

The Effects of Law No. 56/2014 on Gender Composition in Italian Municipal Councils

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This paper aims to analyze the impact of Law no. 56/2014 on the presence of women in Municipal Councils. Law no. 56/2014 was introduced in Italy in order to enhance female political representation in Municipal Councils and it applies to all Municipalities with more than 3,000 inhabitants. We basically questioned whether the increase in the number of women in the political arena is an effect attributable to the gender balance constraint imposed by the new law. The analysis is based on data available from the Ministry of the Interior and refers to the 2014-2015 administrative elections.

Results show that the gender balance constraint introduced by Law no. 56/2014 led to an increase in female presence within Municipal Councils. At the national level it is estimated an average increase varying from 12.9 to 15.2 p.p. depending on the statistical approach adopted.

The effect driven by the enforcing of the law is positive and significant in two out of the three macro-areas investigated. Both with OLS and non-parametric approaches, no significant impact is estimated in the South, which is the area with the weakest female representation rate in the first place (before the approval of the law). Robustness checks support the main findings.