

Pitt Policy Journal

16th Edition Spring 2025

Letter from the Editors

Dear reader,

We are excited to present the 16th Edition of the Pitt Policy Journal. This year, we have been fortunate to collaborate with an incredible team of authors and editors to produce this Journal. We extend our deepest gratitude to the authors who submitted their research for consideration. Your work represents the dedication, intellectual curiosity, and analytical rigor that define the SPIA community. Selecting pieces for publication is never an easy task, as each submission brings valuable insight and depth to the discourse on public policy. We are proud to present the articles in this edition, which span a diverse range of policy areas and contribute meaningful perspectives to ongoing scholarly debates.

We would like to thank our Editorial Board, a team of student volunteers at the School of Public and International Affairs. Their rigorous editing, thoughtful engagement with authors, and commitment to academic excellence serve as the foundation of this Journal. Their work ensures that the Pitt Policy Journal continues to thrive as a platform for innovative policy scholarship.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the SPIA Dean and our faculty advisor, Dr. Luke Condra, for their unwavering support and guidance. To our readers, we hope you find inspiration, insight, and thought-provoking discussions within these pages, just as we have throughout the editorial process. For the past sixteen years, the Pitt Policy Journal has amplified the voices of emerging scholars who will shape the future policy landscape. As we move forward, we remain excited for the continued growth of PPJ and the opportunity to serve as a platform for the next generation of policy leaders.

To our readers, we hope you enjoy and learn something from the following articles, just as we have throughout the editorial and production processes. We look forward to the road ahead and are excited to usher in a new era of the Pitt Policy Journal.

Sincerely,

Jubaida Faruque & Marco Wertheimer

Editors in Chief, 2024-2025

Notes on Pitt Policy Journal

Vision

A world where humanity's most significant challenges are addressed by the most rigorous, innovative, interdisciplinary, evidence-based policy solutions grounded in the best practices of social science research and strengthened by the richness and diversity of epistemologies, theories, and methods.

Mission

Building a respected and reputable platform for the production, display, and dissemination of original, diverse, and exemplary social policy research to encourage creative solutions to significant problems and challenges in domestic, international, and foreign policy that seek to improve the lives of ordinary people around the globe.

Goals & Objectives

- To increase the public visibility and professional reputation of the PPJ through greater external outreach and involvement of reputable scholars;
- To support the production of graduate student research to generate fresh solutions to challenging social policy questions;
- To bolster collaboration between established scholars, aspiring scholars, and experienced practitioners in rethinking major social policy issues;
- To foster and advance ongoing scholarly debate on a variety of social policy topics that seek to improve the lives of ordinary people.

Support

The Pitt Policy Journal is sponsored by the Fund for Student Initiatives, which was launched in the fall of 2008. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the SPIA community, including Dean Luke Condra, faculty, staff, and students.

Selection Information

We welcome submissions that explore diverse policy areas and provide insightful perspectives on domestic and global political, economic, and security matters. Our staff prioritizes the selection of high-quality, thoughtful scholarship that has practical implications for local and

national policy makers. All submissions are reviewed anonymously by the Editorial Board, which selects the best among each pool of submissions for publication.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in the Pitt Policy Journal do not necessarily represent the opinions of our editorial staff, SPIA, or the University of Pittsburgh. While each selected entry undergoes a rigorous editing process, contributing authors are ultimately responsible for the accuracy and integrity of their work.

Contact Information

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Editors in Chief



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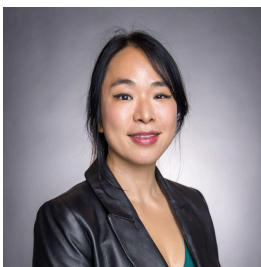


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Editors



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Women and Work in Thailand

Unpaid Care and Domestic Work of Thai Women

by Natty Good

Summary

The gender gap in secondary education completion rates in Thailand has narrowed since 2015. Thai women are educated and ready to join the labor force; however, a gender gap persists in the labor force participation rate, with women comprising only 59 percent of the workforce. Upon closer inspection, this disparity can be attributed to the gender gap in unpaid care and domestic work. The additional unpaid care and domestic responsibilities shouldered by Thai women stem from cultural expectations, care-insensitive workplace policies, and care infrastructure that does not meet demand. Care-insensitive workplace policies lead to shortages of male involvement in child and elder care responsibilities. Meanwhile, the current care infrastructure does not meet the demand for care needs for children under the age of three and the elderly. As the issue of the gender gap in unpaid care and domestic work persists, Thai women are compelled to choose between their careers and their families, resulting in a national issue of declining birth rates.

Recommendations:

- Promote cultural norm change through investment in care-sensitive policies in employment and care infrastructure:
- Investment in care-sensitive employment policies:
 - Allowing for flexible work arrangements in terms of location and work hours
 - Increasing the length and availability of paternity leave to match that of maternity leave
 - Providing tax incentives to employers in the private sector to maintain onsite childcare centers
 - Protection for expectant and nursing mothers by ensuring nondiscrimination policies and breastfeeding infrastructure at the workplace
- Investment in care infrastructure:
 - Increase the availability of publicly funded and affordable childcare centers for children ages 0 to 3 by expanding existing childcare centers for children ages 3 to 5 and providing parents with childcare subsidies

Increase the availability of eldercare by increasing the number of qualified in- home care workers and expanding existing community-based senior citizen centers

The Problem

The gender gap in education in Thailand has narrowed since 2015 (World Bank, n.d.a). According to the 2023 Gender Gap Report, Thailand's gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2023). This score in educational attainment is 0.995. This high gender gap score in educational attainment is attributed to near gender parity in primary education enrollment, with 98.53 percent of men and 98.38 percent of women receiving primary education (World Economic Forum, 2023). The narrowed gender gap in educational attainment extends to secondary education enrollment, where 103.41 percent of men and 97.33 percent of women have received secondary education (Figure 1) (World Economic Forum, 2023).

However, there exists a gender gap in the labor force participation rate. According to the same 2023 report, Thailand received a score of 0.772 in economic participation and opportunity (World Economic Forum, 2023). As of 2022, 59 percent of Thai women are in the labour force compared to 75 percent of men. This gap worsens for women in management positions, where women only make up 32 percent of senior and middle management positions (World Bank, n.d.b).

There is also a gender gap in time spent on unpaid care and domestic work. In 2015, Thai women spent an average of 11.8 percent of their 24-hour day (2.8 hours/day) on unpaid care work, while men spent 3.8 percent of their day (less than one hour/day) (“Thailand,” n.d.). Unpaid care work can be categorized into direct and indirect activities. Direct

Figure 1. Primary and Secondary Education Enrolment in Thailand, by Sex

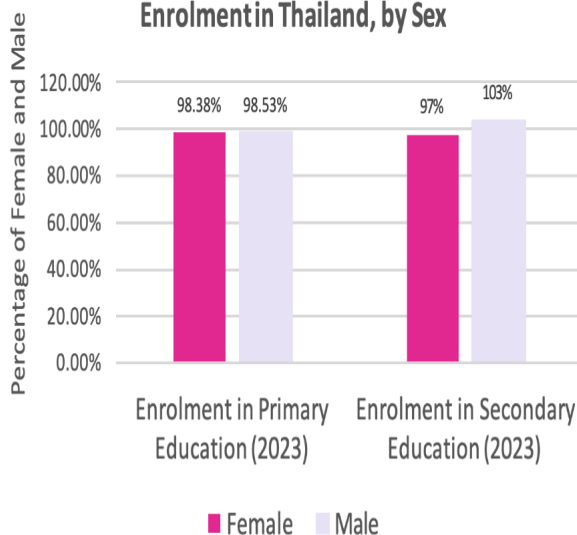
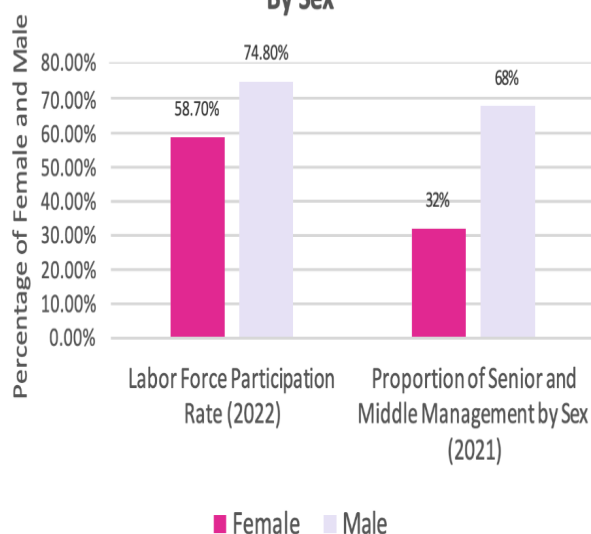
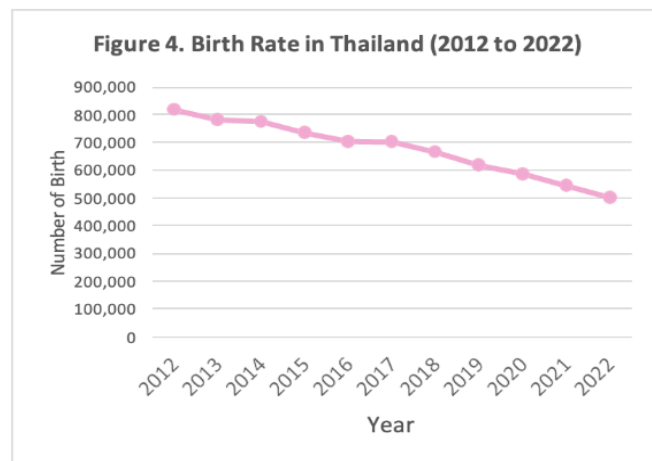
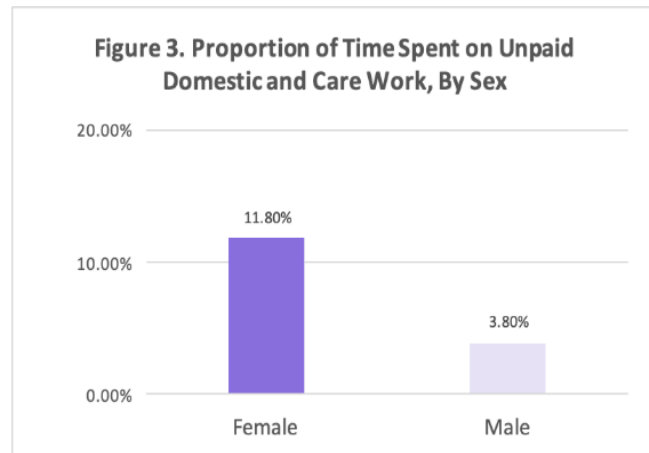


Figure 2. Labor Force Participation in Thailand, By Sex



activities include feeding an infant and caring for the elderly. Indirect care activities include domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning (United Nations, 2019). The significant amount of time Thai women spend on unpaid care work when compared to men can be hypothesized as being the cause of the gender gap in labour force participation rate. Without addressing the issue of unpaid care and domestic work, Thai women are compelled to choose between their careers and their families (United Nations Population Fund, 2024). As more Thai women prioritize their careers, the birth rate in Thailand has declined from 181,901 births in 2012 to 502,107 births in 2022 (Figure 4) (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2022). By addressing the issue of unpaid care and domestic work for women, Thailand would also make progress toward several 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 5 of gender equality, SDG 8 of decent work and economic growth, SDG 10 of reducing inequalities, SDG 11 of sustainable cities and communities, SDG 3 of good health and well-being, and SDG 1 of no poverty (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2021)



Causes of the Gender Gap in Unpaid Care Work

An underlying factor in women's unpaid care and domestic work in Thailand is cultural expectations. A deeply held belief among 47 percent of Thai men is that women should not only perform paid work outside the home but also focus on unpaid work, such as family care (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). However, 46.4 percent of Thai women disagree with the statement that "being a housewife is as fulfilling as working for pay" (45.7 percent of women agreed) (World Values Survey Association, n.d.). While women are expected to work outside of the home, they also have the additional responsibility of domestic work, even if they may not find it as fulfilling, resulting in women working a "second shift" or having a "double day" (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2021). Moreover, as of 2022, 69.2 percent of men and 70.4 percent of women in Thailand believe that it is the child's

duty to take care of ill parents (World Values Survey Association, n.d.). There is a cultural expectation that adult children, particularly daughters, will be the primary caregivers for their aging parents.

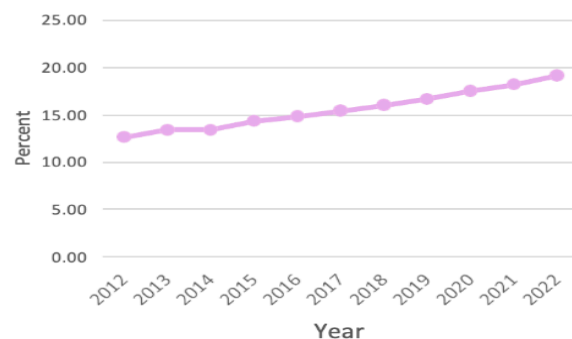
The current maternal and paternal leave policy further contributes to and reinforces existing cultural expectations. Women in both the public and the private sectors in Thailand are entitled to 98 days of paid maternity leave (Horizons, 2023). However, men in Thailand do not have equitable access to paternity leave. Men in the private sector are not legally guaranteed any paternity leave, while men in the public sector have access to limited paternity leave. As of June 2023, Thai male government officials are entitled to 15 days of paid paternity leave (Public Relations Department, n.d.). Prior to this recent policy, some private businesses may have offered paternity leave benefits to their male workers without a codified law requiring these provisions (United Nations Global Marketplace, n.d.). For this reason, childcare responsibilities fall on women.

The absence of publicly funded early childhood care centers for children under age three is another contributing factor of women's unpaid labour. As the 98 days of maternal leave come to an end and mothers are expected to return to work, families must decide on how to care for their young child. Families that can afford the costs associated with private childcare centers may choose to send their children to private childcare centers. However, because Thailand does not have affordable government-funded childcare for children under the age of three, families that cannot afford the costs of private childcare will have to find other means of childcare (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). Many families must decide between having the mother stay home to care for the child or to leave the child with their grandparents.

For families that rely on dual incomes, grandparents, especially grandmothers, become the main care providers for their grandchildren. Grandmothers may retire early to take on the domestic and care work. While women's labour force participation at age 40 is 81 percent, by age 50 women's labour force participation rate reduces to 70 percent. Women in the 50 years old age range also increasingly reported "housework" to be their main role. Less than 20 percent of women in the 40-year-old age range reported domestic work to be their main role, while 30 percent of women in the 50-year-old age range reported domestic work to be their main role (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.).

The scarcity of elder care is yet another contributing factor to women's unpaid care responsibilities. Thailand lacks the necessary infrastructure to care for its growing elderly population. In 2012, those who were 60 years old and over made-up 12.68 percent of the population, while in 2022, they comprised 19.21 percent of the population (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2022). In Bangkok, 19.39 percent of men and women over the age of 60 reported needing help with their daily activities. Due to the scarcity of in-home care workers, the main care

Figure 5. Percent of the Thai Population Who are 60 Years Old and Over (2012 to 2022)



responsibility is falling on female spouses at 27.87 percent, single daughters at 22.44 percent, and married daughters at 14.16 percent (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). Unpaid informal care workers who take on the care responsibility of elderly experience physical and emotional health burdens along with financial strains (World Health Organization, 2024). As women leave the workforce to care for the elderly this responsibility diminishes their ability to save for their own retirement causing them to become reliant on their children in the future as they reach retirement age (World Bank, 2021).

Recommendations:

Promote Cultural Norm Change Through Investment in Care-Sensitive Policies in Employment and Care Infrastructure: Care-sensitive policies must follow the “Purple Economy” framework, where care work is recognized as a public good that generates long-term benefits to society. Society assumes the costs of quality care, care work is valued for its social contribution rather than its market-based values, and care workers receive equal pay for work of equal value (United Nations, 2019). By reframing how care work is valued, the importance of care work would be recognized, and cultural norms relating to care work will shift.

Investment in Care-Sensitive Employment Policies: Care-sensitive employment policies, also referred to as family-friendly workplace policies, promote work-life balance and enable both mothers and fathers to care for their children and improve their family’s health and well-being (UNICEF Thailand, 2022). Care-sensitive employment policies include flexible work arrangements, increasing the availability of paternity leave, on-site childcare centers, and protection for expecting and nursing mothers. By implementing care-sensitive employment policies, societal norms regarding who is able and expected to take on care responsibilities will shift away from predominantly being the responsibility of women to becoming the responsibility of everyone within the family and society.

a. Flexible Work Arrangements: Offering flexible work arrangements enables both men and women to take on caregiving roles without limiting their ability to fulfil their job responsibilities. Flexible work arrangements allow men to take on more caregiving responsibilities and respond to their family's needs (UNFPA Men Engage, 2020). Flexible work arrangements may take the form of flexible locations, such as working from home, and flexible hours, such as allowing work hours to start earlier or later in the day (UNICEF Thailand, 2022). Flexible working hours enable both parents to coordinate pick-up and drop-off duties for their children to and from school. Meanwhile, flexible work locations allow parents to work from home to care for the child when needed. Flexible work arrangements reduce the pressure for a parent to leave the workforce in order to take on caregiving roles.

b. Increasing the Availability of Paternity Leave: International Labour Organization Maternity Protection Recommendation NO.191 recommends that maternity leaves should be at least 18 weeks (World Health Organization, n.d.). While the 98 days of maternity leave in Thailand meet the international standard, there is no such standard for paternity leave (International Labor Organization, n.d.). Paternity leave enables men to build strong bonds with their children and increases men’s confidence in their parenting abilities (UNFPA Men Engage,

2020). By increasing the availability of paternity leave and encouraging men to take paternity leave, men too can take on childcare responsibilities (UNFPA Men Engage, 2020). Encouragement for men to take paternity leave can be through role modelling. In 2020, Japanese Environmental Minister, Shinjiro Koizumi, took paternity leave when his child was born to be a role model to other men (Reuters, n.d.) To further encourage men to use paternity leave there should be a workplace culture which values men as fathers and caregivers by having a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination against fathers.

c. Onsite Childcare Centers in the Workplace: Workplaces must provide high-quality onsite childcare that is accessible and affordable for parents (UNICEF Thailand, 2022). An example of workplace childcare centers can be found in the case of Malaysia. As of 2013, the Malaysian government offers financial incentives in the form of tax deductions for employers in the private sector for the cost of providing and maintaining onsite childcare facilities for their employees (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2021). As more onsite childcare centers become available, fewer parents, particularly women, will be forced to choose between their professional careers and caring for children at home.

d. Protection for Expectant and Nursing Mothers: Currently, Thailand has the Labour Protection Act (No. 7) in place. Section 43 of the Labour Protection Act (No. 7) prohibits termination of employment due to pregnancy (UNICEF Thailand, 2022). This protection enables women to ensure that they will not become unemployed due to pregnancy. To further promote new mothers to return to work, workplaces must also provide their workers with breastfeeding facilities (UNICEF Thailand, 2022). Providing the necessary infrastructure to support new mothers will promote their physical and mental well-being, while also reducing the likelihood of mothers feeling pressured to leave the workforce.

2. Investment in Care Infrastructure: The two main areas of care infrastructure in Thailand that influence the gender gap in care and domestic work are the availability of publicly funded and affordable childcare centers for children ages zero to three and the availability of eldercare.

a. Increase the Availability of Publicly Funded and Affordable Childcare Centers for Children Ages 0 to 3: Currently there are 3,233,701 children under the age of five in Thailand (UNICEF, 2022). While the data for the exact number of children under the age of three is unavailable, UNICEF reported that 86.3 percent of children ages between 3 to 5 years old in Thailand attend some forms of early childhood education program (UNICEF Data, 2021). However, there are no publicly funded early childhood education programs to accommodate the needs for childcare for children under the age of three. In addition, 77.6 percent of men and 65.2 percent of women in Thailand are worried about their ability to give their children a good education (World Values Survey Association, n.d.). For this reason, as high-quality childcare centers for children under the age of three become more widely available and accessible, parents are likely to send their children to the early childhood education centers (UNICEF Thailand, n.d.).

A method to increase childcare for children under the age of three is by expanding the existing publicly funded childcare centers to also include children from zero to three years old and to encourage workplaces to provide childcare for their employees. This can be in the form of on-site childcare services or financial assistance for families to pay for private childcare centers (“Childcare is a Business Issue,” 2021). The increase in childcare for children under the age of three will support women in their choice to return to work after maternity leave without placing

additional care responsibilities on grandmothers.

b. Increase in the Availability of Eldercare: Thailand must prepare for its demographic shift toward an aging population (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2021). Thailand has adopted the National Health Act in 2002, which provides universal health coverage for all its citizens (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2021). The existing universal health coverage is beneficial in ensuring that all elderly in Thailand have access to adequate primary health care. However, it does not extend to the care of the elderly in their homes. Under the current system, the role of unpaid informal caregivers is undervalued for its invaluable contribution as a pillar in the Thai healthcare system (World Health Organization, 2024). Unpaid informal caregivers of the elderly in Thailand alleviate pressure on the country's health and social care system by taking on long-term care responsibilities (World Health Organization, 2024). To increase the availability of eldercare in Thailand, there needs to be an increase in the number of qualified in-home care workers and an expansion of the existing senior citizen centers and elderly education programs.

ii. Expand the Existing Community-Based Senior Citizen Centers and Elderly Education Programs: As recruitment and training of qualified in-home care workers is a time-consuming process, it is also beneficial to address the needs for elderly care through senior citizen centers and elderly education programs. The senior citizen centers and elderly education programs in Thailand follow the philosophy of “healthy aging”, which comprises the ideal that physical and mental health, along with personal care needs, must be ensured (World Health Organization, 2024). Under the “healthy aging” philosophy, the elderly must also have dignity, respect, and self-reliance and be allowed to “age in place” within their homes and communities (Asian Development Bank, 2019).

The senior citizen centers are operated and supervised by the National Senior Citizen Council and the local government in each province. They receive funding from the sub-district health fund of the National Health Security Office (World Bank, 2021). At senior citizen centers and elderly education programs, the elderly connect with those in their age groups, form friendships, and care for one another. Senior citizen centers also offer multidimensional health assessments, nutrition counselling, wellness plans, along with activities such as field trips and handicrafts (World Bank, 2021). Because these programs are provided by the local government, the elderly also learn about available resources and voice their needs directly to the government officials. There are currently 64 elderly education programs serving 2,242 elderly over the age of 60 in Bangkok (Department of Older Persons, n.d.). Additional elderly education programs are needed to meet the demand of the existing and increasing number of elderly in Bangkok and the rest of Thailand. While these programs do not directly translate to adequate care for elderly who need in-home care, it can be one way to support the elderly population while freeing up time associated with the care of the elderly.

Conclusion

Thai women are educated and ready to join the labour force, yet there is a gender gap in labour force participation rates. In closer inspection, the gender gap in labour force participation rate can be attributed to the gender gap in unpaid care and domestic work. Thai women have taken on the

majority of the unpaid care and domestic responsibilities due to cultural expectations and the current care-related employment policies, which do not allow for parents, particularly fathers, to share care responsibilities equitably. The absence of necessary care infrastructure, such as affordable childcare for children ages zero to three and elder care, further exacerbates women's unpaid care responsibilities. By investing in care-related workplace policies and the necessary care infrastructure, care responsibilities will no longer be solely associated with women but will become the responsibilities of everyone in the family and society. This shift in gendered social norms will not only increase women's labor force participation rate but also emphasize the true value that care work has for the long-term future of Thai society.

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Aligning Bauxite and Aluminum Extraction with Equitable Commons Outcomes in Guinea

by Kennedy Short¹

Overview and Problem Description

Bauxite mining and extraction companies based in the Global North and Asia have increasingly targeted the resources of African nations, particularly Guinea, which holds the world's largest reserves of bauxite, the main mineral used in aluminum extraction (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2024). These contracts, often imperialistic, strip the citizens of these resource-rich African states of their control over their mineral wealth (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ] 2023). Unaccountable governments dismantle local oversight and environmental protections, leaving communities near mining sites with inequitable compensation for the extracted materials and land usage (Dibattista et al., 2023). Furthermore, local communities bear the costs of lacking environmental controls and a lack of focus on inhabitant investment, leaving local workers seeing little return on the state's use of eminent domain on their land (Dibattista et al., 2023, p. 4).

With the global demand for aluminum rising, unsustainable mining practices are set to escalate, exacerbating the negative social, environmental, and health impacts on local communities (GIZ, 2023). Adopting an Ostromian perspective—focusing on local ownership and incorporating social dimensions into policy—provides a viable pathway toward sustainable and equitable aluminum mining practices (Le Gouill & Poupeau, 2020). Unless the full spectrum of extraction impacts is integrated into the costs borne by governments and companies, these damages will continue to be externalized onto citizens and cause remedies to be neglected (Dibattista et al., 2023).

This report focuses on the influences that these international mining operations have had on the citizens of Guinea. A country with large reserves of mineral wealth is one of the prime examples today of the “natural resource curse” (Dashwood et al., 2022). These reserves and their connected issues, specifically regarding bauxite, will be examined further through the framework of alleviating these externalities through various policy recommendations related to an Ostromian local ownership and commons-based view.

Current and Proposed Policies

Guinea's mining policies are largely top-down, leaving little room for real local government control (Dibattista et al., 2023, p. 2). With significant oversight by the Ministry of Mines, the

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Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Budget, extraction is predominantly controlled by state-co-opted entities alongside international companies, including increasing participation by Chinese firms and historical connections to American and Australian-based companies (“Mining and Minerals,” 2024). These actors have prioritized political connections over operational efficiency or community benefit (“Mining and Minerals,” 2024).

Despite past mining legislation emphasizing local involvement in the industry, amendments in 2013 to the Guinea Mining Code—the country's primary legal source for mining practices—eroded the local controls established in 2011 (“Guinean Mining Code,” 2013). These changes included reduced taxes on extraction, weaker hiring requirements for local workers, the elimination of time limits on title transfers, and increased vague state intervention in extraction profits, all of which were stricter in the 2011 laws (“Guinean Mining Code,” 2013). These adjustments have exacerbated the negative social and human rights impacts and made oversight by outside organizations and residents even more difficult, especially regarding keeping profits local (GIZ, 2023).

The Social-Ecological Systems (SES) framework highlights the profound effects these practices have on both resources and affected populations (Le Gouill & Poupeau, 2020). Despite recommendations from the World Bank advocating local-inclusive mining practices (Halland et al., 2013), international aluminum companies remain primarily accountable to only the central government, with limited interaction with local stakeholders (Dibattista et al., 2023). Efforts to enforce sustainable practices through international norms have proven ineffective due to sovereignty and centralized resource control (Le Gouill & Poupeau, 2020). However, as Guinea is the most bauxite-rich nation on the planet, the state's desire to export the resource—but inability to use it itself—puts it in a unique position where the true cost of the resources it is giving up may not be fully realized until its engineering sector has developed enough to use the resource domestically (Dibattista et al., 2023).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local complaint systems have struggled to address the imbalances between local communities and corporate actors (Dibattista et al., 2023). Trust in both companies and government entities remains minimal, hampering progress (Dibattista et al., 2023). Moreover, Guinea's government has shown limited interest in advancing research and development or adopting practices that might diminish its control over extraction processes, due to the nature of these processes favoring more local investment and accountability measures (Dibattista et al., 2023).

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a committee established by the Guinean government, has made strides in promoting accountability in government funding and prioritizing the needs of the population (“République de Guinée,” 2023). Its recent report emphasizes financial transparency and the involvement of local communities in policy recommendations, including collecting more comprehensive data on the externalities affecting residents (“République de Guinée,” 2023). This transparency being managed by local populations would lend itself to a stronger national policy emphasis on local solutions and management, though access to the resources needed for local populations to benefit from relevant educational programs makes this kind of outcome unlikely (Halland et al., 2013).

Policy Recommendations

To align bauxite mining with equitable outcomes, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthen Local Economic Linkages:

Integrate domestic economies and producers into the mining ecosystem to enhance understanding of the social impacts on affected regions. Building a robust local economy around mining operations can foster human and economic capital development within Guinea rather than focusing on high-level corporate and government interests.

2. Enhance Transparency and Data-Gathering Initiatives:

Continue developing transparency efforts, particularly those emphasizing local information dissemination. This enables residents to engage with local governments more meaningfully and foster trust between citizens and governing entities. It also emphasizes educating residents about opportunities that these mining practices may provide to them and how they can receive these benefits. These benefits include access to healthcare, individual economic benefits, environmental and social connections, and pathways to skills training. With this, existing policies that currently emphasize gold and diamonds often translate well to bauxite mining, and both current and future programs should include the resource in their practices (GIZ, 2023).

3. Promote Sustainable Extraction Practices:

Encourage mining companies to adopt sustainable practices that account for environmental, health, and social costs in their operational budgets. International pressure and collaboration with organizations such as the United Nations or environmentally-focused NGOs could provide local governments and organizations with a framework and materials for enforcing these measures.

4. Empower Local Stakeholders:

Implement policies that mandate the involvement of local communities in decision-making processes, from employment opportunities to environmental oversight. Specifically, reinstate previous powers and protections to local communities in the Mining Code, focusing on community benefits and fair compensation for extracted resources. Local oversight and power structures have led to successes in other states in the region (Dashwood et al., 2023). Those successes, and failings, highlight what has worked and what needs to be monitored for equitable economic outcomes.

5. Strengthen EITI's Role:

Support the EITI's initiatives by providing the necessary resources to expand its data collection and policy implementation capacities. This includes improving subnational payment disclosures and conducting thorough audits of government and corporate activities in the mining sector. Impact on environmental effects in the extractive industries sector have been proven to work and, despite the ability for the government to fund or manage its own transparency initiatives, EITI has lowered that need for capital and simply requires interaction and data submission (Stephan, 2002).

Conclusion

By prioritizing these policy changes, Guinea can establish a more equitable and sustainable framework for bauxite mining, benefiting both its citizens and the global economy. Policies that maintain or introduce local controls, oversight mechanisms, and supply chain modifications are shown to increase revenue projections and manage payments more effectively (Dashwood et al., 2022, pp. 13-14). These changes also foster local economic development by reducing smuggling operations and supporting locally controlled small-scale mining initiatives (GIZ, 2023). Many of these projects are relatively new in their implementation, particularly those utilizing internet-based data collection and oversight techniques (Dashwood et al., 2022). With meaningful and sustained investment in local stakeholder engagement, Guinea can achieve equitable mining outcomes without sacrificing its mineral tax base.

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How China Should Respond to Tariffs Imposed on Electric Vehicles by the European Union

by Emily Crawford²

Executive Summary

The new tariff of up to 45 percent on electric vehicles (EVs) imported from China to the European Union (EU) harms China further as the United States has already closed off Chinese EV imports (Manuel & Martin, 2024). To compromise with the EU, China should counter the approved tariff on Chinese EV imports with a proposed temporary tariff as a replacement. This proposed tariff would be implemented if the EU can prove that China, or another country is directly threatening the EU EV industry based on a set of predetermined stipulations agreed upon by EU member states (Pike, 2024). This will protect Chinese imports from additional tariffs and benefit the EU at an EV cost level (Spisak, 2024). By proposing this alternative, China is showing cooperation with the EU and increasing trust that they will not inflict further harm on the EU EV industry (Reuters, 2025). Since China is already closed out of the industry in the United States, China needs to protect its EV trade relationship with the EU.

Background

Chinese EV exporters submitted multiple price undertakings³ to the European Commission on the deadline of August 24, 2024, eliminating the possibility of re-submissions (Reuters, 2024). These price undertakings were rejected by the European Commission causing the 27 EU members to engage in an initial vote on September 25, 2024 (Reuters, 2024).

On October 4, 2024, the EU voted in favor of implementing tariffs up to 45 percent on EVs imported from China (Featherston, 2024). The EU currently enforces a base 10 percent car tariff, and the preliminary tariffs proposed by the European Commission would apply an additional 17–38 percent to new EVs imported from China, with this number differing between automakers such as BYD, Geely, and SAIC.⁴ The new tariffs would not apply to hybrid models or individual parts, such as batteries (Spisak, 2024). The European Commission is not attempting to eradicate the importation of Chinese EVs, and the additional tariff placed on automakers will be dependent on subsidy estimates and cooperation levels in the anti-subsidy investigation being conducted by the European Commission (Schwarz, 2023).

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³ An agreement by an exporter to follow minimum import prices to offset subsidies.

⁴ BYD: 17.4 percent; Geely: 20 percent; SAIC: 38.1 percent.

Analysis

The nature of the response from China's Commerce Ministry regarding the EV tariffs is critical in ensuring the EU does not mimic the actions of the United States and turn to protectionist measures. In conversation with the EU, China should highlight that reducing imports of EVs will limit the EU automakers' desire to cut costs on critical EV parts due to the lack of competition from Chinese imports and understand the EU's hesitation to welcome an abundance of imported EVs. The EU has historically experienced adverse effects of imports as the importation of foreign solar panels eradicated the European solar panel industry (Abnett & Blenkinsop, 2023).

As a compromise, China should offer an alternative stating that if Chinese imports threaten the EU EV industry, a temporary tariff becomes applicable to all EV imports from all countries. This alternative would be a compromise as the EU would not be imposing additional tariffs on Chinese automakers, and China will be able to continue exporting EVs to the EU without increasing the cost of EVs to the European consumer on both imported and domestic EVs.

To ensure that the temporary tariff is something that the importing countries want to avoid, the tariff should be imposed for no less than 90 days, and for no less than 15 percent on top of the existing 10 percent base tariff on EV imports to the EU (Amiti et al., 2019). I propose these numbers as 60-90 days is when price increases start to become noticeable, and 15 percent is at the lower end of the EU's original proposed tariff (Hartman, 2025; Amiti et al., 2019).

Placing a temporary tariff on all imported EVs into the EU will be a good compromise between China and the EU as a temporary tariff would serve three key functions:

- providing an incentive for China to not threaten the EU EV industry;
- motivating EU EV automakers to cut costs on domestic products; and
- offering a World Trade Organization (WTO)-compliant compromise (World Trade Organization, 2024).

First, China would avoid threatening the EU EV industry further as an additional tariff would be placed on their EVs exported to the EU. China would also have to answer to other countries, such as those within the United Kingdom UK, as to why their exports to the EU are being assessed an additional tariff. This would provide a sense of checks and balances between China and the EU and ensure that all EV exporters are establishing accountability (Frieden et al., 2021).

Next, the temporary tariff would create a desire for domestic EV automakers to cut costs on not just EVs, but parts as well. If a permanent tariff is placed on Chinese EVs, the cost to the consumer for said EVs is going to increase (Rho & Tomz, 2017). If the cost of imported EVs is higher, domestic automakers can also increase their prices, potentially causing the price of EVs in Europe to skyrocket to unaffordable prices to the average consumer (Dadush, 2024; Frieden et al., 2021). This has the potential to eradicate the EV market from Europe like the solar panel industry (Abnett & Blenkinsop, 2023). The temporary tariff would create a price ceiling on EVs, keeping the cost to consumers affordable and increasing demand, creating a thriving market in Europe (Joint Economic Committee, 2022).

Lastly, this temporary tariff would be compliant with the WTO as the procedures of the tariff are non-discriminatory (World Trade Organization, 2024). Since the temporary tariff would be placed on all imported EVs into the EU, if one automaker were to threaten Europe's EV industry, there is no discrimination between automakers or procedures (World Trade Organization, 2024). While it is understood that importing EVs from the UK may have a different effect on the EU than importing EVs from China, if the European Commission can prove the acts of China or another importing country are threatening their industry, then the temporary tariff can be placed in effect (Szczepański, 2024).

Alternatives:

An alternative to the temporary tariff could be to increase the base tariff, no matter the automaker, to 12–15 percent, from 10 percent (Domonoske, 2024). While a small increase, the effects will still be felt both by China and EU nations (Flowers & Reid, 2024). By increasing the tariff percentage less on average, but equally across the board, the effects are still going to be felt by China (Domonoske, 2024). It will provide them incentive to not egregiously harm the EU EV industry, but the price for consumers in the EU would not increase so dramatically that they become unaffordable (Flowers & Reid, 2024).

However, costs within the EU will increase on both imported and domestic EVs, harming the consumer more than deterring China (Spisak, 2024). By implementing the temporary tariff on all imported EVs, there is a system of checks and balances, as well as an incentive for all importing countries, particularly China, to not threaten the EU industry (Beers, 2025; Wiseman, 2025).

Counter-Arguments:

1. China would be incentivized to not threaten the industry for their personal gain despite the tariff only being in place for 90 days.

China would be incentivized to not threaten the industry as they will begin to feel the effect of the tariff within the 90 days and will receive backlash from other countries/automakers if the temporary tariff is imposed on their imports into the EU (Hartman, 2025). Additionally, China does not want tariffs placed on their imports (Ridgwell, 2024). The EU may void the compromise and return to the original tariff plan if the temporary tariff continues to be implemented as the original tariff plan has harsher consequences than the temporary tariff (Featherston, 2024).

2. China should agree to a tariff, even if only temporary.

By agreeing to a temporary tariff, China is showing the EU that they are willing to compromise and understand the EU's concerns regarding the EV industry within Europe (Reuters, 2025). If China can show that they are able to avoid threatening the industry, and thus avoiding additional tariffs, there is further room for deliberation in the future. There may be an opportunity for the base 10 percent tariff to be revisited.

Additionally, Chinese EV automakers have previously offered minimum export prices and volume caps (Blenkinsop, 2024). These terms have been rejected by the European Commission as of October 2024 (Blenkinsop, 2024).

Conclusion

China should enter deliberation with the EU with the suggestion of implementing a temporary tariff lasting no less than 90 days, and no less than 15 percent as a compromise to their permanent tariff of up to 45 percent (Amiti et al., 2019).

This proposed solution is feasible for both China and the EU. It will incentivize China to not threaten the industry, revert to a 10 percent base tariff on Chinese imports unless terms are violated, and keep EVs affordable for EU member states via a price ceiling (Joint Economic Committee, 2022, p. 9). This proposal would be an amendment to an already-approved policy (“Implementing Regulation,” 2024). Necessary resources would be minimal, creating a succinct policy outline and voting space for member states.

The goal of the original tariff policy is to ensure the EU’s EV industry does not continue to be threatened by China (Blenkinsop, 2024). This proposed policy still holds the initial goal at the forefront, so this policy would be likely to succeed in a vote by EU member states.

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The Bell Curve of the Capitalist Peace Theory: Examining Economic Interdependence and Peace

by Harry Harkins⁵

Abstract

Does the capitalist or democratic peace theory still hold in our modern, hyperglobalized world? Recent trends of economic re-globalization raise the questions: How have countries arrived at their current trade and investment networks? – as well as – What drives countries to seek alternative paths? (Fraser, 2024). By examining the case of Germany following the Second World War leading up until today, I challenge the assumptions of economic interdependence and its implications for peace. A country's barriers of switching costs and its limitations of capable trading partners are not the same as they once were due to rising world economies and global technological improvement (Bharadwaj et al., 2025). However, not all countries have developed at the same rate, and thus trends must be understood as estimates and not perfect descriptions of world events. Despite all the uncertainty of our post-pandemic world, I offer a touch of clarity by positing that there first exists a positive relationship between the number of capitalist and democratic countries with which a country will trade (x-axis) and the chance these countries will refrain from waging war on one another (y-axis), and that around a critical threshold (at the mid-point graphically), this relationship will then weaken, flatten, and ultimately reverse into a strong negative relationship, wherein more trade partners now means more substitutes and therefore less costs of renegotiating trade agreements, roughly following the shape of a bell curve, although not actually relating to a normal distribution.

Introduction

The Capitalist Peace Theory is the core component of the Democratic Peace Theory (Oren, 2016). The latter posits that “democratic states never (or almost never) wage war on one another”, as explained by economic interconnectivity, hence, the notion of capitalist peace (Oren, 2016). These theories contribute to the interdisciplinary study of economic security through the following logic: in the short term, if a country is democratic, it will trade with other democracies due to two factors—open markets, which signal economic opportunity, and democratic processes, which signal security or stability (Repucci, 2015). These factors are

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cyclical because the strengthening of one leads to the strengthening of the other; hence, it is desirable for democracies to maintain relations with one another rather than begin trade relations with less stable and unsafe non-democracies (Repucci, 2015).

The essential logic of these theories, however, lies in their long-term benefit of free trade relations, and that is when economic interconnectivity turns into interdependence (Takeuchi, 2020). When a country increases trade with a partner to a certain extent, waging war on it would prove futile, or worse, the offender could hurt itself (Takeuchi, 2020). This is a benefit to the international system. Then, as more countries become interdependent, the likelihood of war would continue to decrease (Takeuchi, 2020). As such, the short-term economic benefits create long-term peace (Takeuchi, 2020). But does this theory hold in our modern, hyperconnected world? I argue later that it does not. First, however, I will offer my reasoning.

One major assumption of these theories is that “switching costs,” used informally here to describe the burden of circumventing trade relations, are extremely high (Grant, 2024). A second assumption is that viable trading partners are difficult to come by (“Substitute Good,” 2024). But modern cost switches and the availability of trade partners are evolving (Liu, 2023). Therefore, This paper seeks to reevaluate these theories by dismantling these old assumptions through a literature review of democratic countries, particularly highlighting the recent history of Germany. It also posits a new, “bell curve” theory: the extent of a country’s interdependence first increases with the number of viable trading partners, but later decreases, and eventually reverses.

Democratic and Capitalist Peace Theories

A brief history of the democratic and capitalist peace theories would begin at the conclusion of the Second World War. The United States and its allies had just defeated Germany and its allies, setting the stage for a new world order. Economically, the United States had benefited greatly from the past several decades of economic success, most notably in its industrial sectors and in its financial services (“Marshall Plan Assistance,” 2009).

American cities, like Pittsburgh, led the world in the production of steel and other heavy machinery, while other cities, like New York City, rivaled old world financial capitals, like London (Dietrich, 2008). This marked the transition from British to American global dominance (“Marshall Plan Assistance,” 2009). Like the United Kingdom in the past, the United States was now willing and able to lead a new world order. And the order it chose was, like its British predecessor, one of democracy, capitalism, and economic interconnectivity.

To understand what motivated the United States to promote these Western norms so assiduously, one must consider the state of the world following the Second World War. A mere fifteen years after the First World War—whose tangled alliances devastated cities and killed millions—Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito rose to power, leading to another devastating conflict that left millions dead and disrupted international cooperation (Eichengreen, 2021).

Thus, the United States knew a laissez-faire approach to rebuilding Europe would not suffice, should a third world war be prevented (Gebreyesus & Woodard, 2021). Instead, it aimed to create a system of international market pressures, monetary and nonmonetary in origin, that would produce legitimate and more robust alliances between countries, following the aforementioned logic of democratic and capitalistic interconnectivity (“Marshall Plan

Assistance,” 2009). Eighty years later, and bolstered by spikes in democratization and a concurrent enlargement of the global capital market – starting in the 1950s in Asia and Africa (decolonization), the 1980s in South America, and the 1990s in Europe (post-Cold War) – some attribute peace to this interconnectivity, but is there causation or just spurious correlation? (Diamond, 2021).

Assumptions of Interdependence

Unfortunately, this is a difficult question to analyze empirically because there are several testable variables and likely more confounding ones. As a consequence, author Robert Skidelsky argues that attributing peace to democracy is most likely a case of correlation and not causation (Skidelsky, 2023). I, too, wish to analyze this relationship, and in order to delve deeper into the economic trends that create interdependence, I will limit my analysis to the two assumptions listed above, to which I will hereafter name: (1) the barriers of switching costs, and (2) limitations of capable trading partners.

Barriers of Switching Costs

In finance and economics, switching costs are defined as “the costs [one] incurs as a result of changing brands, suppliers, or products”, and although the primary costs are monetary in nature, they are accompanied by “psychological, effort-based, and time-based switching costs” (Grant, 2024). An individual firm wishes to capitalize on these costs by manipulating consumer preferences toward its specific products, thus causing a consumer to become accustomed to the products which only that firm can supply, ensuring future consumption (Eichengreen, 2021). This is referred to as “brand loyalty” (Skidelsky, 2023).

A great example of this would be from the American tech giant Apple (Quickonomics, 2024). When the company first launched its online media shopping platform iTunes, it allowed its customers to purchase digital products, like music and movies, a single time and then transfer this media to any other Apple product at no additional cost (Liu, 2023). However, if, for example, an iPhone user wanted to purchase an Android tablet, Apple would not permit the transfer of media to that Android device (Quickonomics, 2024). Thus, the cost of purchasing the Android would include its market value plus the price of all media previously purchased (that is, the switching costs) (Quickonomics, 2024). In Apple’s ideal world, this would deter the customer from choosing Android, and it would motivate the customer to purchase an Apple tablet instead. In microeconomics, this lack of substitution could create a market monopoly by Apple (Asmundson, n.d.).

This concept extends internationally to countries involved in investment and trade agreements. For example, when President Harry S. Truman enacted the Economic Recovery Act of 1948 — which would come to be known as the Marshall Plan – in the United States’ massive effort to rebuild Europe, Truman used foreign direct (capital) investments to simultaneously institutionalize democracy in Germany (“Marshall Plan Assistance,” 2009). Germany would become reliant on the United States, like an Apple customer is affixed to her Apple products (National Archives and Records Administration [NARA], 2022).

If Germany (later West Germany) wished to hypothetically forgo these incoming American investments and switch to Soviet investments, the German government would have needed to devote considerable time and resources to rewriting trade negotiations and to reorganizing its society to match Soviet, undemocratic ideals, namely the communist principles embedded in its institutions (NARA, 2022). But Germans were freezing and starving to death in the early years following the Second World War, so the Germans knew time was not to be wasted teetering between countries (Gebreyesus, 2021).

Because Germany would come to be overly reliant on the United States, it had no other option but to comply with American values and thereby swear its allegiance (Office of the Historian, n.d.). The United States would later cite this as an example of democratic peace (Eichengreen, 2021). Germany had been a dictatorship under Chancellor Adolf Hitler, who waged war on American allies in Europe. However, after Germany converted back to a democratic state and further integrated its markets with the West, it ceased acting as an aggressive power on the world stage.

However, without empirical evidence, one cannot prove causation. Despite the lack of definitive proof, the United States continued throughout the rest of the twentieth century to boast its German success story and to use it as a model by which other countries could be molded, thus giving way to decades of statebuilding through “democratic peace” and market liberalization (Office of the Historian, n.d.)

Limitations of Capable Trading Partners

The second assumption of capitalist peace relates to the economic principles of consumer preference (or substitution) (National WWII Museum, 2022). The first assumption stated that it is costly to switch between products, in some cases to the extent that switching is unfeasible (Acharya et al., 2023). But if one eases this assumption and instead considers a scenario where two products are equal substitutes of one another (meaning a consumer has no preference or is indifferent to either product), then this changes the economics entirely (Bharadwaj et al., 2025). As preference for one product grows, consumer demand will increase for that product and decrease for the other (Bharadwaj et al., 2025). Eventually, in the long run, supply will also increase for the favorable product and its total market output will increase to meet consumer demand up until the point that it is profitable for the company or country to keep producing or trading it (Bharadwaj et al., 2025).

To apply this internationally, I will turn again to the case of Germany in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Even if it could afford to circumvent the first assumption (i.e. pay the switching costs of leaving American interdependence), it would have still faced limitations in its search for a new trading partner.

While the Soviet Union also wished to establish its dominance and create its version of a new world order, it did not lend the same hand to Germany as the United States did, chiefly because it nowhere near matched the size and scope of U.S. investments to rebuild Germany (Bharadwaj et al., 2025). So, Germany chose to stand by the United States (and its investments) (Investopedia, 2025).

Other great powers at the time, like the United Kingdom and France, were already sworn

allies, as well as close trading partners of the United States, and so if Germany chose to align with either of these countries, that would have been effectively the same as staying with the United States (Investopedia, 2025). In other words, Germany would not be switching sides if it chose to align more closely to one of these countries or the other, nor would its rebuilding have been much different had the United Kingdom or France contributed the lion's share, rather than the United States (Investopedia, 2025). Lastly, other British colonies and Commonwealth countries at that time, like the present-day Republic of South Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, all had strong economies, but had nowhere near the soft and hard (informal and formal) power that the United States had had (Skidelsky, 2023). Thus, Germany's safest bet was to stay with the United States (Investopedia, 2025).

A New Perspective

That was 80 years ago. Today, Germany is still a much greater trade partner with the United States than it is with the Russian Federation, the Soviet Union's successor state. However, Germany's number one trading partner from 2016 to 2023 was not the United States, nor a democracy for that matter, but it was the People's Republic of China, whose President Xi Jinping abolished term limits in 2018, enabling him to rule indefinitely (Germany Trade & Invest, 2023). By eliminating the need for democratic election, he is effectively a dictator (Doubek, 2018).

Germany lost millions of lives and saw its great, historic cities turn to rubble the last time it relied so heavily on a dictator (Investopedia, 2025). Does this mean Germany is just as foolish now as when it elected Adolf Hitler in the 1930s, or has something changed in international economics that would better explain its relationship with China and therefore its prospect of peace and security? I argue that international economics has changed, for two reasons. The first is the emergence of rising economies, which is explained in part by the second reason: technological improvement.

Rising Economies

In the years since the war, the United States has maintained its soft power through sources like its prestigious universities and mass media. However, it has since lost its hegemonic dominance in the collective wake of several rising economies, like the ABERIECSIUS [ah-ber-EEks-ius] countries (my term for what was formerly BRICS), which is comprised of the following 11 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Russia, India, Ethiopia, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE, South Africa, as well as the MINT countries of Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Türkiye (Turkey), and finally the "East Asian Tigers" of Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan (Investopedia, 2025).

If today Germany wishes to find a cheaper provider of a raw mineral needed to produce, for example, one of its world-renowned automobiles – from a company like Audi, BMW, Mercedes, or Porsche – it has various possible partners from which to choose, on several continents across the globe (Eichengreen, 2021). This eliminates the second assumption of the democratic or capitalist peace theories that there are limited capable trading partners, and thus it is safer to stick to established democracies (Skidelsky, 2023).

However, this alone does not negate the first assumption: the barriers of switching costs (Skidelsky, 2023). Having more capable partners is only useful if switching from one partner to the next is feasible, given any time constraints and the resources needed to renegotiate trade agreements (Bloomenthal, 2025). But this too has changed over time due to advances in technology (Bloomenthal, 2025).

Technological Improvement

One reason these formerly fledgling economies have begun to compete with the United States is because changes in technology have expedited the effects of globalization (Bloomenthal, 2025). Before, if two countries wished to make a bilateral agreement, diplomats and other economic advisors may have needed to travel internationally to convene in-person to discuss matters of trade and investment (Bloomenthal, 2025). But today, with improvements in communication technologies such as cheaper cellular communication and the advent of email, texting and videoconferencing – countries have myriad avenues through which to strike a deal (Germany Trade & Invest, 2023). Additionally, feedback time for all actors has been dramatically reduced (Germany Trade & Invest, 2023).

Hence, if Germany has been, for example, buying lithium products from Argentina, but it learns today that Ethiopia has begun extracting lithium more cheaply (thus selling it for a lower price than Argentina), Germany will want to start buying from Ethiopia. This would reduce its total production costs of new electric automobiles that rely on lithium to make their batteries, thus increasing Germany's profit margin. In the past, the switching costs (monetary and nonmonetary) of forgoing a healthy trade agreement with Argentina might have proven dire in the long run. This is because the short-term gains in a German firm's profit could create long-term burdens, should, for example, the reorganization of trade agreements take too much time and too many resources away from more economically productive activities (Seong et al., 2025).

Today, if Germany wanted to make this rearrangement, its economic advisors could video-conference representatives from Argentina and Ethiopia respectively (but on the same day), send official documents over email, scan digital signatures, and have new, judicially ratified agreements by the day's end. What is equally important is the reduction in feedback time, also referred to as access to real-time data (Fraser, 2024). Assuming Argentina has the same basic technological abilities, it could learn that Germany is cutting ties – and then as long as world demand for its lithium is higher than its supply, it could just as easily increase exports to another country – like to the American company of Tesla that also makes electric cars. Theoretically, it would not lose out on any profits; in fact, if Tesla were to buy more lithium from Argentina than the German car companies were, then Argentina might even thank Germany for cutting ties. Setting aside the economics of trade, the other side of the debate on modern democratic or capitalist peace theory is the alleged promise of security and peace, which leads back into this paper's proposed bell curve theory (Oneal & Russett, 1999).

Robustness of my Assumptions, “Bell Curve Theory,” and Conclusions

Robustness

The reason I chose to focus on Germany – who allied with a capitalist democracy, became one, and then saw economic success and peace – was to represent that the capitalist peace theory can be true, at least at a correlative level. Back when Germany had limited capable trade partners paired with evident switching costs, it remained a peaceful actor and a strong economic ally of the West (Gartzke, 2007). But when I compared 1940s Germany with modern Germany, I noted that these underlying factors were no longer evident, which might explain why it would trade so heavily and fearlessly with China. If China were to invade Taiwan tomorrow, Germany could reach out to an ABERIECSIUS, MINT, or East Asian Tiger and reroute its trade.

But what about other countries? And what then should be made of these old theories? Has modernity negated them, or should they simply be viewed in a new light? I have argued in my analysis for the latter. Not all countries have developed as rapidly as Germany over the past 80 years (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Other countries, like many in the global South, still have relatively fewer trading paths available to them, and they do not have the same level of technology, which is why I believe the “old-German case” and “new-German case” exist for various countries concurrently in our modern age, for less developed countries (LDCs) in the former case and more developed countries (MDCs) in the latter (World Bank, 2023).

Bell Curve Theory

To conceptualize this confounding trend, I propose the “bell curve of the capitalist peace theory.” In science, bell curves are commonly equated with the normal curve, or Normal Distribution, which is a symmetrical, graphical representation of probabilities where, as one moves from left to right along the x-axis, the chances of an event occurring increase up until the mid-point of the graph, and then decrease the rest of the way (Bloomenthal, 2025). What is vitally important to my argument is that I only intend to reference the bell curve for its shape, and I do not mean to imply a specific probability between any variables. That would require much further analysis.

Instead, this paper simply proposes that there first exists a positive relationship between the number of capitalist countries with which a country will trade (x-axis) and the chance these countries will refrain from waging war on one another (y-axis) – and most importantly to my proposal, that around a critical threshold (at the mid-point graphically), this relationship will then weaken, flatten, and ultimately reverse into a strong negative relationship, wherein more trade partners now means more substitutes and therefore less costs of renegotiating trade agreements (Copeland, 2015).

For example, when a country has zero trading partners, it is economically independent, and so its decisions are not tied to any other country. This instills fear among international actors, who wish to create interdependence through capitalistic or market integration, as a means to eliminate rogue actors (Keohane & Nye, 1977). When a country then declares economic alliance (and dependence) to a few countries, it becomes locked into trade agreements, thus decreasing its ability, or desire, to wage war on those countries (Oneal & Russett, 1999). But as a country

continues to increase its global network, the weight or importance of any one of these agreements is now increasingly less than it was before, thus negating the effects of this country's integration into such a democratic, capitalist world system (Copeland, 2015).

Conclusions

The real-world implications of my proposal could change the way economists and policymakers alike seek to understand rising international economic trends, such as re-globalization (which is more or less what I described above when a country realigns its trading partners) and thus having knowledge of this could impact their decisions to enter into new trade agreements. When one holds the capitalist peace theory as an absolute constant, one assumes that a country will value securing peace and economic stability (with democratic/capitalist trade partners) over cost reduction, but evidently the country that is able to circumvent this logic, will (Oneal & Russett, 1999). If even a country like Germany, whose experience with dictatorship destroyed its institutions and society— will now trade more with China, a dictatorship, than any other country—something fundamental in the global system must have changed (Germany Trade & Invest, 2023). An increase in the number of capable trading partners, as well as a reduction of switching costs between agreements, through technological advancement, has decreased the extent to which more-developed, democratic countries must rely on any single (or a small group of) countries (Seong et al., 2025). But, for less-developed countries, that new logic might not hold. Overall, my understanding is that economic interconnectivity eventually converts to interdependence, but eventually, at a certain point, the relationship reverts back to interconnectivity (Copeland, 2015). And I believe this relationship can be visualized more effectively if one imagines it as following the shape of a classic bell curve.

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Online Violence Against Minority Women in Politics: Pennsylvania Case Study

by Vanessa Thompson⁶

Abstract

This Pennsylvania-based case study explores the new and growing threat of online violence against women in politics (OVAW-P), focusing on the experiences of female candidates in Pennsylvania during the 2024 United States elections. It highlights the significant challenges women face, including harassment, hate speech, and threats, which hinder their political participation and undermine democratic values. Through a series of interviews with five women candidates and analysis of tweets directed at three congressional women candidates, the study contributes to the understanding of the nature of online violence directed at women political candidates as well as reveals the unique vulnerabilities faced by women of color.

The findings emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive training and support for women candidates. They highlight the importance of digital security, mental health resources, and additional support for minority female candidates, including women of color. The study calls for a collaborative effort among political organizations, researchers, and advocacy groups to address OVAW-P and promote a safer and more equitable political environment.

Introduction

Online violence against women in politics refers to acts of online hate and harassment directed at women politicians and candidates. Women in politics face significant challenges, including sexist comments, hate speech, cyberstalking, body shaming, and even threats of assault, rape, and death (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022). Research by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2016 revealed that 82 percent of women politicians worldwide encounter psychological violence (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022). The impact of OVAW-P extends far beyond individual cases of harassment. It creates a chilling effect that discourages women from pursuing their political ambitions or participating in public discourse (National Democratic Institute, 2022). This reduces the presence of women in political spaces and undermines their agency and influence in

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shaping policies that affect their communities and society (National Democratic Institute, 2022). As a result, the persistence of online violence against women in politics contributes to a cycle of disenfranchisement, reinforcing the belief that political spheres are not welcoming or safe for women (National Democratic Institute, 2022). In this way, OVAW-P poses a profound challenge to the ideals of democracy and equity, making it essential to confront and address this issue head-on (National Democratic Institute, 2022).

Recently, many nonprofit organizations, research institutions, and universities have started to examine the impacts of online violence against women in politics (The White House, 2023). To further investigate these complex issues, former President Joe Biden established the White House Task Force to Address Online Harassment and Abuse (The White House, 2023). This task force was created to tackle online harms affecting women, people of color, and LGBTQI+ individuals (The White House, 2023). Its goal was to provide recommendations for preventing and addressing online violence, including gender-based violence, across all levels of government, technology platforms (such as social media), schools, and other public and private entities (The White House, 2023). It is important to note that since the change in presidential administration, these resources are no longer accessible on the White House's website.

Building on prior research, this study offers an in-depth examination of the experiences of female politicians running in the 2024 U.S. election in Pennsylvania. It aims to shed light on the difficulties female politicians face in politics, which is partially responsible for their comparatively smaller numbers in elected offices.

Current Status of Women in Politics

Ensuring women's full and equal participation in political decision-making is essential for democratic governance and sustainable development, as it fosters greater public trust in policy processes (Volden et al., 2010). Though the number of women participating in U.S. politics has increased in recent years, much progress remains to be made (Girardin, 2023). As of 2024, the record for the number of women in the U.S. Senate was 26, set between January 3, 2021, and January 18, 2021 (Center for American Women and Politics, 2024). As of 2024, 24 women served as U.S. Senators (Center for American Women and Politics, 2024). Among them, 14 belonged to the Democratic Party, nine to the Republican Party, and one was an Independent (Center for American Women and Politics, 2024). Of the U.S. Senators, one was a Latina from Nevada, two were Asian American/Pacific Islanders, and 21 were white women (Center for American Women and Politics, 2024).

As of 2024, 127 women served in the U.S. House of Representatives, comprising 93 Democrats and 34 Republicans (Center for American Women and Politics, 2024). Among these Representatives, 54 identified as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC), which included 29 women who identified as African American (Center for American Women and Politics, 2024). Additionally, 73 Representatives identified as white, with three who identified as white and Latina (Center for American Women and Politics, 2024). Historically, 60 women served as United States Senators, compared to 1,944 men (Center for American Women and Politics, 2024). Furthermore, 378 women have served as United States Representatives, compared to more than 10,800 men in the same role (Center for American Women and Politics, 2024).

As of 2024, Mississippi remains the only state in the United States that has never sent a woman to the House of Representatives (Padilla, 2024). At the same time, North Dakota recently made history by electing its first woman to Congress, Republican Julie Fedorchak (KTVB7, 2024). At this rate, it may take around 88 years for women to achieve gender parity in the United States Congress (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2020).

Prior Research and Stories Shared by Representatives

The Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT), a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that advocates for democracy and human rights in the digital era, has partnered with Northeastern University, the University at Buffalo, and the University of Denver to examine further concerns surrounding online violence against women in politics (Thakur, et al., 2022). Their 2022 study, *An Unrepresentative Democracy: How Disinformation and Online Abuse Hinder Women of Color Political Candidates in the United States*, included interviews with 12 women political candidates and found that women of color candidates were more likely to be subjected to violent and sexist abuse as well as mis- and disinformation as compared to other candidates (Thakur, et al., 2022).

In one example, physical intimidation in conjunction with online threats was leveraged, resulting in the politician resigning and leaving office (Norwood et al., 2021). Former Rep. Kiah Morris, the first African American elected from Bennington County and the second African American woman to be elected to the legislature in the history of Vermont in 2014, reported 26 incidents to local police in which she and her family felt threatened, which included a “break-in and theft from Morris’s car and threatening online messages” (Norwood et al., 2021). Reports also included police officers having discovered “neckties scattered in a cemetery near Morris’s home” – her husband later reported that a “number of his neckties were missing from their basement” (Norwood et al., 2021). Once the threats became too overwhelming in 2018, elected official Morris immediately resigned via a Facebook post, with three months remaining in her second term (Norwood et al., 2021).

The report also found evidence of the use of physical attacks in conjunction with online threats that similarly resulted in the politician eventually resigning and leaving office (Norwood et al., 2021). Rep. Nikema Williams, who shared that she “never felt safe in elected office,” recounted her horrible experience of the violent mob that stormed the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021, just in the first week of her being in Congress (Norwood et al., 2021). She further shared that her staff now reads her mailbox due to the increase in threats and the 24-hour security she hired at the time for her and her family’s safety (Norwood et al., 2021). Former Rep. Cori Bush shared that a man who had tagged her in a violent social media post had also participated in the insurrection (Norwood et al., 2021). Former Acting Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman testified before a Senate committee that the threats had increased against members of Congress by nearly 65 percent between January and April of that year (Norwood et al., 2021).

It is essential to note that these instances are not isolated; they reflect the broader experiences of many women of color politicians in the United States, and this situation persists to this day (Thakur, et al., 2022). These examples of the varied experiences of women in politics demonstrate that OVAW-P is a critical emerging issue that requires attention. Doing so will contribute to a vital and comprehensive examination of the threats to democracy.

Research Questions and Goals

This case study aims to contribute to an evaluation of the experiences related to online violence encountered by women who currently hold office, as well as those who have run for office in the past four years, in the state of Pennsylvania. This study seeks to understand the various forms of online harassment and abuse these women may face, the impact it has on their personal and professional lives, and the challenges they encounter in navigating the political landscape. By gathering and analyzing data on these experiences, the case study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the prevalence of online violence against women in politics and provide insights into potential strategies for addressing and mitigating this issue.

This case study is divided into two parts: The first part provides a summary of the interviews with the five women candidates running for or re-elected to a congressional seat or to serve as a U.S. House representative in Pennsylvania in 2024. The candidates differ in age, race, and religious background and have served various communities throughout Pennsylvania. During the interviews, each candidate was asked the same questions, focusing on their reasons for running for office, their training, specifically regarding how to use social media platforms and what to expect from them, and whether they would consider running for office again based on their experiences (please see Appendix A for the list of interview questions).

The second part of the report analyzes tweets directed at three congressional women candidates for the 2024 elections: Summer Lee, Chrissy Houlahan, and Ashley Ehasz. This analysis reviewed 289 tweets directed at Summer Lee, 400 at Chrissy Houlahan, and 205 at Ashley Ehasz, all collected between May and August 2024. The study identified the types of abusive content each candidate received across various categories: policy, ideology, character, identity, and electability. This approach follows the methodology outlined in the 2019 report, "Running While Female: Using AI to Track How Twitter Commentary Disadvantages Women in the 2020 U.S. Primaries" (for a detailed review of the categories, please refer to Appendix B).

Pennsylvania Case Study – Part 1: Pennsylvania Women Candidate Interviews

Interviews for this study were conducted by the author in October and November 2024. All participants were members of the Democratic Party, consisting of three white women and two women of color. Their ages ranged from the early thirties to the early fifties, and each participant is committed to serving diverse communities in both rural and urban settings. In today's political landscape, candidates must harness social media effectively to engage with a broad audience (Thakur et al., 2022). The most frequently utilized platforms—Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram—offer candidates opportunities to articulate their policies, public outreach efforts, and upcoming events, thereby fostering direct lines of communication with potential constituents (Thakur et al., 2022). Participants in this study shared various strategies for utilizing social media, highlighting their growing comfort with these digital platforms.

When discussing their motivations for seeking office, all candidates conveyed a shared conviction: they believed they could bring about significant, positive changes in their state. One candidate passionately declared, "I'm tired of waiting for other people to make the right decision, so I'll do it myself." Two candidates reflected on their mothers' influential roles in their lives;

one mother was an elected official who actively fought for her community, serving as a powerful role model for her daughter. All candidates emphasized their commitment to amplifying diverse voices and ensuring marginalized communities were heard in political discourse.

Although all the candidates recognized the importance of implementing strategies to address or mitigate OVAP-W, they adopted different tactics for managing their social media campaigns. For example, one candidate noted that many of her constituents preferred Facebook for engagement, so she linked her personal Facebook account to her campaign's social media profiles. This approach allowed her constituents to gain insight into both her personal life and her professional endeavors. However, she explained that she felt compelled to include a disclaimer on her personal profile, which enabled her to block individuals who exhibited disrespectful behavior—an option she regrettably did not have for her official campaign accounts due to First Amendment protections.

In contrast, four of the five interviewed candidates highlighted the importance of separating their personal social media presence from their official campaign accounts. One candidate described her experience with social media during the final weeks of her campaign, noting that she had to distance herself from the campaign's social media due to the avalanche of hateful comments. She candidly admitted to underestimating the psychological resilience required to navigate the often-hostile environment of campaign-related social media, especially when faced with a barrage of misinformation and direct harassment.

Most candidates reported employing social media managers to handle their Twitter accounts, establishing specific guidelines on what content should be shared with them to protect their mental well-being. For instance, one candidate strongly desired to remain unaware of negative comments targeting her religious beliefs. Other candidates reported encountering racial slurs and other forms of hate speech on their social media platforms.

Candidates who identified as women of color or non-Christian were more likely to report that the attacks they faced were primarily centered on their race or religion rather than on their gender. On the other hand, candidates who identified as cisgender white Christians noted that they received a more significant number of hate messages compared to their male counterparts but did not experience their racial or gender identities being targeted in the same manner.

Candidates also shared varying experiences across different social media platforms. One candidate evocatively described her experience on Twitter as a “toxic hellscape,” ultimately deciding to limit her engagement with the platform due to the harmful and abusive comments directed at her. Across the board, all candidates expressed their frustration with Twitter's hostile environment while finding Facebook to be a more manageable and user-friendly platform.

Candidates also attested to the positive impact of the training they had received, including training for managing their public personas. Many expressed gratitude for the training programs offered by organizations like the Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics at Chatham University, as well as Emerge, which is dedicated to equipping aspiring women leaders with the tools they need to run for office successfully. They noted that some training sessions focused heavily on the importance of personal appearance, public speaking acumen, and campaign fundraising strategies. One candidate highlighted the comprehensive public relations training she had received. At the same time, another discussion session addressed the critical decision of when to run for office and how best to prepare oneself and one's family for the challenges of a

political campaign. Every candidate emphasized the pressing need for additional training, specifically tailored to managing online content and effectively coping with the negative messages they encounter on social media on a routine basis.

Recommendations from the Interviewees

Every candidate, except one, affirmed that they would run for office again despite all they had endured. One candidate shared that as long as they can be impactful, they want to do this work and would reevaluate once the time comes when they no longer feel impactful. Each candidate interviewed recommended that women receive extensive training on managing their campaign's social media accounts. They all agreed that the reality of how daunting it can be to run a political social media campaign, where the challenge of running for office is compounded by pervasive harassment and misinformation, should be shared openly with those looking to run for office. Every candidate interviewed agreed that running for office requires one to have "thick skin." One candidate shared that they knew a few of their LGBTQI+ colleagues who have "borne the brunt" of harassment.

Another recommendation for candidates running for office was to ensure that their social media campaigns have clear and precise messaging. One candidate shared the advice of "figuring out what your voice will be on social media," and another highlighted the importance of being "authentically yourself" online as best possible. Another candidate reported that they saw an increase in social media engagement once they became more authentic on their official campaign accounts. That candidate also recommended being creative when using different social media accounts, acknowledging that each platform provides various types of engagement.

The third recommendation for future women running for office was a reminder that they are "public officials," not "public property," and to understand the distinction between the two. This included recognizing that a candidate does not belong to their constituents, nor are they required to devote all their time and energy to them. One candidate further shared that she was still managing to learn that boundary.

The final recommendation was to get offline and prioritize one's mental health when social media posts become too harmful. One candidate elaborated on the importance of knowing what you stand for and the platform and policies you support.

Pennsylvania Case Study – Part 2: Review of Tweets Directed at Congressional Candidates

The second part of the case study focused on analyzing social media messages received by three Pennsylvania congressional women candidates in 2024 to examine how media messages disadvantage female candidates for office. This involved an examination of tweets from X directed at Congresswoman Summer Lee in the 12th District (African American, 36), Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan in the 6th District (Caucasian, 57), and Army veteran Ashley Ehasz in the 1st District (Caucasian, 36). The review was conducted line by line to categorize the types of messaging these three candidates received across policy, ideology, character, identity, and electability. When analyzing each tweet, the stance (support, attack, or neutral) of the tweet directed at the candidate was also identified.

The analysis of tweets found evidence that Congresswoman Lee received significantly more aggressive messages, including more attacks against her character, identity, and race, as compared to the other women candidates. More than half of the tweets directed at Congresswoman Lee were offensive, including attacks against both her character and her identity as a Black woman, calling her a “Total racist... and all around hood rat” and another tweet stating, “Hey @SummerForPA Your race card is denied because it doesn’t make sense. It is a lazy excuse for not protecting the votes of your constituents” (Jack Torrance, 2024; Joeyboy, 2024b).

In contrast, neither Congresswoman Houlahan nor army veteran Ehasz received degrading tweets about their personhood or background. Most negative tweets directed at Congresswoman Houlahan questioned her stance on drafting men to go to war – with only one comment directed at her identity asking, “How about you get your old ass out there and fight” (Clean Slate, 2024). The narrative for all three female Pennsylvania congressional candidates questioned their stance on policy issues, particularly reproductive and immigration rights. This case study contributes to the literature by showcasing the particularly aggressive nature of media messaging that women of color receive as compared to their white counterparts.

Tweets directed at Congresswoman Summer Lee

Pennsylvania’s 2024 congressional election and current Congresswoman, Summer Lee, is a graduate of the Howard University School of Law, a former labor organizer, and the first Black woman ever elected to Congress from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, having succeeded Congressman Mike Doyle (Daniels, 2022). Previously, Congresswoman Lee served two terms in the Pennsylvania State House of Representatives, having won her first election in 2022 by 12 percent. In 2023 alone, Lee and her team solved over 1,600 of her constituents’ concerns, passed \$10.7 million by the Committee for Community Project Funding, filed 19 amendments to protect against harmful cuts to programs and attacks on LGBTQIA+ abortion rights, and so much more (Summer Lee For Congress, n.d.). Unfortunately, the tweets directed at Lee did not highlight her accomplishments nor her impact on the communities she served; instead, most were attacks on her character and identity as an African American.

Of the 289 tweets directed at the congresswoman, 158 were categorized as offensive. More than half of the tweets focused on attacking her character and identity, with a few of those tweets sub-characterized as attacks towards her race, calling the Congresswoman “the poster child for DEI” and “sista woke-hire... spends all her time on her polyester extensions” (Jjmackywac, 2024; Zoe Gold, 2024). Other tweets claimed that the Congresswoman is only concerned with matters that focus on Black and African American communities in her district, while other tweets called her a “hoodrat!” (Jack Torrance, 2024). The tweets that attacked Congresswoman Lee based on her policy were focused on her perceived stance on immigration, calling the Congresswoman an “anti-Zionist” (Frickin Advocacy, 2024). It is essential to highlight that none of the offensive tweets attacking the Congresswoman’s character and identity in June 2024 showed a link to actual policies that she has spoken for or against.

Of the 140 inoffensive tweets, 67 were categorized as neutral, highlighting news articles and information concerning upcoming events, with the remaining 64 tweets labeled as supportive. Of those supportive tweets, one was labeled by the subcategory concerning race, with the tweet

saying, “Just scrolling on TikTok and I come across [@SummerForPA] asking the important questions about assault weapons!! Black women are up 1000% today!!” (Lauren Williams, 2024). Other supportive tweets highlighted donations on Lee’s behalf and supported her earlier remarks at a rally.

Tweets Directed at Army Veteran Ashley Ehasz

Two-time Pennsylvania congressional candidate Ashley Ehasz is a veteran of the United States Army and an Apache helicopter pilot (Ashley Ehasz for Congress, 2024). Ehasz ran on policies that supported access to abortion, believed in greater oversight of charter schools, and fully supported the Second Amendment right to bear arms (Ashley Ehasz for Congress, 2024).

Of the 205 tweets directed at Ehasz, 29 were categorized as offensive; the majority focused on attacking her stance on immigration with tweets such as “Maybe he doesn’t want to be seen with a Hamas supporter like [@ashley_ehasz]” and sarcastic comments like “Any thoughts and prayers [@ashley_ehasz?] You expressed them for the horrors Israelis faced but you remain silent when it comes to expressing about the horrors Palestinians are facing due to our fucking ally and county. you self proclaimed pro-Israel pro-two state politician” (Jamie, 2024; scribbles of a madam, 2024). It is worth noting that seven of the 29 tweets reviewed originated from a parody account. None of the offensive tweets directed at the candidate addressed her race, sexual orientation, religion, or personhood. The tweets categorized as attacks were in response to her being a Democrat or having perceived support for one immigration policy over another.

Of the 205 tweets, 149 celebrated the candidate’s history as an army veteran and supported her positive stance toward women’s reproductive rights. More than 40 tweets referenced their desires for the current congressman to be replaced by candidate Ehasz. Other positive tweets directed at her celebrated her status as a Democratic candidate, one stating “Happy to help out @ashley_ehasz congressional candidate for #PA01” (Indivisible Bucks County, 2024).

Tweets Directed at Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan

Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan is the first woman ever to represent Pennsylvania’s 6th District in Congress (Houlahan, 2024b). She is also an engineer, an educator, and a former officer in the United States Air Force (Houlahan, 2024b). Congresswoman Houlahan and her team’s accomplishments in recent years include closing over 8,000 cases, resulting in more than \$50 million in direct federal benefits payments to constituents, and helping to pass the Inflation Reduction Act, which caps insulin prices at \$35 for seniors (Houlahan, 2024b). The congresswoman received a variety of supportive tweets, thanking her for her “leadership and continued support of the veteran community” and for “championing efforts to #FundUNFPA and expand access to sexual and reproductive healthcare around the world (For Country Caucus, 2024; Caitlin Horrigan, 2024).

Of the 400 tweets directed at Congresswoman Houlahan, over 150 were categorized as attacks – 107 of those tweets questioning her and Rep Don Bacon’s (R-NE) efforts to modernize the nation’s Selective Service System – a system in place since 1917. Many tweets called the congresswoman a “warmonger,” one stating, “Here’s another warmonger for your #Pennsylvania

arsenal: @RepHoulahan” (KK, 2024) and several others asked if those who “change their legal gender” would avoid being drafted, stating, “@RepHoulahan Re: Your selective service bill... who signs up? Biological males, or women who have had an addadicktomy...” (KK, 2024; C Martin S, 2024). In a later press release, Congresswoman Houlahan stated: “I want to set the record straight: Since 1917, men aged 18 to 25 must register with the Selective Service. This new legislation saves taxpayers significant money and makes it easier for these men to follow the law and register with the Selective Service. That is all. Full stop” (Houlahan, 2024a)

Other tweets that were in disfavor of Congresswoman Houlahan were related to her perceived stance on reproductive rights – one tweet stating, “I know you 2 [her and Senator Bob Casey] are busy obsessing about abortion, but could you pretend you are interested in how American taxpayer money is being spent in this ‘war-torn’ country” and “my reps only care about abortion, it seems” (Joeyboy, 2024a). Another tweet stated, “Vote to stop illegals from voting, despite your party’s hellbent plan to cheat?” (Sandra Andresen fmfa94, 2024). It is essential to note that the negative tweets directed at the Congresswoman focused on her perceived policies and ideology rather than attacking her character or identity.

Conclusion

The case study on the experiences of female candidates in Pennsylvania during the 2024 U.S. election cycle sheds light on the alarming issue of online violence against women in politics, where minority women candidates can often be disproportionately targeted. Such violence not only undermines the democratic process but also discourages the participation of women in political life, perpetuating a cycle that limits diverse representation and hinders progress toward gender equality in governance.

The unique challenges faced by these candidates, including harassment, threats, and cyberbullying, highlight the urgent need for a multifaceted response. This can involve raising awareness about the issue and implementing comprehensive support systems to help mitigate the risks associated with running for office. Resources such as training, legal assistance, and mental health support are crucial in empowering women and equipping them with the tools necessary to navigate these challenging landscapes. Moreover, fostering a collaborative effort among various stakeholders, including governmental bodies, political organizations, advocacy groups, and technology companies—is crucial in creating a safer political environment. This collaboration can lead to the establishment of policies and practices that protect candidates from online violence while promoting a culture of respect and inclusion.

Ensuring women can engage in politics without fear is vital for a thriving democracy. As we move forward, we must commit to recognizing the issues at hand and taking tangible steps to create a more equitable political landscape. By amplifying women's voices and addressing the systemic barriers they face, we can build a future where all individuals, regardless of their gender, can participate in politics safely and confidently.

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Appendix A – Interview Guides for Candidates

Research Title: Ford Institute for Human Security – Online Violence Against Women in Politics (OVAW-P) 2024 Elections, Pennsylvania Case Study

Questionnaire

About the Interviewee

1. How do you identify?
 - a. Would you please share your racial, ethnic, and gender identities with me?
2. Briefly, what encouraged you to run for office, and how did you get involved with public service?
 - a. What are some issues you feel most passionate about?

Social Media Experience

3. Have you received training on using social media for campaign management?
 - a. Did you find the training helpful?
 - b. What was most beneficial?
 - c. Who maintains your campaign social media account?
4. How important is it for you to use social media for your campaign?
 - a. What platforms did you use for your campaign and why? (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.)
5. What has been your experience with social media?
 - a. Negative and positive
 - b. What is the personal and professional campaign impact based on your social media experience?
 - c. To what extent do you think negative and false social media posts were related to your identity(s): race, gender, religion, etc.?
 - d. To what extent do you think negative and false social media posts were related to your political views

Wisdom Gained through the Experience

6. Having had the experience you've had now, would you still consider running for office? Why or why not?
7. What advice would you have for an aspirant who is publicly minded but unsure about running for office?

Appendix B – Methodology for Analyzing Tweets

The method for reviewing tweets directed at Pennsylvania congressional candidates Summer Lee, Chrissy Houlahan, and Ashley Ehasz was conducted using the methodology employed in the “Running While Female: Using AI to Track How Twitter Commentary Disadvantages Women” research study (Oates et al., 2019). When analyzing each tweet, the stance (support, attack, or neutral) of the tweet directed at the candidate was also identified. Online posts were then analyzed and labeled into five distinctive categories that were deemed necessary, ongoing political narratives taking place:

- o **Policy:** the candidate’s stances on particular issues important in the election (e.g., immigration, wealth inequality, healthcare)
- o **Ideology:** the candidate’s overall political outlook (e.g., socialist, left-wing, centrist)
- o **Character:** the candidate’s personal qualities (authenticity, truthfulness, opportunism)
- o **Identity:** the candidate’s belongingness in one or more demographic groups often mentioned in “identity politics” (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation, age)
- o **Electability:** the candidate’s talents at running a campaign, winning an election, or doing their job.

Subcategories included sexism or misogyny, threats of violence, racism, and the use of offensive language.

Increasing Pittsburgh Public Transit Usage Among Low-Income Communities

by Yoni Preuss⁷

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic, when it struck the United States in 2020, significantly impacted public transportation usage nationwide (Qi et al., 2023). Overall ridership decreased by 81 percent between April 2019 and April 2020 (USAFacts, 2020). Since this massive decline, cities nationwide have conjured different attempts to bring their transit usage to pre-pandemic levels (Federal Transit Administration, 2024). Historically disadvantaged and low-income communities were more likely to experience loss of transit access during the pandemic (Federal Transit Administration, 2024). Since the pandemic, Pittsburgh has struggled mightily compared to other cities, as it has seen more significant decreases in Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system usage (Pittsburghers for Public Transit, 2024). Of the top 25 national bus agencies by ridership, the Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) was the only system to see daily weekday ridership decrease from the first quarter of 2023 to the first quarter 2024 with a decline of 9.4 percent (Federal Transit Administration, 2024). The PRT Performance Metrics and System Data show a weekday ridership drop of 6 percent, from 130,346 to 121,880, a Saturday ridership decrease of 7 percent from 79,591 to 74,173, and a Sunday ridership decrease of 5% from 55,277 to 52,774, all from September 2023 to September 2024 (Performance Metrics and System Data, 2023). These sharp declines forced Pittsburgh and Allegheny County's hand (Pittsburgh Regional Transit, 2024). With the reliance on public transportation for essential workers and low-income communities, COVID-19 proved an especially difficult period for urban infrastructure (Davis & Stacy, 2021). Dialogue surrounding equitable transportation nationwide prompted cities such as Los Angeles, Boston, and others to change course (Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2025).

Recognizing how stark barriers to public transportation limit mobility and access to jobs, healthcare, education, and social services, Allegheny County launched a 12-month discounted fare pilot in November 2022 (Collins, 2024). Pilot participants must be Allegheny County residents receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (Collins, 2024). Currently, Allegheny County residents eligible for SNAP benefits can apply for a 50 percent discount on PRT fares (Lyons, 2023). In September 2024, the PRT revealed a redesign of the city's bus system, with approximately 60 percent of current bus routes slated to have changes (Pittsburgh Regional Transit, 2025a).

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While active, Pittsburgh needs a policy overhaul of its transit system. An aggressive approach including the implementation of fare-free bus lines connecting low-income communities to services, healthcare, and job opportunities would promote transit usage and efficiency. This work, alongside the PRT redesign, would be a significantly beneficial step in the right direction.

Policy Alternatives

Policy Alternative #1: Mobility Wallet Program

Facing a similar transportation climate to Pittsburgh, in May 2023, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority launched the country's largest universal mobility wallet program (Los Angeles Department of Transportation, 2024). To address barriers to safe, efficient, and reliable transportation faced by low-income Los Angeles residents, this program gave 1,000 South Los Angeles residents a debit card loaded with \$150 per month to spend on transportation (Los Angeles Department of Transportation, 2024). Participants could spend these funds on various mobility options including public transit or shared mobility opportunities such as scooters, bike-share, car-share, or purchasing a personal e-bike (Los Angeles Department of Transportation, 2024). Phase I saw tremendous success, with 140,000 trips purchased, including 80,800 public transit rides, 60,700 rideshares, 2,600 scooters or bike-shares, and 169 bike shop purchases (City of Los Angeles, 2024). Deemed an apparent success, Phase II began in Spring 2025 with an expansion of the program (Los Angeles Department of Transportation, 2024). Now, 1,000 new low-income residents of South Los Angeles and 1,000 low-income residents across Los Angeles County will receive the subsidy (City of Los Angeles, 2024). This program, while promoting accessible and equitable transportation, allows low-income communities to have agency over their transit decisions while supporting multi-modal transportation (City of Los Angeles, 2024). While a proven success, this program has faced several challenges including large expenses, potential for administrative issues, and large portions of funds going to services such as Uber, Lyft, or taxis, not necessarily supporting public transit usage and sustainability (Harjai, 2025).

Policy Alternative #2: Fare-Free Bus Routes

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, Boston noted a decline in ridership and took action. In August of 2021, Route 28 became fare-free, allowing riders to enter the bus without paying a fare while entering at all doors (Boston, 2021). The goals of this program included increasing ridership, improving user experience and overall service, delivering economic benefits to riders, improving travel times, and providing direct benefits to Boston's transit-critical residents (City of Boston, 2023). Transit-critical residents, as defined by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), are "residents who are low-income, people of color, seniors, people with disabilities, or who live in households with few or no vehicles" (Boston, 2021). The goals of the MBTA were met and surpassed (City of Boston, 2023). Route 28 saw a ridership increase of 38 percent after the start of the pilot, a 23 percent larger increase than the 15 percent system-wide bus ridership increase (City of Boston, 2023). Of the riders, 15 percent surveyed during the pilot noted they were new users to Route 28 (City of Boston Transportation Department, 2022). The attempt to reach pre-pandemic levels was successful as Route 28 reached 99 percent of pre-pandemic weekday ridership levels, higher than any other bus route in the system (City of Boston Transportation Department, 2022). Overall efficiency saw a drastic improvement as

Route 28 boarding times per passenger decreased significantly more than any other route as all-door boarding allowed for increased efficiency (City of Boston Transportation Department, 2022). Route 28 saw an 11 percent larger decrease in dwell time than Route 45 which had the second largest decrease (City of Boston Transportation Department, 2022). User satisfaction surveys noted an 8 percent increase for Route 28 users versus an 11 percent decrease in satisfaction for comparable routes (City of Boston Transportation Department, 2022). Lastly, equity goals were reached as 99 percent of route 28 riders were transit-critical residents during the pilot compared to 94 percent in comparable routes. The program was a clear success and the MBTA expanded the program to include bus Routes 23 and 29, which are now fare-free through March 2026 (Boston, 2024).

Policy Alternative #3: Discounted Public Transit

With Pittsburgh's drastic decline in ridership compared to the top 25 national bus agencies (by ridership), it implemented a 50 percent discount for those eligible for SNAP benefits in November 2022 (Collins, 2024). Prior to implementation, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, alongside the PRT, conducted a pilot program to evaluate the potential effects of a half-fare discount and full-fare discount. All participants were assigned a ConnectCard that they would use while boarding the bus.

The study showed no significant difference between the adult group that received no discount and the group that received a 50 percent discount, with both groups having approximately around 80 percent usage (Collins, 2024). This is compared to the 90 percent usage rate of the adult group that received the 100% discount, or fare-free buses (Collins, 2024). The study split users into two categories: adults, aged 18-64, and children, aged 6-17 (Collins, 2024). 90 percent of adults in the fare-free group tapped their ConnectCard at least once, the highest among the three groups (Collins, 2024). Furthermore, adults in the fare-free group had an overall average of 5-6 taps per week while adults in the half-fare had an average of two taps per week (Collins, 2024). Children in the fare-free group also showed an increase in usage, albeit less than their adult counterparts, as they used the card four times per week while those in the half-fare used it one time per week (Collins, 2024). Overall, the benefits of a complete fare-free transit system were significantly greater than the 50 percent discount in terms of transit usage and its impact on users' financial burdens and mobility concerns (Collins, 2024). The 100 percent discount reduced self-reporting weekly spending on PRT trips by \$17.61 on average, with an \$8.92 decrease for the 50 percent discount group (Collins, 2024). Furthermore, those in the fare-free group were less likely to miss work or an appointment due to lack of access to transit (Collins, 2024). Overall, however, this program faced several challenges. While the 50 percent discount was effective, it was not nearly as effective as the 100 percent discount. Furthermore, 18.4 percent of respondents (664) reported never receiving their ConnectCard, indicating that some cards did not reach their intended recipients (Collins, 2024). This system is reliant on strong administrative capacity, a potential hindrance to its effectiveness.

Policy Recommendation

A combination of these policies is necessary to combat the continuous decline in public transportation usage while increasing equitable and accessible transportation. The PRT must follow in the footsteps of the MBTA and implement a completely fare-free program for select bus lines. The MBTA found success in prioritizing bus lines that were essential connectors, high ridership corridors, and high usage by transit critical riders (City of Boston, 2023). The PRT must research bus lines that follow this intersection of usage and economically and historically disadvantaged residents. The success of the MBTA is clear: implementing a completely fare-free bus route is overwhelmingly successful in increasing ridership, improving efficiency, service quality, and transportation equity (Boston, 2024). As the PRT conducts its community work in hearing the voices of the Pittsburgh population on the potential bus line redesign, it must also research bus lines that are necessary infrastructure to transit critical communities.

Recent developments further highlight the importance of this policy recommendation. On March 20, Pittsburgh Regional Transit announced proposed service cuts and a fare increase to address a projected \$100 million deficit (Smeltz, 2025). The policy recommendation included in this memo remains relevant as meeting the transit needs for low-income residents of the City of Pittsburgh is essential (Pittsburgh Regional Transit, 2025b).

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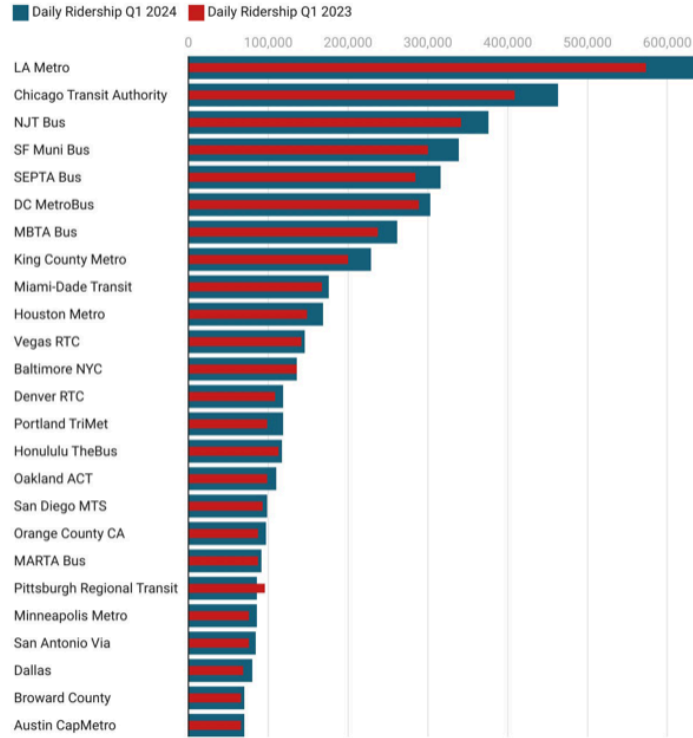
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Appendix

Top 25 US Bus Agencies by Ridership

Portland, Dallas, & Seattle had largest YOY percent growth. NYC excluded as an outlier



Methodology: Total Ridership for Jan, Feb, March divided by total days to normalize data, weekday ridership understated.

Chart: Naqiy McMullen • Source: Federal Transit Administration • Created with Datawrapper

(American Public Transportation Association, n.d.)

Restructuring Federal Grant Limitations for the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Grant

by Shelbi Henkle⁸

Summary

The Biden-Harris Administration established the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) grant as part of the Internet for All Initiative to provide 100 percent of the United States and U.S. territories with high-speed internet access, the equivalent of 25 million households (Arbuckle, n.d.). However, the structure of the BEAD grant prohibits the overlap of other federal broadband-related infrastructure builds including the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Connect Grant, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF), and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (U.S. Department of Commerce (USDC) & National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), 2022). The primary policy issue is that current federal broadband-related funds cannot be utilized in conjunction with BEAD funds (USDC & NTIA, 2022). The secondary problem is that the current funding criteria do not meet the newly established speed parameters set by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) (U.S. Department of Commerce & National Telecommunications and Information Administration [NTIA], 2022). In order to achieve the objective of bringing high-speed internet to all Americans, the duality of the issue necessitates policy alternatives that enable states to access available federal broadband-related funding while balancing funding accountability as well as meeting the rising standards of high-speed internet infrastructure. The recommended course of action for the NTIA is to allow all federal broadband-related grants to be automatically supplementary to BEAD funds for regions able to demonstrate a sufficient condition of need. This approach would enable both the expansion and continuation of pre-existing broadband infrastructure projects and create budget flexibility as the cost of infrastructure continues to rise, while promoting collaboration and accountability with internet service providers (ISPs).

The Problem

BEAD's purpose is to provide federal funding to support all 50 states' efforts to improve broadband infrastructure, with a focus on unserved communities (with no internet access or that

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only have access under 25/3 Megabits per second (Mbps) and underserved communities (with access under 100/20 Mbps) (USDA Rural Development, 2024). Figure 2 in the appendix gives a detailed breakdown of internet speeds and what the levels mean in terms of bandwidth and accessibility.

Eligibility for the BEAD grant requires that the applying region does not concurrently receive any other federal, state, or local funds for a broadband project in the same area, regardless of the amount (NTIA, 2022). Preventing existing broadband-related grants from being used in tandem with BEAD serves to prevent ongoing projects from being halted which would result in an inefficient use of taxpayer dollars (KPMG, 2023). The specific policy problem arises from current recipients of federal-level funding for broadband projects (Brodkin, 2023). At the state and local level of grants there is additional accountability from the community and invested local entities to achieve and maximize project outcomes (Tiersky, 2018). On the other hand, at the federal level, grantees can extend deadlines or default without effective stakeholder buy-in (KPMG, 2023). Without buy-in and accountability, areas that need high-speed internet infrastructure the most are at risk of losing, resulting in incomplete infrastructure projects that will negatively impact communities throughout the United States (Tiersky, 2018).

The policy problem is multi-faceted, while primarily creating an accountability problem for current federal broadband-related fund recipients (KPMG, 2023). Awardees who receive federal funding are eligible for extensions regardless of the level of documented progress toward the grant goal (Brodkin, 2023). The issue compounds as current recipients of broadband-related grants have received three-plus year extensions, called “amnesty periods,” to complete grants, or are at high risk of defaulting, leaving rural and low-income areas at a higher risk of not receiving internet access at the speeds the NTIA deems “served” (Brodkin, 2023). Given that areas with existing federal funds for broadband-related projects are not eligible for BEAD funds until the existing funds are fully utilized, those areas which have received extensions for federal funds or are at risk of default cannot use BEAD funds supplementary to current broadband-related grants (KPMG, 2023). Additionally, there are current awardees receiving millions of dollars worth of grants designated to broadband projects that will achieve speeds *up to* 25/3 Megabytes per sec (Mbps) - speeds that are now categorized as *unserved* according to the NTIA (Internet For All, 2020; USDA Rural Development, 2024). As these results demonstrate, the combination of current standards may deprive communities of public goods in terms of efficient internet access by limiting access to the significantly larger BEAD grant, while enabling federal-grant awardees to circumvent accountability and resulting in failures to complete the current broadband grants effectively (KPMG, 2023; Brodkin 2023).

The Alternatives

To improve broadband project accountability and ensure that all Americans have access to the “served” internet speeds of 100/20 Mbps and above, there are three policy alternatives that can feasibly limit double-dipping by grant awardees while also achieving sufficient internet speed in new broadband infrastructure project implementations (USDA Rural Development, 2024). Evaluating which alternative to select rests on six quantifiable variables: objective alignment with BEAD goals, effective resource allocation, strengths of enforcement and accountability metrics, stakeholder support, adaptability to cost and requirements, and addressing disparities in rural areas (KPMG, 2023).

The first policy alternative proposes that the NTIA allow for waivers by suitable applicants of the BEAD funding requirement that an area has no active federal broadband-related funding, regardless of amount, before receiving BEAD funds. By removing the stipulation, certain areas that are deemed “unserved” and “underserved” by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) could be made eligible for BEAD funding (Internet For All, 2020). The criteria of preventing federal funds from being used in tandem with BEAD is crucial to prevent current projects from being halted and ensure the efficient use of taxpayer dollars (KPMG, 2023). However, the BEAD requirement could be waived in select cases as determined by an appropriate authority such as the NTIA Assistant Secretary, while efficiency could also be achieved by requiring proof from the applicant of compliance with the currently received federal broadband-related funding requirements (Brodkin, 2023). Introducing such a waiver would better support the goals of Internet for All by ensuring that unserved and underserved areas have access to funding for broadband projects (ACLP at NYLS, 2021). However, this would require additional involvement and resources from NTIA to administer the waiver process which would require stakeholders to support the NTIA (Arbuckle, n.d.). Another drawback of this proposal is that the waiver process requires accountability from multiple fund recipients within a region to prevent the “doubling-up” of projects with the same goal, rather than working together and building on existing work (USDC & NTIA, 2022).

The second policy alternative is to amend the BEAD requirement so that an area could be made eligible for BEAD funding if its current broadband-related project has not completed a minimum of 15 percent of its grant objectives (KPMG, 2023). However, this would increase the NTIA’s level of involvement, necessitate additional data collection, and would require extensive partnerships with other broadband funding agencies such as the USDA and additional agencies (KPMG, 2023; NTIA, 2022). The residual issue of federal broadband-related funded projects that do not meet the NTIA’s higher standards for speed would also remain (USDC & NTIA, 2022). This alternative would provide accountability and a metric of progress to those utilizing current federal broadband-related funds, which is lacking in the current model (Brodkin, 2023).

The third and final alternative is for the NTIA to remove the limitation entirely and allow BEAD funding to be able to supplement all federal broadband-related grants such as the USDA’s Community Connect, RDOF, ARPA, etc., dependent on the condition of need in the designated region (USDA Rural Development, 2024). The “condition of need” would be based on factors including economic position, status of fiber infrastructure, and accessibility to the internet with the given resources (NTIA, 2022). This proposal would meet the current requests from ISPs for an “amnesty window” seen with RDOF awardees, due to it providing additional funds to supplement the rising cost of infrastructure materials (Brodkin, 2023). Serving as a supplement for current grants would also lower the NTIA’s administrative burden and better navigate the logistical limitations that would occur with alternatives one and two (Tiersky, 2018). In addition, a key benefit of the third policy alternative is that a supplementary policy option enables the current plans, clearances, and environmental approvals to be utilized, resulting in more efficient project implementation in regions that need it the most (Tiersky, 2018).

The Recommendation

The recommended course of action for the NTIA is policy alternative number three which states, “The NTIA allows all federal broadband-related grants such as USDA’s Community Connect, RDOF, ARPA, etc., to be automatically supplementary to BEAD funds dependent on the

condition of need in the designated region” (USDA Rural Development, 2024). This article recommends this policy option due to its capability to allow for expansion or continuation of pre-existing broadband infrastructure and create budget flexibility as the cost of infrastructure continues to rise, while promoting collaboration and accountability with ISPs (KPMG, 2023). The first alternative removes the funding rule altogether which leads to the initial concern of “doubling up” and loss of accountability with previous grant awardees (NTIA, 2022). The second alternative requires monitoring from the grantee to gauge progress and could be deemed as “unfair” to ISPs due to the slow nature of infrastructure development and environmental permissions (KPMG, 2023; USDC & NTIA, 2022). Approaching BEAD as a collaborative and supplementary fund with current federal funds does require internet service providers (ISPs) and community anchor institutions to work with the current awardee, or for the current awardee to default to the BEAD winner for the area (USDC & NTIA, 2022). While the coordination of this recommendation would require strategic implementation through community partnerships and reviewing local broadband infrastructure progress to prevent the “doubling up” of federal funds, it would be the most effective method for achieving BEAD’s objectives to serve the 25 million U.S. households who are currently without high speed broadband access (KPMG, 2023). In addition, the third policy alternative meets the six criteria established: (1) alignment with BEAD goals of equitable access to broadband, (2) effective resource/funding allocation, (3) enforcement of accountability with existing grantees, (4) stakeholder and community buy-in, (5) adaptability to needs, and (6) address disparities in needs between rural and urban communities (KPMG, 2023).

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Appendix

What is BEAD?

In 2020, the Biden–Harris Administration started the *Internet For All* initiative as a response to the broadband infrastructure limitations found during the COVID-19 pandemic (Internet For All, 2020). The initiative sought to enable all households in the United States to have affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet fiber (Cooper, 2023). Rebuilding aging infrastructure and creating new access routes was deemed the most effective course of action and the BEAD Program was created (Ham, et al., 2023). BEAD is a \$42.45 billion grant, making it the largest national broadband infrastructure project in the nation’s history (Halm et al., 2023). The \$42.45 billion was allotted by the NTIA in 2023 to states based on need and then distributed via subgrants to internet service providers and community anchor institutions in 2024 (Arbuckle, n.d.).

Defining Internet Speeds

The BEAD program aims to supply 100 percent of the United States with internet speeds of 100/20 megabytes per sec (Mbps) which is enough speed and bandwidth to have multiple devices online to stream and connect via video conferencing (see *Figure 1* for comparative breakdown) (USDC & NTIA, 2022). Previous, similar projects only provided speeds up to 25/3 Mbps which is significantly slower and is now deemed ‘unserved’ by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as of 2024 (USDA Rural Development, 2024). See *Figure 1* to see how those speeds compare to household needs and see *Figure 2* for speed breakdown according to the FCC. As technology improves, grant parameters will need to adapt efficiently in-kind. Older grants, which were effective in 2018 with ‘up to’ 25/3 speeds are now outdated and will continue to leave areas ‘unserved’, resulting in the need for additional broadband infrastructure grants down the line.

Figure 1: Internet Speed Breakdown per Household Size and Use (Smith, 2024)

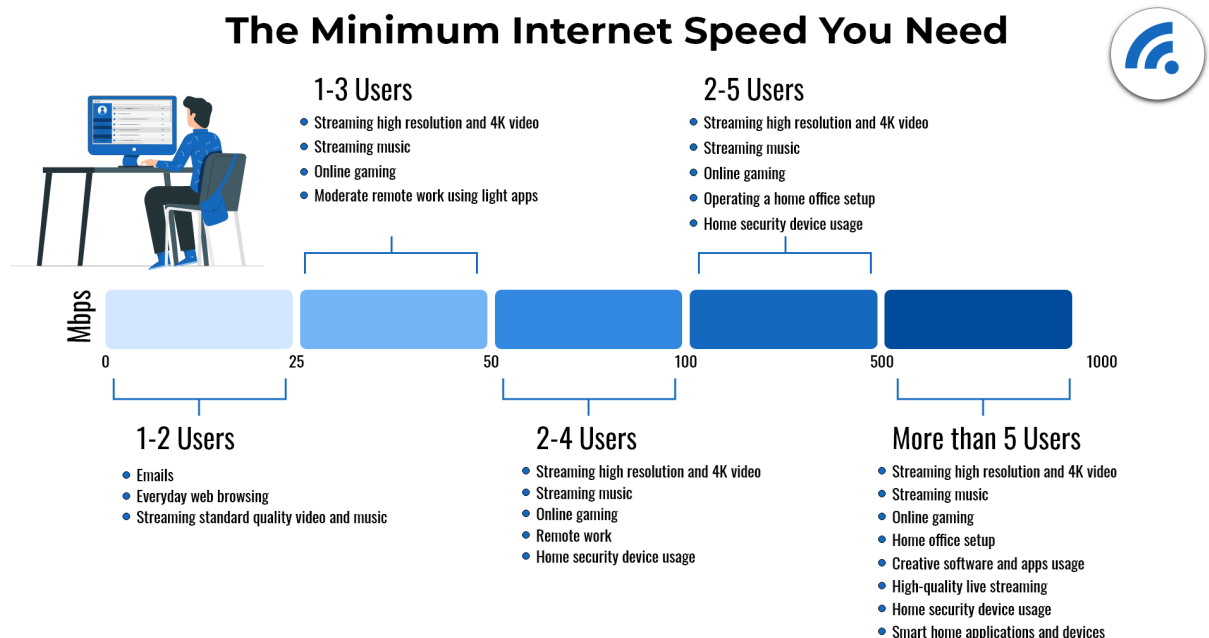


Figure 2: Defining Served, Underserved, and Unserved based on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 2024 Definition (USDC & NTIA, 2022)

Speeds	Unserved	Underserved	Served
Mbps = Megabytes per second	No access to speeds of 25 download & 3 upload Mbps (25/3 Mbps)	No access to speeds of 100 download & 20 upload Mbps (100/20 Mbps)	Access to speeds 100 download & 20 upload Mbps and up (100/20 Mbps +)

Figure 3: Breakdown of Current Federal Broadband Funding (“Broadband Funding Programs,” 2021) + USDA \$150 Million Directed at Rural Communities with the ReConnect and Community Connect Programs (USDA Rural Development, 2024)

Federal Law	Total Amount Allocated	Amount Allocated for Broadband	How Funds Are Used for Broadband
Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES)	\$2.2T	~\$3.3B	Stimulus funds were sent to cities and states for a variety of uses, including addressing pandemic-related connectivity issues.
Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA)	\$2.4T	\$1.6B	Most funding was allocated to NTIA for doling out via NTIA grant programs.
American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	\$1.9T	~\$11.3B by states* ~\$700M by localities*	Stimulus funds are being sent directly to localities and states for a variety of uses, including “necessary” broadband investments, which are subject to a range of criteria.
Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA)	\$1.2T	\$65B total \$42.45B for BEAD	NTIA to administer BEAD. Funds will go to state broadband programs, which will give grants to ISPs. Municipalities, utilities, and other non-traditional entities must be deemed eligible for grants.

Sources: [SHLB](#); ACLP Analysis (on file)

Official Parameter in the BEAD Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Prohibiting Federal Grant ‘Doubling Up’ Broadband Spending (“BEAD,” 2022)

Section IV.B.7.a. ii. of the [BEAD] NOFO states that an Eligible Entity may not fund a project covering a location or area already subject to an enforceable federal, state, or local commitment to deploy qualifying broadband unless the Assistant Secretary waives the exclusion of areas with prior enforceable commitments at the request of the Eligible Entity. The waiver may be applied in cases where the Eligible Entity can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Assistant Secretary that including the area is necessary to achieve the goals of the program.

An enforceable commitment for the deployment of qualifying broadband exists when the commitment to deploy was made as a condition of:

1. Any grant, loan, or loan guarantee provided by an Eligible Entity to the provider of broadband service for the deployment of qualifying broadband service in the proposed service area;

2. Any grant, loan, or loan guarantee with respect to the proposed service area provided by the Secretary of Agriculture;
3. Any high-cost universal service support provided under Section 254 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 254), except that in the case of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, a location will be considered to have an enforceable commitment for qualifying broadband only (a) after the Federal Communications Commission has authorized RDOF support for the winning bid that includes that location in a Public Notice, and (b) the provider does not rely on satellite technologies to deliver service;
4. Any grant provided under Section 6001 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (47 U.S.C. 1305);
5. Amounts made available for the Education Stabilization Fund established under the heading “DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION” in title VIII of division B of the CARES Act (Public Law 116–136; 134 Stat. 564), and funded under the CARES Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP Act);¹⁹
6. Amounts made available for the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) established under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law 117–2; 135 Stat. 4) (ARPA);
7. Amounts made available for the Capital Projects Fund established by Section 604 of the Social Security Act, as added by Section 9901 of ARPA; or
8. Any other grant, loan, or loan guarantee provided by, or funded in whole or in part by, the federal government or a state or local government for the provision of broadband service.

Terminology:

- Community Anchor Institutions – “...an entity such as a school, library, health clinic, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization, or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, low-income individuals, unemployed individuals, children, the incarcerated, and aged individuals” (USDC & NTIA, 2022).
- Federal broadband-related funding – see Figure 3
- Broadband Infrastructure – fiber-specific, can be hung or dug, and costs between \$50,000 to \$90,000 per mile depending on terrain, installation, and availability based on estimates from multiple ISPs as of 2022.
- Fiber/Fiber optic Cable – “Fiber internet is your best bet for fast and reliable internet (outside of quantum entanglement technology). It can reach speeds up to 1 Gbps and endure severe weather conditions, which helps minimize outages. Fiber internet makes it possible to connect multiple tablets, laptops, and phones at once with minimum lag. In short, it offers optimal performance for anything that would require fast and efficient internet. Fiber, however, is not the cheapest or most widely available. Service is still extremely limited, which means people who live in metropolitan cities have a better

chance of finding it than those living in rural areas. If you can afford fiber plans and you are all about fast and reliable connections, then fiber is your best option. That does not mean cable is not a solid choice, considering its speeds can reach up to 1 Gbps” (Cooper, 2023).