

Gender Gaps in Political Careers: Evidence from Competitive Elections



Daide Cipullo ◊ Job market Paper

Department of Economics ◊ Uppsala University

www.davidecipullo.com ◊ davide.cipullo@nek.uu.se

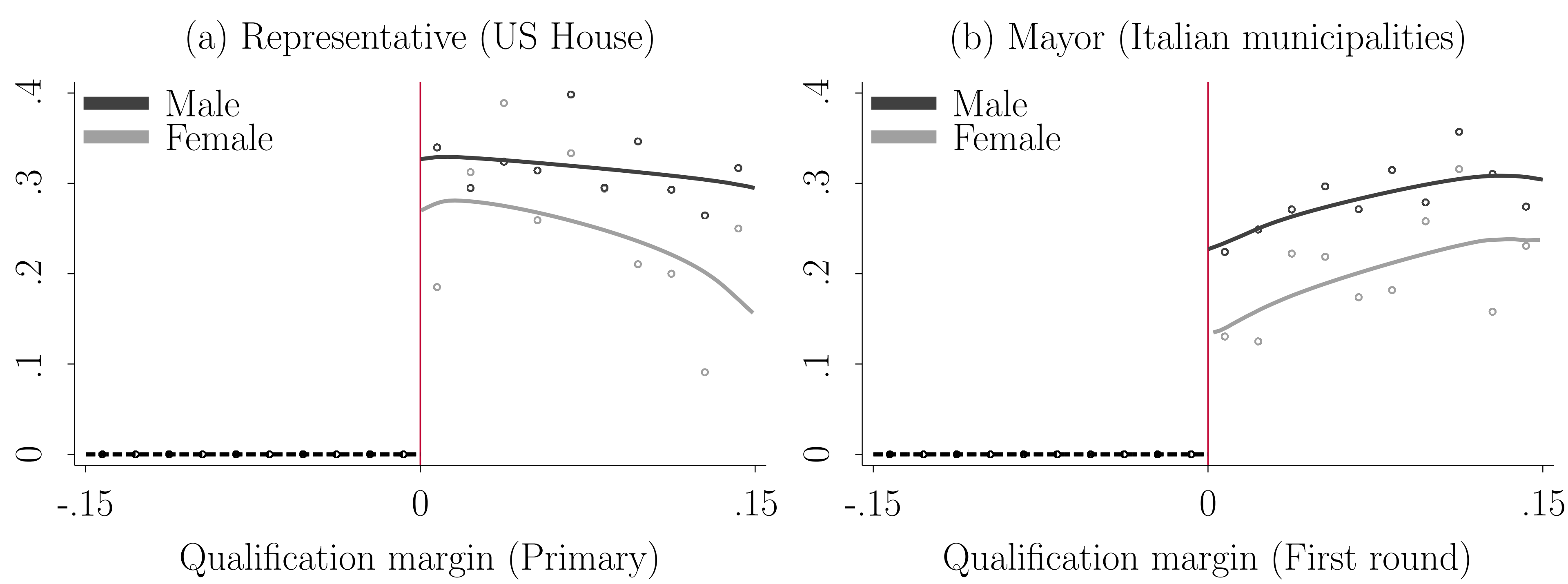
1. Research design

- This paper exploits **two-stage elections** to estimate the **impact of voters on the representation of women in the political profession**, holding (self- or party-appointed) selection of candidates constant. I provide evidence based on **two different settings**: primary and general elections for the US House of Representatives and runoff elections of mayors in Italy. The research design exploits the fact that in both systems, politicians who **barely make it to the final round** and those who just **miss the qualification threshold** are arguably comparable in observed and unobserved characteristics.
- I estimate

$$Y_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 F_i \times Qualified_{i,t} + \beta_2 Qualified_{i,t} + \beta_3 F_i + f(F_i; h_{i,t}) + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

where the running variable $f(F_i; h_{i,t})$ is a flexible function of the qualification margin $h_{i,t}$ and allowed to vary across genders and on either side of the qualification threshold and δ_t is a set of election-year dummies. The coefficient of interest is β_1 , which measures the differential effect of qualification for female candidates in comparison with the effect for their male colleagues.

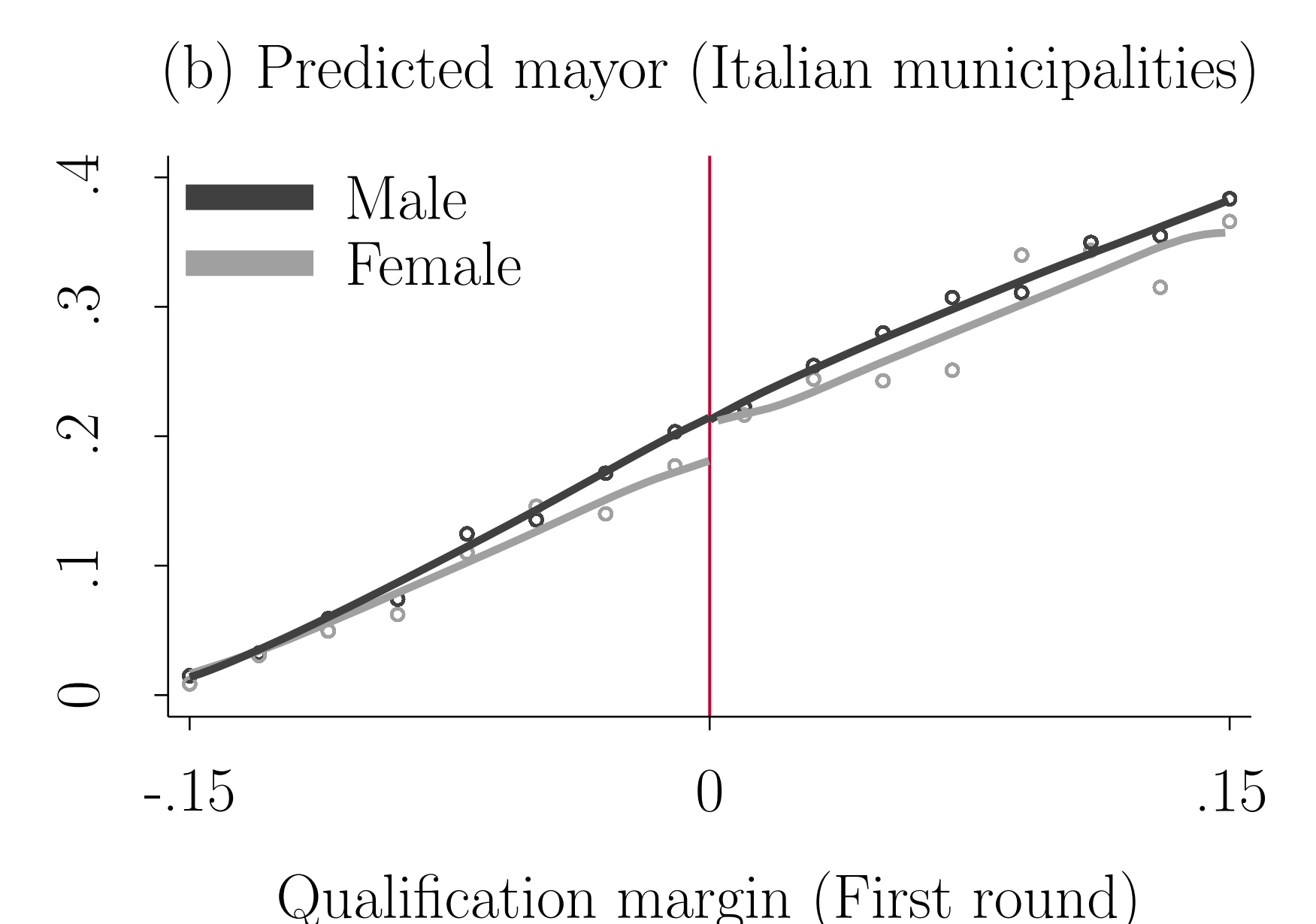
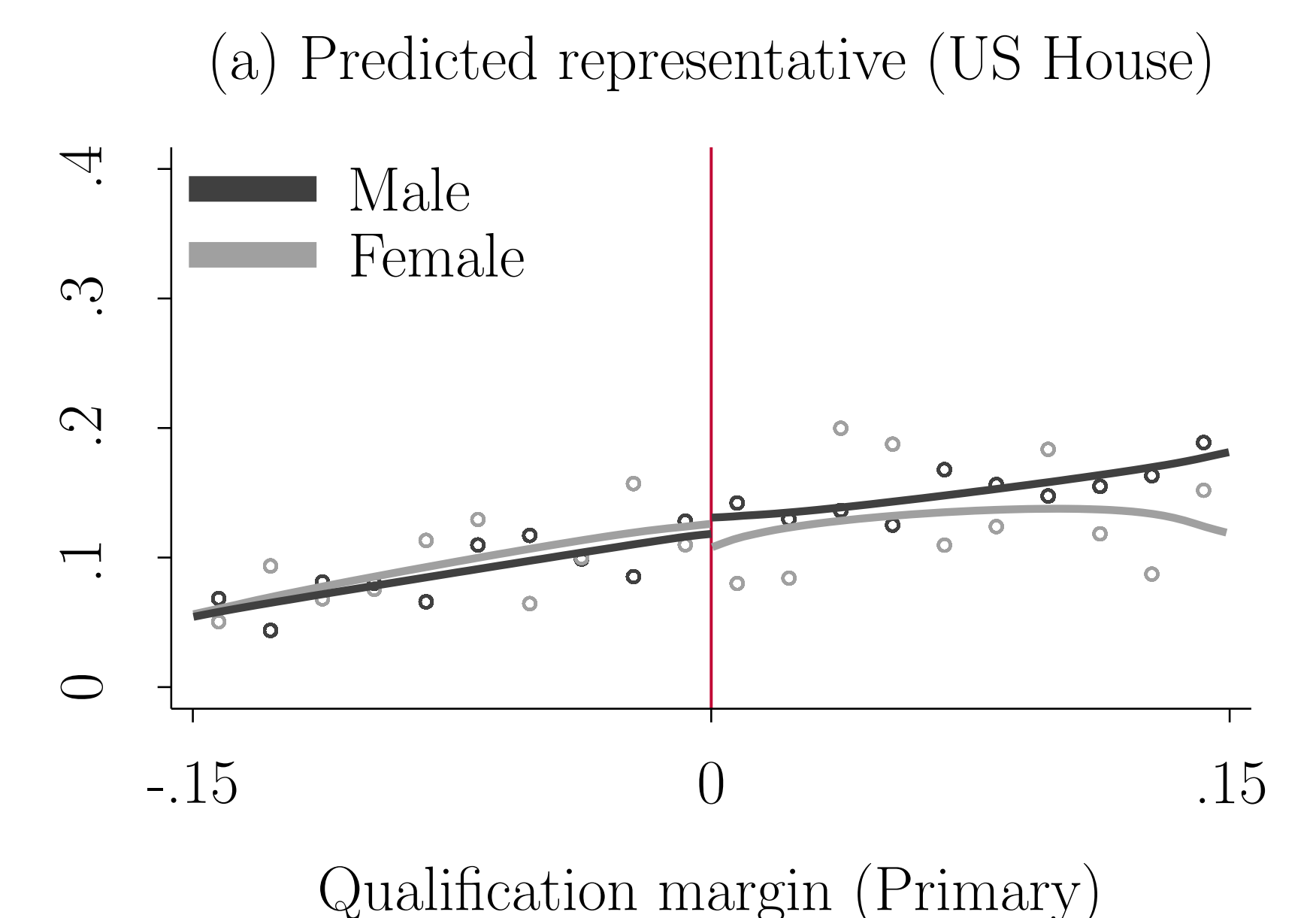
2. Gender differences in the probability of winning the election



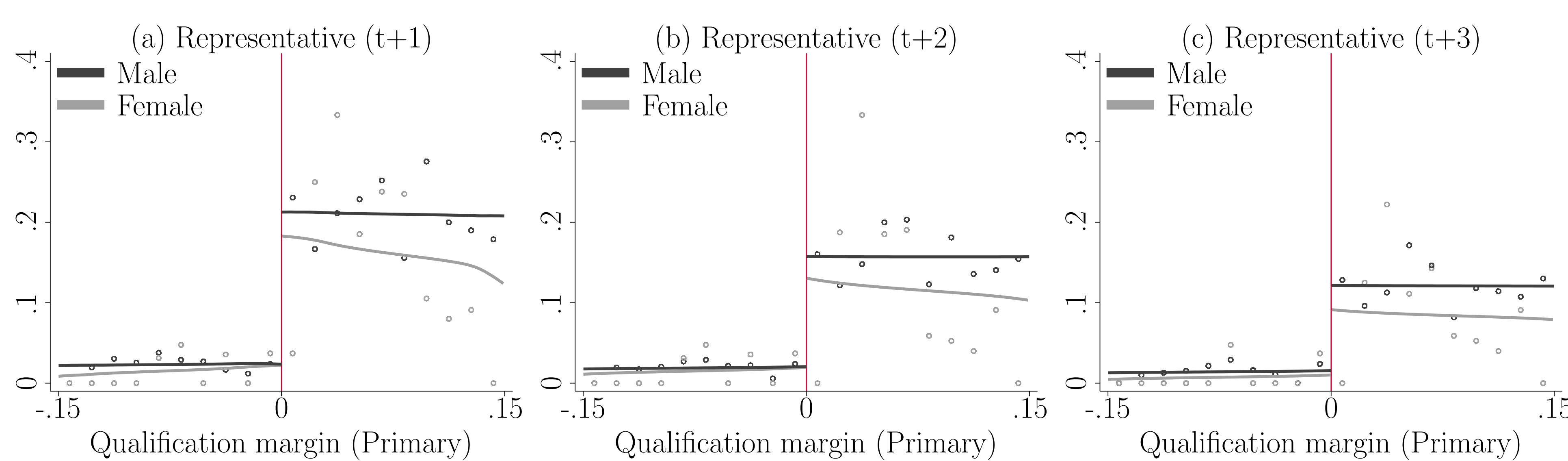
Female candidates who barely qualify to the general election for the US House of Representatives are **7 p.p. (20 percent) less likely elected** than male who barely qualify. Similarly, female candidates who barely qualify to the second round of a runoff election in Italy are **9 p.p. (40 percent) less likely elected** than male candidates who barely qualify.

Notice: Comparable elections

- Elections in which men and women barely make it to the final round are **comparable** in terms of **district characteristics** and the **distribution of determinants and outcomes of first-round returns**.
- In particular, men and women who qualify to the final round **have the same predicted probability of winning the election**.



3. Future political careers



Qualification to the general election **increases the probability of winning a seat in the US House in the future more for men than for women**. The effect widens up a **career gender gap for up to the third downstream election**. Similar results estimated in **Italian municipalities**.

4. Mechanisms and implications

- Marginal qualification of a female candidate also **reduces turnout by 1 percentage point** compared to qualification of a male candidate.
- Barely qualified female candidates receive **25 percent lower media coverage** than barely qualified male candidates.
- Gender differences in the probability of being elected cannot be explained by differences in **observable characteristics** (*Party, experience, incumbency, age, education, occupation*).
- Barely qualified candidates of different gender comparable in the amount of **resources collected and spent during the campaign** and equally likely to receive **endorsements of excluded candidates**.
- Gender gaps in the probability of being elected driven by **inexperienced candidates** and stronger in areas of the country in which **women are less represented in politics** and **less integrated in the local labour market**.
- Consistent with the *sticky floor* hypothesis, the results of this paper suggest that **women are less likely than men to reach the top because they face early challenges in their careers**.