

Young men feel the most threatened by advances in women's rights

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It is not the older generation but young men who have the most difficulty in accepting advances in women's rights. This has been shown by a large study from the University of Gothenburg on gender equality and sexism

in Europe.

In recent decades, Western democracies have become increasingly gender-equal. Girls and women tend to avail themselves of [educational opportunities](#) even more than men do, and more and more women are getting jobs in leading positions. But while gender equality is improving, research shows that modern sexism is working against women's rights.

One example of modern sexism is when people consider society as gender-equal and therefore oppose further efforts to promote women's rights. Their reasoning is based on the so-called zero-sum game notion, where progress for one group is seen as being at the expense of another. Previous research shows that a perceived sense of injustice and competition between men and women affects political attitudes and voting behavior.

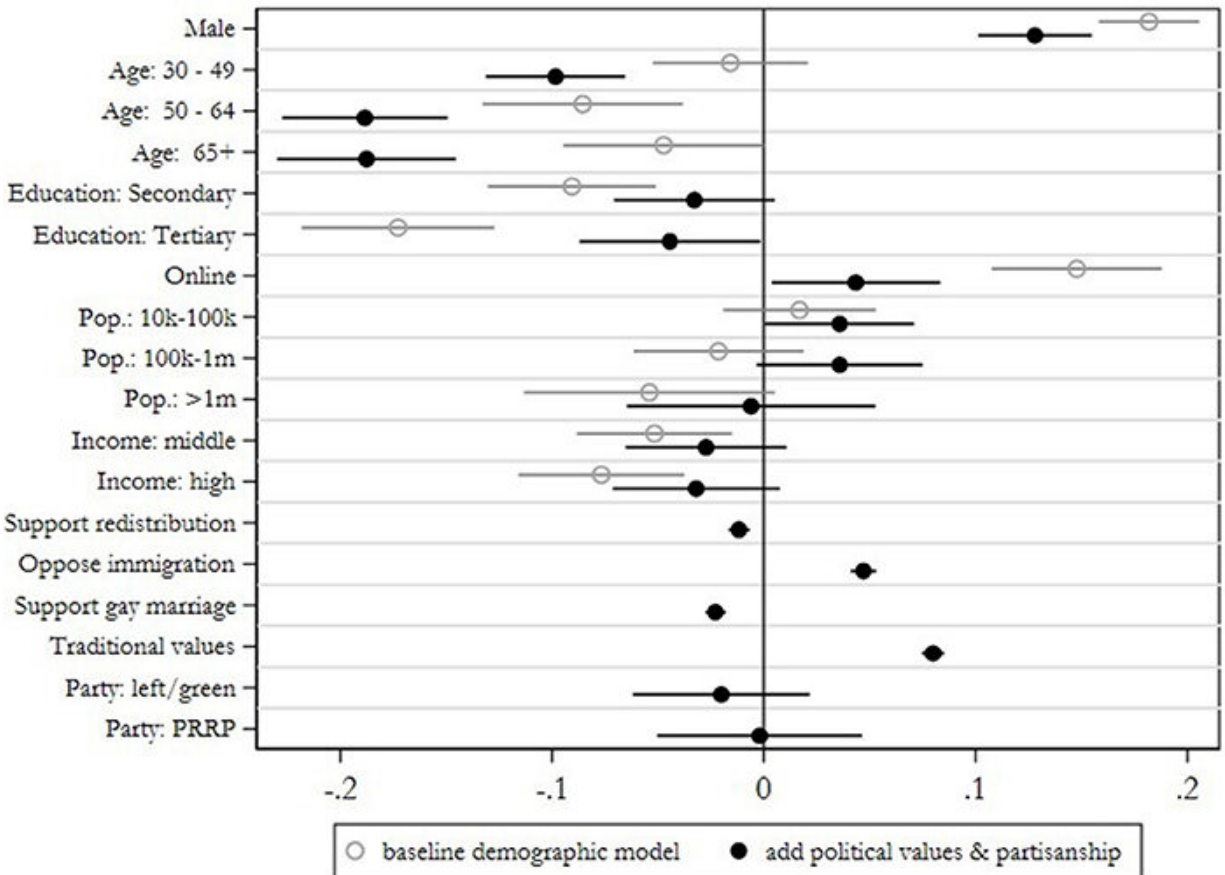
"Some people believe that increased gender equality only benefits women and do not see the benefits for society as a whole. Some research suggests that this feeling of injustice can even motivate citizens to vote for right-wing radical parties who are against feminism and sexual freedom," says Gefjon Off, doctoral student in [political science](#).

Together with Amy Alexander and Nicholas Charron, both [political scientists](#) at the University of Gothenburg, she has studied what lies behind the relatively high incidence of modern sexism among young men in Europe. The study is based on a survey with 32,469 respondents in 27 EU countries. The respondents were asked to state to what extent they agree with the statement that "promoting women's and girls' rights has gone too far because it threatens men's and boys' opportunities."

"The results show that young men aged 18 to 29 most often agree with this statement in our survey. The older the men are, the less they agree with this statement. Some women agree with the statement, but to a far

lesser extent than men of all ages. The results contradict previous research claiming that the older generation are the ones who are the most conservative and opposed to advances in women's rights," says Gefjon Off.

The researchers identified a couple of factors that explain why modern sexism is highest among young men aged between 18 and 29 years. The proportion is highest in regions where unemployment has risen the most in recent years, and where citizens have a widespread distrust of social institutions for example, due to widespread corruption.



Covariates of opposition to advances in women's rights. Coefficients are from negative binomial estimation and express the expected change in the dependent

variable from a one-unit increase in the covariate, with 95% CIs. The reference categories are: aged 18–29, less than secondary education, low income, and

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