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Voting Patterns and the Gender Wage Gap

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Highlights

This paper examines the gender wage gap for Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis. The gender wage gap is largely unexplained and there is a glass ceiling for women. Social attitudes and preferences are proxied for using locality-level voting behavior. Localities with a higher share of nationalist voters produce larger gender wage gaps.

Abstract

Striving for gender equality presents major challenges but the benefits are vast, ranging from reduced conflict, both within and between communities, to higher economic growth. Unfortunately, Israel's gender wage gap remains one of the highest among developed countries, despite a growing reverse gender gap in educational attainment. Investigating the gender wage gap for the Jewish majority and for the Arab minority, we find evidence of gender segregation by industry and occupations in addition to a glass ceiling effect for Jewish and Arab women. Using data from the Israeli Household Income Survey and electoral data from the Israeli parliamentary elections (2009), this paper provides novel evidence of the role of voter preferences in explaining the persistence of gender pay gaps. Importantly, we find strong evidence of an association between a higher share of votes allocated to nationalist parties, in a given locality, and a larger, (adjusted), gender wage gap for both Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis.

JEL Classification : J21, J31, J61, J45, C14, C24

Keywords: Gender wage gap; voting behavior; glass ceiling; glass door; social attitudes; discrimination.

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