Pipeline Theory
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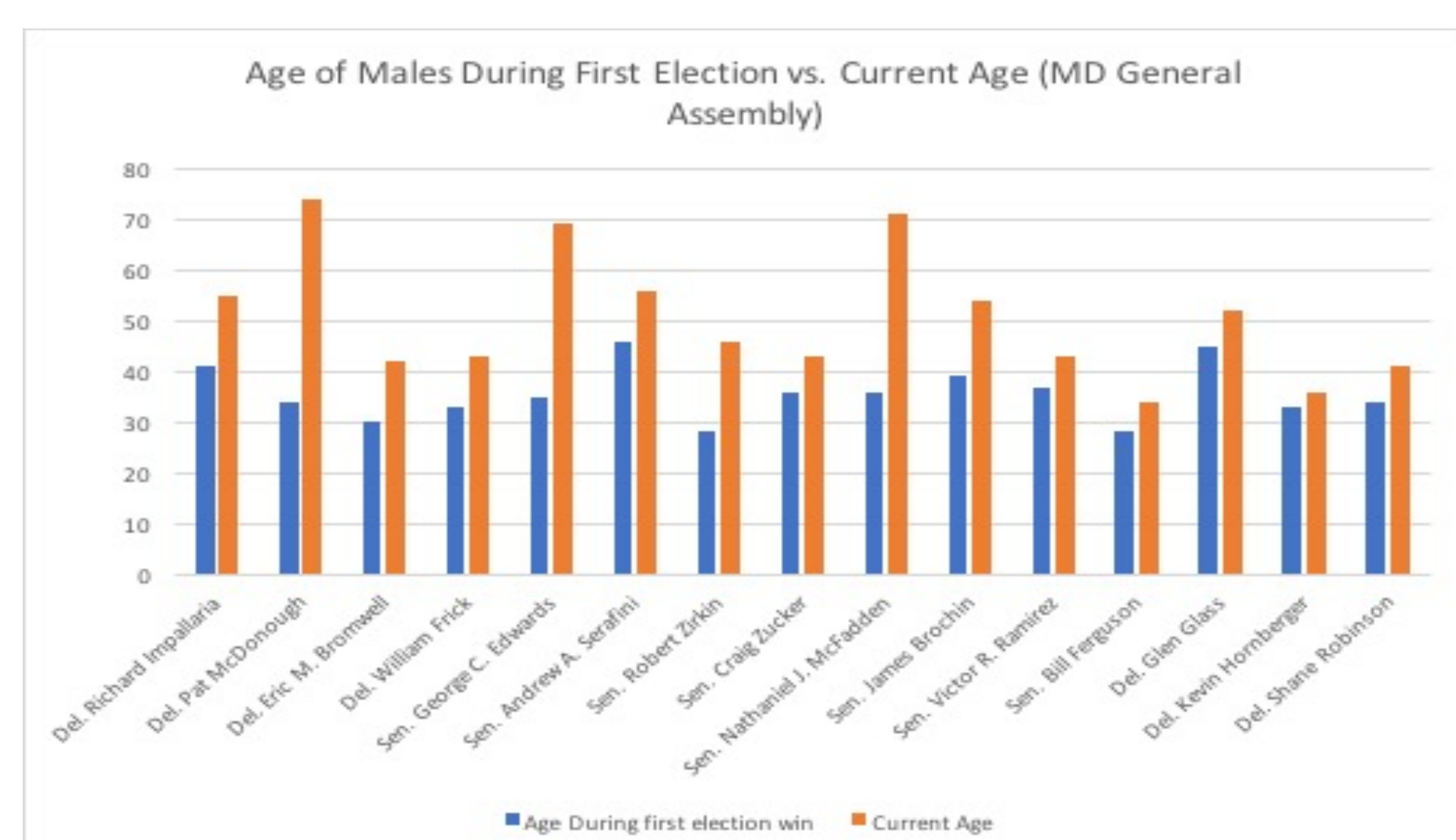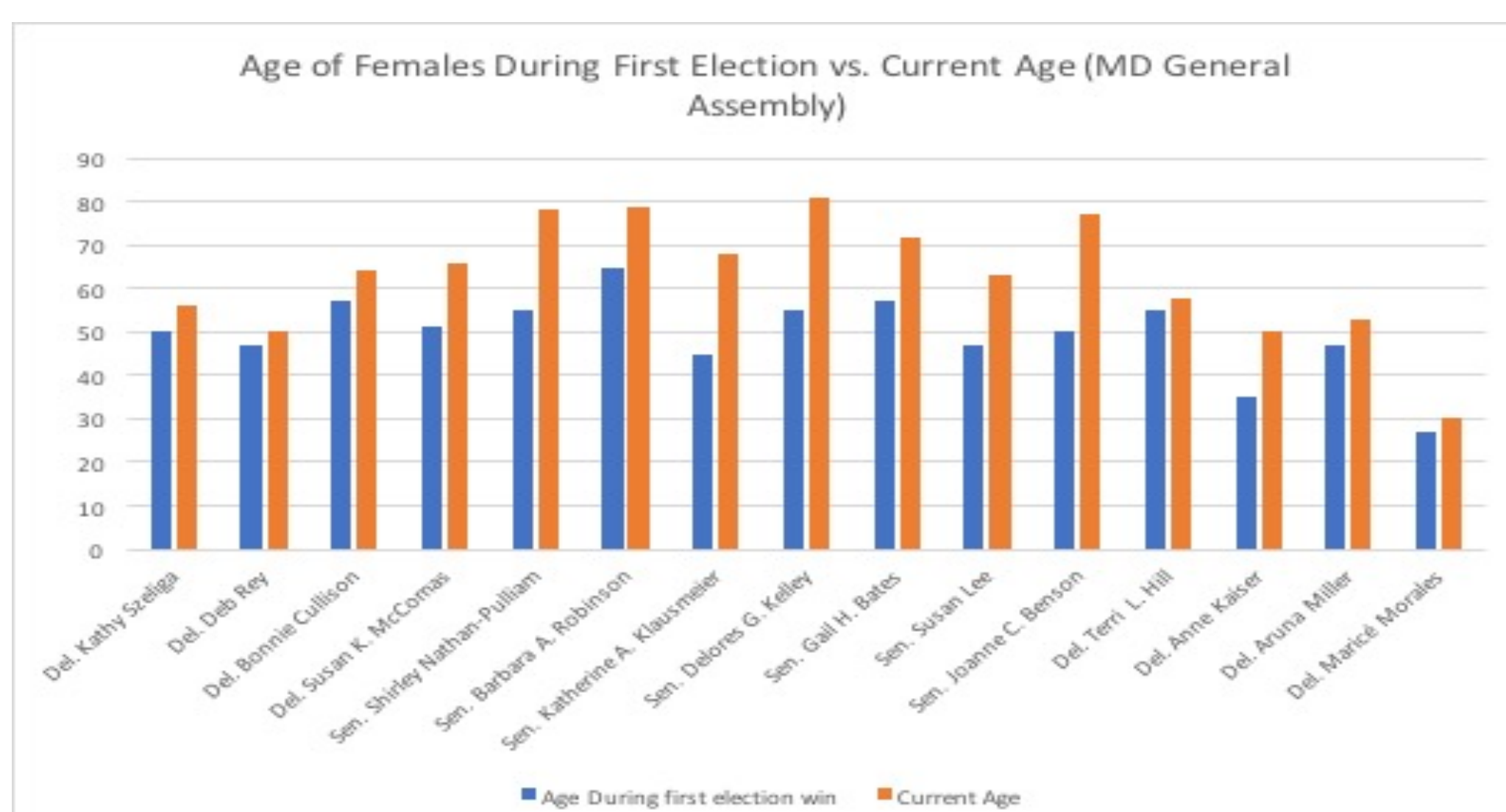
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"Twenty-six years ago, I became the first Democratic woman elected to the Senate in her own right. I was the first, but I made sure I wasn't the only."-Senator Barbara Mikulski (MD)

Age of Females During First Election vs. Current Age (MD General Assembly)

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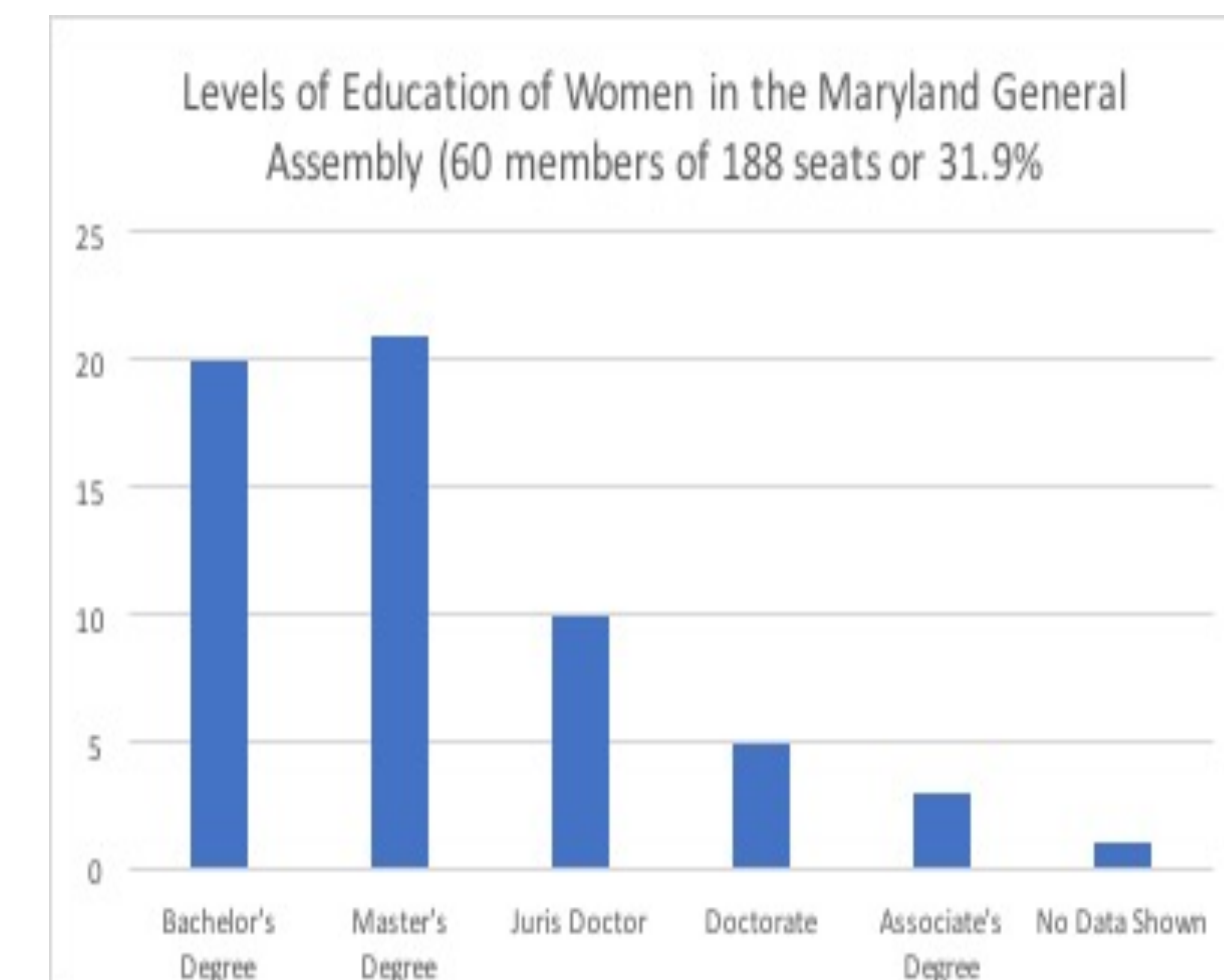
Introduction

For this research, it is necessary to pay attention to factors that could influence someone's decision to run for office. First, to review the ambitions and compare the differences in ambition between female and male legislators, I will review literature on the subject. For this part of the study, I will examine whether women are more likely to run for office in an open election than challenge an incumbent and review the recent elections in the Virginia and New Jersey General Assemblies. Then, I will look at the more common factors such as levels of education, occupational experience, age, and marital status. Here, I will try to focus on the **Maryland General Assembly** during the current session to see what kind of occupations and education levels that legislators both male and female have and understand some of about their personal lives to see if that could influence their political aspirations. These factors should help determine whether someone feels that they have what it takes to successfully run for office.

Maryland General Assembly

At a glance, Maryland seems like one of the states that has a higher percentage of female legislators. Its mid-level percentage does not discredit Maryland as a progressive state but some media and scholars have questioned whether Maryland has done enough to bring in female legislators. In 2017, Catherine Rentz of *The Baltimore Sun* reported that though Maryland has seen seven gubernatorial candidates, **the state lacks women in high political office, especially for being a state that is "52% women"** (Rentz, 2017). Rentz also recognizes that Maryland has only one county led by a woman and although the General Assembly has one of the larger female percentages in the country, groups on both sides of the aisle are gathering to support more female candidates (Rentz, 2017).

Levels of Education of Women in the Maryland General Assembly (60 members of 188 seats or 31.9%

Age

I controlled for whether the legislators were members of the House of Delegates or the State Senate. I sampled **15 male legislators and 15 female legislators in the Maryland General Assembly** to see whether men or women truly tend to break into politics later and are less likely to run for higher office. Of the **15 female legislators, the average age at the time of their first election victory was 49.53 years, with an average current age of 63 years**. The ages over time for the female legislators can be seen in the figure above. Of the **15 male legislators sampled, the average age of 35.67 years old at the time of the first election and a current average age of 50.6 years**. The ages over a time series for male legislators can be seen above. Notably, male legislators in the sample are much younger at the time that they start their political careers than their female counterparts, giving males a better chance to advance their careers with a larger time frame. If female legislators have a shorter period to advance their careers because they started later, than they are less likely to believe that they can successfully win an election in Congress.

Hypothesis

The purpose of this study is to examine whether female legislators have opportunities to advance their careers by starting in local offices before moving to higher level offices. Because evidence suggests that women have a more difficult time being encouraged to run for office and challenge incumbents, it has been proven that women are less likely to be elected into office in the first place. Overall, because women are being elected to state legislatures at a quicker rate than Congress, it seems that pipeline theory works for women seeking offices in General Assemblies (Mariani, 287). Typically, these legislatures will move from city council, or county offices and into the state legislature. However, female legislators have struggled to use pipeline theory to their advantage when campaigning for Congressional offices. This could be because with fewer opportunities to run a successful Congressional campaign, that female legislators are more adamant about initiating and moving policy on women's issues at the state level and establishing themselves in a General Assembly. The likelihood of beating an incumbent in Congress is rather slim, which also possibly deters some of the female candidates. Nevertheless, female legislators have challenged incumbent and successfully won the office but are more likely to challenge when a seat is vacant. Other factors that play into pipeline theory could include age, marital status, and previous experience. Female legislators tend to break into politics at a later age than males and tend to be married, giving women a smaller window to run for Congress (Mariani, 300).

Analysis

Ultimately, women are less likely to use their lower office as a springboard to higher office which could be due to different policy priorities or stereotyping among the electorate. Scholars argue that female legislators may have more influence on policy such as health care, at the state and local level. It is interesting because Maryland itself is a typically Democratic leaning, progressive state. But currently, there are no female legislators serving in the Maryland Delegation at the Federal level. The Congressional Research Service suggest that female legislators have a greater likelihood of getting elected to the United States House of Representatives than the Senate (CRS, 2014). **Reasons for this could be because there are simply more opportunities and more seats to run a Congressional campaign than a Senate campaign**. It is possible that women have a lower chance of being elected to the Senate because they tend to have less experience in elected office than their male counterparts, due to **being elected at older ages or given less opportunities to run.**

Education

I first looked at the levels of education of women in the Maryland General Assembly to see if it would have any correlation to pipeline theory among female legislators. First, I looked at the levels of education for women in the Maryland Senate. Gender is the independent variable and the dependent variable would be levels of education and controlled for position such as in the House of Delegates or Senate. Of the 49 seats in the Maryland Senate, 11 of the Senators are women, accounting for 23.4% of the Senate. Of the **11 Senators, 4 have Bachelor's Degrees, 4 have Master's Degrees, 1 has a Juris Doctor, 1 has a Doctorate and 1 has an Associate's Degree**. Then I looked at the levels of education of female members of the House of Delegates, 49 women of 141 seats in the House, accounting for 34.75%. Of the **49 female Delegates, 16 have Bachelor's Degrees, 17 have Master's Degrees, 9 have Juris Doctors, 4 hold Doctorates, 2 hold Associate's Degree**, and one does not have any data. In the General Assembly, there are **60 female legislators of the 188 seats, making up 31.9% of the Assembly. Of the 60 female Delegates, 20 have Bachelor's Degrees, 21 have Master's Degrees, 10 have Juris Doctors, 5 hold Doctorates, 3 hold Associate's Degree**. I found that levels of education are not as pertinent in females legislators choosing to run as it was 30 years ago.