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**Who they are, where they come from and where they are going:
Professional background and political ambition of Ecuadorian women legislators, 1979-
2017**

By Santiago Basabe-Serrano¹ and Natasha Álava Arteaga²

Abstract

This article examines the differences in socio-demographics, professional backgrounds, and political careers between women and men who were part of the Ecuadorian Congress, 1979-2017. We propose a descriptive statistical study in which, through a bivariate analysis, we compare women and men in terms of age, marital status, professional qualifications, and political ambition before and after their participation in Congress. Based on an unpublished database, the main empirical findings indicate that the differences between them are not statistically significant. Nevertheless, since the implementation of the Parity Law in 2009, women legislators are increasingly younger and single, with more academic training and previous political experience than their male colleagues. This work covers the lack of diachronic studies, focuses on a novel case, and corrects shortcomings in previous research, obtaining more conclusive information on the subject matter.

Keywords: Women legislators, Parity Law, Ecuador, Representation, Democracy, Bivariate analysis

Resumen

Este artículo se propone analizar las diferencias sociodemográficas, antecedentes profesionales y carreras políticas entre mujeres y hombres que formaron parte del Congreso ecuatoriano, 1979-2017. Proponemos un estudio estadístico descriptivo en el que, mediante un análisis bivariado, comparamos a mujeres y hombres en términos de edad, estado civil, cualificación profesional y ambición política antes y después de su participación en el Congreso. Basado en una base de datos propia e inédita, los principales hallazgos empíricos indican que las diferencias entre ellos no son estadísticamente significativas. Sin embargo, desde la implementación de la Ley de Paridad en 2009, las legisladoras son cada vez más jóvenes y solteras, con más formación académica y experiencia política previa que sus colegas masculinos. Este trabajo cubre la falta de estudios diacrónicos, se centra en un caso novedoso y corrige defectos de investigaciones anteriores, obteniendo información más concluyente en torno al tema tratado.

Palabras claves: Mujeres legisladoras, Ley de paridad, Ecuador, Representación, Democracia, Análisis bivariado

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Introduction

Studies on women representatives in different political decision-making arenas have evolved in different directions - some works focus on the effects of quota laws about the increase of women in legislatures. Others involve research on the presence of women ministers, judges, and sectional authorities. In all cases there is agreement that the number of women in politics has increased, although the speed of aggregation has varied according to both the political space involved and the territorial scope of the office. However, a less developed dimension compares both socio-demographic variables and those related to the previous or subsequent political background of women entering into positions of political power.

In this article we compare variables related to age, marital status, professional background, and political ambition before and after Ecuadorian legislators became part of Congress (now called Assembly, Translator's Note) between 1979 and 2019. In contrast to a significant portion of the previous work, we have included male and female legislators in the comparison, thus allowing us to assess the effects of gender on the aforementioned variables. Our research questions, thus, are descriptive since we compare who Ecuadorian legislators are, where they come from, and where they are headed; and what differences are there in the political careers of male and female legislators in Ecuador before and after their term in office.

In the first part of the article we discuss the empirical findings reported by the specialized literature, and identify their points of agreement and tensions. In the second part, we empirically analyze the socio-demographic variables and political background of the women and men who served in Ecuador's legislature between 1979 and 2017. In the third part, we discuss sex-based differences found and propose some interpretations. In the fourth part, we present the main conclusions and propose some ideas for the development of a future research agenda.

How are Women and Men Legislators Alike and Different?

The analysis of the similarities and differences in age, educational level, marital status, or background between men and women who enter politics is a fertile space for research because it allows us to measure the effectiveness of the electoral rules adopted to reduce the gaps between men and women (O'Brien and Piscopo, 2018; Beer and Camp, 2015). In terms of political careers, one of the most robust findings indicates that once men and women enter the legislature, the differences between each group's type of subsequent political ambition are minimal (Allen et al., 2016; Galais et al., 2016; O'Brien, 2015; Murray, 2012; Mateos Díaz, 1997). There is empirical evidence in various geographical contexts on this matter (Folke and Rickne, 2014; Schwindt-Bayer, 2011; Saint-Germain and Chávez Metoyer, 2008; Geissel and Hust, 2005; Uriarte and Ruiz, 1999; Studlar and McAllister, 1996).

Nevertheless, some works that challenge the described findings. On the one hand, Palma (2016) states that in Mexico the previous political experience of men who enter the legislature is longer than that of women. On the other hand, Borner et al. (2009) report the opposite phenomenon in the case of Argentina, where women who enter the legislature have more previous experience in that position than men. In addition, some women authors point out that, although experience in political positions prior to the legislature is similar between men and women, men legislators are more likely to be found in executive positions later in their careers, especially in those with greater resources to generate clientelist ties (Franceschet and Piscopo, 2014; Bjarnegard, 2013).

With regard to variables related to age and marital status, the existing empirical evidence shows that women are entering legislatures at a younger age and that there is a higher number of single female legislators compared to their male colleagues (Franceschet and Piscopo, 2014).

With respect to the level of formal education, empirical findings are even stronger in the sense that women have higher academic credentials than men (Franceschet and Piscopo, 2014; Verge, 2011; Borner et al., 2009; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2009; Valiente et al., 2003; Black and Erickson, 2000; Uriarte and Ruiz, 1999).³ On this last aspect, the fact that women have more university education and yet their presence in the legislature is still a minority, shows that the imbalances in descriptive representation can still be explained precisely on the basis of sex.

This article will help to fill some of the gaps that have arisen from the previous review. On the one hand, the great majority of existing works cover limited periods of time or are conducted synchronously, which makes it difficult to have a broader vision of the evolution of the already mentioned socio-demographic and political variables. Furthermore, analyzing short time periods makes it impossible to assess the extent to which the presence of quota laws, in force since the last few decades, has generated effects on female representation in the legislatures with regard to the variables already discussed. On the other hand, the empirical evidence of several of the studies presented is supported by surveys of the legislators themselves, which increases the possibility of biases in their responses, especially those related to prior academic training and subsequent political ambition.

In addition, work on Latin America is still scarce and is concentrated in Argentina and Mexico, which gives a segmented view of the region for several reasons. One of them is that both countries are among the most populous and this relegates the different dynamics that could arise in smaller nations. Another reason is related to the fact that Argentina and Mexico are federal and there may be variations with respect to unitary countries, especially in relation to the number of political spaces subject to electoral competition and the type of interactions generated between national and local actors and resources. While there are studies that explore unitary countries, such as Chile or Peru, the major shortcoming is that they are limited to studying women as political actors, excluding men, which prevents a real assessment of the differences between them (Batlle and Roque, 2018; Cueva et al., 2018; Schwindt-Bayer, 2011).

Women and Men in the Ecuadorian Assembly: Convergence and Divergence

To learn about the differences in socio-demographic variables and political careers among legislators in Ecuador, we analyzed the confirmation of the country's fourteen congresses between 1979 and 2017.⁴ In this way, we were able to analyze not only the historical evolution of these variables, but also the collateral impact of quota laws on the type of actors who access this decision-making arena. To this end, we prepared an unprecedented database that includes individual information on each and every one of the 1,272 legislators elected over the aforementioned period of time.⁵ In order to capture the information we turned to official sources such as the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT), the Vital Records Office, the Internal Revenue Service (SRI) and the National Assembly's archives.

³ Until the late 1990s, male legislators in Spain were younger than female legislators (Uriarte and Ruiz, 1999). according to the work of Valiente et al (2003). According to the work of Valiente et al (2003), that trend was reversed by the beginning of the next decade.

⁴ The analyzed periods are the following: 1979-1984, 1984-1986, 1986-1988, 1988-1990, 1990-1992, 1992-1994, 1994-1996, 1996-1998, 1998-2003, 2003-2007, 2007-2008, 2009-2013, 2013-2017 y 2017-2021.

⁵ The actual number of people who made it to the Ecuadorian legislature is somewhat less, since the cases of reelection must be discounted from the indicated amount. Given that Ecuador is a country where fleeting and regressive legislative races prevail, the vast majority of deputies reached the seat only once (Basabe-Serrano, 2018; Arévalo, 2017).

We then triangulated this information with information from various sources. On the one hand, the main written media of Ecuador (El Universo, El Comercio, Diario Hoy, Diario La Hora, and Vistazo Magazine); on the other hand, research work (Pachano 1991; Salgado 1986), specialized web portals (e.g., Legislative Observatory) and interviews with experts, essentially people with long careers in the various political parties. In this way, we reduce the biases that may arise when legislators are asked directly about variables related to their age, professional training, and previous political appointments or elected positions.

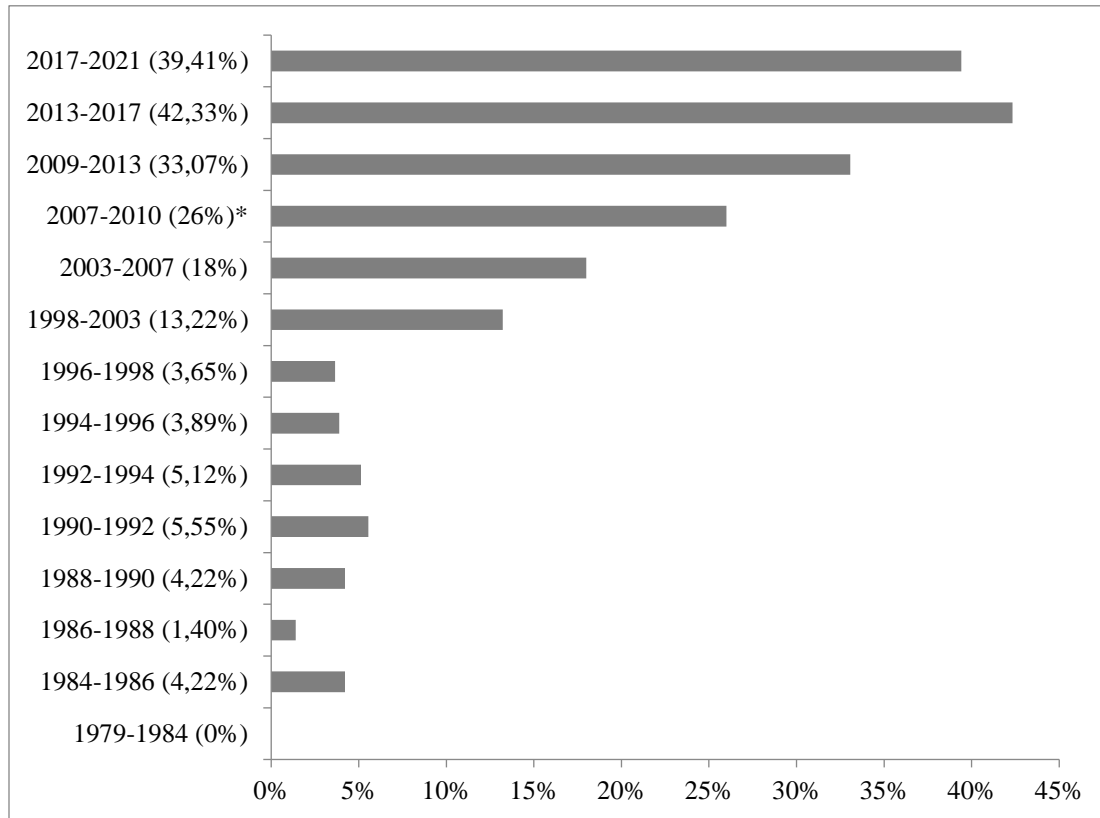
The Ecuadorian case is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, because the studies that analyze the profile of women legislators in Latin America focus on federal countries, mainly Argentina and Mexico, where the existence of greater spaces of power generates different dynamics in the political ambition of women actors. As a unitary country, Ecuador presents a different process, which has been less explored in the region. Secondly, because Ecuador has one of the most advanced parity rules “ley de paridad” in Latin America that allows us to see more clearly whether and how the presence of this institutional feature also affects women's socio-demographic and political careers. Thirdly, Ecuador is a good case study because the sudden political changes that the country has faced throughout its forty years of democracy enables observing how the type of female representation in the legislature has reacted to the surrounding impacts.

Until the 1998 presidential and legislative elections, Ecuador elected provincial deputies for two years and national deputies for four years. The presidential elections of 1978, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, and 1998 coincided with the total renewal of the legislature while the electoral processes of 1986, 1990, and 1994 were held only for provincial deputies. Although the distinction between national and provincial legislators is maintained, since 1998 both have been elected for four years and have no difference in terms of their formal or informal powers within the National Congress.⁶ Due to constant changes in the institutional design related to the functioning of political parties and the organization of elections, Ecuador's political system has been characterized by ephemeral or single-term legislative races, high party fragmentation, and the relative absence of nationwide political organizations (Basabe-Serrano, 2018; Freidenberg and Pachano, 2016).

As for the presence of quota or parity laws, the first reforms in that sense took place in the mid-1990s. In the first place, the lists of candidates for congress contained very low percentages of women, without making any explicit mention of the positions they would hold. While the institutional design guaranteed that the percentages would be sequentially increased to half of the lists, what happened was that the parties placed men in the first spaces, so the chances of women's presence were lower. It was not until the 2009 legislative elections that a new parity law came into effect and made it mandatory for lists to be designed with one woman and one man, or vice-versa. Figure 1 shows the evolution of women's descriptive representation in Ecuador's legislature since 1979.

⁶ The Ecuadorian legislature was renamed National Assembly as of the 2008 Constitution

Figure 1. Ecuadorian Women Legislators, 1979-2017



Source: National Assembly's file

* Period 2007-2010 was cancelled in 2008 for a Constitutional Assembly (Pachano 2010; Basabe-Serrano et al. 2010; Basabe-Serrano 2009).

As described above, since the 1998 election, there has been a considerable and sequential increase in the number of female legislators as compared to the previous twenty years in which this representation did not exceed 5%. However, the largest spaces assigned to women belong to the last three elections (2009-2013; 2013-2017; 2017-2021), which are in line with the aforementioned parity law. However, absolute parity in legislative representation has not yet been feasible, among other reasons, because of the Ecuadorian electoral system and its deterrents to this end. One of them, perhaps the most serious, is that until the 2017-2021 election, the lists of candidates were open and unblocked. This would not only have led to greater intra-party competition and a strengthening of personalism, but also to a difficulty in attaining 50 percent representation of women in the Assembly.

With the general description of the Ecuadorian legislature's composition throughout the almost forty years studied, we added the variables in three groups for the analysis that drives this article. In the first group, called "personal history", we included the legislator's age and marital status (single, married, divorced, common-law) at the time of taking office. In the second group, called "professional background," we consider whether the legislator has a university degree and if so, we also capture the presence or absence of graduate degrees (master's or doctorate.) Additionally, in this group we classify legislators according to their profession or occupation (lawyers, doctors, engineers, bachelors, architects, economists, businessmen/traders, military,

artists/sportsmen, and others). In the third group, called "political career", we include the number of previous periods as legislators; if the individual held popularly elected positions before and after passing through the National Congress; and whether he/she held politically appointed positions, before and after passing through the legislature.

For popularly elected position coding, we considered sectional levels (mayors and members of municipal councils; prefects and members of provincial councils)⁷, provincial and national legislatures; and, the presidency or vice-presidency of the republic⁸. With respect to politically appointed positions, we include ministers, deputy ministers, provincial/zonal directors of ministries, governors,⁹ managers of public companies, delegates of the Executive to technical bodies, and diplomatic representatives who do not belong to the foreign service. In addition, in this category we include positions such as the Attorney General, General Prosecutor, Comptroller General, and judges of the Supreme Court or Constitutional Court.

As mentioned, we coded both women and men who entered the Ecuadorian legislature, thus avoiding the biases that can be created when only one of the two groups are observed (Batlle and Roque 2018; Cueva et al. 2018). Given that this article has more descriptive rather than causal aims, the possibility of multivariate analyses was not included with the aim of focusing on a bivariate one based on a test of means and cross tabulations. In this way, the variables grouped around the three referred dimensions were compared according to the sex of the political actor segmented by legislative periods. Since the sample is relatively small, we also used Fisher's test, which captures the statistical significance of the relationships between variables more precisely.

The tables below show the results of the mentioned measurement. When means are presented, *p* corresponds to a one tailed test that estimates if the differences between women and men are statistically different from 0. When percentages are presented, *p* corresponds to the chi-square test, which estimates if the differences are significantly different from 0. An asterisk (*) is added in the cases in which the chi-square values lose statistical significance with Fisher's test. To make the analysis more intuitive, we bold the values of the variables that actually show statistically significant differences between women and men legislators.

⁷ Until the 2006 elections, council members were popularly elected and formed a collegiate body similar to the municipal councils but at the provincial level. As of 2009, this position disappeared due to the enforcement of the Organic Code of Autonomous Territorial Organization.

⁸ Former presidents Febres-Cordero and Durán-Ballen held a seat in the National Congress after becoming heads of state. Rodrigo Borja was part of the legislature before becoming President. Osvaldo Hurtado chaired the Assembly that gave birth to the 2008 Constitution. Lenin Moreno was Vice President before winning the 2017 presidential elections.

⁹ Unlike other countries, such as Colombia, in Ecuador governors are representatives of the President and are freely appointed and removed from the Executive.

Table 1. Personal Background

<i>Legislative Periods</i>	<i>Mean age of legislators (range)</i>			<i>Mean age of single legislators</i>		
	M	W	<i>p</i> **	M	W	<i>p</i>
1979-1984	46.52 (26-67)			13.50		
1984-1988	44.50 (27-66)	43.25 (34-60)	0,7	13.50	75	0,001
1988-1992	44.72 (26-67)	40.57 (23-53)	0,1	16.13	28.58	0,3
1992-1996	47.15 (24-73)	42.28 (31-48)	0,1	3.71	14.29	0,1
1996-2000	48.97 (28-76)	46.33 (44-50)	0,6	2.54	33.33*	0,005
1998-2003	49.78 (22-77)	45.81 (33-63)	0,1	2.89	25	0,000
2003-2007	50.07 (32-73)	43.55 (29-63)	0,007	6.10	16.67	0,1
2007-2010	47.60 (28-76)	42.76 (26-62)	0,02	16.22	30.77	0,1
2009-2013	46.66 (27-77)	39.05 (24-58)	0,00	14.29	42.50	0,001
2013-2017	49.21 (24-80)	40.90 (26-62)	0,00	14.29	45.29	0,000
2017-2021	49.16 (30-75)	43.84 (25-66)	0,00	11.77	48.08	0,000

Source: Vital Records Office and National Assembly's file

Table 1 summarizes the empirical findings of the "personal background" dimension. With regard to the age variable in the analyzed period, women arrive at the legislature younger than men. However, since the 2003 election, differences have become statistically significant. In fact, the average age of female legislators has been declining, from 43.55 in 2003 to 42.76 in 2007 and 39.05 in 2009. In the two final periods (2013-2017 and 2017-2021) there is a very slight increase in women's average age (40, 90, and 43.84 respectively) although this does not affect the fact that the differences with respect to men remain statistically significant. In comparative perspective, this

empirical finding is consistent with that evidenced by previous work done for other countries in the region. Furthermore, the fact that the p-value is more significant in the last three electoral processes (2009, 2013, and 2017) offers clues about the indirect influence of the parity law on the age variable discussed here. In other words, one could state that during the last decade not only has the number of female legislators increased, but that they are increasingly younger than their male colleagues.

In order to facilitate the empirical observation of marital status, we constructed a dichotomous variable in which we coded single legislators as "1"; and "0" for both married and cohabiting legislators.¹⁰ As can be seen on Table 1, the percentages of single female legislators have historically been higher than those of their male colleagues, although the gaps are not greater, except in the periods 1984-1988 and 1998-2003. However, as of 2009, these differences have become more noticeable to the point that they present statistically significant results. These empirical findings are not only in line with the results reported in previous research in other countries, but when analyzed together with those related to age, they show that after the implementation of the parity law there are not only more female legislators, but they are also younger and primarily single.

Table 2. Professional Background (Academic Training)

<i>Legislative periods</i>	<i>University degree</i>			<i>Graduate degree</i>		
	M	W	<i>p</i>	H	M	<i>p</i>
1979-1984	85.5 0			7.24		
1984-1988	87.3 0	100	0,4	12.69	0	0,4
1988-1992	84.6 7	42.8 4	0.00 5	16.93	0	0,2
1992-1996	80	85.7 1	0,7	14.81	14.28	0,9
1996-2000	77.2 1	100	0,3	20.25	66.66*	0,0 5
1998-2003	81.7 3	87.5	0,5	16.34	12.50	0,6
2003-2007	81.7 0	70.5 8	0,3	32.25	27.77	0,7
2007-2010	82.4 3	80.7 6	0,8	17.56	30.79	0,1
2009-2013	91.6 6	97.5 0	0,2	32.14	32.50	0,9
2013-2017	85.7 1	98.1 1	0,01	28.57	33.96	0,5
2017-2021	94.1 1	94.2 3	0,9	31.76	32.69	0,9

¹⁰ Single legislators include divorced and widowed individuals.

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT), web pages, and National Assembly's file.

Table 2 describes the empirical findings of the "personal background" dimension as it relates to the academic background of legislators. With regard to holding a university degree, there is practically no variation between women and men during the analyzed time frame. The exceptions are in the periods 1988-1992 and 2013-2017 in which the differences are statistically significant, in the first case in favor of men and in the second case in favor of women. In general, Ecuadorian women legislators have greater academic credentials than their male colleagues, despite the fact that numerically they have a smaller presence. This finding is in line with those reported for other Latin American countries and reflects the existing distortion in the political arena between men and women.

In terms of graduate studies, there are also no statistically significant differences between female and male legislators. Although until the 2003-2007 elections there was a higher percentage of men with master's or doctoral degrees, this trend has changed since 2007. In fact, since that historical moment, women's graduate degrees have increased more than those of their male colleagues, although they have not marked a significant gap in statistical terms. In summary, during the last two decades more than 80% of Ecuadorian legislators, without distinction of sex, had an undergraduate degree while at the graduate level the percentages barely exceed 30%. The relative absence of fourth-level training could be a telling sign of the incipient professionalization of Ecuadorian legislators, regardless of whether they are women or men.

With respect to the professional or occupational profile of those who enter the Ecuadorian legislature, the differences between men and women are not statistically significant in any of the categories considered for analysis, except in isolated periods. This is the case with lawyers,¹¹ physicians,¹² engineers,¹³ bachelors in different fields,¹⁴ architects, economists,¹⁵ entrepreneurs and/or merchants,¹⁶ militaries or police officers on passive duty,¹⁷ artists and/or athletes.¹⁸ In this regard, Annex No. 1 provides the results of the measurement carried out. Observing the Ecuadorian legislature as a whole, the main empirical finding that could be made is that in this decision-making arena, lawyers are in the majority, regardless of gender, and that this is true in all the periods analyzed.

¹¹ The period 1988-1992 is the only one in which there are statistically significant differences between the majority of male lawyers and women.

¹² In the period 2007-2010 there are more women doctors than men and the difference is statistically significant.

¹³ In the period 2003-2007 there are more male than female engineers and the difference is statistically significant.

¹⁴ In the periods 1998-2003 and 2013-2017 women bachelors are more than men bachelors, the difference being statistically significant.

¹⁵ In the period 1984-1988 there are statistically significant differences in favor of female economists over their male colleagues.

¹⁶ In the period 1988-1992 there are more women entrepreneurs and/or traders than men. The differences are statistically significant.

¹⁷ No military or police woman in passive duty has ever entered the Ecuadorian legislature.

¹⁸ Only the periods 2003-2007 and 2007-2010 show statistically significant differences between the highest percentage of women artists or sportswomen and men with a similar occupation.

Table 3. Previous Legislative Periods, and Previous/After Elected Office

<i>Legislative Periods</i>	<i>Previous Legislative Periods (range)</i>			<i>Previous Elected Office</i>			<i>After Elected Office</i>		
	M	W	<i>p</i> **	M	W	<i>p</i>	M	W	<i>p</i>
1979-1984	1 (1-1)			37.6 8			43.4 7		
1984-1988	1.01 (1-2)	1 (1-1)	0,8	44.4 4	25	0,4	39.6 8	50	0,6
1988-1992	1.22 (1-3)	1.14 (1-2)	0,6	36.2 9	28.5 7	0,6	36.2 9	28.5 7	0,6
1992-1996	1.32 (1-3)	1.14 (1-2)	0,4	41.4 8	14.2 8	0,1	44.4 4	57.1 4	0,5
1996-2000	1.74 (1-4)	1.33 (1-2)	0,4	56.9 6	66.6 6	0,7	44.3 0	66.6 6	0,4
1998-2003	1.63 (1-5)	1.56 (1-3)	0,7	45.1 9	62.5 0	0,1	33.6 5	25	0,4
2003-2007	1.80 (1-6)	1.05 (1-2)	0,009	57.3 1	27.7 7	0,0 2	26.8 2	33.3 3	0,5
2007-2010	1.51 (1-5)	1.07 (1-2)	0,01	54.0 5	38.4 6	0,1	43.2 4	34.6 1	0,4
2009-2013	1.28 (1-3)	1.12 (1-3)	0,1	51.1 9	60	0,3	36.9 0	67.5 0	0,00
2013-2017	1.52 (1-4)	1.45 (1-4)	0,5	46.4 2	66.0 3	0,0 2	30.9 5	37.7 3	0,4
2017-2021	1.41 (1-5)	1.36 (1-3)	0,7	55.2 9	59.6 1	0,6	-	-	-

Source: Written media (El Comercio, El Universo, Revista Vistazo), web pages, and National Assembly's file.

As for the "political background" dimension, Table 3 presents results for different variables. First, let's take a look at the number of previous periods of women and men in the legislature. This data is useful because it serves as an empirical approximation of what constitutes

political experience and can give some clues about later political careers. In this regard, except for the 2003-2007 and 2007-2010 periods¹⁹, there are no statistically significant differences according to the sex variable, although the values are slightly higher for men. If we consider that there are studies that have shown that Ecuadorian deputies primarily develop ephemeral careers (a single term and back to private life) or regressive careers (a single term and back to different political spaces in local governments), the empirical findings reported herein simply ratify the fact that, in general, very few legislators have accumulated experience in this political decision-making arena (Basabe-Serrano 2018; Arévalo 2017).

In terms of previous political careers in elected office, both at the sectional and national levels, the results in Table 3 go in different directions. First, in the 2003-2007 period there is a statistically significant difference in favor of men while in 2013-2017 the relationship benefits women). In the rest of the periods, no statistically significant gaps are reported. However, over time there are variations that need to be described. On the one hand, until the 1992-1996 period legislators arrived with more elected positions than women; however, this varies from the next election (1996-2000), when women legislators recorded more previous political experience in elected positions than their male colleagues.²⁰

As for political careers in elected office after the legislature, the results reported in Table 3 are not much different from the previous ones. While in some periods there is a higher percentage of men who continue in political life through elections, in other periods the percentage is higher for women, although the differences between one and the other are not statistically significant. Only in the 2009-2013 election was there a relevant difference in statistical terms and it shows that women legislators, once their term is over, have more access to other positions of popular election than their male colleagues. In general, such posts are in sectional governments, mainly municipal offices and provincial prefectures.

We need to keep in mind that the statistically significant gaps in favor of women with respect to subsequent popularly elected positions (2009-2013) coincide with the implementation of the parity law. Although the gaps in the following legislative period (2013-2017) are no longer statistically significant, the percentage of women who continue their political life in positions of popular election remains higher than that of men. Based on the above findings on the legislators' ex post political careers, there are indications that the parity law – lists drawn up with men and women alternately – not only generated effects on the increase in the number of female legislators, but also on their political ambition. After 2009, thus, there are more women who are running successfully for other elected positions beyond the legislature.

By linking this empirical finding to the one presented with respect to former political careers, it could also be argued that the parity law has generally improved women's political participation in elected office. Of course, there is still little empirical evidence to support this claim. In this regard, one piece of information that is yet to be known is the political future of women legislators who will be finishing their term in May 2021, as some may be able to stand for reelection and others for political appointments.²¹

¹⁹ In both periods the difference is in favor of men with a greater number of previous legislative periods.

²⁰ The exceptions are the periods 2003-2007 and 2007-2010.

²¹ From the constitutional reform caused by the referendum proposed by President Moreno in February 2018, all authorities of popular election can be reelected once for the same position.

Table 4. Previous and After Appointed Political Positions

<i>Legislative Periods</i>	<i>Previous political positions</i>			<i>appointed After political positions</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p</i>
1979-1984	20.28			18.84		
1984-1988	36.50	25	0,6	19.04	0	0,3
1988-1992	17.74	0	0,2	19.35	0	0,1
1992-1996	19.25	14.28	0,7	25.18	14.2 8	0,5
1996-2000	6.32	0	0,6	15.18	0	0,4
1998-2003	12.50	6.25	0,4	15.38	12.5 0	0,7
2003-2007	10.97	16.66	0,5	10.97	16.6 6	0,5
2007-2010	21.62	7.69	0,1	5.40	15.3 8	0,1
2009-2013	17.85	15	0,6	16.66	25	0,2
2013-2017	21.42	28.30	0,3	23.80	41.5 0	0,02
2017-2021	35.29	36.53	0,8	-	-	-

Source: Written media (El Comercio, El Universo, Revista Vistazo), web pages, and National Assembly's file.

According to Table 4, in relation to previous political experience in appointed positions, up to and including the 2009-2013 period, men have more experience than women.²² However, in the last two analyzed periods (2013-2017 and 2017-2021) the relationship turns in the opposite direction. In any case, the differences are never statistically significant between both percentages. As for the political appointments following legislative terms, the patterns are similar to those already described. Until the 1998-2003 period there were more men legislators who continued their careers in politically appointed positions, while from the 2003-2007 election onwards this pattern varies towards women. As in the case of previous political appointments, the differences are not statistically significant in any period except 2013-2017. In short, the empirical findings described above are in line with most previous studies that indicate that both the previous and subsequent political paths of legislators vary little in relation to the gender variable.

Conclusions

Throughout forty years of democratic rule in Ecuador, the presence of women in the legislature has grown, although not in the amount that would be expected. While the situation in the period 1979-1984, when there was no female representation, is far from the values of over 30% observed as of 2009, the number of women in this political decision-making arena is still weak. Nonetheless, in this article we have shown that the gaps between men and women, both in terms of socio-demographic variables and in terms of political career, do not present any statistically significant differences. Although during the 1980s and early 1990s the percentages of men with previous and subsequent experience are higher than those of women, this trend is reversed later on. In fact, if we analyze the last legislative period (2017-2021), women legislators appear to have longer political careers before and after both popularly elected and politically appointed positions.

Additionally, and practically without exception, women have entered the legislature at a younger age, being mostly single and more professionally educated than their male colleagues. On this last point, it is worth noting that, although women legislators have more skills and formal education than men, in fact their presence in this political decision-making arena has been systematically lower. This only serves to underscore the historical exclusion of women from politics and the structural reasons for it. In this regard, although Ecuador's quota and parity laws have had a beneficial effect in terms of improving the descriptive representation of women, the possibility of reaching 50% of legislative seats is still an achievement to be made.

In addition, in this article we show that the parity law, in effect since 2009, not only generated positive effects in terms of its initial purpose, but could also have led to indirect effects - positive externalities, in microeconomic terms - in other dimensions of analysis. As we have seen empirically, since the implementation of this law, the age of women who enter the legislature has fallen more than in previous periods and, in addition, their link to the country's political life has increased. In both cases, the findings suggest that the range of women's public service careers is expanding, starting earlier, and therefore would be expected to be longer in the future. Thus, the parity law in Ecuador has generated positive externalities both in the socio-demographic and political career variables that we discuss in this article and in the increase of women in sub-national

²² The only exception is in the 2003-2007 period when the percentage of women with previous political appointments is higher than that of men. However, the difference is not statistically significant.

governments, ministries, or courts of justice (Basabe-Serrano 2020, 2019; Basabe-Serrano and Pérez, 2022).

Finally, some dimensions for analysis are still pending and are part of a future research agenda. On the one hand, although we have noted that the socio-demographic and political career differences between men and women are not statistically significant, whether these variables have any effects among women legislators remains to be studied. For example, differences in professional training could be a good predictor of legislative reelection for some women and not for others. On the other hand, the fact that some legislators have a longer history of political appointments or popularly elected positions would eventually be related to ties of consanguinity or affinity with other political actors. In that case, the research to be developed should consider the existence or lack of such family ties.

Additionally, the empirical findings that we provide in this article open several spaces to deepen the knowledge not only of the differences in the legislative performance of the actors according to the gender variable, but also of the influence of socio-demographic factors or political ambition on the performance of women in legislatures. In this regard, the type of previous political careers could explain variations in the assignment of legislative committees to some women legislators with respect to others. In short, a more exhaustive study of variables of a social and even cultural nature could contribute to more comprehensive responses regarding the involvement of women in the world of politics.

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Annex No 1.

Professional Background (by university degree)

<i>Legislative periods</i>	<i>Lawyers</i>			<i>Doctors</i>			<i>Engineers</i>		
	M	W	<i>p</i>	M	W	<i>p</i>	M	W	<i>p</i>
1979-1984	46.37			10.14			8.69		
1984-1988	42.06	25	0,4	9.52	0	0,5	9.52	0	0,5
1988-1992	39.51	0	0,03	8.87	0	0,4	13.70	0	0,2
1992-1996	30.37	14.28	0,3	8.14	14.28	0,5	14.07	0	0,2
1996-2000	31.64	66.66	0,2	6.32	0	0,6	13.92	0	0,4
1998-2003	34.61	37.50	0,8	4.80	0	0,3	12.50	6.25	0,4
2003-2007	26.82	27.77	0,9	2.43	5.55	0,4	24.39	0	0,01
2007-2010	24.32	23.07	0,8	2.70	15.38	0,01	17.56	3.84	0,08
2009-2013	34.52	40	0,5	0.50	5	0,4	14.28	10	0,5
2013-2017	30.95	35.84	0,5	2.38	1.88	0,8	13.09	15.09	0,7
2017-2021	14.11	23.07	0,1	4.70	1.92	0,3	23.52	15.38	0,2

<i>Legislative periods</i>	<i>Bachelors</i>			<i>Architects</i>			<i>Economists</i>		
	M	W	<i>p</i>	M	W	<i>p</i>	M	W	<i>p</i>
1979-1984	15.9 4			0			0		
1984-1988	19.8 4	25	0,8	2.38	0	0,7	1.5 8	50	0,0
1988-1992	16.1 2	28.5 7	0,3	2.41	0	0,6	0.8 0	14.28 *	0,00 5
1992-1996	17.7 7	42.8 5	0,0 9	2.22	0	0,6	3.7 0	14.28	0,1
1996-2000	16.4 5	33.3 3	0,4	3.79	0	0,7	2.5 3	0	0,7
1998-2003	15.3 8	37.5 0	0,0 3	1.92	0	0,5	5.7 6	6.25	0,9
2003-2007	19.5 1	33.3 3	0,2	1.21	0	0,6	2.4 3	5.55	0,4
2007-2010	24.3 2	19.2 3	0,5	5.40	0	0,2	5.4 0	3.84	0,7
2009-2013	28.5 7	37.5 0	0,3	3.57	2.50	0,7	2.3 8	0	0,3
2013-2017	23.8 0	43.3 9	0,0 1	5.95	0	0,07	4.7 6	1.88	0,3
2017-2021	41.1 7	51.9 2	0,2	2.35	0	0,2	5.8 8	0	0,2

<i>Legislative periods</i>	<i>Businessmen/traders</i>			<i>Military</i>			<i>Artists/Sportsmen</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p</i>
1979-1984	7.24			2.89			0		
1984-1988	11.11	0	0,4	0.79	0	0,8	0.79	0	0,8
1988-1992	7.25	42.85	0,0	1.61	0	0,7	0	0	-
1992-1996	17.77	0	0,2	0.74	0	0,8	0	0	-
1996-2000	22.78	0	0,3	0	0	-	0	0	-
1998-2003	13.46	12.50	0,9	2.88	0	0,4	2.88	0	0,4
2003-2007	17.07	11.11	0,5	2.43	0	0,5	0	5.55	0,03
2007-2010	10.81	7.69	0,6	2.70	0	0,3	1.35	15.38	0,00
2009-2013	3.57	2.50	0,7	4.76	0	0,1	1.19	2.50	0,5
2013-2017	4.76	1.88	0,3	3.57	0	0,1	3.57	0	0,1
2017-2021	2.35	3.84	0,6	1.17	0	0,4	1.17	1.92	0,7

<i>Legislative periods</i>	<i>Others</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p</i>
1979-1984	8.69		
1984-1988	2.38	0	0,7
1988-1992	9.67	14.28	0,6
1992-1996	5.18	14.28	0,3
1996-2000	2.53	0	0,7
1998-2003	5.76	0	0,3
2003-2007	3.65	11.11	0,1
2007-2010	5.40	11.53	0,2
2009-2013	4.76	0	0,1
2013-2017	7.14	0	0,04
2017-2021	3.52	0	0,1

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT), web pages, and National Assembly's file.