Glass Ceilings, Glass Walls, and Glass Cliffs: Gender Bias in the Leadership of International Organizations

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Executive leaders of international organizations play a crucial role in managing the contemporary international order and shaping political outcomes. Yet, there has been no systematic accounting of their individual characteristics. Based on an original dataset of the personal traits of 2,030 highest-ranking executives of 400 intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) from 1966 to 2019, we examine how gender bias affects appointments to leadership positions. Drawing on literatures on glass ceilings, glass walls, and glass cliffs, we empirically assess: 1. the degree to which leadership appointments are biased against women across institutions, nominating countries, and time periods; 2. whether women are sidelined into leadership positions in less prominent institutions and "feminine" issue areas; and 3. the tendency for women to be elevated into leadership positions during challenging periods, such as during crises and scandals. The data and findings open new avenues for research on gender-based discrimination, the interaction of domestic and international political representation, and the impact of leadership characteristics on policy outcomes.

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Introduction

Scholars across the subfields of political science increasingly recognize the need for more research to understand how gender-based discrimination shapes political outcomes. Mainstream international relations scholarship has received particular criticism for its relative inattention toward gender (Enloe, 2014; Murphy, 1996; Sjoberg & Thies, 2023). We consider gender bias by focusing on the executive leaders of international organizations. These leaders play a crucial role in organizations that now occupy central positions in the structure and governance of the international system (Cogan et al., 2017; Copelovitch & Rickard, 2021; Davis, 2023; E. M. Hafner-Burton & Montgomery, 2006). Yet, to date, there has been no systematic accounting or analysis of their individual characteristics. Drawing on theories of gender-based discrimination and an original dataset of intergovernmental organization (IGO) leaders, we demonstrate striking, persistent disparities in representation.

IGO leaders play a variety of critical roles in the functioning of their organizations and the governance of the international system. Among other things, IGO leaders influence agenda-setting and brokerage (Chesterman, 2007; Tallberg, 2010), the distribution of resources and lending (Copelovitch & Rickard, 2021; Nielson et al., 2006), and the status and legitimacy of their organizations (Kille & Scully, 2003). Cox (1969, p. 25) goes as far as to say that leaders are the "most critical single determinant of the growth in the scope and authority of international organizations." Consequently, states invest considerable resources and political capital in promoting their own nationals for the heads of IGOs (Novosad & Werker, 2019). However, the absence of a comprehensive dataset on IGO leaders has constrained the ability of scholars to address basic descriptive questions – such as what type of individuals occupy these positions, and

what share are women – and theoretically important questions – such as the causes and consequences of representational disparities and how representation shapes substantive outcomes.

Existing research from other domains suggests that there are several systemic barriers that lead to biased representation in executive leadership positions. “Glass ceilings” represent the invisible social and institutional barriers that prevent women from attaining executive positions (Wirth, 2001). “Glass walls” can lead to women being particularly underrepresented as leaders in specific issue areas, such as those traditionally associated with “masculine” characteristics (Krook & O’Brien, 2012). Likewise, there are questions about the conditions under which glass ceilings are broken. Women may experience “glass cliffs,” being thrust into challenging leadership roles during major crises or scandals created by their predecessors (Ryan et al., 2010).

In this paper, we draw on a new dataset of IGO leaders, which contains individual information about 2,030 highest-ranking executives of 400 IGOs from 1966 to 2019, comprising 10,918 observations. Based on the data, we are able to systematically examine the evolution of gender representation in IGO leadership over the past five decades. We show that women remain heavily underrepresented among the ranks of IGO leaders, even compared to their counterparts in domestic political positions. Our statistical analysis suggests that glass ceiling and glass wall dynamics play an important role in shaping the leadership characteristics of IGOs. We find less compelling evidence for glass cliffs – even major scandals and crises are not associated with the promotion of women to leadership positions in IGOs. Our findings have important implications for the functioning and legitimacy of organizations that play central roles in the contemporary international order.

Theory: Glass Ceilings, Glass Walls, and Glass Cliffs

While political scientists have increasingly recognized the importance of gender in structuring political contestation and outcomes (Lawless, 2015; Wängnerud, 2009), mainstream international relations scholarship has been criticized for paying insufficient attention to gender bias (Sjoberg & Thies, 2023). This neglect is highly problematic, as such bias can shape and distort the institutions, norms, practices, identities, and outcomes central to the international system (Enloe, 2014; Helleiner, 2022; Sjoberg & Thies, 2023).

Leadership of IGOs is an important and under-explored domain in examining gender bias. Despite burgeoning research on individual leaders as an important source of variation in international relations (E. M. Hafner-Burton et al., 2017; Horowitz et al., 2005), executive leaders of IGOs have received relatively limited attention (Hall & Woods, 2018). IGO leaders play an important role in the management, reform, and outcomes of IGOs. Leaders shape international cooperation through mechanisms such as agenda management, brokerage, and representation (Chesterman, 2007; Tallberg, 2010). They engage in a "politically adaptive function" (Cox, 1969, p. 213) and exert their autonomy by, among other things, forging coalitions with sub-units of governments or non-governmental actors (Keohane & Nye, 1974).

Attention to individual-level characteristics of IGO leaders can contribute to our understanding of substantively important outcomes. IGO leaders' leadership styles (Kille & Scully, 2003), negotiating skills (Park, 2016), ideological beliefs (Copelovitch & Rickard, 2021), and ability to learn and adapt (Clark & Zucker, 2023), among other characteristics, have been linked to salient outcomes. Furthermore, research on individual leaders in other subfields suggests a link between descriptive and substantive representation (Krcmaric et al., 2020; Wängnerud, 2009). Female leaders of IGOs appear to pursue distinct priorities from their male peers (Barraza

Vargas, 2019), and gender representation can affect perceptions of IGO legitimacy (Christensen, 2020).

Existing studies of gender representation have examined women's leadership in domestic political roles, such as national executives and ministerial appointments. There are some reasons to expect that IGOs might perform relatively well on gender diversity relative to their domestic counterparts. First, IGOs are purveyors of norms. They serve as sites of socialization, social learning, and persuasion, whereby prevailing norms can alter behaviors (Checkel, 2001; Johnston, 2001). This includes progressive norms surrounding gender. For instance, IGOs are key institutional conduits for processes of gender mainstreaming that seek to incorporate a gender equality perspective into all aspects of international policymaking (E. Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2002; Heinzel, Weaver, et al., 2024; True, 2003). Moreover, progressive conceptions of gender equality have diffused across organizations, creating external pressures for IGOs to adopt and emulate gender equality frameworks (Hardt & Von Hlatky, 2020; Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2010; Simmons et al., 2006).

Second, IGOs may more frequently face bottom-up, vertical promotion of progressive norms by their staff. IGO officials are often described as progressive agents of norm diffusion. As Barnett and Finnemore (2004, p. 33) note, "Armed with a notion of progress...many IO staff have as their stated purpose to shape state action by establishing best practices and by articulating and transmitting norms that define what constitutes acceptable and legitimate state behavior." These views may flow up through the organization, creating a more gender-progressive environment within which leader selection occurs. Relatedly, there could also be a selection effect whereby more progressive domestic elites select into IGOs, given that their value sets are aligned with IGO missions, in addition to having a more positive view of IGOs as legitimate policymaking

organizations (Dellmuth et al., 2022).

Third, Western democracies with relatively progressive domestic gender norms—such as the United States and its allies—tend to exercise outsized formal and informal influence in IGOs (Stone, 2011). This outsized influence could contribute to relatively progressive gender norms in IGOs relative to global averages for domestic political positions. Such IGOs may effectively be more accepting of liberal norm entrepreneurship (Tallberg et al., 2020).

However, there are also theoretical reasons to believe that gender equality in IGO leadership may be particularly difficult to achieve due to distinct barriers and constraints. In the remainder of this section, we extend scholarship on gender equality in domestic contexts to develop a theoretical framework of barriers to female representation in IGO leadership appointments. We argue that female representation in IGOs will likely be affected by three mechanisms: glass ceilings, glass walls, and glass cliffs. We describe each of these mechanisms in order, adapt them to the distinct context of IGOs, and derive testable hypotheses suitable for empirical analysis.

Glass Ceilings

The concept of "glass ceilings" refers to the invisible social and institutional barriers that prevent women from attaining executive positions (Wirth, 2001). Glass ceilings result from imbalanced access to resources and opportunities between genders, as well as ingrained perceptual biases that constrain women into rigid social roles and expected behavior (Dobele et al., 2014; Lick & Johnson, 2014; Sabharwal, 2015). A glass ceiling stems from a "specific pattern of career disadvantages" that contributes to underrepresentation in executive positions (Folke & Rickne,

2016, p. 568). Women who hold similar professional credentials are less likely to be encouraged to seek leadership positions, while women themselves may view themselves as being less likely than males to think they are qualified for leadership positions (Fox & Lawless, 2004). There are also gender gaps in support for women attaining leadership positions (Dolan, 1997). Glass ceilings are ubiquitous across a wide range of countries and organizational settings. Gender-based discrimination is also well-documented in other aspects of international relations (Sjoberg & Thies, 2023). As a starting point, we expect that leadership appointments to international organizations will be subject to broadly similar bias. Thus, we start with the following basic hypothesis:

H1a: Women are underrepresented in the leadership of IGOs.

Leadership appointments in IGOs are distinct from leadership roles in domestic contexts due to the international dimension. Typically, IGO leadership candidates are nominated by their country of citizenship or at least qualify for candidacy based on the membership status of their home country. Characteristics of the home country of an IGO leader thus plausibly affect what type of individual occupies the position. Glass ceilings exist even in countries known for progressive descriptive representation, such as Sweden (Folke & Rickne, 2016). However, there is meaningful cross-national variation in gender-based discrimination, with severe restrictions on female political participation in some countries (Coppedge et al., 2023; Pemstein et al., 2023). Hence, we consider the extent to which bias in IGO representation can be attributed to glass ceilings stemming from the gender norms of a leader's home country:

H1b: The underrepresentation of women in IGOs is affected by the gender norms of the leader's home country.

Research on both domestic and international executive leadership positions suggests that glass ceilings are persistent and challenging to overcome (Reynolds, 1999; Wrigley, 2022). Furthermore, IGOs are characterized by specific features that may further hinder gender equality. IGOs are often characterized by path dependence due to the difficulty of renegotiating formal and informal rules after inception (Fioretos, 2011, 2017). As such, older IGOs created during earlier eras characterized by less progressive norms may face greater difficulty promoting diversity in their leadership positions. In addition, IGOs inherently draw members from several countries, which can introduce variations in social and cultural values that are more pronounced than in domestic political contexts. The pool of qualified women is likely to be limited in IGOs composed of countries with less progressive gender norms, and member state representatives may be more likely to object to female leadership. Women are more likely to receive support in IGOs composed primarily of member states with progressive domestic gender norms (Tallberg et al., 2020). In IGOs with large, diverse memberships, the bench of qualified women will tend to be deep, but women may be blocked by formal features such as unanimity-based decision rules that effectively give every member a veto. In effect, some institutional characteristics are likely to function as barriers against gender equality, generating variation among IGOs (Jalalzai, 2008). Hence:

H1c: The underrepresentation of women in IGOs is affected by IGO-specific factors

Glass Walls

While glass ceiling dynamics help explain the overall prevalence, or lack thereof, of representation in executive leadership positions, "glass walls" contribute to our understanding of

where representation is impeded or horizontal discrimination across issue areas. Glass walls amount to occupational segregation, where women tend to find themselves working in certain issue areas relative to others. Sneed (2007) details three theoretical reasons for the existence of glass walls. The first set of theories stems from men's and women's individual choices regarding education, socialization, and work experience, among others, relating to biological differences. A second group of theories traces occupational segregation to labor market and organizational discrimination. Here, differences result from institutions and current leaders hiring individuals who are similar to themselves. For example, research into US-state bureaucracies and municipal bureaucracies suggests that glass walls exist in agencies with distributive and regulatory policy portfolios, while there was little occupational segregation in redistributive agencies, owing to different factors, including client relationships and salary differences between agency types, among others (Kerr et al., 2002; Miller et al., 1999). Such institutional discrimination does leave the potential for greater diversity if a woman can break through the glass wall and adjust hiring practices. Finally, there may be systemic barriers to attaining positions that structure broader labor markets. In the domestic political context, this could include the gendering of certain ministerial portfolios, where women are disproportionately afforded opportunities in areas like health, education, and family affairs that are related to traditional gender conceptions (Krook & O'Brien, 2012).

Beyond the gendering of certain portfolios, prior research also suggests that women may have a more difficult time accessing prestigious ministerial appointments. Prestigious portfolios stand out for their visibility, the level of policy control, and the availability of resources, yet they do not necessarily completely overlap with gendered portfolios. For instance, feminine portfolios like health and education could be considered medium-prestige appointments, while masculine

portfolios like science and technology are considered low-prestige (Krook & O'Brien, 2012).

There are some grounds to believe that glass walls may be particularly pronounced for leadership selection in IGOs. Domestic cabinet portfolios are generally characterized by some rotation by executive discretion, and the allocation of ministers is not necessarily tied to prior policy expertise. The appointment process of an IGO leader involves less discretion, as some level of buy-in from other member states is necessary. Furthermore, IGO oversight is generally delegated to relevant government agencies, such as finance ministries for international financial institutions. This can entrench glass walls that exist within particular policy domains. For instance, security IGOs are typically overseen by domestic defense ministries, where male domination is common at the staff and leadership levels (Barnes & O'Brien, 2018). This could create a compounding effect whereby glass walls that are present in domestic political contexts diminish the pipeline of qualified female candidates and hinder their selection at the international level (Field, 2021).

In the context of international organizations, in what functional areas are women more likely to attain leadership roles? Focusing on glass walls in the case of gender representation in leadership positions within the UN system, Haack (2014, p. 47) describes glass walls as referring to how women are directed into functional areas that are deemed to be "gender appropriate" and therefore lacking in importance compared to the functional areas dominated by men. Within the UN system, Haack (2014) categorized portfolios relating to welfare, poverty and human rights as being synonymous with "soft" feminine issues, while security, trade, industrial development, economic, and agricultural portfolios constitute "hard" masculine issues. Overall, Haack (2014) found, using data from 2009, that women had more representation, both as leaders and in the secretariat, within UN agencies associated with "soft" functional areas. Hence, we hypothesize:

H2a: Women are less likely to be appointed to leadership roles in IGOs that occupy a traditionally "male" issue area.

Glass walls may also not simply manifest in terms of issue area but also in terms of an IGO's relative degree of prominence. Given findings in domestic politics that women are more likely to attain positions in less prominent ministries, we hypothesize that:

H2b: Women are less likely to be appointed to leadership roles in prominent IGOs

Glass Cliffs

Another factor that can explain the timing of female leadership appointments is often referred to as a "glass cliff." In domestic politics, women often find themselves contesting elections in constituencies where their chances of winning are limited, or they are appointed to leadership roles during times of crisis (Ryan et al., 2010). Similar dynamics have been demonstrated in business as well, where women are more likely to be appointed as CEOs when firm performance is weak (Cook & Glass, 2014).

The glass cliff stems from difficult circumstances – such as scandals, crises, or performance challenges – rendering leadership positions less appealing to men, thereby opening a precarious window of opportunity for women to assume high-risk roles. In such scenarios, should institutional inefficacies arise, women can become scapegoats to bear the blame for organizational failure (Sabharwal, 2015). The metaphor of the "glass cliff," therefore, derives from the sense of danger and liability uniquely associated with the leadership positions that women frequently occupy. Glass cliff effects have been identified in domestic political leadership roles: for instance, women

are more likely to be appointed to ministerial positions that are bearing austerity-induced cuts under IMF programs (Heinzel, Kern, et al., 2024). Qualitative studies of IGOs have also identified glass cliff dynamics in specific cases, where the onset of a crisis within an organization precipitates the breaking of the glass ceiling and the elevation of a woman to a leadership position (Haack, 2017). We thus propose:

> *H3: Women are more likely to be appointed to IGOs experiencing difficulties, such as a scandal or crisis.*

A New Dataset on IGO Leaders

We collected an original dataset that tracks the nationality and gender identity characteristics of the highest-ranking executives of IGOs from 1966 to 2019. Our dataset covers 400 IGOs drawn from the Correlates of War (COW) International Organizations dataset (Pevehouse et al., 2020). The dataset begins in 1966 to coincide with the annual availability of the COW dataset, and we extended the data for IGOs present in 2014 through 2019. The data is essentially comprehensive for prominent IGOs, with some missing information on the characteristics of leaders for obscure and defunct IGOs, particularly during the early years.

The highest-ranking executive of an IGO was determined based on the following criteria: 1) the individual is the highest-ranking official responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the IGO based on the articles of agreement or official records of the IGO, the roles and responsibilities specified on the IGO website, or the IGO's organizational structure in the Yearbook of International Organizations (YIO) (Union of International Associations, 2022); and

2) the official functions as an employee of the IGO rather than as a representative of a specific member state.[2] After identifying the highest-ranking position of each organization in our dataset, we then compiled a list of individuals holding those positions.[3] Individuals were identified through *YIO Volume 6: Who's Who in International Organizations*, official records of the IGO such as annual reports, information available on IGO websites, and direct communication with the IGO.

For each individual executive, we collected information on a variety of individual characteristics, one of which we examine in this paper: gender. Information on gender was collected through the YIO or biographical details on an organization's website. In cases where gender was not explicitly identified in these sources, gender was inferred through pronouns used to refer to the executive in official documents and communications from the IGO, as well as other credible sources. Gender was coded as a male/female binary as we were not able to identify leaders in the dataset who openly identified as nonbinary.

Empirical Analysis

In this section, we present an empirical examination of our hypotheses concerning the presence of glass ceilings, glass walls, and glass cliff dynamics within international organizations. We draw on descriptive and statistical analysis of our dataset as well as qualitative evidence from the biographical information of female leaders assembled during our data collection. Overall, we

[2] Examples of titles often used by highest ranking executives include Secretary General, Managing Director, President, among others.

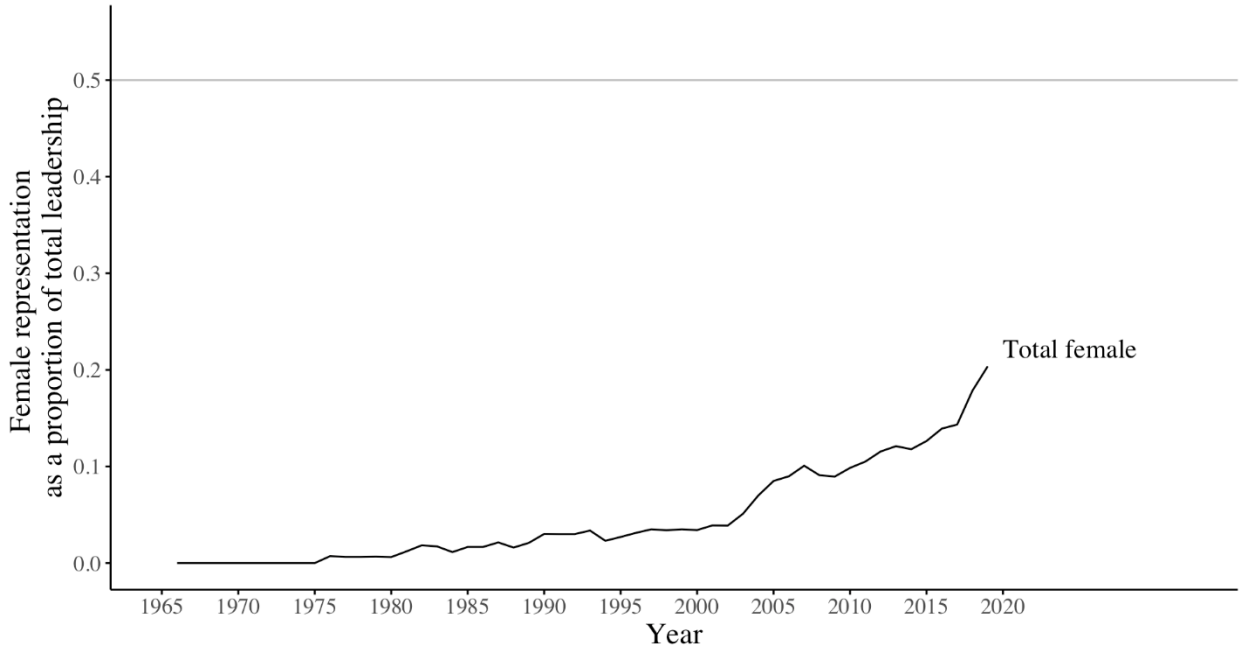
[3] In cases of more than one individual sharing the equal status of the highest-ranking executive in an IGO (e.g., Co-President, Joint Manager), all such leaders are included in the dataset. We identified four cases of IGOs with more than one highest-ranking executive in a given year in our dataset: ACP-EU Joint Assembly (ACPEU), European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), and the International Moselle Company (IMC). See Appendix A 3.2 for more details of each IGO listed above.

find compelling evidence consistent with glass ceiling and glass wall dynamics, while the evidence for glass cliffs is weaker.

Glass Ceiling

Our first hypothesis considers the extent to which women are underrepresented in IGO leadership positions. Figure 1 depicts the share of female leaders in IGOs during the entire time period covered by our dataset. Women have been consistently underrepresented in IGO leadership positions relative to men. Based on our dataset, there were no female IGO leaders at all until 1976. The share of women increased only very gradually in subsequent decades, somewhat accelerating after the turn of the century. However, in 2019, women still accounted for only 20 percent of total IGO leadership positions.

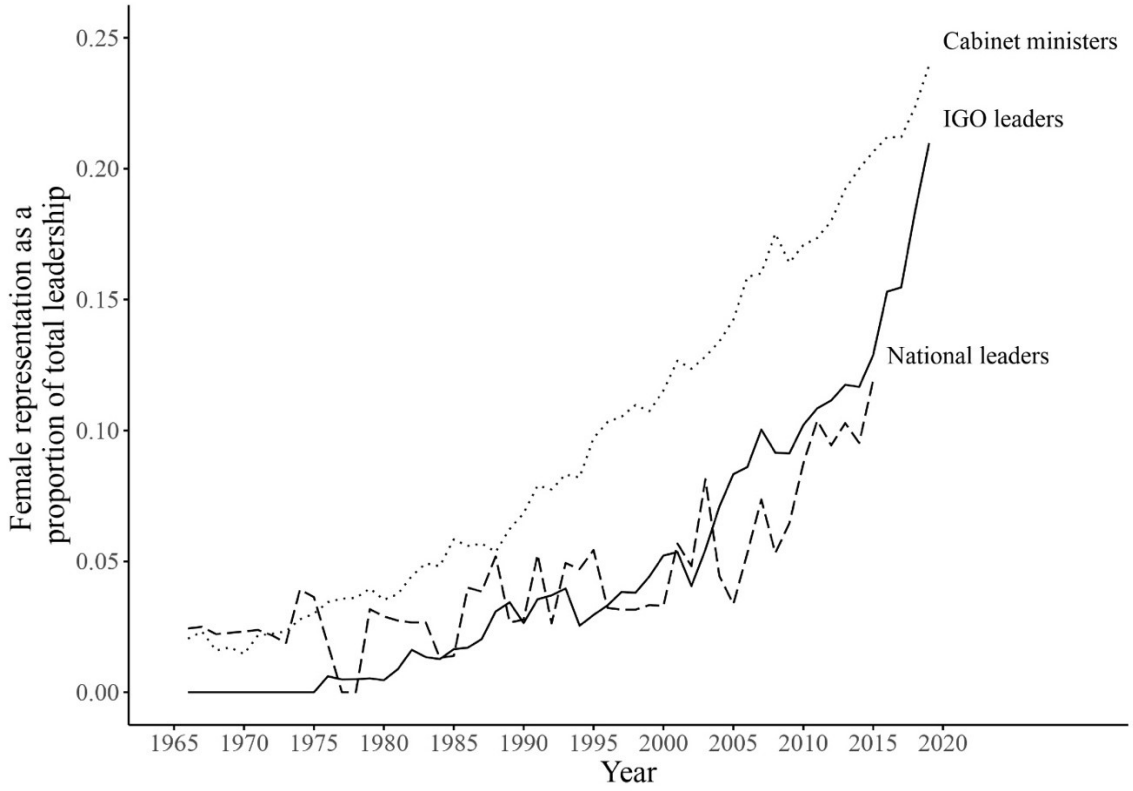
Figure 1: Share of Female Representation in IGOs



Note: This plots the share of female leaders as a proportion of total leadership. Overall, the share of female leaders in IGOs over time has increased only marginally and remained low. The share of female leaders in IGOs has increased over time, with females first assuming leadership positions in 1976.

In Figure 2, we compare female representation in IGOs to female representation in political leadership positions at the domestic level. IGO leadership representation generally lagged behind national leader positions (e.g. presidents, prime ministers) until around 2000, after which the numbers became comparable or higher (national leadership data is only available until 2015). The share of women in IGO leadership positions has more clearly lagged behind the share of women in national cabinets. While the representation of women in national cabinets has gradually increased since the 1970s, the share of female leaders within IGOs started increasing later. We would note, however, that the rate of progress in IGO leadership has been relatively rapid during the most recent period, closing some of the gap with cabinet ministers.

Figure 2: Share of Female Representation in National Cabinets and IGOs



Note: This figure plots the proportion of female leaders among cabinet ministers across countries and IGO leaders. Overall, female representation is higher in national cabinets than among IGO leaders. Data on cabinet members are from the WhoGov dataset (Nyrup & Bramwell, 2020). Data on national leaders are from the Archigos dataset (Goemans et al., 2009), which contains information on political leaders until only 2015.

The descriptive data is clearly consistent with hypothesis H1a: women continue to be considerably underrepresented in IGO leadership positions, with effectively no representation until the mid-1970s. In addition, the representation of women in IGO leadership roles has lagged behind domestic cabinet ministers, suggesting the presence of distinct barriers.

Next, we consider H1b, the extent to which bias in leadership selection may be influenced by country-specific factors of the leader's home country. Glass-ceiling dynamics in the context of domestic politics have been found across countries, including those with relatively progressive

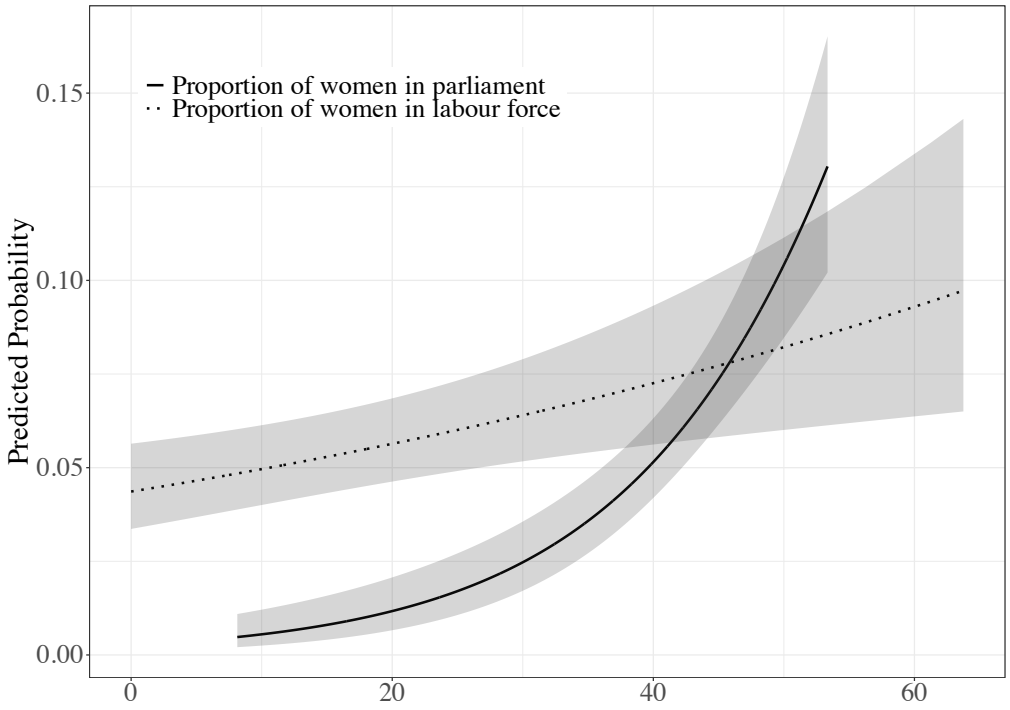
gender norms (Folke & Rickne, 2016). However, we hypothesize that countries with relatively progressive gender norms are more likely to empower qualified female leaders and nominate them for IGO leadership positions. Conversely, domestic glass ceilings in countries with less progressive gender norms should translate to a weaker pipeline at the international level.

The dependent variable is a binary indicator of the gender (male/female) of an IGO leader, and we use logit models covering the available years of our dependent variable, 1966 to 2019. We account for time dependence using cubic polynomials (i.e. t, t^2, t^3) as suggested by Carter and Signorino (2010). In all models, we control for GDP per capita and regime type (polity scores). These variables are plausibly associated with both the independent and dependent variables but through other mechanisms. For example, economic development tends to be associated with progressive domestic gender norms, but it may affect leader selection through other mechanisms, such as the political consequences of natural resource wealth. Democracies may be more susceptible to international shaming about their track record on gender equality, creating pressure to nominate female leaders.

As the independent variables of interest, we consider variables that are direct proxies for domestic gender norms. In the first model (see Appendix C for full regression tables), we proxy societal gender norms with the inclusion of two measures: the proportion of women in the labor force (to capture broad societal trends) and the proportion of women in parliament (to capture progressivity in norms surrounding women in political positions) in the leader's country of citizenship. The substantive results of interest are presented in Figure 3, with full regression results in the appendix. Both measures are statistically significant and consistent with our prediction that more progressive gender norms in a leader's home country increase the probability that an IGO leader from that country is a woman. The average marginal effect of a percentage point increase

in the proportion of women in the labor force is associated with a 0.6 percent increase in the probability that an IGO leader is a woman, while the average marginal effect of a one percentage point increase in the proportion of women in parliament is associated with an 0.1 percent increase in the probability of an IGO leader being a woman, all else equal. Across all models, democracy is positively associated with female leadership, while GDP/capita is either negatively associated or statistically insignificant. This suggests that democracy may promote female leadership through mechanisms aside from domestic gender norms, such as susceptibility to shaming or civil society activism. On the other hand, after accounting for domestic gender norms, higher GDP/capita is not meaningfully associated with female representation.

Figure 3: Predicted probabilities of an IGO leader being a woman by domestic gender norms



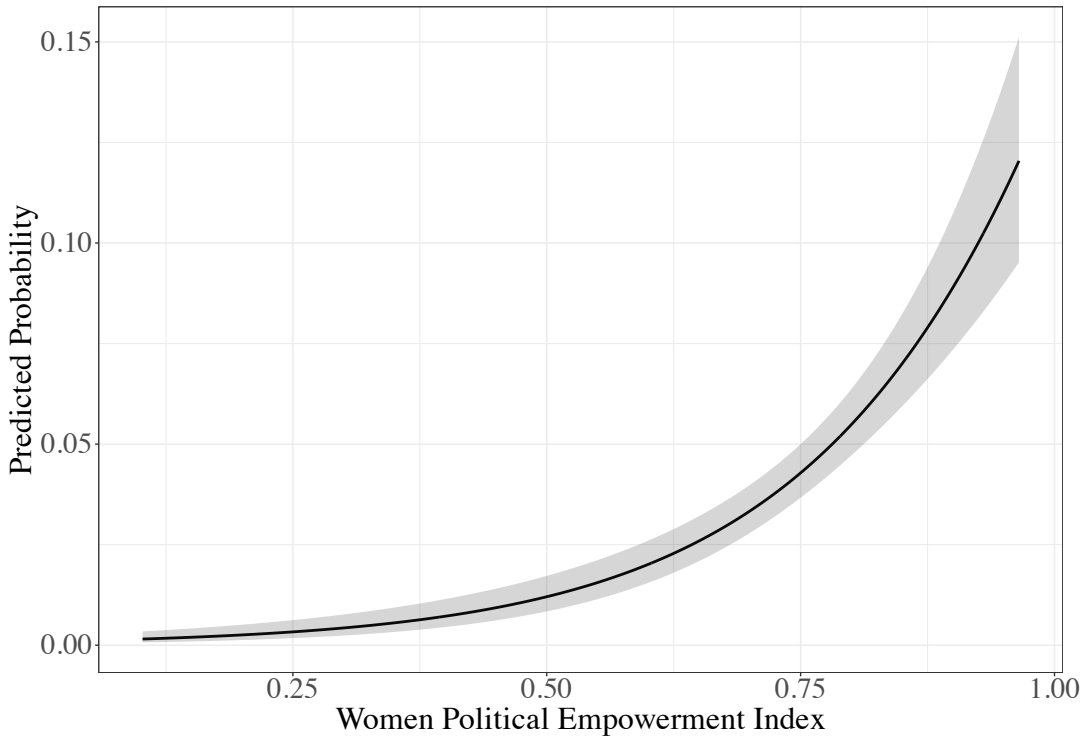
Note: IGO leaders are more likely to be women when they are citizens of countries with high proportions of women in parliament and in the labor force.

We also consider alternative measures of gender norms based on the women political empowerment index in the V-Dem dataset (Coppedge et al., 2023; Pemstein et al., 2023). The women political empowerment index seeks to capture the degree to which women have societal agency, choice, and participation in decision-making processes. It is an aggregate measure comprised of three equally weighted dimensions: women civil liberties, women civil society participation, and women political participation. We include each of the subcomponents in separate models (3-5) to test their individual association with female IGO appointments. Consistent with hypothesis H1b, the aggregate measure of women's empowerment is strongly associated with female IGO leadership (Figure 4). Figure 4 suggests that women are rarely

nominated from countries at low levels of the women political empowerment index. However, we would emphasize that even at the maximal level of the index, the model predicts that less than 15 percent of leaders will be women: domestic gender equality only goes so far in mitigating underrepresentation.

We also considered the relationship between female IGO leadership and the subcomponents of the women political empowerment index. Civil society participation and political participation both have positive, statistically significant relationships with IGO leaders being female. On the other hand, the women civil liberties subcomponent measure is not meaningfully associated with leader gender. Combined with the previous results, this is suggestive of a pipeline mechanism, i.e. more IGO leaders are nominated when more women are actively participating in politics, the labor force, and civil society at the domestic level.

Figure 4: Predicted probability of IGO leader being a woman by WPE Index



Note: IGO leaders are more likely to be women when they are citizens of countries that score high on women's political empowerment.

In Table 1, we depict the top 15 countries in our dataset ranked by total number of IGO leader years, along with the share of leadership positions held by women. The table depicts two time periods, one reflecting the entirety of the dataset and one beginning in 2000 in order to consider changing gender norms over time. Focusing on that later period, of the countries with their nationals holding the most leadership positions, Sweden and France saw the largest share of women holding IGO leadership positions at 27 and 26 percent, respectively. This was followed by the United States and Germany, which both saw 20 percent or more of their nationals holding IGO leadership positions since 2000 being women. At the low end, Belgium, Cameroon, and Senegal saw no women holding IGO leadership positions, even post-2000. Overall, while there is

some progress in the appointment of women to IGO leadership positions, in all cases, parity remains distant.

Table 1: IGO Leadership and Gender, Top 15 Countries Ranked by Total Number of Leaders

Country	1966-2019		2000-2019	
	Total Leadership Positions	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Women	Total Leadership Positions	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Women
France	121	12%	46	26%
United Kingdom	97	8%	40	18%
United States	81	6%	21	24%
Netherlands	57	2%	21	5%
Germany	48	13%	25	20%
Japan	46	9%	21	19%
Brazil	38	3%	22	5%
Mexico	38	8%	23	9%
Nigeria	36	3%	17	6%
India	34	6%	14	7%
Sweden	29	10%	11	27%
Russia	28	4%	16	0%
Belgium	27	0%	7	0%
Cameroon	27	0%	9	0%
Senegal	23	0%	5	0%

We next consider H1c, i.e. the extent to which the representation of women is affected by IGO-specific factors. We include four primary independent variables of interest to capture IGO-specific factors that could influence representation. The first is the level of progressive gender norms within an organization, proxied by the V-Dem women political empowerment score averaged over an IGO's membership. The presumption is that women seeking leadership roles are likely to face greater barriers in IGOs composed of members from countries with relatively nonprogressive gender norms. We also include a measure of IGO age based on the premise that older IGOs may be locked into values and norms from earlier eras due to path dependence. Another

institution-specific measure is membership size. Large memberships can potentially increase the pool of qualified female leaders, as IGOs are typically led by a citizen of a member state. However, large memberships may also impede change by generating collective action problems and making it more difficult to build a consensus in favor of change. These difficulties may be exacerbated in the presence of unanimity voting rules, which enable any member state to block change. The model details are the same as above, except we control for the average GDP per capita and average polity score of all IGO members rather than those measures for the leader's home country.

The results are presented in Table A2. For our first independent variable of interest, we find a statistically significant association between average women political empowerment at the IGO level and female leadership. The difference in the predicted probability of an IGO with an average women empowerment score in the first quartile versus one in the third is 5.5 percentage points, meaning that an organization in the third quartile is 5.5 percentage points more likely to have a woman in the leadership position, all else equal. We also find statistically significant associations between the institution-specific variables of age and membership size with female leadership. Older institutions are less likely to have female leaders, which is consistent with a glass ceiling effect based on institutional path dependence. On the other hand, membership size is *positively* associated with female leadership – although large memberships can make decision-making more cumbersome, counteracting effects, such as increasing the potential pool of qualified women, may be more important. Unanimity voting rules by themselves are not meaningfully associated with leader gender.

We also considered the possibility that the effect of IGO age and membership size on leader gender might be conditional on voting rules. For example, it is possible that unanimous voting rules work to lock in discriminatory path-dependencies in older organizations or that it is harder

to reach a consensus on female leadership candidates when there are large memberships. We find results consistent with this possibility in the case of IGO age – old IGOs with unanimity rules are particularly unlikely to have female leaders. Meanwhile, the interaction between membership size and unanimity rules was statistically insignificant – it appears that large memberships do not impede female representation, even in the presence of consensus-based decision-making.

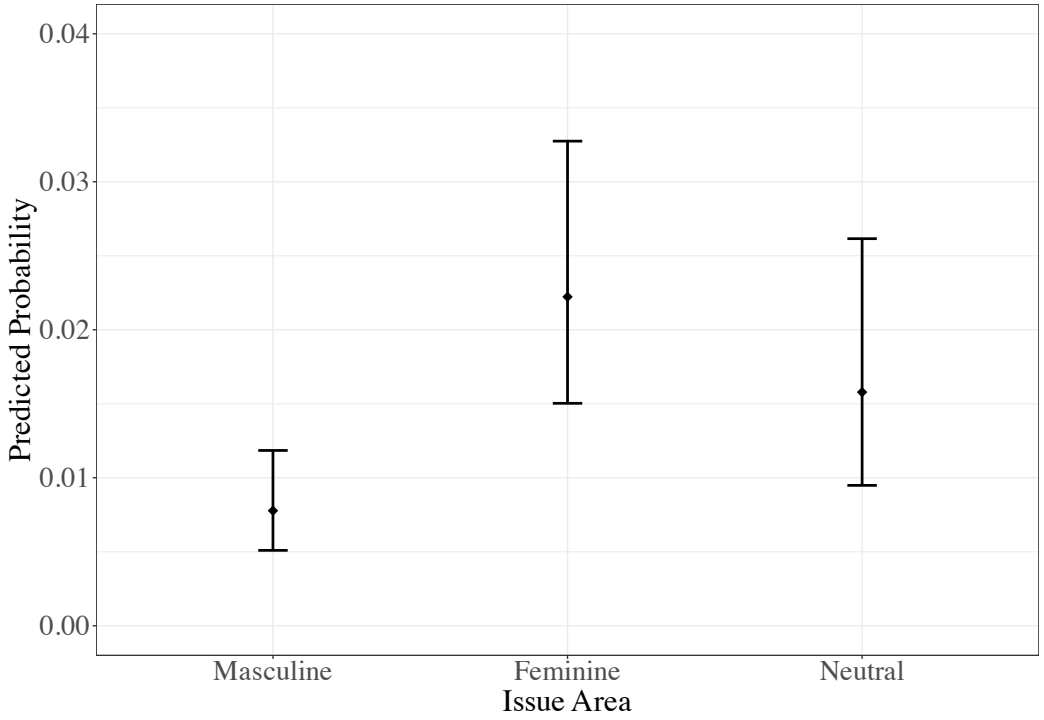
Glass Walls

Turning to glass walls, we consider two hypotheses. First, with H2a, we theorize that women are less likely to be appointed to IGOs that operate in masculine issue areas. We categorize gendered IGO issue areas by overlaying Krook and O'Brien's (2012) classification of gendered domestic ministries onto Blake and Peyton's (2015) issue classifications for IGOs (see Appendix A for further details).[4] We use the variables from H1c as the controls to account for the possibility that these variables are associated with issue areas for reasons outside of our theory. We include separate independent variables for masculine and feminine issue areas to consider if there are independent effects on leader gender.

We find evidence consistent with bias against female leadership in traditionally "masculine" issue areas. Figure 5 depicts the predicted probabilities of a woman leader based on our categorization of issue areas. In masculine issue areas, women are only predicted to hold about 1 percent of leadership positions, while they are predicted to hold just over 2 percent of such positions in feminine issue areas. This difference is both substantively and statistically significant. The full regression results are available in Table A3.

[4] Multi-issue IGOs were coded as "neutral."

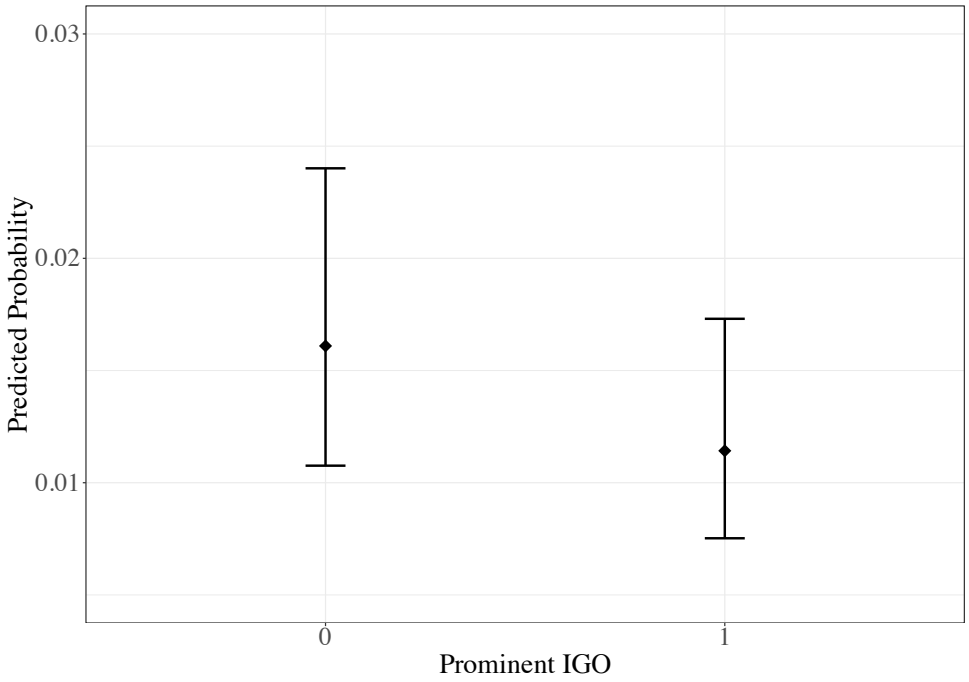
Figure 5: Predicted probabilities of an IGO leader being a woman by issue area



Note: IGO leaders are less likely to be women in traditionally "masculine" issue areas.

We also hypothesized that women would be less likely to be appointed to leadership positions in prominent IGOs. Our subset of prominent IGOs is derived from Hooghe et al.'s (Hooghe et al., 2019) classification of 76 prominent organizations in their *Measuring International Authority* dataset. The variable is coded dichotomously, with a prominent IGO coded as "1" and a non-prominent IGO coded as "0." The model details are identical to the previous one, except for the substitution of the independent variable of interest. As Figure 6 shows, the location of the point estimates is consistent with the hypothesis, but the difference is not statistically significant at the 95 percent level (see Table A4 for full regression results).

Figure 6: Predicted probabilities of an IGO leader being a woman



Note: The point estimates indicate that IGO leaders are less likely to be women in prominent IGOs, though the difference falls short of statistical significance.

Glass Cliffs

Finally, we consider H3, the extent to which glass cliffs are present in IGOs. Glass cliffs imply that women are more likely to be appointed as IGO leaders during periods of crisis, such as a major scandal or severe performance problems. The challenge with testing this hypothesis is identifying a suitable measure of institutional crisis that has applicability across a wide range of IGOs and is not idiosyncratic to a specific organization or issue area.

To address this problem, we coded an original dataset of IGO scandals based on primary and secondary sources. An IGO scandal is defined as a leadership and/or institutional crisis in the IGO that compromises the reputation and credibility of the IGO and/or impedes its ability to perform its mandated functions. We code a scandal as occurring when the leader of an IGO,

multiple IGO personnel, or the IGO itself faces allegations of corruption, harassment or other forms of misconduct which affect the ability of the IGO to dispense its mandated roles and/or damages the reputation of the IGO. We also include extraordinary internal crises, such as a withdrawal of funds or the exit of a member if it severely impedes the ability of the IGO to function. A detailed explanation of how an IGO scandal is identified is included in Appendix A.

We also consider two alternative measures. The first is the share of members in the IGO experiencing financial crises (e.g., banking, currency, and debt crises) (Nguyen et al., 2022). If a large number of member states are experiencing financial crises, this could disrupt an IGO's activities by, for example, reducing financial contributions to the IGO or destabilizing the domestic politics of member states. The second is the share of state dyads within an IGO that are in conflict with each other, estimated from the Militarized Interstate Disputes (v5.0) dataset (Palmer et al., 2022). IGOs with a large share of states in conflict with each other may face serious difficulties in reaching decisions or carrying out regular functions.

All statistical models include the control variables used in the previous section, along with the gender empowerment index for the home country of the leader and institutional variables that were found to be meaningfully associated with female leadership appointments. As a robustness check, we also lag the crisis variables by varying numbers of years, as it may take several years for a leadership change to occur, even in the presence of a crisis.

Our findings for the scandal variable are presented in Table A5. As the first column shows, the presence of a scandal is weakly associated with a woman being in the leadership position of an IGO. However, this could be due to scandals occurring after a female leader is already in place. In the second column, we recode the dependent variable such that only the first year in office of a female leader is coded as "1." In this case, there is no meaningful association between scandals

and female leadership. We experimented with various lag structures and alternative model specifications, but the basic conclusion was the same: there is some evidence that scandals are more likely to surface during the tenure of female leaders, while there is little systematic evidence that scandals precede a transition to female leadership. For example, in the raw data, scandals were associated with female IGO leadership about four times more frequently compared to male IGO leadership.

There are two potential interpretations of this finding. The first is that female leaders are more prone to corruption or mismanagement compared to their male counterparts. The second is that our scandal measure is a lagging indicator. We code scandals based on publicly available information, such as media reports and criminal prosecutions. However, scandals may reflect underlying problems – such as a culture of corruption or intensifying internal conflicts – which are more readily observable at an earlier stage to IGO member states and officials who oversee leadership selection. We consider the second interpretation more plausible, especially in light of the qualitative evidence we present below. However, it is not possible to rule out the first interpretation in a strict statistical sense. The other proxies for IGO crises we tested – member financial crises and militarized disputes – were, for the most part, not meaningfully associated with female representation (see Table A6 for full regression results). We also used an alternative specification based on a Cox proportional hazards model, and the findings were broadly similar (see Table A7).

The mixed results of our statistical tests for glass cliff dynamics in IGOs may reflect the difficulty of identifying institutional crises across diverse institutions in a consistent manner, as well as the possibility that underlying problems only surface as observable crises after a female leader has been appointed. Based on a qualitative survey of female leaders in our dataset, we were

able to identify several cases clearly consistent with glass cliff dynamics. These cases are Christine Lagarde (IMF, 2011-2019), Gro Harlem Bruntland (WHO, 1998-2003), and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (WTO, 2021-present). The presence of these cases suggests that glass cliffs are not entirely absent in the appointment of women to IGO leadership positions despite the absence of systematic evidence.

In 2011, Christine Lagarde was appointed as the Managing Director of the IMF against a backdrop of two major crises. Not only were there significant external shocks the organization was tackling, including an escalating debt crisis in Europe and the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, but Lagarde's ascent to the position also followed an internal institutional scandal: the resignation of former Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who stepped down amid allegations of sexual assault (Chibber, 2011; Haack, 2017). Indeed, in a later interview, Lagarde was asked about her familiarity with the "glass cliff" (Noah, 2019). She affirmed her knowledge of the concept, referencing her own glass cliff moment when she was appointed Managing Director. As part of her response, Lagarde noted, "Whenever the situation is really, really bad, you call in the woman" (Segal & Tsang, 2019). Lagarde's appointment can thus be seen as a strategic maneuver to install a respected and competent female finance minister to salvage the reputation of an institution tarnished by the moral failing of her male predecessor (Haack, 2017).

When Gro Harlem Bruntland assumed the role of Director-General at the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1998, the organization faced significant challenges. Her predecessor, Hiroshi Nakajima, faced intense criticism for fostering an environment rife with cronyism, financial mismanagement, and significant dissatisfaction among member states, all of which contributed to a demoralized staff (Haack, 2017). Furthermore, the WHO was grappling with structural and operational weaknesses that increasingly alarmed donor countries and drew critical

attention in UN evaluation reports (Daes & Daoudy, 1993; Godlee, 1994). These weaknesses include considerable variations in the quality and impact of county-specific work, regional offices struggling with global coherence and coordination, budgetary programs heavily influenced by donor priorities, and continuous failures in addressing the social, economic, and political determinants of health (Daes & Daoudy, 1993; Godlee, 1994; Lidén, 2014). One news report went as far as suggesting that prior to Bruntland's elevation to the leadership position, the WHO displayed "symptoms of a dying organization" (Edwards, 1997). While this case was not coded as a scandal in our data due to the absence of a clear trigger like a formal corruption investigation or member state exit, it is clear that Brundtland was given a daunting mandate to rejuvenate the WHO during a particularly challenging moment and critical juncture in the organization's history.

Finally, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's appointment as the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2021 marked her as both the first woman and the first African to lead the organization. While her accession to the position was already marked by obstacles, including the United States' initial refusal to join the consensus supporting Okonjo-Iweala, she entered office at a time when the WTO faced significant internal and external challenges (WTO, 2021). Global trade was still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, a trade war between the United States and China was intensifying, and there was increasing skepticism about the WTO's trade rules being outdated for the contemporary global economy. In addition, the organization's Appellate Body, arguably the most important dispute settlement mechanism of the WTO, was paralyzed due to disagreements among member states (Pollack, 2023). Moreover, some of the coverage of Okonjo-Iweala's appointment was indicative of the glass ceiling social barriers that discourage women and non-white individuals from pursuing executive positions (Ford, 2021). For example, a headline in a Swiss newspaper read, "This grandmother will become the boss of the WTO,"

although the headline was later changed (Ford, 2021). Senior African leaders at the UN would later condemn the coverage of Okonjo-Iweala's historic appointment as being “sexist and racist” (Ford, 2021). Okonjo-Iweala’s position, therefore, was not just a triumph over shattering the gendered and potentially racial glass ceiling but also involved navigating a precarious path along a “glass cliff” – taking charge during a period of instability, with the added pressure of being a trailblazer in a highly scrutinized, global role.

There are several plausible reasons why glass cliff dynamics may be relatively less common for IGO leadership positions. For domestic ministerial appointments, reputational damage from overseeing an organization in crisis could lead to severe consequences, such as loss of political office. This can create opportunities for women by compelling men to step aside. In many cases, the consequences for IGO leaders are less stark: IGO leaders are generally not elected officials who face potential loss of office. Furthermore, all but the most prominent IGOs are relatively obscure, making it less likely that an organizational crisis will cause irreparable reputational harm. We note that the examples cited above are all leadership positions in prominent institutions. In addition, IGOs are accountable to member states rather than diffuse stakeholders such as voters or shareholders. This might diminish the perceived value of appointing a woman to signal change amidst crises, a major motivation for the appointment of female CEOs in private firms (Reinwald et al., 2023).

The absence of glass cliffs for IGO leadership appointments could be interpreted as good news – women are less likely to be set up for failure through appointments to institutions in crisis. On the other hand, the absence of glass cliffs means women have even fewer mechanisms to attain leadership positions in the first place. It is possible that the absence of glass cliffs may contribute to the relative paucity of women in IGO leadership positions compared to other domains.

Conclusion

We have examined gender equality in the appointment of executive leaders to international organizations. Women face a formidable glass ceiling – despite modest progress over the past fifty years, only about 20 percent of leadership positions in IGOs are occupied by women today. While progressive domestic gender norms are associated with a higher likelihood of female appointments, the absolute numbers still fall drastically short of parity. Women are also held back by a glass wall, with particularly low representation in IGOs occupying traditionally "masculine" issue areas and prominent IGOs. We find limited quantitative evidence for glass cliffs, although we identified qualitative evidence consistent with women being appointed into leadership positions in prominent institutions in particularly challenging circumstances.

Our findings raise several puzzles with important implications for how we understand the role of gender in international politics. Perhaps the most striking puzzle raised by our data is the limited progress in gender equity for female leadership in IGOs. While we find that women are more likely to be appointed as leaders from countries with progressive gender norms, the absolute number of appointments remains astonishingly low. Moreover, women have been represented at consistently higher rates in national cabinets compared to IGOs: the trends we identify do not simply reflect the broader underrepresentation of women in government leadership positions. Although we identified several mechanisms that likely contribute to the difficulty of breaking the glass ceiling in IGOs, there are also reasons to believe IGOs should be ahead of the curve as purveyors of global norms managed by globalized elites. It remains somewhat puzzling why IGOs lag behind so starkly.

Our dataset enables future scholarship to explore the extent to which variation in IGO leadership contributes to variation in salient outcomes. Our dataset also includes coding based on nationality and race, which offers a promising avenue for further research. Bias in IGO leadership may also have a direct effect on substantive outcomes, such as lending volumes and conditionality by international financial institutions, judicial or arbitration decisions, and the substance of treaties and agreements promulgated by IGOs. More research is needed to understand the broader consequences of persistent bias in favor of men in the leadership of IGOs.

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Appendix: Supplementary Materials

A. Coding rules

B. Codebook for dataset

C. Regression tables

D. Detailed discussion of bias in leadership representation among G7 countries and white-majority countries

A. Coding Rules

Personnel Coding Process

The coding of personnel of the IGOs was done as follows: '1' denotes that the personnel is the highest-ranking executive individual within the IGO; '0' denotes that the personnel is not the highest-ranking executive individual within the IGO.

1. An official is considered the highest-ranking executive individual based on the following conditions:
    1. Based on the articles of agreement or official records of the IGO, the roles and responsibilities specified on the IGO website, or the IGO's organizational structure in the Yearbook of International Organization, the individual is the highest ranking official responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the IGO; and
    2. The official functions as an employee of the IGO rather than as a representative of a specific member state.
    3. In cases where detailed information on responsibilities or national representation cannot be located, the highest-ranking individual in the Yearbook of IGOs is coded as the highest-ranking executive.
    4. In cases where more than one individual shares equal status that satisfies the above rules, they are both coded as 1.

2. Highest-ranking positions are confirmed on the following basis:
    1. Through the articles of agreement, official records, or website of the IGO;
    2. Through the Structure section of the IGO in the Yearbook of International Organizations, referred to as "YIO Structure"; or
    3. In cases where the preceding two were either unavailable or did not clearly specify the highest-ranking position of the IGO, the executive position listed in the Yearbook of International Organizations, referred to as "YIO Listing."

In cases of conflicting information, the sources above are prioritized in the order listed.

3. For YIO Listing, the titles of the highest-ranking executive individual include:
    - Secretary
    - Secretariat
    - Executive Secretary
    - Executive Secretariat
    - Permanent Secretary
    - Secretary General
    - Director
    - Executive Director
    - Managing Director

- Bureau Director
- Director General
- General Manager
- President
- Governor
- Executive Officer
- Chief Executive Officer
- Chairman
- Chancellor
- Registrar
- Officer

1. Examples of highest-ranking individual in the IGO (coded as '1'):

Advisory Centre on WTO Law (ACWL) (25)

The institutional structure of the ACWL consists of the General Assembly, the Management Board and the Executive Director.

The **General Assembly** is the ACWL's highest decision-making body, consisting of representatives of member states.

The **Management Board** is responsible for the decisions necessary to ensure the efficient and effective operation of the ACWL, functions independently of the General Assembly, and is headed by the Executive Director.

The **Executive Director** manages the ACWL's day-to-day operations.

While the General Assembly is the supreme decision-making organ of the ACWL, it is made up of the Heads and State of Government of Contracting Parties. The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, along with other Heads of State are representative of their respective countries. The Executive Director on the other hand, functions independently of the General Assembly, and is responsible for coordination and management of executive activities or duties. Thus, the Executive Director is coded with a '1.'

International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) (2670)

The institutional structure of the ICRI consists of the Coordination and Planning Committee, and Secretariat.

The **Coordination and Planning Committee** consists of representatives from founding countries, multilateral banks, international agencies, NGOs, scientific bodies, the private sector, one representative from each ICRI region, and at least one representative of one other country from that region.

The **Secretariat** is co-chaired by two Directors.

Since the Secretariat is co-chaired by two Directors, both function as the highest-ranking executive responsible for the management of the organization as equals. Thus, both Directors are coded as '1.'

2. Examples of non-highest-ranking individual in the IGO (coded as '0'):

Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) (2040)

The Executive Leadership Team is headed by the Director General.

The Secretary-Editor listed is not the Director General. Thus, the Secretary-Editor is coded with a '0.'

Group of Fifteen (G-15) (1910)

The highest-ranking individual cannot be confirmed through articles of agreement, official records, or website of the IGO, nor the Structure section of the IGO in the Yearbook of International Organizations. The highest-ranking individual will be substantiated by YIO Listing. However, since the title of the executive personnel listed in the Yearbook of International Organizations is atypical of the list of terms used to denote the highest-ranking personnel of IGOs, it is coded as '0.' Thus, the Technical Support is coded with a '0.'

3. Exceptions and additional notes:

1. Highest-ranking individual functions as an employee of the IGO and as a representative of a specific member state

Mano River Union (MRU) (3480)

The institutional structure of the MRU consists of the Union Summit of Heads of State & Government, the Union Ministerial Council, Technical Commission of the Union, and the General Secretariat.

The **Summit of Heads of State & Government** consists of representatives of member states.

The **Ministerial Council** consists of Economics and Finance Ministers of member states.

The **Technical Commission** reports to the Ministerial Council.

The **General Secretariat** is led by the Secretary General.

The post of Secretary General is not to be occupied by a national of the Secretariat's host country (Sierra Leone), as such Guinea, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire alternate at a four-year interval.

Since the position of the Secretary General is responsible for the management of the IGO, but is occupied by the nationals of Guinea, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire on a four-year term, the individual is both an employee of the IGO and a representative of a member state. Thus, the Secretary General is coded with a '1.'

2. Highest-ranking individual had a title change

Central European Initiative (CEI) (1080)

The Executive Secretariat is responsible for the overall guidance and orientation for CEI activities.

The Executive Secretariat is headed by the Director General. In 2008, there was a change of titles of the executive level of the Secretariat, leading to the replacement of the Director General by the Secretary General.

Thus, from 1989 to 2007, the Director General is coded as '1' and from 2008 to the present, the Secretary General is coded as '1.'

3. Highest-ranking individual is addressed by two synonymous or interchangeable titles

Central Office for International Railway Transport (OTIF) (1090)

The Secretary General manages the Organization.

In 2006 and preceding years, the Yearbook provided the title of Director General. On 9 and 10 September 2009, Mr. Stefan Schimming was reappointed as the Secretary General of OTIF until 2012. During the same time period, in 2010, Mr. Schimming was referred to as the Director General of OTIF at the UIC Global Rail Freight Conference.

Since the Secretary General and Director General are used interchangeably in reference to the highest-ranking executive individual of OTIF, the two titles are synonymous with one another. Thus, both the Secretary General and Director General are coded as '1.'

4. For personnel names that are not available in YIO V.1, external sources are consulted.

External search is conducted in Google (main search, image search, news search), Google Scholar, Google Books, and Factiva.

Search terms:

- "[IGO]" (long organization name and short organization name; with and without quotes) AND "[position]" (OR [year])
- "[position]" site: IGO_site (or other relevant site)

List of sources consulted:

- Yearbooks
- Press releases and archives from IGO website
- Other datasets e.g. Novosad and Werker (2016)

While the YIO V.1 serves as the primary source for IGO personnel names, there are instances where external information is in conflict with information in the YIO. In such cases, we default to information provided by the IGO itself and overwrite information provided in the Yearbook.

5. For individuals whose biographical information was missing or incomplete in YIO V.6, external web and literature searches were used to complement existing information.

To conduct an external search:

- [Title - optional] + [Full Name] + [Name of IGO - long name or abbreviation]
    - + "nationality"
    - + "biography"
    - + "curriculum vitae"
    - + "education"

While some sources clearly indicate the nationality of an individual, others are inferred. For example, if an individual has undertaken a position in the government (i.e. a civil servant, a representative or delegate of a country to an international body or post abroad), it is implied that the individual is a citizen of the country.

Examples of sources considered as credible:

- Reference books of leading world figures
- Government website
- IGO website
- Biography published in annual reports, conference proceedings, seminar presentation
- IGO news publications
- Individual's website (curriculum vitae, LinkedIn)
- News media

While the YIO V.6 serves as the primary source for IGO personnel biographical information, there are instances where external information is in conflict with information in the YIO. In such cases, we default to information provided by the IGO itself and overwrite information provided in the Yearbook.

(vi) Transition years were coded following a two step process. If the month or day when the transition occurred are known, the individual who held the executive position for the majority of the year was listed in the given year. In cases, where the transition year was not known, the individual who held the position at the end of the year was listed.

Variable Coding Process

Variables were coded in the following manner:

Variable	**Coding Instructions**
Date of Birth	Code the year in which the individual was born.
Gender	Code as M, F, or Other -- gender either explicitly stated in documents or inferred from pronouns (e.g. “Madam”, “she”, “he”).
Education	Code the degree name, university where the degree was received, and the country that the university is in. Bachelors, Master’s, and Doctorates are individually coded. Other types of degrees (i.e. diploma’s, JD’s, MD’s, executive degrees, etc.) are coded under “other.degree”.
Married	Code whether the individual has been married.
Birth Place (Born)	Code place of birth at country-level. Code at sub-national level where information is available.
Nationality	Code the country of which the individual is a citizen, either explicitly stated in documents or inferred based on a position in the government.
Children	Code total number of children.
Languages	Code the languages the individual knows at any level of proficiency.

Issue Area Coding

The issue area classification for IGOs adheres to the coding rules established by Blake and Payton (2014). Blake and Payton (2014) categorize IGOs into one of ten mutually exclusive issue categories or a residual category (“Other – Miscellaneous”).

1. Security: issue area is international security,
   Key words: defense, peacekeeping, military cooperation;
2. Economic – Not Commodity, Not a Bank: issue area is economic other than banks or commodity,
   Key words: industry/industrial, trade, tax, development;
3. Bank: issue area is a bank or fund,
   Key words: bank, finance, import, export, investment, fund;
4. Commodity: issue area is a commodity organization,
   Key words: sugar, groundnut, coffee, oil palm, timber, iron ore, agriculture/agricultural, mineral resources, rubber, cocoa, tin, banana, lead, zinc, sugar, tea, petroleum, wheat, wool;
5. Environment: issue area is environment,
   Key words: pollution, plant, fisheries, river, water;
6. Health: issue area is health,
   Key words: nutrition, disease, health;
7. Transport: issue area is transportation;
   Key words: road, navigation, port, highway, railway;
8. We separate Blake and Payton's (2015) initial category "Science or Education,"
   a. Science: issue area is science,
      Key words: biology, chemistry, chemical, physics, technical/technician, space, engineering, research, statistics; copyright, patent, IP
   b. Education: issue area is education,
      Key words: study, pedology, literacy, examinations, teaching;
9. Telecom: issue area is telecommunication,
   Key words: TV, radio, communications, telecommunications, telephony, postal;
10. Other – Miscellaneous: miscellaneous issue area, where the IGO's fundamental mission, purpose, or aim does not fit within the ten predefined issue categories;
11. General: IGO is multi-issue, encompassing several fundamental missions, purposes, and aims;
12. Economic – All: issue area is one of the three categories of economic IGOs above.

Their dataset covers 266 IGOs, whose classification are adopted directly.

For IGOs in our dataset that do not already have a classification, we apply Blake and Payton's (2015) categories to classify the IGO based on information obtained from the organization's charter, statutes, and official website. From these sources, we identify the section that describes the core mandate, mission, purpose, or objective of the IGO. In cases where this description clearly aligns with a specific category, we code the IGO as being within that issue area. [General/Other coding]

For IGOs that have ceased operations, dissolved, become inactive, or lack accessible charters, statutes, and official websites, the "Aims," "Subjects," and "UN Sustainable Development Goals" sections of the *Yearbook of International Organizations* is referenced. Each section describes and presents the fundamental missions, purposes, and aims of an IGO. If a section includes keywords from the ten predefined issue area categories, the IGO is classified accordingly. Should multiple

keywords be present, the IGO is placed into the "General" category, reflecting its engagement in several fundamental missions, purposes, and aims. If no relevant keyword is found within any section, the IGO is categorized as "Other – Miscellaneous," indicating that its core mission, purpose, or aim falls outside the issue categories established by Blake and Payton (2015).

IGO Scandal Coding

We construct a measure of IGO scandal for a given year as follows: '1' denotes that an IGO experienced a scandal in a given year; '0' denotes that that the IGO did not experience a scandal in a given year.

Where there is more than one scandal for an IGO in a given year, the year is coded as '1'.

1. An IGO scandal is defined as a leadership and/or institutional crisis in the IGO which compromises the reputation and credibility of the IGO and/or impedes the ability of the IGO to perform its mandated functions. An IGO scandal is identified based on the following conditions:
    - 1.1. The leader of an IGO:
        - 1.1.1. Faces allegations of corruption, fraud, embezzlement, discrimination, harassment or other forms of misconduct where they fail to dispense their mandated roles and/or which damage the reputation of the institution; and
        - 1.1.2. These allegations are made during their tenure as head of the IGO and are subject to formal judicial or investigative processes; or
    - 1.2. Multiple personnel of an IGO:
        - 1.2.1. Face allegations of corruption, fraud, embezzlement, discrimination, harassment or other forms of misconduct that involve them failing to dispense their mandated roles and/or which damage the reputation of the institution; and
        - 1.2.2. These allegations are subject to formal judicial or investigative processes; or
    - 1.3. The IGO itself:
        - 1.3.1. Faces allegations of systemic corruption, fraud, embezzlement, discrimination, harassment or other forms of misconduct where it fails to dispense their mandated roles and/or which damage the reputation of the institution; and
        - 1.3.2. These allegations are subject to formal judicial or investigative processes; or
    - 1.4. The IGO experiences an extraordinary internal crisis that severely reduces its ability to perform its mandated functions. The crisis must go beyond routine political contestation and challenges, and must be triggered by a new problem that clearly alters the ability of the IGO to carry out its functions.
        - 1.4.1. An internal crisis is coded as occurring if a withdrawal of funds or exit of a member leads to publicly expressed concerns by the IGO about its ability to function.

2. A search is conducted on Factiva, Google (main search, news search, and book search) and Google Scholar.
    2.1. For Factiva, the following search terms are applied to Headline and Lead Paragraphs ("Headline and Lead Paragraph" is selected under "search for free-text terms in:") :
        2.1.1. "[IGO long name]" AND (scandal OR crisis OR corrupt* OR fraud* OR alleg*). For example: "International Monetary Fund" AND (scandal OR crisis OR corrupt* or fraud* or alleg*).
    2.2. For Google searches, the following search terms are used:
        2.2.1. "[IGO long name]" AND scandal
        2.2.2. "[IGO long name]" AND crisis
        2.2.3. "[IGO long name]" AND corrupt*
        2.2.4. "[IGO long name]" AND fraud
        2.2.5. "[IGO long name]" AND alleg*
3. The start of a scandal is coded based on the year in which the first news article about the scandal is published. The end of a scandal is coded based on the year in which the last news article describing the scandal as actively ongoing is published or a formal resolution is reached, whichever comes later.
    3.1. In cases where there are no contemporaneous news articles found, we code the date based on the information available in scholarly and other secondary sources.
    3.2. We do not consider a scandal as "actively ongoing" if a news article only describes an ongoing prosecution against an individual/individuals who are no longer affiliated with the IGO

B. Codebook for dataset

io	Short abbreviation of the IGO name. This follows COW International Organizations dataset (Pevehouse et al., 2020).
ioname	Full IGO name. This follows COW International Organizations dataset (Pevehouse et al., 2020).
ionum	IGO id number. This follows COW International Organizations dataset (Pevehouse et al., 2020).
year	Calendar year.
position	Position of highest-ranking executive in IGO.
name	Name of executive leader.
gender	Gender of executive leader.
nationality	Nationality of executive leader.
ccode	COW character country code of nationality of executive leader.
ccode_n	COW numeric country code of nationality of executive leader.

C. Regression tables

Table A1

	Dependent variable:				
	Female leader				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Proportion of women in labour force	0.076***				
	(0.011)				
Proportion of women in parliament	0.013***				
	(0.004)				
Women political empowerment index		5.200***			
		(0.590)			
Women civil liberties index			-0.247		
			(0.441)		
Women civil society participation index				4.838***	
				(0.515)	
Women political participation index					3.796***
					(0.387)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.064	-0.236***	-0.032	-0.196***	-0.115***
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.045)	(0.041)
Polity	0.059***	0.028*	0.110***	0.032**	0.047***
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.014)
Constant	-5.566***	-5.235***	-3.601***	-5.144***	-5.466***
	(0.647)	(0.443)	(0.380)	(0.449)	(0.431)
Observations	5,096	9,565	9,649	9,649	9,565
Log Likelihood	-1,460.758	-1,931.841	-1,976.254	-1,922.920	-1,919.926

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: the model includes cubic polynomials of t to account for time dependence.

Table A2

	Dependent variable:		
	Female leader		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Average women political empowerment index	5.799***	5.983***	5.778***
	(1.633)	(1.647)	(1.636)
IGO age	-0.042***	-0.035***	-0.042***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)
IGO membership size	0.013***	0.013***	0.013***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Unanimity voting rule	-0.373**	0.943**	-0.343*
	(0.150)	(0.427)	(0.196)
IGO age:Unanimity voting rule		-0.034***	
		(0.011)	
IGO membership size:Unanimity voting rule			-0.002
			(0.007)
Average GDP per capita (log)	-1.171***	-1.177***	-1.168***
	(0.129)	(0.130)	(0.129)
Average Polity	0.197***	0.202***	0.196***
	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.049)
Women political empowerment index of leader's home country	0.647	0.559	0.645
	(0.863)	(0.862)	(0.863)
GDP per capita (log) of leader's home country	0.313***	0.313***	0.314***
	(0.083)	(0.083)	(0.083)
Polity of leader's home country	0.005	0.003	0.005
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Constant	0.001	-0.369	-0.008
	(0.909)	(0.926)	(0.910)
Observations	5,969	5,969	5,969
Log Likelihood	-1,041.793	-1,036.288	-1,041.766

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: the model includes cubic polynomials of t to account for time dependence.

Table A3

	Dependent variable:
	Female
Masculine issue area	-0.716***
	(0.191)
Feminine issue area	0.349*
	(0.195)
Average women political empowerment index	6.062***
	(1.640)
IGO age	-0.043***
	(0.005)
IGO membership size	0.011***
	(0.001)
Unanimity voting rule	-0.534***
	(0.156)
Average GDP per capita (log)	-1.174***
	(0.131)
Average Polity	0.166***
	(0.049)
Women political empowerment index of leader's home country	0.690
	(0.886)
GDP per capita (log) of leader's home country	0.324***
	(0.085)
Polity of leader's home country	0.008
	(0.025)
Constant	0.256
	(0.894)
Observations	5,969
Log Likelihood	-1,009.581
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: the model includes cubic polynomials of t to account for time dependence.

Table A4

	Dependent variable:
	Female
Prominent IGO	-0.348**
	(0.152)
Average women political empowerment index	5.710***
	(1.635)
IGO age	-0.040***
	(0.005)
IGO membership size	0.014***
	(0.001)
Unanimity voting rule	-0.281*
	(0.156)
Average GDP per capita (log)	-1.168***
	(0.128)
Average Polity	0.197***
	(0.050)
Women political empowerment index of leader's home country	0.635
	(0.862)
GDP per capita (log) of leader's home country	0.309***
	(0.083)
Polity of leader's home country	0.008
	(0.024)
Constant	0.004
	(0.909)
Observations	5,969
Log Likelihood	-1,039.080
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: the model includes cubic polynomials of t to account for time dependence.

Table A5

	Dependent variable:	
	Female	First Female
	(1)	(2)
IGO Scandal	0.862*	1.074
	(0.472)	(1.063)
Average women political empowerment index	5.749***	2.457
	(1.633)	(3.444)
IGO age	-0.043***	-0.028**
	(0.005)	(0.011)
IGO membership size	0.013***	0.005
	(0.001)	(0.003)
Unanimity voting rule	-0.378**	-0.266
	(0.150)	(0.317)
Average GDP per capita (log)	-1.165***	-0.624**
	(0.129)	(0.267)
Average Polity	0.198***	0.168
	(0.050)	(0.105)
Women political empowerment index of leader's home country	0.579	2.782
	(0.863)	(2.041)
GDP per capita (log) of leader's home country	0.315***	-0.006
	(0.083)	(0.186)
Polity of leader's home country	0.005	-0.010
	(0.024)	(0.054)
Constant	0.058	-2.194
	(0.909)	(1.902)
Observations	5,969	5,969
Log Likelihood	-1,040.296	-293.256
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Note: the model includes cubic polynomials of t to account for time dependence.

Table A6

	Dependent variable:	
	Female	
	(1)	(2)
Share of members in IGO with economic crises	-0.496	
	(0.329)	
Share of dyads in IGO in conflict		-10.955
		(13.006)
Average women political empowerment index	5.852***	5.608***
	(1.605)	(1.646)
IGO age	-0.042***	-0.042***
	(0.005)	(0.005)
IGO membership size	0.013***	0.013***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Unanimity voting rule	-0.369**	-0.368**
	(0.150)	(0.151)
Average GDP per capita (log)	-1.224***	-1.162***
	(0.133)	(0.129)
Average Polity	0.190***	0.197***
	(0.048)	(0.050)
Women political empowerment index of leader's home country	0.714	0.616
	(0.870)	(0.862)
GDP per capita (log) of leader's home country	0.315***	0.312***
	(0.083)	(0.083)
Polity of leader's home country	0.003	0.006
	(0.024)	(0.024)
Constant	0.566	0.118
	(0.962)	(0.921)
Observations	5,969	5,969
Log Likelihood	-1,040.616	-1,041.363
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Note: the model includes cubic polynomials of t to account for time dependence.

Table A7

	Hazard Rate (> 0 means shorter duration)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
IGO scandal	-0.101	-0.070		
	(0.260)	(0.323)		
IGO leader scandal			0.038	
			(0.417)	
IGO institution scandal				-0.209
				(0.506)
Average women political empowerment index		-4.304***	-4.312***	-4.288***
		(1.120)	(1.119)	(1.121)
IGO age		-0.008***	-0.008***	-0.007***
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
IGO membership size		0.004***	0.004***	0.004***
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Unanimity voting rule		-0.425***	-0.425***	-0.425***
		(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)
Average GDP per capita (log)		-0.399***	-0.397***	-0.400***
		(0.082)	(0.081)	(0.082)
Average Polity		0.370***	0.370***	0.370***
		(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Women political empowerment index of leader's home country		-1.494***	-1.501***	-1.492***
		(0.544)	(0.544)	(0.544)
GDP per capita (log) of leader's home country		0.223***	0.223***	0.223***
		(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)
Polity of leader's home country		0.033**	0.033**	0.033**
		(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Observations	10,918	6,074	6,074	6,074

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: This table presents the estimated hazard rate coefficients from the Cox proportional hazards models of the time until a female assumes a leadership position in an IGO.

D. Detailed discussion of bias in leadership representation among G7 countries and white-majority countries

The G7 represents some of the most powerful, economically advanced countries in the world, and member states have appointed a disproportionately large share of IGO leaders during the period included in our dataset. In recent years, G7 countries have also announced commitments to support progressive norms with the goal of rectifying gender- and race-based inequalities. This has included efforts vis-à-vis IGOs, such as a joint statement by the Presidency and several IGO leaders[5] at the 2019 Biarritz Summit, which outlined commitments to mobilize "international organizations in the fight against inequalities" (G7 2019).[6] To what extent do leadership appointments by G7 countries match their rhetorical commitments to racial and gender equality?

Table D1 displays total IGO leadership positions held in our dataset by G7 nationals from 1966 to 2019. Out of a total of 455 leadership positions, only 43 (nine percent) were held by women, and only 54 (12 percent) were held by non-white individuals, with the non-white share largely being the result of Japan's inclusion in the G7. These results are partly attributable to the almost total absence of gender or racial diversity in appointments in the early decades of our dataset. For instance, in the IGOs our dataset covers, only five female G7 nationals held a

[5] This group included the International Labour Organization Director-General, World Bank Group President, International Monetary Fund Acting Managing Director, World Trade Organization Director-General, and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Secretary-General.

[6] While this statement made an explicit connection between IGOs and identity inequities, issues like gender equality have consistently been themes of G7 initiatives including, the 2018 Charlevoix Summit's Commitment of Equality and Economic growth (G7 2018), the 2017 Taormina Summit's Roadmap for a Gender-Responsive Economic Environment (G7 2017), the 2016 Ise-Shima Summit's Guiding Principles for Capacity Building of Women and Girls: Towards Sustainable, Inclusive and Equitable Growth and Peace (G7 2016), the 2015 Elmau Summit's Leader's declaration that committed to advancing women's entrepreneurship (G7 2015), the 2014 Brussels Summit Declaration that affirmed a commitment to end all forms of gender discrimination (G7 2014), and the 2010 Muskoka Summit's initiative on women's and maternal health (G7 2010).

leadership position until approximately the 1990s and no non-white G7 national from a country other than Japan held one until the 2000s.

Table D1: IGO Leadership Position Identity Characteristics by G7 Countries, 1966-2019

Country	Total Leadership Positions	Leadership Positions Held by Women	Leadership Positions Held by Non-White	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Women	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Non-White
Canada	29	3	2	10%	7%
France	121	15	1	12%	1%
Germany	48	6	0	13%	0%
Italy	33	2	1	6%	3%
Japan	46	4	46	9%	100%
United Kingdom	97	8	2	8%	2%
United States	81	5	2	6%	2%
Total	455	43	54	9%	12%

Table D2 presents total IGO leadership positions held in our dataset by G7 nationals from 1990 to 2019. While trends in more recent decades exhibit some improvement, they still fall well short of distributional parity. Only 15 percent of leadership positions held by G7 nationals after 1990 were held by women, with a range of 20 percent of French leadership positions to five percent of Italian leadership positions being held by women. In terms of race, only 16 percent of IGO leadership positions held by G7 nationals since 1990 were held by non-white individuals (32 of 40 of which were held by Japanese nationals). If Japan is excluded from these estimates, only about four percent of leadership positions held by G7 nationals were held by non-white individuals. Aside from Japan, this ranged from 11 percent of Canadian held positions to no non-white individuals from Germany holding IGO leadership positions. Notably, only seven of the 250 leadership positions held by G7 nationals were held by non-white women in the cases of Canada's Michaëlle Jean (La Francophonie), France's Monique Barbut (Global Environmental Facility), the

United Kingdom's Patricia Scotland (The Commonwealth), and Japan's Naoko Ishii (Global Environmental Facility), and Yukiko Omura, Izumi Kobayashi, and Keiko Honda (all Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency).

Table D2: IGO Leadership Position Identity Characteristics by G7 Countries, 1990-2019

Country	Total Leadership Positions	Leadership Positions Held by Women	Leadership Positions Held by Non-White	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Women	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Non-White
Canada	19	2	2	11%	11%
France	69	14	1	20%	1%
Germany	31	5	0	16%	0%
Italy	19	1	1	5%	5%
Japan	32	4	32	13%	100%
United Kingdom	51	7	2	14%	4%
United States	37	5	2	14%	5%
Total	258	38	40	15%	16%

One question is whether white males are prioritized for appointments to the most important IGOs, while women and non-white leaders are appointed to less prominent IGOs in a form of tokenism. Subsetting the 1990-2019 data for G7 countries by prominent versus non-prominent IGOs[7] in the international system (see Tables D3 and D4) produces little change in the overall shares of women or racial minorities being appointed to leadership positions. However, there are some interesting variations at the country level. For instance, all G7 countries except the United States saw a greater share of their nationals appointed to prominent IGOs being women relative to non-prominent IGOs. While in the case of the United States, 16 percent of appointments to non-prominent IGOs were women, while only eight percent of prominent IGO leadership positions

[7] Our subset of organizations is derived from Hooghe et al.'s (2017) classification of 76 prominent organizations in their Measuring International Authority dataset. The more limited list of IGOs allows us to focus our attention on organizations that play prominent roles in international cooperation and coordination efforts and that have been in existence for longer time periods, allowing us to better assess change over time.

going to Americans were held by women. For G7 countries other than Japan, all except two of their non-white appointments were to prominent IGOs. The only two appointments of a non-white individual to a non-prominent IGOs were UK national Suma Chakrabarti's appointment to lead the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and joint Australian/Canadian citizen Pal Ahluwalia's appointment to lead the University of the South Pacific.

Table D3: Prominent IGO Leadership Position Identity Characteristics by G7 Countries, 1990-2019

Country	Total Leadership Positions	Leadership Positions Held by Women	Leadership Positions Held by Non-White	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Women	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Non-White
Canada	9	1	1	11%	11%
France	19	4	1	21%	5%
Germany	9	2	0	22%	0%
Italy	8	1	1	13%	13%
Japan	7	1	7	14%	100%
United Kingdom	10	2	1	20%	10%
United States	12	1	2	8%	17%
Total	74	12	13	16%	18%

Table D4: Non-Prominent IGO Leadership Position Identity Characteristics by G7 Countries, 1990-2019

Country	Total Leadership Positions	Leadership Positions Held by Women	Leadership Positions Held by Non-White	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Women	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Non-White
Canada	10	1	1	10%	10%
France	50	10	0	20%	0%
Germany	22	3	0	14%	0%
Italy	11	0	0	0%	0%
Japan	25	3	25	12%	100%
United Kingdom	41	5	1	12%	2%
United States	25	4	0	16%	0%
Total	184	26	27	14%	15%

We also examined similar statistics for several non-G7 white-majority countries, including Scandinavian countries, the Low Countries, Australia, New Zealand, and Russia, to assess trends in gender and racial diversity (see Table D5). From 1966 to 2019, nationals from these countries held 227 leadership positions, only 13 of which were held by women and one of which was held by a non-white individual. While all of these countries except for Belgium and New Zealand saw at least one female national appointed to an IGO leadership position between 1966 and 2019, the only two countries with female nationals in leadership positions at prominent IGOs in the group were Norway and Sweden.

Table D5: IGO Leadership Position Identity Characteristics by Select Countries, 1966-2019

Country	Total Leadership Positions	Leadership Positions Held by Women	Leadership Positions Held by Non-White	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Women	Share of Leadership Positions Held by Non-White
Australia	26	1	1	4%	4%
Belgium	27	0	0	0%	0%
Denmark	13	2	0	15%	0%
Finland	13	2	0	15%	0%
Netherlands	57	1	0	2%	0%
New Zealand	10	0	0	0%	0%
Norway	24	3	0	13%	0%
Russia	28	1	0	4%	0%
Sweden	29	3	0	10%	0%
Total	227	13	1	6%	0%

In sum, leadership positions held by G7 nationals and nationals from white-majority countries continue to be non-reflective of the distribution of gender and race. The share of leadership positions held by women from these countries is well below parity. There is also consistent underrepresentation of non-white leaders relative to the population. For instance, the

percentage of the US population that was not white in 2020 was 38 percent (N. Jones et al. 2021), while only six percent of US national IGO leaders since 1990 were not white. The results are similar for other majority-white countries in our data set.[8] The share of the population that was non-white in Canada in 2021 was 30 percent (Statistics Canada 2022), in 2021 in the United Kingdom (England and Wales), it was 18 percent (Government of the UK n.d.), and in 2013 in the Netherlands, it was approximately 12 percent (Weiner 2015). In all cases, the share of non-white nationals to attain leadership positions of the IGOs in our dataset was below the racial demographic characteristics within these countries.

Cases

The first non-white leader from a G7 country in our dataset was Ronald K. Noble, an American who led INTERPOL from 2000 to 2014. Noble had a history of rising above the racial barriers that often overlay American politics. In the 1990s, when he became an Under Secretary of the Treasury at 38, some reports described Noble as "the highest-ranking black in the history of law enforcement" (Wadler 1999). Noble's INTERPOL nomination was strongly supported and lobbied for by key figures in the Clinton administration, including Attorney General Janet Reno and Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Louis J. Freeh. However, at the time, the focus in reports was seemingly less on Noble's race and more on his nationality, as well as the fact that he was the first non-European to head the organization. Race appears to not have been a significant

[8] Race data is not consistently tracked by states, and this poses a problem for more systematic comparisons of racial demographics within populations to the demographics of leader nationals. For example, in France it is illegal for public authorities to ask for and hold information related to race and ethnicity (Léonard 2015). The examples above provide some indication of the gaps between national demographics and leader demographics where data is available.

component of the public communication surrounding Noble's appointment (Department of Justice 1999).

In terms of gender representation among the highest echelons of IGO leadership, female leaders emerged only towards the 1990s. When the 9th Secretary General of the Council of Europe took office in 1989, French politician Catherine Lalumière was the first woman in the post and the first woman to lead a prominent IGO in our dataset. Although her road to the position seemed less ostensibly driven by progressive gender politics than her political track record, she was vocal about advancing gender equality both within the organization and in the region. This took the form of organizational reform in the Council to improve "male-female equality" (Council of Europe 1993). Speaking at the Parliamentary Meeting in 1993 made the case that "[i]t was not enough for the Council of Europe to give all its member states advice on the matter of equality between women and men; an example had to be set by the Organisation itself" (Council of Europe 1993). She emphasized strengthening local democracy in member countries "to ensure that all are represented and that all participate" (Socialist Affairs 1991). It took 25 years and six Secretary Generals later for the institution to elect another female to its highest position. Croatian Marija Pejčinović Burić was elected to the role in 2019, becoming only the second female leader in the institution's 74-year-long history.

Female leadership in IGOs has become more publicly and conspicuously tied to efforts to remedy gender inequities in recent years. The appointment in 2019 of Ursula von der Leyen and Christine Lagarde to head the European Commission and European Central Bank, respectively, came alongside an increasing push for gender parity in the European Union (EU). A European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2012 on women in political decision-making committed the European Commission and member states to achieving gender parity in the EU. With von der

Leyen and Largarde heading two of the four top posts in the European Union, the appointments were celebrated for achieving "perfect gender balance" by the EU Council President Donald Tusk (B. Jones, Veselinovic, and McGee 2019). Appraisal emphasized how the selection reflected "a form of consensus […] to defend this parity" and that it sent a strong signal about the EU's commitment to gender parity (Casert 2019). As French President Emmanuel Macron put it, "That is a very important statement – that Europe leads on gender equality" (Casert 2019). The salience of gender equality norms has likely increased in IGO leadership appointments over the last three decades.

Similarly, when Patricia Scotland was appointed to be the first woman to lead The Commonwealth, her gender was heavily emphasized. For instance, the headline on the press release read, "A historic moment - Patricia Scotland to be first woman Secretary-General" (The Commonwealth 2015). The press release went on to describe the appointment as "a true breakthrough for gender equality in the Commonwealth" (The Commonwealth 2015). Despite the emphasis on gender in the press release, what was missing in official communications regarding the announcement was any mention of Scotland's race, being a non-white individual from Dominica who emigrated to the United Kingdom, eventually becoming its Attorney General before taking the post at The Commonwealth. The lack of any mention of race perhaps owes to the fact that there had already been multiple heads of The Commonwealth who were non-white. In absolute terms, non-white IGO leadership appointments are not unusual due to leaders from the Global South. This may reduce the normative pressure on governments of white-majority countries to appoint or emphasize their appointments of non-white citizens compared to women.

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