

Beyond the Knowledge Gap: Gender and Political Knowledge Confidence*

Jasmine English[†]

February 14, 2026

Abstract

That women possess less political knowledge than men is a canonical finding in political science. However, this account obscures a second and understudied asymmetry: women are also less confident in the political knowledge they have. Using two national surveys in the United States and the United Kingdom, I show that the gender gap in political knowledge confidence is around twice as large as the well-established gap in objective political knowledge, and that the difference between what people know and what they think they know—their knowledge underestimation—is systematically larger among women. I further show that political knowledge confidence is strongly associated with political engagement, establishing why differences in political self-assessment are consequential. Together, these findings identify knowledge underestimation as a distinct and underexamined dimension of gender inequality in politics and suggest that informational equality alone may be insufficient for equalizing political voice.

*Competing interests: The author(s) declare none.

[†]Assistant Professor of Political Science, Reed College (jasenglish@reed.edu)

1 Introduction

A long line of research documents gender gaps in political knowledge, with women consistently scoring lower than men on standard knowledge batteries (Mondak and Anderson, 2004; Lizotte and Sidman, 2009; Wolak and McDevitt, 2011; Burns et al., 2001; Verba et al., 1997; Stolle and Gidengil, 2010; Fraile, 2014; Dassonneville and McAllister, 2018). This uneven distribution of knowledge is concerning: citizens who know more about politics are more likely to be attentive to public affairs, have stable and consistent political opinions, resist misinformation, and engage politically in a variety of ways (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Galston, 2001; Nie et al., 1996; Zaller, 1992; Meirick and Wackman, 2004; Siegel-Stechler, 2019; Gilens, 2001).¹

This literature has largely measured political knowledge as the ability to correctly answer a short series of factual political questions. However, political knowledge as it functions in democratic life is not reducible to factual recall. Rather, political knowledge encompasses both the possession of factual information *and* the confidence to deploy that information: to trust one’s understanding to discuss politics, form political opinions, evaluate candidates, contact officials, and vote. As a result, political knowledge as used in practice also involves individuals’ assessments of the reliability and adequacy of what they know about politics.

In recognition of this distinction, scholars have begun to disaggregate political knowledge into *objective political knowledge*—the ability to correctly recall political information—and *political knowledge confidence*—how certain individuals feel about the correctness of their political knowledge (Lee and Matsuo, 2018; Lee et al., 2022; Leonhard et al., 2020; Jansa et al., 2024). This latter concept refers to individuals’ confidence in the correctness of their political understanding, rather than their motivation to follow politics or generalized perceptions of political efficacy. Importantly, this nascent literature finds that objective political knowledge and political knowledge confidence do not always align (Anson, 2018; Rogers and Gooch, 2021), and that knowledge confidence is often a stronger predictor of the outcomes typically

¹ Some argue that at least part of the observed gender gap in political knowledge can be attributed to measurement. For instance, some research finds that gender differences decline when focusing on gender-relevant political knowledge (Dolan, 2011), political discussion sophistication (Kraft, 2023), and in contexts with more female representation (Kraft and Dolan, 2023; Pereira, 2019). Men are also more willing to guess, which may inflate the gender gap (Fortin-Rittberger, 2020; Ferrín et al., 2018; Mondak and Anderson, 2004). Critiques aside, the knowledge gap remains one of the most consistent findings in the field.

ascribed to objective knowledge (Lee and Matsuo, 2018; Lee et al., 2022).

What we do not yet know is whether the gender gap in objective political knowledge has a parallel in political knowledge confidence as a directly measured construct. The participatory implications are important: if women systematically underestimate what they know about politics, then the mechanisms that produce participatory inequality may not only be informational but evaluative. Participatory inequality, in other words, may stem not only from the unequal distribution of political information, but from the unequal distribution of the confidence to claim and act on that information.

Building on this concern, this paper develops and evaluates theoretically motivated expectations about gendered patterns of knowledge confidence. Drawing on research on gendered political socialization, stereotype threat, and the political underrepresentation of women, the analysis is guided by the expectation that women systematically underestimate their political knowledge relative to men. The paper also examines whether patterns of knowledge underestimation vary across politically salient subgroups—such as partisan and racial groups—in ways that reflect structured political contexts rather than idiosyncratic differences.

I assess these expectations using original survey data from the United States and the United Kingdom. These cases offer a useful comparison: they share broadly similar democratic institutions while differing in political discourse, party systems, and patterns of women’s political representation, which allows me to assess the robustness of gendered knowledge underestimation across related contexts. Using these data, I identify gendered knowledge underestimation as a distinct and consequential mechanism of political inequality: women systematically discount the political knowledge they possess. Specifically, I show that the gender gap in knowledge confidence is around twice as large as the well-established gap in political knowledge, and that the difference between what people know and what they think they know—their knowledge underestimation—is systematically larger among women. I further demonstrate that political knowledge confidence is strongly associated with political engagement and is often a stronger correlate than objective political knowledge, thereby establishing why knowledge confidence matters for democratic participation. Together, these

findings reconceptualize the gender gap in political knowledge as not only informational but *evaluative*: where existing research focuses on what women do not know, this paper refocuses attention on how women evaluate the accuracy and adequacy of what they do know.

In so doing, this paper makes several contributions to the study of political knowledge, gender and politics, and political engagement. First, the paper adds an important layer to the canonical gender gap in political knowledge: not only do women score lower on factual questions, they are also systematically more likely to discount the knowledge they have. The gender gap, in other words, is not only about information deficits but about epistemic confidence. Second, the paper identifies political knowledge underestimation as an undertheorized mechanism of participatory inequality. This mechanism suggests that correcting informational asymmetries alone may be insufficient: if political knowledge confidence matters for engagement, participation gaps may persist even when informational gaps close. Finally, the paper advances a growing literature on political knowledge confidence by showing that the democratic importance of political knowledge is not reducible to factual mastery: in two large democracies, political knowledge confidence strongly correlates with political engagement even when accounting for objective political knowledge.

In short, this paper argues that the study of political knowledge demands attention to both the possession of political knowledge *and* the confidence with which that knowledge is held. The participatory stakes are straightforward but far-reaching: efforts to equalize information will not equalize voice if women continue to undervalue what they know.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 conceptualizes political knowledge confidence and distinguishes it from related constructs. Section 3 develops theoretical expectations about gendered knowledge confidence and underestimation. Section 4 describes the data, measurement, and logic of case selection. Section 5 examines the relationship between knowledge confidence and political engagement to establish why confidence in one's knowledge is politically consequential. Section 6 presents the core findings on gendered patterns of knowledge confidence and underestimation in the United States and United Kingdom with exploratory analyses by race and party. Section 7 concludes with implications for research on political

knowledge, participation, and inequality.

2 Conceptualizing Political Knowledge and Knowledge Confidence

Most research on political knowledge operationalizes the concept as factual knowledge about government institutions, the responsibilities of those institutions, and the actors making decisions in those institutions (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1993). This kind of knowledge is valued because it correlates with desirable outcomes: higher political participation and efficacy, more stable and consistent political opinions, the ability to hold elected officials accountable, and greater resistance to misinformation and persuasion (Zaller, 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Meirick and Wackman, 2004; Siegel-Stechler, 2019; Gilens, 2001; Althaus, 2003).

One of the most consistent findings in this line of research—and political science more broadly—is that there is a gender gap in political knowledge. Across decades of studies and multiple national contexts, women answer fewer factual political questions correctly, even when controlling for education, political interest, and media consumption (Verba et al., 1997; Wolak and McDevitt, 2011; Lizotte and Sidman, 2009; Fraile, 2014; Dassonneville and McAllister, 2018). Although measurement critiques have challenged the extent of the gender gap (Dolan, 2011; Kraft, 2023; Kraft and Dolan, 2023; Pereira, 2019; Fortin-Rittberger, 2020), the empirical regularity itself is one of the most durable findings in the field.

Scholars have offered a range of explanations for this gap. Some work attributes it to differences in socialization and gendered adult roles that provide men with greater access to political information and discussion (Wolak and McDevitt, 2011; Ferrín et al., 2019). Other studies point to motivational factors and gendered norms around epistemic risk-taking (Mondak and Anderson, 2004; Ferrín et al., 2018). Work that emphasizes these gendered norms has largely focused on response behavior, particularly women’s greater propensity to select “I don’t know” (DK) responses rather than guessing (Mondak and Anderson, 2004; Mondak and Canache, 2004; Lizotte and Sidman, 2009; Ferrín et al., 2018). Scholars have often interpreted this pattern as evidence of gendered norms around risk-taking and correctness: women may be more reluctant to guess in the face of uncertainty, while men are more willing to hazard in-

correct answers. Accordingly, DK responses are commonly interpreted as an indirect indicator of a lack of confidence under epistemic risk.

Recently, however, scholars have begun to explicitly disaggregate the concept of political knowledge into objective political knowledge—the ability to correctly recall political information—and political knowledge confidence—how certain individuals are about the correctness of that knowledge (Lee and Matsuo, 2018; Lee et al., 2022; Leonhard et al., 2020; Jansa et al., 2024). This research recognizes that the democratic utility of political knowledge rests on both information possession and the confidence to deploy that information. Early findings from this growing research agenda suggest that knowledge confidence is often as or more predictive of political engagement than factual correctness on objective political knowledge items (Lee and Matsuo, 2018; Lee et al., 2022; Ortoleva and Snowberg, 2015).

Although related to several established constructs in political behavior, knowledge confidence captures a distinct dimension of how citizens orient themselves toward political information. Most importantly, knowledge confidence is conceptually distinct from internal political efficacy, which reflects a generalized belief in one’s capacity to act competently in politics—whether by understanding political processes, participating, or influencing outcomes (Niemi et al., 1991). Internal efficacy is agent-centered: it concerns confidence in oneself as a political actor. Knowledge confidence, by contrast, is knowledge-centered: it captures individuals’ confidence in the correctness and reliability of their factual understanding of politics. Individuals may feel politically efficacious yet uncertain about whether their factual understanding is correct, just as they may feel knowledgeable while remaining doubtful about their ability to influence political outcomes. Distinguishing these constructs matters because they imply different mechanisms linking political cognition to participation: efficacy governs willingness to act, while knowledge confidence shapes whether individuals treat their political understanding as usable and reliable in political contexts. Even when individuals believe in their capacity to influence politics, low confidence in the correctness of their political understanding may discourage them from acting or relying on their knowledge in political decision-making.

Knowledge confidence is also distinct from political interest and general self-confidence.

Political interest reflects motivation and attentiveness (Hidi and Renninger, 2006; Prior, 2018): it shapes exposure to political information but does not imply confidence in one’s understanding of that information. Knowledge confidence captures the evaluative step that translates exposure into felt epistemic competence and is therefore plausibly downstream of political interest without being reducible to it. Likewise, general self-confidence is domain-general and closely tied to personality traits, whereas knowledge confidence is explicitly domain-specific. Research in psychology distinguishes generalized self-confidence from domain-specific assessments of mastery, showing that individuals can feel broadly confident while remaining uncertain about their competence in particular tasks or knowledge domains and vice versa (Bandura, 1997; Chen et al., 2004). The items used to measure knowledge confidence are domain-specific: they reference concrete aspects of political cognition—elections, institutions, and lawmaking—and thus anchor the construct in the domain of political knowledge. This domain-specificity supports treating knowledge confidence as a distinct concept, rather than as a proxy for broader psychological dispositions.

Research on “I don’t know” (DK) responses and guessing behavior is also closely related to—but analytically distinct from—the concept of knowledge confidence. DK responses capture behavior in response to uncertainty on specific items and require researchers to infer confidence from item-level response strategies. Although this literature has often interpreted DK responses and guessing as indirect indicators of confidence, knowledge confidence directly captures individuals’ self-assessed evaluations of the reliability and adequacy of their political understanding across domains. By measuring knowledge confidence directly rather than inferring it from question-level responses, the approach taken here allows for a clearer separation between information possession and self-evaluative judgments about political knowledge.

Despite a growing body of research on political knowledge confidence as a distinct dimension of political knowledge (Lee and Matsuo, 2018; Lee et al., 2022; Ortoleva and Snowberg, 2015; Leonhard et al., 2020; Jansa et al., 2024), we do not yet know whether the persistent gender gap in objective political knowledge has a parallel in knowledge confidence. This question matters because knowledge confidence captures a meaningfully distinct dimension

of political knowledge—how individuals experience and evaluate their grasp of politics, not simply whether they can retrieve the correct answer. This concept therefore provides insight into individuals' evaluation of their political knowledge: whether they feel able to participate in political conversation, assess new information, and rely on their own perspective as valid and competent when engaging with politics. As such, investigating the relationship between gender and knowledge confidence stands to significantly advance our understanding of the political knowledge gap.

3 Why Gendered Knowledge Confidence?

Why might political knowledge confidence be systematically gendered? Drawing on research in psychology, sociology, and political science, this section develops clear theoretical expectations about gendered patterns of knowledge confidence and knowledge underestimation. I focus on three mutually reinforcing mechanisms. First, gendered norms around certainty and correctness shape how men and women are socialized to express confidence in their political understanding. Second, stereotype threat can heighten women's concern about confirming negative expectations regarding political competence, leading to more cautious self-assessments. Third, women's persistent underrepresentation in political institutions and elite discourse may signal that politics is not a domain in which women's knowledge is presumed authoritative. This section elaborates how I expect each mechanism to contribute to the gendered distribution of political knowledge confidence and political knowledge underestimation.

First, a substantial body of research documents that men and women are socialized into different relationships with certainty, authority, and public knowledge claims. Women face stronger social penalties for expressing confidence, particularly in domains coded as masculine (Rudman, 1998; Rudman and Phelan, 2008). Asserting knowledge confidently can violate prescriptive gender stereotypes that expect women to be modest and collaborative (Prentice and Carranza, 2002). These norms are particularly salient in politics, which remains strongly associated with masculine traits like assertiveness, competitiveness, and authority (Dolan, 2014; Schneider and Bos, 2014). Research suggests that these gendered expectations around

confidence and certainty can undermine women’s psychological engagement with politics and their willingness to assert political knowledge (Wolak, 2020).

Research on gendered communication patterns provides additional insight on this point. Women are more likely to use hedge words (“I think,” “maybe,” “probably”) and disclaimers when expressing opinions, particularly on topics associated with male expertise (Lakoff, 1973; Carli, 1990; Leaper and Robnett, 2011). While some scholars interpret these patterns as strategic responses to backlash (women may choose to express uncertainty to avoid penalty), others suggest that they reflect internalized uncertainty about the legitimacy of one’s knowledge claims (Tannen, 1990). Regardless of mechanism, these patterns suggest that women may be more likely to qualify their epistemic claims about politics—to discount what they know—independent of their knowledge level. These dynamics may be compounded by the gendered distribution of cognitive household labor—the “mental load” (Weeks, 2025)—which may constrain the psychological bandwidth required to project epistemic certainty in political domains. Whether women’s expressed uncertainty reflects internalized doubt or strategic responses to anticipated backlash, both mechanisms imply that women are more likely to discount the adequacy of their political knowledge when assessing their own competence.

Stereotype threat theory offers a second explanation for political knowledge underestimation among women. When individuals are aware of negative stereotypes about their group’s performance in a domain, the psychological burden of potentially confirming those stereotypes can undermine performance and self-assessment (Steele and Aronson, 1995; Spencer et al., 1999). In politics, where women are stereotyped as less knowledgeable and less competent (Schneider and Bos, 2014; Holman et al., 2016), women may internalize these expectations and consequently underestimate their mastery of political information. Importantly, stereotype threat operates independent of objective performance: research finds that women report lower confidence in their abilities in male-typed domains even when their performance equals or exceeds that of men (Ehrlinger and Dunning, 2003; Lundeberg et al., 2000).

Finally, political knowledge underestimation may reflect the broader political context in which women evaluate their competence. When individuals assess their own competence, they

implicitly compare themselves to others in the domain (Dunning et al., 2004). Politics remains a domain marked by substantial gender inequality: women are underrepresented in elected office, political media coverage, and in the set of political experts consulted by journalists (Lawless and Fox, 2005; Teele et al., 2018; Van der Pas and Aaldering, 2020; Ozer, 2023). This descriptive underrepresentation sends powerful signals about who belongs in political spaces and whose political knowledge is valued (Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2007). This may lead women to calibrate their confidence downward—not because they lack knowledge, but because they perceive themselves as atypical or illegitimate participants in a male-dominated space. Research on the “imposter syndrome” documents this pattern: high-achieving individuals in contexts where their demographic group is underrepresented often experience persistent self-doubt (Clance and Imes, 1978; Cokley et al., 2013). Women in politics may experience a parallel dynamic, discounting their knowledge even when objectively well-informed.

These three explanations are likely mutually reinforcing. Gendered norms around certainty may create pressure for women to express doubt in their political knowledge; stereotype threat may activate anxiety about confirming negative expectations around political competence; and descriptive underrepresentation may signal that politics is not a domain where women’s knowledge is presumed legitimate. Together, I expect these forces to produce a systematic tendency for women to underestimate their political knowledge. The analyses that follow assess whether observed patterns of gendered knowledge confidence and underestimation are consistent with this theoretical account, without attempting to causally identify the processes that generate them.

In addition to this core expectation, I also consider how political knowledge confidence varies by race and party. Scholars of epistemic injustice argue that social power shapes whose knowledge claims are treated as credible, suggesting that confidence in one’s knowledge may itself be politically structured rather than purely psychological (Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013; Anderson, 2012). If political knowledge confidence reflects epistemic positioning, its magnitude should therefore vary across the social groups—such as racial and partisan groups—that structure authority, legitimacy, and belonging. These expectations concern structured

variation in magnitude rather than directional hypotheses about which specific subgroups should exhibit larger or smaller gaps.

4 Data and Measurement

This paper draws on two surveys collected in Fall 2025 on Prolific. The first survey is a nationally diverse sample of 1,442 American adults. The second is a nationally diverse sample of 1,035 British adults. These samples exclude the 24 (U.S.) and 43 (U.K.) respondents who failed an attention check.² Both surveys measure political knowledge confidence, objective political knowledge, political engagement, and demographic background (in that order). The two surveys were fielded outside of national election periods, reducing the likelihood that short-term campaign dynamics influence respondents' knowledge and self-assessments.³

Respondents were recruited via Prolific, an opt-in online research platform. Participants were directed from Prolific to a survey programmed and administered in Qualtrics. Prolific has been shown to produce higher-quality data and lower rates of inattentive responding than many alternative online panels, including MTurk (Peer et al., 2021; Albert and Smilek, 2023). Like other non-probability online samples, Prolific samples tend to skew younger and more educated than probability-based surveys. To improve population alignment on key demographic dimensions, analyses that report descriptive means by gender (Section 6) use post-stratification weights based on national benchmarks from the American Community Survey and the U.K. Office of National Statistics.⁴ Analyses focused on correlations between objective knowledge, knowledge confidence, and political engagement (Section 5) are estimated without weights, consistent with common practice when the goal is to assess relationships rather than population-level point estimates.

² Appendix S1 presents descriptive statistics for the United States and United Kingdom survey samples. Appendix S2 presents the survey questionnaires. Appendix S11 describes how the study adheres to APSA's Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research.

³ Although levels of political knowledge and confidence may vary over time, the analyses focus on respondents' relative confidence across knowledge domains and on gaps between objective knowledge and knowledge confidence. The core comparisons are therefore unlikely to depend on period-specific political shocks.

⁴ The weighting procedure is described in more detail in Section 6. The demographic breakdown of the unweighted and weighted samples are reported in Appendix S1. Weighting reduces known Prolific skews and brings the sample into much closer alignment with ACS and ONS population benchmarks.

The logic of case selection is as follows. The United States and the United Kingdom constitute a useful pair of related liberal democracies: similar enough to support meaningful comparison of political knowledge and knowledge confidence, yet different enough to assess whether gendered knowledge underestimation generalizes beyond a single context. Both countries are consolidated liberal democracies with broadly similar political institutions, high levels of media saturation, and long traditions of survey research on political knowledge. At the same time, they differ in politically relevant ways, including party systems, media environments, and patterns of women’s political representation. Examining gendered patterns of knowledge confidence across these two contexts allows me to assess whether knowledge underestimation is a robust feature of gendered political self-assessment rather than an artifact of a single national setting. The comparison is not intended to adjudicate between institutional explanations, but to probe the generalizability of the findings across related democracies.

To measure political knowledge confidence, I use a five-item scale following Jansa and Ringsmuth (2022). These items ask respondents to assess their confidence in their understanding of five different political topics: elections, parties, institutions, lawmaking, and separation of powers. Respondents rate their confidence on a five-point scale from “not confident at all” to “extremely confident.” Each survey respondent’s total score is summed and scaled to run from 0 to 1. Respondents answered the knowledge confidence questions in random order. Table 1 presents the five survey questions with the specific question wordings used in the United States and United Kingdom. Bracketed phrases indicate the U.S. and U.K. wordings.

To assess the internal structure of the knowledge confidence scale, Appendix S6 reports item-level descriptives, inter-item correlations, exploratory factor analyses, and reliability statistics for both countries. In both the United States and United Kingdom, the five knowledge confidence items exhibit substantial dispersion and no evidence of floor or ceiling compression. Inter-item correlations are uniformly positive and moderately large, and exploratory factor analyses reveal a single dominant factor accounting for roughly 70 percent of the variance in each country. All items load strongly on this factor, and Cronbach’s alpha exceeds 0.88 in both samples. These diagnostics indicate that the five items operate as a

Table 1: Knowledge Confidence Items (U.S. / U.K. Wording)

Survey wording
How confident are you that you understand how elections work?
How confident are you that you understand [what the Constitution says / how Parliament works]?
How confident are you that you could explain what distinguishes [the two parties / the main political parties] from one another?
How confident are you that you understand how laws are made?
How confident are you that you understand how power is divided among [the three branches of government / Parliament, the Prime Minister, and the courts]?

Bracketed phrases indicate the U.S. (first) and U.K. (second) institutional wording. Respondents rate their confidence on a five-point scale from “not confident at all” to “extremely confident.” Each respondent’s total score is summed and scaled to run from 0 to 1.

coherent, unidimensional index of political confidence in both national contexts.⁵

To measure objective political knowledge, I use a five-item scale with multiple choice questions designed to capture knowledge of how government works. In line with existing approaches (Lee et al., 2022; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2023; Kraft and Dolan, 2023; Pérez, 2015; Jansa et al., 2024), I use Delli Carpini and Keeter (1993) as a starting point for selecting and wording questions and adapt the questions to the relevant national context. Each respondent is scored as correct (1) or incorrect (0) and their score is summed and scaled to run from 0 to 1, matching the scale for knowledge confidence. Respondents received the objective knowledge questions in random order. Table 2 presents the questions and correct answers.

For the objective political knowledge items, respondents were offered an explicit “I don’t know” (DK) option. Consistent with standard practice, DK responses were coded as incorrect (0) in scoring. This approach treats DK responses as reflecting an absence of demonstrated factual knowledge on the item. Appendix S9 reports the prevalence of DK responses by gender

⁵ Because the core analyses compare knowledge confidence by gender, Appendix S7 further evaluates whether the KC battery functions similarly for men and women. Using gender-stratified exploratory factor analyses and conditional item-level DIF checks (rather than a full multi-group invariance model), the results show highly similar factor structures and loadings across groups and limited evidence of systematic gender-based differential item functioning. These diagnostics suggest that the observed gender gap in KC is not driven by a single item or by obvious measurement non-equivalence.

in both countries and shows that women are more likely than men to select DK.⁶

Because DK selection may also reflect respondents’ willingness to guess under uncertainty—a behavior plausibly linked to knowledge confidence—Appendix S9 examines two alternative DK treatments: excluding DK respondents and treating DK as missing when computing objective knowledge. The core findings are robust to these alternative treatments. Further, Appendix S9 shows that DK response rates are negatively correlated with knowledge confidence in the United States ($r = -0.324$, $p < .001$) and United Kingdom ($r = -0.370$, $p < .001$), indicating that DK responding reflects uncertainty rather than random non-response. At the same time, this correlation is far from perfect, underscoring that DKs and knowledge confidence capture related but distinct aspects of political self-assessment (consistent with the conceptual distinction developed in Section 2).

Table 2: Objective Knowledge Items (U.S. / U.K. Wording with Correct Answers)

United States	United Kingdom
Which party currently has a majority of seats in the House of Representatives? <i>Republican Party</i>	Which party currently has a majority of seats in the House of Commons? <i>Labour Party</i>
What majority is needed in the House and Senate to override a presidential veto? <i>2/3</i>	What is the maximum length of time Parliament can last before a general election must be held? <i>Five years</i>
Which party is considered more conservative at the national level? <i>Republican Party</i>	Which party is generally considered more to the right at the national level? <i>Conservative Party</i>
Whose responsibility is judicial review? <i>Supreme Court</i>	Who is responsible for making the final decision on whether a law passes in the U.K.? <i>House of Commons</i>
What office is currently held by J.D. Vance? <i>Vice President</i>	What office is currently held by Rachel Reeves? <i>Chancellor of the Exchequer</i>

Note: Institutional terminology is adapted for each national context (e.g., United States → Supreme Court and United Kingdom → House of Commons). Full response options are presented in Appendix S2.

⁶ In the survey fielded in the United Kingdom, one objective knowledge item (parliamentary term length) did not include a DK response option; DK rates in the United Kingdom are therefore calculated over the subset of question items that explicitly offered a DK option.

While the two knowledge batteries do not correspond item-by-item, they are intentionally designed to span the same conceptual domain of institutional political understanding. The knowledge confidence items ask respondents to assess their understanding of broad institutional processes: elections, institutions, parties, lawmaking, the allocation of political power. The objective knowledge items, in turn, sample concrete factual manifestations of these same institutional domains: partisan control of legislative bodies and relative party ideology (elections and parties), veto override thresholds or parliamentary term length (lawmaking), judicial review or legislative authority (institutions), and office-holding responsibilities (allocation of political power). The correspondence between the two batteries is therefore functional rather than literal, with each battery capturing the same institutional domains at different levels of abstraction: confidence items capture respondents' perceived grasp of core institutional processes, while objective items capture knowledge of institutional facts within those same domains. The goal of the knowledge confidence measure is not to assess confidence in answers to specific factual questions, but confidence in one's understanding of the political institutions that feature in the canonical measure of political knowledge.⁷

Consistent with this domain-level correspondence, the knowledge confidence and objective political knowledge indices are moderately positively correlated in both countries (0.28 in the United States and 0.35 in the United Kingdom). Respondents with greater confidence in their understanding of politics tend to possess greater factual knowledge of politics. At the same time, the correlation is far from unity, underscoring that confidence and objective knowledge capture related but empirically distinct dimensions of political competence.

Measuring objective knowledge and knowledge confidence in this way allows for an examination of the extent to which a respondent's knowledge confidence diverges from their objective knowledge. I calculate this difference—one's *knowledge underestimation*—as objective political knowledge minus political knowledge confidence. This measure allows me to examine the size and directionality of the divergence between political knowledge and knowledge confidence and to examine these divergences by gender. Importantly, this underestima-

⁷ I deemed item-level correspondence inappropriate for this purpose, as confidence is defined at the level of institutional understanding rather than at the level of specific factual recall.

tion measure should be understood as a descriptive indicator rather than a literal metric of calibration. Because the two component scales differ in format—binary performance versus self-assessed confidence—and because respondents use evaluative scales heterogeneously, the difference score is not intended to imply that identical values denote equivalent quantities. Instead, it provides a standardized way to summarize systematic gaps between demonstrated political knowledge and expressed knowledge confidence by gender.

After the political knowledge questions, respondents answer a series of questions about political engagement: voting in the most recent election (0 or 1), participating in a protest or demonstration in the past 12 months (0 or 1), contacting a government official in the past 12 months (0 or 1), and talking about politics with family, friends, or coworkers (“Never” to “Daily” on a five-item scale, rescaled 0-1). These items form the basis of the analysis of the relationship between knowledge confidence and political engagement (Section 5), which motivates the core analysis of gendered patterns of knowledge confidence (Section 6).

5 Objective Knowledge, Knowledge Confidence, and Participation

This section examines the relationship between objective political knowledge, political knowledge confidence, and measures of political engagement. The purpose of these analyses is to demonstrate why knowledge confidence constitutes a consequential dimension of political knowledge with downstream implications for political equality. These analyses thus lay the foundation for the core investigation of gendered patterns of knowledge confidence.⁸

Table 3 presents evidence from the United States and parallel models from the United Kingdom.⁹ In both contexts, political knowledge confidence is a consistent and often stronger correlate of political engagement than objective political knowledge. In the United States, knowledge confidence is positively and significantly associated with all four behaviors: voting ($p < 0.001$), protesting ($p < 0.001$), contacting officials ($p < 0.001$), and discussing politics

⁸ Because the data are cross-sectional, these relationships should not be interpreted causally; participation may also reinforce knowledge confidence over time. Nonetheless, establishing the strength and consistency of these associations is substantively important for the argument here, as the claim is that unequal distributions of knowledge confidence—regardless of directionality—are likely to carry implications for participatory inequality.

⁹ For space considerations, I present only the knowledge confidence and objective knowledge coefficients. Appendix S3 presents results with covariates: party ID, gender, race/ethnicity, age, income, education, region.

($p < 0.001$). Objective political knowledge, by contrast, is significantly associated with only one outcome (political discussion), and its coefficients are uniformly smaller.

Table 3: Political Knowledge and Participation in the U.S. and U.K. Samples

	Vote	Protest	Contact	Discussion
United States				
Knowledge Confidence	0.229*** (0.058)	0.296*** (0.053)	0.497*** (0.066)	0.405*** (0.034)
Objective Knowledge	0.144 (0.083)	-0.025 (0.069)	-0.037 (0.084)	0.096* (0.043)
N	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400
R^2	0.139	0.076	0.099	0.162
Adj. R^2	0.120	0.055	0.079	0.143
United Kingdom				
Knowledge Confidence	0.113 (0.063)	0.174*** (0.052)	0.130 (0.076)	0.334*** (0.035)
Objective Knowledge	0.202** (0.063)	-0.025 (0.038)	0.052 (0.059)	0.155*** (0.029)
N	1,028	1,028	1,028	1,028
R^2	0.140	0.041	0.056	0.203
Adj. R^2	0.124	0.023	0.038	0.188

Note: Controls for party ID, gender, race/ethnicity, age, income, education, and region included but not shown. Robust standard errors (HC1) in parentheses. Appendix S3 reports results with all covariates. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

The results from the United Kingdom show a relatively similar pattern. Objective political knowledge correlates with voting and discussion, but does not meaningfully correlate with protest or contacting elected officials. Knowledge confidence, on the other hand, significantly correlates with protest ($p < 0.001$) and political discussion ($p < 0.001$), and its association with political discussion is more than double that of objective political knowledge. Across both countries, then, political engagement appears tightly linked to how confident people feel about their political knowledge, even when we account for the factual correctness of what they know.

These patterns cohere with research on political voice and deliberation, which shows that participation depends not only on information possession but also on perceived legitimacy and confidence in one's standing as a political speaker (Karpowitz et al., 2012; Karpowitz and Mendelberg, 2014). Even when individuals possess relevant political information, uncertainty

about the validity of one’s knowledge can suppress political expression. Studies of deliberative inequality demonstrate that individuals who doubt their credibility are more likely to withdraw from political conversation, defer to others, or remain silent (Karpowitz and Mendelberg, 2014; Karpowitz et al., 2012; Mansbridge et al., 2012). From this perspective, knowledge confidence may influence whether political knowledge is treated as actionable and reliable and thus whether individuals engage and use their understanding in participatory contexts.

These findings also speak to work showing that gender gaps in political participation are conditional on the type of activity. Coffé and Bolzendahl (2010), for example, show that women are more likely to vote and engage in private or low-conflict forms of participation, while men are more active in direct contact, collective action, and party politics. The results here suggest that knowledge confidence may help to clarify this pattern. Confidence in one’s political understanding is most consistently associated with activities that involve asserting one’s views or engaging others—such as political discussion, contacting officials, or protest. By contrast, its relationship to voting, while present, is weaker and less uniform across contexts. Gendered patterns of knowledge underestimation (as presented in Section 6) may therefore shed light on why women’s participation is concentrated in private or habitual activities, while men are more likely to engage in expressive forms of political action.

A natural follow-up question in light of these findings is whether the relationship between political knowledge confidence and participation varies by gender—i.e., whether confidence “matters more” for men than women. To examine this possibility, I estimate models that interact gender with both knowledge confidence and objective political knowledge (reported in Appendix S4 for the United States and United Kingdom). Across all four participatory outcomes in both countries, these interaction terms are small and statistically insignificant. Knowledge confidence is a strong and consistent correlate of political participation for both women and men, and the magnitude of this association does not differ meaningfully by gender. Objective political knowledge, by contrast, is weakly and inconsistently related to participation and likewise exhibits no gender-differentiated effects. These results indicate that knowledge confidence is not gendered in its participatory implications, even though it is strongly gendered

in its distribution—a pattern examined directly in Section 6.

In sum, the models presented in this section suggest that the democratic importance of political knowledge cannot be reduced to factual mastery of political information. Knowledge confidence exerts an independent association with multiple forms of political engagement after accounting for objective political knowledge and standard demographic controls. These patterns are consistent with an epistemic pathway linking political knowledge to political engagement, whereby individuals' confidence in the reliability of their political understanding shapes political participation independent of their objective political knowledge.

The purpose of documenting this relationship is to establish why disparities in political self-assessment matter: if confidence conditions whether individuals speak, act, or rely on what they know, then systematic differences in confidence would have downstream consequences for political equality. These findings thus establish knowledge confidence as a substantively meaningful and consequential dimension of political knowledge and motivate the core analyses: whether knowledge confidence itself is unequally distributed by gender.

6 Gendered Knowledge Confidence and Underestimation

This section examines whether the gender gap in political knowledge extends to knowledge confidence. The main analyses are guided by a clear theoretical expectation: that women will systematically underestimate their political knowledge relative to men. Exploratory analyses also probe how these patterns vary by race and party, with the goal of identifying politically structured variation. All analyses use survey weights developed using the 2024 American Community Survey and 2024 data from the U.K. Office of National Statistics (applied in addition to front-end quota sampling) to ensure population representativeness. Because of some missing cases on weight dimensions, my final sample sizes are 1,398 for the United States and 1,025 for the United Kingdom.¹⁰

¹⁰ I constructed these weights using population estimates on dimensions of gender, age, race and ethnicity, education, and income for the United States and gender, age, ethnic group, and education for the United Kingdom (because the Office of National Statistics does not collect income).

6.1 Gendered Patterns of Knowledge Confidence

Table 4 presents weighted means for women and men in the United States and United Kingdom across three dimensions: objective political knowledge, knowledge confidence, and knowledge underestimation (objective knowledge minus knowledge confidence). Figure 1 presents visualizations of these weighted means for the United States (Figure 1a) and United Kingdom (Figure 1b). Appendix S5 presents these results as regression models.¹¹

Starting with the United States, these results first reveal a substantial gender gap in knowledge confidence. Women report an average knowledge confidence of 0.61 compared to 0.71 for men. This 0.1 point gap is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The gender gap in objective knowledge in the United States is significant but notably smaller: women average 0.75 in objective knowledge compared to men’s 0.79 (a rounded difference of 0.04 points, $p < 0.001$). The knowledge confidence gap is thus over twice the size of the objective knowledge gap. This disparity indicates that gender inequality in political knowledge is accompanied by an even larger inequality in how individuals assess their political knowledge.

Table 4: Gender Differences in Political Knowledge in the U.S. and U.K. Samples

	Women	Men	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
United States				N = 1,398
Knowledge Confidence	0.61	0.71	−0.10	< 0.001
Objective Knowledge	0.75	0.79	−0.04	< 0.001
Underestimation (OK - KC)	0.14	0.08	0.06	< 0.001
United Kingdom				N = 1,025
Knowledge Confidence	0.52	0.62	−0.10	< 0.001
Objective Knowledge	0.71	0.77	−0.06	< 0.001
Underestimation (OK - KC)	0.19	0.15	0.04	0.020

Note: Weighted means. Difference is women minus men. *p*-values from weighted two-sample *t*-tests. Knowledge variables scaled 0–1.

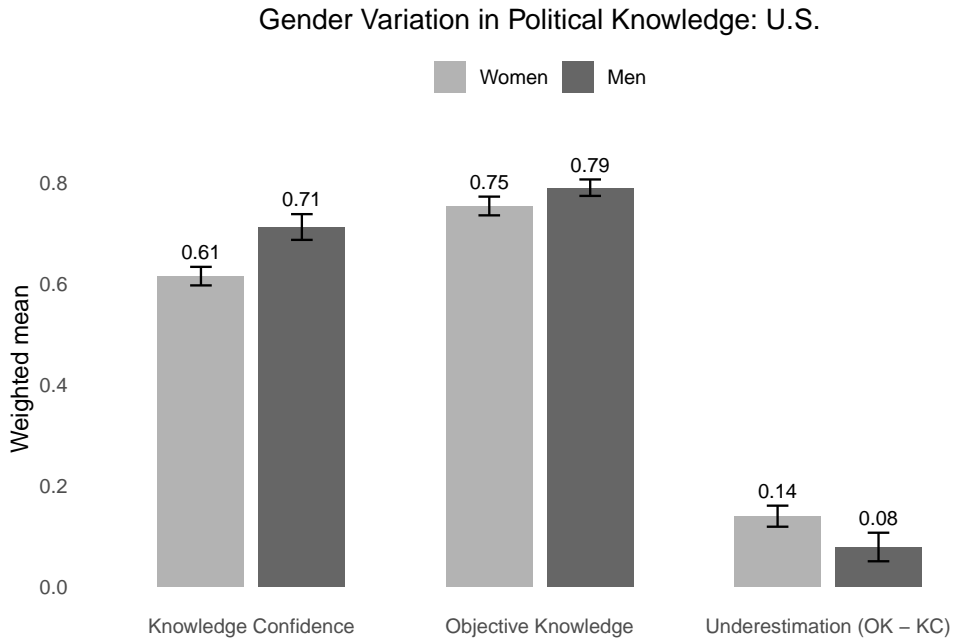
¹¹ Because the objective political knowledge battery consists of a small number of dichotomously scored items, one potential concern is that observed gender differences could be affected by ceiling effects or scale compression at the upper end of the distribution. Appendix S8 examines the weighted distribution of objective knowledge scores by gender in both countries and evaluates whether ceiling scoring drives the paper’s core descriptive patterns. While objective knowledge scores are concentrated toward the upper end of the scale—particularly in the United Kingdom—only a subset of respondents score at the ceiling, and the substantive gender gaps in knowledge confidence and underestimation are robust to excluding ceiling scorers.

Second, the gender gap in knowledge underestimation (objective knowledge minus knowledge confidence) is substantial and significant in the United States. Women underestimate their political knowledge by 0.14 points on average (i.e., their objective political knowledge exceeds their political knowledge confidence by 0.14 points). Men also underestimate their political knowledge, but by only 0.08 points. The difference in political knowledge underestimation between women and men (0.06 points) is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

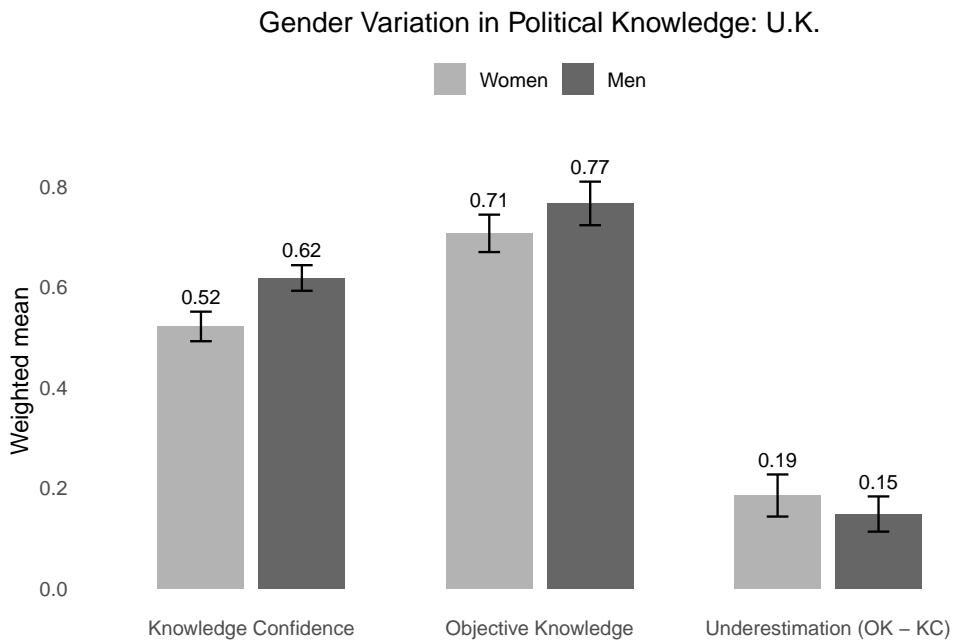
Table 4 and Figure 1(b) present a similar pattern in the United Kingdom. The gender gap in knowledge confidence is 0.10 points (women: 0.52, men: 0.62, $p < 0.001$), nearly doubling the gap in objective knowledge, which stands at 0.06 points (women: 0.71, men: 0.77, $p < 0.001$). Table 4 also shows a statistically significant gender gap in knowledge underestimation: women underestimate their political knowledge by 0.19 points, while men underestimate their political knowledge by only 0.15 points. The difference in knowledge underestimation between women and men (0.04 points) is statistically significant ($p = 0.02$).¹²

Together, these findings reveal a distinct dimension of gendered political inequality that operates alongside the canonical gender gap in political knowledge. In both contexts, the gender gap in political knowledge confidence is not just parallel to the objective political knowledge gap but substantially larger. In other words, gendered differences in political knowledge are layered: informational differences coexist with systematic differences in how individuals evaluate what they know. These patterns suggest that gendered political inequalities may reflect not only unequal access to political information, but unequal confidence in relying on one's political knowledge.

¹² Importantly, these patterns are not an artifact of how DK responses are handled on the objective knowledge battery. As Appendix S9 shows, the gender gap in knowledge confidence and women's greater knowledge underestimation persist when respondents who select DK are excluded and when DK responses are treated as missing and objective knowledge is computed as the mean of available non-DK items. As expected, these alternative treatments increase average objective knowledge in both groups, but they do not alter the substantive conclusion that the knowledge confidence gap is larger than the objective knowledge gap and that women exhibit greater political knowledge underestimation than men in both samples.



(a) United States



(b) United Kingdom

Figure 1: Gender variation in political knowledge (weighted means).

6.2 Exploratory Subgroup Analyses

These aggregate results raise a further question about how knowledge confidence is distributed across subgroups. If the knowledge confidence gap reflects differences in epistemic positioning,

its magnitude should vary across social groups with differing relationships to political authority and belonging (Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013; Anderson, 2012). Social groups that occupy different positions in political discourse and institutional power—such as racial and partisan groups—may thus exhibit distinct patterns of knowledge confidence and underestimation. This section describes core subgroup patterns by race and party, with detailed results presented in Appendix S10. These analyses are exploratory and intended to illuminate how knowledge confidence varies across political positioning, rather than test sharply specified predictions.

First, women report significantly lower political knowledge confidence than men in the three major racial groups in the United States (White, Black, and Hispanic). The knowledge confidence gap is largest among Black and Hispanic women (-0.12, $p < .001$), followed closely by White women (-0.11, $p < .001$). Political knowledge underestimation (objective political knowledge minus political knowledge confidence) is steepest among White and Black women (0.1 and 0.08, $p < .001$), while Hispanic men and women show no meaningful difference in knowledge underestimation. In the United Kingdom, the pattern is similarly robust for knowledge confidence among White and Black respondents (-0.11 and -0.12, $p < .01$), while the knowledge confidence gap among Asian respondents is small and not statistically significant. Political knowledge underestimation is marginally larger among White women ($p < 0.1$) and statistically indistinguishable from zero among Black and Asian respondents. However, these latter estimates should be interpreted cautiously: the survey sample in the United Kingdom contains only 57 Black and 64 Asian respondents.

Second, these analyses show consistent knowledge confidence gaps across party affiliations. In the United States, Democratic women report lower knowledge confidence than Democratic men (-0.08, $p < 0.001$). This gender gap is similar among Independents (-0.06, $p < 0.001$) and substantially larger among Republicans (-0.18, $p < 0.001$). Political knowledge underestimation is most pronounced among Republican women (0.13, $p < 0.001$), moderate among Democratic women (0.04, $p = 0.01$), and statistically indistinguishable from zero among Independents. In the United Kingdom, women report similar and significantly lower knowledge confidence than men across the three major affiliations: Labour (-0.09, $p < 0.001$), In-

dependent (-0.1, $p < 0.001$), and Conservative (-0.1, $p < 0.001$). Knowledge underestimation is marginal among Labour women and Independents and larger among Conservative women (0.15, $p < 0.001$). The gendered underestimation of knowledge thus appears to be structured by party affiliation—a pattern that merits further theoretical attention in its own right.

In particular, the comparatively large underestimation gap among Republican women in the United States and Conservative women in the United Kingdom invites further theoretical consideration. One possibility is that gendered norms around authority and assertiveness may operate differently across partisan subcultures. If conservative political contexts place stronger emphasis on traditional gender roles or hierarchical authority structures, women who identify with right-of-center parties and elites may experience greater tension between partisan identity and gendered expectations regarding public certainty and expertise. Alternatively, right-of-center women may compare themselves against a conservative partisan elite that remains disproportionately male, heightening downward self-calibration in political domains coded as authoritative or institutional. These interpretations remain speculative, but the pattern suggests that political knowledge confidence is not only gendered, but embedded within partisan social environments that shape whose knowledge is perceived as legitimate.

Together, the core and subgroup findings demonstrate a consistent and substantial gender gap in political knowledge confidence. In line with the theoretical expectations developed in Section 3, women display a systematic tendency to underestimate their political knowledge relative to men. This gender gap persists within key intersectional subgroups in two national contexts and roughly doubles the canonical gender gap in objective knowledge. This knowledge confidence gap thus represents a distinct and underexplored dimension of gender inequality—one that is not reducible to gaps in objective political knowledge and that plausibly constrains women’s political engagement based on the findings in Section 5.

7 Discussion and Conclusion

The gender gap in political knowledge is one of the most durable findings in political science (Mondak and Anderson, 2004; Lizotte and Sidman, 2009; Wolak and McDevitt, 2011; Burns

et al., 2001; Verba et al., 1997; Fraile, 2014; Dassonneville and McAllister, 2018). This paper shows that this account is incomplete. In addition to knowing less on standard factual batteries, women are also systematically less confident in the political knowledge they possess.

Drawing on original survey evidence from the United States and the United Kingdom, I demonstrate that political knowledge confidence is a substantively meaningful dimension of political knowledge. Although not the paper's central contribution, I show that confidence in one's political understanding strongly correlates with political engagement and is often more strongly associated with engagement than objective political knowledge. These findings extend recent work that differentiates between objective political knowledge and knowledge confidence (Lee and Matsuo, 2018; Lee et al., 2022; Leonhard et al., 2020; Jansa et al., 2024; Anson, 2018; Rogers and Gooch, 2021) by showing that the participatory consequences of political knowledge cannot be reduced to objective knowledge: confidence in one's knowledge correlates with political engagement independent of factual mastery. Most importantly, this finding establishes that gendered disparities in knowledge confidence have direct implications for political engagement and equality.

The paper's core contribution lies in identifying gendered knowledge underestimation as a distinct and directly measured mechanism of political inequality. First, I show that women report significantly lower confidence in their political knowledge than men, and that this knowledge confidence gap is roughly twice the size of the canonical knowledge gap. Moreover, women systematically underestimate their political knowledge: the gap between what people know and what they think they know is consistently larger among women. That these patterns appear in both the United States and the United Kingdom suggests that gendered knowledge underestimation is not an idiosyncratic feature of a single political system, but a general feature of gendered political self-assessment in related democracies.

Together, these findings add a new layer to the canonical finding that women know less about politics (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Mondak and Anderson, 2004; Wolak and McDevitt, 2011; Lizotte and Sidman, 2009; Burns et al., 2001; Fraile, 2014; Dassonneville and McAllister, 2018). For decades, political science has characterized the gender gap as

an informational deficit. But the evidence presented here shows that women do not simply lack information: rather, they systematically undervalue the information they have. The gender gap is thus not only informational but evaluative: it reflects unequal access to political information and unequal confidence in claiming political knowledge. If we want to understand how political knowledge contributes to gendered political outcomes and inequalities, we should examine not only what citizens know but how confidently they know it.

Seen in this light, political knowledge underestimation emerges as an important and underappreciated mechanism of participatory inequality. Even if women acquire levels of objective knowledge comparable to men, they may remain less likely to translate that knowledge into political engagement if they continue to undervalue what they know. Efforts to understand and address gender gaps in participation must therefore attend not only to the distribution of political information, but also to the confidence with which that information is evaluated and deployed. Civic education initiatives and voter mobilization efforts designed to close participation gaps should therefore target the mastery of factual information about politics *and* the confidence to claim and act on that knowledge. In other words, future interventions should aim not only to increase political knowledge but to recalibrate self-assessments of political knowledgeability. Without such attention, efforts to equalize political information may be insufficient for equalizing political voice. Democratic equality requires not only access to political knowledge, but the confidence to use that knowledge in public life.

Importantly, these findings are based on two Anglo-American democracies and should be interpreted with appropriate scope conditions. The core finding—systematic gender differences in how individuals evaluate their political understanding—is not tied to any single institutional arrangement. However, its magnitude and consequences may vary across contexts with different gender norms, levels of political inclusion, media environments, and forms of political authority. In contexts where women’s political participation is strongly normalized or where political discourse places less emphasis on expertise, confidence gaps may be attenuated; in more hierarchical or exclusionary settings, they may be amplified. Future research should take up this comparative question across national contexts.

Beyond cross-national variation, the findings point to several additional directions for future research. First, scholars could investigate whether gendered patterns of knowledge confidence vary systematically across political domains. Confidence gaps may look different in areas centered on elite institutions and politicians than domains of everyday governance—such as welfare programs or public health systems—where citizens interact directly with the state and where women disproportionately bear responsibility for navigating and managing interactions. In such domains, women often possess equal or greater factual knowledge (Dolan, 2011; Stolle and Gidengil, 2010; English, 2026); if objective knowledge gaps narrow or reverse in these domains, confidence gaps may likewise attenuate. Examining domain-specific variation would therefore help to clarify whether knowledge confidence reflects generalized gender norms or is shaped by the contexts in which political knowledge is acquired and used.

Second, future work could examine how institutional contexts, media environments, and educational practices shape knowledge confidence over time. For example, scholars might study whether exposure to gender-balanced political elites, different forms of civic education, or media coverage that differentially legitimizes expert voices affects how confidently individuals evaluate their political understanding. Longitudinal or experimental designs could help disentangle whether confidence gaps emerge early through socialization or are reinforced through repeated interactions with political institutions and public discourse. Understanding these social and institutional processes may be critical for explaining the persistence of gendered political inequalities. More broadly, explaining political inequality may require attention not only to informational disparities, but to the processes that shape how individuals assess the legitimacy of their political knowledge.

References

- Albert, D. A. and Smilek, D. (2023). Comparing attentional disengagement between Prolific and Mturk samples. *Scientific Reports*, 13(1):20574.
- Althaus, S. L. (2003). *Collective Preferences in Democratic Politics: Opinion Surveys and the Will of the People*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Anderson, E. (2012). Epistemic justice as a virtue of social institutions. *Social Epistemology*, 26(2):163–173.
- Anson, I. (2018). Political knowledge, confidence, and correctness. *Political Behavior*, 40(3):641–662.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. W. H. Freeman, New York.
- Burns, N., Schlozman, K. L., and Verba, S. (2001). *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Carli, L. L. (1990). Gender, language, and influence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(5):941–951.
- Chen, G., Gully, S. M., and Eden, D. (2004). General self-efficacy and self-esteem: Toward theoretical and empirical distinction. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(3):375–395.
- Clance, P. R. and Imes, S. A. (1978). The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 15(3):241–247.
- Coffé, H. and Bolzendahl, C. (2010). Same game, different rules? gender differences in political participation. *Sex Roles*, 62(5–6):318–333.
- Cokley, K., McClain, S., Enciso, A., and Martinez, M. (2013). An examination of the impact of minority status stress and impostor feelings on the mental health of diverse ethnic minority college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 41(2):82–95.
- Dassonneville, R. and McAllister, I. (2018). Gendered biases in political knowledge tests? *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 82(3):552–575.
- Delli Carpini, M. X. and Keeter, S. (1993). Measuring political knowledge: Putting first things first. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(4):1179–1206.
- Delli Carpini, M. X. and Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. Yale University Press.
- Dolan, K. (2011). Do women and men know different things? measuring gender differences in political knowledge. *Journal of Politics*, 73(1):97–107.
- Dolan, K. (2014). *When Does Gender Matter? Women Candidates and Gender Stereotypes in American Elections*. Oxford University Press, New York.

- Dunning, D., Heath, C., and Suls, J. M. (2004). Flawed self-assessment: Implications for health, education, and the workplace. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5(3):69–106.
- Ehrlinger, J. and Dunning, D. (2003). How chronic self-views influence (and potentially mislead) estimates of performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(1):5–17.
- English, J. (2026). Closing the gap: Gender, race, and welfare state knowledge. Working paper.
- Ferrín, M., Fraile, M., and García-Albacete, G. (2019). Adult roles and the gender gap in political knowledge: A comparative study. *West European Politics*, 42(7):1368–1389.
- Ferrín, M., Fraile, M., García-Albacete, G. M., and Gomez, R. (2018). The gender gap in political knowledge: Is it all about guessing? An experimental approach. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 30(1):111–132.
- Fortin-Rittberger, J. (2020). Political knowledge: Assessing the stability of gender gaps cross-nationally. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 32(1):46–65.
- Fraile, M. (2014). Do women know less about politics than men? the gender gap in political knowledge: A cross-national analysis. *Political Research Quarterly*, 67(2):355–367.
- Fricke, M. (2007). *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Galston, W. A. (2001). Political knowledge, political engagement, and civic education. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4:217–234.
- Gilens, M. (2001). Political ignorance and collective policy preferences. *American Political Science Review*, 95(2):379–396.
- Hidi, S. and Renninger, K. A. (2006). The four-phase model of interest development. *Educational Psychologist*, 41(2):111–127.
- Holman, M. R., Merolla, J. L., and Zechmeister, E. J. (2016). Terrorist threat, male stereotypes, and candidate evaluations. *Political Research Quarterly*, 69(1):134–147.
- Jansa, J. M. and Ringsmuth, E. M. (2022). The impact of course structure on students’ political efficacy and confidence-in-knowledge in introduction to american government. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 18(3):395–415.
- Jansa, J. M., Ringsmuth, E. M., and Smith, A. P. (2024). Calibrating confidence: Civic education and the relationship between objective political knowledge and political knowledge confidence. *Perspectives on Politics*, 23(3):997–1012.
- Karpowitz, C. F. and Mendelberg, T. (2014). *The Silent Sex: Gender, Deliberation, and Institutions*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Karpowitz, C. F., Mendelberg, T., and Shaker, L. (2012). Gender inequality in deliberative participation. *American Political Science Review*, 106(3):533–547.

- Kraft, P. W. (2023). Women also know stuff: Challenging the gender gap in political sophistication. *American Political Science Review*, 118(2):903–921.
- Kraft, P. W. and Dolan, K. (2023). Glass half full or half empty: Does optimism about women’s representation in elected office matter? *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 44(2):139–151.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). Language and woman’s place. *Language in Society*, 2(1):45–79.
- Lawless, J. L. and Fox, R. L. (2005). *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don’t Run for Office*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Leaper, C. and Robnett, R. D. (2011). Women are more likely than men to use tentative language, aren’t they? a meta-analysis testing for gender differences and moderators. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(1):129–142.
- Lee, H., Diehl, T., and Valenzuela, S. (2022). The confidence gap: How knowledge confidence shapes political participation. *Information, Communication & Society*, 25(6):798–818.
- Lee, H. and Matsuo, A. (2018). Political knowledge in context: The effects of media system features on knowledge gaps. *International Journal of Communication*, 12:2389–2414.
- Leonhard, L., Karnowski, V., and Kümpel, A. S. (2020). Political knowledge as a two-dimensional construct. *Political Communication*, 37(5):620–643.
- Lizotte, M.-K. and Sidman, A. (2009). Explaining the gender gap in political knowledge: A theory of guessing. *Journal of Politics*, 71(4):1218–1231.
- Lundeberg, M. A., Fox, P. W., and Punčochař, J. (2000). Highly confident but wrong: Gender differences and similarities in confidence judgments. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(1):114–121.
- Mansbridge, J., Bohman, J., Chambers, S., Estlund, D., Føllesdal, A., Fung, A., Lafont, C., Manin, B., and Martí, J. L. (2012). A systemic approach to deliberative democracy. *Deliberative Democracy*, pages 1–26.
- Medina, J. (2013). *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Meirick, P. C. and Wackman, D. B. (2004). Kids voting and political knowledge: Narrowing gaps, informing votes. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(5):1161–1177.
- Mondak, J. J. and Anderson, M. R. (2004). The knowledge gap: A reexamination of gender-based differences in political knowledge. *Journal of Politics*, 66(2):492–512.
- Mondak, J. J. and Canache, D. (2004). Knowledge variables in cross-national social inquiry. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(3):539–558.
- Nie, N. H., Junn, J., and Stehlik-Barry, K. (1996). *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America*. University of Chicago Press.

- Niemi, R. G., Craig, S. C., and Mattei, F. (1991). Measuring internal political efficacy in the 1988 national election study. *The American Political Science Review*, 85(4):1407–1413.
- Ortoleva, P. and Snowberg, E. (2015). Overconfidence in political behavior. *American Economic Review*, 105(2):504–535.
- Ozer, A. L. (2023). Women experts and gender bias in political media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 87(2):293–315.
- Peer, E., Rothschild, D., Evernden, Z., Gordon, A., and Damer, E. (2021). Mturk, prolific or panels? choosing the right audience for online research. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
- Pereira, F. B. (2019). Gendered political contexts: The gender gap in political knowledge. *Journal of Politics*, 81(4):1480–1493.
- Prentice, D. A. and Carranza, E. (2002). What women and men should be, shouldn't be, are allowed to be, and don't have to be: The contents of prescriptive gender stereotypes. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 26(4):269–281.
- Prior, M. (2018). *Hooked: How Politics Captures People's Interest*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Pérez, E. (2015). Mind the gap: Why large group deficits in political knowledge emerge—And what to do about them. *Political Behavior*, 37(4):933–954.
- Rogers, S. and Gooch, D. (2021). Who is misinformed? *Journal of Politics*, 83(2):580–595.
- Rudman, L. A. (1998). Self-promotion as a risk factor for women: The costs and benefits of counterstereotypical impression management. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(3):629–645.
- Rudman, L. A. and Phelan, J. E. (2008). Backlash effects for disconfirming gender stereotypes in organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 28:61–79.
- Schneider, M. C. and Bos, A. L. (2014). Measuring stereotypes of female politicians. *Political Psychology*, 35(2):245–266.
- Siegel-Stechler, K. (2019). Is civics enough? high school civics education and young adult voter turnout. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 43(3):241–253.
- Spencer, S. J., Steele, C. M., and Quinn, D. M. (1999). Stereotype threat and women's math performance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 35(1):4–28.
- Steele, C. M. and Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of african americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5):797–811.
- Stolle, D. and Gidengil, E. (2010). Women and political knowledge. In Brooks, C. and Manza, J., editors, *Finding Equality*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. William Morrow, New York.

- Teele, D. L., Kalla, J., and Rosenbluth, F. (2018). The ties that double bind: Social roles and women's underrepresentation in politics. *American Political Science Review*, 112(3):525–541.
- Van der Pas, D. J. and Aaldering, L. (2020). Gender differences in political media coverage: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Communication*, 70(1):114–143.
- Verba, S., Burns, N., and Schlozman, K. L. (1997). Knowing and caring about politics: Gender and political engagement. *Journal of Politics*, 59(4):1051–1072.
- Weeks, A. C. (2025). The political consequences of the mental load. *European Sociological Review*. Advance article.
- Weitz-Shapiro, R. and Winters, M. S. (2023). Knowledge of social rights as political knowledge. *Political Behavior*, 45(4):1911–1931.
- Wolak, J. (2020). Self-confidence and gender gaps in political interest, attention, and efficacy. *Political Behavior*, 42(4):1145–1172.
- Wolak, J. and McDevitt, M. (2011). The roots of the gender gap in political knowledge in adolescence. *Political Behavior*, 33(3):505–533.
- Wolbrecht, C. and Campbell, D. E. (2007). Leading by example: Female members of parliament as political role models. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(4):921–939.
- Zaller, J. (1992). *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Supplementary Material for “Beyond the Knowledge Gap”

Contents

1	Descriptive Statistics: Prolific Samples	34
2	Survey Questionnaires	36
3	Section 5 Regressions: Full Models with Covariates	38
4	Participation Models with Gender Interactions	40
5	Section 6 Means: Model-Based Estimates	42
6	Scale Construction & Dimensionality of Knowledge Confidence Measure	44
6.1	Item-Level Descriptives	44
6.2	Inter-Item Correlations	48
6.3	Dimensionality Analysis	49
6.4	Reliability	50
7	Measurement Diagnostics & Differential Item Functioning	51
7.1	Gender-Stratified Item Descriptives	51
7.2	Gender-Stratified Factor Structure	52
7.3	Conditional Item-Level Tests of Differential Item Functioning	55
7.4	Robustness Checks: Leave-One-Out and Item-Level Models	57
8	Distributional Properties and Ceiling Effects	59
8.1	United States	59
8.2	United Kingdom	60
9	Don’t Know Responses	62
9.1	Don’t Know Prevalence	62
9.2	Don’t Know by Item	63
9.3	Correlation between Don’t Know and Knowledge Confidence	64
9.4	Main Results Robust to Alternative Don’t Know Treatments	65
10	Heterogeneity Analyses: Race and Party Affiliation	67
11	Ethical Considerations	68

1 Descriptive Statistics: Prolific Samples

Table 1.1: Demographic breakdown: U.S. Prolific sample (Unweighted). Means for continuous variables; percentages for binary indicators.

Variable	All	Women	Men
N	1401.0	719.0	682.0
Age (mean)	44.2	44.8	43.7
Education (mean, 1-4 scale)	2.5	2.5	2.6
Income (mean, 1-13 scale)	7.1	6.9	7.4
South (%)	44.9	46.9	42.8
Democrat (%)	37.3	39.6	34.8
Republican (%)	27.1	25.3	28.9
Independent/Other (%)	35.7	35.0	36.4
White (%)	55.6	55.4	55.9
Black (%)	20.5	21.7	19.2
Hispanic (%)	8.6	7.4	10.0
Asian (%)	5.0	4.7	5.3

Table 1.2: Demographic breakdown: U.S. Prolific sample (Weighted). Means for continuous variables; percentages for binary indicators.

Variable	All	Women	Men
N (weighted)	1398.0	685.0	713.0
Age (mean)	48.0	47.1	48.8
Education (mean, 1-4 scale)	2.9	2.8	3.0
Income (mean, 1-13 scale)	7.7	7.3	8.2
South (%)	40.4	39.8	41.0
Democrat (%)	35.0	39.4	30.8
Republican (%)	26.3	23.1	29.4
Independent/Other (%)	38.7	37.5	39.9
White (%)	56.3	55.5	57.0
Black (%)	9.4	11.7	7.2
Hispanic (%)	11.4	9.9	12.9
Asian (%)	4.9	4.5	5.3

Table 1.3: Demographic breakdown: U.K. Prolific sample (Unweighted). Means for continuous variables; percentages for binary indicators.

Variable	All	Women	Men
N	1029.0	534.0	495.0
Age (mean)	46.8	47.1	46.4
Education (mean, 1-4 scale)	2.7	2.7	2.7
Income (mean, 1-9 scale)	4.7	4.6	4.8
Labour (%)	44.6	45.1	44.0
Conservative (%)	23.6	21.7	25.7
Independent/Other (%)	31.8	33.1	30.3
White (%)	85.1	86.0	84.2
Black (%)	5.8	5.6	6.1
Asian (%)	6.2	5.6	6.9

Table 1.4: Demographic breakdown: U.K. Prolific sample (Weighted). Means for continuous variables; percentages for binary indicators.

Variable	All	Women	Men
N (weighted)	1025.0	523.0	502.0
Age (mean)	48.0	50.1	45.9
Education (mean, 1-4 scale)	2.0	2.0	2.1
Income (mean, 1-9 scale)	4.2	4.1	4.3
Labour (%)	41.5	41.6	41.4
Conservative (%)	25.2	22.9	27.6
Independent/Other (%)	33.3	35.6	31.0
White (%)	81.0	83.3	78.7
Black (%)	4.2	3.6	4.8
Asian (%)	8.3	7.3	9.4

2 Survey Questionnaires

U.S. Survey Instrument

Knowledge Confidence: Please select your level of confidence regarding each question below. [Extremely confident; Very confident; Moderately confident; Slightly confident; Not confident at all]

1. How confident are you that you understand how elections work?
2. How confident are you that you understand what the Constitution says?
3. How confident are you that you could explain what distinguishes the two parties from one another?
4. How confident are you that you understand how laws are made?
5. How confident are you that you understand how power is divided among the three branches of government?

Objective Political Knowledge: Correct answer in italics.

1. Which party currently has a majority of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives? Democratic Party; *Republican Party*; Tea Party; I don't know
2. What majority is needed in the House and Senate to override a presidential veto? 51%; *2/3*; *3/4*; I don't know
3. Which party is considered more conservative at the national level? Democratic Party; *Republican Party*; They are considered equally conservative; I don't know
4. Whose responsibility is judicial review? President; Congress; *Supreme Court*; I don't know
5. What office is currently held by J.D. Vance? Secretary of State; *Vice President*; Chief Justice of Supreme Court; I don't know

Political Engagement

1. Vote: In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you—did you vote in the presidential election last November? Yes; No
2. Protest: Please indicate whether you have taken part in a protest, demonstration or sit-in in the past 12 months. Yes; No
3. Contact: During the past 12 months, have you contacted an elected official or government agency about an issue that mattered to you? Yes; No
4. Political Discussion: How often do you talk about politics with family, friends, or coworkers? Daily; A few times a week; A few times a month; Less than once a month; Never

U.K. Survey Instrument

Knowledge Confidence: Please select your level of confidence regarding each question below. [Extremely confident; Very confident; Moderately confident; Slightly confident; Not confident at all]

1. How confident are you that you understand how elections work?
2. How confident are you that you understand how Parliament works?
3. How confident are you that you could explain what distinguishes the main political parties from one another?
4. How confident are you that you understand how laws are made?
5. How confident are you that you understand how power is divided among Parliament, the Prime Minister, and the courts?

Objective Political Knowledge: Correct answer in italics.

1. Which party currently has a majority of seats in the House of Commons? Conservative Party; *Labour Party*; Liberal Democrats; I don't know
2. What is the maximum length of time Parliament can last before a general election must be held? 3 years; 4 years; *5 years*; 7 years
3. Which party is generally considered more to the right at the national level? Labour Party; *Conservative Party*; They are considered equally right-wing; I don't know
4. Who is responsible for making the final decision on whether a law passes in the U.K.? The Monarch; The Prime Minister; *The House of Commons*; I don't know
5. What office is currently held by Rachel Reeves? *Chancellor of the Exchequer*; Home Secretary; Speaker of the House of Commons; I don't know

Political Engagement

1. Vote: In talking to people about elections, we often find that some were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you—did you vote in the last general election? Yes; No
2. Protest: Please indicate whether you have taken part in a protest, demonstration or march in the past 12 months. Yes; No
3. Contact: During the past 12 months, have you contacted your local councillor, MP, or a government office/agency about an issue that mattered to you? Yes; No
4. Political Discussion: How often do you talk about politics with family, friends, or coworkers? Daily; A few times a week; A few times a month; Less than once a month; Never

3 Section 5 Regressions: Full Models with Covariates

Table 3.1: Political Knowledge and Participation in U.S. Sample

	Vote	Protest	Contact	Discussion
Knowledge Confidence	0.229*** (0.058)	0.296*** (0.053)	0.497*** (0.066)	0.405*** (0.034)
Objective Knowledge	0.144 (0.083)	-0.025 (0.069)	-0.037 (0.084)	0.096* (0.043)
Independent/Other	-0.116*** (0.024)	-0.084*** (0.021)	-0.065* (0.027)	-0.035** (0.012)
Republican	0.017 (0.020)	-0.085*** (0.023)	-0.127*** (0.028)	-0.025 (0.013)
Female	0.045* (0.020)	0.025 (0.018)	0.034 (0.023)	0.027* (0.011)
Asian/Hispanic	-0.501* (0.252)	-0.046 (0.045)	-0.046 (0.070)	0.202* (0.101)
Black	0.103* (0.048)	0.865*** (0.037)	-0.259*** (0.050)	0.099*** (0.028)
Black/Asian	0.003 (0.046)	0.099** (0.036)	0.085 (0.048)	0.013 (0.027)
Black/Hispanic	0.389*** (0.054)	-0.061 (0.043)	-0.118* (0.055)	-0.050 (0.031)
Black/Other	0.038 (0.143)	0.145 (0.118)	0.284 (0.160)	0.003 (0.071)
Hispanic	-0.065 (0.310)	0.039 (0.050)	0.266 (0.261)	-0.022 (0.158)
Hispanic/Other	-0.001 (0.053)	0.041 (0.042)	0.117* (0.056)	0.045 (0.030)
Other	-0.549*** (0.059)	-0.016 (0.046)	0.054 (0.059)	0.105** (0.032)
White	0.087 (0.123)	0.207 (0.120)	0.123 (0.135)	-0.050 (0.061)
White/Asian	0.037 (0.042)	0.076* (0.032)	0.117** (0.044)	0.048 (0.025)
White/Asian/Other	-0.060 (0.127)	-0.100* (0.040)	0.121 (0.130)	-0.015 (0.054)
White/Black	0.324*** (0.055)	0.087* (0.044)	1.015*** (0.059)	0.283*** (0.031)
White/Black/Asian	-0.074 (0.113)	0.065 (0.071)	0.316** (0.114)	0.082 (0.051)
W/B/Asian/Hispanic	-0.642*** (0.054)	-0.039 (0.042)	-0.094 (0.053)	-0.048 (0.030)
White/Black/Hispanic	-0.277 (0.381)	0.466 (0.351)	0.426 (0.323)	0.046 (0.137)
W/B/Hispanic/Other	-0.639*** (0.064)	0.022 (0.049)	0.044 (0.060)	0.233*** (0.034)
White/Black/Other	0.068 (0.046)	0.861*** (0.040)	0.793*** (0.051)	0.302*** (0.028)
White/Hispanic	0.007 (0.062)	0.098* (0.050)	0.066 (0.059)	0.044 (0.032)
White/Hispanic/Other	0.221*** (0.049)	-0.060 (0.036)	0.945*** (0.048)	0.020 (0.027)
White/Other	0.023 (0.178)	-0.029 (0.038)	0.087 (0.143)	-0.052 (0.066)
Age	0.003*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)	0.001** (0.0004)
Income	0.006 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	-0.00002 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.002)
Education	0.050*** (0.012)	0.022* (0.011)	0.044*** (0.013)	0.004 (0.006)
Northeast	0.010 (0.031)	0.012 (0.027)	0.014 (0.039)	-0.002 (0.019)
South	-0.014 (0.026)	0.042 (0.022)	0.040 (0.030)	0.005 (0.014)
West	0.024 (0.028)	0.082** (0.028)	0.016 (0.035)	0.022 (0.017)
Midwest	0.269** (0.091)	-0.147* (0.067)	-0.385*** (0.089)	0.236*** (0.046)
N	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400
R ²	0.139	0.076	0.099	0.162
Adjusted R ²	0.120	0.055	0.079	0.143

Note: Robust standard errors (HC1) in parentheses. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

Table 3.2: Political Knowledge and Participation in U.K. Sample

	Vote	Protest	Contact	Discussion
Knowledge confidence	0.113 (0.063)	0.174*** (0.052)	0.130 (0.076)	0.334*** (0.035)
Objective knowledge	0.202** (0.063)	-0.025 (0.038)	0.052 (0.059)	0.155*** (0.029)
Independent/Other	-0.006 (0.029)	0.021 (0.019)	0.022 (0.035)	0.004 (0.015)
Labour	0.068** (0.024)	0.021 (0.017)	-0.013 (0.033)	-0.008 (0.014)
Female	0.011 (0.021)	0.005 (0.016)	0.070** (0.026)	-0.001 (0.012)
Black	-0.072 (0.078)	-0.037 (0.056)	-0.302*** (0.066)	0.033 (0.037)
Other	-0.299* (0.118)	-0.048 (0.073)	-0.222* (0.098)	0.069 (0.047)
White	0.054 (0.052)	-0.061 (0.043)	-0.202*** (0.060)	0.030 (0.025)
White/Asian	0.080 (0.127)	-0.146*** (0.044)	-0.343*** (0.065)	-0.004 (0.102)
White/Black	0.096 (0.054)	-0.127* (0.061)	-0.007 (0.263)	-0.005 (0.112)
White/Black/Asian	-0.676*** (0.057)	-0.127** (0.044)	-0.397*** (0.065)	-0.128*** (0.028)
Age	0.004*** (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.001 (0.0004)
Income	0.012* (0.006)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.010 (0.007)	0.002 (0.003)
Education	0.012 (0.011)	0.008 (0.007)	0.028* (0.013)	0.008 (0.007)
England-North	-0.014 (0.029)	0.005 (0.017)	0.012 (0.035)	0.035* (0.017)
England-South	-0.005 (0.028)	0.039* (0.019)	0.053 (0.034)	0.020 (0.016)
Northern Ireland	-0.093 (0.097)	0.059 (0.068)	-0.004 (0.091)	0.008 (0.032)
Scotland	-0.055 (0.047)	0.020 (0.031)	0.019 (0.054)	0.027 (0.024)
Wales	-0.002 (0.053)	0.024 (0.040)	0.020 (0.073)	0.055 (0.032)
Constant	0.305*** (0.091)	0.051 (0.061)	0.036 (0.093)	0.232*** (0.042)
N	1,028	1,028	1,028	1,028
R ²	0.140	0.041	0.056	0.203
Adjusted R ²	0.124	0.023	0.038	0.188

Note: Robust standard errors (HC1) in parentheses. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

4 Participation Models with Gender Interactions

Tables A4.1 (U.S) and A4.2 (U.K.) present regression models that examine whether the relationship between knowledge confidence, objective knowledge, and participation varies by gender. Each model includes an interaction between gender and knowledge confidence, an interaction between gender and objective knowledge, and demographic and political controls.

In both national contexts, the interaction models show no evidence that the participatory returns to political knowledge confidence differ by gender. Knowledge confidence is a strong and consistent correlate of political participation for both women and men. The estimated interaction terms between gender and knowledge confidence are small and statistically insignificant across outcomes in both countries. Objective knowledge is weakly and inconsistently related to participation in both samples and likewise exhibits no systematic gender-differentiated effects. Interaction terms between gender and objective knowledge are uniformly small and statistically insignificant across participatory outcomes.

These results suggest that knowledge confidence is not gendered in its participatory implications, even though it is gendered in its distribution. In other words, women do not receive weaker participatory returns to knowledge confidence than men.

Table 4.1: Political Knowledge and Participation in U.S. Sample
(Interactions Between Gender and Knowledge Variables)

	Vote	Protest	Contact	Discussion
Knowledge confidence	0.258** (0.089)	0.274*** (0.073)	0.467*** (0.097)	0.377*** (0.049)
Objective knowledge	0.230 (0.134)	-0.010 (0.103)	-0.058 (0.141)	0.086 (0.067)
Female	0.190 (0.144)	0.018 (0.105)	-0.030 (0.132)	-0.019 (0.068)
KC*Female	-0.056 (0.115)	0.042 (0.104)	0.058 (0.130)	0.053 (0.066)
OK*Female	-0.139 (0.169)	-0.028 (0.138)	0.032 (0.173)	0.013 (0.085)
N	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400
R ²	0.140	0.076	0.099	0.163
Adjusted R ²	0.120	0.053	0.078	0.143

Note: Coefficient estimates for party ID, race/ethnicity, age, income, education, and region are included in all models but suppressed for brevity. Robust standard errors (HC1) in parentheses. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

Table 4.2: Political Knowledge and Participation in U.K. Sample
(Interactions Between Gender and Knowledge Variables)

	Vote	Protest	Contact	Discussion
Knowledge confidence	0.067 (0.091)	0.190** (0.071)	0.229* (0.105)	0.307*** (0.050)
Objective knowledge	0.175 (0.093)	-0.028 (0.067)	-0.037 (0.093)	0.134** (0.045)
Female	-0.072 (0.113)	0.018 (0.066)	0.067 (0.098)	-0.056 (0.055)
KC*Female	0.090 (0.127)	-0.029 (0.104)	-0.187 (0.153)	0.055 (0.070)
OK*Female	0.038 (0.117)	0.006 (0.080)	0.149 (0.117)	0.029 (0.056)
N	1,028	1,028	1,028	1,028
R ²	0.141	0.042	0.058	0.204
Adjusted R ²	0.123	0.022	0.039	0.187

Note: Coefficient estimates for party ID, race/ethnicity, age, income, education, and region are included in all models but suppressed for brevity. Robust standard errors (HC1) in parentheses. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

5 Section 6 Means: Model-Based Estimates

Table 5.1: Regression of Knowledge Measures on Gender and Covariates (U.S. Sample)

	Knowledge confidence	Objective knowledge	Underestimation (OK–KC)
Female	−0.082*** (0.009)	−0.024*** (0.006)	0.059*** (0.010)
Age	0.0004 (0.0003)	0.001*** (0.0002)	0.001* (0.0003)
Education	0.021*** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.004)	−0.003 (0.005)
Income	0.006*** (0.001)	0.0003 (0.001)	−0.005*** (0.001)
Northeast	−0.014 (0.015)	−0.019 (0.011)	−0.005 (0.017)
South	−0.017 (0.012)	−0.029** (0.009)	−0.012 (0.014)
West	−0.011 (0.013)	−0.006 (0.010)	0.005 (0.015)
Democrat	0.015 (0.010)	0.006 (0.008)	−0.009 (0.011)
Republican	0.040*** (0.011)	0.013 (0.008)	−0.027* (0.012)
Asian	−0.063** (0.020)	−0.001 (0.015)	0.062** (0.022)
Asian/Hispanic	−0.011 (0.074)	0.009 (0.055)	0.020 (0.083)
Asian/Other	0.104 (0.106)	0.002 (0.079)	−0.102 (0.120)
Black	−0.006 (0.015)	0.044*** (0.011)	0.049** (0.017)
Black/Asian	0.217* (0.103)	0.092 (0.077)	−0.124 (0.116)
Black/Hispanic	0.052 (0.097)	0.142* (0.072)	0.090 (0.109)
Black/Other	−0.058 (0.109)	0.019 (0.082)	0.077 (0.123)
Hispanic	−0.031* (0.014)	0.050*** (0.011)	0.081*** (0.016)
Hispanic/Other	−0.107* (0.051)	−0.308*** (0.038)	−0.201*** (0.058)
Other	−0.021 (0.020)	−0.034* (0.015)	−0.013 (0.023)
White/Asian	0.094* (0.043)	0.044 (0.032)	−0.050 (0.049)
White/Asian/Other	−0.184 (0.104)	0.052 (0.077)	0.236* (0.117)
White/Black	−0.102** (0.032)	−0.087*** (0.024)	0.015 (0.037)
W/B/Hispanic	−0.146 (0.139)	0.057 (0.104)	0.203 (0.157)
W/B/Other	0.062 (0.357)	0.049 (0.266)	−0.013 (0.402)
White/Hispanic	0.044** (0.017)	0.066*** (0.013)	0.022 (0.019)
W/H/Other	−0.108 (0.138)	0.056 (0.103)	0.164 (0.156)
White/Other	0.111* (0.043)	0.070* (0.032)	−0.041 (0.049)
Constant	0.586*** (0.021)	0.683*** (0.016)	0.096*** (0.024)
N	1,398	1,398	1,398
R ²	0.185	0.173	0.092
Adjusted R ²	0.169	0.157	0.074

Note: Weighted least squares with survey weights. Female coded 1 = female (reference = male); region reference category = Midwest; party identification reference = Independent/Other; race/ethnicity reference = White. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

Table 5.2: Regression of Knowledge Measures on Gender and Covariates (U.K. Sample)

	Knowledge confidence	Objective knowledge	Underestimation (OK–KC)
Female	−0.099*** (0.011)	−0.081*** (0.014)	0.018 (0.015)
Age	0.001*** (0.0004)	0.005*** (0.0005)	0.003*** (0.0005)
Education	0.029*** (0.005)	0.024*** (0.007)	−0.005 (0.007)
Income	0.014*** (0.003)	0.011** (0.004)	−0.003 (0.004)
England – Midlands	0.017 (0.015)	0.004 (0.019)	−0.013 (0.020)
England – North	−0.005 (0.013)	−0.004 (0.017)	0.002 (0.018)
Scotland	0.062** (0.021)	0.036 (0.027)	−0.026 (0.030)
Wales	0.095*** (0.028)	0.069 (0.036)	−0.026 (0.039)
Northern Ireland	−0.006 (0.044)	−0.060 (0.056)	−0.054 (0.061)
Labour	0.007 (0.013)	0.037* (0.016)	0.031 (0.017)
Conservative	0.023 (0.015)	0.041* (0.019)	0.018 (0.020)
Asian	−0.096*** (0.020)	−0.054* (0.026)	0.041 (0.028)
Black	0.054* (0.027)	−0.054 (0.035)	−0.108** (0.038)
Mixed	0.005 (0.025)	−0.169*** (0.031)	−0.173*** (0.034)
Other	0.040 (0.048)	−0.040 (0.061)	−0.080 (0.066)
Constant	0.423*** (0.027)	0.442*** (0.034)	0.019 (0.037)
N	1,024	1,024	1,024
R ²	0.181	0.203	0.116
Adjusted R ²	0.169	0.191	0.102

Note: Weighted least squares with survey weights. Female coded 1 = female (reference = male); region reference = England–South; party identification reference = Independent/Other; ethnicity reference = White.

6 Scale Construction & Dimensionality of Knowledge Confidence Measure

6.1 Item-Level Descriptives

Table 6.1 reports unweighted item-level descriptives for the five knowledge confidence (KC) items in the United States sample. All items are scaled from 0 to 1. Mean levels of confidence range from 0.61 (lawmaking) to 0.71 (elections), with standard deviations between 0.19 and 0.23. The items thus exhibit substantial dispersion and are not concentrated at either the minimum or maximum of the scale.

Table 6.2 reports unweighted item-level descriptives for the five knowledge confidence items in the United Kingdom sample. Mean confidence levels range from 0.52 (power division) to 0.70 (elections), with standard deviations between 0.21 and 0.23. As in the United States, the items exhibit substantial dispersion and are not concentrated at either the minimum or maximum of the scale.

Item	N	Mean	SD
Elections	1418	0.706	0.191
Constitution	1418	0.613	0.199
Parties	1418	0.698	0.217
Lawmaking	1418	0.610	0.207
Power division	1418	0.646	0.231

Table 6.1: KC item descriptives (U.S., unweighted)

Item	N	Mean	SD
Elections	1029	0.703	0.205
Parliament	1029	0.565	0.212
Parties	1029	0.582	0.230
Lawmaking	1029	0.569	0.205
Power division	1029	0.518	0.224

Table 6.2: KC item descriptives (U.K., unweighted)

Table 6.3 reports item-level descriptives separately for men and women in the United States. Across all five items, men report higher average confidence than women. The gender gap varies somewhat by item but is present for each item, rather than being driven by a single question. Standard deviations are comparable across gender groups, indicating similar dispersion in scale use. These patterns suggest that the overall gender gap in KC reflects a broad-based difference in confidence rather than idiosyncratic performance on a particular item.

Table 6.4 reports item-level descriptives separately for men and women in the United Kingdom. Across all five items, men report higher average confidence than women, and the gender gap appears consistently across items rather than being concentrated in a single domain. Standard deviations are similar across gender groups for each item (roughly 0.19–0.22), indicating comparable dispersion in scale use. These patterns suggest that the overall gender gap in knowledge confidence in the U.K. reflects a broad-based difference in institutional confidence rather than idiosyncratic responses.

Item	Men $_{Mean}$	Men $_{SD}$	Women $_{Mean}$	Women $_{SD}$
Elections	0.743	0.186	0.671	0.189
Constitution	0.642	0.197	0.585	0.197
Parties	0.739	0.217	0.657	0.210
Lawmaking	0.660	0.201	0.562	0.200
Power division	0.704	0.217	0.590	0.231

Table 6.3: KC item means and standard deviations by gender (U.S., unweighted)

Item	Men $_{Mean}$	Men $_{SD}$	Women $_{Mean}$	Women $_{SD}$
Elections	0.766	0.190	0.645	0.201
Parliament	0.629	0.207	0.506	0.200
Parties	0.649	0.219	0.519	0.222
Lawmaking	0.617	0.203	0.524	0.197
Power division	0.584	0.216	0.456	0.213

Table 6.4: KC item means and standard deviations by gender (U.K., unweighted)

Table 6.5 reports the full response distributions for each KC item across the five response categories in the U.S. (from “not confident at all” to “extremely confident”). Responses are concentrated in categories 3 and 4. The lowest category (“not confident at all”) is selected by a small minority across items, and the highest category (“extremely confident”) is also used by a minority. These patterns suggest that the items are not characterized by floor effects and exhibit limited ceiling compression, providing adequate variation for scale construction.

Table 6.6 reports the full response distributions for each KC item in the United Kingdom. As in the U.S., responses are concentrated in the middle categories, particularly categories 2 and 3, with category 4 also frequently selected for elections and selected institutional domains. The lowest category is more common in the U.K. than in the U.S., especially for power division and parties, while the highest category is selected by a relatively small minority across items. These patterns indicate meaningful dispersion across the response scale and do not suggest that floor or ceiling effects are mechanically compressing variation. The distributional shape suggests that the items differentiate respondents across multiple levels of institutional confidence.

Item	1	2	3	4	5
Constitution	0.057	0.217	0.408	0.242	0.076
Elections	0.016	0.122	0.339	0.362	0.161
Lawmaking	0.066	0.228	0.383	0.238	0.085
Parties	0.039	0.145	0.305	0.311	0.200
Power division	0.083	0.174	0.329	0.259	0.156

Table 6.5: KC response distributions by item (U.S., unweighted). Entries are proportions at response categories 1–5.

Item	1	2	3	4	5
Elections	0.023	0.141	0.320	0.328	0.189
Lawmaking	0.096	0.267	0.392	0.186	0.059
Parliament	0.120	0.251	0.369	0.205	0.055
Parties	0.134	0.221	0.335	0.224	0.086
Power division	0.201	0.260	0.338	0.149	0.052

Table 6.6: KC response distributions by item (U.K., unweighted). Entries are proportions at response categories 1–5.

Table 6.7 presents response distributions separately for men and women in the United States. Across all items, men are more likely to select higher confidence categories (4 and 5), whereas women are more likely to select mid-range categories (2 and 3). Importantly, both groups make use of the full response scale, and no single category dominates for either gender. The KC gender gap therefore reflects a systematic upward shift in men’s responses rather than differential use of only the extreme categories. These patterns provide preliminary evidence against the concern that the gender difference is driven by mechanical scale-use artifacts.

Table 6.8 presents response distributions for men and women in the U.K. As in the United States, men are more likely to select higher confidence categories, whereas women are more likely to select lower and mid-range categories. Nevertheless, both groups make use of the full response scale, and no single response category dominates within gender. Like the U.S., the gender gap therefore reflects a consistent upward shift in men’s responses rather than reliance on extreme categories alone. This evidence provides further support against the interpretation that the KC gender difference is driven by simple scale-use artifacts.

Group	Item	1	2	3	4	5
Men	Constitution	0.050	0.155	0.424	0.276	0.095
Men	Elections	0.012	0.084	0.295	0.400	0.210
Men	Lawmaking	0.040	0.167	0.364	0.314	0.116
Men	Parties	0.035	0.111	0.240	0.348	0.265
Men	Power division	0.041	0.132	0.301	0.317	0.210
Women	Constitution	0.065	0.273	0.392	0.211	0.058
Women	Elections	0.019	0.159	0.382	0.325	0.114
Women	Lawmaking	0.090	0.284	0.405	0.166	0.056
Women	Parties	0.045	0.177	0.366	0.275	0.138
Women	Power division	0.124	0.216	0.355	0.200	0.106

Table 6.7: KC response distributions by item and gender (U.S., unweighted). Entries are proportions at response categories 1–5.

Group	Item	1	2	3	4	5
Men	Elections	0.006	0.089	0.246	0.386	0.273
Men	Lawmaking	0.061	0.208	0.400	0.248	0.083
Men	Parliament	0.071	0.172	0.388	0.283	0.087
Men	Parties	0.061	0.192	0.319	0.297	0.131
Men	Power division	0.115	0.206	0.396	0.208	0.075
Women	Elections	0.039	0.189	0.388	0.273	0.110
Women	Lawmaking	0.129	0.322	0.384	0.127	0.037
Women	Parliament	0.165	0.324	0.352	0.133	0.026
Women	Parties	0.202	0.247	0.350	0.155	0.045
Women	Power division	0.281	0.311	0.285	0.094	0.030

Table 6.8: KC response distributions by item and gender (U.K., unweighted). Entries are proportions at response categories 1–5.

6.2 Inter-Item Correlations

Table 6.9 reports the inter-item correlation matrix for the five knowledge confidence items in the United States. All pairwise correlations are positive and moderately strong, ranging from 0.54 to 0.70. The uniformly positive and moderately large correlations suggest that the items share substantial common variance and are tapping a related underlying construct. At the same time, the correlations are well below unity, suggesting that the items are not redundant and that each contributes distinct information. These patterns are consistent with a unidimensional but not tautological scale structure.

Table 6.10 reports the inter-item correlation matrix for the five knowledge confidence items in the United Kingdom. As in the United States, all pairwise correlations are positive and substantively large, ranging from 0.50 to 0.75. Even the lowest correlations—between parties and lawmaking (0.50)—remain moderately strong. The consistently positive and sizable correlations indicate substantial shared variance across items, while remaining well below unity. These patterns provide suggest that the items tap a common underlying dimension of institutional confidence without being redundant, supporting a unidimensional interpretation of the scale in the U.K. sample as well.

	Elections	Constitution	Parties	Lawmaking	Power division
Elections	1.00	0.59	0.55	0.67	0.62
Constitution	0.59	1.00	0.54	0.67	0.65
Parties	0.55	0.54	1.00	0.54	0.57
Lawmaking	0.67	0.67	0.54	1.00	0.70
Power division	0.62	0.65	0.57	0.70	1.00

Table 6.9: Inter-item correlations among knowledge confidence items (U.S., unweighted)

	Elections	Parliament	Parties	Lawmaking	Power division
Elections	1.00	0.71	0.56	0.62	0.62
Parliament	0.71	1.00	0.63	0.72	0.75
Parties	0.56	0.63	1.00	0.50	0.60
Lawmaking	0.62	0.72	0.50	1.00	0.72
Power division	0.62	0.75	0.60	0.72	1.00

Table 6.10: Inter-item correlations among knowledge confidence items (U.K., unweighted)

6.3 Dimensionality Analysis

Tables 6.11 and 6.12 report the eigenvalues from exploratory factor analyses of the five knowledge confidence items in the United States and United Kingdom based on the unweighted correlation matrices. In the United States, the first factor has an eigenvalue of 3.44 and accounts for approximately 69 percent of the total variance. In the United Kingdom, the first factor has an eigenvalue of 3.58 and accounts for roughly 72 percent of the variance. In both countries, all subsequent factors have eigenvalues well below 1.0, with the second factor explaining just over 10 percent of the variance. The sharp drop between the first and second eigenvalues in each context provides evidence of a dominant first factor and supports a unidimensional structure.

Factor	Eigenvalue	PropVar	CumPropVar
1	3.443	0.689	0.689
2	0.514	0.103	0.791
3	0.411	0.082	0.874
4	0.349	0.070	0.943
5	0.283	0.057	1.000

Table 6.11: Eigenvalues from KC item correlation matrix (U.S., unweighted)

Factor	Eigenvalue	PropVar	CumPropVar
1	3.581	0.716	0.716
2	0.523	0.105	0.821
3	0.406	0.081	0.902
4	0.264	0.053	0.955
5	0.227	0.045	1.000

Table 6.12: Eigenvalues from KC item correlation matrix (U.K., unweighted)

Tables 6.13 and 6.14 present the loadings from one-factor solutions. In the United States, all five items load strongly on the latent factor, with loadings ranging from 0.68 (parties) to 0.84 (lawmaking). In the United Kingdom, loadings are similarly large, ranging from 0.69 (parties) to 0.90 (parliament). In both contexts, each item contributes substantively to a common underlying dimension of political confidence. None of the items exhibits a weak loading or appears orthogonal to the others.

Taken together, the eigenvalues and factor loadings suggest that the five knowledge confidence items form a coherent, unidimensional scale in both the United States and United Kingdom samples. The results are consistent with interpreting the KC index as capturing a single latent construct rather than a collection of loosely related items.

Item	Loading
Elections	0.776
Constitution	0.782
Parties	0.680
Lawmaking	0.842
Power division	0.825

Table 6.13: One-factor exploratory factor analysis loadings for KC items (U.S., unweighted)

Item	Loading
Elections	0.771
Parliament	0.896
Parties	0.690
Lawmaking	0.808
Power division	0.849

Table 6.14: One-factor exploratory factor analysis loadings for KC items (U.K., unweighted)

6.4 Reliability

Cronbach's alpha for the five-item knowledge confidence scale in the United States sample is 0.885 (raw) and 0.886 (standardized), indicating high internal consistency. In the United Kingdom sample, Cronbach's alpha is 0.899 (raw) and 0.900 (standardized), similarly indicating strong reliability. In both contexts, these values exceed conventional benchmarks for acceptable scale reliability and are consistent with the strong inter-item correlations and clear one-factor structures reported above. Taken together, the reliability statistics reinforce the conclusion that the five items operate as a coherent index of institutional knowledge confidence rather than as a set of loosely related domain-specific measures.

7 Measurement Diagnostics & Differential Item Functioning

This section evaluates whether the KC battery functions similarly for men and women. Because the paper assesses mean KC differences rather than estimate a latent measurement model, I conduct gender-stratified exploratory factor analyses and conditional item-level checks for differential item functioning. These diagnostics assess whether any single item disproportionately drives the gender gap or exhibits clear non-equivalence across groups. A full multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) invariance model is not estimated, as the analyses rely on a simple additive index and the results do not hinge on precise latent scale equivalence. The exploratory diagnostics indicate highly similar factor structures and loadings across groups and limited evidence of systematic gender-based DIF, suggesting that the gender gap is unlikely to be an artifact of measurement non-equivalence.

7.1 Gender-Stratified Item Descriptives

Table 7.1 and Table 7.2 mean knowledge confidence by item or men and women in the U.S. and U.K. samples. Across all five items in both contexts, men report higher average confidence. Standard deviations are highly similar across gender groups for each item, indicating comparable dispersion and scale use. The consistency of the gender difference across items suggests that the aggregate KC gap is broad-based rather than driven by a single question.

Item	Men $_{Mean}$	Men $_{SD}$	Women $_{Mean}$	Women $_{SD}$
Elections	0.743	0.186	0.671	0.189
Constitution	0.642	0.197	0.585	0.197
Parties	0.739	0.217	0.657	0.210
Lawmaking	0.660	0.201	0.562	0.200
Power division	0.704	0.217	0.590	0.231

Table 7.1: KC item means and standard deviations by gender (U.S., unweighted)

Item	Men $_{Mean}$	Men $_{SD}$	Women $_{Mean}$	Women $_{SD}$
Elections	0.766	0.190	0.645	0.201
Parliament	0.629	0.207	0.506	0.200
Parties	0.649	0.219	0.519	0.222
Lawmaking	0.617	0.203	0.524	0.197
Power division	0.584	0.216	0.456	0.213

Table 7.2: KC item means and standard deviations by gender (U.K., unweighted)

7.2 Gender-Stratified Factor Structure

Table 7.3 presents eigenvalues from exploratory factor analyses estimated for men and women in the United States. In both groups, the first factor has an eigenvalue substantially above 1.0 and accounts for approximately two-thirds of the total variance, while all subsequent factors have eigenvalues well below 1. The near-identical eigenvalue structure across gender groups suggests that the KC items exhibit the same dominant unidimensional structure for men and women.

Group	Factor	Eigenvalue	PropVar	CumPropVar
Men	1	3.364	0.673	0.673
Men	2	0.565	0.113	0.786
Men	3	0.411	0.082	0.868
Men	4	0.344	0.069	0.937
Men	5	0.315	0.063	1.000
Women	1	3.399	0.680	0.680
Women	2	0.515	0.103	0.783
Women	3	0.443	0.089	0.872
Women	4	0.372	0.074	0.946
Women	5	0.270	0.054	1.000

Table 7.3: Eigenvalues from KC correlation matrices by gender (U.S., unweighted)

Table 7.4 presents eigenvalues from exploratory factor analyses estimated for men and women in the U.K. In both groups, the first factor has an eigenvalue well above 1.0 and accounts for roughly 69–70 percent of the total variance, while all subsequent factors have eigenvalues far below 1. The similarity of the eigenvalue profiles across gender groups indicates the same dominant unidimensional structure for men and women in the U.K. sample.

Group	Factor	Eigenvalue	PropVar	CumPropVar
Men	1	3.489	0.698	0.698
Men	2	0.583	0.117	0.814
Men	3	0.430	0.086	0.900
Men	4	0.253	0.051	0.951
Men	5	0.245	0.049	1.000
Women	1	3.451	0.690	0.690
Women	2	0.542	0.108	0.799
Women	3	0.452	0.090	0.889
Women	4	0.307	0.061	0.951
Women	5	0.247	0.049	1.000

Table 7.4: Eigenvalues from KC correlation matrices by gender (U.K., unweighted)

Table 7.5 reports one-factor exploratory factor loadings estimated separately by gender in the United States. All five items load strongly on the latent factor for both men and women, with loadings in the moderate-to-high range. No item exhibits a weak loading in either group, and the overall pattern of loadings is highly similar across gender. These results suggest that the KC items contribute to a common underlying construct for both groups.

Group	Item	Loading
Men	Elections	0.786
Men	Constitution	0.778
Men	Parties	0.633
Men	Lawmaking	0.828
Men	Power division	0.815
Women	Elections	0.748
Women	Constitution	0.784
Women	Parties	0.691
Women	Lawmaking	0.834
Women	Power division	0.813

Table 7.5: One-factor EFA loadings by gender (U.S., unweighted; principal axis)

Table 7.6 reports one-factor exploratory factor loadings estimated separately by gender in the U.K. All five items load strongly on the latent factor for both men and women. Overall, the pattern of loadings is highly similar across gender, supporting the interpretation that the KC battery taps a common underlying construct for men and women in the U.K.

Group	Item	Loading
Men	Elections	0.758
Men	Parliament	0.889
Men	Parties	0.630
Men	Lawmaking	0.817
Men	Power division	0.844
Women	Elections	0.742
Women	Parliament	0.888
Women	Parties	0.684
Women	Lawmaking	0.766
Women	Power division	0.830

Table 7.6: One-factor EFA loadings by gender (U.K., unweighted; principal axis)

Table 7.7 directly compares factor loadings across gender in the United States. Differences in loadings are small in magnitude for all items. No item shows a substantively large discrepancy in its relationship to the latent factor across groups. The similarity in loadings suggests that the measurement structure of the KC scale is comparable for men and women at the level of exploratory factor analysis.

Item	Men	Women	Female Minus Male
Elections	0.786	0.748	-0.038
Constitution	0.778	0.784	0.006
Parties	0.633	0.691	0.058
Lawmaking	0.828	0.834	0.006
Power division	0.815	0.813	-0.002

Table 7.7: EFA loading comparison across gender (U.S., unweighted)

Table 7.8 directly compares one-factor loadings across gender in the United Kingdom. Differences are small to moderate in magnitude and do not indicate a systematic pattern of measurement divergence across groups. Together with the eigenvalue results, the similarity in factor loadings suggest that the measurement structure of the KC scale is broadly comparable for men and women in the U.K. sample.

Item	Men	Women	Female Minus Male
Elections	0.758	0.742	-0.016
Parliament	0.889	0.888	-0.001
Parties	0.630	0.684	0.054
Lawmaking	0.817	0.766	-0.051
Power division	0.844	0.830	-0.014

Table 7.8: EFA loading comparison across gender (U.K., unweighted)

7.3 Conditional Item-Level Tests of Differential Item Functioning

Table 7.9 presents conditional item-level regressions in which each KC item is regressed on the KC index, a female indicator, and their interaction in the U.S. The coefficient on female captures uniform differential item functioning (DIF), while the interaction term captures non-uniform DIF. For four of the five items, neither the gender main effect nor the interaction term is statistically significant, indicating limited evidence of systematic gender-based DIF. For the power division item, there is modest evidence of a gender difference conditional on the index, though the magnitude of the effect is small. Overall, the results suggest that differential item functioning by gender is limited and not pervasive across the scale.

Item	Term	Estimate	SE	p
Elections	KC index	0.916	0.023	< .001
Elections	Female	0.020	0.023	0.380
Elections	KC index \times Female	-0.022	0.032	0.477
Constitution	KC index	0.971	0.023	<.001
Constitution	Female	0.030	0.022	0.178
Constitution	KC index \times Female	-0.008	0.032	0.806
Parties	KC index	0.975	0.030	<.001
Parties	Female	0.005	0.028	0.851
Parties	KC index \times Female	-0.008	0.039	0.829
Lawmaking	KC index	1.028	0.022	<.001
Lawmaking	Female	0.002	0.021	0.928
Lawmaking	KC index \times Female	-0.020	0.031	0.511
Power division	KC index	1.110	0.022	<.001
Power division	Female	-0.057	0.023	0.013
Power division	KC index \times Female	0.059	0.032	0.064

Table 7.9: Conditional item-level DIF check: item response regressed on KC index and gender (U.S., unweighted; HC1 SEs).

Table 7.10 presents the same conditional item-level regressions for the United Kingdom. Across most items, there is limited evidence of systematic DIF: the interaction terms are not statistically significant, suggesting little evidence of non-uniform DIF. Two items show modest uniform DIF at conventional thresholds: women report slightly lower confidence on elections and parties conditional on the overall index (both marginal at the 0.10 level), and slightly higher confidence on lawmaking conditional on the index ($p=0.014$). The estimated effects are small in magnitude relative to the overall variation in the items. Overall, the results suggest that any gender-based DIF is limited in scope and not pervasive across the KC battery.

Item	Term	Estimate	SE	p
Elections	KC index	0.894	0.026	< .001
Elections	Female	-0.042	0.024	0.085
Elections	KC index \times Female	0.052	0.037	0.166
Parliament	KC index	1.068	0.023	< .001
Parliament	Female	0.021	0.020	0.288
Parliament	KC index \times Female	-0.031	0.031	0.320
Parties	KC index	0.951	0.033	< .001
Parties	Female	-0.050	0.029	0.082
Parties	KC index \times Female	0.061	0.047	0.196
Lawmaking	KC index	0.994	0.025	< .001
Lawmaking	Female	0.056	0.023	0.014
Lawmaking	KC index \times Female	-0.057	0.037	0.121
Power division	KC index	1.093	0.026	< .001
Power division	Female	0.015	0.023	0.506
Power division	KC index \times Female	-0.025	0.037	0.492

Table 7.10: Conditional item-level DIF check: item response regressed on KC index and gender (U.K., unweighted; HC1 SEs).

7.4 Robustness Checks: Leave-One-Out and Item-Level Models

Table 7.11 reports gender differences (Female minus Male) estimated separately for each KC item in the United States. Each item independently exhibits a statistically significant gender gap in the expected direction, with women reporting lower confidence than men. The comparable magnitude across items reinforces the interpretation that the overall KC gender gap is not attributable to a single domain.

Item	Female minus Male	SE	p
Elections	-0.071	0.010	<.001
Constitution	-0.057	0.011	<.001
Parties	-0.082	0.011	<.001
Lawmaking	-0.097	0.011	<.001
Power division	-0.115	0.012	<.001

Table 7.11: Item-level KC gender gaps (Female-Male) estimated separately for each item (U.S., unweighted; HC1 SEs)

Table 7.12 reports gender differences (Female minus Male) estimated separately for each KC item in the U.K. Each item exhibits a statistically significant gender gap in the expected direction, with women reporting lower confidence than men across all domains. The gaps are of similar magnitude across items, which supports the interpretation that the overall KC gender difference in the U.K. is not attributable to any single domain.

Item	Female minus Male	SE	p
Elections	-0.121	0.012	< .001
Parliament	-0.122	0.013	< .001
Parties	-0.131	0.014	< .001
Lawmaking	-0.093	0.012	< .001
Power division	-0.128	0.013	< .001

Table 7.12: Item-level KC gender gaps (Female-Male) estimated separately for each item (U.K., unweighted; HC1 SEs)

Table 7.13 presents leave-one-out analyses for the U.S. in which the KC index is recalculated excluding each item in turn, and the gender gap is re-estimated. The gender difference remains substantively similar and statistically significant in all specifications. The stability of the gap across specifications suggests that the overall gender difference is not mechanically driven by any single item.

Omitted Item	Female minus Male	SE	p
Elections	-0.088	0.009	<.001
Constitution	-0.091	0.009	<.001
Parties	-0.085	0.009	<.001
Lawmaking	-0.081	0.009	<.001
Power division	-0.077	0.009	<.001

Table 7.13: Leave-one-out KC index gender gaps (Female-Male) (U.S., unweighted; HC1 SEs)

Table 7.14 presents leave-one-out analyses for the U.K. in which the KC index is recalculated excluding each item in turn and the gender gap is re-estimated. The gender difference remains highly stable and statistically significant across all alternative index constructions. This stability indicates that the observed KC gender gap in the U.K. is not mechanically driven by any single item and is instead a robust feature of the broader battery.

Omitted Item	Female minus Male	SE	p
Elections	-0.118	0.011	< .001
Parliament	-0.118	0.011	< .001
Parties	-0.116	0.011	< .001
Lawmaking	-0.125	0.011	< .001
Power division	-0.117	0.011	< .001

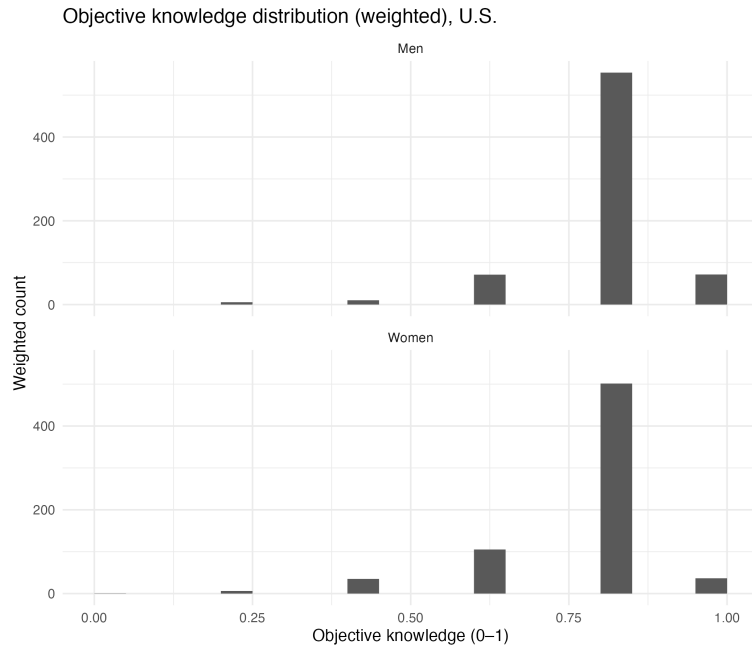
Table 7.14: Leave-one-out KC index gender gaps (Female-Male) (U.K., unweighted; HC1 SEs)

8 Distributional Properties and Ceiling Effects

8.1 United States

This appendix examines the weighted distribution of objective knowledge scores by gender and evaluates whether ceiling effects in the objective knowledge battery drive the paper’s core descriptive results. The figure plots the weighted distribution of objective knowledge (0–1) separately for men and women. Scores cluster toward the upper end of the scale, but only a modest share of respondents score at the ceiling (i.e., answer all five items correctly). Table 8.1 reports the proportion of respondents at the knowledge ceiling by gender.

To assess whether ceiling effects influence the descriptive gender gaps, Table 8.2 replicates the core gender comparisons in knowledge confidence, objective knowledge, and knowledge underestimation, first in the full weighted sample and then excluding respondents at the objective knowledge ceiling. The results are substantively unchanged. Women continue to report substantially lower knowledge confidence and greater knowledge underestimation than men, and the confidence gap remains considerably larger than the objective knowledge gap.



Gender	N	pct_ceiling_unw	pct_ceiling_w	se_ceiling_w
Men	682	0.097	0.101	0.025
Women	716	0.081	0.053	0.014

Table 8.1: Objective knowledge ceiling rates by gender (United States)

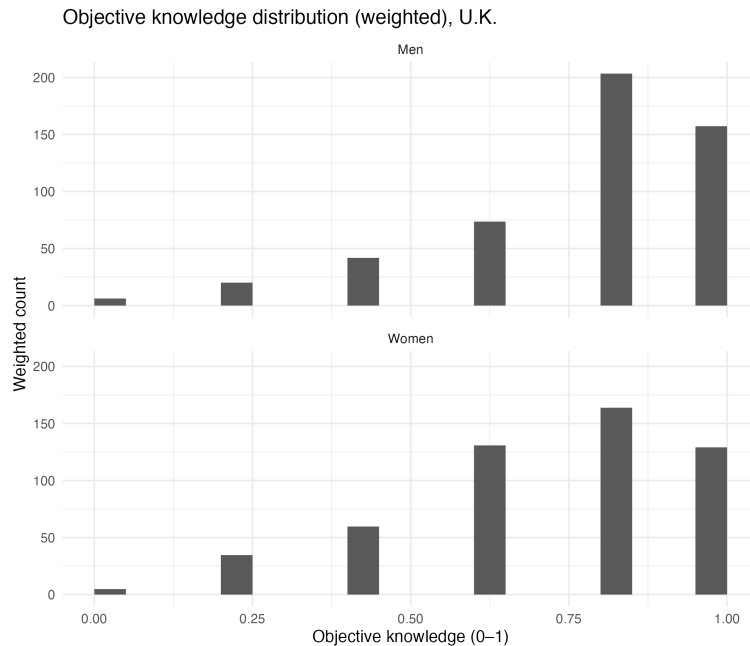
Sample	Gender	KC	OK	OK-KC	SE(KC)	SE(OK)	SE(OK-KC)
Full sample	Men	0.712	0.790	0.078	0.013	0.008	0.014
Full sample	Women	0.614	0.753	0.139	0.009	0.009	0.011
Exclude OK ceiling (5/5)	Men	0.705	0.766	0.061	0.014	0.007	0.015
Exclude OK ceiling (5/5)	Women	0.613	0.739	0.126	0.010	0.009	0.010

Table 8.2: Weighted means by gender for knowledge confidence (KC), objective knowledge (OK), and underestimation (OK-KC), full sample and excluding respondents at the objective knowledge ceiling (United States)

8.2 United Kingdom

This appendix examines the weighted distribution of objective political knowledge scores by gender in the United Kingdom and evaluates whether ceiling effects in the objective knowledge battery drive the paper’s core descriptive results. The figure plots the weighted distribution of objective knowledge (0–1) separately for men and women. Scores are concentrated toward the upper end of the scale, and a substantial share of respondents score at the ceiling. Table 8.3 reports the proportion of respondents at the knowledge ceiling by gender.

To assess whether these ceiling effects account for the observed gender gaps, Table 8.4 replicates the core gender comparisons, first in the full weighted sample and then excluding respondents at the objective knowledge ceiling. Excluding ceiling scorers reduces levels of objective knowledge and underestimation for both men and women, but the substantive conclusions remain unchanged. Women continue to report lower knowledge confidence and greater knowledge underestimation than men, and the confidence gap remains large relative to the objective knowledge gap. Despite stronger ceiling effects in the United Kingdom than in the United States, these effects do not account for the paper’s core findings.



Gender	N	pct_ceiling_unw	pct_ceiling_w	se_ceiling_w
Men	493	0.325	0.313	0.031
Women	532	0.239	0.247	0.040

Table 8.3: Objective knowledge ceiling rates by gender (United Kingdom)

Sample	Gender	KC	OK	OK-KC	SE(KC)	SE(OK)	SE(OK-KC)
Full sample	Men	0.618	0.766	0.148	0.013	0.022	0.018
Full sample	Women	0.521	0.707	0.185	0.015	0.019	0.021
Exclude OK ceiling (5/5)	Men	0.593	0.660	0.067	0.016	0.025	0.020
Exclude OK ceiling (5/5)	Women	0.511	0.610	0.099	0.018	0.016	0.019

Table 8.4: Weighted means by gender for knowledge confidence (KC), objective knowledge (OK), and underestimation (OK-KC), full sample and excluding respondents at the objective knowledge ceiling (United Kingdom)

9 Don't Know Responses

9.1 Don't Know Prevalence

Table 9.1 reports the prevalence of “Don't know” (DK) responses on the objective political knowledge battery in the U.S. sample. Overall, 15.2% of respondents selected a DK response on at least one of the five objective knowledge items. Consistent with prior research, DK responses are more common among women than men: 18.8% of women selected DK at least once, compared to 11.4% of men. At the respondent level, the average share of items answered with DK is 4.4%. This rate is higher among women (5.7%) than among men (3.1%). Because all respondents in the U.S. sample answered the same five-item battery and all items included a DK option, the mean respondent-level DK rate is numerically equivalent to the overall DK rate calculated across all item responses (4.4%).

Table 9.2 reports analogous statistics for the U.K. sample. Overall, 17.3% of respondents selected a DK response on at least one objective knowledge item. As in the U.S., DK responses are more common among women: 23.0% of women selected DK at least once, compared to 10.9% of men. The average respondent-level DK rate is 5.7%, with women again exhibiting higher rates (7.8%) than men (3.5%). One objective knowledge item (parliamentary term length) did not include a DK response option. Accordingly, the item-level DK rate in the U.K. is calculated over the subset of items that explicitly offered a DK option. Despite this difference, the overall patterns closely mirror those observed in the U.S.: DK responses are relatively infrequent on any single item, but women are consistently more likely than men to select DK at least once and to do so more frequently across items.

Across both samples, these results suggest that DK behavior reflects occasional uncertainty on specific questions rather than widespread non-response or disengagement. They also replicate well-established gender differences in DK response behavior, providing a clear descriptive foundation for the sensitivity analyses reported below.

Statistic	Overall	Female	Male
Any DK (respondent-level)	15.2%	18.8%	11.4%
Mean DK rate (respondent-level)	4.4%	5.7%	3.1%
DK rate (all item-responses)	4.4%		

Table 9.1: Prevalence of DK Responses on Objective Knowledge Items (U.S.)

Statistic	Overall	Female	Male
Any DK (respondent-level)	17.3%	23%	10.9%
Mean DK rate (respondent-level)	5.7%	7.8%	3.5%
DK rate (all DK-eligible item-responses)	5.7%		

Table 9.2: Prevalence of DK Responses on Objective Knowledge Items (U.K.)

9.2 Don't Know by Item

Table 9.3 reports item-level DK response rates for the five objective political knowledge questions in the U.S. sample. DK responses vary across items but remain relatively uncommon. No single item accounts for a disproportionate share of DK responses, suggesting that DK behavior reflects item-specific uncertainty rather than systematic disengagement from the knowledge battery. Table 9.4 presents analogous item-level DK rates for the U.K. sample, restricted to the subset of objective knowledge items that offered a DK response option. As in the U.S., DK responses are unevenly distributed across items but remain infrequent in absolute terms.

Across both samples, DK responses are not concentrated on a single question, nor are they uniformly elevated across the battery. Instead, they appear to reflect localized uncertainty tied to specific institutional or office-holding details. This pattern reinforces the interpretation of DK responses as informative expressions of uncertainty rather than indicators of broad non-response or lack of engagement.

Item	Percent Don't Know
House majority	4.3%
Veto override threshold	8.7%
More conservative party	1.2%
Judicial review responsibility	5.8%
Office held by J.D. Vance	2%

Table 9.3: Item-Level DK Rates on Objective Knowledge Battery (U.S.)

Item	Percent Don't Know
Party in government (House of Commons)	2.8%
Conservative Party identification	4.7%
Legislative chamber (Commons)	5.3%
Chancellor of the Exchequer	10.1%

Table 9.4: Item-Level DK Rates on Objective Knowledge Battery (U.K.; DK-eligible items)

9.3 Correlation between Don't Know and Knowledge Confidence

Table 9.5 reports the correlation between respondents' DK response rate on the objective knowledge battery and their self-reported knowledge confidence in the U.S. sample. DK responses are strongly and negatively associated with knowledge confidence ($r = -0.324$, $p < .001$): respondents who report lower confidence in their political understanding are more likely to select "I don't know" than provide a substantive response. This pattern is consistent across gender groups. The correlation between DK responses and knowledge confidence is similar for women ($r = -0.309$) and men ($r = -0.316$), indicating that DK responding reflects a common relationship with self-assessed knowledge rather than a gendered response strategy.

Table 9.6 presents a similar relationship in the U.K. DK response rates are again strongly and negatively correlated with knowledge confidence in the full sample ($r = -0.370$, $p < .001$), with comparable associations for women ($r = -0.333$) and men ($r = -0.367$). The magnitude of the correlation is modestly larger in the U.K., but the substantive pattern mirrors the U.S.

Together, these results suggest that DK responses are linked to evaluative judgments about one's own political knowledge in both national contexts. However, DK responses and knowledge confidence are not interchangeable measures. The imperfect correlation between the two underscores the value of measuring confidence directly rather than inferring it solely from DK behavior. DK captures a situational response choice on specific knowledge items, whereas knowledge confidence is measured independently and prior to the knowledge battery.

Sample	Pearson _r	p-value
Full sample	-0.324	< .001
Women	-0.309	< .001
Men	-0.316	< .001

Table 9.5: Correlation Between DK Response Rate and Knowledge Confidence (U.S.)

Sample	Pearson _r	p-value
Full sample	-0.370	< .001
Women	-0.333	< .001
Men	-0.367	< .001

Table 9.6: Correlation Between DK Response Rate and Knowledge Confidence (U.K.)

9.4 Main Results Robust to Alternative Don't Know Treatments

Tables 9.7 and 9.8 assess whether the central gender patterns reported in the main text are sensitive to alternative treatments of “Don't know” (DK) responses on the objective political knowledge battery in the U.S. and U.K. Panel A in each table reproduces the main analyses, in which DK responses are coded as incorrect. Under this specification, women in both countries exhibit lower knowledge confidence despite modest gender differences in objective knowledge, resulting in a larger gap between objective knowledge and confidence among women.

Panels B and C show that this pattern is robust to two common alternative treatments of DK responses. Panel B excludes respondents who selected DK on any objective knowledge item, while Panel C treats DK responses as missing and computes objective knowledge as the mean of available non-DK items. Across both the U.S. and U.K. samples, the gender gap in knowledge confidence remains large and stable under these alternative specifications, and women continue to exhibit greater knowledge underestimation than men.

As expected, excluding DK respondents or treating DK responses as missing increases average objective knowledge for both women and men in both countries, particularly under the DK-as-missing specification. Knowledge confidence, by contrast, remains unchanged across Panels A and C by construction, underscoring that these adjustments operate through the measurement of objective knowledge rather than respondents' self-assessments. Importantly, these shifts do not meaningfully alter the substantive conclusions: gender differences in objective political knowledge are consistently smaller than gender differences in knowledge confidence, and the resulting confidence gap persists across all coding choices.

Taken together, these sensitivity analyses suggest that the main findings are not an artifact of how DK responses are handled. Instead, they reflect a robust and cross-national divergence between what respondents know and how confident they are in that knowledge—one that is consistently larger for women than men across alternative DK treatments.

Panel	Outcome	Female	Male
A. DK coded as incorrect	Knowledge confidence (KC)	0.61	0.71
A. DK coded as incorrect	Objective knowledge (OK)	0.75	0.79
A. DK coded as incorrect	Knowledge underestimation (OK - KC)	0.14	0.08
B. Exclude DK respondents	Knowledge confidence (KC)	0.64	0.72
B. Exclude DK respondents	Objective knowledge (OK)	0.79	0.80
B. Exclude DK respondents	Knowledge underestimation (OK - KC)	0.14	0.08
C. DK treated as missing	Knowledge confidence (KC)	0.61	0.71
C. DK treated as missing	Objective knowledge (OK)	0.80	0.81
C. DK treated as missing	Knowledge underestimation (OK - KC)	0.18	0.10

Table 9.7: Sensitivity of Gender Gaps to Alternative Treatments of DK Responses (U.S.)

Panel	Outcome	Female	Male
A. DK coded as incorrect	Knowledge confidence (KC)	0.52	0.62
A. DK coded as incorrect	Objective knowledge (OK)	0.71	0.77
A. DK coded as incorrect	Knowledge underestimation (OK - KC)	0.18	0.15
B. Exclude DK respondents	Knowledge confidence (KC)	0.55	0.65
B. Exclude DK respondents	Objective knowledge (OK)	0.79	0.84
B. Exclude DK respondents	Knowledge underestimation (OK - KC)	0.23	0.19
C. DK treated as missing	Knowledge confidence (KC)	0.52	0.62
C. DK treated as missing	Objective knowledge (OK)	0.75	0.80
C. DK treated as missing	Knowledge underestimation (OK - KC)	0.23	0.18

Table 9.8: Sensitivity of Gender Gaps to Alternative Treatments of DK Responses (U.K.)

10 Heterogeneity Analyses: Race and Party Affiliation

Table 10.1: Within-Race Gender Gaps (Women-Men) and p-values: U.S.

	KC_Diff	KC_p	OK_Diff	OK_p	Gap_Diff	Gap_p
White	-0.11	< 0.001	-0.01	0.05	0.1	< 0.001
Black	-0.12	< 0.001	-0.04	0.02	0.08	< 0.001
Hispanic	-0.12	< 0.001	-0.12	< 0.001	0.004	0.871

Note: Gaps are Women - Men. p-values from weighted two-sample t-tests.

Table 10.2: Within-Race Gender Gaps (Women-Men) and p-values: U.K.

	KC_Diff	KC_p	OK_Diff	OK_p	Gap_Diff	Gap_p
White	-0.11	< 0.001	-0.08	< 0.001	0.03	0.05
Black	-0.12	0.003	-0.05	0.4	0.06	0.34
Asian	-0.04	0.44	-0.06	0.34	-0.02	0.72

Note: Gaps are Women - Men. p-values from weighted two-sample t-tests.

Table 10.3: Within-Party Gender Gaps (Women-Men) and p-values: U.S.

	KC_Diff	KC_p	OK_Diff	OK_p	Gap_Diff	Gap_p
Democrat	-0.08	< 0.001	-0.03	0.003	0.04	0.01
Independent/Other	-0.06	< 0.001	-0.03	0.006	0.03	0.13
Republican	-0.18	< 0.001	-0.04	< 0.001	0.13	< 0.001

Note: Gaps are Women - Men. p-values from weighted two-sample t-tests.

Table 10.4: Within-Party Gender Gaps (Women-Men) and p-values: U.K.

	KC_Diff	KC_p	OK_Diff	OK_p	Gap_Diff	Gap_p
Labour	-0.09	< 0.001	-0.11	< 0.001	-0.02	0.36
Independent/Other	-0.1	< 0.001	-0.08	0.009	0.03	0.32
Conservative	-0.1	< 0.001	0.06	0.04	0.15	< 0.001

Note: Gaps are Women - Men. p-values from weighted two-sample t-tests.

11 Ethical Considerations

This project received ethics review and was determined to be exempt from further oversight by the [REDACTED] Institutional Review Board under U.S. federal exemption criteria for minimal-risk survey research. All data were collected in Fall 2025 via Prolific, and respondents were compensated at Prolific's prevailing fair-wage rates. Respondents were adults drawn from a general population sampling frame, and no vulnerable populations were targeted or disproportionately represented. No deception was used, and all respondents provided informed consent prior to participation.