

Trust Issues: How Unveiling Organized Crime Infiltration in Politics Increases Abstention*

Preliminary Draft

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Abstract

We study how the dismissal of Italian city councils (CCDs) infiltrated by the organized crime influences voter participation. Leveraging the staggered timing of the dismissals in a difference-in-differences design, we find a sharp and persistent decline of approximately 2 percentage points in turnout in national, regional, and provincial elections. We argue that the public disclosure of the infiltration acts as an informational shock for local voters, eroding trust in political institutions and reducing political participation. Indeed, using large-scale survey data, we find a sharp decrease in reported political trust after the dismissal date. These results suggest that while CCDs yield important security and economic benefits, they also have unintended consequences for democratic engagement.

Keywords: Organized Crime, Government Trust, Voter Behavior

JEL Classification: D72, D73, K42

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1 Introduction

Organized crime (OC) undermines economic and social welfare (Pinotti, 2015a,b; Acemoglu et al., 2020), yet it remains established in many regions across the world. A key factor behind this persistence is its symbiotic relationship with legal institutions (Accardo et al., 2022). On the one hand, OC both substitutes (Gambetta, 1996) and complements (Blattman et al., 2024) the state as a provider of security, contract enforcement, and dispute resolution through the use of force. On the other hand, it seeks to influence the state's action through bribery and coercion (Dal Bó et al., 2006). In Italy, 386 city councils were dismissed due to OC infiltration between 1991 and 2024. City council dismissals (CCDs), introduced under the Law Act 164/1991, represent an aggressive but successful policy against OC. In the affected municipalities, CCDs led to reduction in OC activity and enhanced economic growth (Fenizia and Saggio, 2024), as well as positive, demand-driven, political turnover (Daniele and Geys, 2015; Baraldi et al., 2022; Fenizia and Saggio, 2024). However, the impact of CCDs on citizens' institutional trust and political participation remains unexplored. This aspect is especially important in OC-permeated regions, where civil engagement is central in challenging criminal influence – e.g. through crime reporting or political supervision. While scholars have connected long-term exposure to OC-related violence with the erosion of institutional trust and political participation (Blanco and Ruiz, 2013; Blanco, 2013; Rolla and Justino, 2022), and punctual, experimental, exposure to OC-related violent images with strengthened support for state authority (Campedelli et al., 2023), we provide evidence on the impact of an anti-OC policy that concurrently targets OC and exposes its entanglement with public institutions.

This paper investigates how city council dismissals (CCDs) in Italian municipalities infiltrated by the organized crime (OC) affect voter participation. Specifically, we are interested in the role of trust in political institutions as a driver of political participation. Political trust can be conceptualized as the feeling that the “own interests would be attended to even if the authorities were exposed to little supervision or scrutiny” (Easton, 1975). Theoretically, trust in political institutions can affect the benefit side of the typical Downsian voting equation (Downs, 1957; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968), as the lack of credibility in institutions lowers the expected return of the preferred electoral outcomes as well as the expressive benefit from the act of voting.¹ CCDs may affect political trust in, at least, two counteracting ways. On the one hand, the unveiling of the city council infiltration by the OC might represent an informational shock for the local voters, disclosing the collusion between OC and legal institutions, thus reducing political trust and, in turn, political participation. On the other hand, CCDs may be seen as the intervention of higher-level governmental institutions to solve a – possibly known – situation of local collusion, and may thus spur trust in the state and consequently raise political participation.

Our empirical approach aims at showing which effect of the CCDs dominates in shaping political trust and political participation. We leverage the staggered timing of the dismissals in an event study design and estimate its effect on voter turnout. To isolate the demand-driven impact on citizens' voter participation, we measure turnout at institutional levels higher than municipal elections. This minimizes contamination from other political consequences of the dismissal at the municipal level that may affect voter turnout, such as candidates' supply. In our main estimation, we combine legislative elections at the na-

¹The Downsian framework models turnout as a random utility trade-off in which the voter balances her ability to influence the outcome, her voting costs, and her expressive utility from voting (see Section 5.5). Hooghe (2018) and Devine (2024) provide a good overview of the correlational literature linking political trust to electoral turnout.

tional (Chamber of Deputies), regional (Regional Council), and provincial level (Provincial Council) in an aggregate turnout measure. We discuss the implications of this aggregation, and successfully verify the robustness of the main results through alternative measures.

We construct a dataset containing information on municipalities in central and southern Italy between 1987 and 2024. First, we collect data on the dismissal of Italian municipal councils from the Department of Internal and Territorial Affairs ([DAIT, 2024](#)). The dataset includes the list of municipalities with a CCD between 1991 and 2023, the date of the dismissal, and the corresponding reason. We complement the dataset with online information on recent dismissals due to organized crime infiltration implemented in 2024 ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)). Second, we collect municipal-level data on voter turnout in each type of election between 1987 and 2024 through *Eligendo*, the historic archive of the Department of Internal and Territorial Affairs ([Eligendo, 2024](#)). Regional election data in the special statute region of Sicily between 2006 and 2022 come from the *Sicilian Electoral Service* ([Sicilian Electoral Service, 2024](#)). Finally, we complete the dataset with census information on population, age and gender distribution, educational attainment, and unemployment for the years 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2021 ([ISTAT, 2024](#)). The final dataset used in the main estimation consists of 47,089 municipality-year observations in the 1987-2024 period. Municipalities whose city council was dismissed due to organized crime infiltrations account for 6.0% of the sample.

Using a staggered difference-in-differences design, we find that, on average, voter turnout drops by approximately 2 percentage points in municipalities where the city council was dismissed due to OC infiltration.² The effect is registered suddenly in the year following the dismissal, and persists for at least six years afterward. To validate the causal interpretation of the finding, we conduct a placebo test using city council dismissals triggered by reasons unrelated to organized crime (e.g. decease of the mayor), and find no significant impact on voter turnout. Moreover, we document negative spillover effects on turnout in neighboring municipalities, where no local political disruption occurred. We thus argue that, in the aggregate, the news exposure acts as negative informational shock on political trust and voter participation. We provide suggestive evidence that other mechanisms such as income effects, migration or OC-controlled votes can not fully explain our findings. Moreover, using a large-scale survey covering over 1.5 million individuals in Italy between 1994 and 2023 ([ISTAT, 2025](#)), we confirm a sharp drop in reported political trust (-25.6%) for individuals living in municipalities with an OC-related CCD.

Heterogeneity analyses show that voter turnout falls more in municipalities with larger populations in 1991, in municipalities experiencing a single dismissal, and in municipalities dismissed in recent years. We attribute these effects to the greater salience of the OC infiltration in contexts where the presence of OC is less expected. Moreover, we find that political areas aligned with the political area of the dismissed mayors drastically lose voters in the aftermath of the CCDs (-7.1pp, -33.3%). Other political areas gain voters (+3.1pp, +15.9%), likely absorbing some of the dissatisfied electorate. On the one hand, these shifts have substantial implications in the political landscape. On the other hand, they suggest that citizens losing trust and becoming politically detached are those which political trust has been more closely disappointed. Also, the presence of political alternatives partially mitigates voters' detachment.

We contribute to the literature on the electoral consequences of the organized crime. This

²This finding is robust to a variety of specifications, such as the implementation of matching procedures to construct control municipalities, or the use of alternative estimators.

literature is vast and growing, as summarized by Accardo et al. (2022). More specifically, we add to the literature started by Acconia et al. (2014) on the study of the effects of infiltrated city council dismissals. So far, the literature has found positive effects of this policy. City council dismissals generate large economic returns (Fenizia and Saggio, 2024), promote positive demand-driven political turnover at local level (Daniele and Geys, 2015; Baraldi et al., 2022; Fenizia and Saggio, 2024), reduce violent intimidation against politicians (Baraldi et al., 2024), and improve the tax collection and the public funds' allocation (Di Cataldo and Mastrorocco, 2022). Moreover, dismissals generate law enforcement spillovers in neighboring municipalities (Galletta, 2017), though they also induce strategic elusive behavior (Tulli, 2024). Finally, Buonanno et al. (2024) find that CCDs increase the share of taxpayers allocating part of their income tax (5%) to local voluntary associations, which they interpret as a proxy for social capital. Our paper shows that city council dismissals also induce disaffection with the political system, presumably by exposing the existence of links between politics and organized crime. These findings complement the literature suggesting that the policy's local benefits coexist with previously undocumented democratic costs.

We also contribute to the literature on the electoral consequences of political scandals. The closest strand of literature has connected corruption scandals with decreased voter participation in Mexico (Chong et al., 2015; Rivera et al., 2024), Italy (Giommoni, 2021), and Spain (Costas-Pérez, 2014; Ares and Hernández, 2017). Differently to most of the literature, we focus on elections at higher level (regions, national parliament) than the level in which the scandal happens (municipality), which allows to disentangle local electoral dynamics from effects on political trust. As shown in Table A3 and discussed in Section 5.1, the negative impact of CCDs on voter turnout appears to be quite large when compared the rest of the literature – with the exception of the outlying findings by Rivera et al. (2024).

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the background context on city council dismissals, Section 3 describes the used data, Section 4 discusses the research design, Section 5 presents the results, and Section 6 concludes.

2 Background

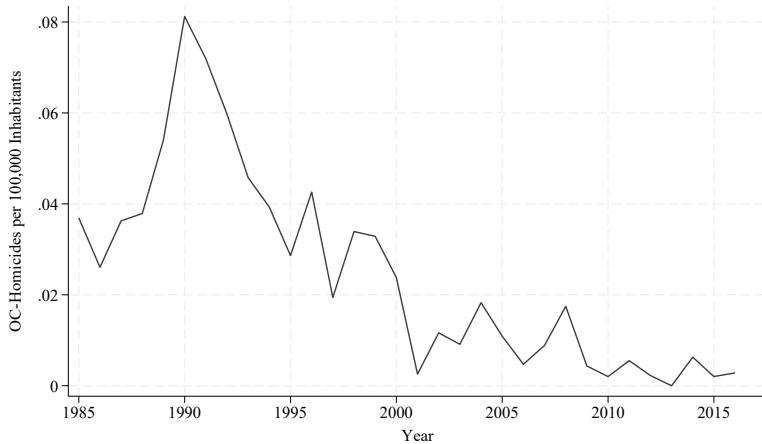
2.1 Organized Crime in Italy

The Italian Penal Code (Art. 416-bis) defines the Mafia as a criminal association that exploits the power of intimidation, with the condition of subjugation and the resulting code of silence, to acquire, among other things, the direct or indirect control of economic activities and public services, or to realize unjust profits, or to interfere with the free exercise of voting. The most important organizations are the *Camorra*, *Cosa Nostra* and the *'Ndrangheta*, traditionally located in Campania, Sicily and Calabria, respectively. Although the Mafia presence is concentrated in southern Italy (Mocetti and Rizzica, 2023), its activity has a national and international reach. Catino (2020) provides an overview of the structure and history of the Italian Mafia organizations.

In the last decades, organized crime in Italy has undergone significant transformations. In the 1980s, the Italian Mafia pursued a strategy of visible, frontal confrontation with the state, which led to the assassination of 71 high-profile figures between 1983 and 1992 (Catino, 2020). Anti-Mafia legislation was greatly expanded in this period, from the criminalization of Mafia participation in 1982 (Criminal Code 416-bis), to the antiracket leg-

isolation in 1991, the prosecution of external participation in 1991 (Legislative Decree No. 203), and the tougher prison conditions for Mafia members under the “41-bis” law regime in 1992 (Catino, 2020). This institutional response culminated with the Palermo Maxi Trials (1986–1992), in which over 400 members of *Cosa Nostra* were convicted. Since the mid-1990s, the Mafia in Italy has increasingly adapted to a hidden, underground criminal activity. Between 1993 and 2002, the number of high-profile figures murders fell to 18. Mafia-related violent crime has been on the decline ever since. Figure 1 shows a sharp increase in mafia-related homicides toward the end of the 1980s, followed by a steady decline in the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants from 1991 through 2000.

Figure 1: Mafia-related Homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in Italy, 1991–2016



Notes: The figure present the yearly number of mafia-related homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in Italy over the period 1991–2016. Source: ISTAT (ISTAT, 2024).

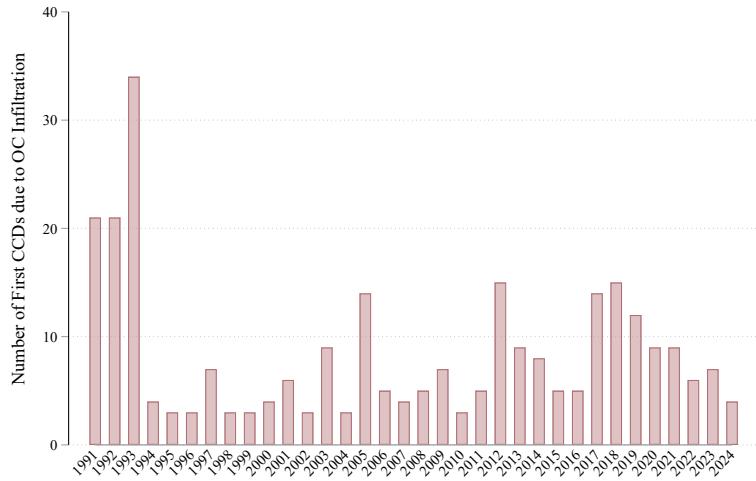
2.2 City Council Dismissals (CCDs)

On May 31, 1991, the Italian Parliament approved the Legislative Decree No. 164, which introduced the possibility of dismissing municipal councils with proven links to the organized crime. The dismissal of city councils is an aggressive policy, and is subject to a strict procedure that is carried out without disclosing any public information. The process begins with a police investigation that establishes the existence of contacts between municipal officials and organized crime. It is important to note that most investigations are not initiated due to suspicions of OC infiltration. The police allegations are communicated to the head of the provincial authority (the *prefetto*), who forms an investigative commission and reports to the Ministry of Interior within four months. The Ministry of Interior, in consultation with the Cabinet, then decides on the dismissal. In case of dismissal, the whole procedure is confirmed by a decree of the President of the Republic and made public. At this point, the mayor, the executive body, and the legislative municipal council are replaced by unelected commissioners, who administer the municipality for a transitional period that can last up to 18 months, until new elections are held.

Figure 2 shows the number of first-time CCDs by year. Between 1991 and 2024, 285 city councils have been dismissed for the first time. More than 70 dismissals were ordered in the first three years of the policy, but dismissals have continued into recent years. Early CCDs likely reflect exceptional national anti-Mafia efforts, which may be distinct from later, more routine applications of the law. Table A2 lists all municipalities and the date

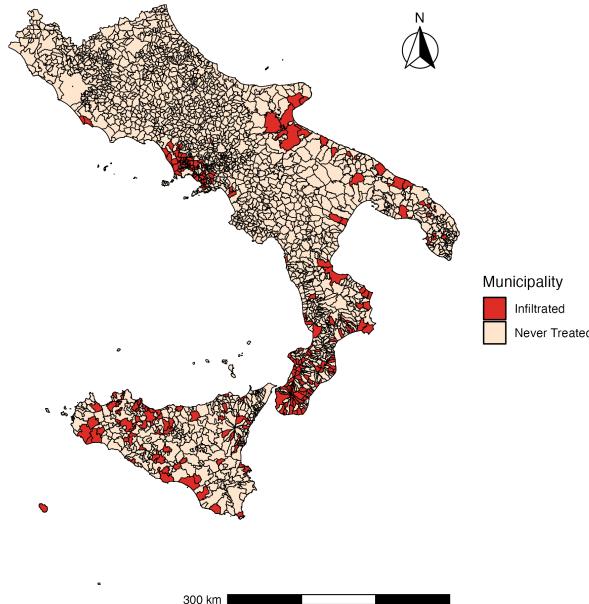
of OC-related CCDs by region. More than 95% of the CCDs took place in central and southern Italy.³ Figure 3 shows the spatial distribution of CCDs in central and southern Italy. Calabria and Sicily stand out as having the highest percentage of municipalities dismissed over time.

Figure 2: Number of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime, 1991-2024



Notes: The figure shows the yearly number of OC-related first CCDs in Italy over the period 1991–2024. The sample includes 285 first dismissals. Source: DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)).

Figure 3: Locations of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime in Central and Southern Italy, 1991-2024



Notes: The figure shows the location of 276 first OC-related CCDs in Central and Southern Italy over the period 1991–2024. 9 first OC-related CCDs in Northern Italy are not shown. Source: DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)).

³Only nine city council dismissals occurred in Northern Italy: one in Emilia-Romagna, three in Liguria, one in Lombardy, three in Piedmont, and one in Valle d'Aosta.

2.3 Italian Elections

Italy is a representative democracy, organized on several institutional levels. Besides the national level, Italy has three levels of local government: as of January 1, 2024, Italy was divided into 20 regions (*Regioni*), 107 provinces (*Province*), and 7,900 municipalities (*Comuni*).

At the lowest institutional level, Italian municipalities handle local matters such as urban planning and proximity public services (e.g. primary schools and waste management). Italian citizens elect representatives to the legislative municipal councils (*Consigli Comunali*) through a proportional system, as well as the mayor (*Sindaca/o*) through a two-round system. The mayors then form executive bodies called *Giunte comunali*.

At the intermediate local institutional level, the Italian provinces are mainly responsible for local planning of transport and school networks. Their role has diminished over the years. Moreover, since the Law Act 56/2014, provinces are no longer elected by the electorate, but indirectly by local municipal councils and mayors. At the highest local institutional level, the Italian regions are divided into 15 ordinary statute (*Statuto Ordinario*) and 5 special statute (*Statuto Speciale*) regions. Usually, Italian citizens elect the representatives of the regional councils (*Consigli Regionali*) through a proportional system, as well as the president (*Presidente della Regione*) through a two-round system.

At the national level, Italian citizens elect representatives to the two chambers of the Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies (*Camera dei Deputati*) and the Senate of the Republic (*Senato della Repubblica*). The Parliament constitutes the legislative power of the state, nominates (supported by a selection of regional representatives) the President of the Republic (*Presidente della Repubblica*) every 7 years, and its confidence is necessary for the appointment and the stability of the Government (*Consiglio dei Ministri*). In recent decades, both the electoral system and the electoral formula for parliamentary elections have changed several times. Both chambers are now elected by a mixed-member proportional system, with the majority of the seats allocated by first-past-the-post system and a minority by proportional representation system.

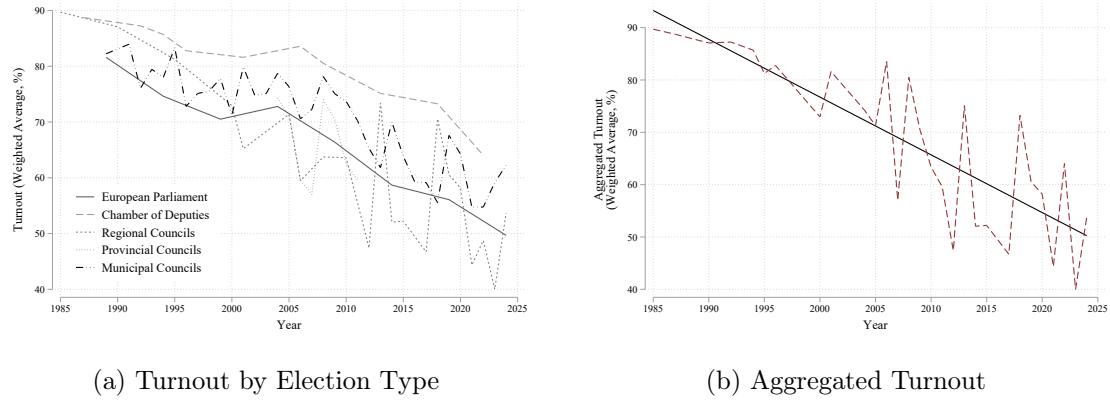
Finally, Italian citizens elect representatives to the European Parliament every 5 years. Seats are allocated to parties based on national performance, and then distributed proportionally to the top vote-getters in 5 different constituencies.

[Figure 4a](#) shows the evolution of turnout levels for each type of legislative election in Italy since 1985, weighting turnouts at the municipal level by the number of electors. Regardless of the type of election, voter turnout declined steadily over the period. Note that municipal, provincial, and regional elections are held at different times in different regions, and therefore turnout jumps as a consequence of different sampling ([Figure A1](#) resolves the sample selection by showing linear trends over the observed period). Moreover, as shown in [Figure A2](#) for the 2013 Chamber of Deputies elections, turnout exhibits substantial regional variation, being generally lower in the southern part of Italy.

In order to use the largest number of votes in every year, we combine different type of elections into an aggregate turnout measure. We consider elections to the Chamber of Deputies, Regional Councils and Provincial Councils. In our main estimation, we do not consider elections to the European Parliament, which may capture a different level of institutional trust. We discard elections that were held at the same time than municipal elections, to avoid contamination in turnout from the CCDs at lower level. In case multiple elections were held in the same time unit, we hierarchically selected the turnout in the

election at the higher geographical level. While this approach maximizes sample size, it could introduce measurement error if turnout drivers vary systematically across election types. To address this concern, we verify the robustness of our results by replicating the analysis using alternative aggregation rules and by estimating models separately for each election type. Figure 4b shows the evolution of this form of aggregated turnout between 1985 and 2024. As expected, this measure declines steadily over the observed period.

Figure 4: Average Yearly Voter Turnout in Italy, 1985-2024.



Notes: The figures present the development of turnout between 1985 and 2024. Panel (a) shows the turnout separated by different elections, while Panel (b) shows the aggregated turnout measure and its linear fit over the observed years. Aggregated turnout is selected turnout by year hierarchically (Chamber of Deputies > Regional Councils > Provincial Councils), discarding elections simultaneous to municipal elections. Source: *Eligendo* ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

3 Data

For the main analysis, we use three main sources of data covering CCDs, voter turnout, and census information for municipalities in central and southern Italy between 1987 and 2024. In order to explore the results’ mechanism, we use survey data on political trust between 1994 and 2023.

City Council Dismissals: We use data on city council administrations from the Registry of Local and Regional Administrators (*Anagrafe degli Amministratori Locali e Regionali*) of the Department of Internal and Territorial Affairs ([DAIT, 2024](#)). The dataset reports all compulsory administrations dismissed due to organized crime infiltration or other reasons (e.g. death of the mayor) between 1991 and 2023. All reasons are listed in [Table A1](#). It also reports demographic characteristics of the mayors (age, gender, education), party affiliation (right wing, left wing, civic list), type of electoral system (proportional/majoritarian), and the duration of the mayoral office term. We complement the dataset with online information on recent dismissals due to organized crime infiltration implemented in 2024 ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)).

Voter Turnout and Vote Shares: We use municipal-level data on voter turnout and party votes in each type of election from *Eligendo*, the historic archive of the Department of Internal and Territorial Affairs for the period 1970-2024 ([Eligendo, 2024](#)).⁴ The archive

⁴In the rare cases where elections were held at a level lower than the municipality, such as in some large cities for national elections, we aggregate the results to the municipal level. For mixed proportional and single-member elections, we focus on turnout in terms of proportional seats.

collects data from all elections in the used period, with the exception of regional elections in special statute regions (Aosta Valley, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino Alto Adige). We collect Sicilian regional election data between 2006 and 2022 from the website of the *Sicilian Electoral Service* ([Sicilian Electoral Service, 2024](#)). During the observed period, municipalities held a median of 6 European-, 8 national-, 7 regional-, 2 provincial-, and 6 legislative elections. [Figure A3](#) provides an overview of the election frequency at daily level for the period 1985-2024.

Control Variables: We use census data for the years 1991, 2001, 2011, and 2021 from the Italian National Institute of Statistics ([ISTAT, 2024](#)). The census contains information for each municipality on the resident population, such as the number of residents and foreigners, their age and gender distribution, educational attainment, and (un-)employment.

Political Trust: We use the “Aspects of Daily Life” survey (*Aspetti della vita quotidiana*, ADL) from the Italian National Institute of Statistics between 1994 and 2023 to measure political trust ([ISTAT, 2025](#)). The ADL survey is part of a very rich system of surveys known as the Multipurpose Household Surveys (*Indagini Multiscopo sulle famiglie*). The survey is conducted annually on a sample of about 20,000 households and 50,000 individuals, and covers over 1.5 million individuals between 1994 and 2023. The sampling design is structured to provide estimates representative at the national and regional level, whereas households are randomly selected from a stratified scheme of municipalities. Participation in the survey is mandatory (Law Act 322/1989). We focus on a particular question of the survey: *Why do you never follow politics? Distrust in Italian politics*. This question has been repeatedly asked since 1994, and allows to capture variation at the margin of political detachment.

4 Research Design

4.1 Sample Selection

We begin with a sample including all 7,904 Italian municipalities, counting 386 OC-CCDs in the period 1991-2024. To ensure comparability among the dismissed municipalities, we focus on the first dismissal experienced by each municipality. This restriction reduces the number of CCDs to 285 unique events. Next, we restrict the sample to municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily, which together account for more than 95% of all OC-related dismissals.⁵ This reduces the sample to 3,145 municipalities, of which 276 with OC-related dismissals. This geographic restriction aims at improving comparability between treated and control municipalities.

As explained in [Section 2.3](#), we build an aggregate measure of turnout which hierarchically selects elections at national, regional and provincial level. The use of elections at level higher than the municipality allows to isolate the impact on demand-driven voter participation, minimizing the effects that the CCDs have on local elections – such as on political equilibria or candidates’ supply. To eliminate potential contamination between elections, we exclude elections held on the same day as municipal elections. After these refinements, our analytical sample includes a total of 47,189 observations over 3,145 municipalities, composed of 276 dismissed municipalities and 2,847 never treated municipalities. When matched to the census data, the analysis sample is restricted to 47,089 observations over 3,120 municipalities, composed of 273 dismissed municipalities and 2,847 never treated

⁵We include the regions of Abruzzo, Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Lazio, Marche, Molise, Tuscany, Umbria, and Sicily.

municipalities.

In the final sample matched to census data, we also identify 1,572 non-OC-related dismissals (see the dismissal's reasons in [Table A1](#)). These events serve as a counterfactual for assessing whether political disengagement arises specifically from the criminal nature of the intervention, rather than from general council turnover. We also define a second treatment group of 525 never-treated municipalities, which share a direct boundary with a treated municipality (see [Figure A4](#)). Focusing on border municipalities allows to estimate the spatial spillover effects of the policy. These municipalities were not directly subject to CCDs, but may have been exposed to the informational shock.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

[Table 1](#) provides descriptive statistics for the main variables used in the analysis, limiting the observations to the years in which we have an aggregated turnout measurement. In total, the sample has over 47,000 observations from 3,145 municipalities between 1987 and 2024.

Panel A summarizes treatment assignment across different categories. The variable *Infiltrated* indicates whether a municipality was subject to an OC-related CCD in the observed period, and represents our main treatment identifier. 6% of the observations come from municipalities with an OC-related CCD between 1991 and 2024. Among these observations, 21.9% come from municipalities with multiple OC-related CCDs (*Multiple*) and 6.6% from municipalities with appealed OC-related CCDs (*Appealed*). 17.0% of the observations come from never-treated municipalities sharing a border with a treated municipality (*Neighboring*). Finally, about half of the sample (52.1%) comes from municipalities experiencing non-OC-related dismissals (*Other dismissals*), further subdivided into cases of resignation (66.8%), mayoral death (5.8%), or other institutional causes (27.4%).⁶

Panel B reports electoral characteristics. The aggregated measure of voter turnout indicates an average voter participation in the sample of 70.8%. Turnout rates for observations in the sample are also broken down by election type. The remainder of Panel B includes variables for the number of eligible voters, voters, blank ballots , elections per year and simultaneous elections.

Panel C includes socio-demographic and economic characteristics of municipalities from the four waves of census data. Information is reported at the observation year defined in the analysis sample, but measures the information carried forward from the last census.⁷ The included municipalities have an average of about 9,000 inhabitants, going from a minimum of 69 to a maximum of about 2.8 million inhabitants. About half of the population (51.1%) is female, and the average old-age ratio is 36.9%. The average unemployment rate is 9.7%. Finally, the population splits quite evenly into high- (26%), middle- (29%), low- (28%) and no education (18%).

Panel D presents the characteristics of the mayors in office. In the observation year, mayors are 46.9 years old on average, and their term duration lasts since 4.6 years. Only 5.7% of the mayors are female. Most of the mayors are politically affiliated to center parties (62.4%), whereas 27.7% are affiliated to left parties, and only 10% to right parties. Notice that data on mayors is only available for about 84% of the sample.

⁶See [Table A1](#) for a full list of institutional causes leading to municipal dismissals.

⁷Information is taken from the last census for years since 1991. For years up to 1990, information is taken from the 1991-census.

As shown in [Table A10](#), treated and control municipalities differ substantially along several observable characteristics. To address this imbalance and test the robustness of our findings, in [Appendix C](#) we construct an alternative control group using propensity score matching.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Obs.	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
Panel A: CCDs					
Infiltrated (OC-CCD)	47,189	0.060	0.237	0	1
Multiple	2,808	0.219	0.414	0	1
Appealed	2,808	0.066	0.248	0	1
Neighboring	47,189	0.170	0.376	0	1
Other dismissals	47,189	0.521	0.500	0	1
Resignation	24,579	0.668	0.471	0	1
Mayor's decease	24,579	0.058	0.234	0	1
Other reasons	24,579	0.274	0.446	0	1
Panel B: Elections					
Turnout	47,189	0.708	0.146	0.004	1
Turnout National	29,579	0.752	0.115	0.005	1
Turnout Regional	18,121	0.626	0.162	0.004	1
Turnout Provincial	2,926	0.649	0.117	0.218	0.999
Turnout European	6,437	0.640	0.151	0.101	0.993
Eligible Voters	47,189	7,562	43,071	62	2,347,455
Voters	47,189	5,509	32,800	3	2,067,514
Blank ballots	46,547	134.8	459.4	0	29,980
Elections per year	47,189	1.271	0.494	1	4
Simultaneous elections	47,189	1.089	0.285	1	2
Panel C: Census					
Population	47,158	8,990	51,583	69	2,775,250
Population density (N/km^2)	47,158	268.5	733.7	2.5	14,991.4
Female Share	47,158	0.511	0.013	0.393	0.664
Unemployment rate	47,089	0.097	0.050	0	0.492
Old age ratio (65y+/20y)	47,158	0.369	0.140	0.078	1.790
High education	47,089	0.256	0.104	0.013	0.721
Middle education	47,089	0.286	0.041	0.056	0.480
Low education	47,089	0.278	0.068	0.081	0.746
No education	47,089	0.180	0.074	0	0.602
Panel D: Mayors					
Age	39,761	46.9	9.9	18	94
Term duration	39,763	4.6	0.8	1	7
Female	39,763	0.057	0.232	0	1
Ballot run-off	39,763	0.272	0.445	0	1
Left Party	37,305	0.277	0.447	0	1
Center Party	37,305	0.624	0.484	0	1
Right Party	37,305	0.099	0.298	0	1

Notes: The table reports summary statistics for the key variables used in the analysis. Panel A covers different types of city council dismissals; Panel B reports electoral characteristics; Panel C includes demographic and socioeconomic variables; and Panel D summarizes mayoral attributes. The number of observations varies due to data availability, including a maximum of 3,145 municipalities in the Center, South and Sicily (1987–2024). Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024) and WikiMafia (WikiMafia, 2025), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).

4.3 Estimating Equations

In this section we formalize three main sets of estimated models.

Voter Turnout: The main analysis of the paper leverages the CCDs timing at municipal level and evaluates the impact on aggregated voter turnout. For each municipality i and year t in the analysis sample described in [Section 4.1](#), we estimate the following staggered difference-in-differences model:

$$y_{i,t} = \sum_{\ell=-4, \ell \neq -1}^5 \gamma_k \cdot CCD_{i,t-\ell} + \alpha_i + \lambda_t + X'_{i,t} \beta + u_{i,t}, \quad (1)$$

where $y_{i,t}$ is i 's aggregated electoral turnout in year t , $CCD_{i,t-\ell}$ is i 's identifier for the dismissal of the city council at time $k = 0$, $X_{i,t}$ is a vector of time-varying municipality and election-level control variables, λ_t and α_i are year and municipality fixed effects, and $u_{i,t}$ is the error term. Note that the event time k is constructed in terms of 365 days distance from the dismissal date, rather than in calendar years, so that elections in $k \geq 0$ always take place after the dismissal. In our main estimation, the effect window includes 4 binned lags and 5 unbinned leads. Control variables include dummies for the type of election under consideration, as well as for other elections held on the same day and their interactions, to account for both the number and types of simultaneous elections. Additional covariates include the number of eligible electors, the unemployment rate, the old-age dependency ratio, and the shares of the population with low, middle, and high levels of education. The coefficient of interest is represented by γ_k , which identifies the difference in turnout between dismissed municipalities and non-dismissed municipalities with respect to $k \neq -1$. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

Besides this dynamic-coefficients model, we also estimate a model with an unique pooled coefficient of interest. For each municipality i and year t in the analysis sample described in [Section 4.1](#), we estimate the following model:

$$y_{i,t} = \delta \cdot CCD_{i,t} + \zeta \cdot Bin_{i,t} + \alpha_i + \lambda_t + X'_{i,t} \beta + u_{i,t}, \quad (2)$$

where $y_{i,t}$ is i 's aggregated electoral turnout in year t , $CCD_{i,t}$ is i 's treatment status in year t , $Bin_{i,t}$ is a dummy variable identifying i 's pre-periods in the $(-\infty, -4)$ effect window, $X_{i,t}$ is a vector of time-varying municipality and election-level control variables, λ_t and α_i are year and municipality fixed effects, and $u_{i,t}$ is the error term. The treatment status $CCD_{i,t} \in \{0, 1\}$ is 1 after the CCD date, 0 before the CCD date, and missing for elections being six-years (in 365 days windows) from the CCD date. Control variables are the same as described in [Equation \(1\)](#). δ is the coefficient of interest, which identifies the average difference in turnout between the 5 post-CCD years and the 4 pre-CCD years. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

Finally, variations of [Equation \(2\)](#) are also used to explore effect-heterogeneity, by adding a term $\delta_2 \cdot CCD_{i,t} \cdot X_{i,t}$ to the model. Examples of heterogeneity characteristics are population size, or party area affiliation of the dismissed mayor.

Vote Shares: A second part of the analysis leverages the CCDs timing at municipal level and evaluates the impact on vote shares to different political areas. For each municipality i , year t , and political area $a \in \{\text{left}, \text{center}, \text{right}, \text{other}\}$ in the analysis sample described in [Section 4.1](#), we estimate the following dynamic and pooled models:

$$\text{Dynamic: } y_{i,a,t} = \sum_{\ell=-4, \ell \neq -1}^5 \gamma_k \cdot CCD_{i,t-\ell} + \alpha_{i,a} + \lambda_t + X'_{i,t} \beta + u_{i,a,t}, \quad (3a)$$

$$\text{Pooled: } y_{i,a,t} = \delta \cdot CCD_{i,t} + \zeta \cdot Bin_{i,t} + \alpha_{i,a} + \lambda_t + X'_{i,t} \beta + u_{i,a,t}, \quad (3b)$$

where $y_{i,a,t}$ is the vote share (relative to the number of electors or relative to the number of actual voters) of the political area a in municipality i and year t , $CCD_{i,t-\ell}$ and $CCD_{i,t}$ indicate the dismissal of the city council, $Bin_{i,t}$ is a dummy variable identifying i 's pre-periods in the $(-\infty, -4)$ effect window, $X_{i,t}$ is a vector of time-varying municipality and election-level control variables, λ_t and $\alpha_{i,a}$ are year and municipality-by-area fixed effects, and $u_{i,a,t}$ is the error term. We also estimate models using only municipality fixed effects α_i . The treatment status is defined as in [Equation \(1\)](#) and [Equation \(2\)](#), using 365 days windows, binned lags in the pre-period, and unbinned leads in the post-period. Control variables are the same as described in [Equation \(1\)](#), with the additional inclusion of linear party-area time trends. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

Particular importance is here given to the variation of the model which adds effect-heterogeneity to the impact of the CCDs on vote shares by adding a term $\sum_{\ell=-4, \ell \neq -1}^5 \gamma_{2,k} \cdot CCD_{i,t-\ell} \cdot X_{i,a,t}$ in [Equation \(1\)](#) and $\delta_2 \cdot CCD_{i,t} \cdot X_{i,a,t}$ in [Equation \(2\)](#). In this regard, our main model investigates the impact of CCDs through the variable $Aligned_{i,a}$ – which indicates whether a political area is aligned or not with the political area of the dismissed mayor.

Political Trust: In order to explore political trust as a mechanism driving the results on voter participation, we estimate models at the individual level using data from the “Aspects of Daily Life” survey ([ISTAT, 2025](#)). For each individual i residing in a municipality contained in the analysis sample described in [Section 4.1](#) at year t , we estimate the following model:

$$y_{i,t} = \sum_{\ell=-4, \ell \neq -1}^5 \gamma_k \cdot CCD_{i,t-\ell} + \lambda_t + X'_{i,t} \beta + u_{i,t}, \quad (4)$$

where $y_{i,t}$ is i 's level of political trust in year t , $CCD_{i,t-\ell}$ is i 's identifier for the dismissal of the city council of the residing municipality at time $k = 0$, λ_t are the year fixed effects, $X_{i,t}$ is a vector of control variables, and u_i is the error term. Note that, as the survey date is not precisely known, the event time k is constructed in terms of calendar years. Therefore, some survey answers in $k = 0$ may be reported before the dismissal announcement, and thus dilute the treatment effect at $k = 0$. Political trust is defined as not answering positively to the question “Why do you never follow politics? Distrust in Italian politics”. We include individual level control variables (sex, linear and squared age, education) contained in the survey data, as well as the election type and municipal level control variables described in [Equation \(1\)](#). The coefficient of interest is represented by γ_k , which identifies the difference in political trust levels between individuals living in dismissed municipalities and non-dismissed municipalities with respect to $k \neq -1$. Standard errors are clustered at municipal level and survey weights are employed.

4.4 Identifying Assumptions

The validity for difference-in-differences generally relies on two core assumptions: (i) Parallel trends; (ii) No anticipation effect ([Angrist and Krueger, 1991](#); [Card and Krueger,](#)

1994). In the context of our study, these assumptions imply that, in the absence of the dismissal, the treated and control units would have followed similar trajectories, and that the dismissal was unforeseen by the agents. On one hand, while it is challenging to perfectly validate the parallel trends assumption, we employ a dynamic DiD approach to provide statistical evidence on its satisfaction. Specifically, we examine the γ_k coefficients in the pre-treatment period to assess whether treated and control municipalities displayed comparable trends prior to the shock. On the no-anticipation assumption, the framework presented in Section 2.2 on the secret investigation upon the dismissal, greatly mitigates the risk of a foreseen presence of Mafia in the municipal council. However, the no-anticipation assumption may be violated in cases where there is widespread public awareness of corruption or mafia infiltration within the local governments. To address this concern, we incorporate a salience analysis, examining whether the effects are stronger in contexts where the dismissal is likely to have been more unexpected.

On top of the standard identifying assumption, staggered designs also require treatment homogeneity for identifying an average treatment effect. In our context, this implies that voter turnout reacts homogeneously across treated cohorts, otherwise the result could be driven by contamination of pre-period and post-period estimate on the coefficient of interest. As shown in Figure 2, the spike in CCDs during the early years of the policy suggests that the nature of interventions may have varied over time, potentially indicating heterogeneous treatment effects across cohorts. To tackle this issue, we also use the interaction weighted estimator proposed by Sun and Abraham (2021).

5 Results

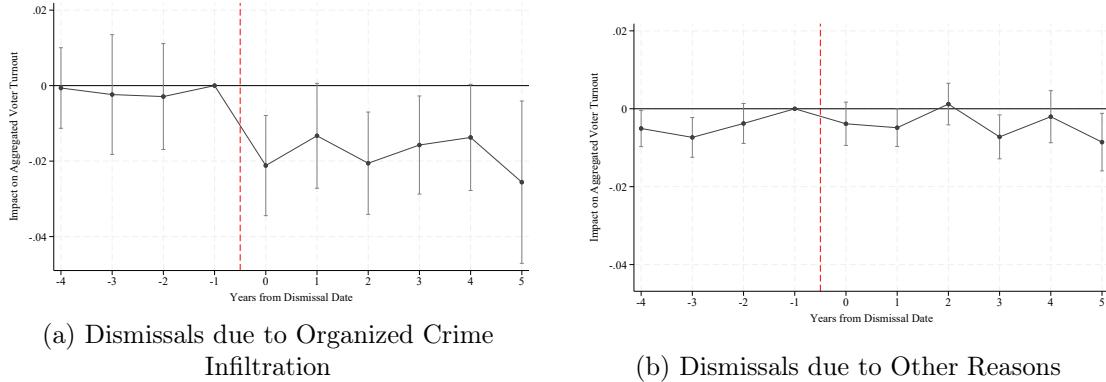
5.1 CCDs and Voter Turnout

Figure 5 presents the estimated $\hat{\gamma}_k$ coefficients from the staggered difference-in-differences model described in Equation (1). Specifically, Figure 5a illustrates the impact of OC-related CCDs on aggregated voter turnout. We estimate that turnout decreases by approximately 2 percentage points (-2.6% to the baseline) within 12 months since the dismissal.⁸ The effect remains significantly negative in the subsequent years, indicating a persistent decline in electoral participation. Importantly, the pre-treatment coefficients are close to zero and statistically insignificant, suggesting that treated and control municipalities followed parallel trends in voter turnout prior to the CCDs.

Figure 5b serves as a placebo test, examining the effect of council dismissals for reasons unrelated to organized crime (e.g., resignation or death of the mayor). This analysis helps disentangle the impact of OC-related dismissals from general disruptions in local governance. Reassuringly, we find that dismissals unrelated to organized crime do not produce any significant change in voter turnout, supporting the interpretation that the observed turnout decline is driven by OC-related events.

⁸Baseline values for the %-calculations in event-studies are computed as the average value of the dependent variable in the group of dismissed municipalities one year before the dismissal.

Figure 5: Impact of City Council Dismissals on Aggregated Voter Turnout, 1987–2024



Notes: The figures present the estimated effects $\hat{\gamma}_k$ of municipal council dismissals due to mafia infiltration (left) or for other reasons (right) on aggregated voter turnout, as specified in Equation (1). The samples include municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis in Panel (a) includes 47,089 observations across 3,120 municipalities. The analysis in Panel (b) includes 34,557 observations across 2,847 municipalities, and excludes municipalities dismissed due to mafia infiltration from the control group. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

[Table 2](#) presents the estimated $\hat{\delta}$ coefficients from the pooled, staggered difference-in-differences model described in [Equation \(2\)](#). Column (4) reports the estimates from the full model, while columns (1-3) report slightly different model specifications. Specifically, the coefficients describe the pooled impact of OC-related CCDs on aggregated voter turnout. The main coefficient remains consistently negative, statistically significant at the 1% level, and robust to the various model specifications. This indicates a stable and strong association between OC-related CCDs and reduced electoral participation. In the full model, turnout decreases by 1.78pp (-2.56%).⁹

To understand the magnitude of the estimated 1.8 percentage points decrease in voter turnout (-2.6% relative to the baseline), [Table A3](#) summarizes the evidence of effects related to turnout in other contexts. The closest literature studies the decline in voter turnout following corruption scandals. With find markedly larger effects compared to [Giommoni \(2021\)](#), who associates one standard deviation increase in corruption exposure in Italy to a -0.3% voter turnout decline. The effect is large also when compared to randomized information interventions about corruption ([Chong et al., 2015](#)) and political malfeasance ([Arias et al., 2022](#)) in Mexico (-1.3pp and -1/+0.5pp, respectively), but – again using informational RCT on corruption in Mexico – smaller than what found by [Rivera et al. \(2024\)](#) (-5 to -8pp, -10%). Our estimated effect is considerably larger than effects found in other treatment contexts, such as media presence ([DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007](#); [Drago et al., 2014](#); [Gentzkow et al., 2011](#)). Taken together, this benchmarking exercise shows that the political consequences of OC-related CCDs are not only statistically robust but also substantial, falling within the range of major institutional or informational disruptions documented in the literature.

⁹Baseline values in pooled models are computed as the average value of the dependent variable in the group of dismissed municipalities in the pre-period (four years before the dismissal).

Table 2: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout, 1987-2024

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
CCD ($\hat{\delta}$)	-0.0374*** (0.0059)	-0.0175*** (0.0036)	-0.0180*** (0.0034)	-0.0178*** (0.0035)
<i>Baseline:</i>	0.6941	0.6941	0.6941	0.6944
Observations	47,189	47,187	47,187	47,089
Municipalities	3,145	3,143	3,143	3,120
R-squared	0.525	0.857	0.860	0.864
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Municipality Controls	No	No	No	Yes

Notes: The table presents the estimated effects $\hat{\delta}$ of municipal council dismissals due to mafia infiltration on aggregated voter turnout, as specified in [Equation \(2\)](#). The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. Standard errors are clustered at municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $.01 \leq p < .05$, * $.05 \leq p < .10$. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

5.2 Spillover Effects on Voter Turnout

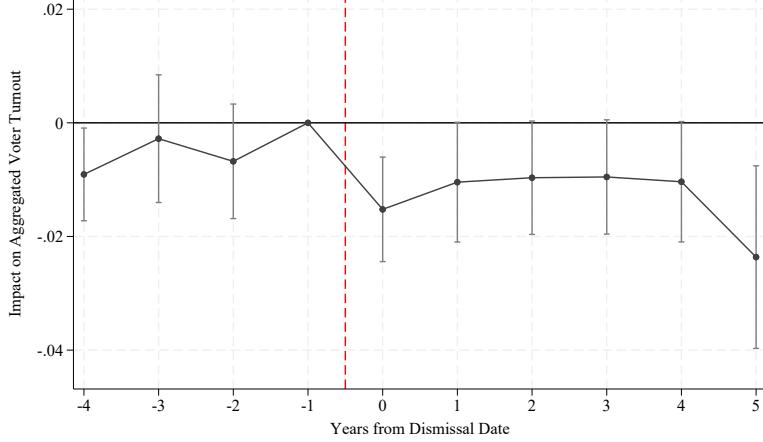
The results in [Section 5.1](#) indicate a sharp decline in voter turnout driven by OC-related CCDs and a null effect for other, non-OC-related, council dismissals. These findings suggest that OC-related CCDs may act as informational shocks, revealing the presence of organized crime within local institutions, thereby eroding political trust, and ultimately leading to voter disengagement. While a more detailed discussion of the underlying mechanisms is provided in [Section 5.5](#), here we test whether the effects of OC-related CCDs extend beyond the directly affected municipalities. If CCDs act as public signals about the OC institutional infiltration, the news is likely to spread geographically. We thus study spillover effects on neighboring municipalities, defined as those sharing a direct border with a treated municipality (see [Figure A4](#)). Importantly, residents in neighboring municipalities are not subject to the same local institutional disruptions, but are still similarly exposed to the information of the dismissal.

[Figure 6](#) presents the estimated $\hat{\gamma}_k$ coefficients from the staggered difference-in-differences model described in [Equation \(1\)](#), whereas treatment timing is determined by a OC-related CCD in a neighboring municipality. [Table 3](#) presents the estimated $\hat{\delta}$ coefficients from the pooled, staggered difference-in-differences model described in [Equation \(2\)](#). Municipalities that experienced a dismissal themselves are excluded from this analysis. We find that neighboring municipalities experience a sharp turnout decline of roughly 0.9 percentage points, about half of the direct effect. As with the main sample, pre-treatment trends are flat and statistically insignificant, lending credibility to the parallel trends assumption.

On the one hand, this finding amplifies the impact of the results. Indeed political detachment from OC-related CCDs is not confined to the affected municipalities, but also crosses into neighboring regions. On the other hand, the presence of spillover effects strengthens the interpretation of the declining turnout after OC-related CCDs being driven by

informational shocks, rather than by the disruption of local governments.

Figure 6: Spillover Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration in a Neighboring Municipality on Aggregate Voter Turnout, 1987–2024



Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects $\hat{\gamma}_k$ of municipal council dismissals due to mafia infiltration in a neighboring municipalities on aggregated voter turnout, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#). The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis includes 41,414 observations across 2,847 municipalities, whereas municipality with a CCD are excluded from the sample. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Table 3: Spillover Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration in a Neighboring Municipality on Aggregate Voter Turnout, 1987–2024

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
CCD ($\hat{\delta}$)	-0.0367*** (0.0049)	-0.0097*** (0.0026)	-0.0098*** (0.0025)	-0.0088*** (0.0025)
Baseline:	0.6967	0.6967	0.6967	0.6967
Observations	41,483	41,481	41,481	41,414
Municipalities	2,869	2,867	2,867	2,847
R-squared	0.520	0.859	0.861	0.867
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Municipality Controls	No	No	No	Yes

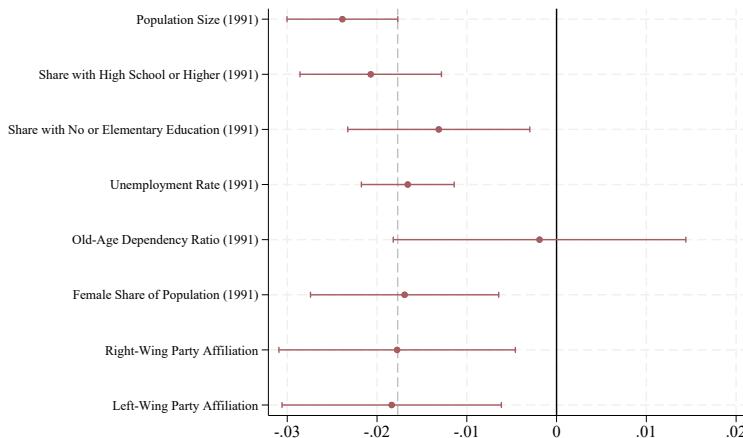
Notes: The table presents the estimated effects $\hat{\delta}$ of municipal council dismissals due to mafia infiltration in a neighboring municipalities on aggregated voter turnout, as specified in [Equation \(2\)](#). The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $.01 \leq p < .05$, * $.05 \leq p < .10$. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

5.3 Effect Heterogeneity

In this section, we explore how key municipal characteristics affect the magnitude of the turnout response to OC-related CCDs. Figure 7 shows a series of separated estimations in which 1991-census characteristics are interacted with the treatment variable ($\delta_2 \cdot CCD_{i,t} \cdot X_{i,1991}$) in the pooled, staggered difference-in-differences model described in Equation (2). The figure plots the $\hat{\delta}$ coefficient from the standard estimation in Equation (2) as a vertical, dashed line. Horizontal coefficients represent $\hat{\delta} + \hat{\delta}_2$ in the case of categorical variables and $\hat{\delta} + \hat{\delta}_2 \cdot SD_X$ in the case of continuous variables, whereas SD_X represents the standard deviation of the used heterogeneity variable measured in 1991 in the whole sample. For completeness, Figure A5 presents only the interaction coefficients.

The results suggest that more populated municipalities in 1991 exhibit a significantly stronger decline in voter turnout following a CCD. The opposite is true for municipalities with a higher old-age dependency ratio, although this category likely negatively correlates with population size. Also, there is suggestive evidence of the effect being stronger, the more educated the population in the municipality is. Finally, no differences are found in terms of party affiliation area of the mayor.

Figure 7: Impact Heterogeneity of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout, 1987-2024



Notes: The figure shows the coefficients from Equation (2) in the effect-heterogeneity version. The vertical, dashed line represents the $\hat{\delta}$ coefficient from the standard estimation. Horizontal coefficients represent $\hat{\delta} + \hat{\delta}_2$ in the case of categorical variables and $\hat{\delta} + \hat{\delta}_2 \cdot SD_X$ in the case of continuous variables, whereas SD_X represents the standard deviation of the used heterogeneity variable measured in 1991 in the whole sample. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024) and WikiMafia (WikiMafia, 2025), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).

The stronger negative effect of CCDs on voter turnout observed in larger municipalities could be led by multiple reasons. On the one hand, the infiltration of larger municipalities may be judged as more serious – because of the greater administrative capacity – and more surprising – because of the higher levels of check-and-balances. On the other hand, salience of the news may play a role, as larger municipalities tend to receive more attention from regional and national media.

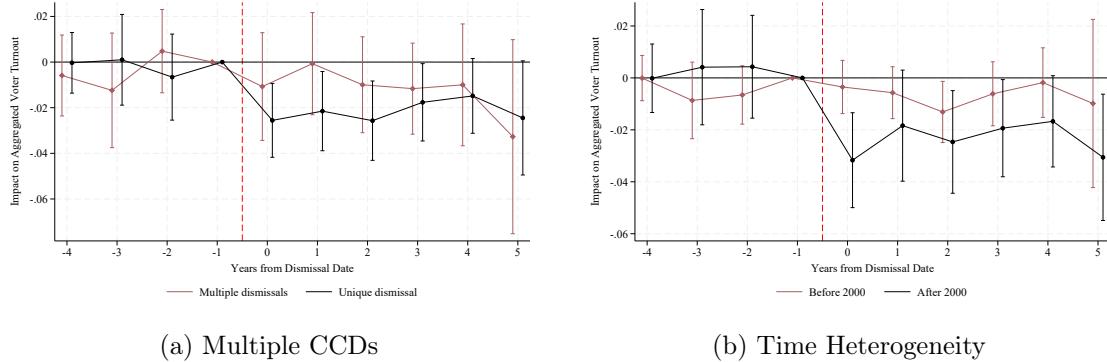
We therefore look closer at proxies for news salience. This analysis serves two key pur-

poses. First, it reinforces the interpretation of the news-related mechanisms as a driver of the results. Second, it provides additional support for the no-anticipation assumption by showing that stronger effects arise precisely where the dismissal was less expected by voters. While we do not have a direct measure of news' salience, we use its inverse relationship with event unexpectedness as a proxy. [Figure 8](#) examines two sources of variation in news' unexpectedness that plausibly condition the salience of the dismissal, by estimating [Equation \(1\)](#) using sample splits.

[Figure 8a](#) compares the impact of the first CCD on voter turnout for municipalities that experienced only one dismissal between 1991 and 2024, and for those that had multiple CCDs. We argue that the awareness of OC presence in municipalities having repeated dismissals is higher, and that CCDs act in a less shocking way in these areas. Consistent with this interpretation, we find that the negative effect on turnout is concentrated in municipalities experiencing a unique dismissal in the observed period.

[Figure 8b](#) compares the impact of CCDs happening before or after the year 2000. As documented in [Section 2.3](#), the Mafia in Italy has increasingly adapted to a hidden, underground criminal activity since the mid-1990s. For instance, Mafia related violence steadily declined. Therefore, we argue that CCDs happening in the 1990s act in a less surprising way than those happening since the 2000s. The results support this view, as the turnout declines are significantly stronger for dismissals that occurred after the year 2000.

Figure 8: Impact Heterogeneity of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout, 1987–2024



Notes: The figures present the estimated effects $\hat{\gamma}_k$ of municipal council dismissals due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#). On the left, Panel (a) shows the results of the first CCD in the sample with unique CCDs and control municipalities, or in the sample with multiple CCDs and control municipalities. On the right, Panel (b) shows the results in the sample with CCDs between 1991 and 1999, or with CCDs between 2000 and 2021. The samples include municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis in Panel (a) includes 44,915 observations in 2,925 municipalities (multiple dismissals) and 46,486 observations in 3,042 municipalities (unique dismissals). The analysis in Panel (b) includes 23,211 observations in 2,942 municipalities (pre-2000 dismissals) and 34,856 observations in 3,024 municipalities (post-2000). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

5.4 CCDs and Vote Shares

A central point related to the drop in voter turnout following the CCDs is to understand *which votes are missing*. This question is quite difficult to answer in absence of individual data on voter behavior. We nevertheless infer suggestive evidence from movements in aggregate vote shares to party areas.

We classify all party lists into four political areas: left, center, right, and others. We then build two types of vote shares at municipality-by-area level. First, counting the number of votes of a political area relative to the total electorate, which capture both the extensive margin (*whether to vote*) and the decision margin (*which political area to vote*). Second, counting the number of votes to a given political area relative to the total voters, which focuses on the decision margin and on the relevant political outcome of the election.

[Table 4](#) shows the pooled impact of CCDs on area votes relative to the electorate as formalized in [Equation \(3b\)](#), with column (4) presenting the effect by alignment of the political area with the political area of the dismissed mayor. As expected, in the various specifications in columns (1-3), vote shares relative to the electorate drop – in line with the effect on voter turnout. The magnitude in percentages in columns (1-2) is -2.4%, similar to the impact found in [Table 2](#).¹⁰ Focusing on the political alignment of parties and dismissed mayors, column (4) clearly indicates that the political area aligned with the area of the dismissed mayor experiences a drastic loss of voters (-7.1pp, -33.3%) in the aftermath of the CCDs. On the other hand, other political areas even gain voters in the aggregate (+3.1pp, +15.9%). As a consequence, as presented in [Table A7](#), votes shares relative to the total voters indicate a major shift from the aligned parties (-10.0pp, -32.8%) to the non-aligned parties (+4.9pp, +16.7%).¹¹

[Figure 9](#) presents the dynamic impact of CCDs on vote shares, as formalized in [Equation \(3a\)](#). [Figure 9a](#) shows the aggregated impact over all political areas, whereas [Figure 9b](#) shows the heterogeneity by political alignment of parties and the dismissed mayors. For both graphs, the base is the total number of electors ([Figure A6](#) shows the alignment heterogeneity graph using the number of actual voters). The dynamic graphs confirm the findings presented in the pooled-coefficient models, with a drop in the aggregated vote shares following the CCDs, and a vote influx from political areas aligned with the dismissed mayor's political area to other political areas. The impacts materialize in the aftermath of the CCDs, whereas pre-trends are stable around a zero difference.

¹⁰As expected, the coefficient $\hat{\delta}$ is not affected by the subdivision of municipalities in municipality-by-area from column (1) to column (2). Notice that column (4) excludes 75 municipalities with missing indication of the dismissed mayor's political area.

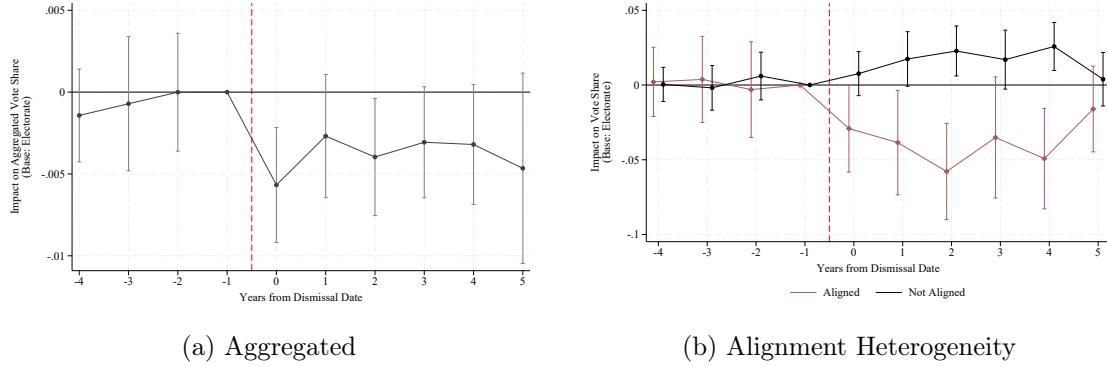
¹¹As expected, due to the zero sum vote share dependent variable, columns (1-2) have a CCD impact of zero. The same applies to column (3), with the exception of some impact from the excluded category *Other Parties*.

Table 4: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Vote Shares (Base: Electorate), 1987-2024

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
CCD ($\hat{\delta}$)	-0.0039*** (0.0009)	-0.0039*** (0.0009)	-0.0049*** (0.0014)	
CCD ($\hat{\delta} + \hat{\delta}_2$) - Aligned				-0.0714*** (0.0100)
CCD ($\hat{\delta}$) - Not Aligned				0.0310*** (0.0051)
<i>Baseline:</i>	0.1597	0.1597	0.1839	0.2016
<i>Baseline - Aligned:</i>				0.2144
<i>Baseline - Not Aligned:</i>				0.1952
Observations	184,044	184,044	138,033	135,066
Municipalities	3,120	3,120	3,120	3,045
R-squared	0.053	0.423	0.434	0.436
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	Yes	No	No	No
Municipality by Area FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Other Parties Included</i>	Yes	Yes	No	No

Notes: The table presents the estimated effects $\hat{\delta}$ of municipal council dismissals due to mafia infiltration on party area vote shares (left, center, right, others), as specified in [Equation \(3b\)](#). Column (4) presents the estimate for the model that adds an effect heterogeneity term $\hat{\delta}_2 \cdot \text{CCD}_{i,t} \cdot \text{Aligned}_{i,a}$. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Vote shares are measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The base of the vote shares is the total electorate. Standard errors are clustered at municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $.01 \leq p < .05$, * $.05 \leq p < .10$. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Figure 9: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Vote Shares (Base: Electorate), 1987–2024



Notes: The figures present the estimated effects of municipal council dismissals due to mafia infiltration on party area vote shares, as specified in Equation (3a). On the left, Panel (a) shows the results of in the overall sample. On the right, Panel (b) separates the impact by alignment of the dependent variable political area and the political area the mayor ($\hat{\gamma}_k + \hat{\gamma}_{2,k}$) or not ($\hat{\gamma}_k$). The samples include municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Vote shares are measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The base of the vote shares is the total electorate. The analysis in Panel (a) includes 138,033 observations in 3,120 municipalities. The analysis in Panel (b) includes 135,066 observations in 3,045 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024) and WikiMafia (WikiMafia, 2025), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).

5.5 Mechanism

Our findings point to a robust and significant drop in voter turnout following the city council dismissal of municipalities infiltrated by the organized crime. In this section we aim at identifying different possible mechanisms driving this result. This exercise does not only contribute to the general understanding of this phenomena, but it is also crucial for the evaluation of the result. Indeed, the interpretation of the decline in voter turnout obviously changes in case it is led by a drop in citizens' political trust or by a decrease of OC vote exchange activities.

In order give structure to the discussion of the effects of CCDs on voter turnout, we rely on the Downsian random utility model (Downs, 1957; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968). This framework models the voter participation of individual i in a given election through the decision rule:

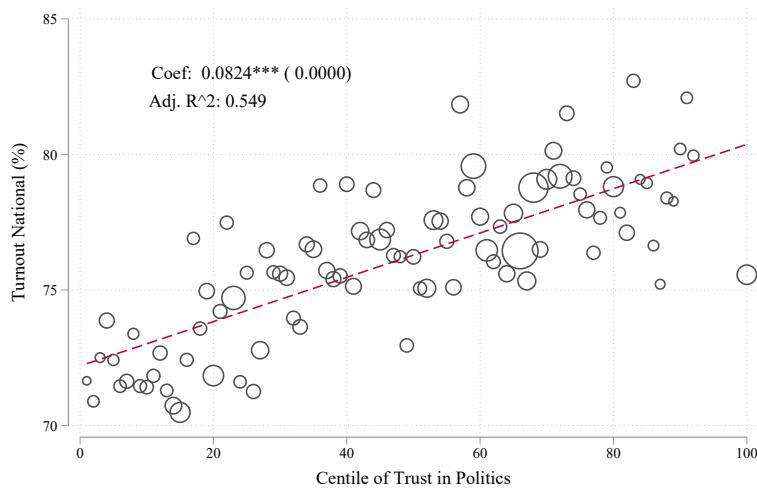
$$\text{Vote iff: } R_i^* = p_i B_i - C_i + D_i \geq 0, \quad (5)$$

where R_i^* is i 's latent, expected reward from voting for her utility-maximizing option, $p_i B_i$ captures the instrumental motive for voting – i.e., the utility derived from individual i 's ability to influence the outcome – and is composed by i 's perceived probability to be pivotal voter $p_i \in (0, 1)$ and i 's expected differential benefit B_i in case the preferred option chosen, C_i are i 's voting costs – covering practical voting costs (e.g., queuing) and information costs –, and D_i represents individual i 's expressive benefits from voting – i.e., the utility received regardless of the vote outcome and of voter's ability to influence it.

Political Trust: A potential channel explaining the impact of city council dismissals on voter turnout passes through political trust. Political trust can be conceptualized as the feeling that the “own interests would be attended to even if the authorities were exposed

to little supervision or scrutiny” (Easton, 1975). Theoretically, in terms of the Downsian random utility model presented in Equation (5), the lack of institutional credibility lowers both the expected return of the preferred electoral outcomes B_i and the expressive benefit from the act of voting D_i . This is especially true in absence of political alternatives. Individual turnout decreases consequently. Using individual data from the “Aspects of Daily Life” survey (ISTAT, 2025), Figure 10 confirms that voter turnout in national elections correlates positively with political trust. Here, political trust is represented in centiles of the municipal level average of individuals not answering positively to the question “Why do you never follow politics? Distrust in Italian politics”. A 10-centiles increases in the distribution of trust in politics are associated with a significant increase in turnout in national election by 0.82pp.

Figure 10: Turnout at National Elections by Percentile of Declared Trust in Politics, 1994-2023



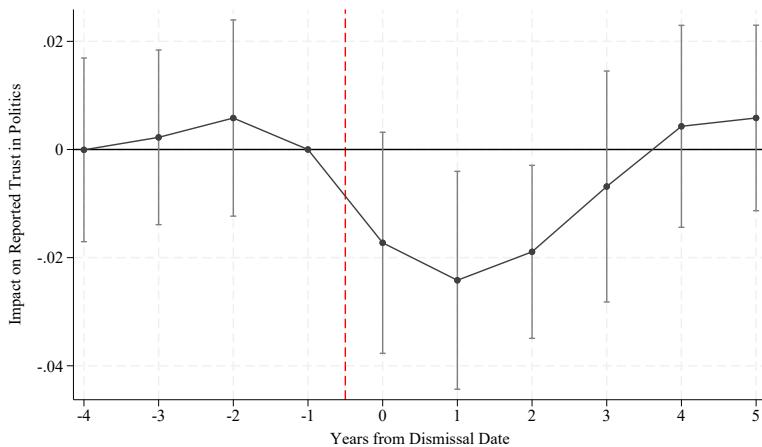
Notes: The figure presents the relationship between turnout in national elections and trust in politics at the municipal level. Trust in politics is measured by the inverse of average number of citizens in the municipality answering positively to the question “Why do you never follow politics? Distrust in Italian politics”, and is then grouped in centiles. The size of the bubbles indicates the number of individuals sampled in a given centile, and the linear fit is weighted accordingly. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors reported in parenthesis. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $.01 \leq p < .05$, * $.05 \leq p < .10$. Source: Aspects of Daily Life (ISTAT, 2025).

Now, the impact of CCDs on high-governmental political trust is not a priori clear. On the one hand, the public disclosure of the connection between local politics and organized crime triggered by CCDs might represent an informational shock to some local voters, and spur negatively on their level of political trust. On the other hand, political trust in higher-level governmental institutions may also increase if the state intervention solves a – possibly already known – situation of malfeasance. Our empirical approach aims at showing which effect of the CCDs dominates in shaping political trust.

Using individual data from the “Aspects of Daily Life” survey on distrust in Italian politics (ISTAT, 2025), Figure 11 presents the estimated $\hat{\gamma}_k$ coefficients from the model described in Equation (4). We estimate that declared political trust decreases by approximately 2 percentage points (-2.6%) in the year of the dismissal. The effect remains significantly negative in the subsequent years, and then reverses to the zero on the long-run. Importantly, the pre-treatment coefficients are close to zero and statistically insignificant, suggesting

that individuals living treated and control municipalities followed parallel trends in declared political trust prior to the CCDs. This result strongly suggests that voter turnout may be affected by CCDs through the news channel of the disclosure of the collusion between OC and institutions and through the consequent loss of political trust. This finding is supported by an additional clue. [Figure A7](#) shows that the number of blank ballots increase following the CCDs – signaling a rise in political detachment.

Figure 11: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Declared Trust in Politics, 1994-2023



Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#), on declared trust in politics. Trust in politics is a dummy variable being 0 if the individual answers positively to the question "Why do you never follow politics? Distrust in Italian politics", and 1 otherwise. The sample includes individuals in municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Trust is measured between 1994 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis covers 664,646 individuals in 2,165 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: *Aspects of Daily Life (ISTAT, 2025)*.

OC-Controlled Votes: There is widespread evidence of the involvement of organized crime in controlling votes in Italy. Since 1992, the bargain of votes involving mafia is even explicitly punished by the article 416ter of the Italian Criminal Code. On the one hand, journalistic and police investigations have reported evidence of vote exchange, vote buying and coercion to vote by the organized crime (e.g. [ANSA \(2024\)](#); [Polizia di Stato \(2025\)](#)). On the other hand, there is evidence on the influence of organized crime on electoral outcomes. For example, the (instrumented) presence of the Sicilian mafia is associated with electoral gains for the Christian Democratic Party between 1946 and 1992 ([De Feo and De Luca, 2017](#)) and Forza Italia between 1994 and 2013 ([Buonanno et al., 2016](#)). Moreover, [Alesina et al. \(2019\)](#) document the strategical use of pre-electoral violence by the organized crime. In terms of the Downsian random utility model presented in [Equation \(5\)](#), OC's control of votes can be modeled through a reduction in the cost parameter for voting C_i . If the city council dismissals lead to a weakening of the local presence of organized crime ([Baraldi et al., 2024](#); [Cingano and Tonello, 2020](#); [Fenizia and Saggio, 2024](#)), then the decline in voter turnout might be led by a decrease in vote control practices.

Although this channel can not be excluded, we argue that it likely does not account for the whole effect. First, heterogeneity analyses in [Section 5.3](#) show how the drop in voter turnout is stronger in municipalities with larger population and better educational levels – characteristics less likely to be associated with vote control practices. Second, [Section 5.4](#)

shows shifts in vote shares from the parties aligned with the dismissed city council political area to those of other political extraction. The fact that part of the electorate finds an alternative in the political system suggests rather a political process of vote punishment and vote detachment, than a generalized cease in OC vote-control activities.

Income Effect: [Fenizia and Saggio \(2024\)](#) find that city council dismissals generate large economic returns in the affected municipalities. This income effect may explain the decline in voter participation if economic welfare correlates negatively with turnout. For instance, higher employment may imply increased informational opportunity costs C_i and therefore lower turnout. In this respect, the literature on the link between income effects and voter turnout is mixed. On the one hand, [Charles and Stephens \(2013\)](#) and [Burden and Wichowsky \(2014\)](#) find that local employment rates and wages are associated with lower turnout in US counties. On the other hand, [Schafer et al. \(2022\)](#) find that negative shocks in within-individual income reduce turnout among poor voters in the city of Bologna.

Timing is an important argument in our context. While voter turnout falls immediately after the city council dismissal, the economic returns take some years to materialize ([Fenizia and Saggio, 2024](#)). Therefore, while income effects may play a role in the medium-term, they are unlikely to be the driving force behind the short-term decline in voter turnout.

Migration Effect: Migration in the aftermath of OC-related CCDs could represent a concurrent mechanism to explain the turnout decline, in case it drives different electorate compositions at the municipal level. For instance, more politically active citizens may leave the municipality after the CCDs. [Fenizia and Saggio \(2024\)](#) do not find any impact of CCDs on the population size of municipalities, suggesting that this factor is likely minor. As shown in [Figure A8](#), we also do not find any impact on the number of registered electors. Also, migration patterns likely need some time to materialize – which speaks against them being the major drivers of the sudden reaction in voter turnout.

5.6 Robustness Checks

To test the robustness of the results presented in [Section 5.1](#), we estimate a number of alternative models.

First, to mitigate the effect of cohort heterogeneity in the response to city council dismissals, we analyze the robustness of our results by using the interaction-weighted estimator proposed by [Sun and Abraham \(2021\)](#). The estimator separately identifies the effect of city council dismissal on turnout for each cohort and aggregates the results using cohort shares in the sample. [Figure A9](#) shows the results, which are qualitatively similar to the results of the main specification.

Second, as described in [Appendix C](#), we constructed an alternative control group using a 5-closest neighborhood matching. [Figure A10](#) reports the results of [Equation \(1\)](#) using the matched sample. Again, results are very similar compared to the main estimation presented in [Figure 5a](#). As for the main specification, [Table A4](#) show that these results on the matched sample are robust to the inclusion of various controls.

Third, given the presence of geographic spillovers documented in [Section 5.1](#), we estimate the model in [Equation \(1\)](#) excluding the bordering municipalities. [Figure A11](#) shows that the results are not particularly affected by this measure. If anything, as expected, the decrease in voter turnout is slightly more pronounced.

Fourth, we conduct robustness checks to verify that our results are not driven by the specific aggregation of turnout measures. [Figure A12](#) shows that results are robust to using an

alternative measure of turnout, calculated as the simple average across individual elections. Meanwhile, [Table A5](#) breaks down turnout by election type, revealing a consistent negative effect across all categories.

Fifth, [Table A6](#) and [Figure A13](#) present robustness checks assessing the influence of outliers. [Table A6](#) shows that the estimated effect remains stable and statistically significant when we estimate the model separately within each region, confirming that the results are not driven by specific geographic areas. Further, [Figure A13](#) reports a leave-one-out analysis, where we re-estimate the model repeatedly while excluding one treated municipality at a time. The consistency of the estimated coefficients across all iterations indicates that no single treated municipality disproportionately influences the overall result. Together, these analyses reinforce the robustness of our findings and address concerns that the main effect could be driven by outliers.

6 Conclusion

This paper investigates how the dismissal of Italian city councils infiltrated by organized crime affects voter turnout. We argue that these interventions operate as informational shocks: by publicly disclosing collusion between elected officials and organized crime, they undermine trust in political institutions and reduce the perceived benefits of participating in elections. To test this, we leverage the staggered timing of city council dismissals in a difference-in-differences and event study framework. To isolate the demand-side effects of political participation and minimize potential contamination from local political dynamics, we measure voter turnout at higher institutional levels than municipalities.

Our findings show that city council dismissals cause a significant and persistent reduction in turnout, averaging 2 percentage points (-2.6%) in national, regional, and provincial elections. This result benchmarks as substantial when compared to literature on voter turnout from other contexts, such as corruption. Placebo tests with municipalities dismissed for unrelated reasons confirm that the effect is specific to organized crime-related interventions. The effect is stronger in contexts where OC-related events are more salient and less anticipated by the public, such as after 2000 and in municipalities dismissed only one time. The result is robust to a wide range of alternative specifications, including matched control groups and alternative estimators.

We also find negative spillover effects on neighboring municipalities, indicating that exposure to the information reduces political engagement – even absent direct intervention effects. This suggests that the mechanism likely operates through public awareness rather than institutional disruption alone. In terms of vote shares, we find that political areas aligned with the political area of the dismissed mayors drastically lose voters in aftermath of the CCDs (-7.1pp, -33.3%), partially absorbed by other political areas (+3.1pp, +15.9%).

We test the mechanism of lowered political trust using individual data from the “Aspects of Daily Life” survey. We find that individuals living in municipalities affected by a CCD exhibit lower levels of political trust (-25.6%) in the aftermath of the intervention, while being similar before.

We contribute to the growing literature on the electoral consequences of organized crime, highlighting a previously overlooked consequence of anti-mafia policies. While prior work has emphasized the economic and administrative benefits of city council dismissals ([Acconcia et al., 2014](#); [Fenizia and Saggio, 2024](#)), we show that these gains come at the cost

of diminished political participation. The findings point to a trade-off at the heart of state interventions against organized crime. While dismantling collusive local governance is crucial for state capacity and development, doing so publicly may inadvertently detach voters and reduce democratic engagement.

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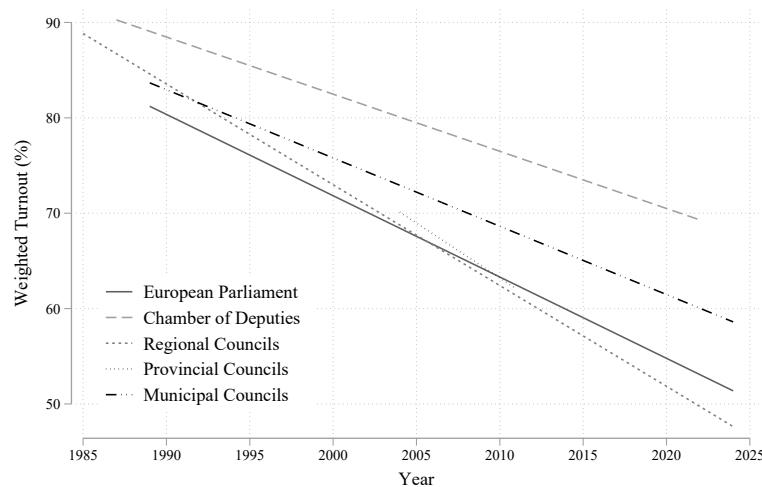
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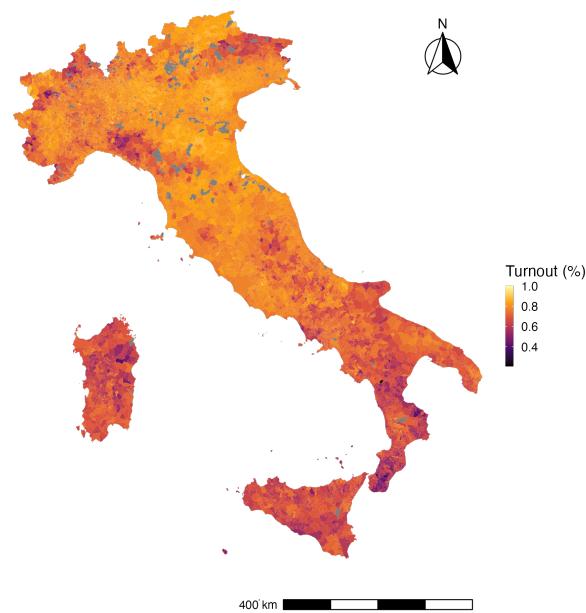
A Additional Figures

Figure A1: Linear Fit of the Average Turnout by Election Type and Year, 1985-2025.



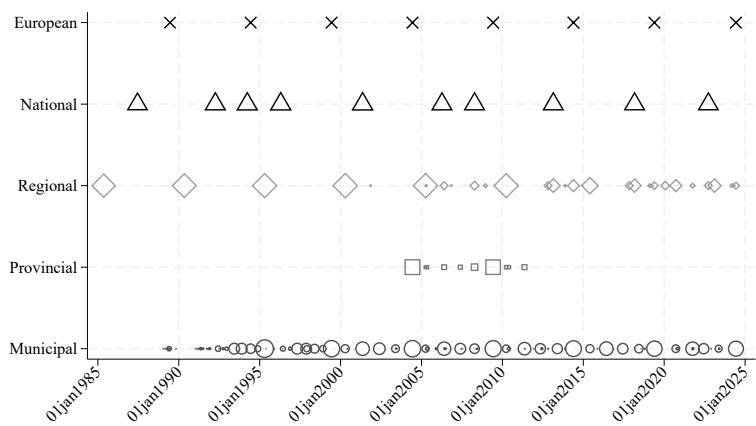
Notes: Source: Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Figure A2: Turnout in Chamber of Deputies Election by Municipality, 2013.



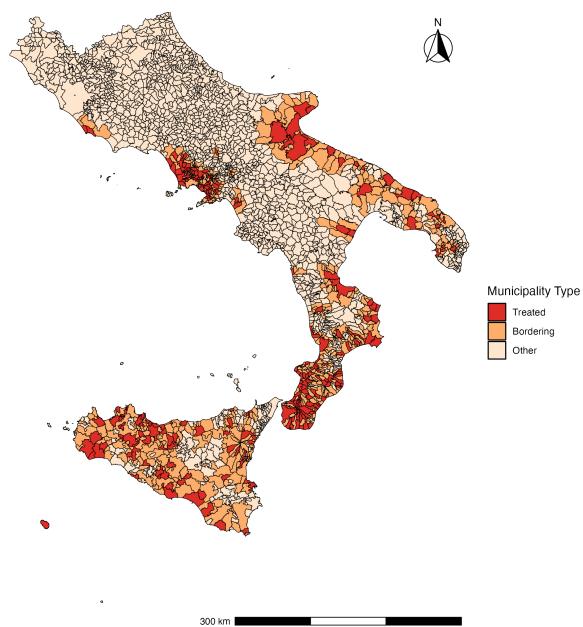
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Figure A3: Covered Elections, 1985-2025



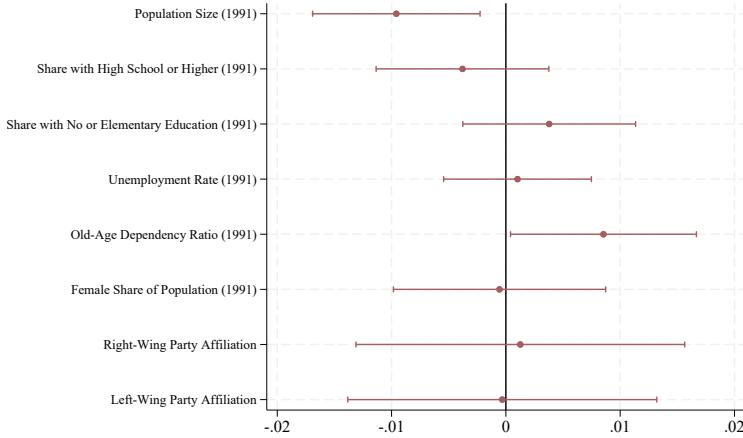
Notes: Source: Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)). Within-election type, the size of the labels is weighted by the total number of eligible voters.

Figure A4: Municipalities Neighboring City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime
in Central and Southern Italy, 1991-2024



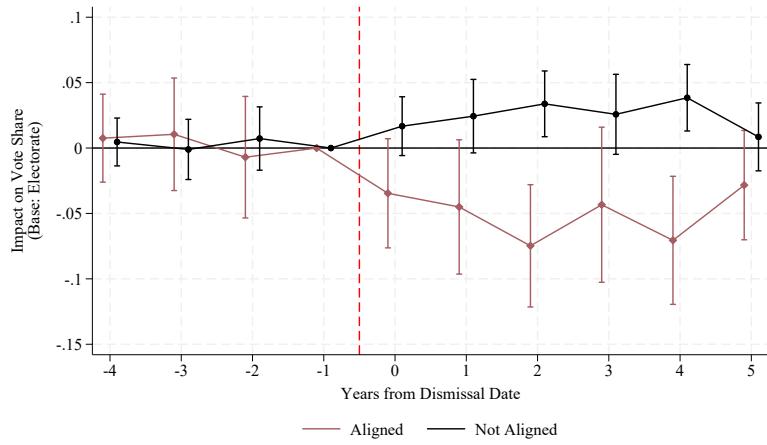
Notes: Source: DAIT (DAIT, 2024) and WikiMafia (WikiMafia, 2025).

Figure A5: Impact of City Council Dismissals on Voter Turnout Interacted with Observable Characteristics, 1987-2024



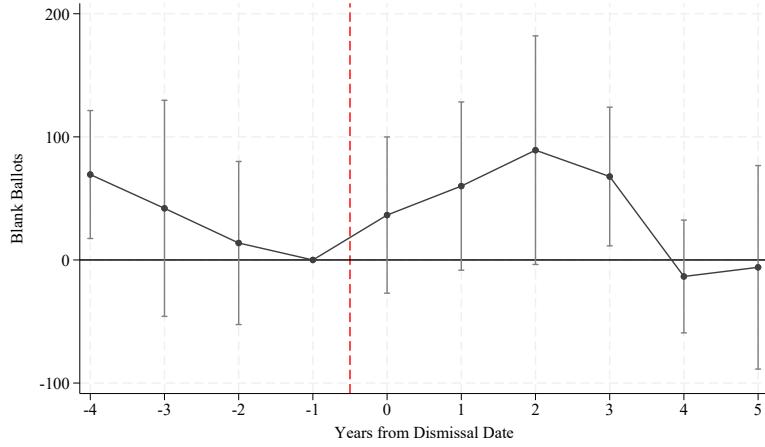
Notes: The figure shows the interaction term from [Equation \(2\)](#) in the effect-heterogeneity version. Horizontal coefficients represent the difference to the baseline category $\hat{\delta}_2$ in the case of categorical variables, and the impact of one-standard-deviation increase SD_X in the 1991 sample – i.e. $\hat{\delta}_2 \cdot SD_X$ – in the case of continuous variables. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Figure A6: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Vote Shares (Base: Voters), 1987–2024



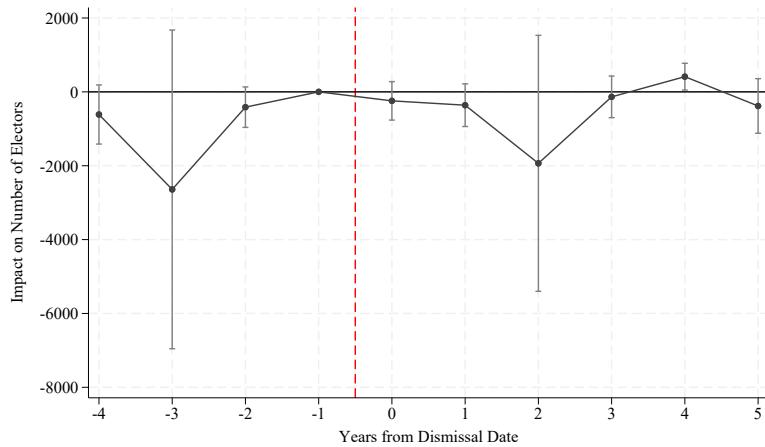
Notes: The figures present the estimated effects of municipal council dismissals due to mafia infiltration on party area vote shares (left, center, right, others), as specified in [Equation \(3a\)](#) – separating the impact by alignment of the dependent variable political area and the political area the mayor ($\gamma_k + \gamma_{2,k}$) or not (γ_k). The samples include municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Vote shares are measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The base of the vote shares is the total voters. The analysis in Panel (a) includes 138,033 observations in 3,120 municipalities. The analysis in Panel (b) includes 135,066 observations in 3,045. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Figure A7: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Number of Blank Ballots, 1987-2024



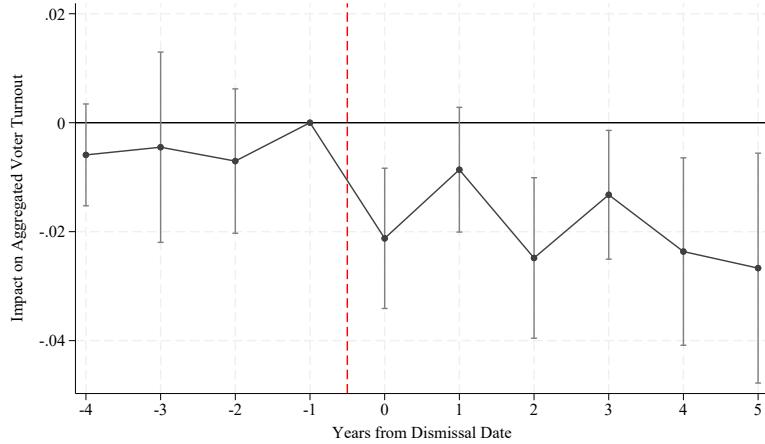
Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#), on the number of blank ballots. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Blank ballots are measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis includes 46,447 observations across 3120 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Figure A8: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Number of Electors, 1991-2024



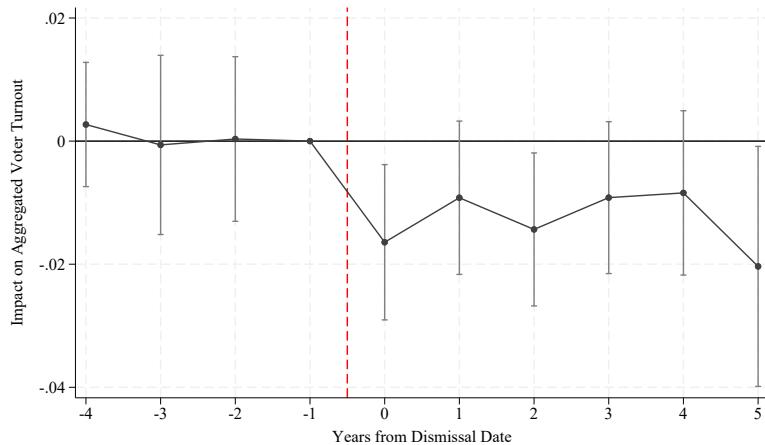
Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#), on the absolute number of electors. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Electors are measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis covers 47,089 observations in 3,120 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Figure A9: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout using Sun and Abraham (2021), 1991-2024



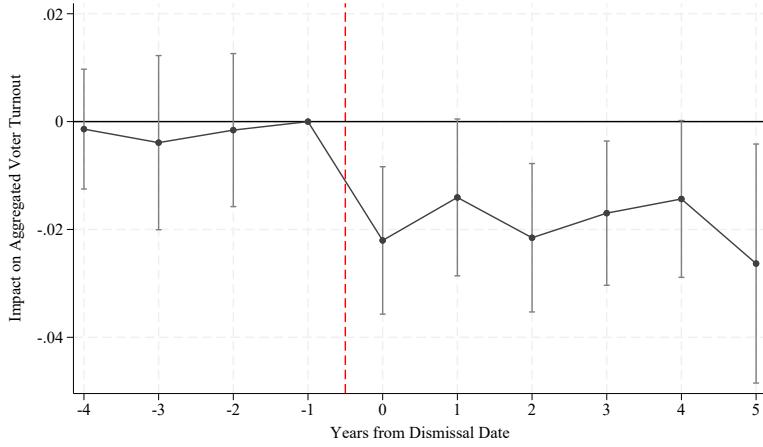
Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, using Sun and Abraham (2021) interaction-weighted estimator, on voter turnout. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis covers 47,266 observations in 3,120 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024) and WikiMafia (WikiMafia, 2025), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).

Figure A10: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter using Matched Control Group, 1991-2024



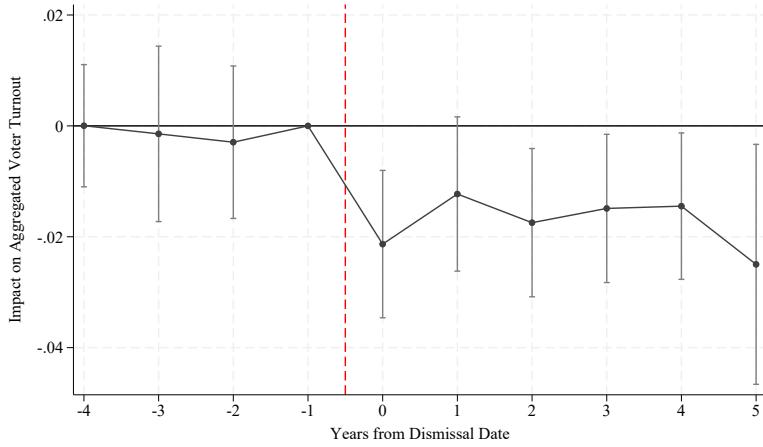
Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily matched to dismissed municipalities by region year. Matching variables include turnout in the 5 years prior to the dismissal, population, the old dependency ratio, and unemployment rate. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis covers 21,040 observations in 1,461 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024) and WikiMafia (WikiMafia, 2025), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).

Figure A11: Impact of City Council Dismissals on Voter Turnout removing Neighboring Municipalities, 1991–2024



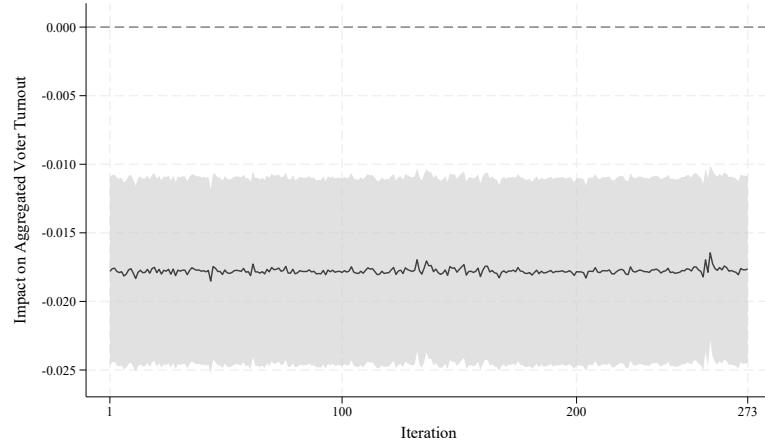
Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#), on voter turnout. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily excluding from the controls municipalities neighboring dismissed municipalities. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis includes 39,069 observations across 2,595 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Figure A12: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter using Yearly Average Turnout, 1991-2024



Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#), on average voter turnout. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily matched to dismissed municipalities. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis covers 47,089 observations in 3,120 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Figure A13: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout, Leave-One-Out, 1991-2024



Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration on voter turnout, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#). The γ_k coefficients are aggregated into a single post-period estimate and plotted using a leave-one-out procedure, iteratively excluding one municipality at a time over 273 iterations. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The analysis covers around 47,070 observations in 3,119 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. 95%-Confidence intervals reported. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

B Additional Tables

Table A1: Reasons for Municipal Dismissals

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Description</i>
Death of the mayor or serious impediment	The mayor passes away or is permanently unable to fulfill their role. The city council is dismissed and the municipality is administered by an external commissioner until elections are held at the first eligible date.
Resignation of the mayor	Mayors may resign for personal or political reasons. The council is automatically dissolved after 20 days and an external commissioner is appointed. Elections are held at the first eligible date.
Impeachment or remotion of the mayor	Removal due to incompatibility with other roles (e.g., regional or national office, healthcare leadership), violations of law, or issues of public order. An external commissioner is appointed and elections are held at the first eligible date.
Motion of no confidence	A majority of councillors vote against the mayor or the financial law. The council is dismissed, and a commissioner is appointed. Elections are typically held after 18 months.
Resignation of the majority of councillors	If more than 50% of the council resign, the council is automatically dissolved. A commissioner takes over and elections are usually scheduled after 18 months.
Failure to approve the budget	If the municipal council fails to pass the budget by legal deadlines, it is dissolved. A commissioner is appointed and elections follow (often after 18 months).
Serious legal or constitutional violation	Dissolution occurs if serious breaches of law or constitutional provisions are identified. The municipality is administered by a commissioner until elections are held.
Public order concerns	When the functioning of the municipality is severely compromised by disorder or institutional paralysis, it can be dissolved and managed by a commissioner until new elections.
Mafia infiltration	When concrete evidence links officials to organized crime (per Law 221/1991), the council is dissolved. A commissioner is appointed with full powers and elections are held after 18 months.

Notes: Source: DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)).

Table A2: List of Dismissed Municipalities, 1991-2024

Basilicata	Montalbano Jonico (16.12.1993), Scanzano Jonico (16.12.2019)
Calabria	Acquaro (18.9.2023), Africo (1.8.2014), Africo (27.10.2003, 2.12.2019), Amantea (4.8.2008, 17.2.2020), Ardore (27.6.2013), Badolato (19.4.2014), Bagaladi (6.4.2012), Bagnara Calabra (14.4.2015), Borgia (2.7.2010), Botricello (9.5.2003), Bova Marina (23.3.2012, 11.5.2017), Bovalino (2.4.2015), Brancaleone (31.7.2017), Briatico (17.3.2003, 24.1.2012, 8.5.2018), Calanna (2.11.2004), Camini (16.1.1995), Canolo (6.5.2017), Capistrano (17.10.2023), Careri (15.2.2012, 10.1.2019), Casabona (29.10.2018), Cesignana (19.4.2013), Cassano all'Ionio (22.11.2017), Cerva (09.05.2024), Cirò (19.2.2001, 21.10.2013), Cirò Marina (19.1.2018), Condofuri (12.10.2010), Corigliano-Rossano (9.6.2011), Cosoleto (8.9.1997, 21.11.2022), Cropani (31.7.2017), Crucoli (29.10.2018), Cutro (14.8.2020), Delianuova (30.9.1991, 21.11.2018), Fabrizia (27.7.2009), Gioia Tauro (18.1.1993, 24.4.2008, 11.5.2017), Guardavalle (21.11.2003, 23.2.2021), Isca sullo Ionio (28.1.1992), Isola di Capo Rizzuto (9.5.2003, 22.11.2017), Joppolo (7.2.2014), Lamezia Terme (30.9.1991, 5.11.2002, 22.11.2017), Laureana di Borrello (11.5.2017), Limbadi (26.4.2018), Marcedusa (8.10.2001), Marina di Gioiosa Ionica (7.7.2011, 22.11.2017), Melito di Porto Salvo (30.9.1991, 28.2.1996, 27.3.2013), Mileto (6.4.2012), Molo chio (23.6.1993), Monasterace (27.10.2003), Mongiana (12.7.2012), Montebello Jonico (24.4.2013), Nardodipace (19.12.2011, 7.12.2015), Nicotera (2.9.2005, 13.8.2010, 23.11.2016), Nocera Terinese (30.8.2021), Palizzi (3.5.2019), Parghelia (17.9.2007), Petronà (22.11.2017), Pizzo (7.7.2006, 23.3.2012, 26.4.2018, 25.2.2020), Portigliola (22.5.2022), Quarto (10.4.1992), Reggio di Calabria (9.10.2012), Rende (28.6.2023), Ricadi (11.2.2014), Rizziconi (28.10.2016, 31.7.2000), Roccaforte del Greco (10.2.1996, 27.10.2003, 28.2.2011), Roghudi (16.1.1995), Rosarno (28.1.1992, 15.12.2008, 30.8.2021), Samo (24.1.2012), San Calogero (27.3.2013), San Ferdinando (20.5.1992, 23.4.2009, 31.10.2014), San Giorgio Morgeto (27.12.2019), San Gregorio d'Ippona (24.4.2007, 8.5.2018), San Luca (14.9.2000, 19.5.2013), San Procopio (23.12.2010), Sant'Andrea Apostolo dello Ionio (30.9.1991), Sant'Eufemia d'Aspromonte (14.8.2020), Sant'Ilario dello Ionio (15.2.2012), Sant'Onofrio (23.4.2009), Santo Stefano in Aspromonte (30.3.1998), Scalea (25.2.2014), Scilla (22.3.2018, 11.4.2023), Seminara (30.9.1991, 29.12.2007), Siderno (27.3.2013, 9.8.2018), Simeri Crichi (30.8.2021), Sinopoli (8.9.1997, 1.8.2019), Sorbo San Basile (13.6.2017), Soriano Calabro (25.1.2007, 17.6.2022), Stefanacconi (28.1.1992, 29.07.2024), Stilo (9.5.2019), Strongoli (3.9.2003, 17.4.2018), Taurianova (2.8.1991, 23.4.2009, 5.7.2013), Tropea (12.8.2016, 24.04.2024)

Campania	Acerra (18.1.1993), Afragola (20.4.1999, 25.10.2005), Arzano (5.3.2008, 29.4.2015, 22.5.2019), Battipaglia (4.4.2014), Boscoreale (15.12.1998, 26.1.2005), Brusciano (26.1.2005), Caivano (26.4.2018, 17.10.2023), Calvi Risolta (29.07.2024), Calvizzano (17.4.2018), Carinola (18.1.1993), Casal di Principe (30.9.1991, 23.12.1996, 6.4.2012), Casalnuovo di Napoli (29.12.2007), Casaluce (7.7.2006), Casamarciano (4.6.1993), Casandrino (2.8.1991, 16.2.1998), Casapesenna (30.9.1991, 30.1.1996, 6.4.2012), Casavatore (24.1.2017), Casola di Napoli (4.6.1993), Casoria (25.10.2005), Castel Volturno (14.9.1998, 6.4.2012), Castellammare di Stabia (24.2.2022), Castello di Cisterna (10.7.2009), Cesa (27.8.1992), Crispano (25.10.2005, 24.1.2017), Ercolano (14.6.1993), Frattamaggiore (5.11.2002), Frignano (11.3.1993), Giugliano in Campania (24.4.2013), Gragnano (23.3.2012), Grazzanise (11.9.1992, 26.1.1998, 8.3.2013), Gricignano di Aversa (2.8.2009), Liveri (19.5.1997), Luscianno (12.12.1992, 17.10.2007), Marano di Napoli (30.9.1991, 28.7.2004, 30.12.2016, 18.6.2021), Marcianise (19.3.2008), Melito di Napoli (23.12.2005, 12.03.2024), Mondragone (30.9.1991), Montecorvino Pugliano (21.11.2003), Monteforte Irpino (27.03.2024), Nocera Inferiore (14.4.1993), Nola (16.8.1993, 26.4.1996), Orta di Atella (4.7.2008, 8.11.2019), Ottaviano (8.9.1997), Pagani (11.3.1993, 23.3.2012), Pago del Vallo di Lauro (23.6.1993, 13.3.2009), Pignataro Maggiore (30.11.2000), Pimonte (4.4.1996), Poggiomarino (30.9.1991, 9.2.1999), Pomigliano d'Arco (16.8.1993), Pompei (11.9.2001), Portici (10.9.2002), Pozzuoli (23.12.2005), Pratola Serra (26.10.2020), Quarto (27.3.2013), Quindici (14.4.1993, 24.9.2002, 27.03.2024), Recale (31.7.1992), San Cipriano d'Aversa (27.8.1992, 19.3.2008, 4.9.2012), San Felice a Cancello (11.5.2017), San Gennaro Vesuviano (12.2.2018), San Gennaro Vesuviano (6.11.2001, 15.11.2006, 12.2.2018), San Giuseppe Vesuviano (4.6.1993, 9.12.2009, 9.6.2022), San Lorenzo Maggiore (24.4.1994), San Paolo Bel Sito (4.3.1994, 5.11.2002), San Tammaro (23.12.2005), Sant'Antimo (30.9.1991, 16.3.2020), Sant'Antonio Abate (2.9.1993), Santa Maria la Carità (8.2.2002), Santa Maria la Fossa (26.10.1992, 11.7.1996), Sarno (23.6.1993), Scafati (11.3.1993, 27.1.2017), Sparanise (19.12.2022), Terzigno (28.7.1997), Teverola (16.12.1993), Torre Annunziata (4.6.1993, 6.5.2022), Torre del Greco (25.10.2005), Trentola Ducenta (10.5.2016), Tufino (25.10.2005), Villa Literno (23.4.2009), Villa di Briano (26.10.1992, 26.1.1998), Villaricca (17.1.1994, 6.8.2021), Volla (2.11.2004)
Emilia-Romagna	Brescello (20.4.2016)
Lazio	Anzio (21.11.2022), Nettuno (28.11.2005, 21.11.2022), Ostia (X Municipio di Roma, 27.9.2015)
Liguria	Bordighera (10.3.2011), Lavagna (27.3.2017), Ventimiglia (6.2.2012)
Lombardia	Sedriano (15.10.2013)
Piemonte	Bardonecchia (2.5.1995), Leini (23.3.2012), Rivarolo Canavese (22.5.2012)

Puglia	Carmiano (5.12.2019), Carovigno (12.3.2021), Cellino San Marco (19.4.2014), Cerignola (14.10.2019), Foggia (6.8.2021), Gallico (30.9.1991), Gioia del Colle (10.9.1993), Manduria (26.4.2018), Manfredonia (22.10.2019), Mattinata (16.3.2018), Modugno (30.3.1993), Monopoli (23.4.1994), Monte Sant'Angelo (20.7.2015), Neviano (5.8.2022), Orta Nova (18.7.2023), Ostuni (27.12.2021), Parabita (15.3.2017), Scorrano (20.1.2020), Sogliano Cavour (29.6.2018), Squinzano (30.1.2021), Surbo (30.9.1991, 8.5.2018), Terlizzi (30.3.1993), Trani (10.9.1993), Trinitapoli (5.4.2022), Valenzano (25.9.2017)
Sicilia	Aci Catena (28.6.1993), Adrano (30.9.1991), Altavilla Milicia (11.7.1996, 11.2.2014), Augusta (8.3.2013), Bagheria (11.3.1993, 20.4.1999), Barrafranca (16.4.2021), Bolognetta (18.11.2021), Bompensiere (26.4.2018), Borgetto (2.5.2017), Burgio (2.9.2005), Caccamo (11.3.1993, 10.3.1999), Calatabiano (10.7.2000, 30.8.2021), Caltavuturo (8.10.2001), Camastra (10.4.2018), Campobello di Licata (18.7.2006), Campobello di Mazara (11.7.1992, 27.7.2012), Canicattì (6.9.2004), Capaci (9.6.1992), Castellammare del Golfo (27.3.2006), Castelvetrano (7.6.2017), Castiglione di Sicilia (23.5.2023), Castrofilippo (15.4.2011), Cerdà (30.9.1991, 12.12.2006), Cinisi (11.9.2001), Corleone (12.8.2016), Ficarazzi (20.4.1999), Furnari (4.12.2009), Gela (18.7.1992), Giardinello (8.8.2014), Isola delle Femmine (9.11.2012), Lascari (31.10.1997), Licata (31.7.1992), Maniace (16.5.2020), Mascali (9.6.1992, 27.3.2013), Mascalucia (13.7.1993), Mazara del Vallo (25.10.1993), Mazzarrà Sant'Andrea (13.10.2015), Mezzojuso (16.12.2019), Misilmeri (9.6.1992, 29.4.2003, 27.7.2012), Misterbianco (21.12.1991, 1.10.2019), Mistretta (28.3.2019), Moio Alcantara (2.2.2023), Montelepre (13.3.2014), Niscemi (18.7.1992, 27.4.2004), Pachino (15.2.2019), Palagonia (9.8.2023), Palazzo Adriano (28.10.2016), Pantelleria (17.3.2003), Partanna (14.4.1993), Partinico (29.7.2020), Piraino (30.9.1991), Polizzi Generosa (27.3.2013), Pollina (31.10.1997), Racalmuto (23.3.2012), Ragalna (23.11.1993), Randazzo (26.01.2024), Riesi (16.10.1992, 26.1.2005), Roccamena (26.1.2006), Salemi (23.3.2012), San Biagio Platani (6.8.2018), San Cataldo (28.3.2019), San Cipirello (20.6.2019), San Giovanni la Punta (11.3.1993, 9.5.2003), San Giuseppe Jato (9.7.2021), Santa Flavia (30.9.1991), Scicli (18.7.1992, 29.4.2015), Siculiana (13.6.2008), Terme Vigliatore (23.12.2005), Termin Imerese (11.3.1993), Torretta (28.11.2005, 8.8.2019), Torrici (23.12.2020), Trabia (30.9.1991), Trecastagni (8.5.2018), Vallelunga Pratameno (27.7.2009), Vicari (25.10.2005), Villabate (20.4.1999, 27.4.2004), Vittoria (2.8.2018)
Valle d'Aosta	Saint-Pierre (10.2.2020)

Notes: Sources: DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)).

Table A3: Benchmarking the Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout

Paper	Treatment	Land	Period	Level	Timing	Result (pp)	Result (%)
This Paper	CCD	ITA	1986-2024	>Mun.	1-5y	-1.8	-2.6
Giommoni (2021)	1-SD in corruption index	ITA	1999-2014	Mun.	1-2y	-0.3	-0.3
Chong et al. (2015)	Info RCT on corruption	MEX	2009	Mun.	1w	-1.3	-2.5
Rivera et al. (2024)	Info RCT on corruption	MEX	2021	Federal	1-5w	-5.6/-7.9	-9.3/-13.7
Arias et al. (2022)	Info RCT on pol. malfeasance	MEX	2015	Mun.		-1/+0.5	-2/+1
Drago et al. (2014)	Newspaper entry	ITA	1993-2010	Mun.		+0.45	+0.6
Gentzkow et al. (2011)	Newspaper entry	USA	1869-1928	Federal		+0.3	
DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007)	Fox News entry	USA	2000	Federal			+1.8

Table A4: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout using Matched Control Group, 1991-2024

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Dissolved</i>	-0.0108*	-0.0131***	-0.0134***
	(0.0060)	(0.0035)	(0.0031)
Observations	21'382	21'382	20'787
R-squared	0.568	0.858	0.873
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	No	Yes	Yes
Election Controls	No	No	Yes
Municipality Controls	No	No	Yes

Notes: The table presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#), on voter turnout. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily matched to dismissed municipalities by region year. Matching variables include turnout in the 5 years prior to the dismissal, population, the old dependency ratio, and unemployment rate. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Standard errors are clustered at municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $.01 \leq p < .05$, * $.05 \leq p < .10$. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Table A5: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout by Election Type, 1991-2024

	National	Regional	Provincial
<i>Dissolved</i>	-0.0136*** (0.0038)	-0.0181*** (0.0044)	-0.0154 (0.0103)
Observations	28,736	17,196	2,309
R-squared	0.787	0.937	0.958
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The table presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#), on voter turnout by election type. Turnout at each election is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Standard errors are clustered at municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $.01 \leq p < .05$, * $.05 \leq p < .10$. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Table A6: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout by Region, 1991-2024

	Basilicata	Calabria	Campania	Lazio	Apulia	Sicily
<i>Dissolved</i>	-0.0144 (0.0324)	-0.0330*** (0.0061)	-0.0146*** (0.0047)	-0.0431*** (0.0165)	-0.0073 (0.0091)	-0.0002 (0.0059)
Observations	42,882	43,813	43,588	42,883	43,152	43,535
R-squared	0.862	0.862	0.862	0.862	0.862	0.863
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The table presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#), on voter turnout by region. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Standard errors are clustered at municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $.01 \leq p < .05$, * $.05 \leq p < .10$. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Table A7: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Vote Shares (Base: Voters) , 1987-2024

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
CCD ($\hat{\delta}$)	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0022 (0.0019)	
CCD ($\hat{\delta} + \hat{\delta}_2$) - Aligned				-0.100*** (0.0137)
CCD ($\hat{\delta}$) - Not Aligned				0.0492*** (0.0073)
<i>Baseline:</i>	0.2500	0.2500	0.2828	0.2981
<i>Baseline - Aligned:</i>				0.3054
<i>Baseline - Not Aligned:</i>				0.2945
Observations	184,044	184,044	138,033	135,066
Municipalities	3,120	3,120	3,120	3,045
R-squared	-0.000	0.392	0.372	0.375
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	Yes	No	No	No
Municipality by Area FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other Parties Included	Yes	Yes	No	No

Notes: The table presents the estimated effects $\hat{\delta}$ of municipal council dismissals due to mafia infiltration on party area vote shares (left, center, right, others), as specified in [Equation \(3b\)](#). Column (4) presents the estimate for the model that adds an effect heterogeneity term $\hat{\delta}_2 \cdot \text{CCD}_{i,t} \cdot \text{Aligned}_{i,a}$. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Vote shares are measured between 1987 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. The base of the vote shares is the total voters. Standard errors are clustered at municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $.01 \leq p < .05$, * $.05 \leq p < .10$. Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Table A8: Descriptive Statistics on Aspects of Daily Life's Survey data by Sample, 1994-2024

Variable	Full Sample		Selected Sample	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Political support (SFI)	0.0450	0.0002	0.0524	0.0003
Population	244,808	685	331,559	1,176
Unemployment rate	0.0759	0.00004	0.0982	0.00005
Old-age ratio	0.3174	0.00009	0.3041	0.00011
Share with high education	0.3439	0.00011	0.3383	0.00015
Share with medium education	0.3002	0.00004	0.2912	0.00005
Share with low education	0.2474	0.00006	0.2383	0.00008
Female share	0.5141	0.00049	0.5148	0.00065
Average age	42.5164	0.0224	41.6153	0.0299
Education: no diploma	0.0566	0.00023	0.0602	0.00032
Education: lower secondary	0.2833	0.00044	0.2780	0.00059
Education: upper secondary	0.3299	0.00045	0.3374	0.00061
Education: post-secondary	0.0961	0.00030	0.0946	0.00039
Education: tertiary	0.2340	0.00042	0.2298	0.00056
Observations	1,532,946		810,008	

Notes: The table reports summary statistics for the key variables used in the analysis. Source: Aspects of Daily Life ([ISTAT, 2025](#)).

Table A9: Impact of City Council Dismissals due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Declared Trust in Politics, 1994-2023

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Dissolved</i>	-0.0101 (0.00404)	-0.0124** (0.00619)	-0.0134** (0.00593)
Observations	1'416'400	1'416'400	664'646
R-squared	0.041	0.041	0.044
Individual Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Linear Time Trend	No	Yes	Yes
Study sample	No	No	Yes

Notes: The table presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dismissal due to mafia infiltration, as specified in [Equation \(1\)](#), on declared trust in politics. Trust is measured between 1994 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1994 to 2024. The analysis covers 664,646 individuals in 2,165 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $.01 \leq p < .05$, * $.05 \leq p < .10$. Source: Aspects of Daily Life ([ISTAT, 2025](#)).

C Propensity Score Matching

In this section of the Appendix, we describe the matched difference-in-differences design used as an additional estimation strategy to assess the effects of the CCD.

Specifically, we employ five-nearest-neighbor propensity score matching to pair each of the 268 municipalities affected by CCD between 1991 and 2024 with control municipalities that share similar observable characteristics. For the sake of comparability, we restrict the pool of potential controls to never-treated municipalities within the same region r and year as the dismissed one.

We estimate propensity scores using a standard probit model based on a set of matching covariates that include the five-year lagged average parliamentary turnout prior to treatment, 1991 population, the 1991 old-age dependency ratio (defined as the population aged 65 and over divided by the population aged 15–64), and the unemployment rate.

Using the estimated propensity scores, each treated municipality is matched to the five untreated municipalities within the same region with the closest scores. This procedure results in a matched sample including all treated municipalities.

Table A10 compares observables characteristics of treated municipalities ("Treated, T") to the unconditional control group ("Control, C") and the matched control group ("Matched, M"). The table report average values in the first three columns, and standardized differences in the last two columns.

Generally, treated municipalities are very similar to municipalities in both types of control groups in terms political variables. In particular, the levels of participation in the aggregated turnout measure are 72% and 71%, respectively. Also the age of the mayor and the presence of female mayors is similar. On average, mayors in treated municipalities have slightly lower office duration.

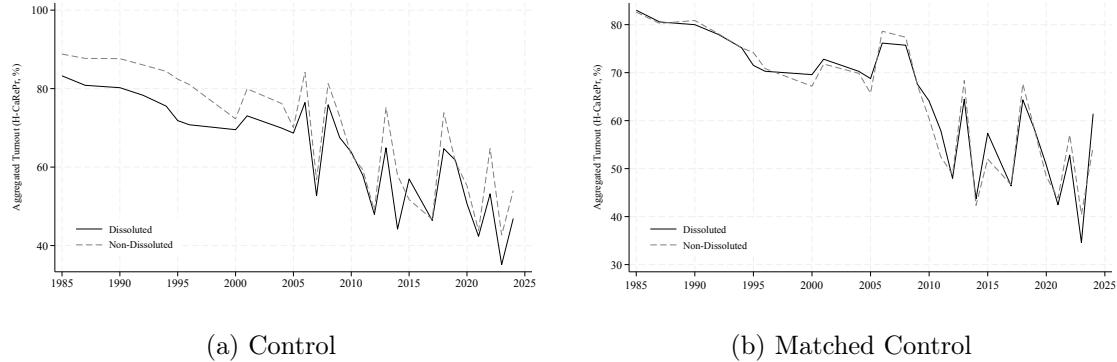
Table A10: Balancing Table: Treated, Unconditional Control and Matched Control

	Treatment	Control	Matched Control	Std.Difft T-C	Std.Difft T-MC
Population (CF)	16,436	8,882	12,613	0.17	0.02
Inhab. per km2 (CF)	896	235	370	0.52*	0.14
Unemp/Labforce Ratio (CF)	0.13	0.10	0.12	0.65*	0.03
65y/(20y-64y) Ratio (CF)	0.27	0.38	0.32	-0.90*	-0.18
Share High-school+ (CF)	0.24	0.27	0.27	-0.27*	-0.08
Share Middle school (CF)	0.31	0.29	0.30	0.65*	0.13
Share Elementary school (CF)	0.26	0.27	0.25	-0.22	0.04
Mayor Age (y)	47.44	46.88	47.19	0.06	0.01
Mayor Duration (y)	4.31	4.62	4.53	-0.31*	-0.08
Female Mayor	0.02	0.06	0.04	-0.18	-0.04
Mayor elected in Second Round	0.26	0.27	0.27	0.01	0.00
Observations	268	2,871	1,206	3,139	1,474

Notes: * $StdDiff > 0.25$ ([Imbens and Rubin \(2015\)](#), page 277). Source: Census ([ISTAT, 2024](#)), DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).

Figure A14 in shows the raw trends in turnout for treated and control municipalities using both the full control group and the matched sample. Trends in calendar time are relatively parallel in the unmatched data and the matched sample exhibits an even closer alignment. The comparability of treatment and control groups in both samples reinforces the validity of this identification strategy.

Figure A14: Yearly trends in turnout, Unmatched and Matched Sample, 1985, 2024



Notes: The figure presents the raw trends in voter turnout in municipalities dismissed due to mafia infiltration and (a) the sample including all never-treated municipalities, and (b) the municipalities in the matched control. The samples includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1985 and 2024, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2024. Source: DAIT ([DAIT, 2024](#)) and WikiMafia ([WikiMafia, 2025](#)), Eligendo ([Eligendo, 2024](#)) and Sicilian Electoral Service ([SEL, 2024](#)).