



Gender differences in the prosecution of police assault: Evidence from a natural experiment in Sweden.

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Abstract: States often seek to regulate the use of police force through citizen complaint systems. This paper examines these systems, specifically, whether patterns of bias found in other juridical contexts are mirrored in the adjudication of police assault. The analysis focuses on prosecutors as the first instance of adjudication who determine whether to move forward with investigation, effectively deciding the majority of cases. We ask whether prosecutor sex is associated with the probability that a police assault claim will be investigated. We leverage a natural experiment in Sweden where prosecutors are assigned through a modified lottery system, effectively randomizing appointment. Our findings suggest that prosecutor gender plays a role in judicial outcomes: women prosecutors are 16 percentage points more likely to investigate claims of police assault than their male counterparts. These findings have implications for scholars interested in state human rights abuses, democratic institutions, and judicial inequality.

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