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Health and the Political Agency of Women

by Sonia R. Bhalotra, Irma Clots-Figueras

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Revised version on my [webpage](#)

Abstract:

We investigate whether politician gender influences policy outcomes in India. We focus upon antenatal and postnatal public health provision since the costs of poor services in this domain are disproportionately borne by women. Accounting for potential endogeneity of politician gender and the sample composition of births, we find that a one standard deviation increase in women's political representation results in a 1.5 percentage point reduction in neonatal mortality. Women politicians are more likely to build public health facilities and encourage antenatal care, institutional delivery and immunization. The results are topical given that a bill proposing quotas for women in state assemblies is currently pending in the Indian Parliament.

Text: See [Discussion Paper No. 6216](#)



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