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LSE GROUPS takes place during the final fortnight of the LSE Spring Term. Undergraduate students are placed in small groups; these are cross-year, interdisciplinary, and group members do not know one another in advance. Each group must then devise its own research question and carry out every stage of a small-scale research project, in less than two weeks.

LSE GROUPS is part of the LSE commitment to students learning through enquiry and developing the skills needed for knowledge creation.

The overall theme of LSE GROUPS 2024 was *Power and Politics*.

This paper was submitted on the final Thursday afternoon of the project. Students then presented their work at a conference, on the closing Friday.

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**‘Men talk about roads’: The Relationship Between Gender and Budget Allocation in
Local Politics in England and Wales**

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Abstract

In England and Wales, the average council is comprised of only 32% women, suggesting an underrepresentation of women's voices. Cross-country evidence suggests that increasing the descriptive representation of women increases women's substantive representation including raising social welfare spending (Bolzendahl and Brooks, 2007). However, subnational literature is inconclusive (Ferreira and Gyourko, 2011) and often incomparable to council settings. To help fill this gap, we investigate English county councils and Welsh principal councils to examine the relationship between the proportion of women presence and budget allocation towards social welfare categories. Our mixed method approach aims to achieve a better understanding of women's presence in local politics. We have constructed a dataset, used for simple and multiple regression, and conducted three semi-structured interviews with women councillors, interpreted by a thematic analysis. The quantitative analysis shows a statistically significant relationship between the proportion of women in councils and the proportion of budgetary allocations to education and social care. Our qualitative analysis supports our quantitative findings pointing towards different gender socialisation as an explanation for women privileging investment in education and social welfare (Phillips, 1995). Future research should include a larger sample size across multiple years and a more representative sample of interviewees, including men.

Keywords: Gender, Local Government, Councils, Representation, Budget Allocation, Social Welfare

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Introduction

Women and men as voters and legislators, have different policy preferences and legislators exhibit gendered differences in voting behaviour (Clayton, 2021). Women prioritise social welfare spending to a greater degree than men (Clayton et al., 2019) and higher proportions of women legislators in office better reflects this preference in budget allocation (Bolzendahl and Brooks, 2007). Therefore, if legislators want to better represent their constituents, more women should be amongst their ranks, but in England and Wales, the average county/principal council, 68% of councillors are men. The voices of women in UK local politics might be systematically underrepresented.

The decision to distribute limited resources across different services is a crucial element of local government, especially in the UK, where councils are responsible for administering necessary services such as social care and education (GOV.uk, n.d.). Understanding the relationship between women's descriptive representation and budget allocation, then, can help to better serve local communities. However, the existing literature is inconclusive. We help to fill this gap in the literature by adopting a mixed method approach, using regression analysis over an original dataset, as well as a thematic analysis of three semi-structured interviews (Osawa and Yoon, 2019).

The goal of this project is to examine the relationship between the proportion of women councillors in English and Welsh councils and budget allocations towards social welfare categories, to help guide future research and inform policy formulation.

Literature Review

As women's descriptive representation (that is, their presence) in legislative bodies has increased (Wängnerud, 2009; Clayton, 2021), a growing body of literature has examined the gendered differences in behaviour amongst legislators. Of the corpus analysing the influence that descriptive representation has on policy outcomes, there main measures are: "women's issue legislation" and social welfare spending (see Swers, 2002 for a discussion). "Women's issue legislation" disproportionately affect women, including policy areas such as 'women's rights' (Höhnmann, 2020), whereas social welfare spending refers to categories such as healthcare and education (Bolzendahl and Brooks, 2007).

Compared to their colleagues, women legislators are more likely to support "women's issues" by raising questions during legislative sessions (Höhnmann, 2020) and by sponsoring bills (Swers, 2002; Kaitlin, 2023). Legislative bodies with higher proportions of women are more likely to pass "women's issue legislation" (Swers, 2002; Clayton, 2021). Similar relationships emerge for social welfare spending. In wealthy democracies, greater descriptive representation of women produced greater social welfare spending (Bolzendahl and Brooks, 2007; Park, 2017). Increases in social welfare spending, especially healthcare and education, were also observed in developing countries (Swiss et al., 2012).

With these trends observed across different geographical contexts and various levels of government (see Clayton, 2021 for a review), the argument that gendered differences in the behaviour of legislators might be driven by different socialisations of men and women (Phillips, 1995) is convincing. Therefore, we should expect similar patterns to emerge consistently in UK subnational politics.

Sub-national governments hold significant power, with councils in the UK administering crucial services such as children's services, social care and education (GOV.uk, n.d.). The distribution of resources across local services can have long-lasting impacts on local communities (Funk and Phillips, 2019) and with increased financial pressure, UK councils are stretching their budgets (Haves, 2024; Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities Committee, 2024), to maintain their services. As UK council spending is threatened, it is even more important to study the consequences of gendered representation in these bodies.

Existing literature on gendered differences in legislator behaviour in the UK focuses on the national politics (Clayton, 2021), lacking research into these relationships in local government. Some evidence shows a strong correlation between the women's presence in local governments and mayoral positions and higher social welfare spending (Funk and Phillips, 2019; Ordine et al., 2023; Svaleryd, 2009; Chen 2013). However, others present no significant findings (Ferreira and Gyourko, 2011; Rigon and Tanzi 2012; Schild 2013). Factors moderating the relationship between women's presence and spending, such as party affiliation (Osawa and Yoon, 2019), overall spending demands (Courtemanche and Green, 2017) and the representation of women in other political offices (Ferreira and Gyourko, 2011), however, are important. Additionally, research on council settings and the proportional makeup of women is sparse (Svaleryd, 2009; Rigon and Tanzi, 2012; Osawa and Yoon, 2019). Many studies focus on the presence of women as leaders within local authorities, such as US Mayors (Ferreira and Gyourko, 2011; Schild, 2013; Funk and Phillips, 2019; Ordine et al., 2023), which measure women's presence in a single position but do not analyse council behaviour given the differences in the decision-making process (Tsebelis, 2002). Our work on UK councils contributes empirically to this literature by helping better understand the gendered behaviour of legislators in council settings.

Methodology

Our research aims to observe the relationship between the proportion of women on county (England) and principal (Wales) councils (from here: "councils") and budget allocation to 'social goods'. Using a mixed methods approach, we employ a regression model for a quantitative analysis of this relationship. We supplement this with interviews with women councillors from England and Wales. We perform a thematic analysis for qualitative insights into councillors' motivations and experiences, which may form the foundation for future research.

Research Question and Hypothesis

RQ: What is the relationship between the proportion of women in English county and Welsh principal councils and budget allocation towards education, healthcare, environment, social care, and transportation in the 2024-25 financial year? Our null hypothesis (H_0) is that there is no relationship between the proportion of women in the English and Welsh county and principal councils and budget allocation towards different categories of social goods.

Quantitative Method

Operationalisation

We operationalise 'social goods' expenditure as the proportion of spending on education, healthcare, social care, transportation, environment, and other spendings. We then investigate

any potential relationship between specific categories and proportions of women. We only consider English county councils and Welsh principal councils due to limitations in data collection.

Data Collection

For quantitative analysis, we rely on secondary data of the 2024-25 budgetary revenue, expenditure on social goods and gender make-up of councillors. We collected this data from council websites, budget books and online reports (Appendix A). Owing to data availability, we excluded 3 counties from our analysis, giving a sample size of 48.

One challenge in handling the data was categories of social goods overlapping across councils. To overcome this, we used supplementary sources. Where unavailable, we excluded councils. Similarly, 2024-25 budget data was unavailable for some counties, hence we used 2023-24 data.

Analysis Design

We employed simple regression

$$(Budget\ allocations\ to\ category = b_0 + (proportions\ of\ women)b_1 + \varepsilon)$$

And employed a multiple regression

$$(Budget\ allocations\ to\ category = b_0 + (proportions\ of\ women)b_1 + (Country)b_2 + (Budget\ per\ capita)b_3 + (Labour)b_4 + (Conservative)b_5 + (LibDem)b_6 + (Independent)b_7 + (Green)b_8 + (Other)b_9 + (Plaid\ Cymru)b_{10} + \varepsilon.)$$

To avoid multicollinearity, we have removed the "Non-aligned councillors" variable from the regression equation.

Variables

Our independent variable (X) was coded as the proportion of women in English county and Welsh principal councils for the budgetary year 2024-25.

Our dependent variables (Y) are the proportion of budgets spent on education, healthcare, social care, transportation, environment, and other activities. We considered the proportions of budgets spent in each of these categories against the proportion of women in the counties.

Confounders

Drawing upon existing literature, we identified population size (Bolzendahl and Brooks, 2007) and majority party affiliation (Osawa and Yoon, 2019) as potential confounders. We control for county population size through budget per capita. We control for party affiliation as this is strongly linked to politicians' policy preferences. Additional confounders (e.g., unemployment rate, median income) were considered but excluded from the study owing to time constraints. This limitation could be addressed in further research.

Qualitative Method

We conducted 3 semi-structured interviews with women councillors to understand the motivations underpinning their political preferences, and the salience of their gender identity to their decision-making. This method allowed flexibility to ask follow-up questions to further investigate points raised by participants. The topic guide involved main discussion points to steer the conversation into the relevant issues (Appendix B).

Volunteer sampling was used to recruit participants. We sent emails to the councillors using their publicly available email addresses.

The interviews were conducted and recorded online using "Zoom" and "Microsoft Teams". To ease the process of transcribing interviews, the "Jojo" software was used. Each transcript was then cross-checked using the recordings.

We chose thematic analysis for its ability to employ a standardized approach to categorize personal experiences shared in interviews (Appendix C).

Due to time and resource constraints, we were only able to secure three interviews, two of which with councillors from the same county. This introduces likelihood for potential bias in our sample. Further qualitative research should aim for a larger sample including more geographical and party variation.

Ethics

The secondary data used is publicly available. An ethical concern was determining gender proportions. Online data only includes councillors' names and photos. Due to time constraints, we assumed the gender identities of councillors based on this data. Future research should aim to gather this information from councillors. Before the interviews, participants were given a written consent form (Appendix D) and reminded of their right to skip any questions or withdraw at any time. No personal identifiers were used in the database, ensuring participants' anonymity.

Results and Discussion

Quantitative Results

Preliminary Analysis

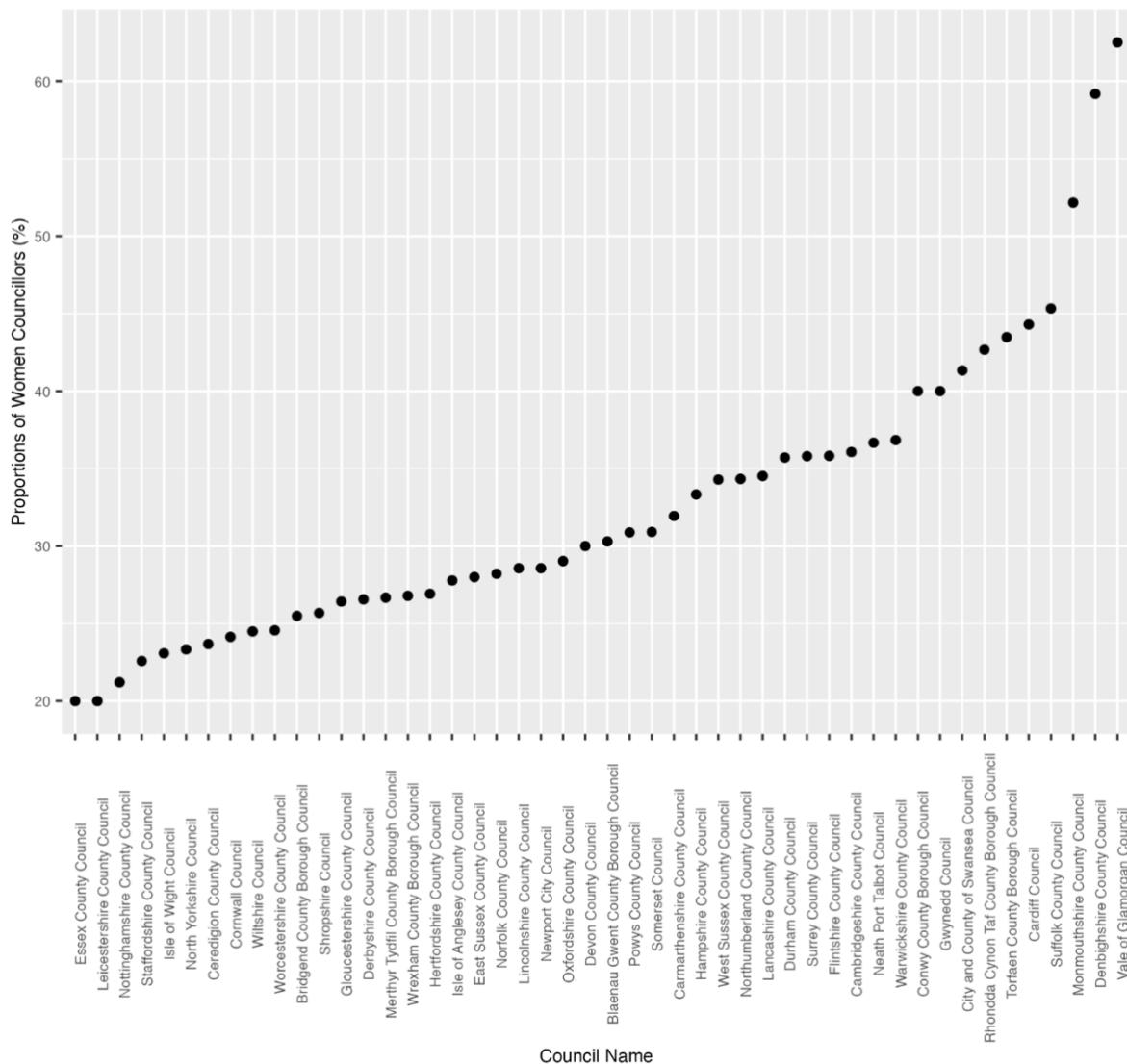
The mean of the proportions of women in councils is 32.5% (SD = 9.4). The minimum percentage of women councillors is 20%, whereas the maximum is 62.5% (Figure 1). The number of observations is 48 (28 in England and 20 in Wales).

Figure 1

Graph of proportions of women councillors

Distribution of Women Councillors in England and Wales

Source: Data collected from council websites



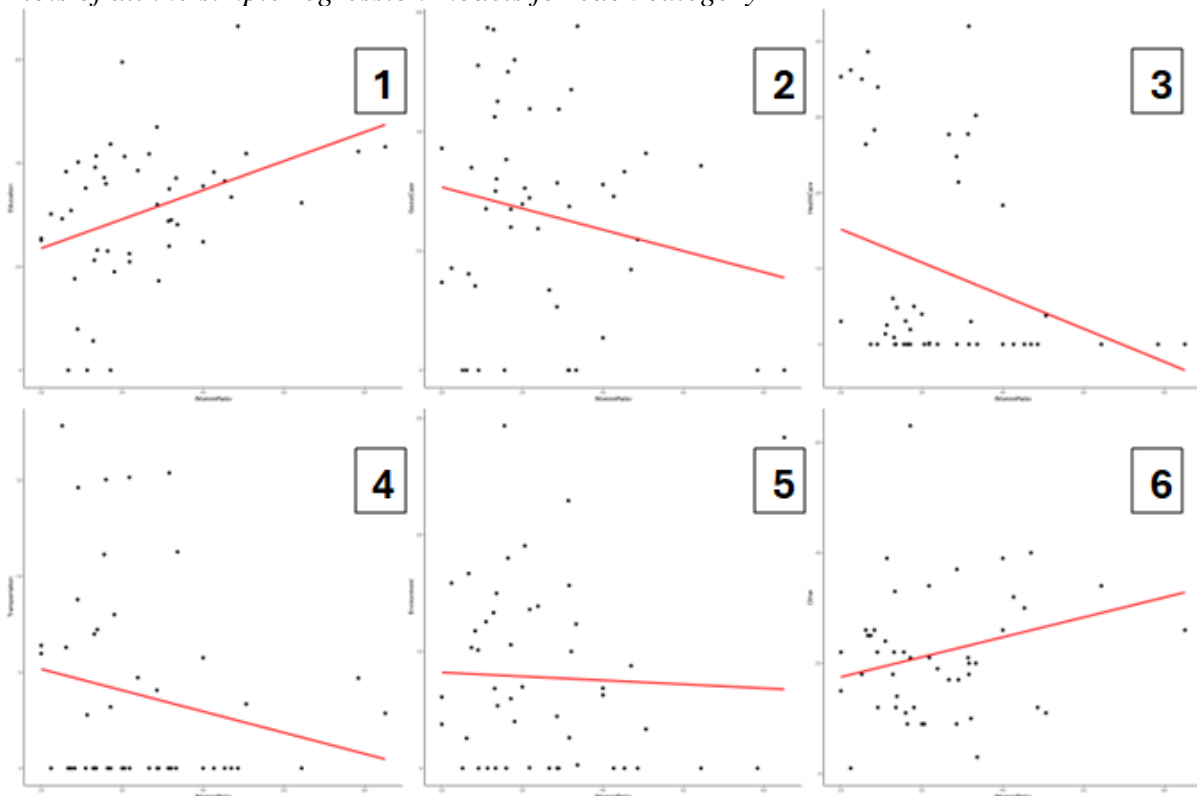
Models were checked for the General Linear Model assumptions to ensure they were adequate to use for regression models.

Primary Analyses

Simple regression. Initially, for each of the 6 categories (education, healthcare, social care, transportation, environment, other), simple regression models were employed (Figure 2). Results show a significant relationship between the proportions of women and the budgetary allocations to education ($b_1 = 0.56$, $\beta_1 = 0.39$, $t(46) = 2.84$, $p < 0.01$) and healthcare ($b_1 = -0.44$, $\beta_1 = -0.30$, $t(46) = -2.1$, $p < 0.05$) (Appendix E). These results suggest that an increase in the proportion of women councillors translates to an increase in budgetary allocations to education, whereas it presents a decrease in allocations to healthcare. Other categories did not show statistically significant results (Appendix E). To address potential confounders, multiple regression models were then used for each category.

Figure 2

Plots of all the simple regression models for each category



1 – Education, 2 – Social Care, 3 – Healthcare, 4 – Transportation, 5 – Environment, 6 – Other

Multiple regression. The regression model results show that there is a statistically significant relationship between the proportions of women councillors and budget allocations to education even when controlling for county population size and party distributions of the counties ($b_1 = 0.56$, $\beta_1 = 0.39$, $t(37) = 2.1$, $p = 0.039$) (Table 1). Similarly, the relationship between proportions of women and budgetary allocations to social care presents a statistical significance at the 0.1 level ($b_1 = -0.54$, $\beta_1 = -0.29$, $t(37) = -1.9$, $p = 0.068$) (Table 2). Healthcare ($b_1 = -0.03$, $\beta_1 = -0.02$, $t(37) = -0.12$, $p = 0.9$), environment ($b_1 = -0.01$, $\beta_1 = -0.01$, $t(37) = -0.08$, $p = 0.9$), transportation ($b_1 = -0.09$, $\beta_1 = -0.16$, $t(37) = -0.84$, $p = 0.4$), and the other ($b_1 = 0.08$, $\beta_1 = 0.06$, $t(37) = 0.34$, $p = 0.74$) categories do not have a statistically significant relationship with the proportion of women in the councils (Appendix E).

Table 1^[1]*Regression results using Education as the dependent variable*

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> | | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² | | Fit | |
|------------------------|----------|--------------------|--|------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|
| | | 95% CI [LL, UL] | | | 95% CI [LL, UL] | | | |
| (Intercept) | 22.32 | [-145.30, 189.94] | | | | | | |
| <u>WomenRatio</u> | 0.56* | [0.03, 1.09] | | .09 | [-.05, .24] | | | |
| <u>CountryWales</u> | 5.46 | [-14.90, 25.81] | | .01 | [-.03, .04] | | | |
| <u>Budgetpercapita</u> | 0.00 | [-0.00, 0.00] | | .00 | [-.01, .01] | | | |
| Labour | -0.19 | [-1.91, 1.52] | | .00 | [-.01, .02] | | | |
| Conservative | -0.02 | [-1.72, 1.67] | | .00 | [-.00, .00] | | | |
| <u>LiberalDemocrat</u> | -0.32 | [-2.08, 1.45] | | .00 | [-.02, .03] | | | |
| Independent | -0.01 | [-1.74, 1.72] | | .00 | [-.00, .00] | | | |
| Green | -0.84 | [-2.86, 1.18] | | .01 | [-.04, .07] | | | |
| Oth | -0.07 | [-1.80, 1.67] | | .00 | [-.01, .01] | | | |
| <u>PlaidCymru</u> | -0.18 | [-1.92, 1.57] | | .00 | [-.01, .02] | | | |
| | | | | | | | <i>R</i> ² = .255 | |
| | | | | | | | 95% CI [.00, .30] | |

[1] A significant *b*-weight indicates the semi-partial correlation is also significant. *b* represents unstandardized regression weights. *sr*² represents the semi-partial correlation squared. *LL* and *UL* indicate the lower and upper limits of a confidence interval, respectively.

* indicates *p* < .05. ** indicates *p* < .01.

Table 2
Regression results using SocialCare as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² 95% CI [LL, UL] | Fit |
|------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|-----|
| (Intercept) | 15.65 | [-166.35, 197.65] | | | |
| <u>WomenRatio</u> | -0.54 | [-1.11, 0.04] | .05 | [-.04, .14] | |
| <u>CountryWales</u> | 0.79 | [-21.31, 22.89] | .00 | [-.00, .00] | |
| <u>Budgetpercapita</u> | 0.00 | [-0.00, 0.01] | .03 | [-.04, .10] | |
| Labour | 0.35 | [-1.52, 2.22] | .00 | [-.02, .02] | |
| Conservative | 0.14 | [-1.70, 1.98] | .00 | [-.01, .01] | |
| <u>LiberalDemocrat</u> | 0.71 | [-1.21, 2.62] | .01 | [-.03, .04] | |
| Independent | -0.03 | [-1.91, 1.85] | .00 | [-.00, .00] | |
| Green | 1.09 | [-1.10, 3.28] | .01 | [-.04, .06] | |
| Oth | -0.74 | [-2.62, 1.14] | .01 | [-.03, .05] | |
| <u>PlaidCymru</u> | -0.01 | [-1.91, 1.89] | .00 | [-.00, .00] | |

$R^2 = .471^{**}$
 95%
 CI[.08,.53]

[1] A significant *b*-weight indicates the semi-partial correlation is also significant. *b* represents unstandardized regression weights. *sr*² represents the semi-partial correlation squared. *LL* and *UL* indicate the lower and upper limits of a confidence interval, respectively.

* indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

With a unit increase in the proportions of women in councils (%), the budgetary spending on education increased by 0.56% points. On the contrary, this increase in the proportion of women councillors leads to a decrease in spending on social care by 0.54% points. The regression coefficients in all the other budgetary categories show that the relationship between the predictor and predicted variables are minimal (< 0.1% change).

Despite the statistically significant results in education and social care, there is still unexplained variation in these models. 11% of the variance is explained by the proportions of women in education (Total error reduced = 25%), while it is 9% in social care (Total error reduced = 48%).

The results suggest that there is a statistically significant relationship between the proportion of women in councils and their respective budget allocations. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis: there is no relationship between the two variables.

Qualitative Results

Four themes were extrapolated from analysing the interviews: personal experience, male-dominated institutions, party affiliation, and structural limitations.

(Gendered) Personal Experience

This theme is related to councillors' personal experiences in daily life, how these informed their choices to become councillors and their priorities while in office. All interviewees referred to personal experiences as playing a role in their choice and policy preferences. Many of these experiences reflected gendered socialisation as outlined in previous literature (Phillips, 1995; Osawa and Yoon, 2019), with women especially bearing the brunt of childcare responsibilities. Interviewee 1 noted her responsibility to take care of her disabled child as a main factor in becoming a councillor and pursue issues of social care and education, especially promoting spending towards special educational needs. Another interviewee highlighted how the gendered disparity in childcare responsibility sensitised her to this issue in her council differently than her male colleagues.

"I have used our council's childcare system. It's awful. It's not fit for purpose. And the male colleagues don't interact [with it]."

Male-Dominated Councils

This theme was extrapolated from participants' remarks about the prevalence and relative higher importance of men's opinions in their councils, and how this can make it difficult for women councillors to be heard.

"We've got such a male-dominated council. It is mostly male voices that get heard and are making more decisions."

"They day I got elected [...] [a colleague] said to me: 'What you don't understand, dear, is that in the council chamber I refer to male councillors as councillor and female councillors as Mrs or Miss.' [...] That is where the culture is set at that organisation. [...] They're dinosaurs."

Party Affiliation

Participants indicated party affiliation, especially being part of the majority or the opposition, as a factor in their ability to influence decisions. This finding supports our decision to control for political affiliation in our regression model.

"The cabinet system is very closed, and you've ultimately got like 10 or 12 people from one party that are making all the decisions."

Interestingly, party affiliation was indicated as overlapping with gender distribution differences. The conservative parties were described as mostly composed of men. One interviewee described an instance of leading an anti-conservative alliance in her council and passing a cross-party proposal to keep all children's centres in the county open. Once they lost control of the council to a conservative administration, their cabinet (which she highlighted as being composed of 9 men and 1 woman), halved the budget and closed 45 out of 52 children's centres.

"[there are] many more female voices in the opposition parties and the opposition benches"

Structural Limitations

Interviews highlighted structural limitations to budget allocations, a previously unexpected aspect. These refer to (1) some aspects of the budget being sectioned off and allocated in fixed

amounts yearly to certain categories such as healthcare, or (2) demand for some services driving budget allocation. In this case, budget allocation is thus not a reflection of single councillors' or parties' preferences, but instead a function of exogenous factors.

“There's a huge exponential increase in families being referred to social services. [...] So I have found it difficult to say, well, I think we should have more money for parks and trees.”

This issue indicates areas for further research, where partially fixed budgets and demand-driven services could be added as controls in a quantitative study.

Limitations

Due to time constraints, our research did not include potential confounding factors discussed in the methods. Implementing these variables within the model could reduce the unexplained errors. Similarly, investigating this relationship using longitudinal panel data (Bolzendahl and Brooks, 2007) would be beneficial to understand the change in budgetary allocations in relation to budget cuts.

Another limitation is the insufficient power of our sample size ($N = 48$). Likewise, our qualitative sample size is very small, causing the findings to be limited and biased. Two of our councillors were from the same council and all our councillors were women, this potentially led to bias in the councillors' experiences.

Conclusion

Our findings indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between the proportion of women in counties and budgetary allocation towards education. Budgetary allocation towards health and social care is negatively related to the proportion of women in counties.

Results from our quantitative analysis are in line with previous literature suggesting that more women in local government bodies tends to correlate with increased social welfare spending (Svaleryd, 2009). However, the mixed outcomes of our quantitative analysis, which highlight a negative relationship between women in councils and healthcare and social care spending, are not reflected in previous literature. Our qualitative analysis suggest that these results may be related to structural constraints restricting the autonomy of councillors to implement their preferred budgetary allocations.

While our quantitative findings are mixed, our qualitative findings indicate that greater representation of women may change councils' male-dominated environment, leading to women councillors having greater influence on policy decisions and budgetary allocation, thus allowing them to more effectively engage in substantive representation.

The limited explanatory power of our model could be explained by the limitations of our research. Our small sample size resulted in insufficient power. Additionally, we were able to arrange a limited number of interviews. By incorporating a larger sample size, including Scottish and Northern Irish councils and examining longitudinal budget data, future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship and stronger answers. Our qualitative data indicates that councillors may have limited responsibility and autonomy in allocation due to partially fixed budgets. Future research should consider the flexibility of budget allocations along other confounders (see Quantitative Results) across different categories to individuate a stronger relationship between the two variables. Lastly, more granular budget data from internal sources would enhance the accuracy of data categorization.

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Appendix B: Interview Topic Guide

Introduction:

- Greetings
 - Introduce yourself (your name and that you're working on a research project as part of LSE GROUPS) to the interviewee and thank them for taking the time to speak to you.
 - Explain to the interviewee that we are doing a project to observe the potential relationship between the proportion of women councillors and proportionate budget allocations to different budgetary categories, like health, education, etc. Their answers will be anonymised and used to inform a short research paper that will be presented at a conference, published on the LSE website and potentially used for future research. Additionally, their anonymous responses may form part of other blogs or reports.
 - For this study, we will ask the interviewees about their political **motivations, experiences and preferences**. We would appreciate their honesty about their personal experiences and preferences.
 - We have shared a consent sheet with you- we would really appreciate you reading it and providing your consent. Also ask their consent to video record this interview.
 - Do you have any questions about our study?
- Interview questions
 - Let's start with some demographic questions:
 - What was your profession before becoming a Councillor?
 - What is your party affiliation?
 - How long have you been a Councillor?
 - What is your gender?
 - Could you talk about your journey and motivations to becoming a councillor in your county?
 - Were there any particular political or personal? experiences that you felt were particularly instrumental?
 - Which areas of spending do you value to be the most important and why?
 - What is the proportion of women Councillors in your county?
 - How would you evaluate the current level of representation of women on your Council?
 - How do you think this current level of representation is reflected in potential budget allocations and policy discussions at the county level?
 - Ask whether there are any specific anecdotes that relate to this?
 - To what extent do you feel your preferences are reflected in the council's budget allocation for the 2024-25 fiscal year?
 - Do you feel like your voice matters in council budgetary discussions?
 - Is there anything else you would like to share with us?
- Concluding Remarks
 - Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us today - we are really grateful for your insights!
 - Do you have any questions about our study?

- We have one final question: we would like our study to be as diverse as possible and we're currently looking to recruit other interviewees. Could you perhaps connect us to other women councillors - in your county or elsewhere - who would be willing to participate in this study?
- Thank you again for taking part!

End

Appendix C: Code Table for Thematic Analysis

Our qualitative analysis supports our quantitative findings, and points to socialisation as a potential explanation for women privileging investment in education and social welfare.

- Personal experience (gendered), socialisation
 - Care-taking responsibilities
- Male-dominated structure perspective influence on decisions (gendered institutions)
 - Hands,
- Party affiliation
- Less autonomy than we expected (potential for future research to control for more factors)

| Research question: What is the relationship between the proportion of women in the UK county councils and budget allocation towards different categories in the 2024-25 financial year? | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Global Theme: Women councillors’ political preferences that influence budgetary allocations | | | |
| Organizing themes | Basic codes | Description | Example from the text of the interview: Quote, participant identification |
| Personal experiences | The influence of personal experience on how they act as councillors | Their previous occupations, daily life, etc. have an impact on what they value as councillors | <p>Interviewee 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Before I was counsellor, I was caring for my disabled child. So I wasn't actually employed at that time.” - “I was also a trustee of a charity that supports families of children with special needs and disabilities. And I used to go to some of the council meetings and when there were sort of relevant things being discussed to see what the outcomes were of the, you know, those discussions. And sometimes we would contribute to them as trustees of the charity.” - “Well for me it’s issues like social care and education and particularly spending that involves, you know, supporting special educational needs.” <p>Interviewee 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “At the primary school of the area I represented, where my daughter went to, there were 48 different first languages spoken. And it's a very socially and culturally diverse school. [...] [The Tory decision-makers] are quite divorced from the challenges that there are in the area that I represent, hence |

| | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
| | | | <p>why we've just put a lot of focus on [them].”</p> <p>Interviewee 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You have to advocate. Well, do you know what a woman's morning looks like? Like I was up at 5:15 because my children wouldn't go back to bed. They were up dressed, you know, drop their stuff off to their dad's, dropped them at school for breakfast club, back on my way across town to get here. You know, got to do a food truck, got to do this. Women have far more caring responsibilities than men.” • “I had a double buggy because I had twins. My double buggy was the same size as a wheelchair. And I didn't recognise until I had the double buggy how inaccessible spaces were, how inaccessible paths were. And that has better informed my [work]. [...] my feminism has radicalised by becoming a councillor.” • “I have used our council's childcare policy. I have used our council's childcare system. It's awful. It's not fit for purpose. And the male colleagues don't interact [with it].” |
| Party affiliation | Party affiliations and the individual | The individual's party affiliation and how it impacts their decisions | <p>Interviewee 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Currently, I'm independent. I was Labour when I joined, when I stood, and I'm now independent.” • “I have just one voice and particularly now I'm independent.” |
| | Party affiliations influencing discussions | How the party values, expectations play a role in the discussions held | <p>I 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It's probably even harder because I don't have the party, the group supporting me. And there were less options to |

| | | | |
|--|--|--------------------|--|
| | | within the council | <p>• speak because I'm an independent.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “And it does feel sometimes like because the council just brought in this rule that independent councillors would only be able to have one round of questioning as a whole. We're not aligned to the independent party, which we are, so we're non-aligned independents. So we only get, whereas previously the independent candidate, the independent councillor had an opportunity in every round of questions for council, for example.” • They (opposition groups) are also starting to talk about it and they will come to me to ask things just because I've got some lived experience and because I have talked about it. So I think there's sort of, some sort of more joint thinking.” <p>Interviewee 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I'm not going to change a council of 55 Tories. So all I can do [...] is mitigate the harm” • “the decision makers in rural Tory Norfolk, it's mostly white men over 70” |
| | The impact of being the majority party and/or being part of the ruling party | | <p>Interviewee 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “it's so political that I don't think even if the party and administration agreed with any of the things I've said, I don't think they would ever admit it because, you know, they are the party that's in government.” <p>Interviewee 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There was a couple of years that we were in control of the council, like an anti-Tory alliance, and they wanted us to review children's centres. I |

| | | | |
|--------|--|--|---|
| | | | <p>chaired that piece of work, it was cross-party. [...] As a result of that, we got cross-party agreement to keep all of Norfolk's children's centres open. Then we lost control of the council, and a year later, the administration, <u>which had nine men and one female cabinet member</u>, just arbitrarily halved the budget and they shut 45 out of 52 children's centres.”</p> <p>Interviewee 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’m a member of the labour party (note: majority in this council) [...]. So obviously, back benches, opposition parties, cabinet members, officers inform the budget consultation process” • “you know, as the leading party, our opinion holds a bit more weight than opposition parties.” |
| | Connection between party and gender | | <p>Interviewee 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I took Tory and UKIP councillors, men, out to visit children's centres because they'd never been in one. So they didn't know what they were doing. [...] And as a result of that, we got cross-party agreement to keep all of Norfolk's children's centres open. Then we lost control of the council, and a year later, the administration, which had nine men and one female cabinet member, just arbitrarily halved the budget and they shut 45 out of 52 children's centres.” |
| Gender | Gender as a factor in the structure of discussions | How there is different treatment of the genders within the council, the male voices dominating the discussions | <p>Interviewee 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So, whether that would be the same if we had been male, I don't know. But we are all quite vocal about issues which affect people and those are the policies that you're talking about.” |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I mean, I have, we have had to bring up in committees in the past that I've been part of. We have had to just kind of like have a quiet word with the chair for maybe not noticing the female hands that go up as quickly as they notice the male hand. But I think just having that, that. Making that, sort of making just a polite point about that, you know, privately, so it's not to embarrass somebody, has had an effect. So, I think it's a difficult one to say because we've got such a male dominated council. It is mostly male voices that get heard and are making more decisions. And <u>the opposition is much, you know, is much more, many more female voices in the opposition parties and the opposition benches.</u>” • “Yeah, we still have the same opportunities. We still have the right to put an event and budget amendment through and so on. And, you know, I felt like we were treated fairly by officers and so on in that respect.” <p><i>Interviewee 2:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (2) “What you don't understand, dear, is that in the council chamber I refer to male councillors as councillor and female councillors as Mrs or Miss.” [...] That is where the culture is set at that organisation. |
| | Gender to influence budgetary allocations | Gendered budgetary allocations, how different genders uphold different values more | <p><i>Interviewee 1:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It feels like, generally, this is very general, the men talk about roads and, well, and the women talk about, you know. The cabinet member for children's services is a woman, the deputy is a woman, the |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|
| | | | <p>cabinet member for adult social care is a woman... You know, and highways is a man and. So it is a bit like that, I think, you know, that's that. Although it did used to be a man who was the children's services cabinet member, but I mean, it's a waste of time. So, yeah, it is a bit it is a bit like that, I think."</p> |
| Political system and climate | (Budgetary) Expectations from the council | The budgetary decisions are not as autonomous as expected, there are certain obligations of the council that they have to fulfill and demand drives allocation | <p>Interviewee 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I mean, most of the vast majority of spending within the council is on health and social care and education and children's services. So, adult services and children's services. But that's sort of the nature of the statutory duties really fall in in those two sort of portfolios. So they haven't really got much choice to allocate most of the budget there." <p>Interviewee 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "it's demand-led service. [...] on paper, it might look like reasonable amounts of the council's budget is spent on adult and children's social care or public health. But I'd say that's not willingly and it's not planned. It's almost like there's an overspend because they can't say they've had no choice. But to do that, if they could spend less, they absolutely would" <p>Interviewee 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "you can see that there's a huge exponential increase in families being referred to social services and mental health support services. So I have found it difficult to say, well, I think we should have more money for parks and trees." |
| | Structure of the council | The new system has changed the way discussions | <p>Interviewee 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "one of the things that happened in between that period and standing was that the |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|---|
| | | take place within the council | <p>council changed to a different system. So it changed to a cabinet system rather than a committee system. And I still feel now that the committee system was a much more open way of operating”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The cabinet system is very closed and you've ultimately got like 10 or 12 people from one party that are making all the decisions, which I suppose was still the case with the committee system. But there seemed to be more dialogue and more listening.” • “And now they've changed it so that all unaligned independents just have the one opportunity. So now there's three women independent councillors, but we only get one opportunity for a question between us” |
| | Political climate | Even on the local level, the political climate of the nation has an impact – can relate this topic to party affiliation (majority party) | <p>Interviewee 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the climate is so difficult and financially for local authorities. And it's so political, it's so political” |

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

Dear participant,

Thanks for your interest in this project. In this email, I give you information about the project and ask for your consent to participate. If you agree, please reply to this email, stating your name and that you agree to the statements in the table below to give your consent.

What is the study about?

Our study investigates the potential relationship between the proportion of women present in county councils across England and Wales and budget allocation across different budgetary categories such as healthcare, education, etc. Some of our study will be quantitative and use councillor and budget data from councils. With interviews, we are looking to speak to women councillors to gather more detailed insights about their experiences, motivations and preferences during allocation processes.

What will my involvement be?

We would like to have a 20-minute conversation with you discussing your experience as a woman councillor. We will be asking you a few broad questions regarding our research topic and allow you to articulate your responses freely. We are looking to gather your honest perspective and insights about your experience.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary. There are no negative consequences for you if you decide not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part but later you change your mind, you can let us know by tomorrow (June 7th) before the time of our interview (10 am) – you will not have to give any explanation why. It is also absolutely fine if you feel that you don't want to answer any specific questions. You can also withdraw your results before the 12th of June end of day (4 pm) without providing an explanation by emailing us.

What will my information be used for?

We will be using the interview to as part of the findings in a short study, which will be published on the LSE website. The results of the study will also be shared publicly at a conference at the end of the project. The group members may also present the study at other UK conferences or use its contents to inform blog posts or other pieces in the future.

Will my information be anonymous?

Your participation will anonymous – your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. We will record the interview to better analyse it during our project, but the data will be stored safely end encrypted on platforms approved by an ethics committee. Our notes will also not include your name. Once the study ends, we will delete all recordings and notes.

If you agree to take part in the research, please complete the section below

Your name:

Please read these three statements. If you agree with the statement, put X in the box next to it.

| | |
|---|--|
| I have read this message and had the opportunity to ask questions. | |
| I agree to participate in the interview and my responses being recorded. | |
| I understand that my responses will be kept confidential and anonymous and that my personal information will be kept securely and destroyed at the end of the study | |

Once completed, please email this back. Thank you!

Researcher name: XXXXXX

Email address: XXXX

If you have any questions about the study, please email XXXX

If you wish to make a complaint about this study, please email eden.groups@lse.ac.uk

[The LSE Research Privacy Policy](#).

Appendix E: Regression Tables

Table 1

Regression results using Education as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> | | <i>beta</i> | <i>beta</i> | | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² | | <i>r</i> | Fit |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------------|----------|-------------|--------------|----------|------------------------|------------------------|----------|----------|-----|
| | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | |
| (Intercept) | 12.28 | [-1.17, 25.73] | | | | | | | | | |
| WomenRatio | 0.56** | [0.16, 0.96] | | 0.39 | [0.11, 0.66] | | .15 | [.01, .33] | | .39** | |
| <i>R</i> ² = .150** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 95% CI[.01,.33] | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 2

Regression results using HealthCare as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> | | <i>beta</i> | <i>beta</i> | | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² | | <i>r</i> | Fit |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------------|----------|-------------|----------------|----------|------------------------|------------------------|----------|----------|-----|
| | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | |
| (Intercept) | 23.92** | [9.71, 38.13] | | | | | | | | | |
| WomenRatio | -0.44* | [-0.86, -0.02] | | -0.30 | [-0.58, -0.01] | | .09 | [.00, .26] | | -.30* | |
| <i>R</i> ² = .087* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 95% CI[.00,.26] | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 3

Regression results using Environment as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> | | <i>beta</i> | <i>beta</i> | | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² | | <i>r</i> | Fit |
|------------------------------|----------|---------------|----------|-------------|---------------|----------|------------------------|------------------------|----------|----------|-----|
| | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | |
| (Intercept) | 8.88* | [0.63, 17.13] | | | | | | | | | |
| WomenRatio | -0.03 | [-0.28, 0.21] | | -0.04 | [-0.34, 0.26] | | .00 | [.00, .08] | | -.04 | |
| <i>R</i> ² = .002 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 95% CI[.00,.08] | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 4

Regression results using SocialCare as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> | | <i>beta</i> | <i>beta</i> | | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² | | <i>r</i> | Fit |
|------------------------------|----------|----------------|----------|-------------|---------------|----------|------------------------|------------------------|----------|----------|-----|
| | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | 95% CI | [LL, UL] | | |
| (Intercept) | 37.80** | [19.36, 56.24] | | | | | | | | | |
| WomenRatio | -0.36 | [-0.90, 0.19] | | -0.19 | [-0.48, 0.10] | | .04 | [.00, .18] | | -.19 | |
| <i>R</i> ² = .036 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 95% CI[.00,.18] | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 5
Regression results using Transportation as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>beta</i> | <i>beta</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>r</i> | Fit |
|-------------|----------|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--|----------|---|
| (Intercept) | 7.37** | [1.93, 12.81] | | | | | | |
| WomenRatio | -0.11 | [-0.27, 0.05] | -0.20 | [-0.49, 0.09] | .04 | [.00, .19] | -.20 | |
| | | | | | | | | <i>R</i> ² = .040 95% CI[.00,.19] |

Table 6
Regression results using Other as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>beta</i> | <i>beta</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>r</i> | Fit |
|-------------|----------|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--|----------|---|
| (Intercept) | 10.31 | [-1.97, 22.59] | | | | | | |
| WomenRatio | 0.36 | [-0.00, 0.72] | 0.28 | [-0.00, 0.57] | .08 | [.00, .25] | .28 | |
| | | | | | | | | <i>R</i> ² = .080 95% CI[.00,.25] |

Table 7
Regression results using Education as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² 95% CI [LL, UL] | Fit |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|---|
| (Intercept) | 22.32 | [-145.30, 189.94] | | | |
| WomenRatio | 0.56* | [0.03, 1.09] | .09 | [-.05, .24] | |
| CountryWales | 5.46 | [-14.90, 25.81] | .01 | [-.03, .04] | |
| Budgetpercapita | 0.00 | [-0.00, 0.00] | .00 | [-.01, .01] | |
| Labour | -0.19 | [-1.91, 1.52] | .00 | [-.01, .02] | |
| Conservative | -0.02 | [-1.72, 1.67] | .00 | [-.00, .00] | |
| LiberalDemocrat | -0.32 | [-2.08, 1.45] | .00 | [-.02, .03] | |
| Independent | -0.01 | [-1.74, 1.72] | .00 | [-.00, .00] | |
| Green | -0.84 | [-2.86, 1.18] | .01 | [-.04, .07] | |
| Oth | -0.07 | [-1.80, 1.67] | .00 | [-.01, .01] | |
| PlaidCymru | -0.18 | [-1.92, 1.57] | .00 | [-.01, .02] | |
| | | | | | <i>R</i> ² = .255 95% CI[.00,.30] |

Table 8
Regression results using HealthCare as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² 95% CI [LL, UL] | Fit |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| (Intercept) | 75.27 | [-69.97, 220.50] | | | |
| WomenRatio | -0.03 | [-0.49, 0.43] | .00 | [-.01, .01] | |
| CountryWales | -11.70 | [-29.33, 5.94] | .03 | [-.04, .09] | |
| Budgetpercapita | -0.00 | [-0.01, 0.00] | .05 | [-.04, .15] | |
| Labour | -0.63 | [-2.12, 0.86] | .01 | [-.03, .05] | |
| Conservative | -0.49 | [-1.96, 0.98] | .01 | [-.03, .04] | |
| LiberalDemocrat | -0.85 | [-2.37, 0.68] | .02 | [-.04, .07] | |
| Independent | -0.40 | [-1.90, 1.10] | .00 | [-.02, .03] | |
| Green | -0.77 | [-2.51, 0.98] | .01 | [-.03, .06] | |
| Oth | 0.11 | [-1.40, 1.61] | .00 | [-.01, .01] | |
| PlaidCymru | -0.46 | [-1.98, 1.05] | .01 | [-.03, .04] | |
| | | | | | <i>R</i> ² = .463** |
| | | | | | 95% CI[.07,.53] |

Table 9
Regression results using Environment as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² 95% CI [LL, UL] | Fit |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| (Intercept) | -17.86 | [-112.87, 77.15] | | | |
| WomenRatio | -0.01 | [-0.31, 0.29] | .00 | [-.01, .01] | |
| CountryWales | -9.87 | [-21.41, 1.66] | .06 | [-.06, .18] | |
| Budgetpercapita | -0.00 | [-0.00, 0.00] | .02 | [-.05, .09] | |
| Labour | 0.41 | [-0.57, 1.38] | .01 | [-.04, .07] | |
| Conservative | 0.22 | [-0.75, 1.18] | .00 | [-.03, .04] | |
| LiberalDemocrat | 0.31 | [-0.69, 1.31] | .01 | [-.04, .05] | |
| Independent | 0.39 | [-0.59, 1.38] | .01 | [-.04, .07] | |
| Green | 0.24 | [-0.91, 1.38] | .00 | [-.03, .03] | |
| Oth | 0.39 | [-0.59, 1.37] | .01 | [-.04, .07] | |
| PlaidCymru | 0.54 | [-0.45, 1.53] | .02 | [-.05, .10] | |
| | | | | | <i>R</i> ² = .253 |
| | | | | | 95% CI[.00,.30] |

Table 10
Regression results using SocialCare as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² 95% CI [LL, UL] | Fit |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| (Intercept) | 15.65 | [-166.35, 197.65] | | | |
| WomenRatio | -0.54 | [-1.11, 0.04] | .05 | [-.04, .14] | |
| CountryWales | 0.79 | [-21.31, 22.89] | .00 | [-.00, .00] | |
| Budgetpercapita | 0.00 | [-0.00, 0.01] | .03 | [-.04, .10] | |
| Labour | 0.35 | [-1.52, 2.22] | .00 | [-.02, .02] | |
| Conservative | 0.14 | [-1.70, 1.98] | .00 | [-.01, .01] | |
| LiberalDemocrat | 0.71 | [-1.21, 2.62] | .01 | [-.03, .04] | |
| Independent | -0.03 | [-1.91, 1.85] | .00 | [-.00, .00] | |
| Green | 1.09 | [-1.10, 3.28] | .01 | [-.04, .06] | |
| Oth | -0.74 | [-2.62, 1.14] | .01 | [-.03, .05] | |
| PlaidCymru | -0.01 | [-1.91, 1.89] | .00 | [-.00, .00] | |
| | | | | | <i>R</i> ² = .471** |
| | | | | | 95% CI[.08,.53] |

Table 11
Regression results using Transportation as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² 95% CI [LL, UL] | Fit |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| (Intercept) | 32.11 | [-33.85, 98.07] | | | |
| WomenRatio | -0.09 | [-0.30, 0.12] | .02 | [-.05, .08] | |
| CountryWales | 5.97 | [-2.04, 13.98] | .05 | [-.06, .16] | |
| Budgetpercapita | -0.00 | [-0.00, 0.00] | .00 | [-.03, .03] | |
| Labour | -0.37 | [-1.04, 0.31] | .03 | [-.05, .11] | |
| Conservative | -0.20 | [-0.86, 0.47] | .01 | [-.04, .05] | |
| LiberalDemocrat | -0.31 | [-1.00, 0.38] | .02 | [-.05, .08] | |
| Independent | -0.30 | [-0.99, 0.38] | .02 | [-.05, .08] | |
| Green | -0.31 | [-1.10, 0.49] | .01 | [-.04, .07] | |
| Oth | -0.26 | [-0.94, 0.42] | .01 | [-.04, .07] | |
| PlaidCymru | -0.28 | [-0.97, 0.41] | .01 | [-.05, .08] | |
| | | | | | <i>R</i> ² = .204 |
| | | | | | 95% CI[.00,.24] |

Table 12
Regression results using Other as the criterion

| Predictor | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> 95% CI [LL, UL] | <i>sr</i> ² | <i>sr</i> ² 95% CI [LL, UL] | Fit |
|-----------------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| (Intercept) | -32.59 | [-179.41, 114.24] | | | |
| WomenRatio | 0.08 | [-0.39, 0.54] | .00 | [-.02, .03] | |
| CountryWales | 9.65 | [-8.18, 27.48] | .02 | [-.05, .10] | |
| Budgetpercapita | 0.00 | [-0.00, 0.00] | .01 | [-.04, .07] | |
| Labour | 0.49 | [-1.01, 2.00] | .01 | [-.04, .05] | |
| Conservative | 0.42 | [-1.07, 1.91] | .01 | [-.03, .05] | |
| LiberalDemocrat | 0.51 | [-1.04, 2.05] | .01 | [-.04, .05] | |
| Independent | 0.40 | [-1.12, 1.92] | .01 | [-.03, .04] | |
| Green | 0.61 | [-1.16, 2.38] | .01 | [-.04, .06] | |
| Oth | 0.59 | [-0.93, 2.11] | .01 | [-.04, .07] | |
| PlaidCymru | 0.44 | [-1.09, 1.97] | .01 | [-.03, .05] | |
| | | | | | <i>R</i> ² = .259 |
| | | | | | 95% CI[.00,.31] |