

Women found to be just as corrupt as men in Mexican politics

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Women are just as corrupt as men in Mexican municipal politics, according to a new study from Rice University.

"Women's Representation and Corruption: Evidence from Local Audits in Mexico" will appear in an upcoming edition of *Comparative Political Studies* and was authored by Gustavo Guajardo, a Rice Ph.D. candidate in [political science](#), and Leslie Schwindt-Bayer, the Thomas Cooke and Mary Elizabeth Edwards Chair in Government and Democracy at Rice. In the paper, the researchers examined how revelations of corruption affect the election of women in [municipal government](#) in Mexico and whether the women in office are less corrupt than men.

Guajardo and Schwindt-Bayer found that [female candidates](#) for mayor in Mexico were more likely than male mayoral candidates to be elected after audits of municipal finances uncovered spending irregularities (based on data from 2000-2019). They suggest this occurs because parties and/or voters prefer women in the aftermath of corruption allegations due to stereotypes about women being more honest, trustworthy and less corrupt than men.

However, the researchers also found that female mayors are no less corrupt than male mayors once in office. While voters and parties may think women are less corrupt, the researchers found that women in office are just as corrupt as men and perhaps even more so.

"Once in office, women do not have significantly lower spending irregularities than men, and in some cases they have even more," Schwindt-Bayer said. "This highlights a really important contradiction in Mexican politics—perceptions about gender and corruption do not necessarily match reality."

The researchers theorized that the political culture in Mexico, including the dependence on parties to further political careers, could potentially drive women to engage in corruption because they may need to compensate for their marginalized status and fewer political resources.

Schwindt-Bayer said these findings are important, because in recent decades, increasing women's representation has become a popular strategy in the fight against [corruption](#).

"More research should be done to explore this topic in different governments around the world, but our findings do not support the theory that [female representation](#) is a panacea for [political corruption](#)," she said.

More information: Gustavo Guajardo et al, Women's Representation and Corruption: Evidence From Local Audits in Mexico, *Comparative Political Studies* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/00104140231194063](https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231194063)

Provided by Rice University

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