

# Factors Affecting the Institutionalized Political Participation of Chinese Women: An Empirical Analysis Based on CGSS2021 Data

Xiaodi Jiang, Shandong University of Finance and Economics, China

Yuanyuan Guo, Tsinghua University, China\*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3042-8417>

Peng Dong, Tsinghua University, China

## ABSTRACT

This study utilizes the CGSS2021 dataset to explore institutionalized political engagement among Chinese women. Key findings include positive correlations with social circle involvement, housing area, and traditional media consumption. Interestingly, younger women are less politically engaged. Cross-tabulation reveals that daily social interactions and disagreement with prioritizing marriage over career boost institutionalized political involvement, particularly in Beijing. By contrast, women from Inner Mongolia show the least engagement. Surprisingly, frequent internet usage has limited influence on political participation, whereas traditional media use boosts it. Women in their first marriage also show higher engagement. The study offers policy recommendations to enhance Chinese women's political participation.

## KEYWORDS

Chinese Women, Institutionalized Political Participation, New Media, Social Circles, Social Status, Traditional Media

## INTRODUCTION

Political participation, integral to democratic development, has gained unmatched significance as a metric for evaluating the strides made toward modern democracy, especially in transitional nations like China. With each passing era, the dynamic interplay between modernization and political evolution becomes even more pronounced. Modern China, straddling the line between age-old traditions and contemporary transformations, offers a multifaceted canvas for such studies. Against this backdrop, the role of and challenges faced by the distinct demographic of Chinese women in their political pursuits command attention. In this context, the study aims to discern the factors driving the institutionalized political participation of Chinese women. Unraveling the answer has implications for strengthening democratic processes and ensuring an inclusive representation of all segments of society. Researchers have shown a burgeoning interest in political participation in this context, with notable contributions from scholars like Cheng and Han (2023). Broadly, political participation can be bifurcated into

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\*Corresponding Author

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institutional and non-institutional categories. The former predominantly includes traditional offline activities, such as voting and demonstrations, while the latter has witnessed an expansion due to the advent of online channels facilitated by cutting-edge media technologies (Alryalat, 2015; Kapoor et al., 2018; Rana et al., 2013; Rana et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2018; Simintiras, 2015; Singh et al., 2019). Such technological strides have diversified participation mediums and bridged traditional and modern civic engagement methods (Shah et al., 2005; Zhang & Ge, 2023). As society navigates this evolution, it becomes essential to understand how various sectors of society, especially Chinese women, adapt and engage with these mechanisms.

A comprehensive examination of the existing literature reveals that many scholars have predominantly explored political participation through the lens of different groups, such as urban residents, university students, and women (Cheng & Han, 2023). Such a search reveals an emerging need to focus on a particular demographic: Chinese women. Women's participation in institutional politics has far-reaching implications for policy formulation, representation, and advancement of democratic processes.

To effectively address this agenda, the first task is to conduct an in-depth exploration of the factors that stimulate the participation of the female demographic in institutionalized political activities. The extensive literature on this topic has considered the factors influencing political engagement. In the early stages, scholars primarily focused on social capital and the provision of public goods, delving into the macroscopic dimensions of how diverse societal attributes impact overall civic political participation. However, from an individual perspective, engagement in political behavior is influenced not only by external stimuli but also by intrinsic motivation. Consequently, the roles played by psychological factors, such as life satisfaction and political efficacy, should not be overlooked (Su et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, beyond focusing on the psychological aspects of political engagement, a thorough examination of social circles and modes of institutionalized political participation is necessary. The female demographic shows a pronounced homogeneity in terms of public goods and societal attributes. Within this context, beyond intrinsic psychological drivers, research must consider the social environment women inhabit. In this regard, factors such as social well-being, perceptions of fairness, and trust hold significant importance. These factors are the emotional foundation for female participation in political activities. These emotional facets are closely intertwined with the characteristics of social circles and avenues for institutionalized political participation, jointly shaping the attitudes and behaviors of the female demographic toward political engagement.

For instance, concerning social well-being, female individuals' satisfaction with their personal lives and the societal milieu directly influences their stance toward political participation. Similarly, the perceived sense of fairness is intricately linked to their inclination toward political engagement. This perception is a crucial yardstick for the female demographic to assess whether resource allocation and decision-making processes are equitable when participating in political activities. Additionally, trust is a pivotal emotional factor. The degree of trust the female demographic places in government, social organizations, and other participants affects their willingness to participate in institutionalized political activities. Therefore, it is essential to consider the perceived sense of social equity and contemplate how to enhance the potential for female demographic engagement in institutionalized political activities. Therefore, this research explores these issues comprehensively, incorporating a holistic perspective. The study's research question is: What factors influence the institutionalized political participation of Chinese women?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

### **Literature Review of Chinese Institutionalized Political Participation**

The existing research into institutionalized political participation in China is diverse, encompassing citizens, farmers, migrant workers, students, and other groups. Early investigations predominantly concentrated on citizen groups, probing the rationale, motives, and trust in government tied to

institutionalized political participation. Citizens, defined fundamentally from the perspective of rights and obligations, naturally engage in the process of exercising power and fulfilling duties. This process is vital to prevent public servants from becoming dictators, a necessity underscored by Shi (2003), and a strategic measure to manage emergencies and preemptively address societal risks, as proposed by Liu (2010). Factors such as governmental transparency, efficiency, trust, institutional provisions, organization dynamics, and interpersonal relationships sway citizens' institutionalized political participation (Jia, 2022; Wu et al., 2015). With the onset of the digital era, the internet has emerged as a pivotal conduit for national governance and civic political engagement. The level of individual institutionalized political participation closely correlates with internet usage patterns, underscoring the need to enhance internet governance (Sun et al., 2021).

Apart from external constraints, psychological elements emerge as potent driving forces behind citizens' political engagement. These psychological factors, encompassing electoral attitudes, organizational involvement sentiments, and the psychology of public scrutiny, predominantly emerge from a nuanced perception of interests (Hao, 2011). Underpinning this are the dynamics of stimulation, solidification, and propulsion mechanisms. Citizens, guided by perceptions of interest and societal expectations, generate a political engagement imperative. Positive anticipations of political engagement efficacy, political trust, and a clear sense of political participation identity work together to anchor initially stimulated necessities as unwavering inclinations towards proactive political engagement. Prolonged and steady political expression then further accelerates the emergence of individuals' positions on institutionalized political participation (Zhu et al., 2021).

In parallel, research involving farmer and migrant worker groups emerges as a pivotal offshoot within China's institutionalized political participation spectrum. In China, farmer-related issues remain intrinsically intertwined with national vitality. The extent of farmers' political participation is a crucial metric for gauging the nation's modernization and democratization (Xiong et al., 2019). A transformative urbanization process occurred from 1949 to 2018 when the rural population percentage plummeted from 89.36% to 40.42%. However, a substantial segment of the urban populace comprises "new citizens" and "migrant workers" with dual identities due to seasonal migration between urban and rural areas. These groups face challenges related to institutionalized political participation. Farmers' institutionalized political participation often confronts the dual problems of institutional provision and inherent limitations. These constraints encompass organizational hierarchy, political climate, participation mechanisms, interest articulation modes, media usage, and regional nuances. At the same time, the adverse influences stemming from economic underdevelopment, corruption, and outdated management models cannot be disregarded. Overall, farmers' institutionalized political participation rate remains low, occasionally bordering on marginalization, constrained by multifarious factors (Lang et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2004; Xiong et al., 2019). In the digital age, the institutionalization of online political participation provides a critical lever for balancing institutional provisions and enhancing the awareness and capability of farmers in political engagement. Refining and bolstering the institutionalization of online political participation fosters a legitimate and orderly political engagement landscape (Liu et al., 2015).

Scholars have also examined other demographics, such as private business owners, university students, and societal groups. Distinct starting points underpin political participation for diverse groups. Private business owners, for instance, gravitate towards economic considerations, manifesting attitudes that emphasize rights over obligations (Ma, 2019). Conversely, university students are more receptive to institutional atmospheres, personal interests, and collective behaviors. Thus, enhancing institutional provision and leveraging interest-driven mechanisms constitute pivotal conduits for advancing their institutionalized political participation (Zhu et al., 2013). Inadequate institutionalized political participation among university students might lead to reduced political identification and non-institutionalized political involvement (Li, 2013). In tandem, societal entities have burgeoned into pivotal agents within the political participation landscape, bridging the gap between citizens and

governmental factions while fostering constructive interactions throughout the political engagement process (Hu, 2014).

In sum, ongoing research on China's institutionalized political participation continues to deepen, spanning a widening range of groups. Its core focus centers on uncovering influential determinants, mechanisms, challenges, causative factors, and innovative trajectories. As research focusing on multi-group analysis, interest expression, and institutional provisions advances, future studies hold the potential to illuminate this multifaceted domain further.

## Literature Review of Chinese Women's Institutionalized Political Participation

Internationally, women's institutionalized political participation has been recognized as a vital gauge for assessing a nation's gender parity (Ping, 2023). Chinese women's participation in institutionalized political processes has gained substantial scholarly attention. Concurrently, the Chinese government is proactively safeguarding women's rights to civic engagement. China's female-driven institutionalized political participation emerges from historical inevitability and deliberate agency. On the one hand, the advent of democratic and egalitarian ideals corresponds to societal progress and cultural evolution. On the other hand, the Chinese Communist Party's consciousness and understanding of women's issues have cultivated an environment conducive to women's political involvement (Lai, 2014). Nevertheless, practical implementation reveals a relatively low level of political participation among Chinese women, a multifaceted outcome influenced by various factors. Women possess relatively fewer political and social resources within the national framework. Moreover, latent gender discrimination exacerbates this disparity, amplifying the challenges facing institutionalized political participation among women (Ping, 2023). Critical factors shaping women's institutionalized political engagement include policy safeguards and institutional facilitation (Yao et al., 2018).

The refinement of legal structures and public policies, exemplified by China's "Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests" and the promotion of compulsory education, significantly contribute to elevating women's political awareness and their capacity to participate in civic and political affairs (Deng, 2023). However, the influence of deep-rooted ideologies endures as a gradual and subtle force impacting women's institutionalized participation. Family dynamics and educational investment shape children and students' interests and cognitive patterns, profoundly influencing their behavior (Yao et al., 2018). Under traditional paradigms, Chinese women often adhere to the "men outside, women inside" paradigm, resulting in a relatively passive approach to political participation and a less pronounced sense of active involvement (Fu, 2011). Gender consciousness holds particular sway over women's political engagement, making it a cornerstone for establishing gender parity (Wu et al., 2022). This dynamic becomes even more nuanced when considering multiple characteristics—ethnic, regional, and otherwise—where women bear distinct roles and rights. These intricate gender dynamics often heighten sensitivity (Chen, 2019; Yan, 2019). Additionally, perceptions of economic conditions and social welfare influence women's well-being and security and shape their positions and attitudes toward institutionalized political participation (Deng, 2023).

Addressing the deficiency in women's institutionalized political participation necessitates a comprehensive approach spanning institutional support, resource allocation, shifts in ideological perceptions, capacity-building for women, and public awareness. For instance, introducing gender-based quotas into elections could challenge discriminatory practices. While such an approach effectively bolsters women's grassroots political involvement and empowerment, it could also inadvertently constrain their numbers, perpetuating gender-associated occupational roles (Song et al., 2016). Actively propagating the ideals of gender equality constitutes a pivotal strategy for advancing women's institutionalized political participation. Broadening channels for expressing interests and facilitating political discourse, coupled with leveraging the bridging role played by women's organizations, is essential for transforming women's roles and nurturing enthusiasm for political engagement (Chen, 2019; Deng, 2023; Yan, 2019). Thus, probing Chinese women's institutionalized political participation warrants a comprehensive and systematic perspective. While

external environmental factors are paramount, internal aspects, such as psychology, perspectives, and ideologies, should receive equal attention for a comprehensive understanding.

A review of previous studies on Chinese women's institutionalized political participation reveals evident gaps in understanding. First, much of the literature presents fragmented insights, with numerous studies tackling specific aspects of women's political participation without offering a comprehensive framework, leading to isolated observations devoid of a broader context (Fu, 2011; Yao et al., 2018). Second, a marked overemphasis on surface dynamics can be identified. Many studies focus on visible elements, such as legal or societal changes, neglecting the pivotal cultural, psychological, and socio-economic underpinnings that shape women's participatory behavior. Third, the cultural paradigms influencing participation, especially the "men outside, women inside" narrative, are acknowledged but not deeply explored, leaving a gap in understanding their genesis, persistence, and contemporary relevance (Fu, 2011). Fourth, the existing literature lacks an intersectional analysis. The interplay among traditional beliefs, family dynamics, and modern political systems—especially how these converge to influence women's political roles—remains a largely untapped domain (Chen, 2019; Yan, 2019). Fifth and finally, many studies miss the compounded effects of various influencing factors. Instead of analyzing the collective impact of multiple elements, they often scrutinize them in isolation, leading to a skewed perspective.

Given the gaps identified in the existing literature, this paper investigates the myriad influences on the institutionalized political participation of Chinese women more deeply. The selected variables—societal groups, economic indicators, prevailing gender perceptions, educational levels, and the influence of both new and traditional media—were not chosen at random. Societal groups play a role in molding individual perceptions and collective actions, while economic indicators often dictate the resources and opportunities available for women. Gender perceptions, deeply embedded in culture, can encourage or deter women's active participation. Educational levels can significantly influence political awareness, analytical skills, and the confidence to participate. Lastly, new and traditional media shapes public discourse and influences individual and collective political decisions, each with a unique reach and impact. Considering these socio-demographic attributes, the central research question can be refined: How do these intricately linked variables collectively inform and shape the extent and nature of Chinese women's engagement in institutionalized political activities? By meticulously analyzing these specific factors, this study not only endeavors to bridge the existing gaps in the literature but also aspires to provide a more comprehensive, integrated, and theoretically informed perspective on the dynamics at play.

## Research Framework

Based on the literature review presented, this study comprehensively examined the factors influencing the institutionalized political participation of Chinese women. Drawing from the CGSS2021 survey data, the following were selected as independent variables: religious beliefs, ethnicity, political affiliation, neighborhood circle group, friend circle group, socioeconomic self-assessment, family car count, gender attitude (from 1 to 5), province, education level, personal total income, housing area, sources of traditional media (newspaper, magazine, radio, television), new media internet, family circle group, online frequency, social trust, perception of social equity, social class, age, social well-being, family total income, family property count, marital status, father's highest education level, and mother's highest education level (Table 1).

These eight dimensions represent crucial aspects that may influence the institutionalized participation of Chinese women. Understanding and considering these factors can offer comprehensive insight into the dynamics and intricacies of how Chinese women engage within formal political and societal structures. Moreover, by delving into these dimensions, policymakers and researchers can tailor interventions and strategies to enhance women's involvement, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable participation landscape.

Table 1. Independent variables

Category	Independent variables	Connotation
Personal information	Religious beliefs	
	Ethnicity	
	Age	
	Political affiliation	
	Province	
	Marital status	
Social circles	Neighborhood circle group	
	Friend circle group	
	Family circle group	
Socioeconomic indicators	Socioeconomic self-assessment	
	Personal total income	
	Family total income	
	Housing area	
	Family car count	
	Family property count	
Gender views	Gender attitude 1	Men prioritize their careers, while women prioritize their families
	Gender attitude 2	Men are naturally more capable than women
	Gender attitude 3	Marrying well is better than doing well in one's career
	Gender attitude 4	During economic downturns, female employees should be laid off first
	Gender attitude 5	Housework should be equally shared between husbands and wives
Education level	Respondent's education level	
	Father's highest education level	
	Mother's highest education level	
Traditional media	Newspaper	
	Journal	
	Broadcast	
	Television	
New media	Internet	
	Online frequency	
Social perspectives	Social trust	
	Social equity	
	Social well-being	
	Social class	

## METHODS

### Data Collection

The data employed in this investigation originate from a nationwide continuous sampling survey conducted in 2021 by the Institute of Sociology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This initiative constitutes an integral part of the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), and the dataset under consideration stems from the 2021 Web User Social Consciousness Survey. Stringent preprocessing measures were implemented to eliminate unsuitable data, characterized by responses indicating a “refusal to answer” or “lack of knowledge.” This meticulous curation resulted in the culling of 1519 valid responses.

The scope of the survey is expansive, encompassing diverse facets such as basic demographic information, media consumption patterns, psychological attributes, and societal perspectives. The data procurement process followed a methodology grounded in stratified multi-stage probability sampling, a systematic approach adopted for household surveys conducted across the 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and centrally administered municipalities of mainland China. This systematic framework ensured the attainment of a representative sample.

Considering the specific scope of this study, focused on the demographic of Chinese women, a stringent screening process was applied to isolate participants exclusively from the female stratum. Consequently, a final compilation of 1519 valid responses was attained. SPSS statistical software was used to analyze the data, facilitating rigorous scrutiny, exploration, and validation.

### Descriptive Analysis

The specific distribution is shown in Table 2.

### Sample Information

The sample information is shown in Table 3.

The table reveals notable trends among the sampled population. Notably, approximately 11.33% of respondents selected Beijing Municipality as their location. When considering educational attainment, a substantial portion, more than 20%, holds a 4.0 junior high school qualification. As for religious beliefs, a significant majority, comprising 90.71%, align with 1.0 no religious belief, totaling 1377.0 individuals. Regarding social class, the 5.0 middle-class segment constitutes a considerable proportion, accounting for 33.93%. Notably, in terms of marital status, over 70% of the participants fall under the category 3.0 first marriage with spouse.

### Analysis Method

The stepwise regression method was chosen as an appropriate analytical framework to explore the factors influencing the institutionalized participation of Chinese women in politics. This method is known for its ability to handle many variables and discern the most impactful ones. In the context of Chinese women’s political involvement, where numerous socio-cultural, economic, and political factors converge, a refined model that can sift through these variables efficiently is crucial. With its iterative procedure, stepwise regression starts with an empty model and either progressively adds the most significant predictor variables or eliminates the least impactful ones. This ensures that each variable’s contribution to the model is evaluated regarding its statistical significance. As a result, the model crafted in this research reflects correlations and accentuates those variables with the strongest predictive power. By applying this method, the research offers an incisive, empirically grounded model that captures the key determinants shaping the political participation landscape for Chinese women. It provides stakeholders a clearer understanding of the myriad forces at work, fostering informed decisions and interventions regarding women’s political empowerment in China.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics**

	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean value	Standard deviation	Median
Province	1.000	19.000	10.233	5.665	11.000
Educational level	1.000	13.000	5.337	3.410	4.000
Marital status	1.000	7.000	3.291	1.456	3.000
Housing area	12.000	1099.000	115.279	86.847	100.000
Ethnicity	0.000	1.000	0.923	0.267	1.000
Traditional media – newspaper	1.000	5.000	1.580	0.900	1.000
Traditional media – journal	1.000	5.000	1.605	0.839	1.000
Traditional media – broadcast	1.000	5.000	1.866	1.068	1.000
Traditional media – television	1.000	5.000	3.379	1.175	3.000
New Media – internet	1.000	5.000	3.611	1.546	4.000
Social trust	1.000	5.000	3.640	0.934	4.000
Social fairness	1.000	5.000	3.402	0.962	4.000
Social well-being	1.000	5.000	3.994	0.759	4.000
Family circle group	1.000	5.000	2.165	0.726	2.000
Religious beliefs	0.000	1.000	0.093	0.290	0.000
Political affiliation	0.000	1.000	0.001	0.026	0.000
Neighborly social circles	1.000	7.000	3.792	2.227	4.000
Friendship circles	1.000	7.000	3.779	1.901	4.000
Self-rated socioeconomic status	1.000	5.000	3.403	0.746	3.000
Number of family cars	0.000	1.000	0.451	0.498	0.000
Gender attitude 5	1.000	5.000	1.809	0.955	2.000
Gender attitude 4	1.000	5.000	4.136	1.039	4.000
Gender attitude 3	1.000	5.000	3.050	1.343	3.000
Gender attitude 2	1.000	5.000	3.267	1.328	4.000
Gender attitude 1	1.000	5.000	3.015	1.388	3.000
Institutionalized political participation of Chinese women	0.000	1.000	0.503	0.500	1.000
Internet usage frequency	1.000	5.000	2.161	1.688	1.000
Number of family properties	0.000	11.000	1.191	0.666	1.000
Father’s highest educational attainment	1.000	13.000	3.059	2.241	3.000
Mother’s highest educational attainment	1.000	13.000	2.385	1.985	1.000
Social class	1.000	10.000	4.434	1.786	5.000

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis results of this study can be summarized in Table 4.

The variables religious beliefs, ethnicity, political affiliation, neighborhood circle group, friend circle group, socioeconomic self-assessment, family car count, gender attitude 5, gender attitude 4, gender attitude 3, gender attitude 2, gender attitude 1, province, education level, personal total income, housing area, traditional media newspaper, traditional media magazine, traditional media radio, traditional media television, new media internet, family circle group, online frequency, social trust,

Table 3. Sample information

		Frequency	Percentages (%)	Cumulative percentages (%)
Province	Inner Mongolia	14	0.92	0.92
	Beijing	172	11.33	12.25
	Ningxia	36	2.37	14.62
	Anhui	96	6.32	20.95
	Shandong	126	8.30	29.25
	Shanxi	52	3.43	32.67
	Guangxi	66	4.35	37.02
	Jiangsu	93	6.13	43.15
	Jiangxi	51	3.36	46.51
	Hebei	51	3.36	49.87
	Henan	86	5.67	55.53
	Zhejiang	98	6.46	61.99
	Hubei	100	6.59	68.58
	Hunan	55	3.62	72.20
	Gansu	32	2.11	74.31
	Fujian	59	3.89	78.19
	Liaoning	91	5.99	84.19
	Chongqing	157	10.34	94.53
Shanxi	83	5.47	100.00	
Educational Level	Uneducated	186	12.25	12.25
	Non-formal education	12	0.79	13.04
	Primary school	303	19.96	33.00
	Junior high school	424	27.93	60.94
	Vocational high school	32	2.11	63.04
	General high school	160	10.54	73.58
	Technical secondary school	53	3.49	77.08
	Technical school	3	0.20	77.27
	Adult education (junior college)	66	4.35	81.62
	Junior college	73	4.81	86.43
	Adult education (bachelor)	49	3.23	89.66
	Bachelor	133	8.76	98.42
	Post-graduate or above	24	1.58	100.00
Religious Beliefs	Non-religious	1377	90.71	90.71
	Buddhism	57	3.75	94.47
	Daoism	4	0.26	94.73
	Folk beliefs	7	0.46	95.19
	Islam	44	2.90	98.09
	Catholicism	3	0.20	98.29
	Christianity	25	1.65	99.93
	Other religious	1	0.07	100.00

*continued on following page*

Table 3. Continued

		Frequency	Percentages (%)	Cumulative percentages (%)
Social Class	1.0	119	7.84	7.84
	2.0	95	6.26	14.10
	3.0	210	13.83	27.93
	4.0	256	16.86	44.80
	5.0	515	33.93	78.72
	6.0	186	12.25	90.97
	7.0	71	4.68	95.65
	8.0	36	2.37	98.02
	9.0	8	0.53	98.55
	10.0	22	1.45	100.00
Marital Status	Unmarried	143	9.42	9.42
	Cohabitation	30	1.98	11.40
	First marriage	1110	73.12	84.52
	Remarriage	41	2.70	87.22
	Separated but not divorced	9	0.59	87.81
	Divorced	42	2.77	90.58
	Widowed	143	9.42	100.00
Total		1518	100.0	100.0

Table 4. Results of the stepwise regression analysis (n = 1518)

	UNSTD		STD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Collinearity diagnosis	
	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>Beta</i>			VIF	Tolerance
Constant	9.981	1.599	-	6.240	0.000**	-	-
Neighborhood social circles	0.023	0.006	0.103	4.104	0.000**	1.034	0.967
Housing area	0.001	0.000	0.100	4.019	0.000**	1.011	0.989
Traditional media – newspaper	0.035	0.015	0.064	2.411	0.016*	1.152	0.868
Traditional media – broadcast	0.040	0.012	0.086	3.244	0.001**	1.147	0.872
Traditional media – television	0.026	0.011	0.062	2.375	0.018*	1.107	0.903
Year of birth	-0.005	0.001	-0.161	-6.210	0.000**	1.099	0.910
<i>R</i> 2	0.079						
Adjustment <i>R</i> 2	0.076						
<i>F</i>	<i>F</i> (6,1511) = 21.723, <i>p</i> = 0.000						
D–W value	1.851						
Dependent variable: institutionalized political participation of Chinese women							

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

perception of social equity, social class, age, social well-being, family total income, family property count, marital status, father's highest education level, and mother's highest education level were used as independent variables. Institutionalized political participation of Chinese women was chosen as the dependent variable for a stepwise regression analysis using the stepwise method. After automatic identification by the model, the remaining variables were neighborhood circle group, housing area, traditional media – newspaper, traditional media – radio, traditional media – television, and age. The R-squared value was 0.079, indicating that these six variables can explain 7.9% of the variance in new\_institutionalized political participation. The model's effectiveness was confirmed by an F-test ( $F = 21.723, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ).

The model equation is as follows:

$$\text{CWIPP} = 9.981 + 0.023\text{NCG} + 0.001\text{HA} + 0.035\text{TMNews} + 0.040\text{TMRadio} + 0.026\text{TMTel} - 0.005\text{Age}$$

Furthermore, a test for multicollinearity revealed that all variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 5, indicating the absence of collinearity issues. The Durbin–Watson (D–W) values were around 2, indicating no autocorrelation in the model. This suggests a lack of interrelationships between the sample data points, which indicates a well-fitted model.

The regression coefficient for neighborhood circle was 0.023 ( $t = 4.104, p < 0.01$ ), indicating a significant positive relationship between neighborhood circle and women's institutionalized political participation in China. This implies that being actively involved in local neighborhood circles has a notable positive impact on women's engagement in institutionalized political activities. Women who participate in neighborhood circles are more likely to be exposed to discussions, information sharing, and interactions related to political matters within their community. This social engagement fosters a sense of belonging and community awareness, which may motivate them to participate more actively in formal political processes. Neighborhood circles can provide a supportive environment for women to discuss and exchange political ideas, enhancing their confidence and interest in participating in political activities. Moreover, these circles often create opportunities for women to become aware of local political issues and civic responsibilities, fostering a sense of civic duty and encouraging active involvement in institutionalized political processes. The positive influence of neighborhood circles on women's institutionalized political participation can be attributed to the social connections, information flow, and community engagement they offer, ultimately empowering women to become more politically active and engaged citizens.

The regression coefficient for housing area was 0.001 ( $t = 4.019, p < 0.01$ ), indicating a statistically significant positive impact of housing area on women's institutionalized political participation in China. Several underlying factors can explain this positive relationship. First, a larger housing area might reflect a higher socioeconomic status, suggesting that women with better housing conditions have greater access to education, information, and resources. This improved socioeconomic status can empower women to become more politically engaged, as they are more likely to have the time, knowledge, and resources to participate in political activities. Second, a spacious living environment can provide women a comfortable and conducive setting for networking and engaging in community activities. Women with larger homes may find it easier to host gatherings, discussions, or meetings, enabling them to connect with fellow community members and discuss political matters more effectively. Third, a larger housing area might signify greater autonomy and control over one's life decisions. Women with more living space might have a stronger sense of agency and confidence, which can translate into an increased willingness to voice their opinions, participate in discussions, and take on leadership roles in political contexts. Additionally, a spacious living environment may contribute to a sense of social prestige and influence, encouraging women to actively participate in political discussions and activities to maintain or enhance their social standing. However, it is crucial to consider that this positive relationship might not apply universally across all socioeconomic

backgrounds. Factors such as urbanization, economic disparities, and cultural norms could influence the extent to which housing area impacts women's political participation. The positive effect of housing area on women's institutionalized political participation can be attributed to improved socioeconomic status, enhanced opportunities for community engagement, increased agency and confidence, and the potential for greater social influence. These factors collectively contribute to a more active and engaged role for women in formal political processes.

The regression coefficient for traditional media – newspaper was 0.035 ( $t = 2.411$ ,  $p = 0.016 < 0.05$ ), indicating a statistically significant positive impact of traditional newspapers on women's institutionalized political participation in China. Similarly, the regression coefficient for traditional media – broadcast was 0.040 ( $t = 3.244$ ,  $p = 0.001 < 0.01$ ), and for traditional media – television, it was 0.026 ( $t = 2.375$ ,  $p = 0.018 < 0.05$ ). These coefficients also signify a statistically significant positive influence of traditional broadcast and television media on women's institutionalized political participation. These positive relationships can be explained by the critical role that traditional media platforms, such as newspapers, radio broadcasts, and television, play in shaping public opinion, disseminating information, and fostering political awareness. These media outlets have a broad reach and often serve as primary sources of news and information for individuals, including women. Access to traditional media can enhance women's political knowledge, awareness, and understanding of societal and political issues. Women who are well-informed about political matters through these channels are more likely to feel confident and empowered to participate in formal political processes. Moreover, traditional media can amplify women's voices and highlight their concerns, leading to increased visibility and recognition of their role in politics. Positive portrayals and coverage of women in traditional media can inspire other women to engage in political activities and contribute to shaping policies affecting them. Additionally, traditional media can serve as a platform for raising awareness about women's rights, gender equality, and social issues, encouraging women to actively participate in discussions and advocate for their interests.

The results revealed an intriguing contrast between the impact of traditional media and the lack of impact of the internet on women's institutionalized political participation in China. While traditional media platforms like newspapers, broadcasts, and television exhibited positive influences, the internet did not appear to affect women's political engagement significantly. This discrepancy might be attributed to several factors. First, traditional media outlets are long-established and widely recognized sources of information in China. They often enjoy greater credibility and authority than information disseminated online, which can be susceptible to misinformation and bias. As a result, women may place greater trust in information from traditional media, leading them to take political action based on such information. Second, traditional media platforms, particularly newspapers, broadcasts, and television, tend to cater to a broader demographic, including individuals who might not have internet access or prefer traditional news sources. This broader reach allows traditional media to engage a wider cross-section of the population, including women from diverse backgrounds who may not be active internet users. Third, the nature of the content provided by traditional media versus the internet could play a role. Traditional media outlets often offer in-depth analysis, investigative reporting, and longer-form content that covers political issues comprehensively. In contrast, the internet is often associated with shorter, fragmented, and sometimes sensationalized content that may not provide the same level of nuanced political insight and analysis. Women seeking well-rounded political knowledge may thus lean more toward traditional media sources. Lastly, the internet's influence might be diluted due to the vast amount of online information. The plethora of sources, opinions, and platforms could make it challenging for women to discern reliable and accurate information, leading to confusion rather than empowerment. By virtue of their editorial oversight and professional standards, traditional media outlets may offer a more structured and reliable source of political information. In summary, the positive impact of traditional media channels on women's institutionalized political participation in China could be attributed to their credibility, wider reach, comprehensive content, and established trust they have garnered over time. On the other hand, the internet's lack of influence might stem from

issues related to trust, content quality, and information overload. Considering these nuances is essential for understanding the varying effects of different media platforms on women's political engagement.

The regression coefficient for birth year was  $-0.005$  ( $t = -6.210$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ), indicating a significant negative relationship between birth year and institutionalized political participation. In other words, younger women are less likely to engage in institutionalized political activities. This trend can be elucidated by exploring various underlying factors influencing younger women's reluctance to participate in formal political processes. One contributing factor could be the generational differences in societal values and priorities. Younger generations often emphasize individual pursuits, such as education and career development, which might lead them to allocate less time and interest to traditional political activities. Moreover, the advent of the digital age has transformed the civic engagement landscape. Younger individuals have grown up with easy access to digital platforms and social media (Alryalat et al., 2017), enabling them to express their opinions and support causes in alternative ways. This shift might lead them to perceive institutionalized political participation as less effective or impactful than online activism and digital advocacy. Another crucial aspect to consider is the evolving nature of political trust. Younger individuals might hold a more skeptical view of traditional political institutions due to witnessing political scandals and ineffective governance. This skepticism could contribute to their disinterest in engaging with established political processes. Furthermore, the issue of representation could play a role. If younger women perceive a lack of alignment between their concerns and the policy agendas of established political parties or institutions, they might opt for alternative forms of participation that offer a more direct connection to issues they care about. Cultural shifts towards individualism and personalized experiences might also influence their engagement choices. Younger generations might prefer participating in grassroots movements, community-based initiatives, and issue-driven campaigns that allow them to directly impact the causes they are passionate about.

The analysis (Table 5) revealed a significant relationship between institutionalized participation and neighborhood circle at the 0.01 significance level ( $\chi^2 = 30.052$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). A closer examination of the percentage differences reveals that female participants who chose the first option (engaging in social and recreational activities with neighbors almost daily) exhibit a notably higher level of institutionalized political participation. This finding suggests an intriguing potential dynamic. The heightened political engagement among women who frequently interact with neighbors could be attributed to various factors. First, regular interactions with neighbors may foster a stronger sense of community belonging and civic responsibility, prompting individuals to become more actively involved in formal political processes. Second, shared experiences and discussions within neighborhood circles might raise awareness of political issues and the importance of participating in political activities. Moreover, the positive correlation could reflect a broader trend of women who engage socially being more empowered and having a greater desire to influence societal changes through political means. This aligns with social capital theory, which posits that well-connected individuals in communities are more likely to participate in collective actions, including political engagement. However, further research is warranted to ascertain a causal relationship and investigate the underlying mechanisms.

The analysis indicated a significant relationship between institutionalized participation and friendship circle at the 0.05 significance level ( $\chi^2 = 14.097$ ,  $p = 0.029 < 0.05$ ). Comparing the percentage differences reveals that female respondents who chose the first option (engaging in social and recreational activities with friends almost daily) exhibit a higher level of institutionalized political participation. This finding suggests an intriguing connection between social interactions within friendship circles and women's engagement in formal political activities. The increased political participation among women who frequently socialize with friends could stem from several underlying factors. Firstly, close friendships may provide a conducive environment for discussing political matters, fostering awareness, and encouraging participation in political events or initiatives. Secondly, individuals with active social lives might possess higher self-confidence and efficacy, contributing to their willingness to participate in political processes. This positive correlation highlights

Table 5. Cross-tabulation (Chi-Square) analysis results

Item	Answer	Institutionalized political participation of Chinese women (%)		Total	$\chi^2$	p
		0.0	1.0			
Neighborhood circle	1.0	210(27.85)	161(21.07)	371(24.44)	30.052	0.000**
	2.0	119(15.78)	85(11.13)	204(13.44)		
	3.0	90(11.94)	84(10.99)	174(11.46)		
	4.0	52(6.90)	48(6.28)	100(6.59)		
	5.0	84(11.14)	107(14.01)	191(12.58)		
	6.0	109(14.46)	137(17.93)	246(16.21)		
	7.0	90(11.94)	142(18.59)	232(15.28)		
Total		754	764	1518		
Friendship circle	1.0	119(15.78)	142(18.59)	261(17.19)	14.097	0.029*
	2.0	76(10.08)	100(13.09)	176(11.59)		
	3.0	152(20.16)	139(18.19)	291(19.17)		
	4.0	81(10.74)	64(8.38)	145(9.55)		
	5.0	175(23.21)	142(18.59)	317(20.88)		
	6.0	101(13.40)	110(14.40)	211(13.90)		
	7.0	50(6.63)	67(8.77)	117(7.71)		
Total		754	764	1518		
Gender attitude 3	1.0	95(12.60)	114(14.92)	209(13.77)	10.781	0.029*
	2.0	209(27.72)	235(30.76)	444(29.25)		
	3.0	86(11.41)	101(13.22)	187(12.32)		
	4.0	214(28.38)	204(26.70)	418(27.54)		
	5.0	150(19.89)	110(14.40)	260(17.13)		
Total		754	764	1518		
Gender attitude 1	1.0	94(12.47)	145(18.98)	239(15.74)	20.644	0.000**
	2.0	222(29.44)	242(31.68)	464(30.57)		
	3.0	58(7.69)	61(7.98)	119(7.84)		
	4.0	222(29.44)	205(26.83)	427(28.13)		
	5.0	158(20.95)	111(14.53)	269(17.72)		
Total		754	764	1518		

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Table 5. Continued

Item	Answer	Institutionalized political participation of Chinese women (%)		Total	$\chi^2$	p
		0.0	1.0			
Province	Inner Mongolia	4(0.53)	10(1.31)	14(0.92)	82.685	0.000**
	Beijing	71(9.42)	101(13.22)	172(11.33)		
	Ningxia	24(3.18)	12(1.57)	36(2.37)		
	Anhui	56(7.43)	40(5.24)	96(6.32)		
	Shandong	71(9.42)	55(7.20)	126(8.30)		
	Shanxi	19(2.52)	33(4.32)	52(3.43)		
	Guangxi	19(2.52)	47(6.15)	66(4.35)		
	Jiangsu	50(6.63)	43(5.63)	93(6.13)		
	Jiangxi	23(3.05)	28(3.66)	51(3.36)		
	Hebei	24(3.18)	27(3.53)	51(3.36)		
	Henan	63(8.36)	23(3.01)	86(5.67)		
	Zhejiang	46(6.10)	52(6.81)	98(6.46)		
	Hubei	61(8.09)	39(5.10)	100(6.59)		
	Hunan	28(3.71)	27(3.53)	55(3.62)		
	Gansu	20(2.65)	12(1.57)	32(2.11)		
	Fujian	25(3.32)	34(4.45)	59(3.89)		
	Liaoning	59(7.82)	32(4.19)	91(5.99)		
Chongqing	58(7.69)	99(12.96)	157(10.34)			
Shanxi	33(4.38)	50(6.54)	83(5.47)			
Total		754	764	1518		
Traditional media – newspaper	1.0	493(65.38)	451(59.03)	944(62.19)	18.624	0.001**
	2.0	184(24.40)	184(24.08)	368(24.24)		
	3.0	55(7.29)	75(9.82)	130(8.56)		
	4.0	14(1.86)	38(4.97)	52(3.43)		
	5.0	8(1.06)	16(2.09)	24(1.58)		
Total		754	764	1518		
Traditional media – broadcast	1.0	411(54.51)	353(46.20)	764(50.33)	22.991	0.000**
	2.0	194(25.73)	181(23.69)	375(24.70)		
	3.0	94(12.47)	138(18.06)	232(15.28)		
	4.0	40(5.31)	72(9.42)	112(7.38)		
	5.0	15(1.99)	20(2.62)	35(2.31)		
Total		754	764	1518		

continued on following page

Table 5. Continued

Item	Answer	Institutionalized political participation of Chinese women (%)		Total	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
		0.0	1.0			
Traditional media – television	1.0	65(8.62)	40(5.24)	105(6.92)	28.485	0.000**
	2.0	145(19.23)	116(15.18)	261(17.19)		
	3.0	216(28.65)	183(23.95)	399(26.28)		
	4.0	214(28.38)	246(32.20)	460(30.30)		
	5.0	114(15.12)	179(23.43)	293(19.30)		
Total		754	764	1518		
New media – internet	1.0	132(17.51)	164(21.47)	296(19.50)	33.723	0.000**
	2.0	34(4.51)	68(8.90)	102(6.72)		
	3.0	69(9.15)	72(9.42)	141(9.29)		
	4.0	149(19.76)	187(24.48)	336(22.13)		
	5.0	370(49.07)	273(35.73)	643(42.36)		
Total		754	764	1518		
Marital status	Unmarried	103(13.66)	40(5.24)	143(9.42)	42.981	0.000**
	Cohabitation	13(1.72)	17(2.23)	30(1.98)		
	First marriage	526(69.76)	584(76.44)	1110(73.12)		
	Remarriage	18(2.39)	23(3.01)	41(2.70)		
	Separated but not divorced	9(1.19)	0(0.00)	9(0.59)		
	Divorced	22(2.92)	20(2.62)	42(2.77)		
	Widowed	63(8.36)	80(10.47)	143(9.42)		
Total		754	764	1518		

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

the potential role of peer networks in shaping women’s political involvement. Friendships’ supportive and encouraging nature may empower women to voice their opinions, advocate for their interests, and actively engage in political actions. However, further research is needed to uncover the intricate dynamics at play and establish a causal relationship between frequent interactions with friends and heightened political engagement.

The analysis unveiled a statistically significant relationship between institutionalized political participation and gender attitude 3 (“Compared to pursuing a successful career, women should prioritize finding a good husband”) at a significance level of 0.05 ( $\chi^2 = 10.781$ ,  $p = 0.029 < 0.05$ ). Further examination of the percentage disparities underscored a noteworthy trend: Women who disagreed with this viewpoint exhibited a discernibly heightened level of engagement in institutionalized political activities. This finding has intriguing implications, shedding light on the interplay between evolving gender attitudes and women’s active involvement in formal political spheres. Women who challenge the traditional notion that career success takes a backseat to marital prospects appear to manifest a deeper commitment to shaping societal norms and political paradigms. Such individuals are more likely to assert their agency and actively contribute to the political discourse. The positive correlation between progressive gender attitudes and elevated political participation suggests a

synergistic relationship between women's evolving perceptions of their roles and their aspirations to exert influence within the political arena. Women who deviate from conventional gender roles are seemingly inclined to assume a more proactive role in advocating for policy changes that align with their progressive worldview. However, while this correlation is illuminating, it is essential to consider potential mediating variables and perform more nuanced analyses to ascertain the underlying mechanisms at play. Future research could delve into the causal dynamics that link evolving gender attitudes to heightened political engagement, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of this complex relationship.

The association between institutionalized political participation and gender attitude 1 ("Men should prioritize their careers while women should prioritize their families") demonstrated statistical significance at the 0.01 level ( $\chi^2 = 20.644$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). A nuanced analysis that considered the variance in percentage distributions revealed a compelling pattern: Women who aligned less with the belief, signaling lower agreement, exhibited a notably higher propensity for institutionalized political participation. This noteworthy finding illuminates the intricate interplay between traditional gender norms and women's involvement in formal political processes. The widely-held notion that men should emphasize careers and women should prioritize domestic roles reflects deeply rooted societal expectations that could impede women's engagement in political activities. Those women who diverge from this gender belief might display a heightened willingness to challenge established norms, leading to an elevated engagement in institutionalized political pursuits. This result underscores the transformative potential of evolving gender attitudes on women's political engagement. As women progressively interrogate and reject traditional gender stereotypes, they might experience a heightened sense of agency to contribute to political processes. Consequently, such shifts can enhance the inclusivity and diversity of political discourse and decision-making, positively shaping societal and governance outcomes. However, a comprehensive exploration of the underlying mechanisms linking gender beliefs and political participation within various cultural, social, and economic contexts remains warranted to deepen our understanding of these dynamics.

The relationship between institutionalized political participation and the province variable yielded a statistically significant correlation at the 0.01 level ( $\chi^2 = 82.685$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). Dissecting the percentage distributions offers more granular insights: Females from Beijing showed a markedly higher inclination towards institutionalized political participation than their counterparts from other provinces. To analyze this phenomenon, Beijing, the nation's capital, is a nexus of political activity, intellectual dialogue, and policy formulations. This could mean that women residing in Beijing are not only more exposed to political discourses but might also have greater opportunities to engage and be heard. The capital's progressive urban milieu, combined with its educational and infrastructural advantages, likely fosters an environment wherein women are more informed, empowered, and encouraged to partake in political activities. On the contrary, the data revealed a considerably subdued pattern of institutionalized political participation among women in Inner Mongolia. Such regional disparities may be rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of Inner Mongolia, where traditional values might still play a dominant role. It is plausible that women in Inner Mongolia, influenced by entrenched cultural norms and possibly limited access to resources, exhibit a lower propensity for political engagement. Expanding on this comparative analysis, the juxtaposition of Beijing and Inner Mongolia underscores China's heterogeneity. Such disparities reflect not only geographic diversities but deeper socio-political and cultural dichotomies. The inherent dynamism of Beijing, with its forward-leaning policies and openness to global influences, might facilitate women's political participation. In contrast, Inner Mongolia's potentially conservative ethos and distinct socio-cultural identity might shape women's perspectives towards political activism.

The statistical analysis revealed significant associations between institutionalized political participation and different forms of media consumption. Specifically, the variables traditional media – newspaper, traditional media – broadcast, traditional media – television, and new media – internet demonstrated statistically significant relationships with institutionalized political participation at the

0.01 level (newspaper:  $\chi^2 = 18.624$ ,  $p = 0.001 < 0.01$ ; broadcast:  $\chi^2 = 22.991$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ; television:  $\chi^2 = 28.485$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ; internet:  $\chi^2 = 33.723$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). Interestingly, the analysis suggests that women who do not use newspapers or broadcast media but frequently watch television and extensively engage with the internet exhibit a higher proportion of institutionalized political participation. This finding underscores the nuanced relationship between media consumption patterns and women's engagement in formal political activities. One possible explanation for this trend could be that television and the internet offer more diverse information sources, allowing women to access a broader spectrum of political content and engage with various perspectives. Additionally, the interactive nature of the internet might enable women to participate in online discussions, campaigns, and advocacy efforts more actively, thereby enhancing their inclination towards formal political participation. However, further research must examine the underlying mechanisms and motivations that link media consumption habits to women's political engagement. Qualitative investigations, for instance, could explore how different media platforms facilitate women's political empowerment, information-sharing, and mobilization. Understanding these dynamics could contribute to developing strategies to leverage media to enhance women's active involvement in the political sphere.

By June 2023, the number of internet users in China reached 10.79 billion, marking an increase of 1109 million since December 2022. This surge lifted the internet penetration rate to 76.4%, up by 0.8 percentage points from December of the previous year. Among these figures, mobile internet users dominated with a count of 10.76 billion, making up 99.8% of the total user base. This dominance signifies the mobile phone's role as the primary tool for internet access in China. Regarding other devices, the usage percentages for desktops, laptops, TVs, and tablets stood at 34.4%, 32.4%, 26.8%, and 28.6%, respectively. Additionally, the average weekly online hours per user climbed to 29.1, an increase of 2.4 hours from December 2022.

While these numbers are impressive, an apparent disparity remains between urban and rural areas. Urban internet users accounted for 7.77 billion or 72.1% of the total in June 2023. In contrast, rural internet users numbered 3.01 billion, representing 27.9%. Breaking down the penetration rates, urban areas boasted a rate of 85.1%, a 2.0 percentage point rise from December 2022, whereas rural areas lagged at 60.5%. This gap, however, also underscores the rapid development of the internet in rural areas, with 5G networks now covering all urban districts and county seats. Moreover, communication service discounts of up to 50% have benefited over 28 million rural households. Despite the growing internet penetration in China, a substantial number of non-internet users remain. These non-users totaled 3.33 billion as of June 2023, dropping by 1109 million from December 2022. A significant portion of these non-users, 59.0%, resided in rural areas, significantly outstripping the national rural population proportion of 23.8%. Notably, the elderly population, those aged 60 and above, comprised 41.9% of this non-user group. The absence of internet access causes daily inconveniences for these individuals. For instance, 12.5% find shopping challenging without the internet, 11.6% face difficulties handling official tasks and paying bills, 10.5% encounter obstacles in medical appointments and medication purchases, and 9.3% struggle to find transportation.

This presents an intriguing phenomenon: Although using the internet does not seem to enhance Chinese women's willingness to participate in institutionalized political activities, those who frequently use the internet exhibit a higher proportion of institutionalized political participation. On the other hand, while traditional media like newspapers and broadcasts can boost Chinese women's willingness to participate in institutionalized political activities, women who do not use traditional media display a higher proportion of institutionalized political participation. Analyzing and explaining this phenomenon reveals several potential insights. One possible explanation is the differential impact of information sources and communication patterns. Frequent internet users might access a wider array of information sources, allowing them to be more informed about political matters and issues affecting women. This exposure to diverse viewpoints and discussions could motivate them to engage more actively in institutionalized political processes. In contrast, traditional media consumers might be influenced by the editorial agendas of those media outlets, potentially leading to differing attitudes

and behaviors regarding political participation. Moreover, the online space provides a platform for women to voice their opinions and mobilize for political causes without some of the barriers in offline contexts. Women less inclined to use traditional media might find the internet a more accessible and empowering avenue for participating in political discussions and initiatives. The generational aspect must also be considered. Younger women, more likely to be frequent internet users, might have different attitudes towards politics and societal roles. They might be more accustomed to digital communication and online activism, which could translate into higher institutionalized political participation through online channels.

The significance of institutionalized political participation in relation to marital status was quite notable ( $\chi^2 = 42.981$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ ). A comparative analysis of the percentage differences revealed that women in their first marriage with a spouse exhibit a higher proportion of institutionalized political participation. This intriguing phenomenon warrants closer examination. One plausible explanation could be the influence of social roles and responsibilities. Women in their first marriage might be more actively engaged in shaping societal and political landscapes as they navigate the dynamics of both their personal lives and broader social contexts. Having a spouse could provide a support system that encourages them to participate more meaningfully in political activities, viewing them as integral to their role as individuals and as part of a family unit. Furthermore, these women might perceive political participation as a means to contribute to the welfare and future of their families. Their commitment to their marital relationships and the potential impact on their families' well-being might drive them to seek active involvement in institutionalized political processes, advocating for policies that align with their values and aspirations. Factors related to time availability and life stage must also be considered. Women in their first marriage might be at a stage where they have fewer family responsibilities compared to those with multiple marriages or those who are divorced or widowed. This might grant them more time and flexibility to engage in political activities and initiatives.

## CONCLUSION

This paper's most significant contribution lies in its comprehensive exploration of factors influencing Chinese women's engagement in institutionalized political participation. Through an in-depth analysis of multiple variables, including social interactions, media exposure, gender norms, demographic characteristics, and even the often-overlooked factor of housing area, the study uncovers a range of intricate dynamics that shed light on the complex landscape of women's political involvement in China. A noteworthy finding is the direct positive impact of housing area on women's institutionalized political participation. The study reveals that women with larger housing areas tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement in formal political activities. This observation adds a new dimension to our understanding of the factors motivating women's political participation and emphasizes the need to consider seemingly unrelated factors in this context. Moreover, the paper unveils intriguing insights into the interplay between traditional and new media, as well as social interactions and gender norms, in shaping women's political engagement. The study's findings indicate that while traditional media may enhance political participation for some women, others who abstain from using these platforms display higher levels of institutionalized political engagement. This counterintuitive finding prompts us to reevaluate the role of media in influencing women's political behavior and its interaction with other contextual elements. The impact of social interactions, such as interactions with neighbors and friends, on women's political participation behavior offers a compelling narrative about the importance of interpersonal relationships in fostering an environment conducive to active political involvement. In conclusion, this paper not only enhances our understanding of the multiple factors influencing Chinese women's institutionalized political participation but also brings to light the previously unexplored role of housing area in motivating political engagement. By delving into the complex interplay of media, social interactions, gender norms, and even housing, the study enriches

the discourse on women's political participation in China and offers valuable insights for further research and policy-making.

## **Policy Implications**

The findings of this study have significant policy implications for promoting women's institutionalized political participation in China. Recognizing the impact of various factors on women's political engagement can guide policymakers in designing targeted strategies to enhance their participation and influence in the political sphere.

Firstly, the positive influence of larger housing areas on women's political participation suggests that improving housing conditions and accessibility could indirectly contribute to increased political engagement. Policymakers could consider initiatives that address housing affordability and quality, particularly in urban areas where women's political participation tends to be higher. By creating conducive living environments, policymakers can provide women with the resources and space to engage more actively in formal political activities.

Secondly, the unexpected correlation between the non-use of traditional media and higher institutionalized political participation indicates that promoting alternative platforms for political awareness and engagement is crucial. Policymakers should harness the potential of digital technologies and social media to provide women with information, resources, and opportunities for political participation. This approach involves acknowledging the changing media landscape and tailoring efforts to reach and engage women not influenced by traditional media channels.

Additionally, recognizing the role of social interactions in shaping political engagement highlights the significance of community-based initiatives. Policymakers can encourage and support community organizations, social groups, and neighborhood networks that foster political discussions, awareness, and activities. By strengthening social ties and facilitating open dialogue, these initiatives can provide platforms for women to engage with political issues in a comfortable and empowering environment.

Furthermore, gender norms and stereotypes must be addressed to promote women's political participation. Policymakers should collaborate with educational institutions, media outlets, and community leaders to challenge and change prevailing gender perceptions. Initiatives promoting women's political voices and leadership can help break down barriers and create a more inclusive political landscape.

In conclusion, the policy implications drawn from this study underscore the importance of adopting a multifaceted and targeted approach to enhance women's institutionalized political participation in China. By addressing housing conditions, embracing new media, fostering community engagement, and challenging gender norms, policymakers can create an environment where women are empowered to contribute significantly to the political discourse and decision-making processes.

## **Research Limitations and Future Research**

This study is limited in several ways that should be considered when interpreting the findings and applying the results to broader contexts. Firstly, the study's scope is confined to a specific demographic of Chinese women, and the findings may not be readily generalizable to other populations or cultural contexts. Cultural, social, and economic differences between regions and countries can influence the relationships between the variables examined in this study, thus limiting the external validity of the results. Secondly, the cross-sectional nature of the study design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. A longitudinal study or experimental design could provide more robust evidence of causation over time, enabling a better understanding of the dynamics between the factors explored in this research. Furthermore, the study focuses on specific factors related to women's institutionalized political participation, while other variables that may also influence political engagement—such as cultural norms, personal motivations, and historical context—are not

comprehensively examined. Incorporating a broader range of variables could provide a more holistic understanding of women's political behavior. Lastly, the study's reliance on quantitative analyses limits the depth of insight into the underlying mechanisms and nuances of the relationships between variables. Qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could offer richer insights into participants' perspectives and motivations, enhancing the overall understanding of the observed patterns.

### **COMPETING INTERESTS**

The authors of this paper declare there are no competing interests.

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## APPENDIX

Table 6. Variable measurements and question wording

Item	Question wording	Source
Neighborhood social circles	How often do you engage in social and recreational activities with your neighbors (such as visiting each other, watching TV together, dining, playing cards, etc.)?	CGSS2021
Housing area	The living space of the house you currently reside in is...	
Traditional media – newspaper	How have you used newspapers over the past year?	
Traditional media – broadcast	Over the past year, what has been your usage of the radio?	
Traditional media – television	Over the past year, how often have you used the television?	
Year of birth	What is your year of birth?	

*Xiaodi Jiang is an associate professor in the School of Public Administration and Policy at Shandong University of Finance and Economics and the first author of this paper. He has devoted his career to educational administration and public policy, publishing articles in indexed journals and regularly participating in academic and professional conferences. He has recently published the article, "Does Public Service Motivation Affect Teacher Satisfaction From Perspective of Urban and Rural Dual Structure? Empirical Analysis Based on Estonia Talis 2018 Data."*

*Yuanyuan Guo is an assistant researcher in the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University and the corresponding author of this paper. She has devoted her career to digital government research. She has published articles in indexed journals and regularly participated in academic and professional conferences. She has recently published the article "Does User Preference Matter? A Comparative Study on Influencing Factors of User Activity Between Government-Provided and Business-Provided Apps."*

*Peng Dong is an assistant researcher in the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University. He has devoted his career to national governance and regional economy research. He has published articles in indexed journals and regularly participates in academic and professional conferences.*