It Takes More than a Candidate:
The Invincible Gender Gap in Political Ambition

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Note: This paper is a working draft of a research note (or letter) that we plan to submit in the coming weeks. The submission guidelines for this type of research restrict content to no more than 4,500 words. The point of these papers is to provide an empirical update, not to advance a new theory. To remain anonymous for the purposes of submission, we refer to our earlier work in the third person.

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In 2001, when Lawless and Fox uncovered a large gender gap in political ambition among potential candidates, their research highlighted just how far the U.S. was from any semblance of gender parity in electoral politics.[1] To be sure, political scientists and activists had widely decried the fact that as we entered the 21st century, no woman had ever seriously contended for the presidency and women occupied just 13% of seats in Congress.[2] But change was on the horizon. Indeed, most scholarly accounts coalesced around the premise that the best way to reduce gender disparities in elective office was to increase women's presence in the professions that tend to precede political careers (e.g., Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994). Those increases were well underway, and study after study revealed that when women ran for office, they fared at least as well as men (e.g., Burrell 1996). As women continued to move toward parity in professions like business and law, their candidacies would follow.

Findings from Lawless and Fox's Citizen Political Ambition Study, however, suggested otherwise. Women and men who worked in the pipeline professions to politics – law, business, education, and politics – were not equally interested in running for office. Even though these potential candidates held the same credentials and operated in similar professional spheres, women were substantially less likely than men ever to have considered running for office or to express any interest in running at some point in the future. The findings were so stark that dozens of scholarly inquiries aimed to assess and contextualize the ambition gap. Some focused on the gendered traits and behaviors contributing to women's election aversion (e.g., Kanthak and Woon 2015). Others focused on structural and partisan dynamics (e.g., Crowder-Meyer and Lauderdale 2014). Still others

[1] See Fox and Lawless (2004) and Lawless and Fox (2005) for the results from the first wave of the Citizen Political Ambition Study.
[2] "History of Women in the U.S. Congress," Center for American Women and Politics. Accessed at: https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/levels-office/congress/history-women-us-congress (October 31, 2022).

experimented with interventions to identify factors that might increase women's interest in a candidacy (e.g., Karpowitz, Monson, and Preece 2017). Closing the gender gap in political ambition became more than a topic of scholarly intrigue. It also became a rallying cry for many political organizations seeking to increase women's numeric representation (Kreitzer and Osborn 2018).

Although U.S. political institutions remain far from gender-balanced – men occupy more than 70% of seats in Congress and more than 80% of state governorships – women's numeric representation has certainly improved in recent decades. Since 2001, women's presence in Congress has more than doubled. Several female presidential candidates have emerged. Hillary Clinton won the popular vote in the 2016 presidential election. Voters elected a female vice president in 2020. And women's political activism has been on the rise; look no further than to the Women's March and the *#MeToo* movement (e.g., Castel et al. 2020).

We argue in this research note, however, that despite the changing electoral context and composition of U.S. political institutions, women's full political inclusion remains a distant goal. Our extensive new study of potential candidates reveals that the gender gap in political ambition was just as large in 2021 as it was 20 years earlier. Remarkably, the roots of the gap remain virtually unchanged as well. A masculinized ethos continues to permeate the political system and contributes to gender differences in potential candidates' perceptions of entering the electoral arena. Women's numeric representation, therefore, can increase without closing the gender gap in political ambition – certainly welcome news to those who believe that U.S. political institutions should be more diverse. But our findings highlight the extent to which the idea of running for office is still a far more remote and removed endeavor for women than men. Given that a central criterion in evaluating the health of democracy is the degree to which citizens are willing to engage the political system, the seemingly invincible gender gap in political ambition continues to upend notions of political fairness and democratic legitimacy.

Establishing the Gender Gap in Political Ambition

The Citizen Political Ambition Study, which served as the basis for *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*, relied on a candidate eligibility pool approach to examine the role gender plays in potential candidates' decisions to run for office.[3] That is, Lawless and Fox, in both 2001 and 2011, compiled a national sample of equally credentialed women and men who worked in the four professions most common among state and federal officeholders.[4] To gauge political ambition, they asked potential candidates whether they ever considered running for office. This measure of nascent ambition includes people who have actually run for office, those who have seriously considered it, and those who have thought about it from time to time (see also Clifford, Kirkland, and Simas 2019; Dynes, Hassel, and Miles 2019).

Among a national sample of more than 3,500 equally credentialed potential candidates in 2001, a large gender gap in political ambition emerged: 59% of men had considered running for some elective position, compared to just 43% of women (see Figure 1). Interest varied across federal, state, and local positions, but the gender gap was significant across the board. Ten years later, the results were strikingly similar: the gender gap held steady at 16 percentage points.

New results – based on a 2021 survey we fielded through YouGov – reveal that little changed in 20 years.[5] The third set of bars in Figure 1 indicates that our national survey of well-matched women and men in the four eligibility pool professions saw a gender gap in political ambition virtually the same size as it was both 10 and 20 years earlier.[6]

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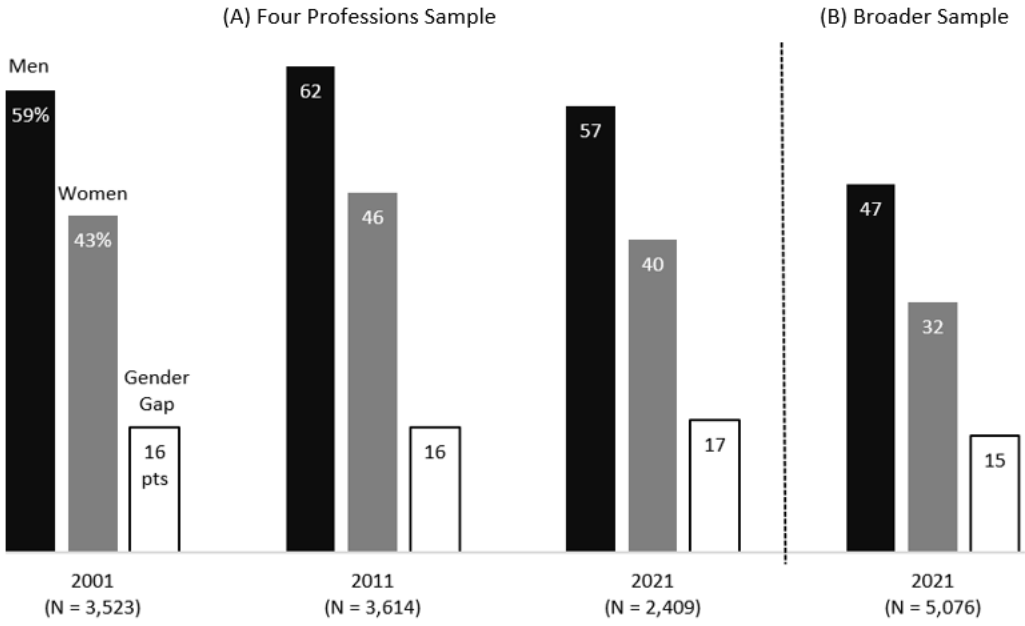
[3] See Lawless and Fox (2005) for a review of how scholars previously examined gender and political ambition.
[4] The women and men in the candidate eligibility pool were lawyers, business owners and executives, teachers, professors and school administrators, or held positions in government or political organizations.
[5] YouGov fielded the survey to a sample of potential candidates from November 18, 2021 – March 8, 2022. See Appendix A for a description of the sample and Appendix B for the portions of the survey instrument used in this research note. For a description of the 2001 and 2011 samples of potential candidates and the mail surveys on which their responses are based, see Lawless and Fox 2005; 2011.
[6] See Appendix Table A1 for demographic comparisons between the women and men in the sample, and Appendix Figure A1 for comparisons in women and men's political activism.

Figure 1. The Unchanging Gender Gap in Political Ambition among Potential Candidates



Notes: Bars represent the percentages of potential candidates who reported that they ever considered running for office, as well as the gender gap (in percentage points) at each point in time. Panel (A) includes women and men who work in law, business, education, and politics. Panel (B) supplements that sample in 2021 with 2,667 respondents who are college-educated and employed full-time, but do not hold the same positions as those in the Four Professions Sample. The gender gap is significant at $p < .05$ in all comparisons. Sources: Lawless and Fox 2005; 2011, and our 2021 YouGov survey of potential candidates.

Because there is now more diversity in careers preceding a political candidacy than there was two decades ago, we supplemented the sample with more than 2,600 potential candidates who are college-educated and work full-time, but do not hold the same positions as those in the "Four Professions Sample."[7] Not surprisingly, overall interest in running for office is somewhat lower among this broader sample (see Figure 1, Panel B). But the gender gap in political ambition remains roughly the same size.[8] The gender gap also withstands controls for basic demographic and political factors, such as political interest and participation, race, age, education, income, and party affiliation.[9]

[7] Nick Robinson, "Lawyers in Politics," *The Practice*. Accessed at: https://thepractice.law.harvard.edu/article/declining-dominance/ (September 28, 2022).
[8] Because the gender gaps are comparable across the "Four Professions" and "Broader" samples, we rely on the latter for the remainder of our analysis.
[9] See Appendix Table A2 for the regression analysis and Appendix C for variable description and coding.

All else equal, women are 15 percentage points less likely than men to have considered running for office (0.43 predicted probability, compared to 0.59; $p < .05$).

Importantly, the gender gap in political ambition persists across demographic groups. The comparisons presented in Table 1 reveal that women of all types are significantly less likely than men to consider running for office. Notably, the gender gap is roughly the same size across generations. Even among potential candidates under the age of 40, men are 18 percentage points more likely than women to have thought about a candidacy. The magnitude of the gap, however, does vary significantly across some categories. It is bigger for Republicans than Democrats, though the partisan difference results largely from lower ambition among Democratic men. In terms of race, significant gender gaps emerge in all categories, but White women are more likely than women of color to report interest in running for office.[10] This finding contributes to the growing body of scholarship examining intersectionality and electoral politics (e.g., Gershon and Monforti 2021; Silva and Skulley 2019). And the results suggest a double disadvantage for women of color in the candidate eligibility pool. Ultimately, though, in no demographic category have women and men achieved parity in political ambition.

Finally, it is important to note that the gender gap in political ambition is not merely a difference in what women and men believe considering a candidacy entails. The gap is substantial when we turn to actual steps that typically precede running for office. Whereas 30% of men reported taking at least one step – spoke to party leaders; discussed running with friends or family; discussed financial contributions with potential supporters; investigated how to get on the ballot; spoke to candidates about their experiences – only 18% of female potential candidates did so ($p < .05$). The same is true when we consider whether those in the sample ever ran for office (8% of men, compared to 4% of women; $p < .05$).

[10] This result emerges in the multivariate analysis as well. See Appendix Table A2.

Table 1. The Gender Gap in Political Ambition, by Demographic Group			
	Considered Running for Office		Gender Gap
	Women	*Men*	
Race			
White	36 %	52 %	16 pts
Black	22	34	12
Latino	26	44	18
Asian	15	21	6
Party Affiliation			
Democrat	34	47	13
Republican	32	51	19
Independent	22	41	19
Household Income			
Less than $70,000	24	42	18
$70,000 – $99,999	31	48	17
$100,000 - $149,999	36	49	13
$150,000 and above	39	51	12
Age			
Under 40	29	47	18
Ages 40 – 59	33	47	14
60 and over	33	48	15
Parental Status			
No children at home	32	46	14
Children at home	31	49	18
Marital Status			
Married	35	49	15
Not Married	27	44	17
N	**2,580**	**2,496**	**15 points**

Note: Entries represent the percentage of women and men within each demographic group who have considered running for office. The final column presents the size of the gender gap in political ambition in each demographic category. The gender gap is significant at $p < .05$ in every comparison.

The Enduring Roots of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition

The gender gap in political ambition has held steady over a period of extraordinary change in U.S. politics – changes that might lead many people to shy away from politics altogether, much less step forward as candidates. Indeed, between 2001 to 2021, the toxicity of the electoral environment

increased dramatically and party polarization among citizens and elites reached an all-time high. The amount of money pouring into national elections more than quadrupled, with a large chunk directed at a dizzying array of negative advertisements. The ubiquity of social media facilitated an increase in the spread of misinformation and a near total loss of privacy for candidates. And with affective polarization on the rise, ad hominin and personal attacks became a routine part of the day-to-day atmosphere of a political campaign. In fact, more than 40% of the potential candidates we surveyed believe that even local elections are nasty affairs. Thirty percent think that local elected officials regularly receive death threats.

Yet these trends in the political sphere do not account for the gender gap in political ambition. The third set of bars in Figure 1, after all, indicates that overall interest in running for office has been generally steady – for both men and women – since 2001. Moreover, women's increasing numbers in Congress and state legislatures across the country coincide with the increase in political toxicity. That's not to imply that women's presence caused these changes, of course. But the increasingly negative nature of the political environment certainly didn't disproportionately deter them from launching candidacies either.

The gender gap in political ambition, therefore, transcends political climate. Rather, its origins have been strongly linked to gendered political socialization (e.g., Constantini 1990; Sapiro 1982). In the context of U.S. politics, this term refers to the perpetuation of traditional gender norms that orient people to be more likely – consciously or subconsciously – to view men as political leaders. In their studies of potential candidates, Lawless and Fox investigated myriad ways that gendered political socialization can influence the gender gap in political ambition, including family upbringing, school experiences, and household and parental responsibilities. They ultimately pinpoint two particularly powerful manifestations – one internal and one external. Twenty years later, we find these two factors to be just as influential on political ambition.

Internal Assessments: Self-Perceived Qualifications to Run for Office

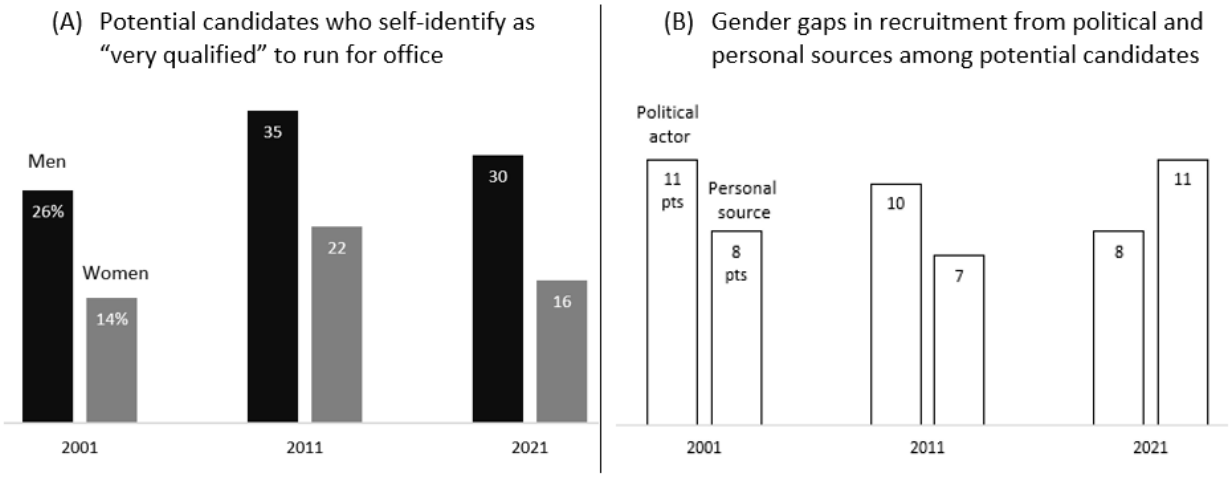
Gendered political socialization often leads men to conclude that they are well-suited for politics and women to believe that they do not possess, or will be penalized for exhibiting, the qualities the electoral arena demands of its candidates (Guillen 2018). Whereas men are encouraged to be forceful, assertive, and self-promoting, cultural attitudes toward women as political leaders still today often leave an imprint suggesting to women that it is inappropriate to possess these characteristics**.** When women do participate in historically masculine environments, they often come to believe they must be better than men to succeed (e.g., Bauer 2020).

Indeed, among potential candidates with nearly identical professional profiles, political experiences, and relevant credentials, women and men do not reflect on their qualifications to run for office in the same way. When asked to assess whether they are qualified to run, men are almost twice as likely as women to consider themselves "very qualified" (30% compared to 16%; $p < .05$). As Panel (A) in Figure 2 makes clear, this gender gap was roughly the same size in 2021 as in both 2001 and 2011. At the other end of the continuum, women are more than twice as likely as men to self-assess as "not at all qualified" to run for office (30% versus 14%; $p < .05$).

These perceptual differences emerged not only in response to a broad question focused on overall qualifications. When asked about specific experiences and credentials, 72% of men in the sample believe they are very knowledgeable about public policy, while only 49% percent of women feel that way ($p < .05$). This is particularly important because women are 14 percentage points more likely than men to believe policy expertise is essential in a candidate. Men are also far more likely than women to believe they handle criticism well (60% of men, compared to 38% of women; $p < .05$). Again, this is highly relevant given that 71% of women think that being able to withstand scrutiny is an important quality in a candidate. The data also underscore gendered perceptions in that

women are 12 percentage points more likely than men to think that "someone like me would have a hard time running for office."

Figure 2. The Roots of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition: Internal and External Assessments



Notes: Panel (A) represents the gender differences in self-assessed qualifications and Panel (B) represents the gender gap in political recruitment at each point in time. Political actors include elected officials, party leaders, and non-elected activists. Personal sources include spouses/partners, family members, colleagues, and friends. See Figure 1 for source information.

Whether these perceptions reflect women underestimating their qualifications or men inflating theirs is an open question. For our purposes here, though, the differences are critical because self-assessed qualifications drive the gender gap in political ambition.[11] The average female potential candidate who doesn't think she is qualified is not very likely to consider running for office (predicted probability is 0.22). All else equal, that probability jumps to 0.41 if she thinks she's qualified and to 0.52 if she thinks she's "very qualified." Men are also more likely to express interest in running for office when they think they're qualified – the probability of considering a run jumps from 0.30 to 0.61 if they think they're "very qualified" – but they are far more likely than women to find themselves in that category in the first place.[12]

[11] See Appendix Table A2 for the complete regression analysis.
[12] Put somewhat differently, supplementing the baseline model to account for self-assessed qualifications reduces the magnitude of the gender gap from 16 to 9 percentage points, all else equal.

External Assessments: Encouragement to Run for Office

Most political institutions are dominated by men and ultimately embody an engrained ethos of masculinity. Even if men who occupy positions in these institutions no longer exhibit overt signs of bias against women, years of traditional conceptions about candidate quality, electability, and background persist (Bjarnegard and Kenny 2015). Political gatekeepers, as well as many everyday Americans, in other words, are more likely to think of men than women as future political leaders. Among potential candidates in 2001 and 2011, this ethos led to a substantial gender gap in encouragement for a candidacy from both political and personal sources (see Figure 2, Panel B).

Here, too, little changed over the course of 20 years. Turning first to recruitment from political actors – elected officials, party leaders, and political activists – women in the pool of potential candidates remain less likely than men to receive support to run for office. More specifically, whereas 11% of men were recruited to run for office by an elected official, just 7% of women were ($p < .05$). The gap is similar (11% compared to 6%) for party leaders ($p < .05$). Overall, in terms of support from at least one "political actor," women are 8 percentage points less likely than men to report receiving encouragement. From personal sources – the family members, spouses/partners, colleagues, and friends who know them best – the gender gap is even wider.

Potential candidates are far more likely to express interest in running for office when they receive support from those around them. All else equal, receiving the suggestion to run for office from a political source nearly doubles a woman's predicted likelihood of considering a candidacy (from 0.36 to 0.70). Encouragement from a personal source is just as powerful (the probability increases from 0.36 to 0.75). The combined effect nearly guarantees that a woman will consider running for office (0.93 predicted probability). The same is true for men; when a man reports both political and personal encouragement, his predicted probability of considering a candidacy is 0.95.

But as was the case for self-assessed qualifications, women are less likely than men to find themselves with the support that can bolster notions of a candidacy.

Conclusion

Political ambition has long been of interest to political scientists (e.g., Lasswell 1948; Schlesinger 1965). After all, a healthy, robust democracy in the United States depends on a substantial portion of the population's willingness to run for office. With more than 500,000 elective positions across the country, the government literally cannot function unless millions of citizens step forward as candidates. But political ambition is important beyond the mere operation of government. It's also a barometer of inclusivity and equality in the political system. On this dimension, our findings suggest that women's full inclusion in the American electoral process has not yet materialized.

A major explanation for the intractable nature of the gender gap in political ambition might be what we call a representation paradox. That is, the influx of women into high-level positions of political power may suggest a more inclusive political system. But potential candidates' perceptions of how high-profile female candidates are treated when they run may offset the positive effects. Although there is no evidence of systematic bias against female candidates – women win just as often as men, raise just as much money, and receive comparable news coverage (Hayes and Lawless 2016) – instances of sexism and discrimination against women in politics continue to occur. And these examples, especially when they involve presidential candidates, receive sustained attention from journalists, pundits, candidates, and voters. These episodes of bias likely reinforce for many female potential candidates the perception that women will face an inhospitable electoral environment, one in which they'd need to be more qualified and have thicker skin than men to succeed.

Reactions from potential candidates about some of the most prominent women in politics support the notion of a representation paradox. In 2011, roughly two-thirds of women in the candidate eligibility pool thought that Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin were subjected to sexist media coverage in their respective campaigns for president and vice president. More than 50% believed Palin faced bias from voters; a whopping 84% felt the same way about Clinton (Lawless and Fox 2011). On the heels of Clinton's loss to Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election, things looked no better to female potential candidates. When asked how women fare in the electoral process, only 23% thought women were just as likely as men to win their races. Large majorities believed that women have a harder time than men raising money, that women face sexist media coverage when they run for office, and that voters are biased against female candidates (Lawless and Fox 2017). The same remains true when we turn to the 2021 data. Among female potential candidates, 85% contend that women face more scrutiny and challenges than men when running for office. In fact, 64% of male potential candidates see it that way too, further reinforcing the broad perception that women have it much harder than men do when they run for office. To the degree that the candidacies of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, or Kamala Harris serve as a civic education project about women who run for office, they appear to reinforce, or perhaps exacerbate, women's doubts. Thus, for many well-qualified women, dismissing the idea of running for office is a rational response to a political system they perceive as rife with bias.

The representation paradox, incidentally, is not confined to older generations who lived through an explicitly sexist political system. When we break the sample of potential candidates into three cohorts – under 40, ages 40 to 60, and over 60 – perceptions of the political arena for women are very similar. In fact, those under 40 are actually more likely than women over 60 to agree strongly that "women face more scrutiny and challenges when they run for office than men do"

(36% of younger women, compared to 27% of women over 60; $p < .05$). They're also more likely to doubt that they have thick enough skin to endure a campaign (66% compared to 61%; $p < .05$).

Clearly, increasing women's numeric representation does not go hand in hand with closing the gender gap in political ambition. Even though political organizations and party gatekeepers have made progress in recruiting female candidates, the needle hasn't moved when it comes to ensuring that women in the candidate eligibility pool feel as comfortable and interested in seeking the reins of political power as men do. These results defy the broad expectation that as women's candidacies for high-level office become routine, more women – and especially younger generations – will see the political system as more inviting and open to them (e.g., Ladam, Harden, and Windett 2018; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007).

The persistent gender gap in ambition underscores the dominance of traditional gender socialization. Young women and men are now presented with professional possibilities and opportunities previous generations were not. Women in STEM programs have become commonplace. Women comprise the majority of law and medical school students. Women's entrance into and ascension in formerly male enclaves, such as the business world, have been underway for decades. Yet potential female candidates – many of whom have already achieved high levels of success in male-dominated fields – continue to undervalue their credentials and qualifications, receive less encouragement to run for office, and have trouble seeing themselves as candidates for elective office. Although the move toward gender parity in elective office that scholars from the 1980s and 1990s hoped for is (slowly) underway, the invincible gender gap in political ambition continues to impede full political equality and inclusion, with no end in sight.

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Appendix A: The Sample

YouGov fielded the 2021 survey of potential candidates from November 18, 2021 – March 8, 2022. They broke the sample into two parts. First, they compiled the "Four Profession Sample" portion of the candidate eligibility pool. This included interviews with 1,576 people who identified as lawyers, educators, or business professionals, as well as 500 politically active college-educated women and men. The frame for the politically active sample was representative of respondents in the 2020 Cooperative Election Study who engaged in at least four of the following activities in the last year: (1) attended local political meetings (such as school board or city council); (2) put up a political sign (such as a lawn sign or bumper sticker); (3) worked for a candidate or campaign; (4) attended a political protest, march, or demonstration; (5) contacted a public official; and (6) donated money to a candidate, campaign, or political organization. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on age, race, and education and evenly split on gender.

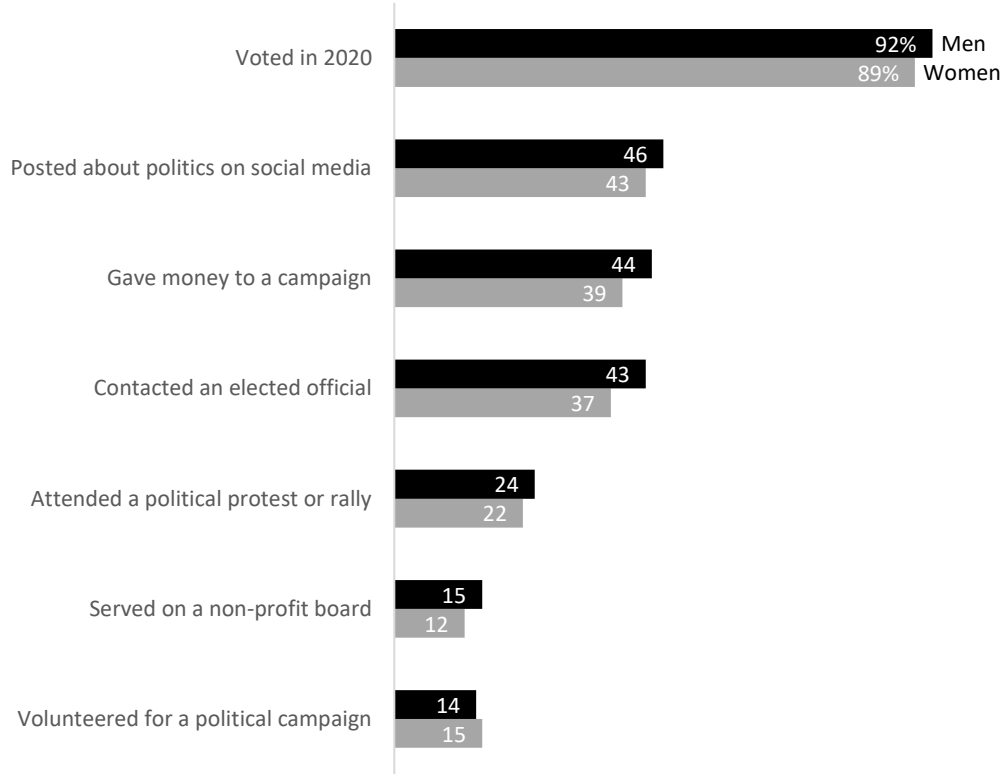
For the "Broader Sample," YouGov interviewed 3,417 full-time employed, college-educated respondents who were then matched down to a sample of 3,000 to produce the final dataset. The frame for this sample was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file).

In an effort to ensure that the "Four Professions Sample" matched the Lawless and Fox eligibility pool samples as closely as possible, we included on the survey – and fielded to all respondents – a question that asked respondents to identify their profession as either a (1) lawyer; (2) company executive or business owner; (3) teacher, principal, professor, or college administrator; (4) government or political party staff member; or (5) other. This allowed us to ensure that the law, business, educator, and political activist subsamples matched the specific roles included in the previous studies. It also allowed us to classify from the broader sample of college-educated

respondents people who work full-time in one of the four eligibility pool professions, but whom YouGov did not screen as such. The analysis presented in Figure 1 relies on respondents' self-identified profession (in other words, how they answered the profession question we included on the survey).

On key dimensions, the sample of potential candidates includes well-matched women and men. Turning first to political participation, Figure A1 presents the percentages of women and men who engaged in various political activities over the course of the last year.

Figure A1. Political Participation among Potential Candidates, by Sex



Note: Bars represent the percentages of potential candidates who reported that they engaged in each activity at some point in the last two years. Gender differences are significant at $p < .05$ for voting, donating money, contacting elected officials, and serving on a non-profit board. N = 2,580 for women and 2,496 for men.

Not only are the respondents very politically active relative to a general population sample, but men and women are also roughly equally likely to participate, as has been the case for potential

candidates dating back to 2001. The handful of statistically significant differences that emerge are not substantively meaningful. Table A1 indicates that the women and men also share similar demographic profiles with each other.

Table A1. Demographics of the Candidate Eligibility Pool

	Women	Men
Race		
White	63 % *	66 %
Black	14 *	10
Latino	13	11
Asian	7	8
Other	3	5
Party Affiliation		
Democrat (including leaners)	64 *	53
Independent	12 *	16
Republican (including leaners)	24 *	31
Household Income		
Less than $70,000	32 *	21
$70,000 – $99,999	24	22
$100,000 - $149,999	24 *	28
$150,000 and above	21 *	29
Profession		
Lawyer	11	12
Business Executive/Owner	9 *	15
Educator (teacher, professor, administrator)	22 *	18
Other	58	55
Education		
Bachelor's Degree	50	49
Post-Graduate Degree	50	51
Mean Age	45.5 * years	48.8 years
N	2,580	2,496

Notes: * gender gap is significant at $p < .05$.

On a few demographics – race, income, party affiliation, and age – we do see statistically significant gender differences. With the exception of income, these disparities are roughly the same magnitude as those among the potential candidates from 2001 and 2011 to whom the 2021 sample is being compared (see Lawless and Fox 2005; 2011). Moreover, we control for these demographic variables in our multivariate analyses.

Appendix B: Relevant Portions of the Survey Instrument

What is your profession?

- Lawyer
- Company Executive or Business Owner
- Teacher, Principal, Professor, or College Administrator
- Government or Political Party Staff Member
- Other

Have you done any of the following things in the past two years? (Check all that apply)

- Voted in a presidential election
- Attended a political rally or protest
- Contributed money to a campaign
- Wrote or posted a comment about politics on social media
- Contacted or interacted with an elected official
- Served on a non-profit board
- Volunteered on a political campaign

Have you ever thought about running for office?

- I have actually already run for elective office.
- Yes, I have seriously considered running for office.
- Yes, running for office has crossed my mind.
- No, I have not thought about running for office.

Have you ever taken any of these steps that tend to precede a campaign? (Check all that apply)

- Spoken to party leaders
- Discussed running with friends or family
- Discussed financial contributions with potential supporters
- Investigated how to get on the ballot
- Spoken to candidates about their experiences
- Attended a candidate training

For each pair, choose the statement that better describes you?

- Someone like me would have a hard time running for office.
- Someone like me would have a leg up running for office.

- I don't have thick enough skin to run for office.
- I am pretty unflappable when criticized.

- I don't know enough about public policy to run for office.
- I am very knowledgeable about some areas of public policy.

Have any of the following people ever suggested that you run? (Check anyone who has suggested it)

- A co-worker or business associate
- An elected official
- An official from a political party
- A spouse or partner
- A member of your family
- A non-elected political activist
- Someone from your church, synagogue, mosque, etc.

Overall, how qualified do you think you are to run for office?

- Very qualified
- Qualified
- Somewhat qualified
- Not at all qualified

What is your level of agreement with the following statements?

Answer options:
Strongly agree
Agree
Strongly disagree
Disagree

- Women face more scrutiny and challenges when they run for office than men do.
- Ordinary people would be better than most elected officials at solving the country's problems.

How important do you think the following characteristics and credentials are for political candidates?

Answer options:
Essential
Would be a plus
Not important

- Business experience
- Public policy expertise
- Law degree
- Public speaking experience
- Ability to withstand scrutiny

Demographics, provided by YouGov

Gender

- *Male*
- *Female*

Birth year

Race

- *White*
- *Black*
- *Hispanic*
- *Asian*
- *Middle Eastern*
- *Native American*
- *Two or more races*
- *Other*

Education

- *No High school*
- *High school graduate*
- *Some college*
- *2-year degree*
- *4-year degree*
- *Post-graduate degree*

Income

- *Less than $10,000*
- *$10,000 - $19,999*
- *$20,000 - $29,999*
- *$30,000 - $39,999*
- *$40,000 - $49,999*
- *$50,000 - $59,999*
- *$60,000 - $69,999*
- *$70,000 - $79,999*
- *$80,000 - $99,999*
- *$100,000 - $119,999*
- *$120,000 - $149,999*
- *$150,000 - $199,999*
- *$200,000 - $249,999*
- *$250,000 - $349,999*
- *$350,000 - $499,999*
- *$500,000 or more*

Marital Status

- *Married*
- *Separated*
- *Divorced*
- *Widowed*
- *Never married*
- *Domestic / civil partnership*

Do your children live with you? (for those with children)

- *Yes, I have children under the age of 18, and they live with me.*
- *No, I have children under the age of 18, but they don't live with me.*
- *No, my children are grown.*

Party Identification

- *Strong Democrat*
- *Not very strong Democrat*
- *Lean Democrat*
- *Independent*
- *Lean Republican*
- *Not very strong Republican*
- *Strong Republican*

Table A2. Potential Candidates' Interest in Running for Office

	Baseline Model	More Specified Model
Gender (female)	-.628 * (.070)	-.396 * (.081)
Education	.477 * (.071)	.197 * (.082)
Income	-.010 (.013)	-.047 * (.015)
Political efficacy	.119 * (.031)	.021 (.036)
Political participation	.463 * (.022)	.216 * (.026)
Democrat	-.045 (.106)	.120 (.121)
Republican	.235 * (.113)	.214 (.129)
Black	-.272 * (.116)	-.727 * (.137)
Latino	.016 (.109)	-.370 * (.127)
Political interest	.260 * (.055)	.151 * (.063)
Marital status (married)	.215 * (.082)	.253 * (.094)
Children under 18 at home	.054 (.080)	.093 (.092)
Birth year	.013 * (.003)	.017 * (.003)
Self-assessed qualifications		.434 * (044)
Recruited by political actor		1.446 * (.118)
Encouraged by personal source		1.666 * (.082)
Constant	-28.628 * (5.733)	-36.144 * (6.697)
Adjusted R^2	.260	.480
N	4,594	4,591

Notes: Entries represent logistic regression coefficients (and standard errors) predicting whether a respondent ever considered running for office. * $p < .05$.

Appendix C: Variable Description and Coding in the Multivariate Analysis

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
DEPENDENT VARIABLE				
Considered running for office	0, 1	0.39	0.49	Indicates whether respondent ever considered running for office (1) or not (0).
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES				
Gender	0, 1	0.51	0.50	Indicates whether respondent is a woman (1) or a man (0).
Education	1 – 2	1.50	0.50	Indicates whether respondent has a bachelor's degree (1) or a post-graduate degree (2).
Income	1 – 16	9.34	3.01	Indicates respondent's annual family income. Ranges from less than $10,000 (1) to $500,000 or more (16).
Political efficacy	1 – 5	3.30	1.16	Indicates whether respondent thinks that "ordinary people would be better than most elected officials at solving the country's problems." Ranges from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).
Political participation	0 – 7	2.67	1.82	Indicates the number of the following activities respondent has engaged in during the last two years: voted in the presidential election; donated money to a political campaign; volunteered for a political campaign; attended a rally or protest; contacted an elected official; wrote or commented about politics on social media; served on a non-profit board.
Democrat	0, 1	0.58	0.49	Indicates whether respondent self-identifies as Strong Democrat, Democrat, leaning Democrat (1) or not (0).

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coding
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES – continued				
Republican	0, 1	0.26	0.44	Indicates whether respondent self-identifies as Strong Republican, Republican, leaning Republican (1) or not (0).
Black	0, 1	0.12	0.32	Indicates whether respondent identifies as Black (1) or not (0).
Latino	0, 1	0.12	0.32	Indicates whether respondent identifies as Latino (1) or not (0).
Political interest	1 – 4	3.47	0.78	Indicates how closely respondent follows politics. Ranges from “hardly at all” (1) to “most of the time” (4).
Marital status	0, 1	0.64	0.48	Indicates whether respondent is married or living with a partner (1) or not (0).
Children under 18 at home	0, 1	0.34	0.47	Indicates whether respondent has children under the age of 18 living at home (1) or not (0).
Birth year	1936 – 1999	1974	13.31	Indicates respondent’s year of birth.
Self-assessed qualifications	1 – 4	2.48	1.08	Indicates how qualified respondent feels to run for office. Responses range from “not at all qualified” (1) to “very qualified” (4).
Recruited by political actor	0, 1	0.18	0.38	Indicates whether respondent ever received the suggestion to run for office from a party leader, elected official, or political activist (1) or not (0).
Encouraged by personal source	0, 1	0.37	0.48	Indicates whether respondent ever received the suggestion to run for office from a spouse, family member, colleague, or someone from a church, synagogue, or mosque (1) or not (0).