# Evidence Bite: When is gender on party agendas? Manifestos and (De-)democratisation in Greece, Portugal, and Spain

This article by Ana Catalano Weeks, Paloma Caravantes, Ana Espírito-Santo, Emanuela Lombardo, Maria Stratigaki, and Sami Gul explores how and when political parties in three Southern European democracies include gender-related interests in their election manifestos, and what this reveals about gender equality and democratic processes. Political parties' manifestos shape public debate and indicate their commitment to policy areas. In dialogue with the CCINDLE project, this study examines manifestos in Greece, Portugal, and Spain to understand when gender-related issues appear, and how parties' ideological positions and the broader political contexts affect attention to gender. This evidence bite offers a concise summary of its conclusions.

The **key observations** of the article include that:

### 1. Left-wing parties give more priority to gender issues

Left-wing and progressive parties consistently include gender-related political interests such as gender equality, violence against women, work-family balance, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ+ rights in their manifestos. They do this more often and with more egalitarian framing than their right-wing counterparts.

### 2. Far-right parties also give significant attention to gender-related issues and address gender from a traditionalist perspective

Far-right parties also include gender topics, but favour a traditional or conservative framing that emphasises the roles of women in family and reproduction rather than progressive reforms. This shows that gender language in manifestos does not always equate to a commitment to gender equality.

### 3. Economic crises and far-right party strength fuel gender backsliding and de-democratisation

Political contexts are crucial to the dynamics of gender issues in manifestos. In particular:

- Economic crises such as the Great Recession correlate with reduced attention to gender issues.
- Far-right party success is linked with more traditional positions and less egalitarian framing across the political spectrum, indicating the potential for gender backsliding when these parties are on the rise.

These contexts help explain variations over time and across countries.

The **key takeaway messages** of the article include that:

- **Gender in party manifestos reflects democratic priorities:** Manifesto content matters, it predicts what parties are likely to pursue if elected and shows how inclusive or exclusionary political visions are becoming.

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- **Party ideology shapes attention to equality:** Left-leaning parties are more consistently committed to gender equality; conservative and far-right parties include gender issues in less egalitarian and often traditionalist terms.
- **Crises and political shifts affect democratic inclusion:** Economic downturns and the rise of far-right parties correlate with reduced attention to gender equality. Changes in political commitments can thus be related to democratic backsliding.

Overall, the study links party agenda setting with democratic health. When parties prioritise gender equality in manifestos, it signals democratic commitments to inclusion and social justice. When attention wanes, for example amidst economic crises or far-right ascents, this is a marker of de-democratisation; where gender equality is sidelined from mainstream political and policy debates. This analysis indicates that the appearance and nature of gender issues on party agendas is a bellwether for democratic health in Greece, Portugal, and Spain.
You can read the article in full here.

For more information on the CCINDLE project, as well as publications, evidence bites, podcasts, videos and more, please visit our website: https://ccindle.org

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