VOTER ID LAWS AND GENDERED IMPACTS ON VOTER TURNOUT

by

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The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Jacqueline D. Franolich, and they evaluated the student's presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my loving family. This has been a long journey and I would not have been able to finish this without your support.

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I would like to acknowledge my committee members and especially Charles Hunt, Ph.D. for guiding me through this process. You have been such a great mentor and I feel so fortunate to have you as my Chair. I further want to acknowledge the professors from the Policial Science Department, this has taken me a long time to complete this program and your support and guidance helped to make this a reality.

ABSTRACT

Since well before the U.S. presidential election of 2020, voter identification laws have been a topic of discussion amongst politicians, voters, the news media, and scholars. Many have questioned the focus and true reason for their creation, their implementation, their effects and potential unintended consequences. Specifically, many have argued that voter identification laws pose too great a barrier to potential voters to be worth the benefits gained in election security. Since the election of 2020, those discussions seemed to magnify. For example, in a May 2021 speech, President Biden repeated similar assertions made in the past by scholars and activists (Amwine and Smeal 2013), but in a much higher-profile fashion. Currently, thirty-five of the fifty U.S. states have voter identification laws, and it is the changes to some of these laws that have received criticism. States like Georgia and Texas have taken steps to further revise their voter identification laws which have resulted in the filing of numerous lawsuits. The recent developments and changes to current voter identification laws have led to a new unanswered question: do these laws adversely affect the turnout of women voters more than men? According to the *US Census Bureau*, we know that women turn out to vote at higher levels than men. But does the turnout gender gap decrease when voter identification laws are implemented and increase in level of strictness? If so, this could suggest that voter identification laws do adversely affect turnout of women more than men. This is the research question I aim to answer here. To answer my hypothesis, I created a dataset using voter turnout data from the *U.S. Census Bureau* for presidential

election years 2000-2020. I then created an index to measure the strictness levels of voter identification laws in all 50 states. I also created a competitiveness scale to measure the competitiveness of the presidential and senate races for the same election years and collected numerous control variables thought to affect voter turnout. After collecting that data and applying advanced statistical techniques and multivariate regression models using both random and fixed effects, I found that the evidence was largely null and suggestive at best that voter identification laws do adversely affect turnout of women more than men. The descriptive models initially revealed indicative evidence to support the theory; however, after running the advanced regression models that initial evidence did not replicate, as they revealed no statistically significant differences in the turnout gender gap as the voter ID index increased.

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ID	Identification

INTRODUCTION

Since well before the U.S. presidential election of 2020, voter identification laws have been a topic of discussion amongst politicians, voters, the news media, and scholars. Many have questioned the focus and true reason for their creation, their implementation, their effects and potential unintended consequences. Specifically, many have argued that voter identification laws pose too great a barrier to potential voters to be worth the benefits gained in election security. Since the election of 2020, those discussions seemed to magnify. For example, in a May 2021 speech, President Biden repeated similar assertions made in the past by scholars and activists (Amwine and Smeal, 2013), but in a much higher-profile fashion. Currently, thirty-five of the fifty U.S. states have voter identification laws, and it is the changes to some of these laws that have received criticism. States like Georgia and Texas have taken steps to further revise their voter identification laws which have resulted in the filing of numerous lawsuits. [1] The recent developments and changes to current voter identification laws have led to a new unanswered question: do these laws adversely affect the turnout of women voters more than men? According to the *US Census Bureau*, we know that women turn out to vote at higher levels than men. But does the turnout gender gap decrease when voter identification laws are implemented and increase in level of strictness? If so, this could suggest that voter identification laws do adversely affect turnout of women more than

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[1] La Union Del Pueblo Entero, *et al*., v. Gregory W. Abbott, *et al*., No. 5:21-cv-00844-XR.

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Gender Dynamics of Voting and Turnout

Since women gained the right to vote in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, they have become a voting bloc that candidates now focus their messaging seeking their vote (Burrell, 2005). With the ability to vote in elections, women have changed the political landscape forever. Even after women gained the right to vote, they initially did not vote in high numbers; but they reached a milestone in 1980 when women turned out to vote at slightly higher numbers than men (Burrell, 2005; Baxter and Lansing, 1983). By 2000, turnout numbers for women surpassed men, when their margin increased by an astonishing 8.4 million votes (Burrell, 2005). As a segment of the electorate, women are clearly no longer invisible (Fullerton

and Stern, 2010). And according to Burrell (2005) and Bennett (1986), women are a strong political force.

Before assessing differential impacts of voter ID laws specifically, we must consider literature on the historical and current gender-based differences in turnout of men and women as well as other barriers to voting. Is there a difference in the way that men and women vote, and whether they even vote at all? Some scholars believe there are. Some factors that impact turnout behavior that concern men, may be different for women. According to a study by Harell, men are more involved in associations, some of them affiliated with their employment through worker unions. Women are not as involved in political networks and may not follow political news as closely as men. On the other hand, women are engaged in different types of social circles like religious and volunteer organizations. These differences combine to create a different path to the polls for women compared to men (Harell, 2009).

There are other differences in the way that men and women participate in politics that may be explained by psychological differences. Traits like conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to new experiences can play a big factor in who men and women cast their vote for. A study by Wang (2014) found that the interaction between personality traits and gender were significant and should be considered together when examining gender differences and the vote. The study further noted that while earlier research indicated that both conscientiousness and emotional stability are personality traits that may align more with women, Wang's study found that emotional stability was less of a factor for women than originally thought. Gender has become a particularly important feature of presidential campaigns and politics. Many scholars have

studied the gender gap to understand why there is one and how it has evolved over time. In an early study by Fullerton and Stern (2010), they analyzed the decline of the gender gap in voter registration and turnout in the south from 1956-1980. The scholars found that even though the voting gap decreased over that period, the registration process was the reason for the continued gap. Some women simply did not turn out to vote because they were not registered.

According to Burrell (2005) the gender gap has consistently increased every presidential election year since 1980, but this gender gap alone does not fully capture the impact that women have made on electoral politics (Burrell, 2005). The policies that affect women directly drive who they vote for. Abortion, the continued war on drugs, female representation in the courts, and public safety are issues that women have been shown to care about and will vote for the candidate they believe will protect the policies they align closely with (Burrell, 2005). Polls showed that support by women for then-candidate Ronald Reagan dropped dramatically after his anti-abortion stance. From that point on, women's issues have been a major component in candidate messaging. This renewed focus on what matters to women may help to explain the turnout gap between men and women (Burrell, 2005).

Voter Identification Laws and Their Consequences

Voter identification (hereafter "Voter ID") laws have been enacted in numerous state legislatures as a measure designed to increase election security and protect against voter fraud. Voter ID laws require a potential voter to show some form of identification to vote; but that identification requirement also varies across the states who have voter ID

laws. Some states may require a strict photo ID while some may require non-photo identification that does not require a photo ID at all. (*NCSL. 2022a*)

However, voter ID laws are not without their potential drawbacks. Commentators, activists, and scholars have questioned whether the added layer of election security is worth the additional burden on voters. For example, numerous studies have questioned whether voter identification laws are a partisan response to limit access to the polls (Aktenson et al., 2014; Bowler and Donovan, 2016; Milford, 2015; Hicks et al., 2016). Throughout American history, people who did not own land, were minorities and women, were frequently denied the right to vote. As voting rights expanded, "tension between easy access to the polls for voters and securing the vote against fraud developed into a contentious debate." (Atkenson, et al., 2014, p. 1; Atkenson et al., 2010) Some of those debates resulted in the passage of voter identification laws. The impacts of voter identification laws vary across the states depending on the types of laws implemented. Some states require a photo ID to vote. But does the implementation of a law that requires a photo ID prevent voter fraud? According to a study by Orr and Arkley, they found that it did not (2016). Since 2000, numerous states passed voter identification laws for the first time, but some form of voter identification laws have been around for a long time (*National Conference of State Legislatures,* 2022). In 1883, Kentucky was the first to adopt a personal registration requirement (Perez, 2021). Texas and South Carolina started to request or require a photo ID before 1965, even though Texas did not officially have voter ID laws until 1966 (*See* Biggers and Hammer, 2017, Table 2, p. 572). Later in 2005 Georgia and Indiana were the first states to adopt voter identification laws which required a strict photo ID in order to vote (Biggers and Hammer, 2017; Highton 2017).

The motivation for or against voter ID laws have been a topic of literature for some time now. Some scholars argue their benefits, while others disagree. The vast majority of the literature studies turnout in the aggregate but does not seem to focus on their implementation and the possible consequences that they may have.

More recently, scholars have specifically analyzed how voter identification laws affect turnout of racial minority voters as well as the pros and cons of their implementation in the first place (Atkenson et al., 2014; Bright and Lynch, 2017). Some scholars believe that voter identification laws have no real impact on voter turnout, while others disagree (Valentino and Neuner, 2017; Alvarez et al., 2008). When focusing on the combination of providing a photo identification card and matching that photo with a signature that is on file or the signature that is on a person's identification card, there is some evidence to suggest that those stricter requirements may dampen the vote (Alvarez et al., 2008). There is no shortage of literature on voter identification laws, but the lack of scope and broadness of that literature is a potential shortfall. "Identification laws have been studied in the aggregate for their effect on turnout, the implementation of these laws has gone largely unstudied", especially when focusing on their implementation and their effects on gender (Atkenson et al., 2010 p. 67; Hershey, 2009; Alvarez et al., 2008; Highton 2017). There have been many obstacles when trying to study the effects of voter identification laws on turnout. Obstacles such as problems with administrative records and the lack of survey and election data have made it difficult to examine the effects of voter identification laws on turnout. But these obstacles should not deter us from studying their effects further (Grimmer et al., 2018; Highton, 2017).

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Since the implementation of voter identification laws in various states throughout the United States, many have suggested that as voter identification laws are implemented in a state, voter turnout for women in presidential elections decreases. To date, there are limited studies to support this idea, but it has been repeated on numerous occasions, and by high-profile individuals. On August 26, 2021, in a proclamation speech made by President Joseph Biden to commemorate Women's Equality Day, the President asserted that women are disproportionally impacted by voter identification laws. President Biden further stated that due to the photo identification requirement in some states, voter turnout for women in those states declines (Sherman, 2021).

The quantity of literature on voter identification laws that addresses their benefits or consequences have increased since the vast implementation of voter identification laws in 2000. The majority of literature that studies the effects of voter identification laws generally focus their research on racial minorities and potential effects on voter turnout. However, this literature has so far failed to compare these laws' differential effects on voter turnout between the two genders. To remedy this, my study specifically examines voter turnout by gender in each state, with or without voter identification laws to see whether the implementation of those laws influences gender-based voter turnout. Do voter identification laws create a barrier so high that it will deter women from voting? And is that barrier higher than that for men? If not for voter identification laws, would

voter —and the gender gap—be greater? These are questions that this study aims to answer.

Voter ID laws are not the same in every state. Some states require some legal form of photo ID while others may only have to show documentation with their address on it. No matter what their requirements are, voter ID laws vary across the country, and some argue, their consequences may not be the same for everyone. In a study by Biggers (2021), which focused on the racial minority vote, he noted that the perception of voting costs may affect turnout. Voter identification laws that require the showing of photo identification to vote, could be a negative voting cost in particular for racial minorities. There are many studies that try to determine the potential for discrimination when photo identification is required and there are also studies that try to determine those turnout effects.

But what about gender? Are women more disproportionally impacted by voter identification laws than men? What is it about the photo identification requirement that might impact women more? If we answer these questions in the affirmative, this may suggest that women still have barriers to overcome in casting their votes. Some scholars, like those from the *Brennan Center for Justice* backed up President Biden's assertions, stating that women are disproportionally impacted (Sherman, 2021).

According to the *Brennan Center for Justice* voter identification laws are a barrier to women more than men due to the requirement of showing proof of photo identification, like that of a driver's license or other valid forms of identification before voting (Sherman, 2021). Why would women not have valid photo identification? It could be because of a recent marriage or divorce. Research from the *Brennan Center for Justice*

and from Michael Pitts (2015), assert for this reason that women tend to have more instances where their last name may not match their current legal last name on other forms of identification, which in turn may affect their ability either to register to vote, or to cast a vote on election day. It takes time to go to the Driver's License Division to change your driver's license. Men tend not to face this challenge because they traditionally have not changed their last name when they are married or divorced. The discrepancy between the name on the photo identification and the name in the poll books is where the impact might take place. When utilizing data from Indiana's 2012 general election, Pitts found that "women disproportionately have their provisional ballots rejected due to Indiana's photo identification law." (2015) But other states like Texas and Alabama do allow for voters whose name is different on their photo identification and the poll books to cast a vote (*National Conference of State Legislatures,* 2022).

Besides the issue of whether the name on a photo ID is the same as the one used during voter registration, there are other factors that may drive disparate effects on turnout for women. According to the *Southern Coalition for Social Justice,* a study published by *The Washington Post*, found that factors such as poverty, senior status, marriage/divorce, student status and voting history may also drive voter ID laws' disparate effects on voter turnout for women more than men. Women make up the majority population of each of those categories. (*Southern Coalition for Social Justice, 2023*; Montoya, 2020) And data from the *USCB* correlates poverty and student status with low voter turnout. When examining those factors more closely, each of those factors seem to be affected by either income or the difficulty of maintaining or obtaining a current photo ID.

When considering the factors laid out by the *Southern Coalition for Social Justice*, the same factors have even more pronounced effects on voter turnout for women of color. According to a study by the *Pew Research Center*, black women turnout to vote in higher numbers than black men and higher than any other racial or ethnic minority group (Igielnik, 2020a; Igielnik, 2020b). And when we examine turnout for Hispanic women, they also vote at higher levels than Hispanic men. Scholars who focus their research on the intersectional relationship between gender and race believe that the examination of not only gender but also race when considering the gender gap and voter turnout may provide more nuanced analysis (Montoya, 2020; Medenica and Fowler, 2018). Women of color, according to scholars Brown and Gershon (2016), do not only experience disparate effects due to their gender, they also experience these effects due to their race. Categories of race and gender are not exclusive and therefore should not necessarily be considered as such (Brown, 2014). And when examining the gender gap in turnout between women of color, that gap is larger than that of white women. (Stauffer and Fraga, 2022) Research on intersectionality indicates that race and historical barriers to the polls are still an ongoing concern and further impact voter turnout for not only women in general, but more so for women of color.

To study the effects of voter identification laws on voter turnout, I provide the following hypothesis to test those theoretical expectations: As state legislatures implement stricter voter identification laws, voter turnout for women for presidential elections decreases in those states more than that of men.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Dependent Variable

To examine whether voter identification laws implemented in a state disproportionately affect voter turnout for women more than they do for men, I first collected voter turnout data obtained from the *U.S. Census Bureau* for presidential election years 2000 through 2020 as my main dependent variable. For purposes of this study, I focused on the total calculations for "percent (%) of eligible voters who voted" for men and women in each of the fifty states. This provided fifty (50) state observations for each presidential election year, for a total of 300 individual state observations covering the six presidential elections. After including the percent voted for men and women in my dataset, I then calculated the difference in turnout between men and women for each state observation. The state-level difference in turnout for men and women is important to include in my dataset so I can gain a sense of how those differences may change in states with and without voter identification laws.

Primary Independent Variables

Independent variables must also be included in my dataset to help further understand whether turnout for women is disproportionately affected by voter identification laws. After obtaining voter turnout data by gender, I then examined the *National Conference of State Legislatures* (hereinafter "*NCSL"*) website to track the implementation of voter identification laws between 2000 and 2020. Currently, according to the *NCSL*, 35 of the 50 U.S. states have voter identification laws. And, of

the 300 individual state-year observations I gathered from 2000 through 2020, 149 of them have voter identification laws. But knowing which of the 300 observations have or had voter identification laws does not complete the story. Just because a state has voter identification laws it does not mean their level of strictness is necessarily the same. Some states have voter identification laws but not the previously discussed photo ID requirement; and even if they have this requirement, it may not be a strict requirement.

To identify a state observation's level of strictness, I created a voter ID index. This voter ID index is separated into three descriptive levels of strictness and does so using the following elements of NCSL's data: whether a state has a voter identification law of any kind; whether a state requires a photo ID; and whether the law is considered strict in other ways according to the *NCSL* (mainly in the implementation stage, including how strictly the law is enforced). I then added these three descriptive codes together to get a voter ID index for each state observation which ranges from 0 (no Voter ID laws) to 2 (strict or photo ID law). Table 1 delineates exactly what each value of the index denotes regarding voter ID laws in each state-year observation.

Table 1 Voter ID Index Variable Construction

Voter ID Index Values	State's Voter ID Legal Status
0	State has no Voter ID law.
1	State has Voter ID law, but no photo ID requirement and is not considered "Strict" according to the NCSL.
2	State has Voter ID law and has either a photo ID requirement or is considered "Strict" according to the NCSL.

Control variables

Analyzing voter turnout data for men and women in each state and identifying which states have voter ID laws is not enough to understand voter turnout for men and women, or whether the implementation of a voter ID requirement is why they impact women more than men. Therefore, I must account for other influences that could impact voter turnout for men and women independent from the voter identification requirement which could result in differences in voter turnout between men and women. To help account for other potential influences, I include control variables in my dataset. Control variables are essential to ensure that my dependent and independent variables are held constant as to not skew my results.

The competitiveness of statewide elections are important variables that should be considered when trying to understand voter turnout. To identify statewide competitiveness, I collected data from the *CQ Voting and Elections* data bank on margins of victory for presidential and U.S. Senate races over the same period (2000-2020) in each state. It has been suggested by scholars in this field that voters will cast their ballots at much higher rates when a presidential or senate race is competitive in a state as well as if a state is even holding their U.S. Senate elections at the same time as a presidential election. Competitiveness between the dominant political parties can be significant if it matters in a particular state (Gray, 1976 and Jordan, 2017). For example, in Hawaii presidential elections are not competitive. Historically, voters cast their ballots at much higher rates for the Democrat candidate for President and Senate, as well as for the majority of their state levels of government (McDonald, 2021). Due to the lack of competitiveness between the political parties in Hawaii, we might expect turnout in these

races to be lower in Hawaii. But in states like Arizona and Pennsylvania, presidential elections are competitive because both states are not one-party dominant like they are in Hawaii. In these states voters may cast their ballots at much higher rates due to the competitiveness between the two dominant parties which is magnified by the surrounding media attention that the races receive and the monetary donations that are poured into the campaigns.

Therefore, I created a competitiveness scale to determine how competitive a Presidential and Senate race was in each state for each election year. To do this, I subtracted the difference between vote totals for each of the individual Democrat and Republican candidates (for both President and Senate) to determine the margin of victory of each race. After calculating the difference between the Democrat and Republican outcomes, each observation was coded using the below 0-6 competitiveness step scale. The competitiveness code moves up depending on how competitive the race is. The number "1" means that the race is not competitive in that state for that election cycle through the most competitive which is coded "6". Each step up in competitiveness is incrementally measured and defined here:

Table 2 Coding of Senate and Presidential Competition

Code	Competitiveness step
0	No race
1	> 50-points difference, least competitive
2	20-50 points difference
3	10-20 points difference
4	Less than 10-point difference
5	2.5-5-point difference
6	0-2.5-point difference, most competitive

Education, median age, and the inclusion of socioeconomic factors such as unemployment and median income are also included as control variables in my dataset. According to *U.S. Census Bureau*, the higher the educational attainment of an individual, the more likely they are to vote. This is particularly relevant when capturing gender-based differences, as women tend to attain higher levels of education than men nationwide. Turnout can also be correlated with a voters' age. The older the individual, the greater the likelihood they will vote due to either education, life experiences or how they perceive the government may affect them. Turnout data indicates that individuals ages 18-25 turn out to vote at much lower rates than those ages 65-74 (*United States Census Bureau,* 2022a). Gender-based difference are also an important factor to consider. Men and women are both engaged in associational life but what they are engaged in are different. According to Harrell (2009), men and women may get their political information from different sources and those sources of information may focus on different policy consequences. It has been argued that women tend to have lower

socioeconomic status than men due to lower rates of women in the workforce and if they are in the workforce, they may experience a gender wage gap (Harrell, 2009). Women may turn out to vote at higher levels than men but what may matter to men may not be the same for women. Therefore, I collected data for each of these factors (education, age, income, etc.) collectively by state, and then separately for men and women voters in each state.

Methodology

To test my hypothesis, I will begin with running basic descriptive models to generally look at average voter turnout rates for all voters and then for men and women separately. This descriptive model will not include any control variables but only the dependent and primary independent variables. The descriptive model will provide an initial glimpse into turnout rates when considering voter identification laws on voter turnout. I will then include all my control variables and run a basic multivariate regression to see how those variables may influence voter turnout for all voters and then for men and women. Finally, I will conclude with regression models that also account for random and fixed effects.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Descriptive Findings

Before running any regression models, descriptive cross-tabulations were created to provide a general sense of how many state observations during 2000-2020 have or had voter identification laws, and what average voter turnout may demonstrate, both collectively and separately for men and women. These descriptive models did not include any control variables.

The first descriptive model simply tabulated the percent of "average turnout" and the "number of states" that did or did not have voter identification laws. The second descriptive model again tabulated the percentage for "average turnout" but this time, this descriptive model focused on the percentage for "average turnout" in states with no voter ID laws alongside with those that had strict and non-strict voter ID laws. The third descriptive model included the gender component and looked at "average turnout" separately for men and women in states with no voter ID laws, non-strict voter ID laws and those with strict and/or photo ID laws (voter ID index) and then the difference between the percent total of turnout for men and women was then calculated to identify the difference in turnout between men and women in states with no voter ID laws, those with non-strict voter ID laws and strict and/or photo id requirements. Table 3 summarizes all of these results.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics, Turnout % and Voter ID, 2000-2020

Voter ID Conditions	Number of State-Years	Average Turnout %	Average Turnout % (Men)	Average Turnout % (Women)	Difference (Women - Men)
No Voter ID Laws	151	60.5%	58.4%	62.5%	4.0%
Any Kind of Voter ID Law	149	59.4%	57.3%	61.3%	4.0%
Non-Strict VID Laws	80	59.9%	57.6%	61.9%	4.2%
Strict and/or Photo ID	69	58.9%	56.9%	60.7%	3.8%

After running the descriptive statistics models, the findings are largely inconclusive. When analyzing the first set of results in Table 3, this model could suggest that as voter ID laws increase in strictness, voter turnout decreases. But even though we can see that average turnout for men and women also decreases as voter ID laws increase in strictness, for purposes of my hypothesis, the difference in turnout between men and women **does not** consistently decrease. The difference in turnout for men and women, when no voter ID laws are implemented in a state, is 4.0; but as strictness increases, the difference in turnout among men and women does widen before it decreases again with the next step up in strictness. This pattern could suggest that non-strict voter ID laws do not disproportionately affect women more than men, whereas strict laws and/or those with photo ID requirements could have more meaningful impacts on women. When testing these differences for statistical significance, however, these differences do not appear to be meaningful. First, a T-test was used to examine the comparison between the

two groups or categories of states with and without voter ID laws. A Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test for comparisons between the three different values from the Voter ID index. After running both tests, there were no findings of statistical significance. These general findings are not enough to support or reject my hypothesis, so regression models must be generated to include control variables.

Multivariate Regression Results

After analyzing the descriptive statistics models, I then turned to more robust regression modules utilizing the statistical software, STATA to test the effects of variables that could influence outcomes for voter turnout, especially the difference in turnout totals for men and women. Using multivariate regression, I was able to account for independent variables and hold them constant in order to more precisely measure the effects of voter ID laws. To generate these predictions, I ran a basic Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model; a regression model that used random effects by state; and one that used fixed effects by state.

The basic regression models were created to examine turnout while including the voter ID index. The difference between the three basic regression models is that the first examines total turnout among all voters; the second examines turnout for men to include the independent variables, limited specifically to men in the state; and the third model examines turnout for women which includes the independent variables for women.

Before turning to the gender difference, we can examine the first set of results in Table 4, to see whether voter ID laws (via the Voter ID Index) have generalized negative effects on turnout as we might expect. The voter ID Index coefficient tells us that as the strictness level increases, turnout decreases by a little under 1 percent. The P-value for

the voter ID index is low at .038, indicating statistical significance. To better view turnout at each one-unit increase in strictness, I generated from this STATA output the predicted values in Table 5 which reflect turnout based on the values from the voter ID index. When there are no voter ID laws, we can predict average turnout at 60.6 percent and when there are strict and/or photo ID laws turnout drops to 58.8 percent.

Table 4 Effects on State-Level Voter Turnout, 2000-2020

Dependent Variable	Eligible Voter Turnout %		
	All Voters	*Men*	*Women*
Voter ID Index	-0.93*** (0.44)	-0.81** (0.45)	-1.02*** (0.45)
Senate Competition	0.26 (0.20)	0.31* (0.20)	0.21 (0.20)
Presidential Competition	0.85*** (0.29)	0.65*** (0.29)	1.06*** (0.29)
Unemployment Rate †	4.67 (35.07)	-16.53 (30.80)	29.73 (41.40)
% State with Bachelor's Degree †	17.84*** (6.57)	14.03*** (7.00)	21.64*** (6.11)
% State Senior Citizens †	29.89* (19.35)	20.71 (18.88)	38.17*** (19.34)
% State Under 30 †	-24.22 (25.83)	-54.69*** (24.83)	10.17 (26.94)
Constant	51.93*** (9.70)	62.34*** (9.02)	40.76*** (10.30)
R-Squared	0.11	0.12	0.12
N	300	300	300

Results found using ordinary least squares regression.

** = statistically significant at .1 level; ** = .05 level; *** = .01 level*

† = *Specific to electorate gender in "Men" and "Women" models.*

But this study is not focused on generalized effects of voter ID laws on voter turnout. Specifically, I am focused on turnout for men and women and whether the advantage that women have over men on turnout decreases when voter ID laws are implemented, especially as their level of strictness increases. As such, I ran the same regression as in Table 4, but separately to predict turnout for men, and turnout for women, to analyze the differences in effects between them. When analyzing the predicted values on turnout from these models, we can see that turnout decreases for both men and women as the level of voter ID strictness increases. But when examining these predicted values further in Table 5, we can see that the turnout advantage that women have over men decreases slightly for each uptick of the voter ID index.

Table 5 Predicted Turnout Values Based on Voter ID Index

	Turnout (All voters)	Turnout (Men only)	Turnout (Women only)	Predicted Gender Diff.
No Voter ID Laws	60.6	58.5	62.6	4.2
Non-Strict VID Laws	59.7	57.6	61.6	4.0
Strict and/or Photo ID	58.8	56.8	60.6	3.8

However, basic regression models do not take into account things that may affect turnout on a state-by-state basis that the independent variables cannot account for. Regression models need to use random effects to provide more precise results. Random

effects take into account factors within a state and an election year that could affect turnout that I may not see just by applying independent variables.

After accounting for random effects, I examined the STATA output found in Table 6 to see whether voter ID laws (via the Voter ID Index) continued to have generalized negative effects on turnout. The voter ID Index coefficient shows that as the strictness level increases, turnout decreases by less than 1 percent. The P-value for the voter ID index is higher in this model at 0.395, which suggests that this variable may be less significant than in the Basic model. I again generated from STATA the predicted values from this model to examine turnout for all voters based on the values from the voter id index. When there are no voter ID laws, we can predict an average turnout of 60.2 percent and as voter ID laws are implemented and increase in strictness, average turnout drops to 59.5.

Table 6 Effects on State-Level Voter Turnout, 2000-2020 (Random Effects by State)

Dependent Variable	Eligible Voter Turnout %		
	All Voters	*Men*	*Women*
Voter ID Index	-0.35 (0.42)	-0.24 (0.44)	-0.48 (0.43)
Senate Competition	0.06 (0.12)	0.12 (0.12)	0.01 (0.12)
Presidential Competition	0.39* (0.24)	0.21 (0.25)	0.57*** (0.25)
Unemployment Rate †	4.63 (21.68)	-16.16 (19.21)	33.81 (27.10)
% State with Bachelor's Degree †	18.97** (10.03)	17.18* (11.88)	19.22*** (8.13)
% State Senior Citizens †	25.54 (22.67)	22.01 (19.47)	38.56* (25.70)
% State Under 30 †	-62.59** (33.33)	-83.61*** (31.83)	-26.85 (35.91)
Constant	62.25*** (9.93)	69.26*** (9.33)	50.42*** (11.22)
R-Squared	0.09	0.11	0.10
N	300	300	300

Results found using OLS regression with random effects by state and year.

** = statistically significant at .1 level; ** = .05 level; *** = .01 level*

† = *Specific to electorate gender in "Men" and "Women" models.*

When examining turnout for men and women and the turnout advantage for women in Table 6 we again see that turnout decreases for both men and women with each one unit increase in the voter ID index, and we see that the percent turnout advantage women have over men is similar to the predicted gender difference findings as in Table 7.

Table 7 Predicted Turnout Values Based on Voter ID Index (Random Effects)

	Turnout (All voters)	**Turnout (Men only)**	**Turnout (Women only)**	**Predicted Gender Diff.**
No Voter ID Laws	60.2	58.0	62.3	4.2
Non-Strict VID Laws	59.9	57.8	61.8	4.0
Strict and/or Photo ID	59.5	57.6	61.3	3.7

To limit and account for all possible effects within a state a regression model accounting for fixed effects is also important. Doing so essentially limits the variation being measured to changes within states that implemented changes in the strictness of their voter ID requirements during this period. After accounting for fixed effects, the results from STATA in Table 8 also examined whether voter ID laws (via the Voter ID Index) for all voters have a generalized negative effect on turnout. The voter ID Index coefficient tells me that as the strictness level increases, turnout decreases by less than 1 percent. The P-value for the voter ID index is 0.559, which again is outside the significance threshold. I generated Table 9 from the predicted values from this STATA model and examined turnout for all voters based on the values from the voter ID index. When there are no voter ID laws, we can predict similar results like those found in Table

7 which reflect average turnout of 60.2 percent. As voter ID laws are implemented and increase in one unit of strictness, average turnout drops down to 59.6 percent.

Table 8 Effects on State-Level Voter Turnout, 2000-2020 (Fixed Effects by State)

Dependent Variable	Eligible Voter Turnout %		
	All Voters	*Men*	*Women*
Voter ID Index	-0.27 (0.47)	-0.15 (0.50)	-0.34 (0.49)
Senate Competition	0.04 (0.12)	0.09 (0.12)	-0.02 (0.12)
Presidential Competition	0.30 (0.26)	0.12 (0.27)	0.48** (0.26)
Unemployment Rate †	8.34 (24.82)	-14.57 (21.13)	46.60* (31.99)
% State with Bachelor's Degree †	14.33 (17.96)	11.96 (25.50)	11.67 (13.05)
% State Senior Citizens †	30.59 (35.88)	25.92 (32.11)	56.07* (39.81)
% State Under 30 †	-84.48** (43.91)	-99.71*** (42.00)	-48.52 (48.55)
Constant	67.39*** (12.22)	73.83*** (11.45)	53.07*** (14.49)
R-Squared	0.11	0.11	0.10
N	300	300	300

Results found using OLS regression with fixed effects by state.

** = statistically significant at .1 level; ** = .05 level; *** = .01 level*

† = Specific to electorate gender in "Men" and "Women" models.

When focusing again on turnout for men and women and the turnout advantage that women have, we continue to see that turnout decreases for both men and women as the voter ID index increases. When examining the predicted values in Table 9, we see the advantage that women have on turnout over men (predicted gender difference) is similar to those in Tables 5 and 7 above.

Table 9 Predicted Turnout Values Based on Voter ID Index (Fixed Effects)

	Turnout (All voters)	**Turnout (Men only)**	**Turnout (Women only)**	**Predicted Gender Diff.**
No Voter ID Laws	60.2	58.0	62.2	4.2
Non-Strict VID Laws	59.9	57.8	61.8	4.0
Strict and/or Photo ID	59.6	57.7	61.5	3.8

CONCLUSION

The idea that voter ID laws could be implemented to disenfranchise a group of individuals is something that should not be ignored; however, making assertions about the same without further study is unsatisfactory as well. Due to sentiment by some scholars, activists, and by those with a higher profile who claim that women are disproportionally impacted by voter identification laws, it is that sentiment that is the basis of this study. To capture the impact of voter ID laws on voter turnout for women, I could not simply analyze turnout data for women alone. I examined voter turnout for both men and women, and I specifically focused on the turnout advantage of women to see whether that advantage decreased as voter ID laws were implemented especially as the voter ID index increased.

The results of this study produced largely null findings that could not confirm any significant difference in the impacts of voter ID law on women compared to men. While the primary independent variable in the first model did suggest significance and it did reflect a minimal decrease in the voter advantage that women have, these results did not fully replicate in the models that accounted for random and fixed effects, perhaps given the limited number of observations. In those two models, the primary independent variable was significant when examining turnout for women, but the findings were not the same when examining turnout for men. The predicted turnout tables created from the three model outputs do reflect a minimal decrease in the predicted gender difference by approximately 0.2 percent, which suggest directionally that voter ID laws may burden

some women voters; but these numbers are substantively negligible, and the voter ID variable alone explains only a minuscule part the decrease in voter turnout for both men and women. Other variables should be examined to better understand the electorate and what may or may not encourage people to turn out to vote. But there may be reasonable explanations for these null findings. For example, we should also consider the counter effects of voter ID laws, such as the mobilization efforts of potential voters. According to scholars like Wolbrecht (2020) and Corder and Montoya (2020), extensive mobilization efforts by many organizations who focus on the "Get Out the Vote" message through local and national education efforts and campaigns which encourage people to register to vote, may have damped some of the effects of voter ID laws on the gender voting gap. Mycoff et al. (2009) noted that actions of state governments, interest groups and political parties will continue to encourage people to vote; but if people do not, it may not necessarily be due to voter ID laws at all.

Voter ID laws are the topic of current discussions and rightly so due to the sentiment for and against their implementation for various reasons. Continuing to try to understand the electorate and why voters participate, as well as why some do not, may get us closer to understanding what factors prevent them from voting in first place.

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