



Women as Political Leaders: Can Quotas Affect Attitudes?

Rohini Pande
Mohammed Kamal Professor of Public Policy
Harvard Kennedy School



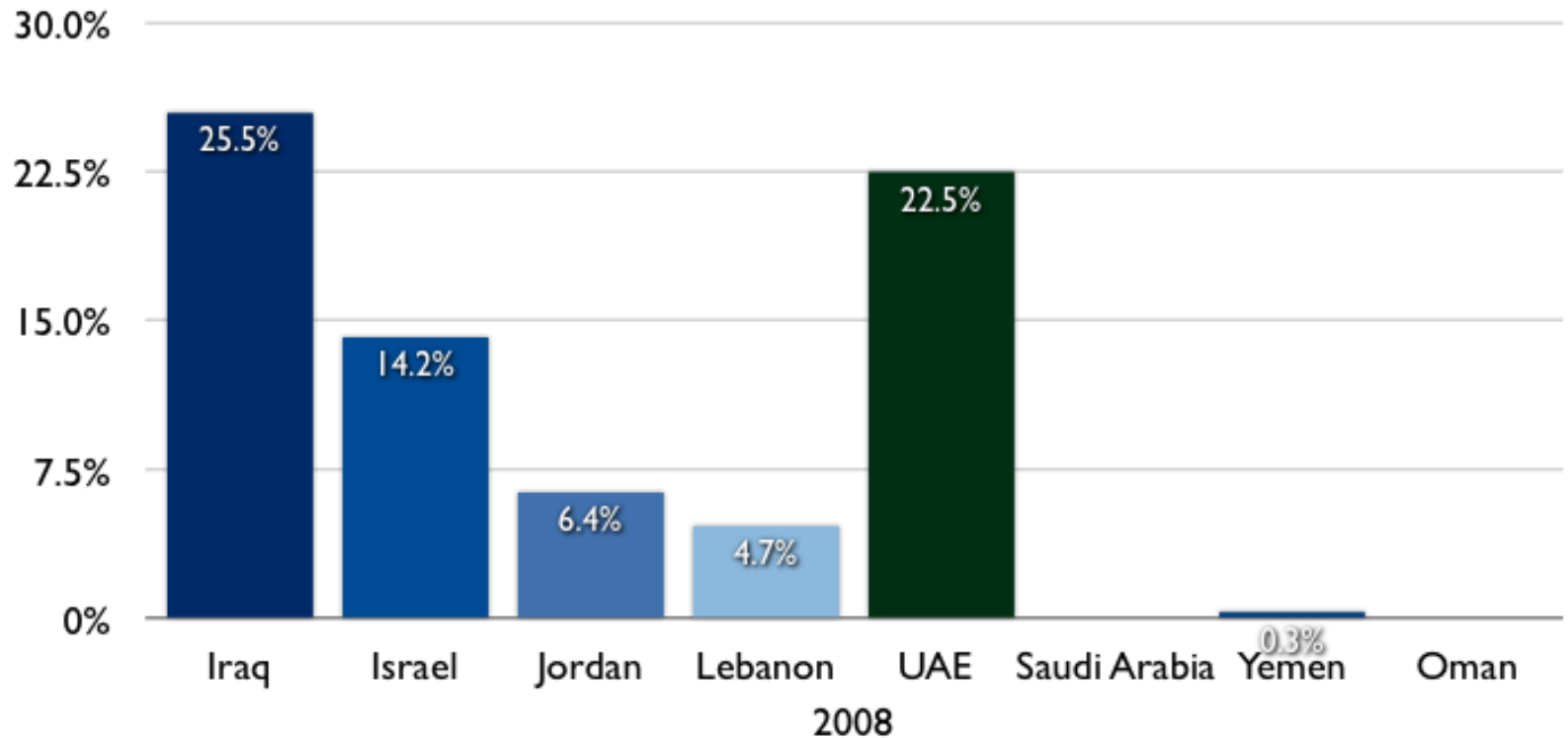
Women in Politics

- In July 2008, women accounted for 18.4 % of parliamentarians worldwide (IPU, 2008)
 - In Arab Countries this number stood at 9.7%
- This disparity rarely reflects legal restrictions:
 - Women can vote, women can support candidates, and women can run for office in almost every country
 - In many countries, female voter turnout exceeds male turnout
- An important policy response has been gender quotas in politics: Over 100 countries have some form of political affirmative action



Women in Politics

Percentage of Women in National Parliaments, Select Middle Eastern Countries, 2008



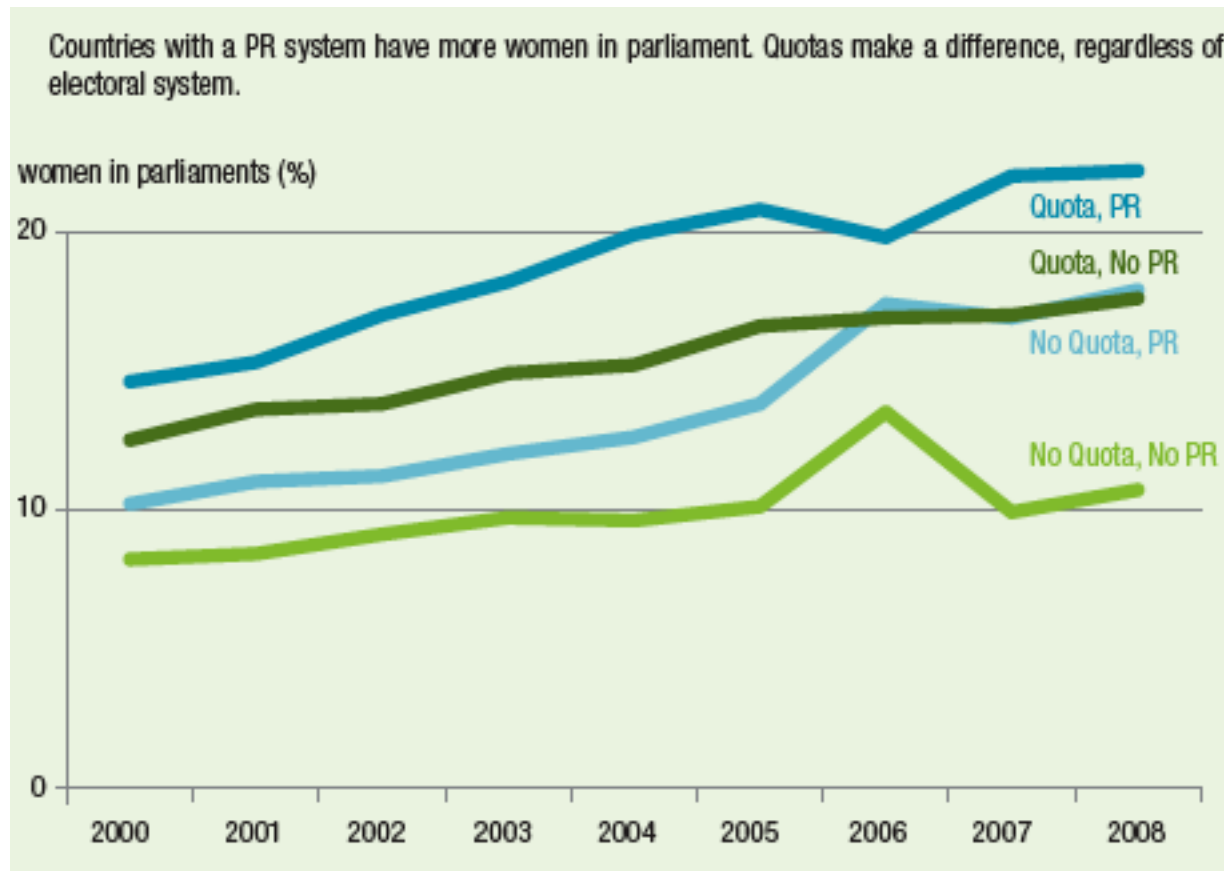
Note: Blue countries indicate the country has some form of gender quota, green countries do not have any type of gender quota.

Source: UNIFEM Progress of the World's Women Report, 2008



Women as Political Leaders: What have we learned?

① Quotas can increase female leadership:



Source: UNIFEM Progress of the World's Women 2008

Women as Political Leaders: What have we learned?

- ② Female leadership shifts policies towards those preferred by women
 - Rehavi (2008): Between 1970 and 2000, the increase in number of female state legislators in US increased spending on health care by 15%
 - Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2005): Quota induced increase of female chief village councillors in India increased spending on drinking water



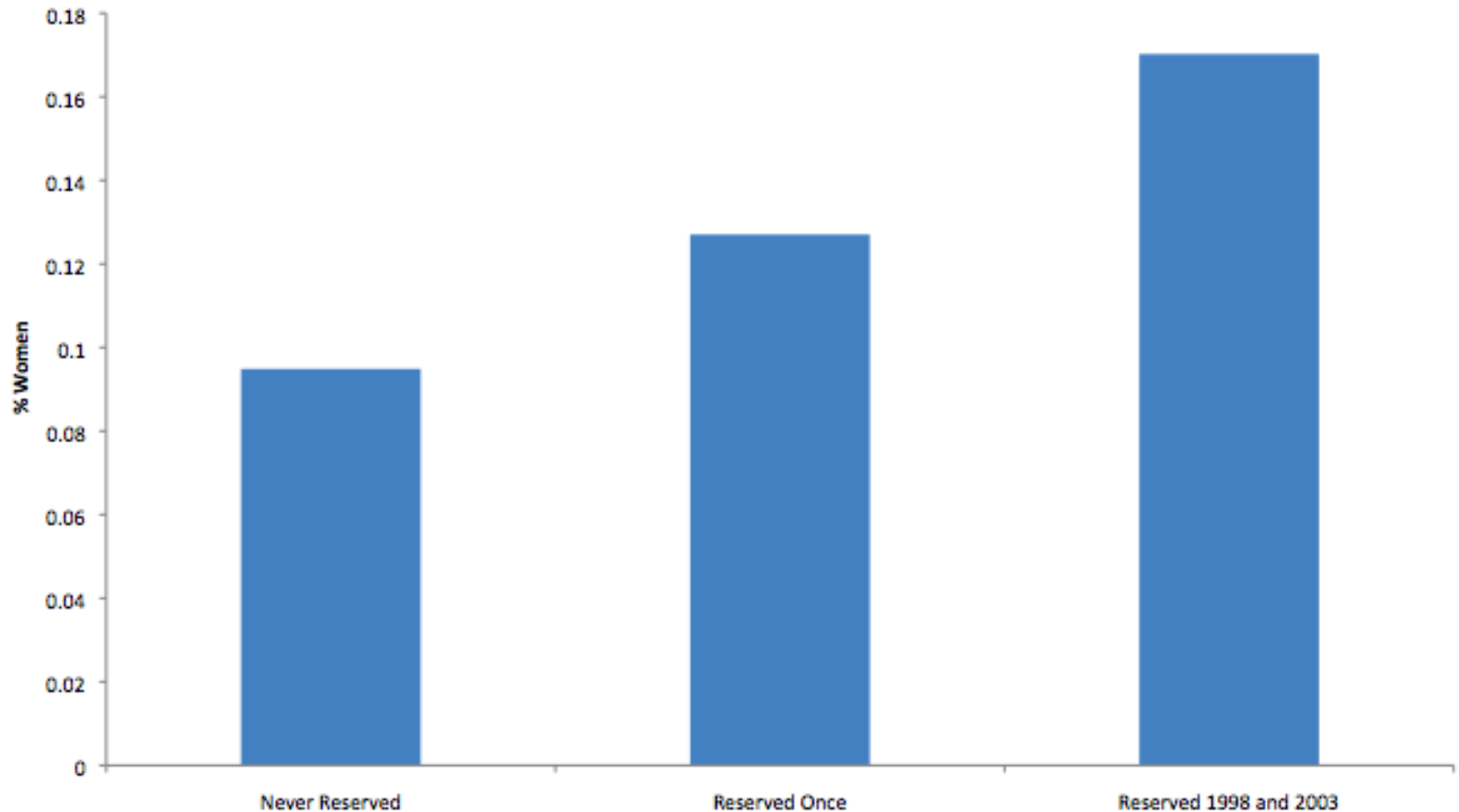
Women as Political Leaders: What have we Learned?

- ③ Quotas can change voter attitudes towards women in leadership positions, and enhance future electoral success of women
- With co-authors I have examined this in rural India. With exposure to a female leader
 - Male villagers don't change their explicit or implicit preference for male leaders
 - BUT they are much more likely to believe women can make effective leaders



Evidence from India

2008 Pradhan Election Outcomes



Implications

- Female leadership in politics is an important way of providing women a say in the policy process
- Cultural and social norms often lead to poor perceptions of whether women can lead effectively
 - This can make initial entry of women into politics difficult
- However, voters are willing to learn – they update their beliefs after observing women lead
- Suggests public policy can play an important role in ensuring there is a first generation of female leaders

