activities. Hence, committee allocations are important for political careers and legislative outcomes.

Committee allocations also matter for understanding gender dynamics within legislatures. There are widespread gender gaps in the composition of legislative committees (Carroll 2008; Coffé and Schnelleke 2013; Schwindt-Bayer 2010). Women are concentrated in

“soft” committees handling domestic and social issues, while men dominate “hard” committees like economics and international affairs (Heath et al 2005). With women already underrepresented in nearly all legislatures, this additional distortion leads to their stark absence from central areas of decision-making. Decisions about budgets or foreign policy affect both sexes but are made disproportionately by men. Women’s absence from key areas has repercussions for policy outcomes (Carroll 2001; Wängnerud 2000), with important perspectives overlooked when women are not present.<sup>1</sup> There are also consequences for women politicians’ future careers, with expertise in finance and foreign affairs often viewed as important qualifications for high executive office (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Kerevel and Atkeson 2013).

Despite their important consequences, the explanation for gender gaps on committees remains an unsolved puzzle. The literature on committee allocations is under-developed (Hansen 2010), and pays little attention to gender gaps. Studies that do consider gender remain inconclusive and do not engage fully with the committee allocations literature. They often focus on discrepancies between committee requests and allocations, whereas we contend that gender gaps in committee memberships are much more deep-rooted and symptomatic of wider inequalities in political career trajectories. We offer a major advance by providing the first comprehensive account of how men and women end up on different parliamentary committees. We demonstrate the multiple impacts of gender on the committee allocation process. We contextualize committee membership within a broader understanding of gendered power hierarchies (Brush 1992), demonstrating that it is insufficient to measure gender inequality in terms of specific acts of discrimination. Rather, many small decisions throughout a lifespan can culminate in male dominance of the key foci of power.

We illuminate the multiple hidden forces that steer men and women towards different committees, building on Risman’s concept of gender as “embedded at the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of our society” (2004: 446). We focus on three core explanations for gendered committee memberships: expertise (prior gender gaps in knowledge and political experience shape committee allocations); seniority (more established legislators – usually men - have better access to coveted committees); and gender stereotyping (men and women associate themselves and others with distinct policy areas). We explore whether existing differences between men and women result in gendered path dependence when allocating committee memberships. We also consider how gender stereotypes exacerbate the problem by influencing the way that politicians perceive themselves and others (Ridgeway 2011).

Combining the insights of quantitative and qualitative analysis, we use France as a case study. French parliamentary committees have recently been reinforced, making them the most powerful organ in the legislature and strengthening parliament against the executive (Krolik 2014; Urvoas 2013). The French legislature has also recently feminized following parity legislation, from 12.3% women in 2002 to 26.5% in 2012. Yet its committee allocations remain gendered, with women heavily concentrated in the Social and Cultural Affairs committees, while the Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Defense committees are male-dominated. Our mixed methods approach provides comprehensive insights into why committees are gendered. Our large, original dataset includes data on each legislator’s background and district, enabling rigorous statistical

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the British Select Committee on Defense only considered the key role of soldiers’ families once women joined the committee (HC Deb January 12, 2012, vol 538, col 421).

analysis. We complement these findings by interviewing more than 50 deputies to provide in-depth, nuanced explanations.<sup>2</sup>

Previous studies have produced inconclusive results because they explain only part of the conundrum. Our approach takes a broader view and enables much more complete explanations to emerge. We find gender differences embedded throughout political careers, shaping qualifications, expertise, and perceptions. It is only when this cumulative effect is understood that the broader ramifications for gendered representation can be fully appreciated, and more effective solutions proposed.

## Gendered Committee Allocations

Some committees are considered more valuable than others, with “prestige” and “power” committees ranked highest (Eulau 1984; Frisch and Kelly 2006; Heath et al 2005). These include budget committees, foreign affairs, defense, and the economy (Hansen 2010). Not coincidentally, these are the committees associated with men’s interests and strengths (Franceschet 2011; Schwindt-Bayer 2010: 111). Committees associated with women include social affairs, healthcare, education, welfare, culture, and women’s and equality issues, all of which often entail high workloads and low status (Bolzendahl 2014; Coffé and Schnellecke 2013; Crawford and Pini 2011). Krook and O’Brien find similar patterns when examining cabinet portfolios worldwide, though they question the assumption that “feminine” portfolios are inferior, noting that “education, health, and welfare entail some of the largest state expenditures” (2012: 842).

Gender gaps in committee allocations appear widely over time and space, with documented cases in the USA (Carroll 2008; Frisch and Kelly 2003), Latin America (Heath et al 2005; Schwindt-Bayer 2010), Australia (Sawer 2000), and Europe (Bækgaard and Kjaer 2012; Bolzendahl 2014; Coffé and Schnellecke 2013; Crawford and Pini 2011). A few exceptions, such as Mexico (Kerevel and Atkeson 2013), indicate gender gaps are not inevitable.

Explaining this phenomenon is not straightforward. The two most common hypotheses are discrimination and free choice. Carroll (2008) compared committee requests in the USA with actual allocations, and found that gender gaps in legislators’ own preferences exceeded the gaps on committees: To the extent that women’s preferences were overruled, it was to force them onto prestige committees rather than deny them access. Bækgaard and Kjaer (2012), using a very different case study and method, had similar findings: gender gaps stem more from individual preferences than systemic bias. O’Brien (2012) and Thomas (1994) also rejected the hypothesis of bias against women.

Yet, some studies do uncover discriminatory treatment (Mateo Diaz 2005; Rodríguez 2003). Heath et al (2005) found a backlash against women following quota legislation. Frisch and Kelly (2006) found marginal differences in preferences, but women, especially in the Republican party, less often received their chosen committee. These mixed findings show that discrimination and gendered preferences are necessary but insufficient explanations of gender gaps.

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<sup>2</sup> Mickler (2013) uses mixed methods to explain committee allocations but ignores gender.

The puzzle of why men and women might choose, or receive, different committee allocations remains unanswered. Further, “the determinants of ‘choice’ are notoriously complex” (Towns 2003: 18). No study has yet offered a comprehensive analysis of the variables shaping legislators’ choices and influencing those responsible for allocations. This study is the first to unite existing theories of committee allocations and apply an explicitly gendered lens. In doing so, we deepen our understanding of the choices made by individual actors and illuminate the key role played by gender stereotypes (Lorber 1993). Our comprehensive model is built around three key expectations, laid out below.

## **Expertise**

Informational theory claims that committee assignments reflect deputies’ specialization in areas linked to their interests, profession, and education (Ciftci et al 2008; Hall and Grofman 1990; Yordanova 2009). McElroy demonstrates that committees in the European Parliament are filled with specialists, arguing that this can increase efficiency by exploiting expertise as an “informational asset” (2006: 7). Krehbiel (1991) argues that expertise in committees benefits the legislature, through informed policy-making and as a counterweight to the executive. Hence, we expect expertise in a policy domain to predict membership of the related committee. Although unbiased, this criterion is gendered. Gender roles that are socialized and ingrained from early childhood steer girls towards arts-based subjects and boys towards math and science. These differences in specialization are often exacerbated within the labor market, with significant vertical and horizontal segregation. Women are greatly outnumbered in sectors such as the military, finance, and judiciary (Charles 2003). This might lead to underrepresentation on committees in related areas. Conversely, women comprise the majority of teachers, nurses, public sector and social workers, so they might gravitate towards committees in these areas.

Alongside professional careers, most parliamentarians accrue political experience through local office or party roles. People often adopt portfolios outside their existing expertise, given the need to cover the full policy range. Such roles permit politicians to widen their fields of specialization, reducing the problem of an uneven distribution of expertise. These roles should therefore be included when gauging a parliamentarian’s areas of specialism.

Expertise takes two distinctive gendered forms. Expertise accrued through education and prior profession may be influenced by socially constructed norms, but is still within individual control. Conversely, prior political experience – both within local and party politics – is subject to the allocation of portfolios by others. We thus distinguish between *knowledge* (education and profession) and *experience* (prior political roles). While both forms of expertise can influence committee allocations, they may be gendered in different ways. Knowledge is shaped primarily through indirect societal gender constructs, with males and females socialized into different areas from infancy (Bacchi 1999). Experience may be shaped more directly by gender stereotyping and discrimination, with men and women allocated different roles and portfolios. Gender stereotyping that occurs earlier in legislators’ careers can affect outcomes later, even without stereotyping at the committee allocation stage.

## **Seniority**

Coveted places on high status committees might be the preserve of senior politicians (Crisp et al 2009; Frisch and Kelly 2006), who benefit from experience, authority, and networks. Veteran parliamentarians who have long campaigned to sit on a particular committee might earn their place after serving time in low-status committees (Bullock 1970; Mickler 2013; Munger 1988). In contrast, new arrivals have less access to resources such as influence and patronage. They may lack powerful friends, or a national reputation. They may also not know how to get onto the “right” committee (Barnes 2014).

If seniority determines access to prestigious committees, this might explain why women sit on lower-status committees. Measures such as gender quotas have led to rapid feminization of legislatures worldwide, meaning many women are recent entrants to parliament (Krook 2009). Furthermore, women often enter politics later and exit earlier than men (Green 2009). Women’s entry may be delayed due to childrearing, while exit may be precipitated by a hostile environment or lack of opportunities (Murray 2010). Consequently, women are disproportionately junior, with men dominating the senior ranks. If seniority is key then the shortage of senior women would explain the overall gender imbalance.

Alongside political longevity, there are other ways to exert authority. A prominent party role might help secure a desirable committee assignment, as might ministerial office. As most governments worldwide have been historically male-dominated, this might further explain men’s predominance on coveted committees. Local positions of power may also consolidate, or act as a springboard to, national power. Such positions are often male-dominated (Bochel and Bochel 2008), affording men an advantage during the committee allocation process (Pini and McDonald 2011).

## **Gender stereotyping**

Gender stereotyping is the attribution of certain traits, interests, and characteristics based on a person’s gender rather than their individual qualities (Dolan and Lynch 2014). Cultural gender norms attribute certain domains (relating to care and reproduction) to women and others (production and defense) to men (Chafetz 1988; Towns 2003). Such stereotypes can lead to gendered committee portfolios, whether unconsciously or strategically. For example, women might be more strongly encouraged to sit on the Social Affairs committee, even if it was not their initial preference (Kenney 1996; Towns 2003). Widespread unconscious bias might also lead men to steer women away from more powerful roles (Green 2003). Such behavior may be well-intentioned but based on stereotypical assumptions about gender-appropriate roles; alternatively, it may indicate covert discrimination. With places on power committees being a coveted resource, male legislators have a vested interest in discouraging female rivals from seeking these roles. Gender stereotyping may also be internalized, manifesting in distinct gendered preferences. These norms frequently operate subconsciously and might lead men and women to make unknowingly gendered decisions.

Such stereotyping might also influence strategic decisions. Prior research found that women speak of making a difference (Childs 2004), while men might be more instrumental in developing their careers. These differences are socially constructed; women are socialized to be altruistic and serve others, while men are socialized to be ambitious (Larimer et al 2007). Similarly, men may receive advice from other men about strategies to advance their careers, whereas a dearth of senior women means that women lack mentors and may receive

counter-productive advice due to sexism or stereotyping. Consequently, gender (rather than sex) can steer men towards more prestigious committees than women. Furthermore, women might seek out feminized committees, whether consciously (to avoid a male-dominated environment) or subconsciously (due to more role models and better symbolic inclusion of women).

## Case study: France's National Assembly

Although the expectations discussed above are broadly applicable, testing them requires large amounts of data and in-depth knowledge of a case study. We choose France as its relatively compact committee system, with a clearly defined hierarchy, facilitates analysis. The primary period of analysis is the last full parliamentary term (2007-12).

Until 2009, each deputy sat on one of six permanent committees: Finance; Foreign Affairs (hereafter Foreign); Defense; Laws; Economic and Environmental Affairs (E&E); and Cultural, Family, and Social Affairs (CFS). E&E & CFS were twice the size of the others, containing half of all deputies between them. In 2009, the two large committees were split in half to create eight committees of approximately equal size. E&E was split into Economic Affairs (hereafter Economy), and Environment. CFS was split into Social Affairs (Social), and Cultural and Educational Affairs (Culture). The partisan composition of each committee mirrors the Assembly as a whole.

Committees meet frequently and have the power to scrutinize and (since 2009) revise legislation. Committees can also summon experts and witnesses. In our interviews, deputies frequently claimed that their committee role was the most important and influential aspect of their parliamentary work.

Committees have both horizontal and vertical hierarchies. The former relates to committees' relative prestige. Abélès (2001: 155) refers to the "noble" (top) committees and the "poubelles" (the remainder – literally, "trash cans"). Top of the pecking order are Finance (the most powerful), and Foreign (the most prestigious). Next are Laws (another "power" committee enabling deputies to influence much of the legislative process), and Defense. Of these four, Defense is the least coveted because of its niche remit. The two large committees which were subsequently split into four are the "poubelles." Jean-Jacques Urvoas, who chaired Laws 2012-16, argued that the hierarchies of prestige reflected both seniority (with newcomers steered towards SFC rather than Finance, Foreign, or Laws) and gendered distributions of labor (Urvoas and Alexandre 2012: 127).

Regarding vertical hierarchies, every committee has an executive. The coveted role of president confers genuine influence. Beneath the president sit several vice-presidents and secretaries who are significantly less influential.<sup>3</sup> Party officials encourage selected deputies to stand for election to these roles by the committee members.

After a parliamentary election, deputies express preferences for various roles, including three choices for a permanent committee. Decisions are made by the executive team of each parliamentary party, in a process described by a female left-wing deputy as "neither democratic

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<sup>3</sup> In interviews, left-wing deputies downplayed their role as VPs and Secretaries. However, right-wing deputies felt that being a VP was useful for advancing their ideas and influencing the running of the committee, suggesting greater benefit for the governing party.

nor transparent.”<sup>4</sup> Neophyte deputies seldom receive all their preferences. In interview data, deputies cited their relevant expertise, seniority, or preference for an unfashionable committee as explanations for obtaining their committee of choice. Some also indicated that their expressed preference was influenced by realism or ambition. For example, a left-wing woman obtained a place on E&E, stating that “...I didn’t know how it all worked. I didn’t want to be on Social but I also knew that Finance wasn’t open to someone like me [...]. Foreign is an elite committee for famous names. That just left Defense and I’m not in a constituency with a big military presence.” A left-wing man asked for Finance despite knowing there was “no chance” for a new deputy, ending up instead on E&E. These accounts suggest that some deputies ask for what they want even though they don’t expect to get it, and others ask for what they expect to get even though they don’t really want it (cf Towns 2003: 18). Due to self-limitation, preference forms would be an unreliable indicator of deputies’ actual committee preferences (Bullock 1976; Shepsle 1978). The ability of selectors to fulfill those preferences is also constrained by other variables such as limited availability of places on each committee, especially for small parties (Hall and Grofman 1990).

While no two countries are identical, the French case affords a good testing ground for broader theories. Like many other countries (Caul 1999), France has more women politicians on the left than the right (26.3% compared to 13.4% in 2007-12). The left were in power 1997-2002 and 2012-17; the right governed 2002-12. France does also have a few particularities. Parliamentary office is incompatible with executive office, so no serving member of the government sits within parliament. However, many deputies do combine parliamentary office with local fiefdoms. A major local role, as head of a region, department,<sup>5</sup> or mayor of a city, provides an important power base but also entails a significant time commitment that detracts from legislative obligations.<sup>6</sup> As French gender parity legislation has limited application to local executive office,<sup>7</sup> these roles remain male-dominated, and this might further explain men’s greater presence on prestigious committees.

## Data and Methods

We created a large, unique dataset to test the direct and indirect effects of gender on committee allocations. Our dependent variable is the committee to which deputies were allocated; because this is a categorical variable, we use multinomial logistic regression. The advantage of a multinomial model is that it allows us to consider all committees simultaneously, thus indicating why someone ended up on one committee and not another. However, the analysis is somewhat constrained by the relatively low *n* (c. 70) for each committee, limiting the number of independent variables that can be modeled. We therefore also ran binomial logistic regressions for each committee, allowing us to increase our *n* to all eligible deputies (>500); the results are not shown due to space limitations but are discussed where appropriate. Given women’s overrepresentation within SFC, we used this as the reference category to contrast

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<sup>4</sup> All translations are by the authors.

<sup>5</sup> An administrative district; there are 95 departments in mainland France

<sup>6</sup> From 2017 deputies will be prohibited from holding simultaneous local executive office.

<sup>7</sup> Parity did not apply to local executive office until 2008, and has limited reach; in 2015, 90% of departmental presidents, 91% of regional presidents and 84% of mayors were men (HCEfh 2015).



directly against all other committees. Alongside sex (coded woman 1, man 0), our model includes expertise, seniority, and constituency variables. We use alternative measures for gender stereotypes, detailed below.

Our measures of expertise include two knowledge variables (education and profession), and two experience variables (local politics portfolios, and party spokesperson roles). Some gender gaps do exist within the professional and political backgrounds of French deputies, although these gaps are narrower than in the wider population (HCEfh 2015; Murray 2010). We tested whether these gaps explain the gendered composition of committees. We measured expertise in terms of its relevance to each committee. Hence, for each of our four variables on every committee, we gave deputies a score of 1 if their main area of expertise was relevant to the committee, 0.5 if they had relevant secondary expertise, and 0 otherwise. We then created an amalgamated “expertise” scale of 0-4 for each committee, whereby 4 represented the highest level of relevant expertise for the committee in question.<sup>8</sup> The data for the knowledge variables is unevenly distributed, with a concentration of business people (relevant to Economy), teachers and professors (relevant to Culture), healthcare professionals (relevant to Social), and deputies holding law degrees. In contrast, very few deputies have knowledge related to Defense, Foreign, or Environment. The experience data is more evenly distributed, reflecting the need to cover all areas within politics. The distribution of deputies across different committees largely reflected their expertise, with knowledge more influential than experience.<sup>9</sup>

Our seniority variables include terms served in the National Assembly; previously holding ministerial office (coded 1 yes, 0 otherwise); a high-profile role within the national party organization (1 yes, 0 otherwise); and combining parliamentary office with major local executive office<sup>10</sup> (1 yes, 0 otherwise). We also introduced several controls for constituency effects. Urban areas are associated with more favorable attitudes towards gender equality (Evans 2016), so we introduced an urban/rural control variable (measured on a scale from 1 (most urban) to 4 (most rural)). Deputies representing a military district might prioritize Defense,<sup>11</sup> so we controlled for a military base in the district (1 yes, 0 otherwise). We also controlled for seat safety (coded as the difference between the victor’s and runner up’s scores in the 2007 election) as women are more often in marginal seats, although the evidence for the impact of seat marginality on committee allocations is mixed (Eulau 1984; Frisch and Kelly 2006; Hansen 2010; Mickler 2013).

We complement our quantitative analysis with 52 interviews with French deputies, conducted by the authors in 2011, using a snowballing technique. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, we provide only their sex and left-right orientation. We interviewed 29 women (16 left, 13 right) and 23 men (15 left, 8 right).

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<sup>8</sup> It was not possible to include each category of expertise separately in the multinomial model because of the relatively low  $n$ , but we also analyzed each category separately in binomial models for individual committees to confirm robustness (available on request).

<sup>9</sup> Tables available on request.

<sup>10</sup> Defined as president of a region, department, or mayor of a town of 50,000+ inhabitants.

<sup>11</sup> Several deputies claimed this in our interviews.

## Findings<sup>12</sup>

Table 1 and Figure 1 highlight women's relative over or underrepresentation in each parliamentary committee, including following the split of two committees into four in 2009, and before and after the 2012 election. The table shows the number of female executive and ordinary members of each committee, followed by the total percentage of women on each committee.

[Table 1 and Figure 1 about here]

Table 1 reveals entrenched horizontal segregation. Finance and Defense are the most male-dominated committees. Women's presence in Foreign and Laws has declined over time, suggesting that women's committee assignments do not always improve as their numbers increase (Barnes 2014; Heath et al 2005; but see Friedman 1996). For Foreign, a committee associated with seniority, the recently elected women may be too junior. Women are underrepresented on two "noble" committees in 1997, three in 2002, and all four thereafter. Conversely, they are heavily overrepresented on SFC, including after its division. Women's presence on Economy is about proportionate, whereas women are underrepresented on Environment. Hence, women are predominantly in the "poubelles" and disproportionately in the "feminine" areas.

Vertical segregation is also evident, particularly under right-wing governments. Women have held very few executive roles, especially in the "noble" committees. In 1967, the first woman chaired a committee (SFC). She had no successor until 1997-2000 (Laws), a period including the passage of the parity law. In 2009, a woman chaired Culture, but it was not until 2012 that women chaired Foreign and Defense, alongside Social. Women have held few other executive roles, and are concentrated in the inferior position of secretary. This has also improved since 2012, though less so in the "noble" committees.

[Table 2 about here]

Moving onto our core expectations, we find that expertise is a powerful predictor of committee membership. Having relevant expertise in the committee's themes increases the odds of serving on that committee as much as fourfold. We also see that expertise relevant to SFC is a negative predictor of membership of the other committees, indicating that membership of SFC is strongly related to expertise. Likewise, in our interviews, numerous deputies described the need for specialization within their parliamentary work, usually linked to prior expertise. This expertise was cited as influencing committee allocations both for deputies and selectors.<sup>13</sup> Gender gaps in expertise are considered further below.

Regarding seniority, having a national party role has little impact for any committee except Laws. Nor is there a statistically significant gender gap; 38% of men have held a party

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix for data sources.

<sup>13</sup> Deputies cited prior knowledge as a key reason for joining a committee. Deputies not on the committee pertaining to their expertise, such as latecomers or members of small parties with few committee places to distribute, expressed disappointment. They sometimes attended their preferred committee regardless (non-members may attend but not vote), and sometimes temporarily switched committees to use their expertise on a particular policy.

spokesperson role compared to 35% of women. The gender gap for former ministers was also relatively modest; nine women deputies (8.5%) were former ministers, compared to 51 men (10.9%). Being a former minister is a negative predictor of membership of each committee, indicating that former ministers are mostly found in SFC; binomial models for each individual committee confirm this.<sup>14</sup> This further suggests that SFC is not just a “dumping ground,” as we would expect former ministers to sit on their committee of choice. However, SFC does have a concentration of recently elected legislators, with Foreign carrying the biggest longevity premium.<sup>15</sup> Of the 146 deputies first elected in 2007, 65 sat on SFC and 40 on E&E, compared to only 2 on Foreign. In contrast, nearly 80% of long-serving deputies were in “noble” committees. This is also gendered; by their third term, 58% of men but only 37.1% of women were in “noble” committees. Finally, 13.6% of male deputies also held major local roles, compared to 4.7% of women, a highly significant gender gap. However, this was a significant predictor only for Laws, suggesting that any seniority gains might be counterbalanced by a reduced presence in parliament.

Our constituency controls show limited impact for seat safety and urban/rural effects, although representing a military district did strongly increase the likelihood of serving on Defense. As a slightly higher proportion of women than men represented military constituencies, this cannot explain the gender gap on Defense.

We use three different measures to analyze gender stereotyping. First, we consider whether any sex effects persist after controlling for all other explanations. Second, we use additional data analysis to explore any evidence of gender stereotyping. Third, our interview data provides more nuanced explanations.

## **Sex effects**

In Table 2, we see no significant sex effect for E&E, Laws, and Foreign after controlling for other variables, although women are less likely to sit on these committees. Women are over three times less likely than men to sit on Defense rather than SFC, and over five times less likely to sit on Finance, both significant results. These findings indicate that path dependence is insufficient to explain gendered committee allocations; there are additional effects driving women away from Defense and Finance. However, it is not clear from this data whether these effects stem from discrimination or personal preferences. Our next two measures illuminate the origins of this sex gap.

## **Gender discrimination in allocations?**

Ways to test for discrimination include comparing legislators’ committee requests with their allocations (Carroll 2008; Frisch and Kelly 2006), and comparing survey data of pre-election preferences with post-election allocations (Bækgaard and Kjaer 2012). These data are not available for France, and we have noted that legislators’ self-declared preferences may be unreliable. Hence, we develop several alternative measures to test for discrimination.

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<sup>14</sup> Models available on request.

<sup>15</sup> We tested previous terms, along with the military, seat safety, expertise, and urban variables, for interaction effects with sex. Likelihood ratio tests showed all interactions were insignificant.

Male dominance of committee executive roles indicates discrimination that might also be reflected in committee allocations. Furthermore, if women are more dissatisfied with their initial allocation, we would expect a greater proportion of women to switch committees, resulting in a more even gender distribution by the end of the legislature.<sup>16</sup>

We found that women did indeed change committees more often than men (28.9% compared to 21.3%). Women shifted towards Finance, Defense, and Foreign (but also Social and Culture), and away from Laws and Environment. We reran our models to analyze the revised committee membership at the end of the legislature (March 2012). As our focus is on voluntary changes in committee membership, we excluded deputies who had not served a full term. Our results in table 3 also illuminate interesting patterns following the splitting of SFC and E&E into four committees. Social is the reference category, as it then had the highest female membership.

[Table 3 about here]

Table 3 identifies fewer significant relationships than table 2, especially for seniority and constituency effects, although its overall explanatory power increases.<sup>17</sup> The strong significance for social expertise in every analysis confirms that membership of Social is driven by prior expertise. Culture, the other feminized committee, also has a strong expertise effect. Expertise now also matters for Finance, suggesting more meritocracy in this committee's membership. There is a lingering sex effect that is actually stronger in 2012 than 2007, although the gender gaps reduced following their peak in 2009 when the committees were split from six into eight.

The relative importance of expertise implies that deputies reach the committees where they best fit. However, it should be noted that expertise itself may result from discriminatory gender stereotyping. Table 4 breaks down expertise into knowledge and experience variables, using our definitions above, and reveals that there are no significant knowledge gaps in any area. Yet, for SFC and its derivatives, there are large and highly significant gaps in political experience, with women more than twice as likely as men to have experience in these areas. This suggests that stereotypical portfolio allocation occurs earlier in women's careers that has a knock-on effect for committee allocations. For Finance, women actually have more knowledge than men, though slightly less experience. Hence the absence of women from a technocratic committee cannot be explained by lack of expertise. Furthermore, 21.9% of all deputies with knowledge of Finance are women, a proportion very similar to that for Culture (22.2%). The gap widens significantly for political experience (17.4% to 39.3%) and even more for membership of the respective committees (8.2% to 40% in 2009).

[Table 4 about here]

Gaps also emerge for Defense and Foreign, where both sexes have almost identical knowledge but men have far more experience. Matters relating to diplomacy and armed forces are still seen as belonging to men. For all other categories, there are no large or significant gender gaps.

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<sup>16</sup> Deputies can only switch into another committee when a seat on that committee is vacated; some interviewees found this process more obstructive than others. We contend that successfully navigating this process is more likely if the deputy was originally misallocated.

<sup>17</sup> The variable for local executive office was not significant for any committee and did not increase the explanatory power of the model so was excluded.

Table 4 provides clear evidence both of path dependence and discrimination. Rather than stemming from knowledge (reflecting deputies' personal choices), gender gaps stem from political experience (indicating discriminatory gender stereotyping earlier in political careers). These gaps are reproduced and sometimes exacerbated in committee allocations, indicating that stereotyping is a multi-step process leading to significant imbalances on committees.

Our final statistical test of gender stereotyping considers committee allocations of deputies arriving after August 2007. Although it is unsurprising that latecomers went mostly to the *poubelles*, there is a striking, highly significant gender gap that indicates stereotyping: Nearly a third of women went to Culture compared to barely 10% of men, and more than one fourth of men went to Environment while no woman did.

## **The embedding of gendered norms**

We complement the statistical analysis with interview data to deepen understanding of gender stereotyping. We illustrate how gendered norms are deeply embedded both in the decision-making process of individual legislators and in the wider environment that shapes allocations.

Although some deputies fervently rejected gender stereotyping and advocated involving both sexes in all policy areas, evidence of stereotyping arose throughout our interviews. This included experience of stereotypical placements; internalized associations of particular policy areas with a particular sex; and perceived differences in agentic and communal approaches.

Some right-wing female deputies spoke of being allocated to feminized committees despite their interests and/or qualifications lying elsewhere. For example, one had professional, educational, and political experience of finance and requested Finance, only to be given SFC. She declared, "it's true, women are automatically allocated to SFC... it's a shame... it's frustrating." She suggested maybe it was a question of seniority, but in her second term, she is stuck in Culture. Another transferred from SFC to Defense, saying she started out in SFC "by default." A third described how she lobbied hard to get onto E&E to avoid SFC. Hence, our qualitative evidence confirms that at least part of the significant sex differences revealed in our statistical model stem from discriminatory assignments.

Most of our interviewees internalized and accepted the cultural norms underpinning assignments. Many seemed satisfied with their allocation. Where they did not sit on their preferred committee they proactively sought reassignment, or accepted the outcome given their junior status or shortage of places within their party. Some interviewees believed decisions were based on a seniority hierarchy, even when our quantitative data suggested otherwise. For example, a right-wing deputy attributed her place on Foreign to her longevity in parliament. Another claimed "[Finance] is the most prestigious, the most coveted, so it's reserved for former ministers, for deputies who've already been here a long time...so it's harder to get in" (a left-wing male deputy concurred). Yet sex was actually a much more powerful predictor of membership of Finance than seniority. Consequently, the seniority effects we did find may stem partly from self-exclusion, whereby junior deputies (a category including most women) do not apply for prestigious committees on the assumption that they won't get in. Supply may be a function of perceptions of demand.

Deputies also internalized the gender norms underpinning committee assignments.

Many interviewees identified particular policies with men or women. “Women’s” areas belonged in the social realm, including children, family, education, women’s rights, health, reproduction, poverty, culture, and senior citizens. “Men’s” domains included defense, war, economy, finance, foreign affairs, science, business, and law. When asked whether domains were gendered, deputies replied that women were particularly motivated on certain issues, or were pigeonholed into these areas. Meanwhile, “masculine” areas were frequently discussed with reference to the male domination of committees on these issues. Hence, the absence of women from certain committees is a vicious circle, as both sexes more easily envisage men sitting on these committees. This may lead to bias against women by party selectors, and self-exclusion by women who go to the feminized committees “by default.”

Finally, male deputies were perceived to be more agentic, and women more communal. One left-wing man claimed, “being a deputy is just a step towards a more ambitious goal,” adding that this was more true for men, with women more devoted to serving their constituents. A left-wing woman said men were more focused than women on career progression, while another declared that her work helping voters was “not glamorous but it’s more useful” (cf Green 2011). A right-wing woman argued that women focused more on others and the greater good, while men focused more on their careers. These claims came from both sexes and four different parties spanning the political spectrum. Overall, women were perceived to focus on policies that they considered useful and important, with men favoring committees bestowing prestige, power, and career advancement. While these may merely be gendered assumptions, they can help shape reality. If women (are expected to) eschew career progression in favor of a communal approach to representation, they risk foregoing influence and prestige. Yet, the female-dominated committees have big budgets and major impact on constituents’ lives. Their low status reflects gendered priorities rather than their true importance. If committees were ranked by the issues voters considered most important, Social would be second after Finance (IPSOS 2014). A more gender-balanced legislature might make places on “feminized” committees more coveted.

There is already some evidence of this when contrasting French parties of the left and right. Left-wing parties typically “own” social issues (Budge 1987). Hence, left-wing deputies of both sexes competed for spaces on SFC, with demand exceeding supply. One wanted to sit on SFC due to her nursing background, but found herself on E&E. She claimed “it wasn’t possible to change because there were no places on SFC; the people there are those ... with expertise in the area who’ve been there a long time and fight hard to keep their places.” Another said he preferred SFC but too many people from his party wanted to sit there so he went to Laws, where places were available. When SFC split in two, another deputy could not get her choice of Social as it was over-subscribed.

In contrast, no such pattern was evident on the right. One male deputy obtained a place on SFC because “there’s no competition because there’s lots of work and it isn’t prestigious like Finance.” A female latecomer was reluctantly placed in SFC because it was the only place available. The “shortage of applicants” for SFC was evoked by another woman. These qualitative findings are confirmed by binomial logistic regression analysis split by parties of the

left and right.<sup>18</sup> Sex was not significant for predicting left-wing membership of SFC, but was highly significant for the right. The left were more likely to dump women in E&E, whereas right-wing women were more concentrated in SFC. There was also a partisan divide for Finance, which is particularly coveted by opposition parties as the only committee chaired by the opposition. A huge gender gap emerged on the left, with only one woman member out of 29. This partly stems from multiple small parties on the left (compared to one large party of the right) each sending its most senior member(s) to Finance rather than female newcomers. Seniority was highly significant on the left, but not the right. Clearly, the desirability of committees is affected both by partisanship and gendered norms, with women often ending up where men do not wish to be.

## Conclusion

We contend that legislative committee membership needs to be situated within a wider, worrying trend of subtle discrimination against women throughout the political process. The expertise that legislators accrue throughout their careers does influence their roles in parliament. Hence, the evidence of earlier gender discrimination, through stereotypical portfolio allocations within local politics and political parties, is important. Even if there were no discrimination in committee allocations, the stereotyping earlier in deputies' careers would produce gender gaps on committees. We show that this stereotyping is amplified within parliament, with small gaps in knowledge translating into larger gaps in experience and even larger gaps in committee allocations.

The evidence regarding seniority was more mixed. Veteran legislators were more likely to get onto the "noble" committees, while neophytes usually began in the "poubelles," though this was truer for women than men. Former ministers congregated in SFC; this, alongside the high level of expertise within this committee, indicates that it was a coveted choice, at least for left-wing deputies. Holding a national party role or local executive office made little difference to committee allocation. As the growing numbers of women entering parliament become more senior, we might expect more of them in prestigious committees.

We found both quantitative and qualitative evidence of gender stereotyping. Previous studies juxtaposed discriminatory practices by others, and gendered preferences by legislators themselves. We argue that both are mutually reinforcing and speak to a wider culture of gendered norms. Men and women both internalize notions of gender-appropriate topics and behavior, with women expected to focus more on communal themes, while men are freer to pursue ambition, self-interest, and prestige. When women try to resist these norms, they often still find themselves pigeonholed. These norms pervaded the reflections of our interviewees; they are deeply ingrained not only in parliament but also in local and party politics, and patriarchal society more broadly.

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<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately we cannot test for partisanship in the multinomial analysis, as an interaction of sex and partisanship creates too little variability in the X values for committees with few female members. Binomial regression results focusing on individual committee memberships should be interpreted cautiously due to the low *n* for left-wing parties so are not displayed, but are available on request.

Although our study is limited to a single country and specific time period, it confirms a broader trend of power structures within legislatures shaped by informal institutions (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). Legislators can gain power through longevity, internal party hierarchies, and holding additional offices, but none of these guarantees a coveted committee allocation. Persistence, strategic choices, and networking can all be more valuable than traditional markers of seniority. Knowing how to navigate the process effectively made a big difference to the sense of efficacy expressed by our interviewees. Yet, several female interviewees said it took them years to decode the unwritten rules of the game (cf. Bjarnegård 2013; Franceschet 2011; Kenny 2014). Women's exclusion from the informal mentoring within male networks leaves them disadvantaged, but there are too few senior women to mentor new female deputies. Hence, men compound the gendered advantages accrued throughout their careers, leading to favorable committee allocations.

Gendered committee allocations cannot be explained only by looking at the actors directly involved. Rather, they are symptomatic of much wider processes pushing men and women in different directions. More broadly, gender gaps within legislatures cannot be isolated to a specific causal mechanism but are inherent in both the structures and norms of politics. We demonstrate how the entire political trajectory of deputies is shaped by gender. Women are pigeonholed into "feminized" areas in local and party politics. They hold fewer positions of local power and occupy more marginal seats. They take longer to reach parliament, leaving them less time to achieve seniority. They have fewer mentors. They are subjected to stereotypes regarding both their policy orientations and their supposedly communal, self-sacrificial approach to representation. These gendered norms run so deep that they are internalized by deputies of both sexes and all parties. Consequently, committee allocations are almost a *fait accompli*, shaped by all that came before.

Our case study has wider repercussions for studies of committee allocations, and gendered power more broadly. We have illustrated how context and path dependence inform and structure "choices," making it difficult to break deeply ingrained gender hierarchies. There are two severe consequences. First, gender imbalances within committees marginalize women's voices within key arenas of policy-making. Second, the problems we identify reach the very summit of politics. France is one of many countries never to have had a female president, and its only female prime minister served an unusually short term decades ago. Men lead both chambers of parliament and the two largest parties. Ministerial portfolios also follow gender stereotypes, with women concentrated in "soft" portfolios and men holding most of the powerful ministries (Little 2012). These phenomena are echoed around the world (Jalalzai 2013; Krook and O'Brien 2012). Small differences throughout a political career become magnified in the higher echelons of politics.

Given the multiple, mutually reinforcing forms of gender discrimination that women encounter throughout their careers, increasing the number of women in politics is necessary but insufficient. Women also need equal recognition, with their talents and agency accorded the same respect as men. Women cannot simply be pigeonholed in roles seen as "complementary" to men (Sénac 2015). Political careers are a long pipeline, and we have identified many small cracks rather than a single big fracture in the pipe. Ensuring that women enjoy parity not only of presence but also participation (Fraser 2005) requires reinforcing the pipeline from beginning to



end. Until women receive the same opportunities as men throughout their careers, they risk marginalization at the summit of power.

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Table 1: Women in Parliamentary Committees 1997-2012

Year	Level	Finance	Defense	Foreign	Laws	Economy	Environment	Culture	Social
1997	Exec	0/8	1/7	1/7	2/7 <sup>1</sup>		0/9		1/8
	Members	3/59	1/59	7/63	7/61		10/128		20/132
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>		<b>7.3%</b>		<b>15%</b>
	<b>Over/Under</b>	<b>-6.4</b>	<b>-7.9</b>	<b>+0.5</b>	<b>+0.9</b>		<b>-3.6</b>		<b>+4.1</b>
2002	Exec	0/8	0/7	0/7	0/7		1/9		2/9
	Members	3/62	4/62	5/64	9/65		14/135		38/134
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>		<b>10.3%</b>		<b>28%</b>
	<b>Over/Under</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>-6.5</b>	<b>-5.3</b>	<b>+0.2</b>		<b>-2</b>		<b>+15.7</b>
2007	Exec	0/8	0/7	2/7	0/7		2/9		1/9
	Members	4/65	7/63	7/66	9/64		25/133		48/135
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>		<b>19%</b>		<b>34%</b>
	<b>Over/Under</b>	<b>-13</b>	<b>-8.5</b>	<b>-6.2</b>	<b>-5.8</b>		<b>+0.5</b>		<b>+15.5</b>
2009	Exec	0/10	1/9	2/11	0/10	2/9	3/9	5/9 <sup>1</sup>	2/9
	Members	6/63	6/61	8/62	9/63	10/61	9/63	23/61	20/64
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>30.1%</b>
	<b>Over/Under</b>	<b>-10.3</b>	<b>-8.5</b>	<b>-4.8</b>	<b>-6.2</b>	<b>-1.4</b>	<b>-2.4</b>	<b>+21.5</b>	<b>+11.6</b>
2012 (Mar)	Exec	0/10	1/9	1/8	0/8	2/8	2/6	3/8 <sup>1</sup>	2/9
	Members	9/63	7/60	10/63	8/63	12/63	8/61	19/57	24/63
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>19.7%</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>33.8%</b>	<b>36.1%</b>
	<b>Over/Under<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>-6.8</b>	<b>-7.5</b>	<b>-3.6</b>	<b>-7.8</b>	<b>+0.6</b>	<b>-4.2</b>	<b>+14.7</b>	<b>+17</b>
2012 (Aug)	Exec	2/10 <sup>3</sup>	2/9 <sup>1</sup>	3/9 <sup>1</sup>	2/9	3/9	1/9	6/9	4/9 <sup>1</sup>
	Members	10/62	8/55	8/60	15/64	18/61	16/64	25/61	27/64
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>15.6%</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>23.3%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>23.3%</b>	<b>44.3%</b>	<b>42.5%</b>
	<b>Over/Under</b>	<b>-9.8</b>	<b>-10.9</b>	<b>-10.6</b>	<b>-3.2</b>	<b>+3.5</b>	<b>-3.2</b>	<b>+17.8</b>	<b>+16</b>

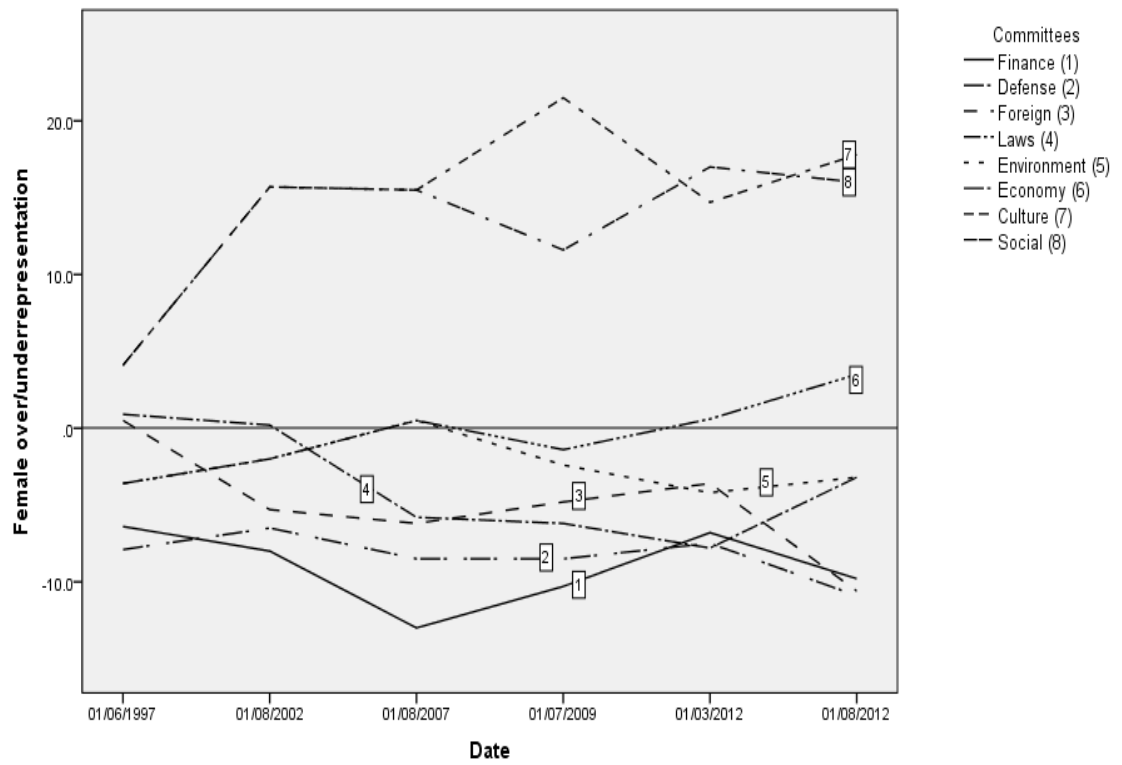
Over/Under = the percentage point gap between women's proportion on the committee and their proportion of the assembly as a whole. A positive score indicates overrepresentation on the committee; a negative score indicates underrepresentation. Exec = President, Vice-Presidents and Secretaries.

<sup>1</sup> Includes female committee president

<sup>2</sup> Based on 19.1% women in the National Assembly at the time

<sup>3</sup> Includes the (male) spokesperson for the committee (only Finance has this role)

Figure 1: Women's over/underrepresentation on different committees 1997-2012



**Table 2: Multinomial model of Committee Membership, August 2007**

	E&E	Laws	Defense	Foreign	Finance
Sex**	0.771 (0.305)	0.427 (0.461)	0.298 (0.492)*	0.567 (0.462)	0.171 (0.573)**
Expertise†	1.593 (0.165)**	3.262 (0.247)**	4.422 (0.614)*	3.677 (0.475)**	1.609 (0.286)
SFC Expertise**	0.682 (0.152)*	0.612 (0.205)*	0.587 (0.199)**	0.744 (0.200)	0.529 (0.205)**
National party role	0.975 (0.316)	2.267 (0.372)*	0.747 (0.394)	0.936 (0.399)	1.389 (0.371)
Former minister**	0.142 (0.626)**	0.167 (0.647)**	0.270 (0.712)	0.509 (0.578)	0.296 (0.624)
Terms in parliament**	1.315 (0.103)**	1.409 (0.120)**	1.631 (0.113)**	2.024 (0.111)**	1.553 (0.113)**
Local executive office	1.388 (0.491)	3.176 (0.503)*	1.576 (0.568)	1.359 (0.553)	1.912 (0.528)
Urban/rural*	1.436 (0.152)*	0.936 (0.184)	1.414 (0.195)	1.091 (0.185)	1.444 (0.193)
Safety of seat	0.980 (0.011)	0.981 (0.013)	0.981 (0.012)	0.992 (0.012)	0.966 (0.013)**
Military base*	1.113 (0.332)	2.035 (0.409)	2.887 (0.372)**	2.681 (0.400)*	2.426 (0.388)*

N = 569. SFC is the reference category. Model chi-square 316.21\*\*. Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> 0.426 (Cox and Snell), 0.440 (Nagelkerke). The model includes six “expertise” variables (one for each committee); data is only shown for expertise relevant to the committee in question (“expertise”) and to the reference category (“SFC expertise”). Significance scores in the first column relate to overall significance within the model, based on likelihood ratio tests; in the remaining columns they identify significant relationships for each specific committee.

†All “expertise” variables were significant at  $p < 0.05$  in the overall model; most were significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ . Values are odds ratios. Standard errors in parentheses.

**Table 3: Predictors of Committee Membership, March 2012**

	Culture <sup>1</sup>	Environment	Economy	Laws	Defense	Foreign	Finance
Sex**	0.484 (0.462)	0.304 (0.499)*	0.396 (0.477)	0.176 (0.550)**	0.174 (0.581)**	0.496 (0.493)	0.188 (0.544)**
Expertise <sup>2</sup>	2.551 (0.297)**	1.124 (0.416)	1.596 (0.259)	2.183 (0.307)*	5.758 (0.938)	2.628 (0.633)	2.118 (0.374)*
Social affairs expertise**	0.440 (0.260)**	0.254 (0.308)**	0.334 (0.285)**	0.420 (0.280)**	0.494 (0.248)**	0.293 (0.289)**	0.325 (0.284)**
National party role*	0.490 (0.508)	0.708 (0.500)	0.993 (0.472)	1.721 (0.469)	1.304 (0.472)	0.970 (0.478)	1.644 (0.464)
Former minister	1.696 (0.847)	0.987 (1.015)	0.627 (0.922)	0.606 (0.805)	2.210 (0.789)	1.547 (0.767)	0.681 (0.848)
Terms in parliament**	0.919 (0.154)	0.918 (0.155)	0.955 (0.148)	0.977 (0.145)	1.200 (0.136)	1.472 (0.133)**	1.163 (0.139)
Urban/rural**	0.657 (0.227)	0.954 (0.234)	1.397 (0.235)	0.783 (0.226)	1.291 (0.234)	0.634 (0.227)	1.405 (0.239)
Safety of seat	0.985 (0.016)	0.963 (0.017)*	0.980 (0.016)	0.994 (0.016)	0.992 (0.015)	0.957 (0.015)	0.958 (0.017)**
Military base <sup>3</sup>	0.846 (0.531)	0.753 (0.541)	1.427 (0.484)	1.185 (0.518)	1.844 (0.483)	0.704 (0.491)	1.697 (0.491)

N = 514. Social Affairs is the reference category. Model chi-square 349.30\*\*. Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> 0.493 (Cox and Snell), 0.501 (Nagelkerke). The model includes eight “expertise” variables (one for each committee); data is only shown for expertise relevant to the committee in question (“expertise”) and to the reference category (“social affairs expertise”). Significance scores in the first column relate to overall significance within the model, based on likelihood ratio tests; in the remaining columns they identify significant relationships for each specific committee.

<sup>2</sup>In the overall model, expertise was significant at p<0.01 for Economy, Finance and Laws, at p<0.05 for Culture and Defense, and was not significant for Environment and Foreign.

<sup>3</sup> Significant changes to the military took place in 2010-12, with numerous bases being closed, merged, or relocated. We expect the impact of these changes to be lagged and unpredictable, so these findings are to be interpreted with caution.

\*p≤0.05, \*\*=p≤0.01. Values are odds ratios. Standard errors in parentheses.



**Table 4: Expertise broken down into knowledge and experience**

		Men	Women
SCA 2007	Knowledge	0.708 (52.9%)	0.802 (60.4%)
	Experience	0.204** (18.7%**) **	0.509** (41.5%**)
E&E 2007	Knowledge	0.685 (56.5%)	0.571 (51.9%)
	Experience	0.287 (25.7%)	0.293 (26.4%)
Foreign 2007	Knowledge	0.080 (14.2%)	0.076 (14.2%)
	Experience	0.098 (9.1%)	0.038 (3.8%)
Defense 2007	Knowledge	0.076 (13.4%)	0.071 (13.2%)
	Experience	0.038 (3.6%)	0.019 (1.9%)
Finance 2007	Knowledge	0.193 (24.4%)	0.241 (26.4%)
	Experience	0.081 (6.8%)	0.076 (7.5%)
Laws 2007	Knowledge	0.467 (36.9%)	0.330 (30.2%)
	Experience	0.062 (5.1%)	0.076 (6.6%)
Social 2012	Knowledge	0.338 (28.2%)	0.428 (34.9%)
	Experience	0.116 (10.6%**)	0.224 (25.5%**)
Culture 2012	Knowledge	0.427 (40.1%)	0.487 (42.5%)
	Experience	0.096** (10.0%**)	0.237** (25.5%**)
Environment 2012	Knowledge	0.191 (22.9%)	0.197 (22.6%)
	Experience	0.149 (13.8%)	0.145 (13.2%)
Economy 2012	Knowledge	0.601 (51.0%)	0.520 (45.3%)
	Experience	0.155 (14.4%)	0.145 (17.0%)

Values are mean scores (out of a scale from 0 to 2); significance measured using ANOVA. Values in brackets are percentages of men and women possessing any expertise in the given domain; significance measured using chi-square tests. \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\*= $p \leq 0.01$

# Appendix

## Sources of Data

Data on the composition of committees and their executives, along with some biographical data on deputies, is gathered from the French parliamentary website ([www.assemblee-nationale.fr](http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr)). Additional data on deputies (their education, prior profession, political and partisan experience) was gathered through a variety of sources including deputies' personal websites, the French Who's Who guide, newspaper reports, official party websites, local government websites, and online biographies with acceptable degrees of reliability. Using multiple sources helped us triangulate the data while unearthing content not available from official parliamentary webpages.

We used the best available data; however, it was not possible to obtain comprehensive data for all deputies. Where data on prior roles within local politics and political parties was not available we assumed that the deputy had no such role, as prior roles significant enough to influence subsequent political trajectories should be traceable using our sources. Though plausible, we cannot be certain that this assumption is accurate. While the risk of missing data weakens the assumptions that we can make for these variables, the results should not be systematically biased. District-level data was gathered using the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies ([www.insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr)), local government websites, [www.airmil.org](http://www.airmil.org), and the Ministry of Defense website. We did not have data for non-service personnel in military-related jobs, such as weapons manufacture.

## Notes