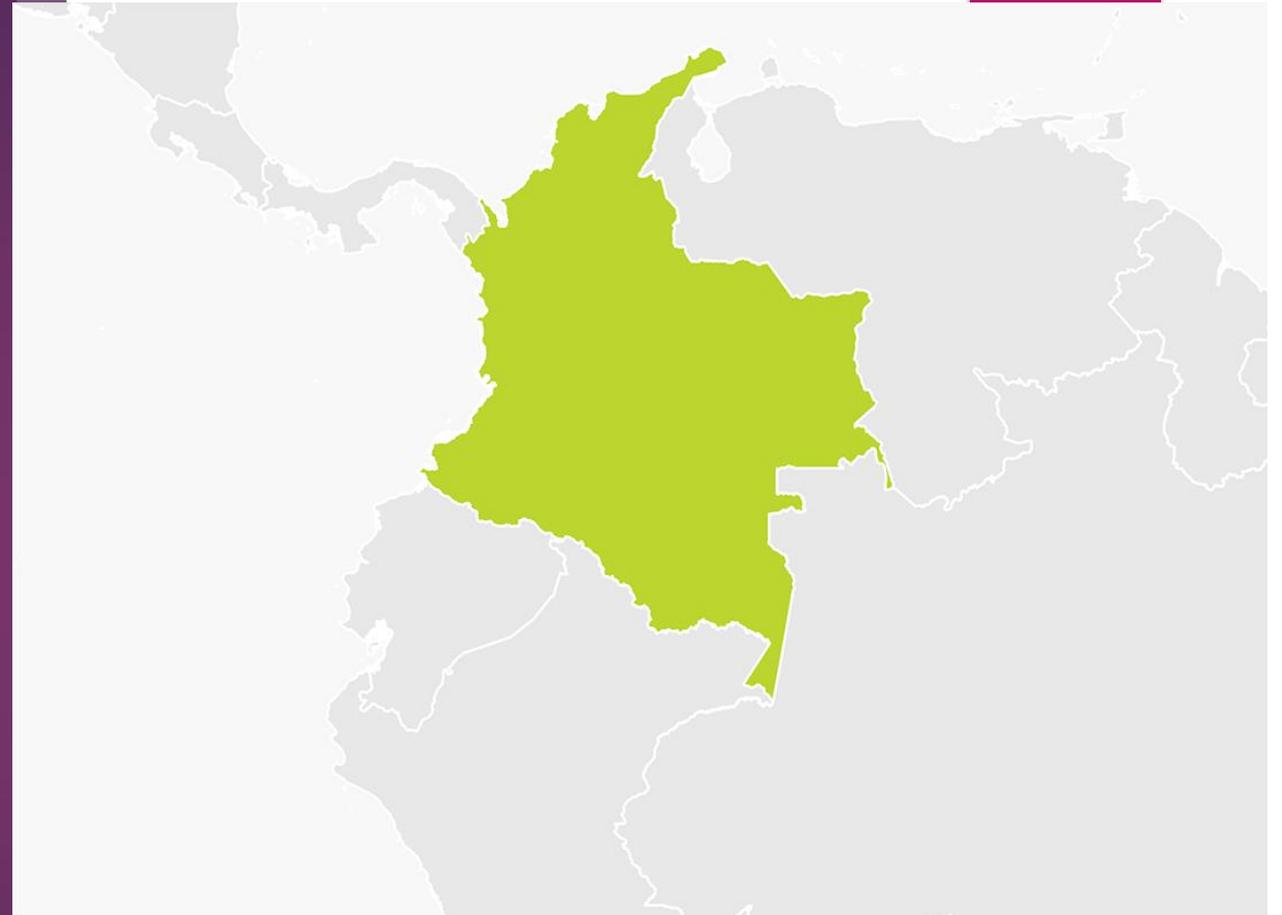


Violence against Women in Politics in Colombia

A CASE STUDY



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Context

- ▶ History of armed conflict
 - ▶ Left-wing guerrilla groups
 - ▶ Right-wing paramilitary groups
 - ▶ Drug cartels
 - ▶ State actors
- ▶ Political violence used by all armed actors, including the state
- ▶ Politicians have also been targeted

Women in National Congress



- ▶ Low levels of women's political participation
 - ▶ 30% quota in executive positions
 - ▶ 30% quota candidates lists
- ▶ Currently:
 - ▶ 19% Chamber, 22.5% Senate
 - ▶ 16.6% Local Councils
 - ▶ 16.7% State Assemblies
 - ▶ 15.6% Governors
 - ▶ 12% Mayors

Data and methods

	Survey	Interviews
Councilwomen	112	28
Mayors	21	2
Assemblywomen	13	2
Local Admin. Govs.	13	2
Congresswomen	7	1
Total	166	35

Results – Deliberative bodies

- ▶ 70% of the respondents reported being victims of VAWIP
- ▶ 24% denied/restricted right to speak
- ▶ 22% denied economic/administrative resources
 - ▶ 17% were denied campaign funds
- ▶ 18% were insulted, discredited or their credentials were questioned

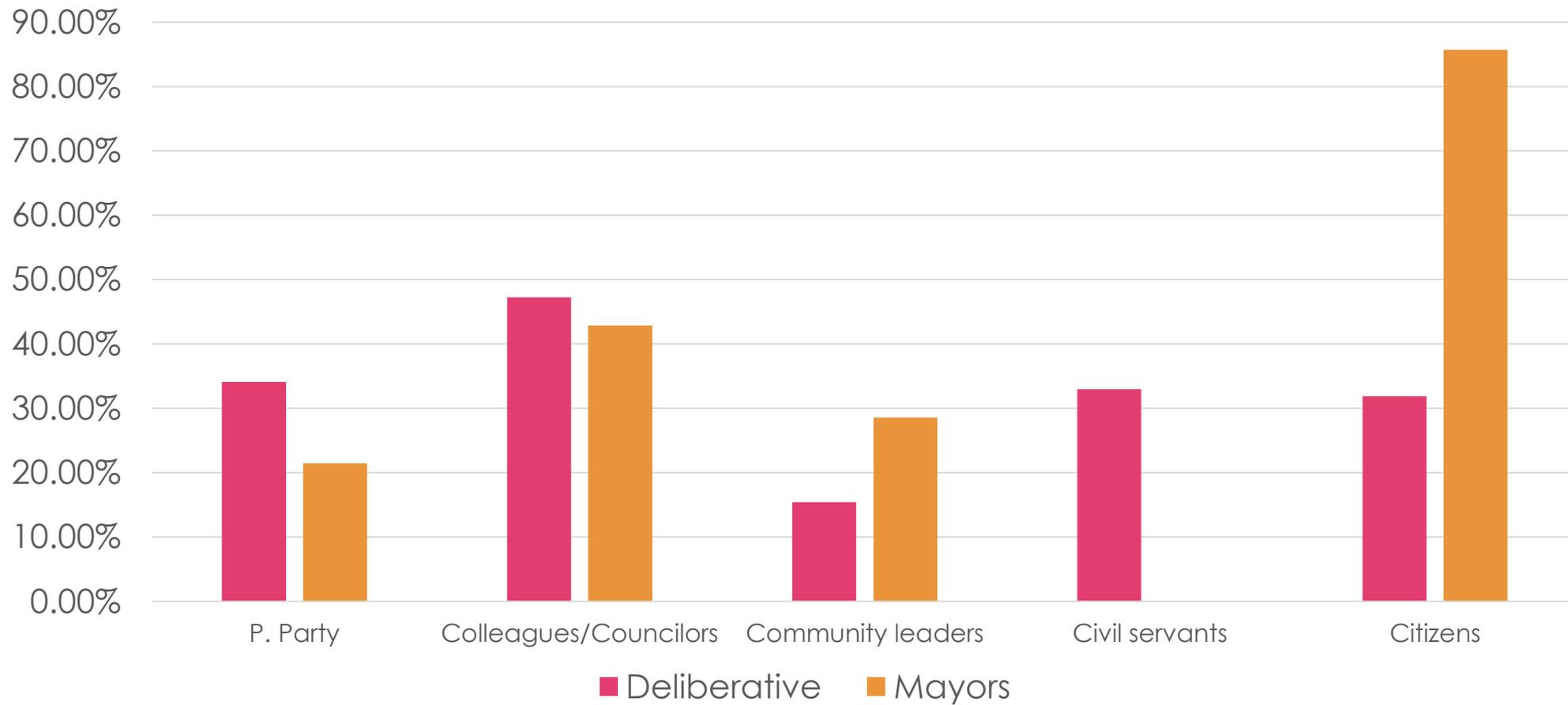
Results

- ▶ 5 % accused of being 'a bad mother, daughter, wife' for being in politics
- ▶ 16% received rape or sexual assault threats
- ▶ 12% catcalled
- ▶ 6% sexually harassed
- ▶ 5% Comments about their private lives
- ▶ 2% were victims of physical or sexual violence

Results – Mayors

- ▶ Only 2 respondents were not victims of VAWIP
- ▶ 9 reported being disrespected, questioned in their ability to lead, called epithets
- ▶ 7 received threats of violence
- ▶ 5 were falsely accused of corruption
- ▶ 4 were silenced

Perpetrators



Testimonies

- ▶ Hard to recognize behaviors as 'violence'
 - ▶ "Cost of doing politics"
 - ▶ Justified as a consequence of the civil conflict (even if no clear connection)
- ▶ Several manifestations at once
- ▶ Social media and SMS widely used to insult and threaten anonymously

"It was very hard for me to self-identify as a victim of violence. I thought 'why do they do this to me' but I never thought about it as violence. It took me a long time to recognize that this was violence, even though I have worked in HHRR"
(Member of LAG)

Testimonies

“They wanted me to resign, especially when I became president of the council. They even tried to change the council rules to reduce the autonomy of the presidency”
(Councilwoman)

- ▶ Silencing is very common
- ▶ Challenging women’s power

Testimonies

- ▶ False accusations of corruption are also common
 - ▶ Tarnish the woman's reputation
 - ▶ Affect long-term career
 - ▶ But also affect her performance

“I have been reported to the Attorney General, the Comptroller, the Inspector General, as part of the persecution I suffered. Anything that I did in my administration, he said ‘there is a crime, let’s report it’” (Former Mayor)

State response

What did you do?	
The Cost of Doing Politics'	34%
Public Opinion	30%
Authority	23%
Did nothing, but felt mistreated	16%

“After two and a half months requesting a risk assessment [due to death threats], the National Protection Unit sent an analyst. She told me that it was nothing (even though she does not know the context) that , at most, the NPU would give me a cellphone and a bulletproof vest.”

Civil conflict

- ▶ Some actions are clearly linked to the civil conflict
- ▶ However, most women recognized different motivations for their attacks, even if they were also victims in the civil conflict

“Our enemies are not the FARC but our political rivals” (councilwoman)

“When I was campaigning someone started texting me. I looked him up and it was a.k.a. “Calixto”. He told me to go up [to the mountain]. He wanted to intimidate me, to scare me so I would leave [politics]” (councilwoman)

Testimonies

“The police started to harass me ... I would be driving and they would pull me over several times. Police officers would go to my house and take pictures of my family. They were not following due process, they were intimidating me”
(Member of LAG)

Intimidation and harassment by different armed actors was also common but state actors were used by political rivals to intimidate women

Conclusions

- ▶ Hard to recognize acts of violence as violence
- ▶ Intertwined w. civil conflict → But distinct actions, motives, and perpetrators
- ▶ Interviews highlighted the importance of empowerment, training.
 - ▶ But, need to change political culture and institutions
- ▶ Not a single action but several different manifestations at once
- ▶ Political parties responsible, esp. economic violence, and support
- ▶ Challenges ahead: increase women's political participation in the aftermath of the conflict.