

STATE OF THE PROFESSION

Insight into Gender Authorship in Politics in the Low Countries (2021-2023)

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Abstract

In 2021, we took over the editorship-in-chief of Politics in the Low Countries (PLC). Nearing the end of our term as editors-in-chief, we tried to determine how we fared in terms of gender balance among the authors. This has been one of the editorial board's main concerns during our tenure as editors of PLC. In this short State of the Profession note, we tackle the question of gender bias among researchers who have published in the journal.

Table 1 Female Contributions to PLC Publications Across Different Publication Categories

Issue 1 2021 to Issue 2 2023									
	All female		Female lead		Female contributor		No female contribution (male only)		Total
Original Research Article	3	12.5 %	5	20.8%	6	25%	10	41.6%	24
PhD Review	4	40%	0	-	0	-	6	60%	10
Editorial	1	16.7%	2	33.3%	1	16.7%	2	33.3%	6
Research Note	2	40%	1	20%	0	-	2	40%	5
PhD Summary	1	25%	0	-	0	-	3	75%	4
Literature Review	1	50%	1	50%	0	-	0	-	2
State of the Profession	1	50%	0	-	0	-	1	50%	2
TOTAL	13	24.5%	9	17%	7	13.2%	24	45.3%	53

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A total of 53 pieces have been published in the last three years (before this issue – hence excluding the five pieces included in this issue, 2023-03). These articles have been written by 90 authors in total. Among them 36 identify as female and 54 as male, producing a 40:60 gender ratio. We can further break down this figure by looking at the gender distribution by type of submission. Table 1 shows the type of contribution (in row) by the gender of the author(s) (in column).

Strikingly, among the 24 original research articles published in PLC between 2021 and 2023, only three are all-female-authored, whereas ten are all-male-authored. However, these two categories include single-authored articles. In fact, all female-authored articles are single-author pieces (meaning there were no all-female collaborations) while of the ten male-only contributions six are solo articles (hence, four all-male collaborations). By focusing on first authors, we obtain more gender balance with five articles led by a female author and six by a male author in which at least one of the other authors identify as a woman.

The second most published type of contribution in PLC is PhD review (for more details about this format, see Vandeleene et al., 2023). In the time span we are considering, the journal hosted ten of them. Often PhD reviews are authored by a member of the PhD jury. The gender ratio is pretty balanced also in this case, with six PhD reviews authored by researchers who identify as a male, and four by researchers who identify as female. The slightly predominant number of male authors can be also explained by the fact that academic staff in the Low Countries is still predominantly made of non-female professors.

In our last issue (2023-02), we launched a new format: the PhD summaries. Due to the novelty of this format, the gender imbalance we can observe (three vs. one) is largely due to the availability of recently defended PhDs, and we will monitor this figure to strive towards a more balanced gender ratio in the near future. In fact, under the previous format (when a PhD review was published without a PhD summary by its author), a perfect gender balance was achieved (3-3, not shown in Table 1).

When considering other types of publications (six editorials, five research notes, two literature reviews and two State of the Profession articles), we are able to observe a gender balance in authorship, with a bit more female(-only) authored pieces. This however does not counterbalance the figure of original research manuscripts for two reasons. First, because we are talking about an overall smaller number of pieces. Second, and more importantly, because original research articles remain the standard against which academic prestige is measured.

There could be several reasons for which we still observe such imbalance in types of submission. One could be the already mentioned overarching imbalance in academia, where non-male tenured academics remain a minority. This inevitably gets reflected in number of publications. Another element can be linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. A wealth of research has shown that women have paid a high price in terms of productivity during and immediately after the pandemic (Squazzoni et al., 2021; Viglione, 2020). Starting in 2021, our analysis is likely to also capture this trend.

Editors and editorial teams do not have any control on the gender of who submits a manuscript to our journal. But we can contribute by making the gap

visible, as we are doing in this State of the Profession note, and also by making the work of women more visible. Since we have been installed as editors, we committed to offer the possibility of publishing open access to articles authored by women. We have also paid attention not to overburden women with requests of reviews, as it is also well known that women tend to do the bulk of academic service work (Domingo et al., 2022). Following these best practices, *Politics of the Low Countries* remains committed to fostering gender balance in academia.

References

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