

Women as policy makers: Evidence from the Grassroots



PLANNING COMMISSION



The Indian Experience



- Do reservations for women at the lowest level in India help improve the position of women across the board?
- India provides a very interesting window into this phenomenon:
 - Large scale reservation at the most grassroots level
 - A national debate on expansion of those quotas
 - The way that quotas were implemented allows us to contrast the experience of comparable places with and without quotas.

The Panchayat system, and the quotas



- Since 1993, India has revitalized its system of decentralized government: the Panchayat system.
- Panchayats are in charge of local expenditures and, increasingly, play a key role in the flagship social program, such as the national rural guarantee act.
- The constitutional amendment that established the system also planned for mandated representation of women

Reservations for women



- In each council, one third of the members must be women
- Further, one third of each council must have a women as the head
- To avoid political manipulation, the selection of councils to be reserved is random in most States

Our Research: the Immediate effects

- Do the reservation lead more women to be **elected**?
- Does this lead more women to effectively **participate**?
- Does this lead to different policy choices, that better reflect **women's need**?
- Does this change the **style of government**?



Our research: The long term impacts



- Does this change the **perception** that women can lead (positively or negatively?)
- Does this change the chance of women to be **elected** after reservation?
- Does this **durably** change policy outcomes, or are any changes immediately reversed after reservation?
- Does this change people's **aspirations** for their daughters?
- Do this change in aspiration lead to change in **real life outcomes**?

Identification strategy, and data collection

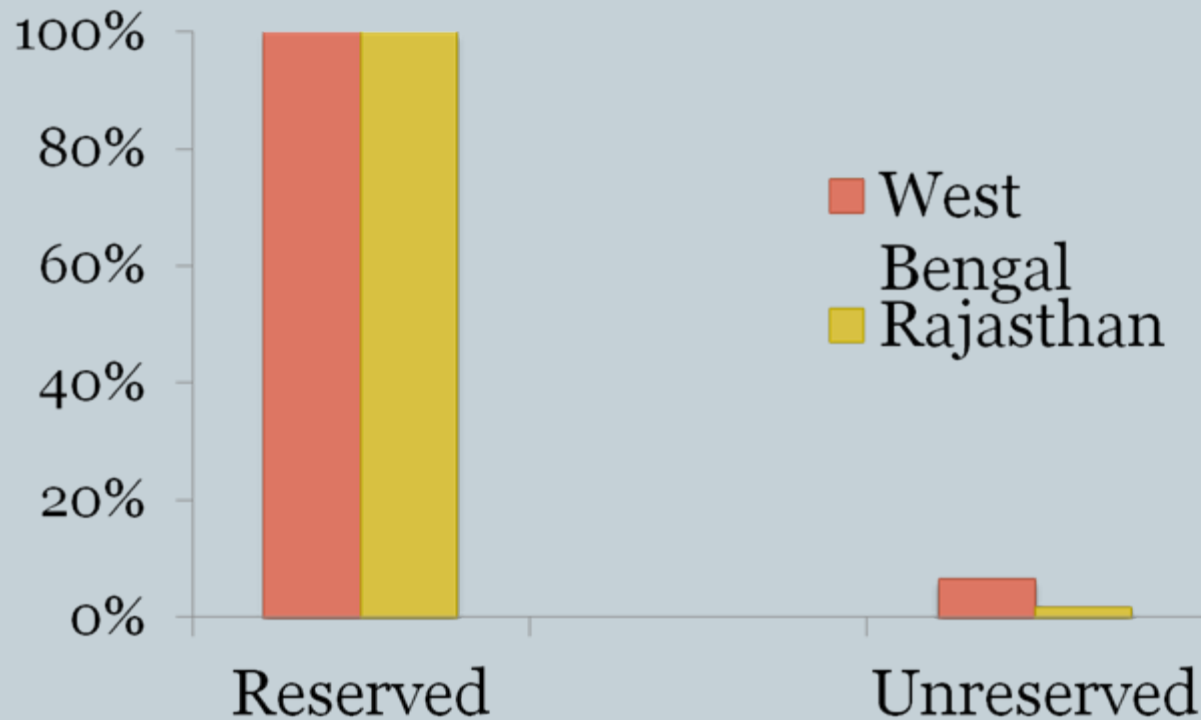


- **Given that randomization, the empirical strategy is straightforward: We want to compare outcomes of interest in reserved vs unreserved constituencies.**
- **Data collection :**
 - Chattopadhyay and Duflo: Collected data in 2000 in almost all the GP of one district in West Bengal (2 years after election for first cohort of women)
 - Banerjee and Duflo: Collected data in 100 villages in Rajasthan in 2002 (2 years after second election).
 - Beaman et al. Collected village level and household level data in 2005 (2 years after second cycle of elections)
 - Banerjee, Duflo, Imbert, Pande: Ran an experiment and collected household level data in 2010

More women elected?



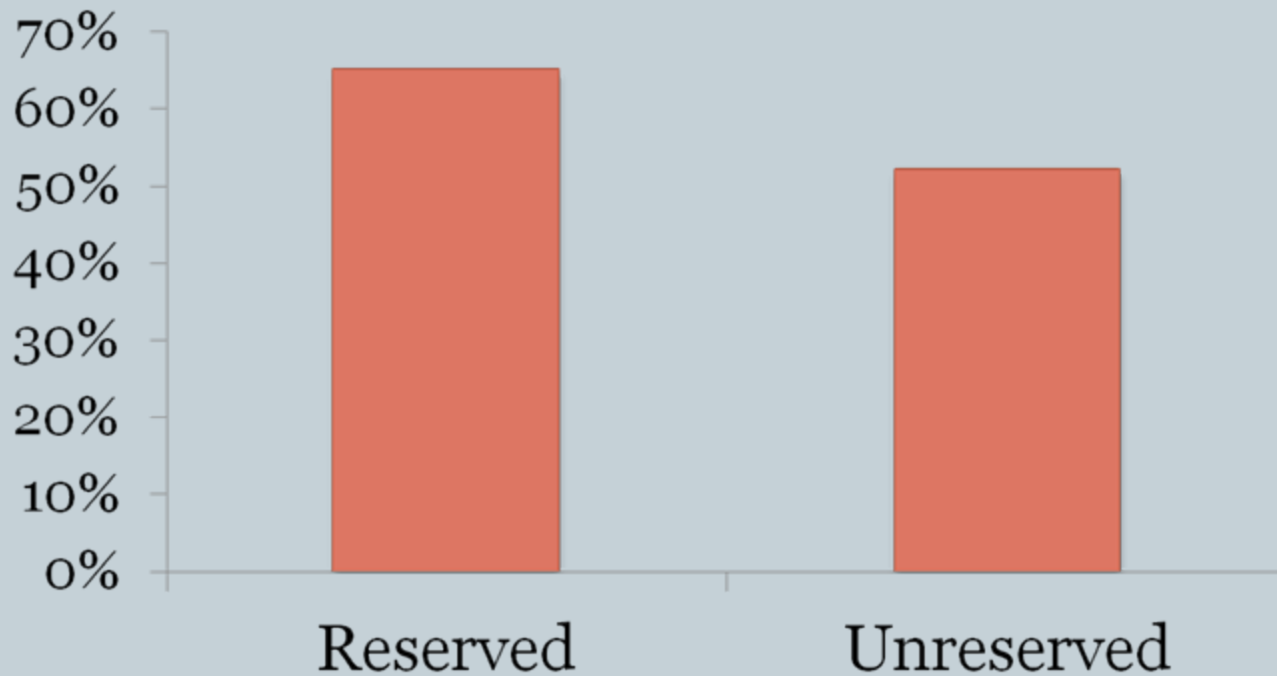
Number of women elected, first cycle of reservation



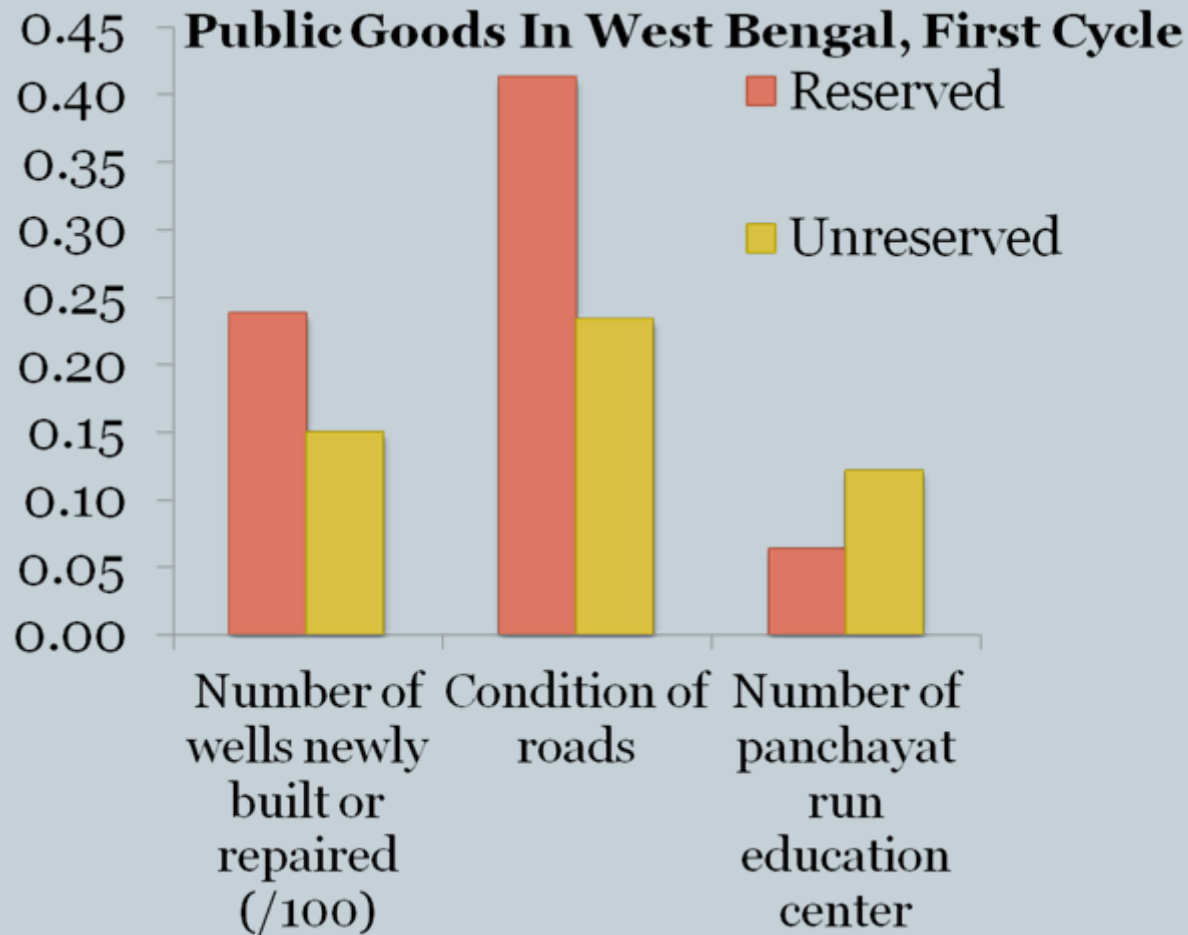
More participation: Record from village meeting



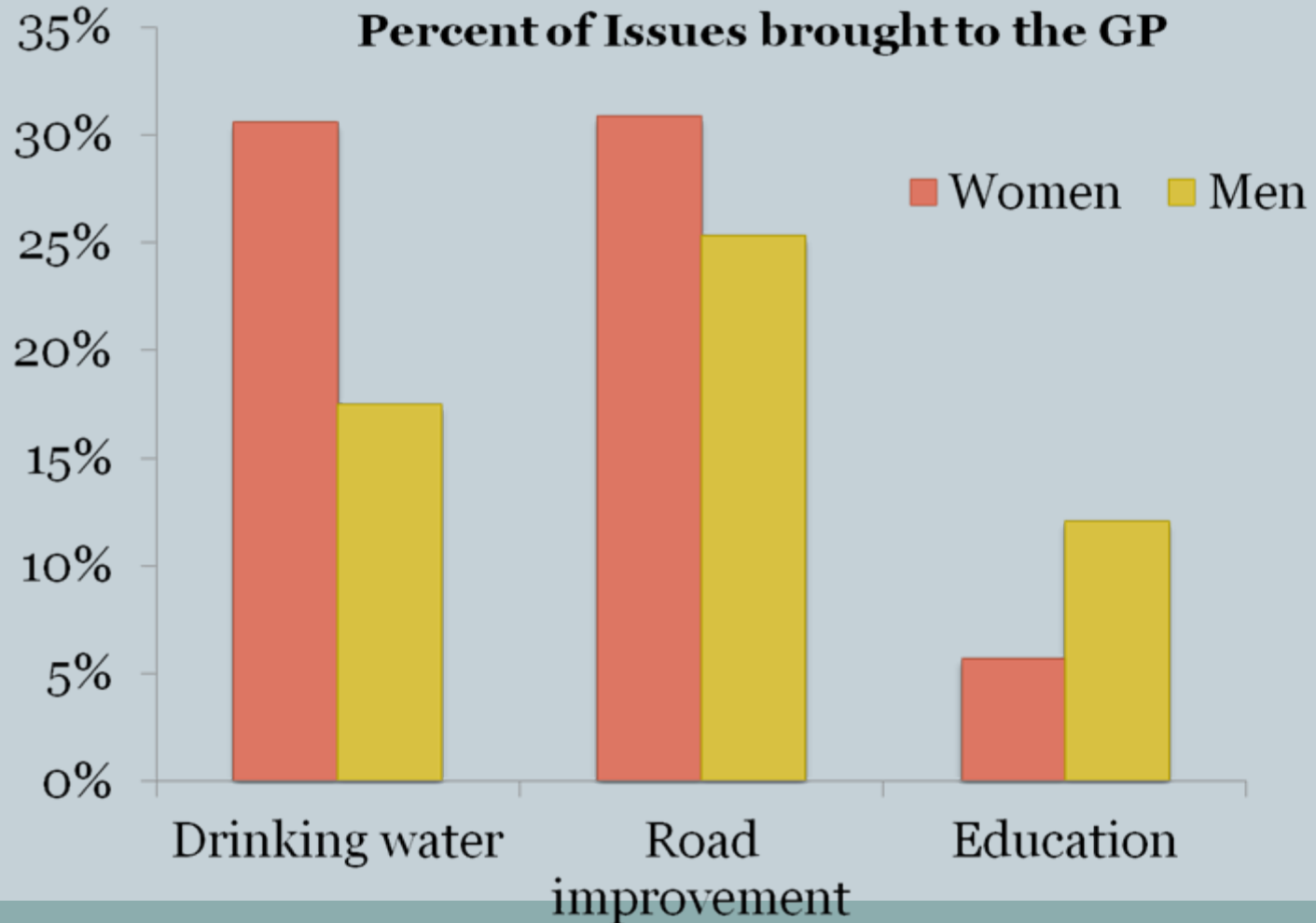
Did women speak at the village meeting?



Different Policies



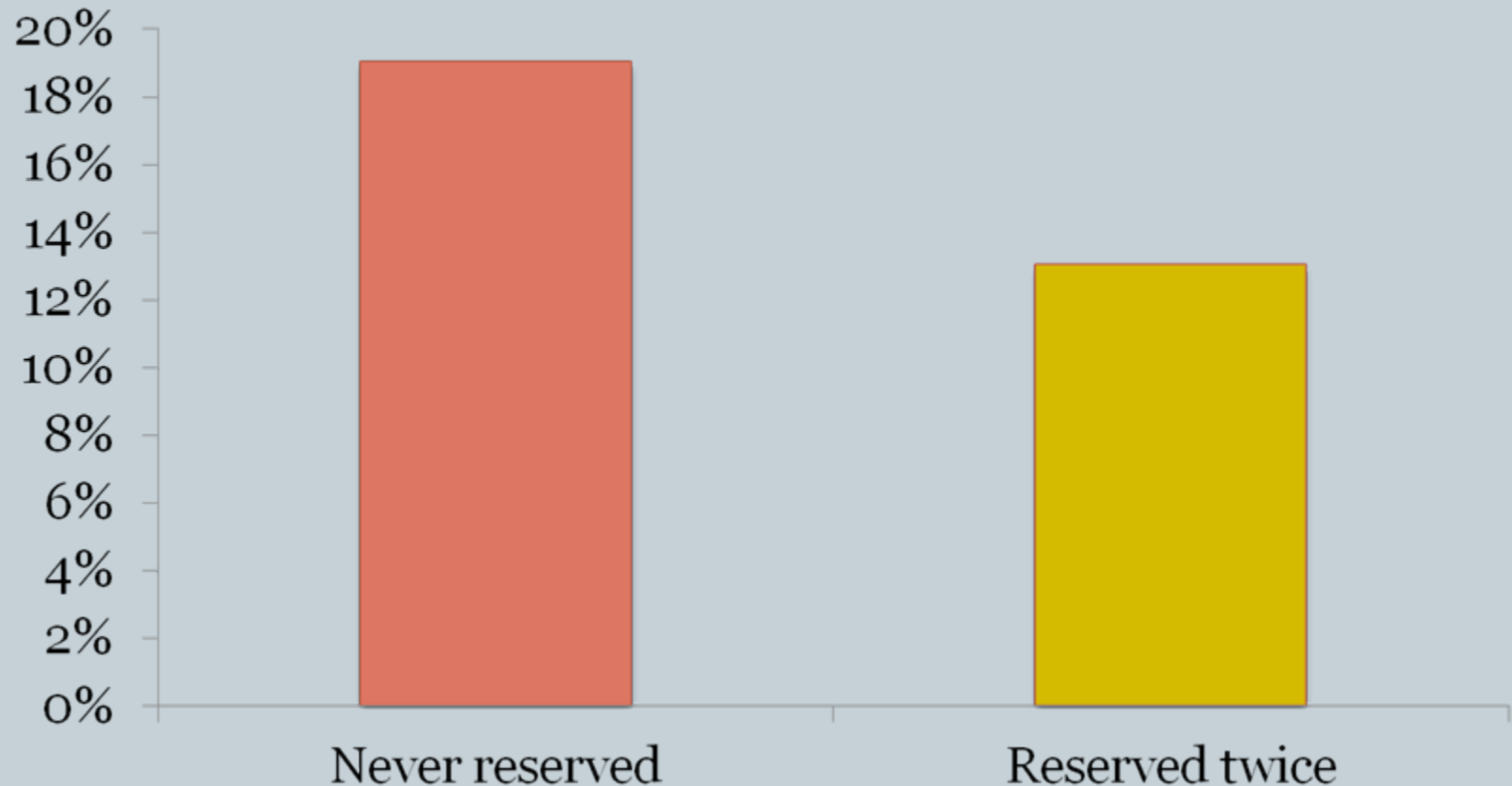
Does this reflect women's preferences?



Style of Government: Bribes



Household ever paid a bribe for water?

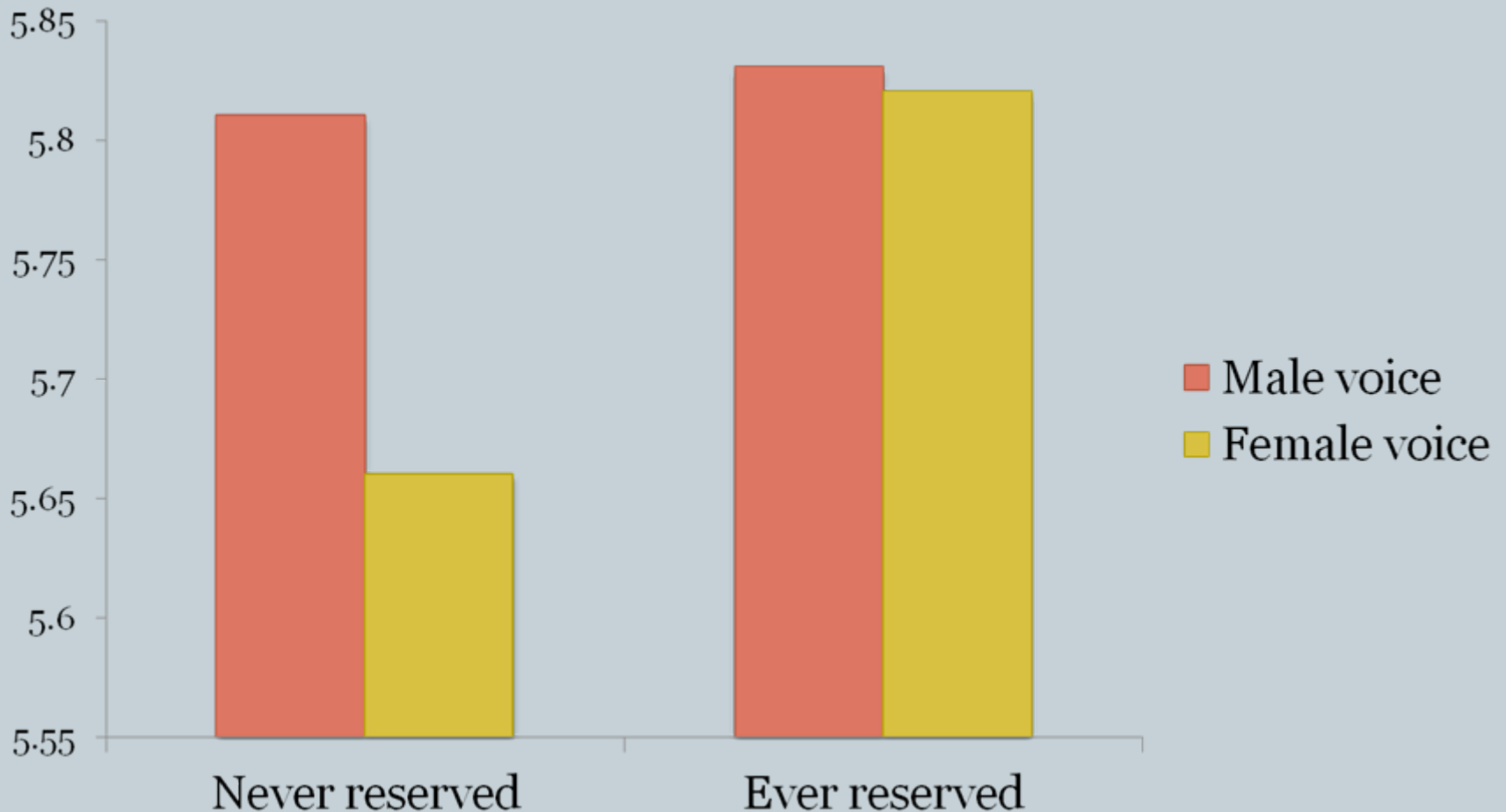


Perceptions: Can women lead?

Reaction after hearing a taped speech



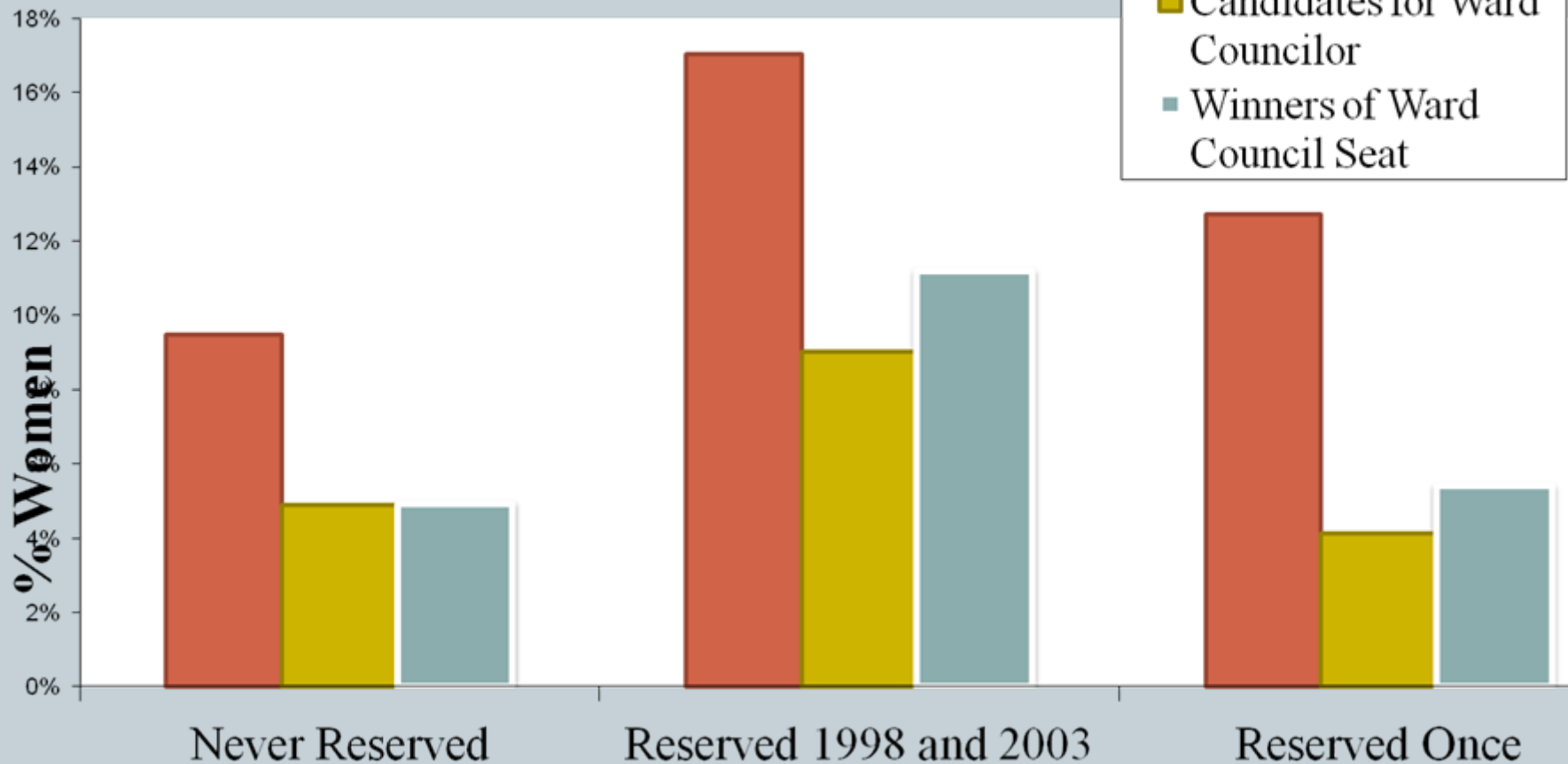
On a scale of one to ten, how effective is the Pradhan?



Are women elected after reservation ?



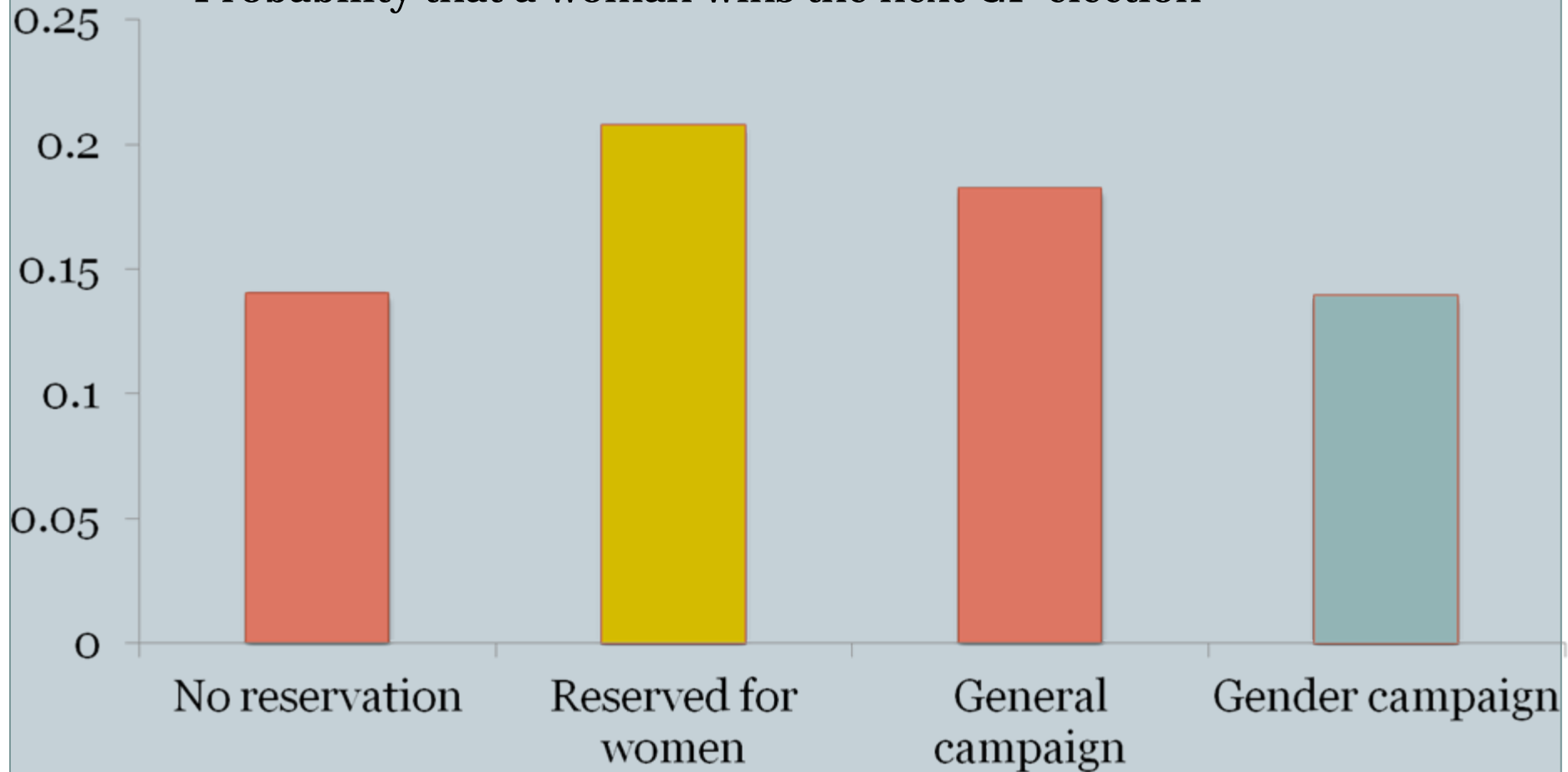
2008 Election Outcomes



Can the process be accelerated: theater campaigns in Rajasthan



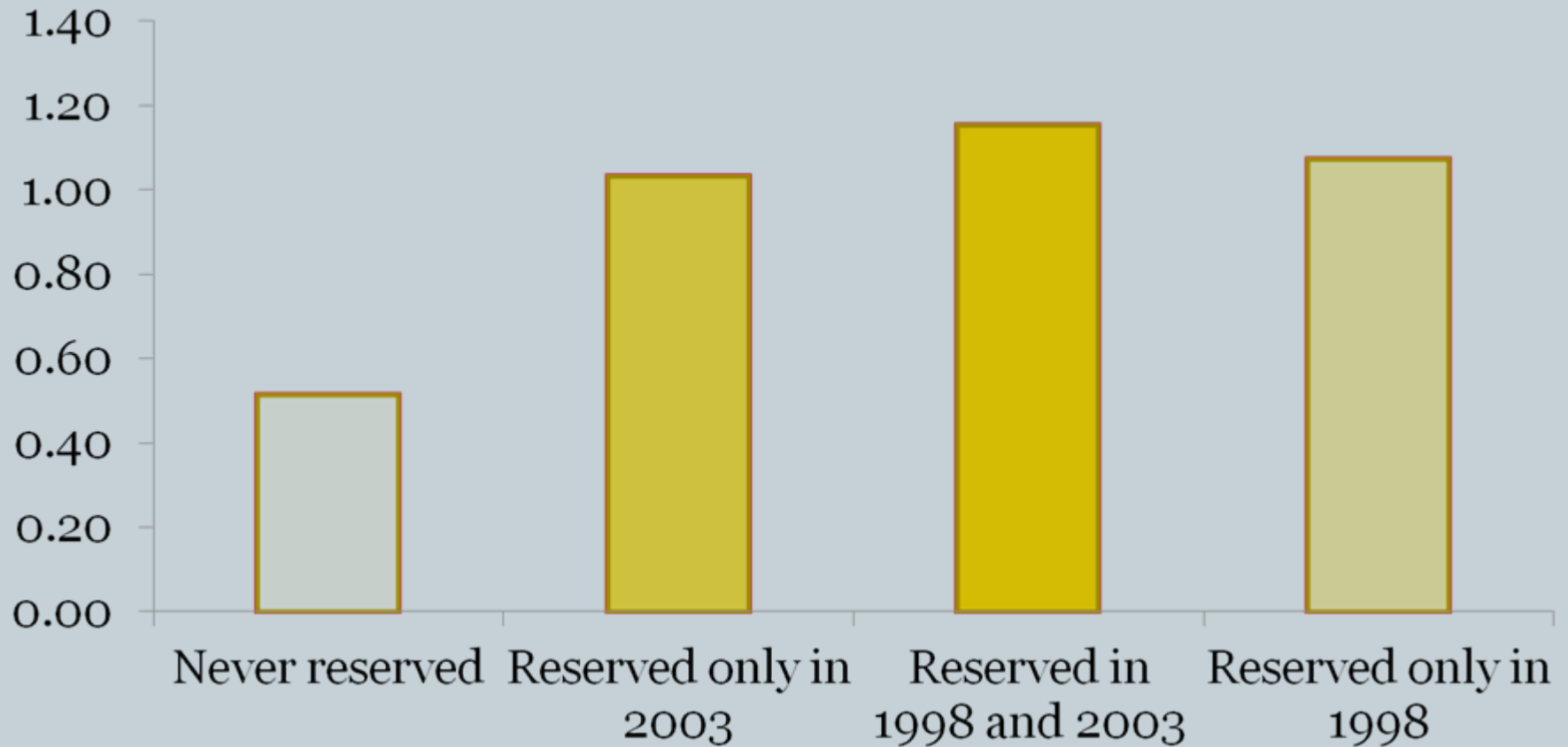
Probability that a woman wins the next GP election



Are the effects durable?



Index of alignment with women's preferences

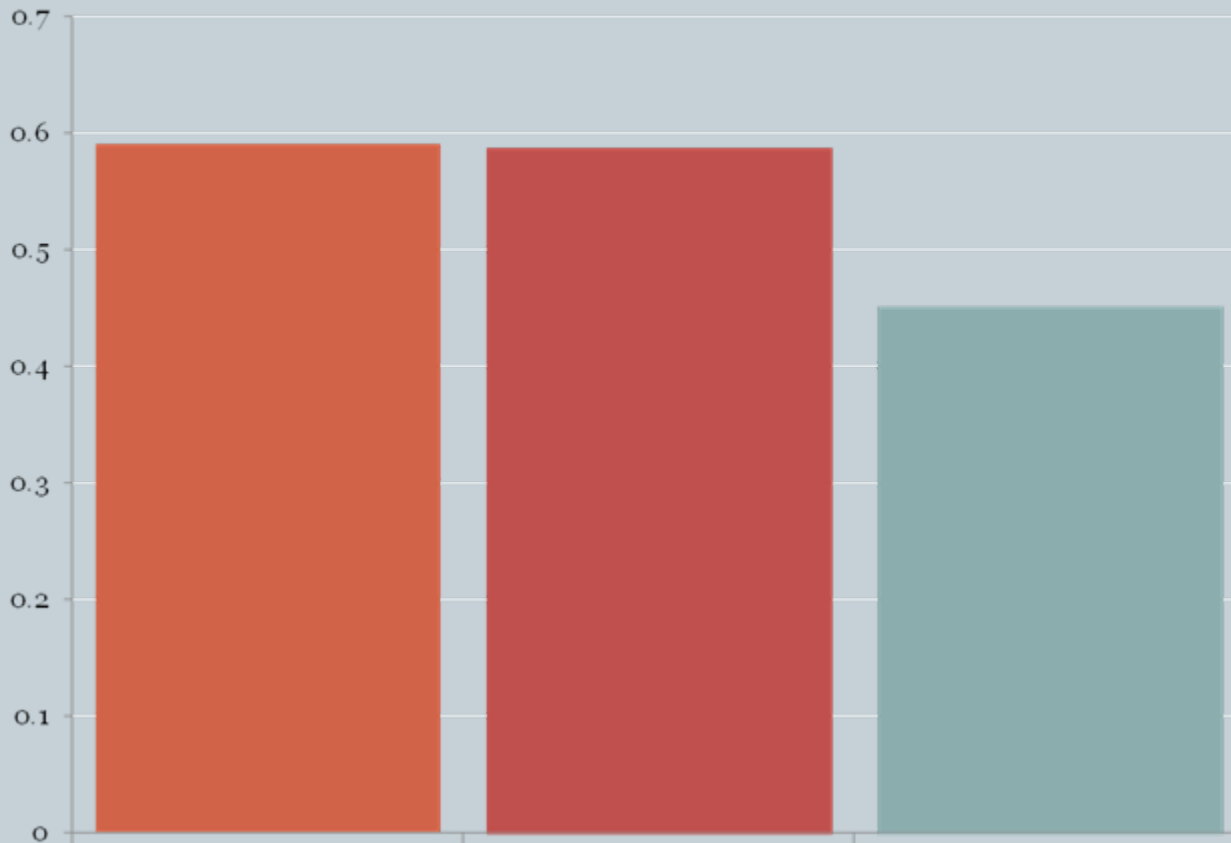


Parental Aspiration



Gap in parents' aspirations: average

Unreserved Reserved Once Reserved Twice



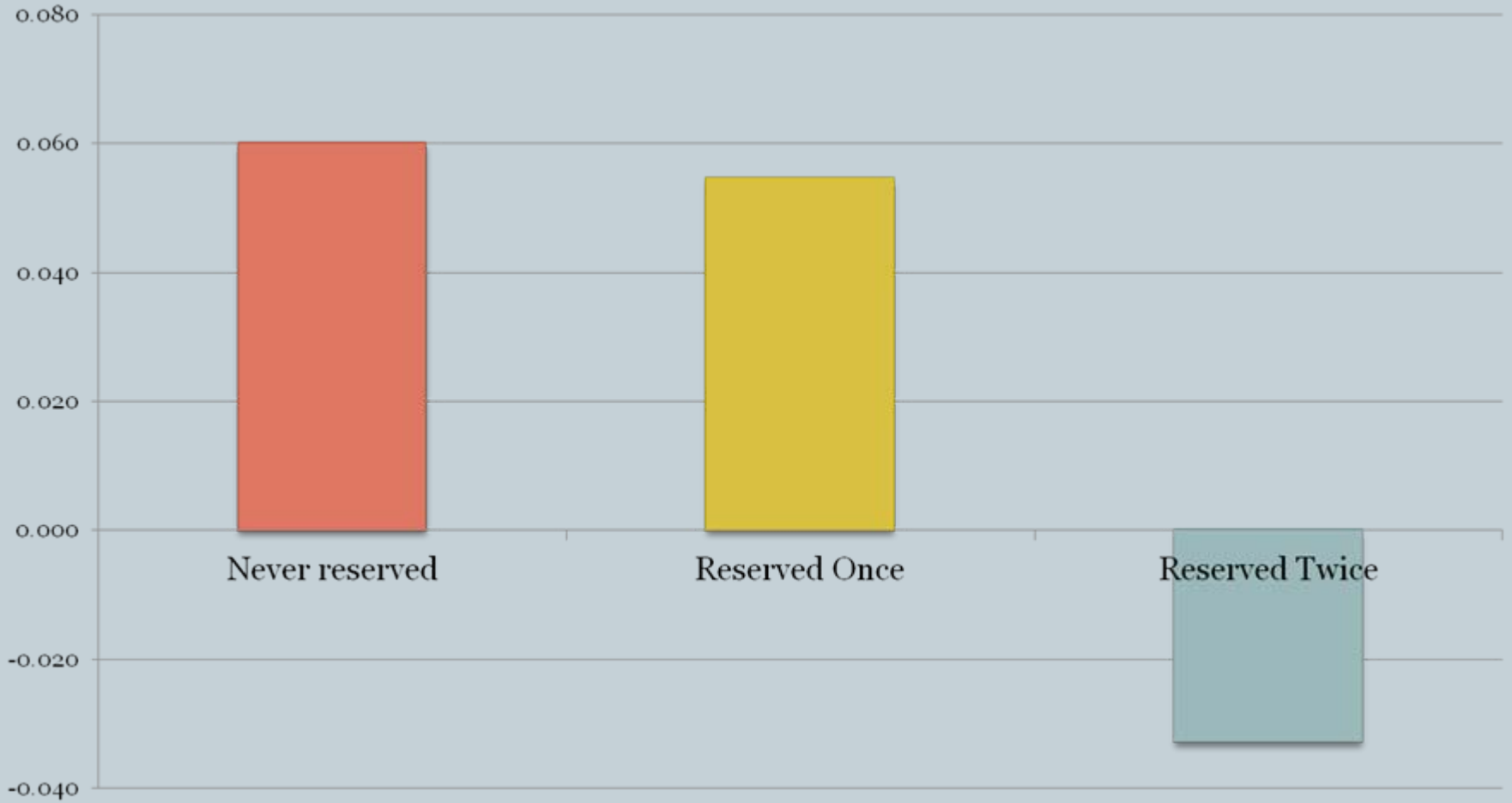
Children's aspiration:



Gap in teens' aspirations: average



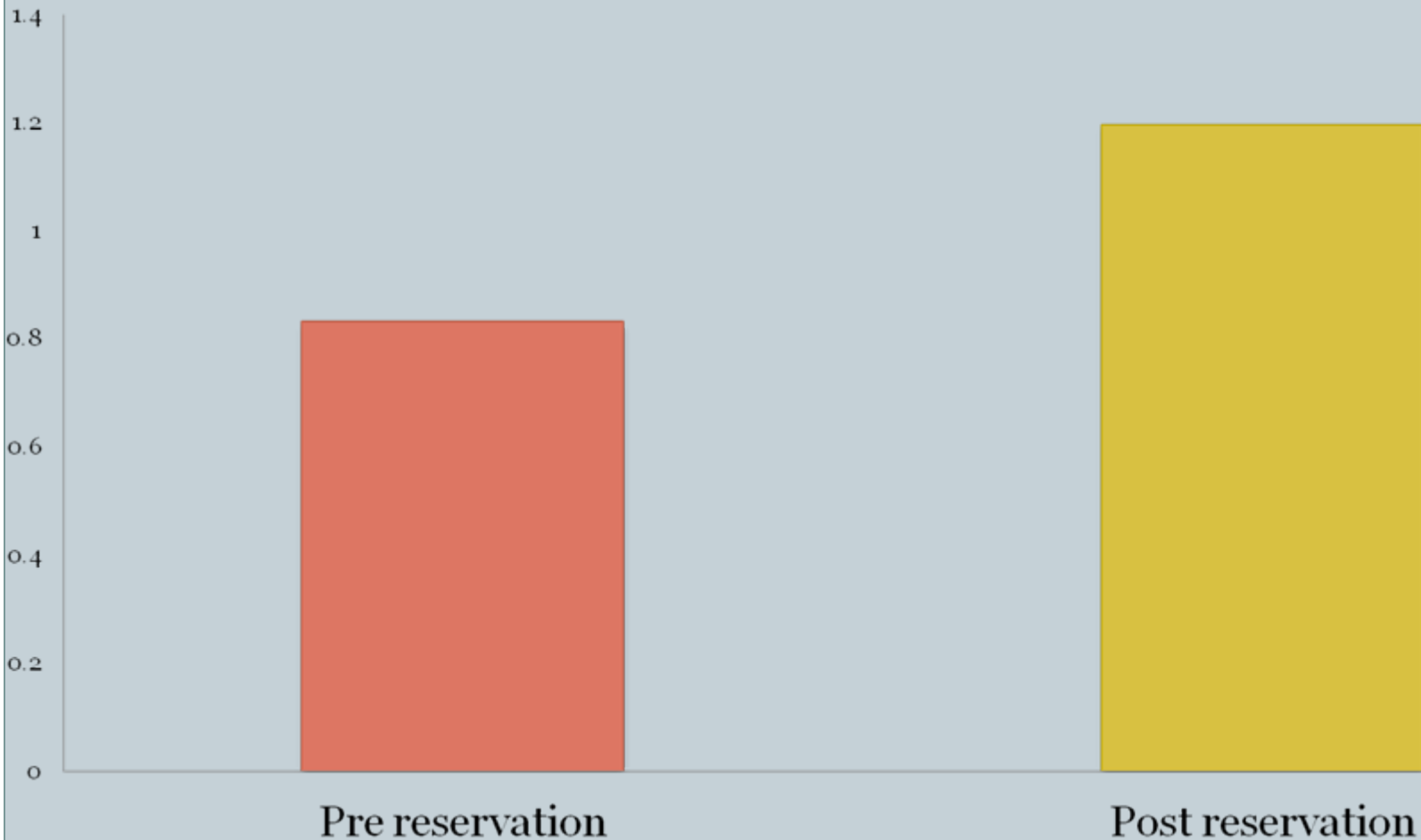
Educational Attainment



Crime against women are more likely to be reported



(Reported) Crime Againsts women



Conclusion



- **Women leaders are generally disparaged in India. “shadow pradhans”, stooges**
- **And indeed they are quiet, often their husbands answer questions for them**
- **Yet, over this more than 10 years-old research program, what we have learnt is that:**
 - Women take different decisions that better reflect women’s need
 - They gain acceptance as leaders, in a way that cannot be replicated with campaigns
 - Their quiet presence does lead to a change in parents’ attitude towards girls which has real impacts.