The Battle of the Sexes for Mayoral Re-election: Gender Differences in Early Childcare Provision

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Abstract

While politicians strategically implement policies to secure re-election, the role of gender identity in these decisions remains unclear. This study examines whether Italian mayors seeking re-election provide different provision of early childcare according their gender. Leveraging a sample of closely contested mixed-gender municipal elections from 2002 to 2015 and applying a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD), I find a negative gender gap in early childcare provision. Municipalities led by male mayors are 8.6% more likely to offer early childcare services, provide 1.2% more childcare spots, and spend 60% more per child aged 0–3 than their female led counterparts. This gap is not driven by differences in policy preferences but rather by strategic behaviour aimed at re-election and is consistent across other core female-oriented services. Finally, the gap widens in municipalities with more progressive gender norms, higher demand for early childcare services, and greater voter turnout. These findings suggest that male mayors increase early childcare spending to strengthen electoral support in the second ballot, rather than female mayors reducing childcare provision to counter gender stereotypes.

Keywords: Early childcare provision, mayoral re-election, gender-sensitive policies, gender

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1 Introduction

Over the past century, policies addressing gender and racial discrimination[1] have reshaped political representation worldwide. By 2023, women accounted for 26.5% of national parliament members globally—a stark contrast to their almost complete exclusion in the early 20th century.[2] This shift has spurred extensive research on how politicians' identity influence policy decisions. However, little is known about how identity influences policymaking when politicians seek re-election, despite the frequency of this scenario.[3]

In this study, I examine how politicians' gender affects early childcare provision, a core policy area often associated with female leadership (Profeta, 2020). Early childcare is considered a core policy area for female politicians due to its role in promoting female empowerment (Giorgetti and Picchio, 2021; Brilli et al., 2016; Del Boca and Vuri, 2007) and its disproportionate impact on women's lives.[4] However, gender stereotypes[5] and behavioural differences in confidence and competition create ambiguity regarding whether female politicians seeking re-election prioritize early childcare more than their male counterparts.

From a theoretical perspective, if politicians prioritize re-election above all else, their decisions should align more with the median voter theorem (Downs, 1957) than the citizen-candidate model (Osborne and Slivinski, 1996; Besley and Coate, 1997). This suggests that politicians strategically adjust their policies, aligning with the preferences of the median voter rather than strictly adhering to their policy identity. I provide empirical evidence that re-running mayors in Italy align with the median voter prediction in early childcare provi-

[1] The New Zealand Electoral Act and the U.S. Voting Rights Act are two landmark policies. The 1893 New Zealand Electoral Act was the first to grant women the right to vote and participate in political competition, while the 1965 U.S. Voting Rights Act prohibited racial discrimination in voting.

[2] This data cames from the IPU Parline data

[3] Data from the IPU Parline data shows that approximately 60% of incumbents consider running for re-election to retain office.

[4] Despite recent progress, women continue to bear most of family care responsibilities (Saraceno and Keck, 2011; Del Boca et al., 2020).

[5] Voter bias against female candidates is well-documented (Baskaran and Hessami, 2018; Le Barbanchon and Sauvagnat, 2022), as are biases from party leaders (Esteve-Volart and Bagues, 2012; Casas-Arce and Saiz, 2015).

sion. To my knowledge, this is the first study to examine whether strategic policy adoption in response to the median voter varies by the incumbent's gender.

To identify the causal effect of politician gender, I leverage the quasi-random assignment of mayoral gender in closely contested mixed-gender elections. Using a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD), I analyze closely contested mixed-gender elections by linking administrative data on early childcare provision with local election results and politician characteristics in Italian municipalities from 2002 to 2015. This design is particularly well-suited for examining the role of mayors for two key reasons. First, the mayor is the only local office in Italy filled through direct elections. Second, mayors hold a leading position within city councils, wield executive authority, and are responsible for the provision of public early childcare services.[6]

I find a significant gender gap in early childcare provision. Linear-order parametric estimates indicate that municipalities led by male mayors are 8.6% more likely to offer early childcare services, provide 1.2% more childcare spots, and spend 60% more on early childcare per child aged 0–3. The results remain consistent across various robustness checks, including the addition of fixed effects, further political controls, different optimal bandwidth selection methods, and alternative samples. In addition, these findings are supported by both a falsification and a placebo test. The falsification test rules out the possibility that the gender gap in early childcare results from path dependence. The results show no significant difference in prior childcare provision between treated (female-led) and control (male-led) municipalities. The placebo test confirms the absence of a gender gap in early childcare when using fake cut-off values.

This gap suggests that incumbents strategically adjust their policies toward the median voter's preference to secure re-election. Two potential mechanisms could explain this shift: (1) male mayors increase early childcare provision to appeal to a broader voter base, or (2) female mayors decrease early childcare spending to counter gender stereotypes and improve

[6] In 1971, the Law No. 1044 established that local government must provide early childcare services for children aged zero to three.

their electoral prospects.

To formally test whether this gender gap results from a strategic behaviour, I conduct three additional analyses. First, I show that the gap exists only for mayors seeking re-election, ruling out gender-based policy preferences as the driving force. If policy preferences were the driving factor, the gender gap would persist among non-re-running mayors. However, it does not.

Second, I demonstrate that the gender gap appears only in core female-oriented policies[7] but not in other local services.

Third, I perform a difference-in-discontinuities analysis to assess how the policy gap varies with childcare demand, gender stereotypes, and voter turnout. The findings indicate that the gap is larger in municipalities with weaker gender stereotypes, higher female employment, and greater voter turnout. These results suggest that male mayors increase spending rather than female mayors reducing expenditures to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Overall, my findings suggest that mayors strategically adjust policies based on gender to maximize their re-election prospects. Male mayors are more likely than female mayors to align their policies with those of their defeated opponents, adopting positions closer to the median voter's preference. This highlights an important but understudied dimension of electoral strategy in gendered policymaking.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the related literature and this study's contribution. Section 3 describes the data and institutional setting. Section 4 outlines the identification strategy used to assess the gender gap in early childcare provision among re-running mayors and presents the results. Section 5 demonstrates that this gap stems from gender-based strategic differences among mayors when seeking re-election. Finally, Section 6 concludes.

[7] This study defines core female-oriented policies as those that support women in balancing work and caregiving responsibilities by offering alternatives to maternal care.

2 Related literature and contributions

This study builds on multiple strands of literature and makes several contributions.

To begin with, it relates to the empirical literature on electoral competition models and the role of politicians' identity. In the median voter theorem (Downs, 1957), identity plays no role, as politicians adopt the policy preferred by the median voter to secure victory. In contrast, citizen-candidate models suggest that politicians implement policies aligned with their own identity (Osborne and Slivinski, 1996; Besley and Coate, 1997).

Recent studies indicate that electoral competition often conforms to the median voter theorem (Di Tella et al., 2023; Le Pennec, 2024). Candidates strategically adjust their political discourse to appeal to the center, tailoring their messaging based on their opponent's identity. Fernandes (2023) finds that this pattern extends to gender identity. In mixed-gender races, female candidates are more likely to address traditionally male-dominated topics, while male candidates emphasize issues typically associated with women.

I contribute to this literature by demonstrating that the median voter theorem better explains policy differences between male and female re-running candidates. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study to examine this setting. No previous research has shown that incumbent policymakers adjust their policies to appeal to the electoral base of the opponent they narrowly defeated. In this study, I show that re-running male mayors allocate more resources to early childcare provision than their female counterparts.

Then, this study relates to the extensive literature on gender differences in strategic behaviour in competitive setting[8] and the broader literature on retrospective voting[9]. While

[8] See works by Niederle and Vesterlund (2007), Ahlqvist et al. (2013), Kanthak and Woon (2015), Ellison and Swanson (2023), Kugler et al. (2021), among others.

[9] These studies emphasize how incumbents act strategically to enhance their re-election prospects (Brender, 2003; Nannicini et al., 2013; Drago et al., 2014). This includes engaging in 'pork barrel' behavior (Cox and McCubbins, 1986; Cadot et al., 2006; Roberson, 2008) or targeting policies to specific groups. Such targeted policies enable voters to infer politicians' attitudes toward them, creating a support-buying effect that boosts incumbents' chances of re-election (Pierson, 1996; Cox, 2009; Manacorda et al., 2011; De La O, 2013

both research streams are well established, no prior work has directly bridged them. A notable exception is Accettura and Profeta (2021), which highlights a gender gap in policy decisions aligned with the political cycle.

I contribute to this strand of literature in three ways. First, I demonstrate that the gender gap in early childcare policy is strategic, extending to other female-oriented policies but not to non-female-oriented ones. Second, I explore the mechanisms driving this gap by examining heterogeneous effects. The findings indicate that male mayors increase spending on early childcare to broaden their electoral support, rather than female mayors reducing such spending to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes. Third, I show that only male mayors act strategically in line with the median voter theorem's predictions, while female mayors do not exhibit similar strategic behaviour to secure re-election.

Finally, this study builds on the literature on the policy consequences of politicians' identity, with a particular focus on gender. Existing findings in this area remain mixed[10], including the limited research on early childcare provision. For instance, Carozzi and Gago (2023) find no significant impact of female leadership on gender-sensitive services in Spain, whereas Hessami and Baskaran (2019) show that a higher share of women in German city councils correlates with increased childcare availability.

I add to this strand of literature by showing that differences in policy are shaped by how male and female mayors behave when seeking re-election. Notably, no gender gap in early childcare spending emerges when not conditioning on mayors seeking re-election. These findings rule out inherent policy preferences as the main driver of the observed differences. This contribution is particularly significant given Italy's poor performance in childcare pro-

[10] Studies from developing countries show results consistent with the predictions of the citizen-candidate model (Osborne and Slivinski, 1996; Besley and Coate, 1997), where the gender identity of politicians significantly influences policy. Female-led or female-represented local governments tend to allocate more resources to education (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Clots-Figueras, 2012) and health (Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014). In contrast, evidence from developed countries is more mixed. While a few studies find significant gender-based differences in policy provision (Casarico et al., 2022; Funk and Gathmann, 2015; Hessami and Baskaran, 2019), many others report inconclusive findings (Ferreira and Gyourko (2014); Rigon and Tanzi (2012); Baltrunaite et al. (2019); Bagues and Esteve-Volart (2016); Andreoli et al. (2022)).

vision[11], deeply entrenched traditional gender roles (Carrer and Masi, 2024), and significant gender disparities in the labour market (Casarico and Lattanzio, 2024).

3 Institutional setting and data

3.1 Institutional setting

Local government. In Italy, municipalities are the tiniest sub-national level of government. They are organized into three main bodies: the mayor, the city council, and the city executive committee. The mayor serves as the head of the local government and is limited to a maximum of two terms in office. The city council is the legislative body responsible for passing regulations and budgetary decisions while the city executive committee, appointed by the mayor, manages policy implementation and daily administrative functions within the municipality. Two electoral rules hold for mayoral election. Municipalities with fewer than 15,000 inhabitants employ a majority bonus system, where the leading candidate secures at least two-thirds of the city council seats. In municipalities with more than 15,000 inhabitants, a second ballot is held if no candidate achieves an absolute majority, with the winner securing a 60 majority bonus in the council.

Public early childcare provision. Public nursery schools were established in 1971 by Law No. 1044, targeting children aged 0 to 3. This law mandated the construction of approximately 3,800 nursery schools by 1976 and granted local governments authority over these services in alignment with national and regional guidelines. Due to socioeconomic and demographic changes, this level of early childcare provision quickly became insufficient (Grembi and An-

[11] Italy has failed to meet the Barcelona Target set by the European Council in 2002, which aimed to ensure childcare for at least 33% of children under three by 2010 to promote gender equality and boost female workforce participation. More details can be found here.

tonelli, 2010). Several subsequent initiatives[12] attempted to address the excess demand, but even today - despite the adoption of a mixed public-private system[13] - Italian municipalities struggle to meet early childcare needs.[14]

3.2 Data and descriptive statistics

This study focuses on municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants between 2002 and 2015 to ensure comparability for two reasons: (1) they operate under the same fiscal rules[15], and (2) they were unaffected by gender quotas introduced during this period[16]. Given the distribution of Italian municipalities, this sample covers approximately 70% of them.

I combine data from four sources to construct a municipal-year dataset. First, the Financial Statement Certificates from the Ministry of Interior provide annual municipal-level data on early childcare provision. Specifically, this includes expenditures and the number of childcare slots, whether directly managed by municipalities or provided through partnerships with private entities.

Second, I gather electoral results and individual-level information on local politicians from

[12] For example, Law 285, introduced in 1997, expanded childhood services to include options such as baby parking, 'family babysitters,' and micro-crèches. Law 328/2000 strengthened the role of local governments in providing social services for families and aimed to improve early childcare provision across Italian municipalities, although resource allocation continued to vary significantly across municipalities. The Italian Budget Law of 2007 (Law 296/2006) subsidized the development of early childcare services. National funds were allocated to regions by the central government using regional indicators related to childcare demand, including the population under 3 years of age, female employment and unemployment rates, and disparities between regional and national childcare service coverage. These resources were subsequently redistributed to local governments.

[13] Local governments cover fees for users accessing private facilities, reserve slots in private establishments, or authorize private providers to manage portions of their services according to public regulations on pricing and standard.

[14] The first section of Appendix A provides additional descriptive statistics on the absence of public early childcare provision across Italian municipalities. All descriptive evidence is based on my own analysis of data from the Ministry of Interior.

[15] The Italian Domestic Stability Pact (DSP) has imposed stricter budget constraints on municipalities with populations over 5,000 since 1991. In 2013, these constraints were extended to include municipalities with fewer than 5,000 residents.

[16] Law 215/2012 introduced gender quotas and dual voting preferences, mandating that neither gender could occupy more than two-thirds of council seats in municipalities with populations exceeding 5,000 inhabitants.

two Ministry of Interior datasets. The Historical Archive of Elections reports local election results, including candidate details such as name, gender, total voters, and votes received.[17] The Registry of Local and Regional Administrators offers additional details on municipal officials, including gender, education, previous profession, age, and place of birth, dating back to 1985.

Third, I compile key municipal socioeconomic, demographic, and geographic variables using data from the 2001 and 2011 Census of the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)[18], supplemented with municipal pre-taxable income data from the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Finally, I use the results of two historical referenda to capture heterogeneity in gender culture across Italian municipalities, reflecting the enduring nature of cultural attitudes (Giuliano, 2020). These abrogative referenda include the 1974 vote on divorce (Law n. 898/1970) and the 1981 vote on abortion (Law 194/1978). The Ministry of Interior provides the data, reporting the share of votes in each municipality that opposed these measures.

Leveraging the granularity of this information, I select legislatures with re-running mayor who won a mixed gender election. Leveraging the granularity of this data, I select legislatures with re-running mayors who won a mixed-gender election. In Italy, 60% of mayors seek a second term, with no significant gender[19] or geographical differences.[20] Mixed gender elections, where the top two mayoral candidates are of opposite genders, occur more frequently in northern Italy and have increased over time (Figure 1).

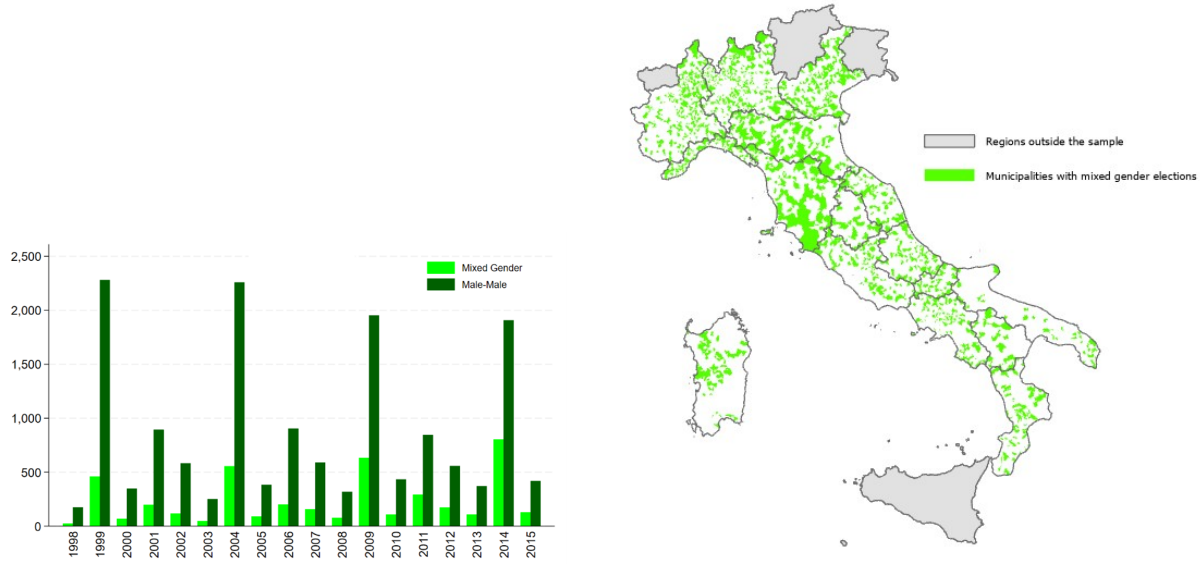
[17] This data is available only for municipalities belonging to the fifteen ordinary regions and Sardinia. From an institutional point of view, it makes sense to exclude special regions (Aosta Valley, Trentino-South Tyrol, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily) from the first part of my analysis since they have the autonomy to impose different electoral systems in their municipalities.

[18] The two Census waves are allocated to municipalities based on their election year to accurately capture pre-determined municipal characteristics. Specifically, the 2001 wave is assigned to municipalities with elections between 2002 and 2011, while the 2011 wave applies to those holding elections after 2011.

[19] Table A.1 shows no significant difference in re-running behavior between male and female mayors.

[20] Re-running mayors may differ from their non-re-running counterparts in ambition or ability, potentially influencing early childcare provision decisions. However, Table A.2 in Appendix A finds no significant differences in childcare provision between the two groups, mitigating endogeneity concerns.

Figure 1: Mixed gender elections



Note: The figures illustrate the timing (left) and geographic distribution (right) of mixed-gender elections. The bar graph on the left displays the yearly distribution of mixed-gender elections (light green) and non-mixed-gender elections (dark green) across Italian municipalities. The map on the right highlights municipalities that had at least one mixed-gender election (light green), while those in white did not.

The baseline dataset contains 10,472 municipal-year observations from 2,837 mixed-gender elections. Table A.3 in the Appendix details variable construction, while Table A.4 provides descriptive statistics for the final sample. Table A.5 tests for significant differences between municipalities led by male and female mayors.

On average, municipalities led by male and female mayors show no significant differences in early childcare provision. However, they differ in other aspects. Female mayors are more likely to be elected in densely populated municipalities with higher female labour market participation, a greater proportion of foreign residents, and lower education levels. In contrast, municipalities led by male mayors tend to have greater female representation in executive committees and city councils.

4 The gender gap in policy across re-running mayors

4.1 Identification strategy

4.1.1 The research design

Assessing whether female and male leaders make different policy decisions to secure a second mandate poses several empirical challenges. To begin with, the election of female mayors is not determined randomly. Traditional gender norms, rooted in patriarchal family structures and masculinity, shape not only women's behaviour (Gneezy et al., 2003; Eisenkopf et al., 2015) but also voter and politician gender stereotypes (Baskaran and Hessami, 2018; Le Barbanchon and Sauvagnat, 2022; Esteve-Volart and Bagues, 2012; Casas-Arce and Saiz, 2015), disadvantaging female candidates.

Then, many confounding factors may simultaneously influence early childcare provision, the election of female mayors, and their likelihood of seeking re-election. Table A.5 indicates that female mayors are more often elected in municipality where the demand for early childcare and the resources to supply the service are larger.

To address these endogeneity concerns, I employ a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) on closed contested mixed-gender election.[21] This design leverages the quasi-random nature of electoral outcomes to achieve variation in the gender of elected officials.[22] The gender gap in early childcare provision among re-running mayors is then measured as:

$$\text{Ihs}\left(\text{ Early Chidlcare }\right)_{\text{it}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Female mayor }_{\text{it}} + P\left(MV_{it}\beta\right) + \varepsilon_{\text{iy}} \tag{1}$$

[21] This methodology is widely used to assess the impact of politicians' gender (Ferreira and Gyourko, 2014; Brollo and Troiano, 2016; Hessami and Baskaran, 2019; Casarico et al., 2022; Carozzi and Gago, 2023), and other identity traits such as ideology (Beland, 2015; Solé-Ollé and Viladecans-Marsal, 2013), race and ethnicity (Burgess et al., 2015; De Luca et al., 2018), family background (Washington, 2008; McGuirk et al., 2023), and religious beliefs (Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014; Meyersson, 2014) on policy

[22] Figure A4 provides a visual representation of the research design, clarifying which units are treated and which are controls.

where $\text{Ihs}(\text{ Early Chidlcare })_{\text{it}}$ stands for the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of the policy outcome of interest for municipality i in year t.[23] I use three different outcomes to measure the provision of early childcare to capture both the intensive and extensive margins. I rely on a dummy variable equal to one if the service is provided and zero otherwise (extensive margin), and then on the share of childcare spots and expenditures per children (intensive margin). These three measures are good proxy of the intensity, and the quality of the service provided.

Female mayor $_{\text{it}}$ is a dummy variable equal to 1 in cases of female mayors and 0 otherwise. Therefore, β_1 has to be interpreted as an ATT.

The running variable in this RDD is the mayors' margin of victory (MV_{it}) defined as the vote share difference between the first- and second-place candidates. To account for potential nonlinearity in the relationship between margin of victory and early childcare provision, I employ both parametric and nonparametric approaches. To avoid the instability of high-order polynomials (Gelman and Imbens, 2019), I use local linear and quadratic polynomials for both estimates. For bandwidth selection, I use the data-driven MSE-optimal bandwidth approach proposed by Calonico et al. (2019). However, robustness checks confirm that the results remain consistent across different optimal bandwidth techniques.

Finally, the clustering of the error terms at the municipal ε_{iy} completes the description of model.

4.1.2 Validity of the research design

Before presenting the results, I verify the validity of the research design. Figure B.2 illustrates the density distribution of the margin of victory, accompanied by a local first-order polynomial control function and 95% confidence intervals. Negative margins of victory cor-

[23] The model was also estimated using a logarithmic transformation of the outcomes instead of the hyperbolic sine, yielding consistent results. These additional results align with those reported in the paper and are available upon request.

respond to cases where the female candidate lost the election, while positive values indicate municipalities led by female mayors. No sorting behaviour occurs around the cut-off. Agents cannot manipulate the margin of victory, ensuring that control units cannot self-select into treatment. Consistent with this RDD assumption, the distribution shows no significant discontinuity at the cut-off. This finding is further supported by the McCrary test (McCrary, 2008) and the CJM test (Cattaneo et al., 2020), both of which confirm the absence of discontinuity in density around the cut-off.

Another assumption of the RDD is that all relevant characteristics—both observable and unobservable—must be smoothly distributed around the cut-off. Within the optimal bandwidth, the only characteristic that should change at the cut-off is the mayor's gender.

To validate this assumption, I conduct a series of balancing tests, focusing on both demand[24] and supply[25] determinants that influence the provision of educational services, particularly early childcare. The estimation results are presented in Tables B.1, B.2, and B.3 in the Appendix and visualized in Figure 2. The evidence indicates no significant differences in socio-economic and demographic characteristics between treatment and control groups.

The number of children aged 0–3, the share of elderly residents, the logarithm of foreign residents, and population density are balanced, indicating no significant difference in early childcare demand between treated and control units. Similarly, municipal pre-taxable income, unemployment rates, education levels, female employment, and female labour force participation are comparable, demonstrating that municipalities led by female and male may-

[24] On the demand side, public education is shaped by economic and demographic factors such as age (Gradstein and Kaganovich, 2004; Gradstein and Kaganovich, 2004), income (Corcoran and Evans, 2010), and redistributive preferences (Merzyn and Ursprung, 2005). Women's labor market participation (Bergstrom and Blomquist, 1996) and the availability of alternative care options also play a crucial role. In Italy, family members, particularly grandparents, often provide non-maternal care (Coda Moscarola et al., 2016). Additionally, gender norms influence demand for early childcare, with traditional caregiving roles reducing reliance on public services, while more egalitarian norms drive greater demand for childcare support in dual-earner households (Boeckmann et al., 2015; Folbre, 2006).

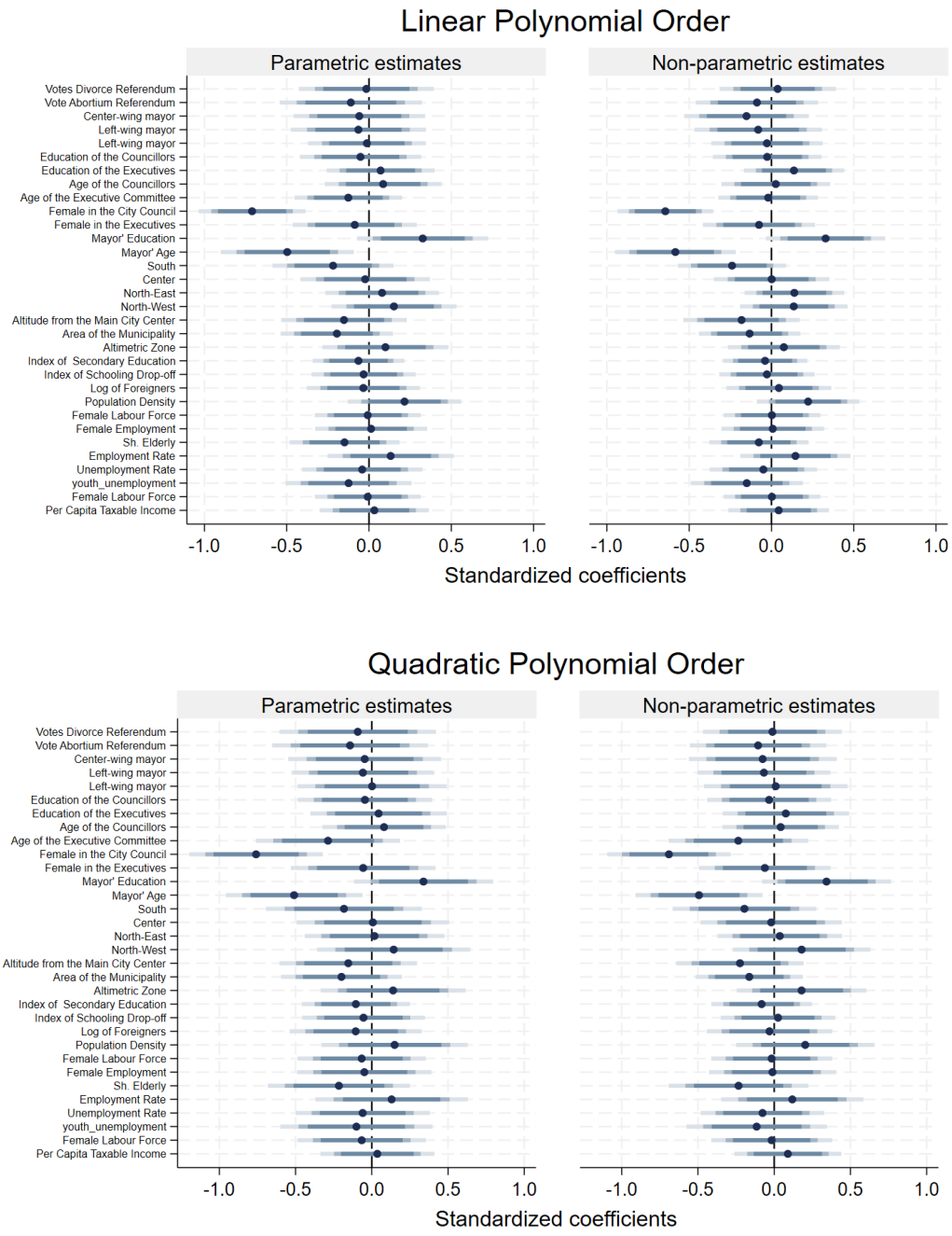
[25] On the supply side, public early childcare services largely depend on local government resources. Bosi and Silvestri (2008) present a model highlighting the political mechanisms shaping early childcare provision in Italy, emphasizing fiscal constraints and policy priorities at the local level.

ors do not significantly differ in their economic capacity to provide early childcare services.

Then, treated and control municipalities do not exhibit consistent differences in geographic location or gender culture. Female mayors who narrowly defeated male candidates are not disproportionately elected in municipalities with a more progressive gender culture.

Finally, most political characteristics are balanced between municipalities led by female and male mayors, with a few notable exceptions. Female mayors tend to be younger and more educated, likely reflecting the influence of Italy's traditional gender norms, where younger and more educated women are more inclined to enter politics. Another key difference is the proportion of female councillors, which is higher in male-led governments than in those led by female mayors. To ensure these imbalances do not bias the results, the study conducts robustness checks by replicating the RDD estimates while controlling for these unbalanced characteristics.

Figure 2: Balancing tests

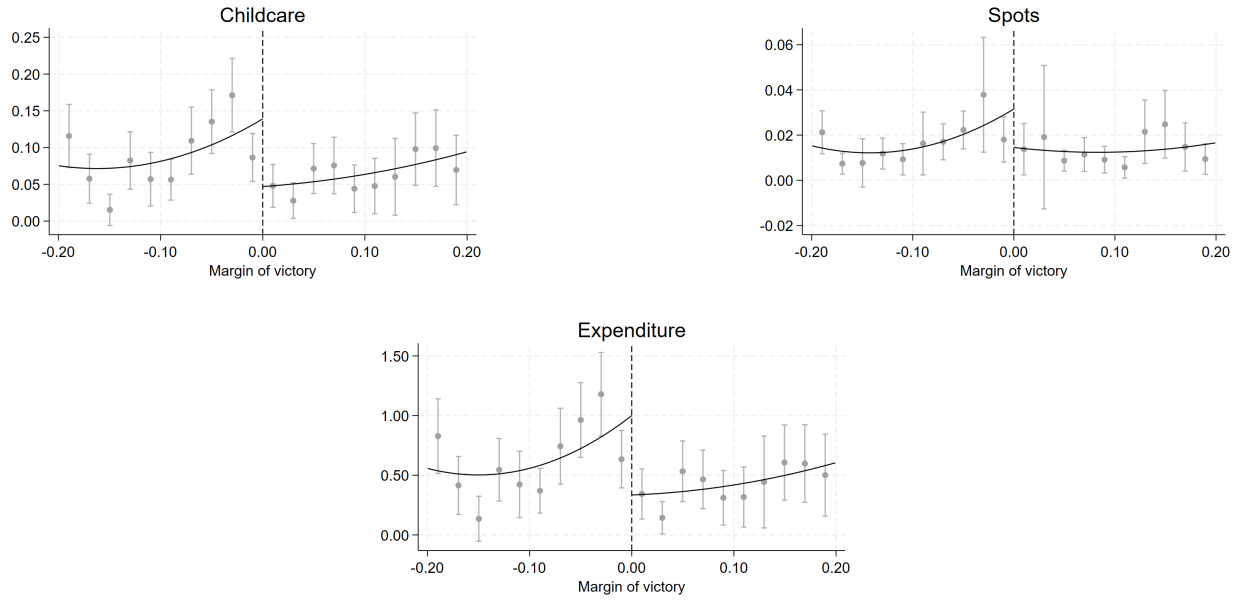


Note: The figure presents parametric and non-parametric point estimates for the discontinuity in covariates at the cutoff. Different shades of blue represent estimates with 90%, 95%, and 99% confidence intervals. The estimates are derived using local linear and second-order polynomial regressions within the optimal bandwidth specified by Calonico et al. (2019).

4.2 Empirical findings

Main findings. Figure 3 shows the gender gap in early childcare provision among re-running mayors. It presents binned scatter plots of childcare outcomes in 20% margin-of-victory bins with 95% confidence intervals. A local second-order polynomial function is fitted on both sides of the cut-off.

Figure 3: Gender gap in early childcare across re-running mayors



Note: the figure reports binned scatter plots of childcare outcomes in 20% margin of victory bins with 95% percent confidence intervals. A local second-order polynomial function is fitted on both sides of the cut-off

A clear gap emerges at the cut-off for both early childcare service availability and expenditure, with female-led municipalities providing fewer services than their male-led counterparts. In contrast, a negative but non-significant gap appears for the availability of childcare spots.

Table 1: Gender gap in early childcare across re-running mayors

	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Linear Polynomial						
Childcare	-0.086***	-0.105***	-0.079**	-0.084**	-0.088**	-0.072*
	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.039)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Bandwidth	0.189	0.178	0.189	0.164	0.151	0.158
Observations	3468	3304	3088	1817	1691	1588
Spots	-0.013**	-0.016**	-0.010	-0.003	-0.001	0.001
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Bandwidth	0.210	0.198	0.214	0.135	0.114	0.127
Observations	3748	3603	3374	1524	1365	1315
Expenditure	-0.603***	-0.692***	-0.543**	-0.608**	-0.638**	-0.524*
	(0.232)	(0.229)	(0.249)	(0.284)	(0.269)	(0.276)
Bandwidth	0.187	0.177	0.188	0.167	0.153	0.161
Observations	3443	3269	3074	1834	1711	1606
Panel B: Quadratic Polynomial						
Childcare	-0.085*	-0.071	-0.089*	-0.077*	-0.079*	-0.065
	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.052)	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.042)
Bandwidth	0.189	0.178	0.189	0.239	0.220	0.227
Observations	3468	3304	3088	2383	2283	2109
Spots	-0.016	-0.015	-0.009	-0.001	0.002	0.003
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Bandwidth	0.210	0.198	0.214	0.217	0.201	0.215
Observations	3748	3603	3374	2254	2119	2023
Expenditure	-0.614*	-0.547	-0.648*	-0.582*	-0.558*	-0.464
	(0.346)	(0.335)	(0.377)	(0.309)	(0.302)	(0.310)
Bandwidth	0.187	0.177	0.188	0.249	0.214	0.223
Observations	3443	3269	3074	2460	2218	2085
Region & Year F.E.		✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓

The table reports the parametric (columns 1–3) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6) of the RDD model. Panel A and Panel B differ in the polynomial order adopted. Additionally, the specification in columns 2 and 5 controls for regional and year fixed effects, while columns 3 and 6 control for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

Table 1 confirms these findings, presenting parametric and non-parametric RDD estimates within the optimal bandwidth. Columns 1–3 report parametric estimates, while columns 4–6 present non-parametric estimates. Panel A applies a first-order polynomial, whereas Panel B uses a quadratic-order polynomial. The specifications differ based on the controls applied: Columns 2 and 5 control for regional and year fixed effects[26], while columns 3 and 6 account for unbalanced political observables.

Across most polynomial specifications and outcome measures, a persistent negative gender gap is observed. Linear parametric estimates show that female-led municipalities are, on average, 8.6% less likely to offer early childcare services, provide 1.2% fewer spots, and allocate 60% less funding to this policy than male-led municipalities.

Robustness checks. To confirm these findings a thorough battery of robustness checks is performed. To begin with, I re-estimate the RDD on closed mixed-gender elections, adopting two alternative optimal selection bandwidth techniques (Calonico et al., 2019). Table B.4 presents these additional findings confirming the baseline results.

Next, the results remain consistent, though less robust, when expanding the sample to include all municipalities with re-running mayors below 15,000 inhabitants (Table B.6). This expansion increases the number of mixed-gender elections but introduces biases in the estimates due to confounding policies that affect both female political representation and early childcare provision above the 5,000 inhabitant threshold.

Then, this paper conducts two empirical exercises to ensure that austerity measures and additional national resources for early childcare provision do not bias the results. First, I re-estimate the RDD model, restricting the sample to 2002–2012 by excluding the last three years of the dataset. This addresses potential bias from the sovereign debt crisis and the austerity measures imposed by the Italian Domestic Stability Pact, which began limiting

[26] While these controls enhance estimate consistency, they are not my preferred specification. Their inclusion reduces variation between treated and control units, and balancing tests indicate that additional controls are unnecessary, as observables are well balanced.

municipal budgets for municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants in 2013. Second, I account for additional resources allocated for early childcare provision under the Budget Law (Law 296/2006) by including a dummy variable set to 1 for years in which regions received these additional funds. Table B.5 reports the results. Across all specifications, the findings remain robust, confirming a persistent gender gap in early childcare provision among re-running mayors.

To further validate the robustness of the findings, this paper conducts a falsification test and a placebo test. The falsification test estimates the RDD model using previous early childcare provision as the outcome variable. Since the gender of incumbent mayors cannot influence policy implementation in previous legislative terms, a significant relationship would indicate potential sample bias or differences in the path dependence of early childcare provision between treated and control units. However, the results in Table B.7 rule out these concerns. The mayoral gender is not significantly associated with the provision of nursery school in almost all specifications.

As a placebo test, this paper estimates the RDD model using cut-off values for the running variable from -0.30 to -0.10 and 0.10 to 0.30 (Brollo and Troiano, 2016). Within this range, the analysis no longer compares early childcare provision between municipalities where a female mayor narrowly won or lost against a male opponent. Instead, positive cut-offs compare policy choices between female mayors who won with a large margin and those who won narrowly, while negative cut-offs do the same for male mayors. Since this test does not evaluate a gender gap in policies, no significant differences are expected. Figures B.3 displays the results of this empirical exercise for all three outcome measures, using a first-order polynomial. In each graph, the x-axis represents different values of the margin of victory, while the y-axis shows the point estimates and confidence intervals. All three graphs indicate that most estimates for the presence of early childcare (extensive margin), early childcare expenditure, and spots per child aged 0–3 (intensive margin) are not statistically

significant. These findings remain robust to the use of a second-order polynomial (Figure B.4).

5 A strategic gender gap in policy decisions

The results from the previous section likely reflect strategic policy decisions by mayors. To secure re-election, politicians may prioritize policies aligned with the median voter theorem (Downs, 1957) rather than adhering to their core policy preferences, as suggested by the citizen-candidate model (Besley and Coate, 1997;Osborne and Slivinski, 1996). This section examines how mayors seeking re-election shift away from their core policies and act strategically. The following three subsections provide robust evidence through distinct empirical exercises.

5.1 Ruling out a gender gap in policy preferences

A large body of literature suggests that women have a stronger preference for core female-oriented policies, such as early childcare (Hessami and Baskaran, 2019; Profeta, 2020). However, my results show that male re-running mayors provide more early childcare than their female counterparts. The hypothesis that this gender gap stems from differences in policy preferences (Besley and Coate, 1997) contradicts existing evidence and is therefore unlikely.

To empirically rule out this hypothesis, I estimate Model 1 on two samples: (i) mayors not seeking re-election and (ii) all mayors, regardless of their re-election decision.[27] Non-re-running mayors provide an ideal test, as they are more likely to prioritize their policy preferences rather than strategically aligning with the median voter. If policy preferences were driving the results, the gender gap should persist across non-re-running mayors, re-running mayors, and the full sample.

[27] In Appendix C, I verify that the RDD assumptions hold in both samples. Specifically, Figure C.1 confirms the absence of sorting behaviour around the cut-off, while Figure C.2 and C.3 demonstrates that most observables are balanced around the electoral threshold.

Table C.1 presents the results of this empirical exercise. Panel A reports findings for mayors not seeking re-election. Across most specifications, a positive but statistically insignificant gender gap emerges. These findings hold across parametric and non-parametric estimates, different polynomial orders, and various model specifications with additional controls. Panel B presents results for the full sample of mixed-gender elections, where a negative gender gap persists, though fewer estimates are statistically significant compared to previous results.

These findings rule out the possibility that male mayors have an inherent preference for early childcare policy. Instead, they increase support for this policy only when seeking re-election, suggesting a strategic behaviour aimed at appealing to a broader, more female-oriented voter base.

5.2 Gender gap in core-female and non-core female policy

If male mayors increase early childcare spending to broaden their electoral appeal, particularly among female voters, they should also strategically expand other core female-oriented policies.

Leveraging the granularity of the Financial Statement Certificate dataset (Ministry of Interior)[28], I replicate the Model 1 estimates using local government expenditures on alternative public services. The available data cover school canteens, sports centers, local police, electoral services, and local institutions.[29]

Among these, I classify school canteens and sports centers as core female-oriented policies, as they help women balance work and caregiving responsibilities by providing alternatives to maternal care. School canteens, in particular, support continuity in full-time schooling in Italy (Dhuey et al., 2021; Berthelon et al., 2023). The remaining services are considered non-core female-oriented policies.

[28] The Financial Statement Certificate dataset (Ministry of Interior) provides comprehensive annual information on local government budgets. This allows me to collect data not only on early childcare provision but also on expenditures across various service categories, as well as the level of surplus or deficit.

[29] Table C.3 describe these additional variables while Table C.4 provide descriptive statistics.

Parametric estimates in Table C.2 indicate a significant and negative gender gap in core female-oriented services. Linear polynomial specifications show that legislatures led by female mayors allocate 60% less funding to school canteens and 38% less to sports centers. These results remain robust with the inclusion of additional controls, including regional and year fixed effects and unbalanced political characteristics.

Notably, the negative gender gap among re-running mayors is not offset by increased spending on non-female-oriented policies. Across all services in this category, no significant gender gap is observed. This suggests that the reduction in core female-oriented policy expenditures contributes to an overall decline in total local government spending. Two pieces of empirical evidence support this interpretation. First, when I replicate the analysis using the share of expenditures for each service category relative to the total budget, no significant gender gap emerges in childcare and school canteen expenditures (Table C.5). Second, when analysing the total municipal budget, linear parametric estimates indicate a significant negative gender gap in total government expenditure across all parametric specifications (Table C.6), consistent with the findings of Accettura and Profeta, 2021.

However, Table C.6 indicates that the gender gap in core female-focused policies has no significant impact on the overall local government budget. Linear parametric estimates reveal a significant negative gender gap in tax revenues, yet I find no significant differences in municipal budget deficits or surpluses. Similarly, non-parametric estimates show no significant gender gap in total local government expenditures, revenues, or overall budget balance.

This lack of impact on the total government budget could be due to the relatively small share of core female-oriented policies in overall spending. For instance, expenditures on early childcare provision account for only 2% of total local government budgets.

5.3 Heterogenous effects

The gender gap in early childcare provision among re-running mayors may vary across municipal subgroups due to differences in strategic behavior between male and female mayors. I examine two key dimensions of heterogeneity.

First, I assess whether the policy gap widens in municipalities with higher childcare demand and weaker gender stereotypes by conducting a heterogeneous analysis based on (1) the share of female employment and (2) the share of votes against the divorce abrogative referendum.

Second, I investigate whether the policy gap increases when incumbent policies are more salient due to higher voter participation. To test this, I use (3) voter turnout as a proxy for policy salience.

To examine these heterogeneity effects, I adopt an approach similar to the difference-in-discontinuities method used by Casarico et al., 2022. I extend Model 1 by incorporating the heterogeneity measure of interest, its interaction with the mayor's gender dummy, and the margin of victory.[30]

The validity of this design relies on the continuity of the interaction at the cut-off and the random assignment of interaction variables, conditional on the forcing variable. The first condition is fully satisfied, as shown in Figure 2, where none of the three variables in the heterogeneous analysis exhibit discontinuities at the cut-off. To assess the second condition, I follow Becker et al. (2013) and verify that heterogeneous results are not driven by other factors varying across municipal subgroups. To this end, I conduct a balancing test for

[30] In detail, I estimate the following local linear regression model within the optimal bandwidth computed in model 1:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta F_{it} + \gamma MV_{it} + \delta F_{it} \cdot MV_{it} + \mu Z_{it} + \nu Z_{it} \cdot MV_{it} + \lambda F_{it} \cdot Z_{it} + \omega F_{it} \cdot Z_{it} \cdot MV_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

The variable definitions remain the same as in Model 1, with the only exception being Z_{it}, which represents one of the three variables listed above. For the purposes of this study, the key coefficients of interest are β and γ. β measures the effect of the mayor's gender on the outcome when $Z_{it} = 0$, while γ captures the interaction effect between the mayor's gender and the variable of interest at the cut-off.

observables, comparing municipalities above and below the mean values of the female employment share, the share of votes in the divorce abrogative referendum, and voter turnout. The results of this test are reported in Figure C.4.

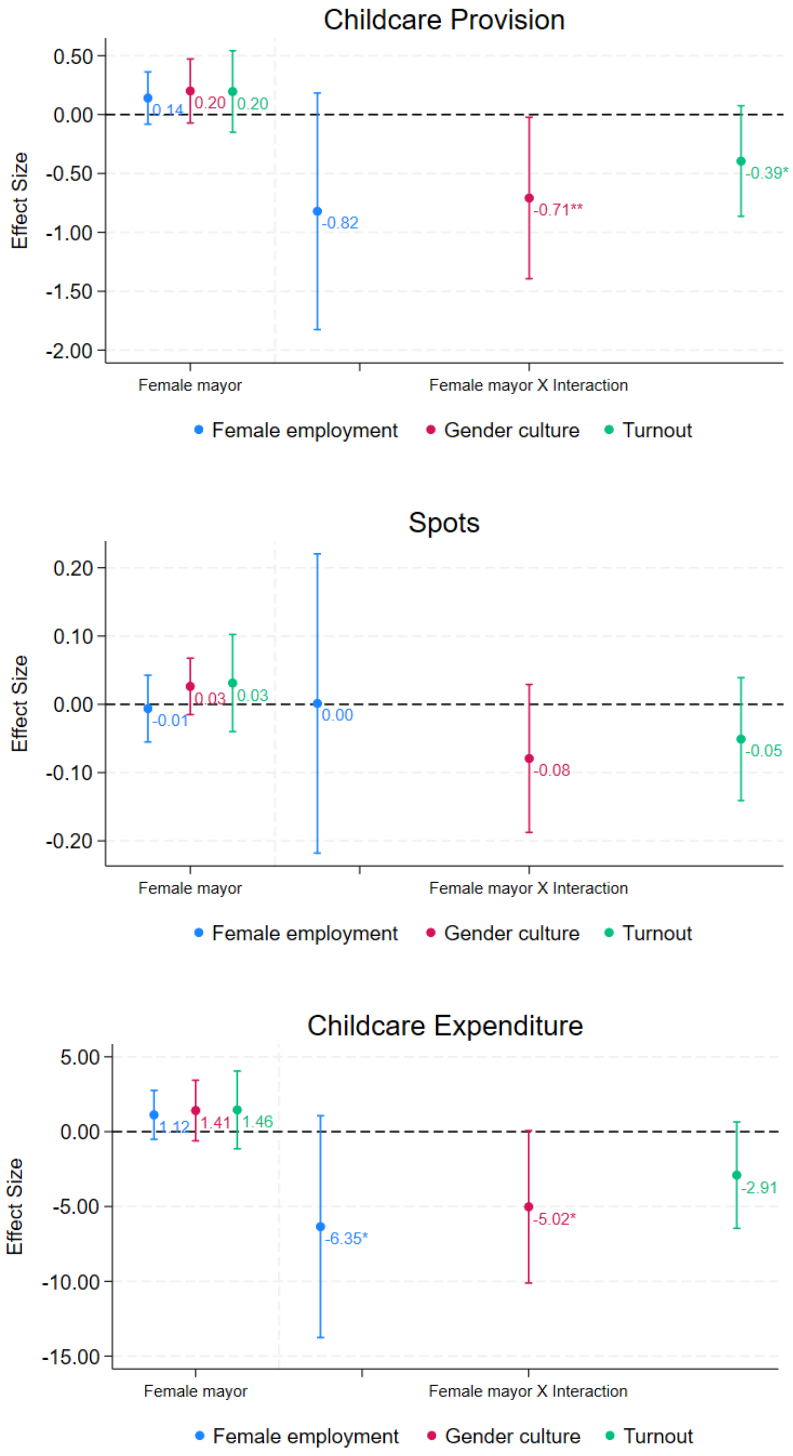
After confirming the design's validity, I proceed with the heterogeneous analysis. Figure 4 presents the effects for the two main outcomes. The left side of each graph shows the effects of a female mayor (β) when the interaction variable is zero, while the right side reports the interaction coefficients (γ). Different colours distinguish the three interaction variables.

Overall, the results are both significant and consistent. A 1 percentage point increase in the female employment share and the share of votes against the divorce referendum in municipalities led by a female mayor is associated with a 6.14% and 5.33% reduction in childcare expenditure per child, respectively. These findings rule out an alternative interpretation of the baseline results.

The gender gap in early childcare and other core female-oriented policies may stem from female mayors avoiding policies that reinforce gender stereotypes to enhance their re-election prospects. However, the gap widens in municipalities with high childcare demand and weaker gender stereotypes, where female mayors have less incentive to engage in such strategic behavior. Therefore, the gap is primarily driven by male mayors allocating more resources to early childcare, particularly in municipalities where demand for these services is higher.

Meanwhile, a 10-percentage point increase in voter turnout reduces the probability of early childcare provision by 3.9 percentage points. The widening gap in legislatures with higher turnout suggests that male mayors strategically invest more in early childcare provision, where policy implementation has greater prominence due to higher political participation. These are the settings where they have a greater chance of gaining the support of female voters.

Figure 4: Heterogeneity effects



Note: The figure reports heterogeneity estimates. On the left hand side the coefficient estimates of β while on the right hand side the ones of γ. Vertical lines are 95% percent confidence intervals, obtained from municipality-level cluster-robust standard errors.

These findings are further supported by the estimates in Table C.7, which report the gender gap in early childcare across different subsamples of municipalities, accounting for regional and year fixed effects as well as unbalanced political controls. This evidence further suggests that male mayors actively increase early childcare spending in municipalities where they have a greater chance of securing female voters' support.

6 Conclusions

While gender stereotypes (Le Barbanchon and Sauvagnat, 2022; Casas-Arce and Saiz, 2015) and differences in confidence and competitiveness (Kanthak and Woon, 2015; Ellison and Swanson, 2023) suggest that male and female politicians may adopt distinct electoral strategies, little is known about gender gaps in policy among incumbents seeking re-election.

Given that 60% of politicians worldwide seek re-election[31], understanding how incumbents adjust policies in response to electoral incentives is crucial. This is particularly relevant for core female-oriented policies, which international organizations and scholars recognize as key to promoting gender equality. However, evidence on the relationship between politicians' identity and policy choices remains mixed, possibly due to overlooked re-election strategies.

In this work, I analyse the leading figure of Italian mayors and their provision of early childcare and other core female-oriented policies. Italy presents an ideal case due to its historically low childcare provision, entrenched traditional gender roles (Carrer and Masi, 2024), and persistent gender disparities in the labour market (Casarico and Lattanzio, 2024). To causally identify the effect of politician gender, I exploit quasi-random variation in mayoral gender due to narrow electoral margins and apply a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD). I link administrative data on early childcare provision with local electoral results and politicians' characteristics from 2002 to 2015.

I find a persistent negative gender gap in early childcare provision among re-running may-

[31] Source: IPU Parline data

ors. Municipalities led by male mayors are 10.8% more likely to offer early childcare services, provide 2.08% more childcare spots, and spend 61.3% more per child aged 0–3. These results remain robust across multiple specifications, including fixed effects, additional political controls, different bandwidth selection methods, and alternative samples. Falsification and placebo tests further validate these findings.

From a theoretical perspective, two hypotheses could explain a gender gap in early childcare among re-running mayors. Female mayors may downplay these policies to counter voter stereotypes and improve their re-election prospects, while male mayors may strategically expand them to broaden their electoral appeal. The observed gap reflects gendered strategic behaviours.

In other terms, incumbents strategically adjust their policies to the median voter based on their gender. Three empirical exercises support this conclusion. First, I rule out the possibility that the gap stems from gender-based policy preferences (Besley and Coate, 1997) rather than re-election strategies (Pierson, 1996; Cox, 2009). Among non-re-running mayors—who are more likely to prioritize their own policy preferences—there is no significant gender gap in early childcare provision.

Second, I find that this gender gap extends beyond early childcare services to other core female-oriented policies at the local level. Male-led municipalities spend significantly more on school canteens and sports centers - two key alternatives to maternal care - than their female counterpart. However, this spending gap does not significantly alter the overall municipal budget. This is due to the small share of these services in total expenditures rather than compensatory decrease in other areas.

Finally, the gender gap widens in municipalities with weaker gender stereotypes, higher female employment, and greater voter turnout. These findings point out that male mayors are more likely to increase spending on core female-oriented policies to strengthen their electoral appeal, rather than female mayors reducing expenditures to avoid reinforcing gender

stereotypes.

These results have important policy and electoral implications. While increasing female political participation is expected to enhance gender-sensitive policies, the results suggest a more complex reality. Rather than female mayors expanding these policies, male mayors who narrowly defeat female opponents strategically increase spending on core female-oriented services to maximize their re-election prospects. This indicates that greater female representation in electoral competition may indirectly increase resources supporting female empowerment, but primarily through male incumbents' strategic adjustments rather than proactive policy expansion by female politicians.

Further research is needed to assess the external validity of these findings across different political systems and settings. Future studies should examine whether similar strategic behaviours occur in other political roles, such as executive committees and city councils, and under different institutional arrangements. Institutional settings, in particular, play a crucial role in shaping female political representation and, consequently, policy decisions (Profeta and Woodhouse, 2018; Baltrunaite et al., 2019; Cipullo, 2023). Expanding research on gendered electoral strategies will help clarify the broader implications of increasing female political representation on public policy.

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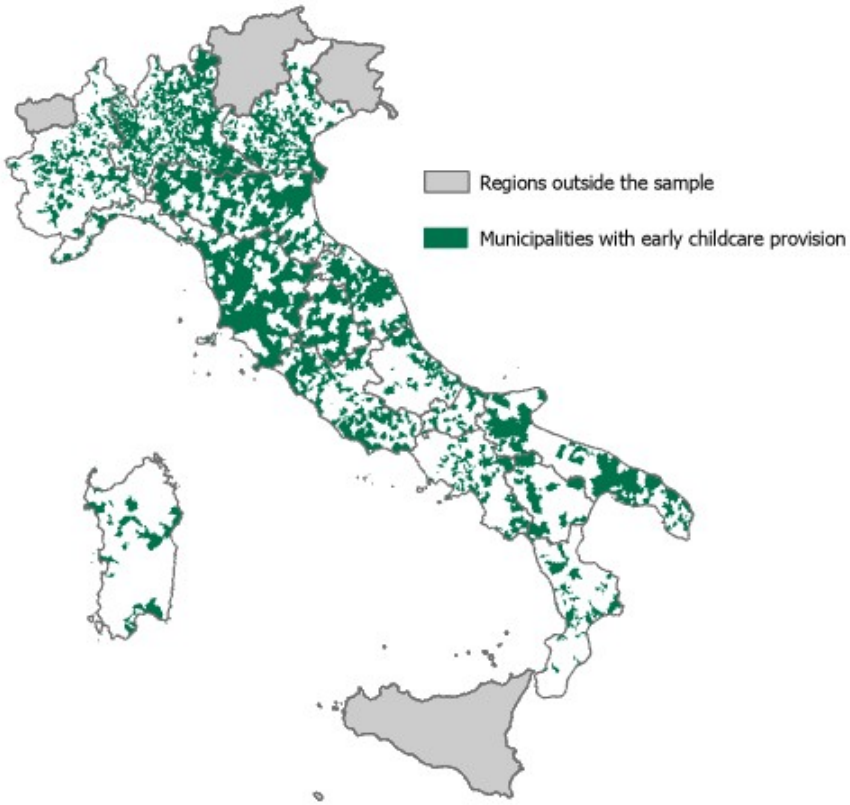
Appendix A: Descriptive statistics

A.1 Early childcare provision

In Figure A.1, I illustrate early childcare provision across Italian municipalities using data from the Ministry of Interior. Between 2002 and 2015, only 2,096 municipalities provided public early childcare services, with significant variation both within and across regions.

Figure A.1: The geography of public early childcare provision



Note: The figure displays in green the municipalities that provided early childcare services between 2002 and 2015. The regions of Sicily, Valle D'Aosta, Friuli Venezia Giulia, and Trentino Alto Adige are not included in the sample.

The proportion of municipalities providing this service is notably higher in the Center (40%)

and the North (29%), but significantly lower in the South (20.74%), highlighting a substantial regional disparity in access to public early childcare services. Even when services are available, the number of allocated spots is insufficient to meet European targets. At the municipal level, early childcare services are accessible to only 13.6% of children aged 0–3, with the southern regions showing an even lower accessibility rate of just 9.4%.

A.2 Descriptive statistics

Table A.1: Gender gap in re-running probability among mayors

	Running for re-elections			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: Full sample				
Female mayor	-0.0247**	-0.0234*	-0.0192	-0.00675
	(0.0119)	(0.0127)	(0.0126)	(0.0124)
Observations	20,034	16,896	16,720	16,720
Panel B: Municipalities smaller then 5000 inhabitants				
Female mayor	-0.0235	-0.0162	-0.0142	-0.000691
	(0.0148)	(0.0160)	(0.0160)	(0.0157)
Observations	13,322	10,735	10,625	10,625
Panel C: Municipalities between 5000 and 15000 inhabitants				
Female mayor	-0.0205	-0.0229	-0.0141	-0.00972
	(0.0230)	(0.0234)	(0.0233)	(0.0229)
Observations	4,569	4,161	4,115	4,115
Economics controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Political controls		✓	✓	✓
Gender culture			✓	✓
Regional FE				✓

Note: This table reports the results of an empirical exercise, based on legislature data, to assess whether a gender gap exists among re-running mayors. The analysis employs a linear probability model to examine whether the decision to seek re-election is significantly associated with the incumbent's gender, while controlling for socio-economic municipal characteristics (e.g., pre-tax municipal income, unemployment rate, and secondary education levels), political factors (e.g., mayor's age and education, share of female councillors, and proportion of women in the executive committee), gender culture (measured by the share of votes in favour of the abrogative referendum), and regional fixed effects. Significance levels are denoted as ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, and *p<0.1.

Table A.2: The difference in childcare between re-running and non-re-running mayors

	Childcare Presence	Childcare Spots	Childcare Expenditure
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A: Full sample			
Re-running mayors	-0.003	0.001	-0.002
	(0.008)	(0.001)	(0.055)
Observation	74,938	68,278	69,767
Panel B: Municipalities smaller than 5000 inhabitants			
Re-running mayors	0.008	0.001	0.053
	(0.007)	(0.001)	(0.043)
Observation	49,649	45,862	47,130
Panel C: Municipalities between 5000 and 15000 inhabitants			
Re-running mayors	-0.015	0.001	-0.070
	(0.017)	(0.002)	(0.120)
Observation	17,237	16,212	16,416

Note: The figures report the timing (left hand side) and the geography (right hand side) of mixed gender elections. The left hand side bar graph consists shows the yearly distribution of mixed-gender elections (light green) and non-mixed-gender elections (dark green) across Italian municipalities. Instead, the map on the right hand side shows municipalities shaded in light green had at least one mixed-gender election, while those in white did not.

Table A.3: Description and Data Source of Each Variable

Variable	Definition	Source
Dependent Variables		
Childcare	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the service is provided, 0 otherwise	Ministry of Interior
Spots	Inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of childcare spots for children aged 0-3	Ministry of Interior
Expenditure	Inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of childcare expenditure for children aged 0-3	Ministry of Interior
Explanatory Variable		
Female Mayors	Dummy variable equal to 1 for a female mayor, 0 otherwise	Ministry of Interior
Political Controls		
Age	Mayor's age	Ministry of Interior
Education	Mayor's education	Ministry of Interior
Female In The Executive	Share of female in the executive committee	Ministry of Interior
Female In The City Council	Share of female in the city council	Ministry of Interior
Age Of Executives	Average age of the executive committee	Ministry of Interior
Age Of Councillors	Average age of the city council	Ministry of Interior
Education Executives	Average education of the executive committee	Ministry of Interior
Education Councillors	Average education of the city council	Ministry of Interior
Left-Wing Mayor	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the mayor has a left-wing ideology, 0 otherwise	Ministry of Interior
Right-Wing Mayor	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the mayor has a right-wing ideology, 0 otherwise	Ministry of Interior
Civic Mayor	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the mayor comes from a civic list, 0 otherwise	Ministry of Interior
Economic Controls		
Per Capita Taxable Income	Log of per capita taxable income	Ministry of Economics and Finance
Unemployment	Unemployment rate	ISTAT
Youth Unemployment	Youth unemployment rate	ISTAT
Female Employment	Share of female employment	ISTAT
Female Labour Force	Share of female labour force	ISTAT
Index Of Secondary Education	Index of completion of secondary education	ISTAT
Index Of School Dropouts	Index of compulsory schooling drop-off	ISTAT
Demographic Controls		
Children	Log of children aged 0 to 3	ISTAT
Population Density	Population density	ISTAT
Foreigners	Log of foreigners	ISTAT
Share Elderly	Share of individuals above 60 years old	ISTAT
Geographic Controls		
Altimetric Zone	Altimetric zone	ISTAT
Area	Area of the municipality	ISTAT
Altitude From The Center	Difference in altitude from the main city center	ISTAT
North-West	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the municipality is located in the north-west, 0 otherwise	ISTAT
North-East	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the municipality is located in the north-east, 0 otherwise	ISTAT
Center	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the municipality is located in the center, 0 otherwise	ISTAT
South	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the municipality is located in the south, 0 otherwise	ISTAT
Cultural Controls		
Abortion	Share of votes against the abortion abrogative referendum	Ministry of Interior
Divorce	Share of votes against the divorce abrogative referendum	Ministry of Interior

Note: The table describes each variable used in this study and summarizes its data source.

Table A.4: Descriptive Statistics Sample Used in the RDD Strategy

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Childcare	6,292	.080	.271	0	1
Spots	6,246	.017	.098	0	2.826
Expenditure	6,254	.555	1.915	0	10.140
Female Mayors	6,462	.396	.489	0	1
Age of the Mayor	6462	48.146	10.324	23.000	86.000
Education of the Mayor	5759	3.986	1.997	0.000	6.000
Female in the Executive Committee	5670	0.262	0.335	0.000	1.000
Female in the City Council	6226	0.374	0.240	0.000	1.000
Age of the Executive Committee	6313	44.734	8.340	20.000	80.000
Age of the City Council	6451	43.599	4.590	28.500	62.250
Education of the Executive Committee	6157	3.993	1.018	2.000	6.000
Education of the City Council	6444	3.968	0.568	2.000	6.000
Left-Wing Mayor	6086	0.070	0.255	0.000	1.000
Right-Wing Mayor	6086	0.042	0.200	0.000	1.000
Civic Mayor	6086	0.844	0.363	0.000	1.000
Per Capita Taxable Income	6448	2.447	0.766	0.630	5.951
Unemployment Rate	6446	8.965	7.344	0.870	35.230
Youth Unemployment Rate	6446	24.800	18.234	0.000	74.440
Female Employment	6446	42.617	8.344	23.780	58.930
Female Labour Force	6453	0.357	0.078	0.179	0.528
Index of Secondary Education	6452	46.018	21.459	5.680	100.000
Index of School Dropouts	6452	9.986	3.550	0.000	30.000
Children	6455	0.241	0.057	0.123	0.407
Population Density	6453	134.815	205.799	6.000	2671.080
Foreigners	6453	3.652	1.425	0.000	6.842
Share Elderly	6455	0.241	0.057	0.123	0.407
Altimetric Zone	6455	2.832	1.506	1.000	5.000
Area of the Municipality	6462	27.720	28.103	2.282	243.258
Altitude from the Center	6455	378.037	270.458	3.000	1210.000
North-West	6462	0.425	0.494	0.000	1.000
North-East	6462	0.128	0.335	0.000	1.000
Center	6462	0.200	0.400	0.000	1.000
South	6462	0.247	0.431	0.000	1.000
Abortion	6408	0.553	0.111	0.226	0.860
Divorce	6408	0.477	0.142	0.082	0.937

Note: The table displays descriptive statistics for the sample used in the analysis. Column 1 reports the number of observations, Column 2 shows the mean, Column 3 the standard deviation, and Columns 4 and 5 show the minimum and maximum values, respectively.

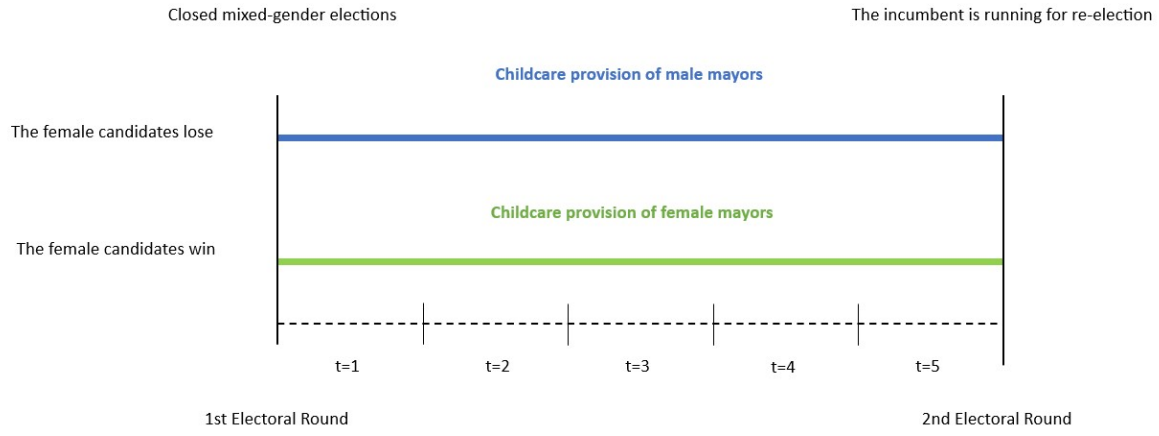
Table A.5: Mean Differences Between Female-Led and Male-Led Municipalities

Variable	Male Mayor	Female Mayor	Difference in Mean
Childcare	0.081 (0.273)	0.078 (0.267)	0.003
Spots	0.018 (0.093)	0.018 (0.108)	-0.003
Expenditure	0.567 (1.932)	0.537 (1.890)	0.030
Per Capita Taxable Income	2.457 (0.780)	2.430 (0.741)	0.027
Female Labour Force	0.354 (0.078)	0.360 (0.081)	-0.003*
Youth Unemployment Rate	25.62 (18.069)	23.544 (18.417)	2.073***
Unemployment Rate	9.297 (7.347)	8.454 (7.311)	0.843***
Female Employment	41.94 (8.184)	43.653 (8.481)	-1.713***
Share Elderly	0.243 (0.057)	0.237 (0.060)	0.009***
Population Density	124.23 (186.663)	151.008 (231.141)	-26.778***
Foreigners	3.618 (1.428)	3.705 (1.422)	-0.090**
Index of School Dropouts	10.02 (3.591)	9.936 (3.483)	0.084
Index of Secondary Education	46.593 (21.474)	45.141 (21.411)	1.452***
Altimetric Zone	2.817 (1.491)	2.853 (1.527)	-0.036
Area of the Municipality	28.701 (29.814)	26.220 (25.200)	2.484***
Altitude from the Center	384.906 (272.463)	367.524 (267.075)	17.382**
North-West	0.402 (0.489)	0.462 (0.498)	-0.060***
North-East	0.108 (0.309)	0.162 (0.369)	-0.054***
Center	0.222 (0.414)	0.168 (0.372)	0.054***
South	0.270 (0.444)	0.210 (0.408)	0.060***
Age of the Mayor	49.167 (10.530)	46.587 (9.798)	2.577***
Education of the Mayor	3.825 (1.983)	4.218 (1.995)	-0.393***
Female in the Executive Committee	0.273 (0.339)	0.246 (0.327)	0.027***
Female in the City Council	0.423 (0.240)	0.303 (0.225)	0.120***
Age of the Executive Committee	44.796 (8.373)	44.637 (8.289)	0.159
Age of the City Council	43.413 (4.623)	43.884 (4.524)	-0.471***
Education of the Executive Committee	3.978 (1.017)	4.017 (1.020)	-0.042
Education of the City Council	3.972 (0.579)	3.960 (0.552)	0.012
Left-Wing Mayor	0.069 (0.255)	0.072 (0.258)	-0.001
Right-Wing Mayor	0.045 (0.210)	0.036 (0.186)	0.009*
Civic Mayor	0.849 (0.360)	0.837 (0.369)	0.009
Abortion	0.555 (0.108)	0.552 (0.114)	0.0003
Divorce	0.474 (0.141)	0.480 (0.144)	-0.003

Note: The table shows the difference in means between female-led and male-led municipalities. The first two columns report the mean and standard deviation (in parentheses) for key variables of interest across municipalities led by female and male mayors, respectively, while the third column tests whether the mean difference is statistically significant using a two-sample t-test. Significance levels are denoted as ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

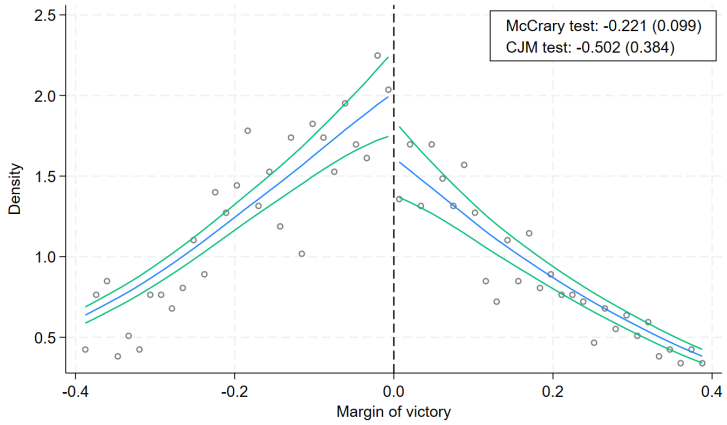
Appendix B: The gender gap in policy across re-running mayors

Figure B.1: Research design



Note: The figure illustrates the research design of this study. To assess whether incumbents make different decisions based on their gender to secure re-election, we focus exclusively on mayors running for a second consecutive term. Specifically, we examine the provision of childcare during the tenure of mayors who narrowly won a closely contested mixed-gender election in their first electoral round.

Figure B.2: Population density the margin of victory around the cut-off



Note: The figure displays the Population density distribution of the margin of victory, along with a local first-order polynomial control function and 95 percent confidence intervals. On the right-hand side of the zero cut-off are cases where a woman wins a mixed-gender election, while on the left-hand side are cases where a woman loses. Both the McCrary test (McCrary, 2008) and the CJM test (Cattaneo et al., 2020) results support the null hypothesis, alleviating concerns regarding manipulation or sorting behaviours around the electoral threshold.

Table B.1: Balancing economici

	Linear Polynomial						*Quadratic Polynomial*					
	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
income	0.034	0.034	0.131	0.041	0.041	0.151	0.011	0.011	0.101	0.026	0.026	0.157
	(0.091)	(0.091)	(0.090)	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.136) (0.124)	(0.124)	(0.125)	(0.149)	(0.149)	(0.161)	
Bandwidth	0.174	0.174	0.199	0.168	0.168	0.181	0.174	0.174	0.199	0.300	0.300	0.272
Observations	3293	3293	3243	1859	1859	1758	3293	3293	3243	2707	2707	2307
fem$_l abour force$	0.000	0.000	0.017*	-0.013	-0.013	0.002	-0.002	-0.002	0.010	-0.017	-0.017	0.002
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012) (0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.014)	
Bandwidth	0.177	0.177	0.191	0.176	0.176	0.178	0.177	0.177	0.191	0.236	0.236	0.292
Observations	3351	3351	3135	1927	1927	1730	3351	3351	3135	2383	2383	2356
Tasso di disoccupazione giovanile	-2.731	-2.731	-3.968	-0.645	-0.645	-1.987	-1.728	-1.728	-4.880	-1.420	-1.420	-2.041
	(2.409)	(2.409)	(2.649)	(4.102)	(4.102)	(4.122) (3.539)	(3.539)	(3.655)	(5.141)	(5.141)	(4.981)	
Bandwidth	0.195	0.195	0.181	0.182	0.182	0.173	0.195	0.195	0.181	0.242	0.242	0.246
Observations	3652	3652	2989	1993	1993	1691	3652	3652	2989	2430	2430	2183
Tasso di disoccupazione	-0.360	-0.360	-1.411	0.443	0.443	0.027	-0.255	-0.255	-0.672	0.092	0.092	-0.009
	(0.930)	(0.930)	(1.001)	(1.522)	(1.522)	(1.520)	(1.324)	(1.324)	(1.312)	(1.858)	(1.858)	(1.777)
Bandwidth	0.198	0.198	0.195	0.214	0.214	0.199	0.198	0.198	0.195	0.294	0.294	0.301
Observations	3706	3706	3218	2220	2220	1888	3706	3706	3218	2661	2661	2413
Tasso di occupazione	1.217	1.217	2.579**	-0.388	-0.388	0.162	0.977	0.977	2.331	-0.726	-0.726	-0.270
	(1.084)	(1.084)	(1.121)	(1.509)	(1.509)	(1.517)	(1.620)	(1.620)	(1.608)	(2.002)	(2.002)	(1.972)
Bandwidth	0.194	0.194	0.205	0.195	0.195	0.189	0.194	0.194	0.205	0.221	0.221	0.225
Observations	3638	3638	3302	2110	2110	1840	3638	3638	3302	2296	2296	2071
fem$_e mployment$	0.001	0.001	0.019*	-0.010	-0.010	0.006	0.002	0.002	0.015	-0.013	-0.013	0.005
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.016)
Bandwidth	0.180	0.180	0.188	0.194	0.194	0.198	0.180	0.180	0.188	0.253	0.253	0.285
Observations	3395	3395	3090	2095	2095	1888	3395	3395	3090	2500	2500	2347
fem$_l abour force$	0.000	0.000	0.017*	-0.013	-0.013	0.002	-0.002	-0.002	0.010	-0.017	-0.017	0.002
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.014)
Bandwidth	0.177	0.177	0.191	0.176	0.176	0.178	0.177	0.177	0.191	0.236	0.236	0.292
Observations	3351	3351	3135	1927	1927	1730	3351	3351	3135	2383	2383	2356
Region & Year F.E.		✓			✓			✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓			✓			✓

Note: the table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3 and 7–9) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6 and 10–12) from the RDD model. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 control for regional and year fixed effects, while columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 account for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1.

Table B.2: Balancing demographici e geographici

	Linear Polynomial						*Quadratic Polynomial*					
	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
shelderly	-0.004	-0.004	-0.009	0.007	0.007	0.012	-0.015	-0.015	-0.015	0.008	0.008	0.013
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Bandwidth	0.234	0.234	0.199	0.181	0.181	0.172	0.234	0.234	0.199	0.301	0.301	0.304
Observations	4172	4172	3250	1986	1986	1681	4172	4172	3250	2714	2714	2419
Population density	45.882*	45.882*	70.310***	32.194	32.194	40.197	42.052	42.052	51.849	38.528	38.528	42.389
	(24.888)	(24.888)	(27.216)	(37.488)	(37.488)	(39.458)	(36.246)	(36.246)	(38.484)	(45.755)	(45.755)	(47.181)
Bandwidth	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.240	0.240	0.241	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.339	0.339	0.351
Observations	4467	4467	3866	2409	2409	2153						
foreigners	0.065	0.065	0.135	-0.237	-0.237	-0.147	-0.213	-0.213	0.078	-0.413	-0.413	-0.324
	(0.176)	(0.176)	(0.169)	(0.267)	(0.267)	(0.261)	(0.249)	(0.249)	(0.233)	(0.350)	(0.350)	(0.343)
Bandwidth	0.188	0.188	0.267	0.184	0.184	0.183	0.188	0.188	0.267	0.215	0.215	0.209
Observations	3537	3537	3881	2017	2017	1775	3537	3537	3881	2247	2247	1949
primary	-0.097	-0.097	-0.449	-0.274	-0.274	-0.942	-0.156	-0.156	-0.700	-0.596	-0.596	-1.199
	(0.400)	(0.400)	(0.463)	(0.688)	(0.688)	(0.751)	(0.573)	(0.573)	(0.640)	(0.879)	(0.879)	(0.917)
Bandwidth	0.230	0.230	0.215	0.196	0.196	0.169	0.230	0.230	0.215	0.246	0.246	0.231
Observations	4128	4128	3431	2110	2110	1656	4128	4128	3431	2455	2455	2090
secondary	-0.827	-0.827	-0.587	-4.224	-4.224	-0.674	-2.280	-2.280	-0.002	-4.814	-4.814	-0.850
	(2.135)	(2.135)	(2.137)	(3.942)	(3.942)	(3.473)	(3.183)	(3.183)	(3.078)	(5.034)	(5.034)	(5.074)
Bandwidth	0.234	0.234	0.261	0.191	0.191	0.245	0.234	0.234	0.261	0.264	0.264	0.247
Observations	4166	4166	3845	2078	2078	2183	4166	4166	3845	2553	2553	2185
Altimetric Zone	0.114	0.114	0.250	0.169	0.169	0.191	0.208	0.208	0.261	-0.069	-0.069	-0.052
	(0.199)	(0.199)	(0.200)	(0.265)	(0.265)	(0.283)	(0.277)	(0.277)	(0.290)	(0.355)	(0.355)	(0.367)
Bandwidth	0.178	0.178	0.199	0.189	0.189	0.176	0.178	0.178	0.199	0.220	0.220	0.218
Observations	3361	3361	3250	2059	2059	1722	3361	3361	3250	2293	2293	2022
Area of the Municipality	-3.730	-3.730	-5.069	-0.820	-0.820	-2.117	-7.910*	-7.910*	-10.793**	-5.087	-5.087	-1.599
	(3.363)	(3.363)	(3.476)	(4.921)	(4.921)	(5.199)	(4.672)	(4.672)	(4.928)	(7.238)	(7.238)	(6.481)
Bandwidth	0.182	0.182	0.193	0.246	0.246	0.222	0.182	0.182	0.193	0.232	0.232	0.302
Observations	3439	3439	3170	2455	2455	2042	3439	3439	3170	2373	2373	2413
Difference in Altitude from the Main City Center	-49.042	-49.042	-68.704*	-67.199	-67.199	-86.043*	-30.156	-30.156	-62.371	-41.087	-41.087	-42.825
	(37.143)	(37.143)	(37.145)	(50.854)	(50.854)	(50.685)	(51.212)	(51.212)	(50.225)	(68.024)	(68.024)	(69.425)
Bandwidth	0.166	0.166	0.185	0.190	0.190	0.202	0.166	0.166	0.185	0.222	0.222	0.215
Observations	3173	3173	3049	2064	2064	1905	3173	3173	3049	2301	2301	2001
Region & Year F.E.		✓			✓			✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓			✓			✓

Note: the table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3 and 7–9) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6 and 10–12) from the RDD model. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 control for regional and year fixed effects, while columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 account for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1.

Table B.3: Balancing politici

	Linear Polynomial						*Quadratic Polynomial*					
	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Mayor' Age	-6.027***	-6.027***	0.000	-5.701***	-5.701***	0.000**	-3.853*	-3.853*	0.000	-5.926**	-5.926**	0.000
	(1.472)	(1.472)	(0.000)	(2.070)	(2.070)	(0.000)	(2.241)	(2.241)	(0.000)	(2.556)	(2.556)	(0.000)
Bandwidth	0.176	0.176	0.177	0.192	0.192	0.171	0.176	0.176	0.177	0.284	0.284	0.202
Observations	3331	3331	2907	2078	2078	1681	3331	3331	2907	2644	2644	1911
Mayor' Education	0.657**	0.657**	-0.000	1.016***	1.016***	0.000**	0.659	0.659	-0.000	1.125**	1.125**	-0.000
	(0.280)	(0.280)	(0.000)	(0.389)	(0.389)	(0.000)	(0.418)	(0.418)	(0.000)	(0.495)	(0.495)	(0.000)
Bandwidth	0.192	0.192	0.165	0.209	0.209	0.179	0.192	0.192	0.165	0.263	0.263	0.201
Observations	3201	3201	2718	1990	1990	1747	3201	3201	2718	2317	2317	1901
Sh. of Female in the Executive Commitee	-0.025	-0.025	0.021	-0.141**	-0.141**	-0.083	-0.033	-0.033	0.008	-0.125	-0.125	-0.063
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.049)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.071)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.079)
Bandwidth	0.191	0.191	0.185	0.171	0.171	0.166	0.191	0.191	0.185	0.246	0.246	0.247
Observations	3214	3214	2750	1712	1712	1466	3214	3214	2750	2194	2194	1962
Sh. of Female in the City Council	-0.155***	-0.155***	0.000	-0.217***	-0.217***	0.000	-0.196***	-0.196***	0.000	-0.229***	-0.229***	-0.000*
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.000)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.000)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.000)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.000)
Bandwidth	0.207	0.207	0.243	0.167	0.167	0.228	0.207	0.207	0.243	0.261	0.261	0.311
Observations	3713	3713	3707	1798	1798	2076	3713	3713	3707	2469	2469	2453
Average Age of the Executive Committee	-0.165	-0.165	-0.526	-1.038	-1.038	-2.057	-2.450*	-2.450*	-1.196	-1.965	-1.965	-2.388
	(0.981)	(0.981)	(1.098)	(1.653)	(1.653)	(1.693)	(1.435)	(1.435)	(1.646)	(1.958)	(1.958)	(1.978)
Bandwidth	0.218	0.218	0.175	0.133	0.133	0.126	0.218	0.218	0.175	0.176	0.176	0.180
Observations	3905	3905	2843	1515	1515	1263	3905	3905	2843	1916	1916	1731
Average Age of the Councillors	0.121	0.121	0.435	1.628**	1.628**	1.103	0.774	0.774	0.772	1.604*	1.604*	1.151
	(0.589)	(0.589)	(0.603)	(0.781)	(0.781)	(0.752)	(0.840)	(0.840)	(0.854)	(0.944)	(0.944)	(0.901)
Bandwidth	0.179	0.179	0.190	0.193	0.193	0.210	0.179	0.179	0.190	0.278	0.278	0.305
Observations	3379	3379	3103	2075	2075	1949	3379	3379	3103	2623	2623	2424
Average Education of the Executive Committee	0.140	0.140	0.047	-0.027	-0.027	-0.044	-0.038	-0.038	-0.001	-0.044	-0.044	-0.026
	(0.120)	(0.120)	(0.121)	(0.160)	(0.160)	(0.163)	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.172)	(0.210)	(0.210)	(0.226)
Bandwidth	0.208	0.208	0.233	0.229	0.229	0.240	0.208	0.208	0.233	0.295	0.295	0.264
Observations	3671	3671	3473	2253	2253	2056	3671	3671	3473	2552	2552	2174
Average Education of the Councillors	-0.015	-0.015	0.023	-0.122	-0.122	-0.013	-0.048	-0.048	0.005	-0.135	-0.135	-0.014
	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.075)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.105)	(0.105)	(0.105)	(0.106)	(0.132)	(0.132)	(0.135)
Bandwidth	0.183	0.183	0.201	0.215	0.215	0.200	0.183	0.183	0.201	0.253	0.253	0.245
Observations	3452	3452	3275	2229	2229	1896 Observations	3452	3452	3275	2492	2492	2180
shaborvno	-0.010	-0.010	-0.017	0.016	0.016	0.015	-0.017	-0.017	-0.010	0.002	0.002	0.005
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Bandwidth	0.158	0.158	0.166	0.182	0.182	0.188	0.158	0.158	0.166	0.214	0.214	0.227
Observations	2999	2999	2723	1969	1969	1813	2999	2999	2723	2203	2203	2049
shdivno	0.005	0.005	0.007	0.041*	0.041*	0.044*	-0.014	-0.014	0.002	0.018	0.018	0.027
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Bandwidth	0.160	0.160	0.173	0.217	0.217	0.213	0.160	0.160	0.173	0.222	0.222	0.231
Observations	3029	3029	2833	2246	2246	1957	3029	3029	2833	2278	2278	2081

Note: the table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3 and 7–9) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6 and 10–12) from the RDD model. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 control for regional and year fixed effects, while columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 account for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1.

Table B.4: Alternative bandwidths selection methods

	Linear Polynomial						*Quadratic Polynomial*					
	Parametric Estimates			*Non-Parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Msesum Bandwith*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Panel A: msesum bandwith												
Childcare	-0.035*	-0.043**	-0.041*	-0.087**	-0.090**	-0.076**	-0.074***	-0.079***	-0.077***	-0.085**	-0.073*	-0.076*
	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.023)	(0.038)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.029)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.040)
Spots	-0.008	-0.008*	-0.008	-0.003	-0.003	0.000	-0.016**	-0.017**	-0.015**	0.005	0.006	0.008
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Expenditure	-0.277*	-0.334**	-0.321**	-0.627**	-0.649**	-0.522*	-0.561***	-0.600***	-0.587***	-0.603*	-0.518*	-0.535*
	(0.148)	(0.143)	(0.163)	(0.281)	(0.262)	(0.277)	(0.194)	(0.186)	(0.210)	(0.308)	(0.306)	(0.299)
Panel B: msetwo bandwith												
Childcare	-0.035*	-0.043**	-0.041*	-0.091**	-0.097***	-0.085**	-0.074***	-0.079***	-0.077***	-0.095**	-0.101**	-0.094**
	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.023)	(0.039)	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.029)	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.044)
Spots	-0.008	-0.008*	-0.008	-0.006	-0.004	-0.003	-0.016**	-0.017**	-0.015**	0.003	0.005	0.007
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Expenditure	-0.277*	-0.334**	-0.321**	-0.649**	-0.693**	-0.611**	-0.561***	-0.600***	-0.587***	-0.710**	-0.732**	-0.687**
	(0.148)	(0.143)	(0.163)	(0.283)	(0.271)	(0.282)	(0.194)	(0.186)	(0.210)	(0.314)	(0.306)	(0.321)
Region & Year F.E.		✓			✓			✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓			✓			✓

The table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3 and 7–9) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6 and 10–12) from the RDD model. Panel A and Panel B differ in the optimal bandwidth selection method used. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 control for regional and year fixed effects, while columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 account for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1.

Table B.5: 1 Billion program and DSP

	Linear Polynomial						*Quadratic Polynomial*					
	Parametric Estimates			*Non-Parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Non-Parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Childcare	-0.089**	-0.078**	-0.110***	-0.092**	-0.069*	-0.088**	-0.088	-0.084	-0.058	-0.048	-0.005	-0.051
	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.036)	(0.040)	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.054)	(0.059)	(0.054)	(0.044)	(0.047)	(0.043)
Bandwidth	0.193	0.188	0.182	0.162	0.137	0.152	0.193	0.188	0.182	0.153	0.139	0.153
Observations	2385	2102	2270	1206	919	1135	2385	2102	2270	1140	932	1135
Spots	-0.014**	-0.012*	-0.017***	-0.011	-0.003	-0.008	-0.014	-0.012	-0.008	-0.001	0.006	0.001
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Bandwidth	0.194	0.186	0.174	0.128	0.113	0.119	0.194	0.186	0.174	0.131	0.143	0.138
Observations	2375	2069	2161	973	809	916	2375	2069	2161	981	964	1028
Expenditure	-0.607**	-0.520*	-0.695***	-0.635**	-0.480*	-0.628**	-0.601	-0.581	-0.483	-0.266	0.066	-0.294
	(0.261)	(0.277)	(0.256)	(0.285)	(0.277)	(0.276)	(0.403)	(0.440)	(0.376)	(0.329)	(0.338)	(0.319)
Bandwidth	0.190	0.187	0.179	0.159	0.133	0.146	0.190	0.187	0.179	0.139	0.131	0.140
Observations	2333	2085	2210	1183	902	1080	2333	2085	2210	1033	885	1050
Budget Law F.E		✓			✓			✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓			✓			✓

Note: The table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3 and 7–9) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6 and 10–12) of the RDD model. Panel A and Panel B differ in their optimal bandwidth selection methods. The specifications in columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 control for the inflow of additional national resources that vary across regions and years, while columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 control for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1.

Table B.6: Full sample of municipalities below 15,000 inhabitants

	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Linear Polynomial						
Childcare	-0.067**	-0.100***	-0.062*	-0.079	-0.099**	-0.050
	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.048)	(0.045)	(0.048)
Bandwidth	0.239	0.229	0.227	0.195	0.172	0.181
Observations	5667	5547	4983	3020	2725	2617
Spots	-0.008	-0.011*	-0.005	-0.004	-0.005	0.002
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Bandwidth	0.217	0.214	0.208	0.170	0.148	0.159
Observations	5337	5282	4680	2717	2386	2336
Expenditure	-0.495**	-0.693***	-0.433	-0.520	-0.686**	-0.327
	(0.250)	(0.235)	(0.271)	(0.348)	(0.329)	(0.347)
Bandwidth	0.224	0.220	0.219	0.199	0.173	0.187
Observations	5463	5395	4849	3031	2749	2673
Panel B: Quadratic Polynomial						
Childcare	-0.082*	-0.083*	-0.056	-0.086	-0.098*	-0.040
	(0.048)	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.057)	(0.054)	(0.054)
Bandwidth	0.239	0.229	0.227	0.207	0.244	0.236
Observations	5667	5547	4983	3108	3483	3104
Spots	-0.010	-0.012	-0.003	-0.001	-0.003	0.005
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Bandwidth	0.217	0.214	0.208	0.198	0.218	0.236
Observations	5337	5282	4680	3025	3235	3101
Expenditure	-0.420	-0.473	-0.327	-0.595	-0.692*	-0.262
	(0.350)	(0.343)	(0.375)	(0.413)	(0.388)	(0.392)
Bandwidth	0.224	0.220	0.219	0.203	0.249	0.235
Observations	5463	5395	4849	3074	3525	3097
Region & Year F.E.		✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓

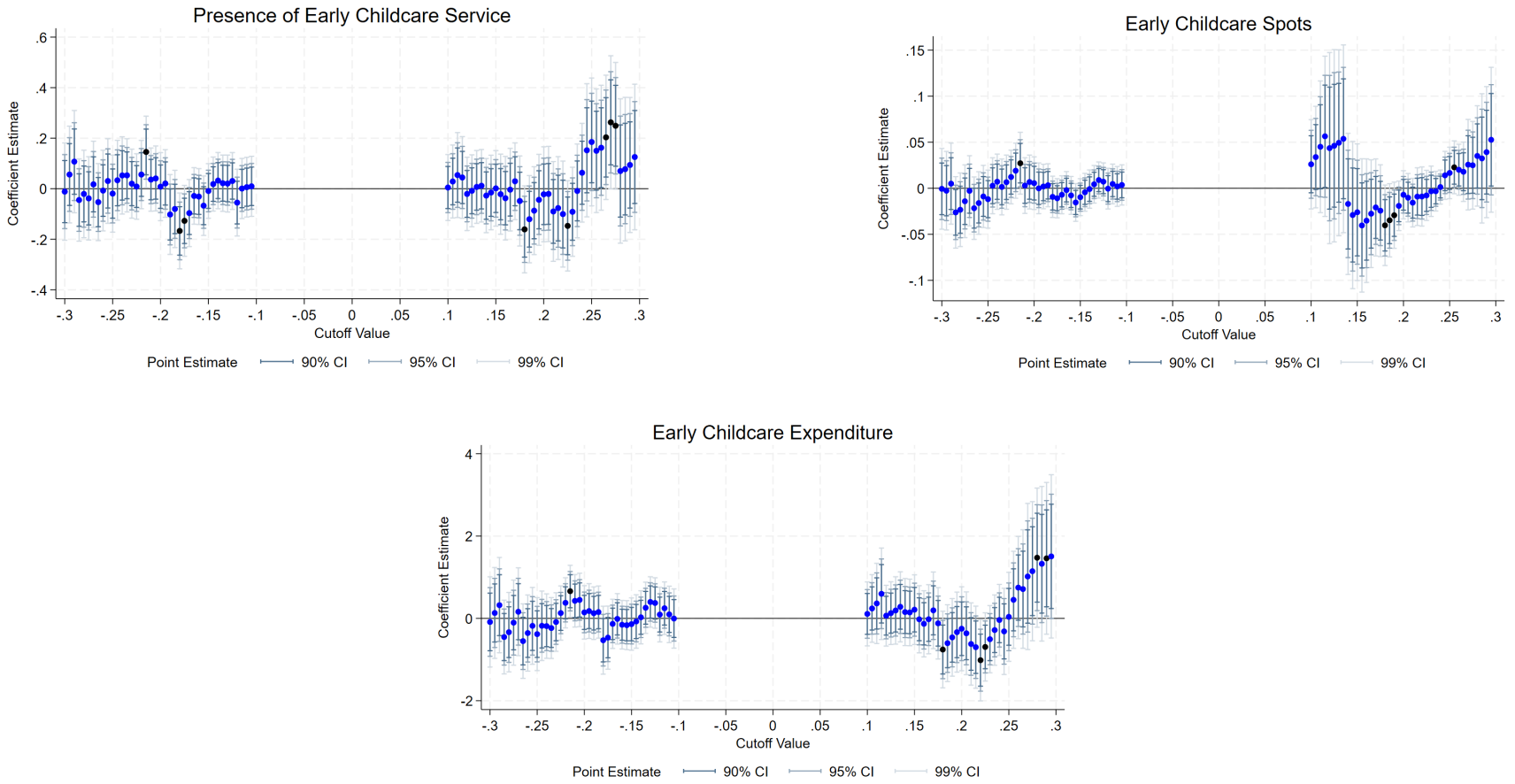
Notes: The table reports the parametric (columns 1–3) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6) of the RDD model on all mixed gender elections in municipalities with less then 15,000 inhabitants. Panel A and Panel B differ in the polynomial order adopted. Additionally, the specification in columns 2 and 5 controls for regional and year fixed effects, while columns 3 and 6 control for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table B.7: Falsification test

	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Linear Polynomial						
Childcare	-0.028	-0.038	-0.036	-0.039	-0.040	-0.057**
	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.027)	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.028)
Bandwidth	0.209	0.200	0.223	0.172	0.163	0.168
Observations	3849	3742	3591	1898	1815	1687
Spots	-0.005	-0.006	-0.006	-0.002	-0.003	-0.005
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Bandwidth	0.205	0.194	0.243	0.139	0.138	0.139
Observations	3778	3635	3798	1583	1574	1428
Expenditure	-0.255	-0.321*	-0.289	-0.279	-0.274	-0.370*
	(0.173)	(0.167)	(0.192)	(0.219)	(0.211)	(0.202)
Bandwidth	0.199	0.186	0.210	0.165	0.157	0.163
Observations	3715	3512	3444	1834	1743	1636
Panel B: Quadratic Polynomial						
Childcare	-0.043	-0.049	-0.047	-0.032	-0.030	-0.050
	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.032)
Bandwidth	0.209	0.200	0.223	0.228	0.218	0.216
Observations	3849	3742	3591	2341	2268	2067
Spot	-0.006	-0.006	-0.006	0.003	0.005	0.005
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Bandwidth	0.205	0.194	0.243	0.165	0.153	0.143
Observations	3778	3635	3798	1834	1723	1467
Expenditure	-0.313	-0.291	-0.300	-0.222	-0.161	-0.269
	(0.262)	(0.273)	(0.277)	(0.252)	(0.251)	(0.237)
Bandwidth	0.199	0.186	0.210	0.219	0.199	0.201
Observations	3715	3512	3444	2277	2114	1945
Region & Year F.E.		✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓

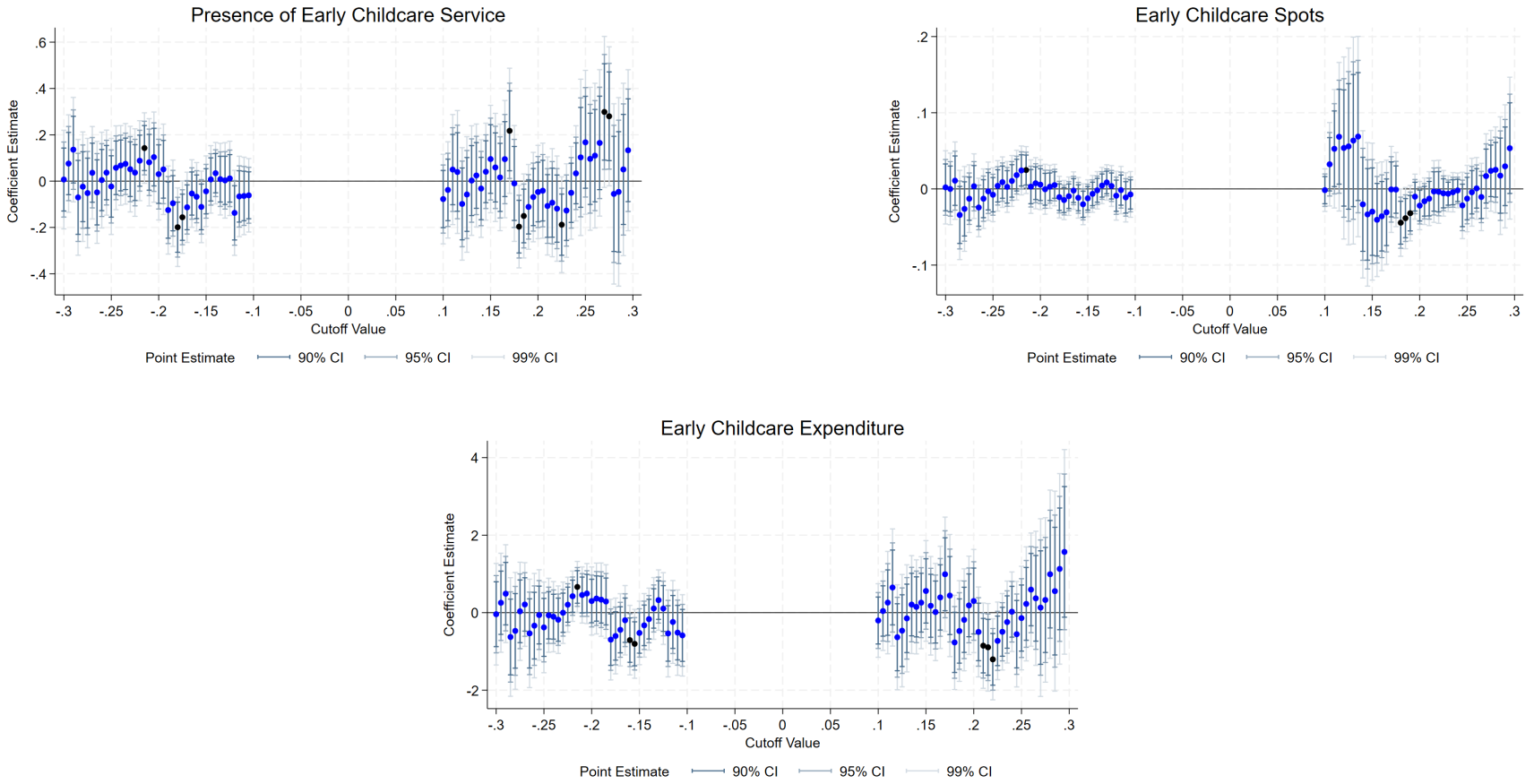
Notes: The table reports parametric estimates (columns 1–3) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6) of the RDD model, where the outcome variables are the average provisions of early childcare during the previous legislatures. Panel A and Panel B differ in the polynomial order used. Additionally, the specifications in columns 2 and 5 control for regional and year fixed effects, while columns 3 and 6 control for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, and * $p<0.1$.

Figure B.3: Placebo test (linear polynomial)



Note: The figure displays the results of the placebo test implemented to check the consistency of the main results for each of the three measures of early childcare provision. The placebo test consists of estimating the RDD model on these measures, using cut-off values ranging from -0.30 to -0.10 and from 0.10 to 0.30, with a first-order polynomial. In the three graphs, the x-axis represents the margin of victory, while the y-axis shows the respective point estimates with their confidence intervals.

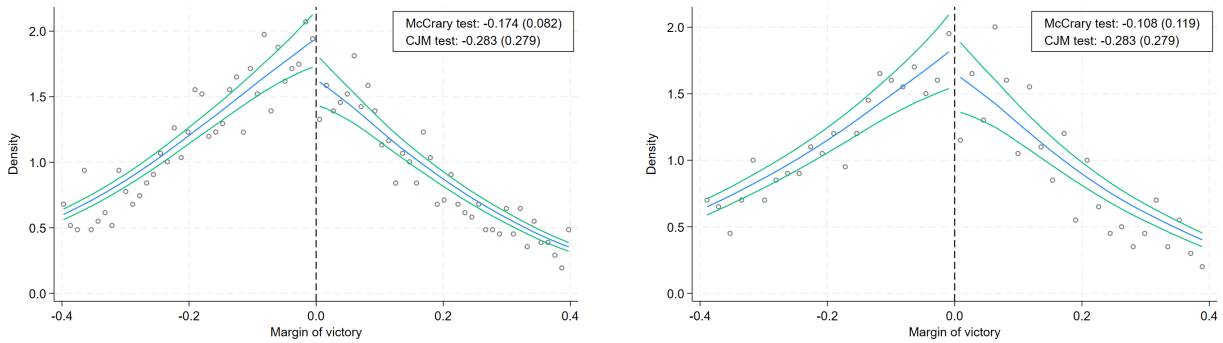
Figure B.4: Placebo test (quadratic polynomial)



Note: The figure displays the results of the placebo test implemented to check the consistency of the main results for each of the three measures of early childcare provision. The placebo test consists of estimating the RDD model on these measures, using cut-off values ranging from -0.30 to -0.10 and from 0.10 to 0.30, with a second-order polynomial. In the three graphs, the x-axis represents the margin of victory, while the y-axis shows the respective point estimates with their confidence intervals.

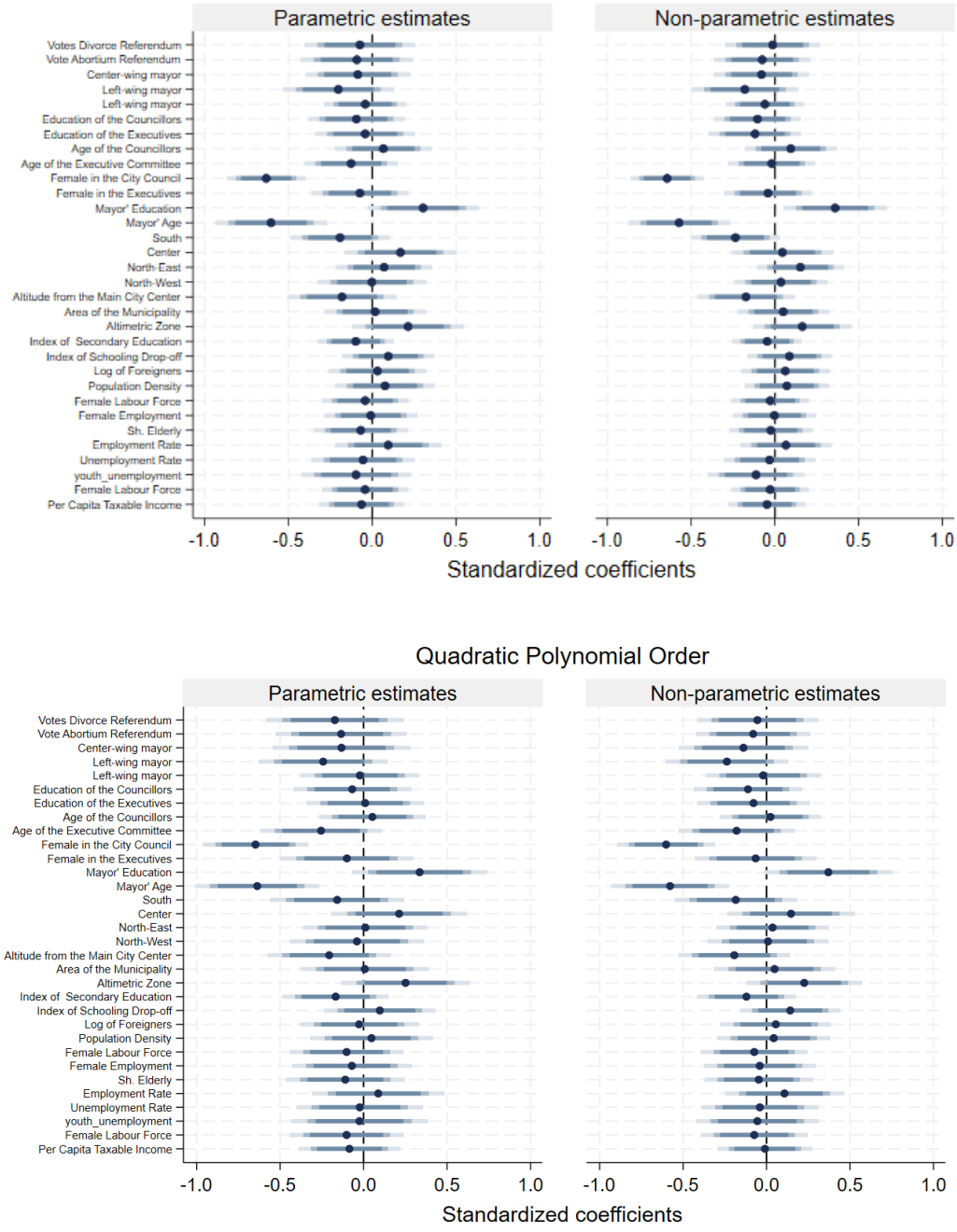
Appendix C: A strategic gender gap in policy decisions

Figure C.1: Population density if the margin of victory



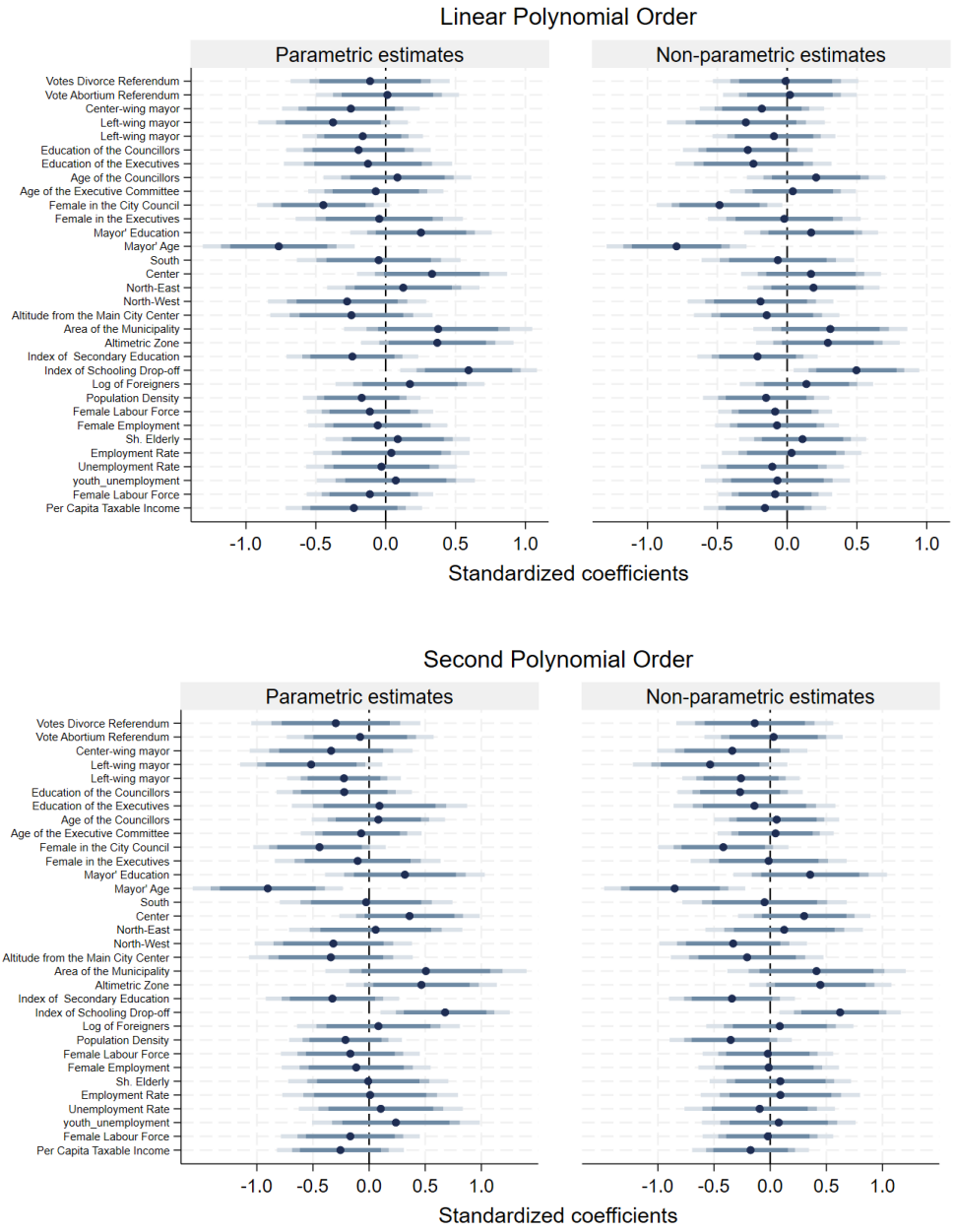
Note: The figure displays the Population density distribution of the margin of victory, along with a local first-order polynomial control function and 95 percent confidence intervals for the full sample of mayors (left hand side) and for those not re-running for re-election (right hand side). Both the McCrary test (McCrary, 2008) and the CJM test (Cattaneo et al., 2020) results support the null hypothesis, alleviating concerns regarding manipulation or sorting behaviours around the electoral threshold.

Figure C.2: Balancing tests on the full sample of mayors



Note: the figure presents parametric and non-parametric point estimates along with their 95% confidence intervals for all observables. The upper graph displays estimates using a first-order polynomial, while the lower graph shows estimates using a quadratic-order polynomial

Figure C.3: Balancing tests on the full of mayors not re-running



Note: the figure presents parametric and non-parametric point estimates along with their 95% confidence intervals for all observables. The upper graph displays estimates using a first-order polynomial, while the lower graph shows estimates using a quadratic-order polynomial

Table C.1: Gender gap in preferences

	Linear Polynomial						*Quadratic Polynomial*					
	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Not re-running mayors												
Childcare	0.077	0.051	0.092	-0.006	-0.044	-0.019	0.092	0.096	0.090	-0.055	-0.082	-0.103
	(0.063)	(0.057)	(0.067)	(0.084)	(0.067)	(0.101)	(0.093)	(0.087)	(0.101)	(0.126)	(0.096)	(0.146)
Bandwidth	0.168	0.159	0.174	0.229	0.195	0.197	0.168	0.159	0.174	0.238	0.217	0.208
Observations	1450	1403	1216	966	889	761	1450	1403	1216	977	936	777
Spots	-0.001	0.001	0.013	-0.006	0.025	-0.007	0.016	0.023	0.019	0.008	0.055	-0.015
	(0.017)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.023)	(0.019)	(0.033)	(0.040)	(0.032)
Bandwidth	0.195	0.196	0.171	0.158	0.131	0.206	0.195	0.196	0.171	0.211	0.184	0.189
Observations	1617	1628	1203	775	670	773	1617	1628	1203	925	852	738
Expenditure	0.477	0.374	0.728	-0.040	-0.329	-0.039	0.810	0.734	0.679	-0.340	-0.485	-0.637
	(0.444)	(0.416)	(0.481)	(0.641)	(0.497)	(0.699)	(0.658)	(0.642)	(0.721)	(0.921)	(0.700)	(1.067)
Bandwidth	0.165	0.151	0.173	0.209	0.176	0.212	0.165	0.151	0.173	0.237	0.216	0.206
Observations	1433	1355	1207	915	825	782	1433	1355	1207	977	936	777
Panel B: Full sample of mayors												
Childcare	-0.040	-0.061**	-0.036	-0.067*	-0.079**	-0.059	-0.034	-0.020	-0.040	-0.068	-0.077*	-0.059
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.030)	(0.038)	(0.034)	(0.038)	(0.041)	(0.040)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.040)	(0.044)
Bandwidth	0.189	0.179	0.191	0.178	0.160	0.181	0.189	0.179	0.191	0.297	0.235	0.302
Observations	5425	5192	4782	2979	2738	2687	5425	5192	4782	3983	3589	3636
Spots	-0.010	-0.012	-0.003	-0.009	-0.007	-0.005	-0.006	-0.008	-0.004	0.001	0.004	-0.002
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Bandwidth	0.195	0.189	0.197	0.168	0.145	0.166	0.195	0.189	0.197	0.210	0.190	0.228
Observations	5564	5389	4897	2826	2515	2510	5564	5389	4897	3314	3113	3166
Expenditure	-0.257	-0.359*	-0.217	-0.473*	-0.558**	-0.399	-0.254	-0.197	-0.267	-0.479	-0.544*	-0.399
	(0.197)	(0.196)	(0.206)	(0.275)	(0.246)	(0.276)	(0.293)	(0.284)	(0.310)	(0.316)	(0.295)	(0.320)
Bandwidth	0.188	0.174	0.195	0.180	0.162	0.186	0.188	0.174	0.195	0.292	0.235	0.303
Observations	5390	5056	4881	2987	2762	2746	5390	5056	4881	3957	3583	3633
Region and Year F.E		✓			✓			✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓			✓			✓

Note: The table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3 and 7–9) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6 and 10–12) of the RDD model. Panel A and Panel B differ based on the sample considered: Panel A includes all mayors, while Panel B includes only those not seeking re-election. The specifications in columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 control for the inflow of additional national resources that vary across regions and years, while columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 control for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1.

Table C.2: Gender gap in core-female and non-core female policy

	Linear Polynomial						*Quadratic Polynomial*					
	Parametric Estimates			*Non-Parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Non-Parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Schools Canteens	-0.603*	-0.612*	-0.763*	-0.434	-0.378	-0.716	-0.915*	-0.894*	-0.802	-0.272	-0.288	-0.527
	(0.349)	(0.349)	(0.391)	(0.526)	(0.529)	(0.538)	(0.521)	(0.533)	(0.578)	(0.675)	(0.683)	(0.679)
Bandwidth	0.257	0.253	0.234	0.233	0.233	0.231	0.257	0.253	0.234	0.287	0.310	0.294
Observations	4283	4258	3610	2365	2365	2131	4283	4258	3610	2637	2750	2406
Sport Centers	-0.375**	-0.486***	-0.397**	-0.203	-0.237	-0.275	-0.567**	-0.539**	-0.605**	-0.224	-0.235	-0.290
	(0.162)	(0.170)	(0.175)	(0.244)	(0.220)	(0.249)	(0.252)	(0.247)	(0.272)	(0.321)	(0.271)	(0.315)
Bandwidth	0.204	0.170	0.197	0.179	0.148	0.167	0.204	0.170	0.197	0.216	0.210	0.222
Observations	3693	3169	3234	1965	1666	1664	3693	3169	3234	2254	2184	2088
Canteens	-0.055	-0.070	-0.030	-0.007	-0.017	-0.017	-0.105	-0.113	-0.099	-0.010	-0.027	-0.020
	(0.055)	(0.060)	(0.057)	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.066)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.080)	(0.074)	(0.073)	(0.077)
Bandwidth	0.138	0.137	0.142	0.146	0.144	0.141	0.138	0.137	0.142	0.221	0.220	0.220
Observations	2693	2683	2457	1637	1621	1451	2693	2683	2457	2283	2283	2071
Local Police	-0.224	-0.184	-0.188	0.017	0.046	-0.144	-0.004	0.051	-0.141	0.124	0.150	-0.044
	(0.232)	(0.238)	(0.237)	(0.308)	(0.332)	(0.318)	(0.335)	(0.349)	(0.345)	(0.397)	(0.426)	(0.404)
Bandwidth	0.175	0.164	0.188	0.220	0.182	0.215	0.175	0.164	0.188	0.287	0.248	0.284
Observations	3250	3077	3094	2287	1992	2046	3250	3077	3094	2638	2467	2391
Electoral service	-0.123	-0.118	-0.152	0.292	0.445	0.200	0.347	0.639**	0.383	0.372	0.669*	0.322
	(0.211)	(0.222)	(0.222)	(0.312)	(0.315)	(0.309)	(0.298)	(0.309)	(0.307)	(0.367)	(0.394)	(0.365)
Bandwidth	0.167	0.148	0.170	0.173	0.155	0.182	0.167	0.148	0.170	0.268	0.211	0.275
Observations	3136	2844	2805	1914	1733	1808	3136	2844	2805	2554	2188	2362
Local Institution	-0.168	-0.073	-0.133	0.081	0.059	0.097	-0.484	-0.629*	-0.448	0.085	0.115	0.014
	(0.244)	(0.235)	(0.264)	(0.398)	(0.376)	(0.387)	(0.362)	(0.359)	(0.376)	(0.527)	(0.465)	(0.534)
Bandwidth	0.214	0.225	0.215	0.193	0.202	0.213	0.214	0.225	0.215	0.238	0.303	0.231
Observations	3833	4002	3446	2075	2139	2015	3833	4002	3446	2384	2708	2146
Region and Year F.E		✓			✓			✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓			✓			✓

Note: The table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3 and 7–9) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6 and 10–12) of the RDD model. The specifications in columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 control for the inflow of additional national resources that vary across regions and years, while columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 control for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1

Table C.3: Other public services provided at the local government level

Variable	Definition	Source
School Canteens	Inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of expenditure on school canteens for children	Ministry of Interior
Sports Centers	Inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of expenditure on sports centers for the resident population	Ministry of Interior
Canteens	Inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of expenditure on canteens for children	Ministry of Interior
Local Police	Inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of expenditure on local police for the resident population	Ministry of Interior
Electoral Service	Inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of expenditure on electoral services for the resident population	Ministry of Interior
Local Institutions	Inverse hyperbolic sine transformation of expenditure on local institutions for the resident population	Ministry of Interior
Total Expenditure	Logarithmic transformation of total local government expenditure for the resident population	Ministry of Interior
Total Revenues	Logarithmic transformation of total local government revenues for the resident population	Ministry of Interior
Surplus/Deficit	Surplus or deficit for the resident population	Ministry of Interior

Note: The table describes the construction of the variables adopted in section 4.

Table C.4: Descriptive statistics sample used in the RDD strategy

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
School Canteens	6,274	551.42	680.81	0	10062.5
Sports Centers	6,308	4.73	26.16	0	1245.34
Canteens	6,288	.55	4.15	0	92.42
Local Police	6,306	29.83	80.47	0	2724.57
Electoral Service	6,302	22.69	48.55	0	2001.70
Local Institutions	6,309	162.67	206.86	0	5929.273
Total Expenditure	6,336	5.10	0.42	4.16	8.66
Total Revenues	6,258	14.09	.74	12.22	18.03
Surplus or Deficit	6,326	18.90635	210.1379	-5649.163	5086.757

Note: The table displays descriptive statistics for the sample used in the analysis. Column 1 reports the number of observations, column 2 shows the mean, column 3 the standard deviation, and columns 4 and 5 show the minimum and maximum values, respectively.

Table C.5: Gender gap in the share of core-female and non-core female policy

	Linear Polynomial						*Quadratic Polynomial*					
	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Childcare	-0.008	-0.008	-0.004	-0.008	-0.011*	-0.008	-0.005	-0.006	-0.009	-0.005	-0.006	-0.002
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Bandwidth	0.147	0.142	0.163	0.147	0.134	0.147	0.147	0.142	0.163	0.191	0.190	0.174
Observations	2511	2449	2414	1451	1332	1307	2511	2449	2414	1808	1797	1520
Schools Canteens	-0.003	0.001	-0.011	0.011	0.022	0.004	0.003	-0.003	0.011	0.017	0.026	0.016
	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.033)
Bandwidth	0.212	0.195	0.218	0.174	0.171	0.187	0.212	0.195	0.218	0.221	0.216	0.217
Observations	3378	3192	3088	1687	1663	1632	3378	3192	3088	2025	1985	1820
Sport Centers	-0.021***	-0.024***	-0.022***	-0.016*	-0.018**	-0.018*	-0.015	-0.017*	-0.017*	-0.017	-0.017*	-0.017
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Bandwidth	0.194	0.214	0.193	0.167	0.166	0.170	0.194	0.214	0.193	0.236	0.231	0.228
Observations	3147	3400	2814	1628	1628	1494	3147	3400	2814	2091	2077	1866
Local Police	0.014	0.018	0.012	0.015	0.009	0.005	0.023	0.021	0.022	0.023	0.017	0.016
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.037)
Bandwidth	0.166	0.177	0.173	0.170	0.192	0.186	0.166	0.177	0.173	0.236	0.248	0.233
Observations	2780	2930	2555	1663	1816	1610 2780	2930	2555	2095	2175	1896	
Canteens	-0.003	-0.002	-0.003	-0.007	-0.005	-0.008	-0.006	-0.005	-0.007	-0.007	-0.006	-0.009
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Bandwidth	0.154	0.149	0.154	0.178	0.175	0.179	0.154	0.149	0.154	0.293	0.278	0.328
Observations	2601	2541	2329	1709	1683	1563	2601	2541	2329	2324	2301	2229
Local Institution	0.001	0.012	0.002	0.006	0.010	0.007	0.021	0.022	0.021	0.001	0.006	0.004
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Bandwidth	0.188	0.175	0.193	0.182	0.172	0.190	0.188	0.175	0.193	0.301	0.273	0.311
Observations	3079	2882	2821	1740	1666	1650	3079	2882	2821	2388	2286	2206
Electoral service	0.029	0.031	0.033	-0.002	-0.008	0.019	0.009	-0.018	0.018	-0.024	-0.031	-0.022
	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.035)	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.056)
Bandwidth	0.268	0.252	0.267	0.171	0.182	0.188	0.268	0.252	0.267	0.202	0.197	0.196
Observations	3922	3777	3479	1667	1741	1638	3922	3777	3479	1871	1853	1688
Region and Year F.E		✓			✓			✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓			✓			✓

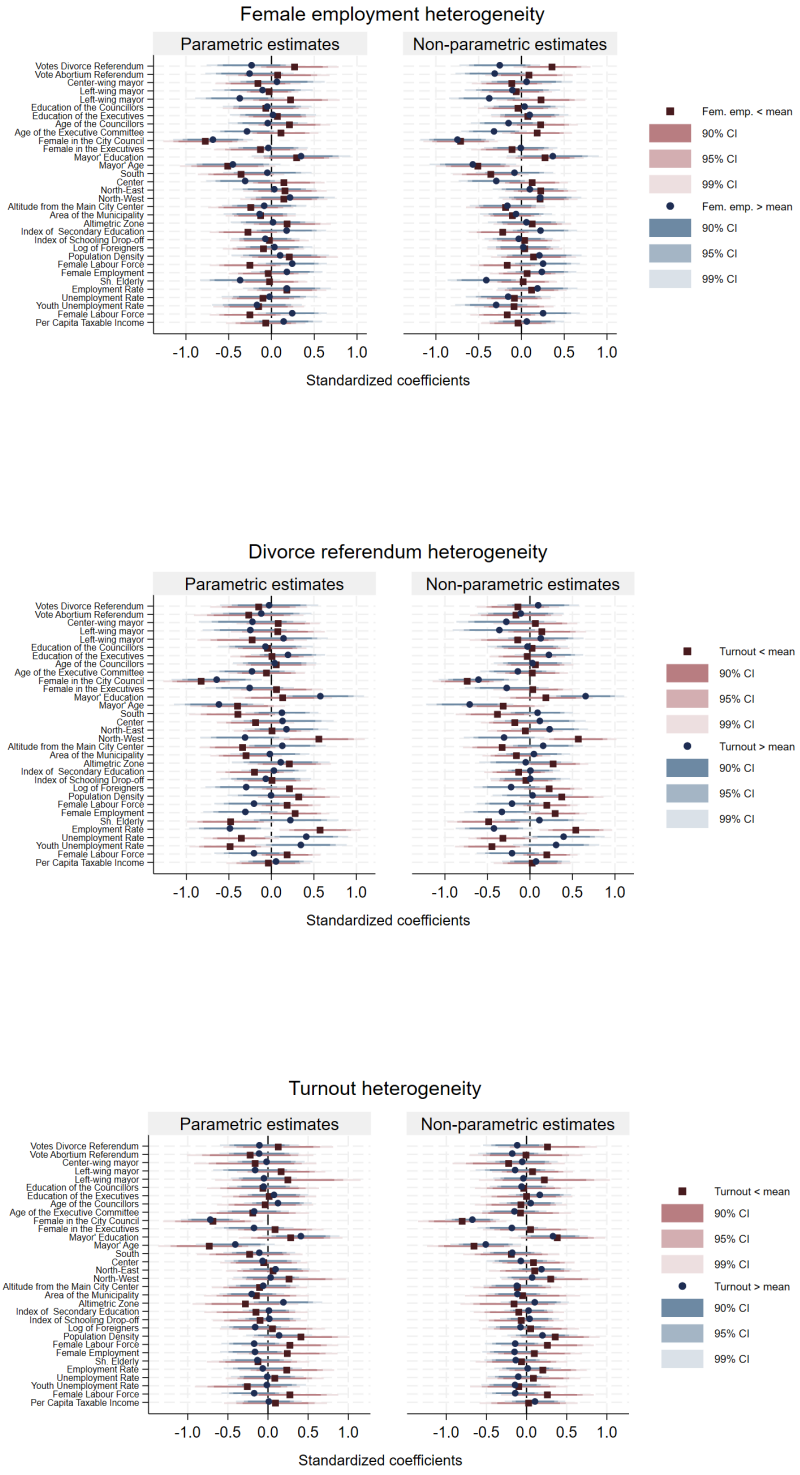
Note: the table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3 and 7–9) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6 and 10–12) from the RDD model. The outcomes represent the share of total expenditure allocated to each service category. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 include controls for the inflow of additional national resources, which vary across regions and years, while columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 account for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1.

Table C.6: Local government budget

	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Linear Polynomial						
Total Expenditure	-0.092*	-0.114**	-0.109**	-0.038	-0.026	-0.010
	(0.050)	(0.046)	(0.052)	(0.072)	(0.062)	(0.070)
Bandwidth	0.175	0.166	0.184	0.179	0.160	0.210
Observations	3253	3112	2988	1969	1782	1951
Total Revenues	-0.096	-0.159*	-0.156*	-0.083	-0.145	-0.152
	(0.088)	(0.083)	(0.092)	(0.126)	(0.110)	(0.127)
Bandwidth	0.179	0.169	0.193	0.169	0.160	0.180
Observations	3290	3124	3085	1868	1787	1755
Surplus or Deficit	-7.942	-2.845	-4.141	37.784	35.460	27.212
	(17.528)	(20.228)	(15.049)	(30.579)	(28.566)	(32.042)
Bandwidth	0.170	0.154	0.213	0.179	0.194	0.182
Observations	3176	2940	3338	1967	2088	1768
Panel B: Quadratic Polynomial						
Total Expenditure	-0.112*	-0.078	-0.107	-0.019	-0.012	0.016
	(0.066)	(0.060)	(0.070)	(0.092)	(0.077)	(0.096)
Bandwidth	0.175	0.166	0.184	0.225	0.217	0.226
Observations	3253	3112	2988	2336	2268	2071
Total Revenues	-0.122	-0.141	-0.189	-0.057	-0.117	-0.126
	(0.124)	(0.117)	(0.129)	(0.153)	(0.133)	(0.154)
Bandwidth	0.179	0.169	0.193	0.228	0.226	0.238
Observations	3290	3124	3085	2341	2336	2125
Surplus or Deficti	11.310	20.697	-9.708	50.352	51.518	44.023
	(27.612)	(29.834)	(25.990)	(40.678)	(40.313)	(42.594)
Bandwidth	0.170	0.154	0.213	0.233	0.232	0.233
Observations	3176	2940	3338	2371	2371	2106
Region and Year F.E		✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓

Note: the table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3 and 7–9) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6 and 10–12) from the RDD model. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 include controls for the inflow of additional national resources, which vary across regions and years, while columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 account for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1.

Figure C.4: Balancing test across heterogenous subsamples



note: the figure presents point estimates and their 95% confidence intervals for the balancing tests using a first-order polynomial. Results for the subsample below the mean are shown in red, while those above the mean are shown in blue.

Table C.7: Heterogeneity effects

	Female employment						*Divorce abrogative referendum*						*Turnout*					
	Parametric Estimates			*Non-parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Non-parametric Estimates*			*Parametric Estimates*			*Non-parametric Estimates*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
Values above the mean																		
Childcare	-0.117**	-0.117**	-0.137**	-0.130	-0.170	-0.144	-0.165***	-0.163***	-0.152**	-0.241***	-0.221***	-0.217**	-0.110**	-0.138***	-0.114**	-0.109**	-0.108**	-0.092*
	(0.053)	(0.055)	(0.062)	(0.109)	(0.105)	(0.106)	(0.057)	(0.055)	(0.065)	(0.092)	(0.081)	(0.088)	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.048)	(0.052)	(0.049)	(0.050)
Bandwidth	0.184	0.175	0.187	0.152	0.143	0.149	0.194	0.191	0.193	0.173	0.156	0.170	0.190	0.173	0.187	0.168	0.150	0.153
Observations	1555	1473	1337	542	529	471	1655	1626	1443	707	655	610	2243	2053	1949	1049	946	857
Spots	-0.014	-0.022**	-0.013	0.013	-0.000	0.011	-0.025**	-0.028**	-0.024*	-0.019	-0.005	-0.007	-0.007	-0.011	-0.010	-0.014*	-0.014*	-0.011
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.027)	(0.019)	(0.029)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.010)
Bandwidth	0.216	0.194	0.218	0.129	0.103	0.136	0.210	0.207	0.206	0.149	0.131	0.132	0.226	0.202	0.221	0.139	0.113	0.126
Observations	1744	1606	1493	456	408	431	1753	1734	1504	644	535	476	2545	2352	2186	903	788	700
Expenditure	-0.867**	-0.845**	-1.004**	-1.016	-1.251	-1.120	-1.135***	-1.124***	-1.005**	-1.722***	-1.578***	-1.565**	-0.741**	-0.933***	-0.761**	-0.801**	-0.796**	-0.708*
	(0.385)	(0.394)	(0.444)	(0.808)	(0.770)	(0.793)	(0.406)	(0.396)	(0.475)	(0.663)	(0.585)	(0.640)	(0.301)	(0.307)	(0.335)	(0.380)	(0.357)	(0.373)
Bandwidth	0.183	0.173	0.186	0.153	0.145	0.153	0.192	0.188	0.191	0.173	0.153	0.171	0.190	0.175	0.187	0.169	0.154	0.156
Observations	1533	1454	1324	544	536	474	1641	1612	1422	707	654	616	2238	2062	1949	1059	972	862
Values below the mean																		
Childcare	-0.048	-0.080**	-0.040	-0.036**	-0.027	-0.033*	-0.005	-0.047	-0.010	-0.019	-0.024	-0.008	-0.114*	-0.066	-0.122*	-0.047	-0.065	-0.023
	(0.030)	(0.035)	(0.031)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.027)	(0.032)	(0.027)	(0.035)	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.060)	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.055)
Bandwidth	0.216	0.184	0.211	0.136	0.131	0.138	0.240	0.178	0.253	0.186	0.186	0.178	0.190	0.173	0.187	0.139	0.153	0.148
Observations	2093	1861	1893	1042	1019	978	2154	1785	2008	1267	1267	1130	2243	2053	1949	898	963	835
Spots	-0.010	-0.016**	-0.007	-0.007*	-0.004	-0.003	-0.000	-0.005	0.005	-0.004	-0.003	-0.001	-0.016	-0.011	-0.018	0.000	-0.000	0.005
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Bandwidth	0.205	0.190	0.202	0.133	0.138	0.120	0.278	0.243	0.243	0.173	0.156	0.153	0.226	0.202	0.221	0.121	0.126	0.134
Observations	1992	1898	1831	1039	1059	889	2309	2152	1954	1201	1072	969	2545	2352	2186	794	807	757
Expenditure	-0.301	-0.633***	-0.246	-0.231**	-0.187	-0.226*	-0.055	-0.314	-0.037	-0.122	-0.146	-0.021	-0.832*	-0.542	-0.862*	-0.265	-0.450	0.018
	(0.206)	(0.233)	(0.216)	(0.113)	(0.118)	(0.124)	(0.187)	(0.210)	(0.200)	(0.265)	(0.251)	(0.275)	(0.435)	(0.434)	(0.482)	(0.390)	(0.404)	(0.413)
Bandwidth	0.217	0.180	0.214	0.132	0.130	0.138	0.239	0.183	0.217	0.195	0.169	0.169	0.190	0.175	0.187	0.130	0.144	0.133
Observations	2096	1808	1903	1033	1018	978	2127	1805	1852	1298	1164	1073	2238	2062	1949	833	927	757
Region and Year F.E		✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓	
Unbalanced controls			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓

Note: the table presents parametric estimates (columns 1–3, 7–9, and 13–15) and non-parametric estimates (columns 4–6, 10–12, and 16–18) from the RDD model. Panel A estimates the gap in early childcare provision among re-running mayors when the share of female employment (columns 1–6), votes for the divorce abrogative referendum (columns 7–13), and voter turnout are above the mean. Symmetrically, Panel B reports the same estimates when these variables are below the mean. Columns 2, 5, 8, 11, and 14 control for the inflow of additional national resources, which vary across regions and years, while columns 3, 6, 9, 12, and 18 account for unbalanced political observables. Significance levels are denoted as *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, and * p<0.1.