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. We find that the news effect spills over to neighboring municipalities, and is stronger when the dismissals are more salient. 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 study 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 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 national

[1] The 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. Hooghe (2018) and Devine (2024) provide a good overview of the correlational literature linking political trust to electoral turnout.

(Chamber of Deputies), regional (Regional Council), and provincial level (Provincial Council) in an aggregate turnout measure. We discuss the implications of using this measure and perform robustness checks to verify consistency of the main results.

We construct a dataset containing information on municipalities in central and southern Italy between 1986 and 2024. First, we collect data on the dissolution 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 2024, the date of the dissolution, and the corresponding reason. Second, we collect municipal-level data on voter turnout in each type of election between 1986 and 2024 through *Eligendo*, the historic archive of the Department of Internal and Territorial Affairs (Eligendo, 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 45,774 municipality-year observations in the 1986-2024 period. Municipalities whose city council was dismissed due to organized crime infiltrations make about 2.2% 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 dissolution, and persists for at least six years afterward. To validate the causal interpretation, we conduct a placebo test using dismissals triggered by reasons unrelated to organized crime and find no significant impact on 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.

Heterogeneity analyses show that voter turnout falls more in municipalities with larger populations in 1991, in municipalities experiencing a single dissolution, and in municipalities dissolved 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.

We contribute to the literature on the electoral consequences of the organized crime. This literature is vast and growing, as summarized by Accardo et al. (2022). More specifically, we add to the literature started by Acconcia 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 strategical 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

[2] This 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 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. Related, we contribute to the literature trying to explain the secular decline in average turnout among advanced democracies.[3] Using the CCDs as an informational shock, we provide a proof of concept of the important relationship between political trust and voter turnout.

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

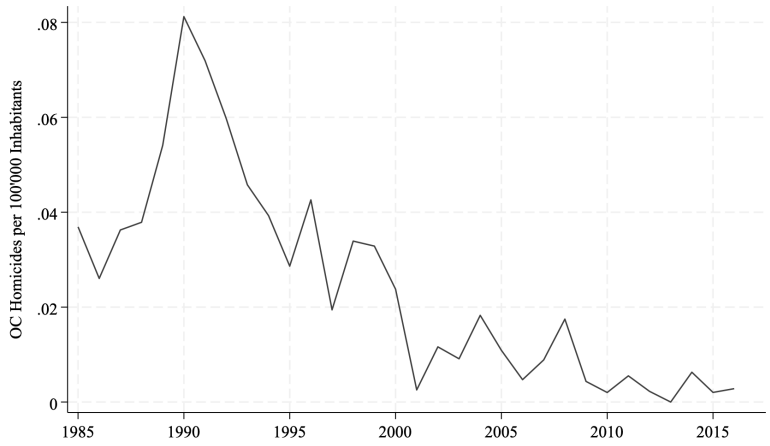
2.1 Organized Crime in Italy

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 legislation 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 an invisible, submersive 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.

[3] The average turnout for national parliamentary elections in OECD countries was around 80% in 1980 and has fallen by more than 10 percentage points since then (see Figure A1).

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



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

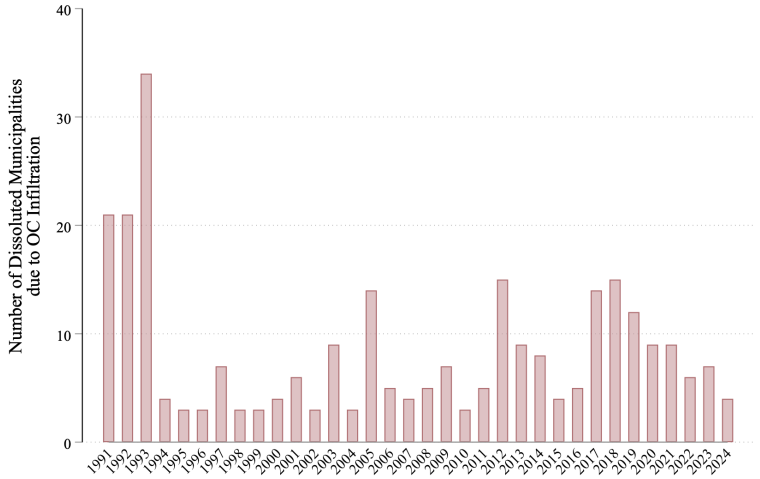
2.2 City Council Dismissals (CCDs)

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 suspicious of mafia 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 CCDs by year. Between 1991 and 2024, up to 286 municipalities have been dissolved. More than 70 dissolutions were ordered in the first three years of the policy, but dissolutions have continued into recent years. Early dissolutions likely reflect exceptional national anti-Mafia efforts, which may be distinct from later, more routine applications of the law. Potential heterogeneity in treatment effects is addressed by estimating differential impacts across intervention periods. Table A1 lists the municipality and the date of dissolutions by region. More than 95% of the dissolutions took place in central-south Italy.[4] Figure 3 shows the spatial distribution of dissolutions in the center-south Italy. Calabria and Sicily stand out as having the highest percentage of municipalities dissolved over time.

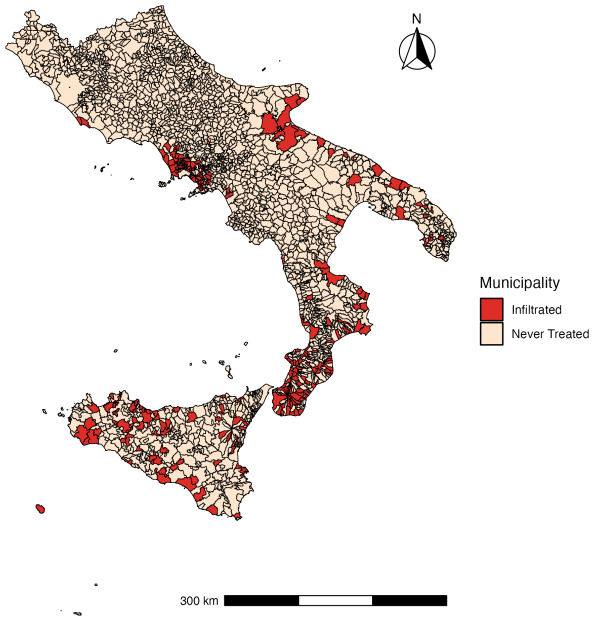
[4] Only nine city council dissolutions occurred in Northern Italy: one in Emilia-Romagna, three in Liguria, one in Lombardy, three in Piedmont, and one in Valle d'Aosta.

Figure 2: Number of City Council Dissolutions (CCDs), 1991-2024



Notes: The figure present the yearly number of city council dissolutions in Italy over the period 1991–2024. The sample includes 286 dissolutions. Source: DAIT (DAIT, 2024).

Figure 3: City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime in Southern Italy, 1991-2023



Notes: The figure displays the location of city council dissolutions in Southern Italy over the period 1991–2024. The sample includes 277 dissolutions. Dissolutions in the North are excluded from the sample. Source: DAIT (DAIT, 2024).

2.3 Turnout at 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 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.

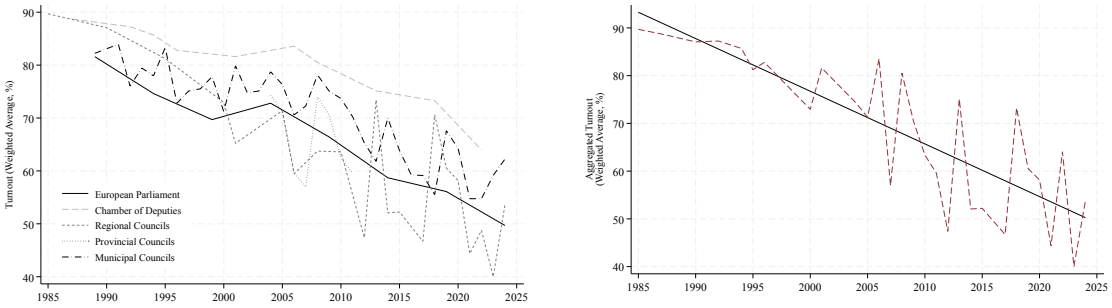
At the national level, Italian citizens elect representatives to the two chambers of the Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies (*Camera dei Deputati*) and the Senate of the Republic (*Senato della Repubblica*). The Parliament constitutes the legislative power of the state, nominates (supported by a selection 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 show jumps in turnout as a consequence of different sampling (Figure A2 resolves the sample selection by showing linear trends over the observed period). Moreover, as shown in Figure A3 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 dissolution 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 1986 and 2024. As expected, this measure declines steadily over the observed period.

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



(a) Turnout by Election Type

(b) Aggregated Turnout

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

3 Data

We mainly use three sources of data covering municipalities in the center-south Italy between 1986 and 2024.

Voter Turnout: We collect municipal-level data on voter turnout in each type of election through *Eligendo*, the historic archive of the Department of Internal and Territorial Affairs for the period 1970-2024 (Eligendo, 2024).[5] The archive 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). In the observed period, municipalities had the median number of elections of 6 for European-, 8 for national-, 7 for regional-, 2 for provincial- and 6 for legislative elections. Figure A4 gives an overview of the years in which elections take place, divided by election type and weighting elections by the number of eligible voters.

City Council Dismissals: We collect data on city council administration from the Department of Internal and Territorial Affairs's "Anagrafe degli Amministratori Locali e Regionali" (DAIT, 2024). The dataset reports all compulsory administrations due to organized crime infiltration or other reasons (e.g. death of the mayor) between 1991 and 2023. All reasons are listed in Table A2. 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 charge. We complement the dataset with online information on recent dismissals due to organized crime infiltration implemented in 2024 (WikiMafia, 2025).

Control Variables: Finally, we collect census data for the years 1991, 2001, 2011, and 2021 from the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT, 2024). The censuses contain a information for each municipality on the resident population, such as the number of residents, foreigners, their age and gender distribution, educational attainment, and (un-)employment. We mainly use these data to construct control variables in our regression.

[5] In 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.

4 Research Design

4.1 Sample Selection and Descriptive Statistics

We begin with a sample including all 7'904 italian municipalities, including 388 dissoluted municipalities due to mafia infiltration recorded over the period 1991 and 2023, which represent our main treatment group. To ensure comparability of the dissoluted municipalities, we retain only the first dissolution experienced by each municipality. This restriction reduces the number of dissoluted municipalities to 305 unique events.

Next, we limit our focus to municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily, which together account for more than 95% of all mafia-related dissolutions. This reduces the sample to 3'142 of which 295 treated municipalities. This geographic restriction serves two purposes: it ensures that treated and control municipalities are drawn from a comparable institutional context, and it avoids problematic comparisons with municipalities in the North, which typically exhibit higher baseline voter turnout (see Figure A3).

Finally, to ensure that our estimates capture the broader effects of mafia-related dissolutions on electoral participation, we focus on voter turnout at provincial, regional and national level, excluding turnout at the municipal level. This choice allow us to isolate the informational and political trust effects of dissolution, rather than the administrative consequences of local electoral turnover, while mitigating potential claims of municipal vote buying behavior. To further eliminate potential contamination, we exclude any elections held on the same day as municipal elections in the treated municipalities. After these refinements, our final analytical sample includes a total of 3'115 municipalities, composed of 268 dissoluted municipalities and 2'847 never treated municipalities, which will represent the main comparison group.

In the sample, we also identify 1'570 non-mafia-related dissolutions. These events serve as a counterfactual for assessing whether political disengagement arises specifically from the criminal nature of the intervention, rather than from council turnover per se. Further, we conduct robustness checks of the main results removing these municipalities.

To strenghten the causal interpretation of our results, beyond the main treatment group, we also define a second treatment group of 524 bordering municipalities, defined as those sharing a direct boundary with a treated municipality. Focusing on border municipalities allows to estimate the spatial spillover effects of the policy (see Figure A5). These municipalities were not directly subject to dissolution but may have been exposed to the information on shock, allowing us to assess whether the observed turnout decline reflects a broader erosion of political trust.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the main variables used in our empirical analysis. Panel A summarizes treatment assignment across different categories. The variable *Infiltrated* indicates whether a municipality was subject to a mafia-related dissolution in a given election observation and represents our main treatment identifier. The variables *Multiple* and *Appealed* capture respectively whether the municipality experienced multiple dissolutions and whether the dissolution was appealed. *Neighboring* flags municipalities sharing a border with mafia-related dissoluted municipalities, which we use to estimate spatial spillover effects. Finally, the *Other dissolutions* category aggregates all non-mafia-related dissolutions, further subdivided into cases of resignation, mayoral death, or other institutional causes (see Table A2 for a full list of other institutional causes).

Panel B reports electoral outcomes. The main dependent variable, *Turnout*, represents our

measure of voter turnout aggregated at provincial, regional and national level. Turnout rates are also broken down by election type. The remainder of panel B includes variables for the number of eligible voters, total voters, blank ballots cast, number of elections per year and number of elections per day.

Panel C includes socio-demographic and economic characteristics of municipalities from the four waves of census data. These include the share of female population, population density, the unemployment rate, and the old age dependency ratio (i.e., elderly to working-age population), and educational attainment.

Panel D presents characteristics of the mayors in office. These include age, duration of term (in years), whether the mayor was female, wether the election was decided in a Ballot run-off, and the political affiliation of the mayor, classified into center, left, and right parties. Data on mayors is incomplete for across variables and years, resulting in missing values and a reduced number of observations in the panel.

Treated and control municipalities, as shown in Table 1, differ substantially along several observable characteristics. To address this imbalance and test the robustness of our findings, we construct an alternative control group using propensity score matching, as detailed in Appendix B, and use this matched sample to verify the robustness of our findings.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Obs.	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
Panel A: Dissolutions					
Infiltrated	45'387	0.056	0.229	0	1
Multiple	2'528	0.208	0.406	0	1
Appealed	2'528	0.068	0.252	0	1
Neighboring	45'387	0.169	0.375	0	1
Other dissolutions	45'387	0.522	0.500	0	1
Resignation	23'675	0.670	0.470	0	1
Mayor's death	23'675	0.056	0.231	0	1
Other reasons	23'675	0.274	0.446	0	1
Panel B: Elections					
Turnout	45'387	0.709	0.145	0.004	1
Turnout National	28'737	0.751	0.115	0.005	1
Turnout Regional	17'207	0.628	0.162	0.004	1
Turnout Provincial	2'854	0.648	0.118	0.218	0.999
Turnout European	5'793	0.654	0.139	0.101	0.993
Electors	45'387	7'267	40'210	62	2'363'059
Voters	45'387	5'254	29'135	3	2'067'514
Blank ballot	28'736	132.92	360.40	0	23'654
N. elections per year	45'387	1.262	0.484	1	4
N. elections per day	45'387	1.091	0.288	1	2
Panel C: Census					
Population	45'387	9100.08	55'548.01	69	2'775'250
Female share	45'387	0.511	0.013	0.393	0.664
Population density	45'387	271.40	745.20	2.47	14'991.39
Unemployment rate	45'387	0.097	0.050	0	0.492
Old age ratio	45'387	0.368	0.140	0.078	1.790
High education	45'387	0.254	0.104	0.013	0.721
Middle education	45'387	0.286	0.041	0.056	0.480
Low education	45'387	0.280	0.068	0.081	0.746
No education	45'387	0.181	0.074	0	0.602
Panel D: Mayors					
Age mayor	39'350	46.93	9.86	18	94
Duration	39'352	4.62	0.81	1	7
Female mayor	39'352	0.057	0.231	0	1
Ballot run-off	39'352	0.273	0.445	0	1
Center Party	36'926	0.623	0.485	0	1
Left Party	36'926	0.278	0.448	0	1
Right Party	36'926	0.099	0.299	0	1

Notes: The table reports summary statistics for the key variables used in the analysis. Each panel refers to a specific data domain. Panel A covers different types of municipal council dissolutions; Panel B reports voter turnout and electoral characteristics; Panel C includes demographic and socioeconomic variables; and Panel D summarizes mayoral attributes. The number of observations may vary due to data availability. The sample includes $3'142$ *in the Center, South and Sicily (1986–2024). Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

4.2 Estimating Equation

We estimate the impact of CCDs on voter turnout using the following staggered difference-in-differences model:

$$y_{i,t} = \sum_{\ell=-4,\ell\neq-1}^{5} \gamma_k \cdot Dissoluted_{i,d-\ell} + \alpha_i + \lambda_t + X'_{i,t}\beta + u_{i,t}, \tag{1}$$

where $y_{i,t}$ is the aggregated electoral turnout in municipality i at time t, $Dissoluted_{i,d-\ell}$ is an identifier for the dissolution of the city council at time $k = 0$ in municipality i, $X_{i,t}$ is a vector of time-varying municipality and election-level control variables, λ_t and θ_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 dissolution date, rather than in calendar years, so that elections in $k \geq 0$ always take place after the dissolution. 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 elections occurring simultaneously, capturing their potential impact on turnout. 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 dissoluted municipalities and non-dissoluted municipalities at $k \neq -1$. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

In our main estimation, we rely on a sample of 3'115 municipalities in Central and Southern Italy observed from 1991 to 2024, using electoral data from 1986 to 2024. The sample includes 268 municipalities affected by a CCD (City Council Dismissal) and 2'847 municipalities that were never treated, which serve as the control group in our staggered difference-in-differences design.

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 dissolution, the treated and control units would have followed similar trajectories, and that the dissolution 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 dissolution 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 dissolutions 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).

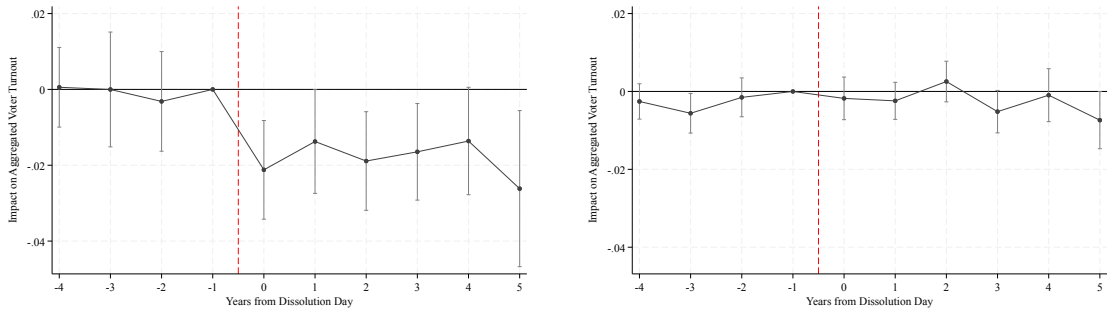
5 Results

5.1 Main Estimation

Figure 5 presents the γ_k coefficients from Equation (1). Specifically, Figure 5a illustrates the impact of city council dissolutions due to mafia infiltration on voter turnout. We estimate that turnout decreases by approximately 2 percentage points within 12 months of the dissolution. 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 intervention.

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

Figure 5: Impact of City Council Dissolutions on Voter Turnout, 1991–2023



(a) Dissolutions due to organized crime

(b) Dissolutions due to other reasons

Notes: The figures present the estimated effects of municipal council dissolutions due to mafia infiltration (left) or for other reasons (right), as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout. The samples include municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The analysis in panel (a) includes 45′387 *observations across* 3′115 *municipalities. The analysis in panel (b) includes* 33′739 *observations across* 2′809 *municipalities; excluding from the control the municipalities dissolved due to mafia infiltration shown in panel (a) the reduction is due to the exclusion of municipalities treated for mafia infiltration, which are included in panel (a) Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Table A3 in the Appendix presents the effects of mafia-related city council dissolutions on voter turnout using the static difference-in-differences model across a range of model specifications. The main coefficient remains consistently negative, statistically significant at the 1% level, and robust to the inclusion of various controls. This indicates a stable and strong association between city council dissolution due to OC-infiltration and reduced electoral participation by 1.8pp.

To understand the magnitude of the estimated 2 percentage points decrease in voter turnout (-2.3% relative to the baseline), Table A5 summarizes the evidence from other contexts and policies. The closest literature studies the decline in voter turnout following corruption scandals. Compared to Giommoni (2021), who finds a modest 0.3% turnout decline

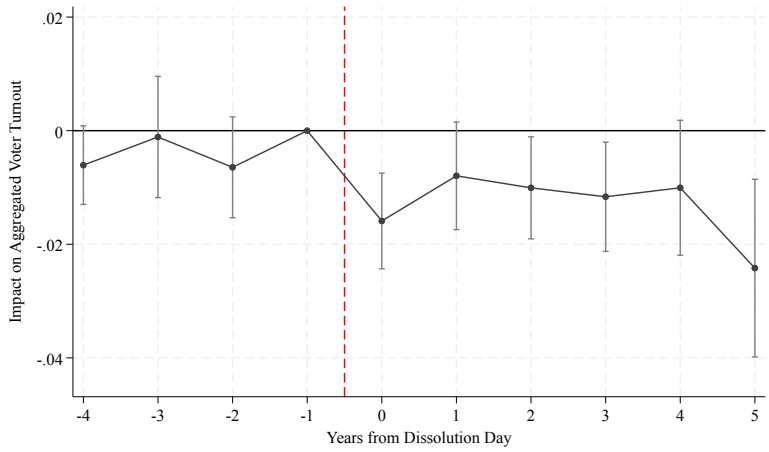
associated with higher corruption exposure in Italy, our effect is markedly larger. The effect is large compared to randomized information interventions about corruption Chong et al. (2015) and political malfeasance (Arias et al., 2022) in Mexico (-1.3pp and -1/+0.5pp, respectively), but – again using informational RCT on corruption in Mexico – smaller than what found by Rivera et al. (2024) (-5 to -8pp, -10%).

The results in Figure 5 indicate that the decline in voter turnout is specifically driven by city council dissolutions due to mafia infiltration, rather than by general municipal turnover. These findings suggest that such dissolutions may act as informational shocks, revealing the presence of organized crime within local institutions, and thereby erode political trust, ultimately leading to voter disengagement.

While a more detailed discussion of the underlying mechanisms and potential alternative explanations is provided later, we next examine whether the informational effects of these dissolutions extend beyond the directly affected municipalities. If mafia-related dissolutions indeed serve as public signals about organized crime infiltration, the news is unlikely to remain geographically confined. To assess this, we study spillover effects on neighboring municipalities, defined as those sharing a direct border with a treated municipality (refer to Figure A5 in the Appendix to see the selection of neighbors). Importantly, residents in neighboring municipalities are not subject to the same local institutional disruptions, but are still exposed to the information of the dissolution.

Figure 6 presents results from estimating Equation (1) where treatment timing is determined by a dissolution in a neighboring municipality. Municipalities that experienced a dissolution themselves are excluded from this analysis. Strikingly, we find that neighboring municipalities experience a turnout decline of roughly 1.5 percentage points. As with the main sample, pre-treatment trends are flat and statistically insignificant, lending credibility to the parallel trends assumption.

Figure 6: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout in Neighboring Municipalities, 1991-2023



Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout in neighboring municipalities that share a border with those affected by the dissolution. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The analysis includes $40'357$ *observations across* $2'839$ *municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: **** $p < .01$, *** * $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, ** * $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. *Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

The result of Figure 6 strengthens the interpretation that the main effect is not driven by disruption of local governments. Rather, it support the possibility that the informational shocks about organized crime depresses political engagement.

In the following section, we examine the mechanisms through which mafia-related dissolutions may affect voter turnout, with particular attention to how informational shocks can influence political engagement. We then discuss the magnitude and implications of the estimated effects, before turning to a series of robustness checks.

5.2 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 vote exchange activities of the organized crime.

Political Trust: A potential channel explaining the drop in voter turnout following the city council dismissals passes through a decline in 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). On the one hand, the public disclosure of the connection between local politics and organized crime 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 known situation of malfeasance. The lack of institutional credibility lowers the expected return of the preferred electoral outcomes as well as the expressive benefit from the act of voting, and turnout decreases consequently. One indication that political trust declined in this context is partisan shifting as shown in Table A4. Dissolutions lead to a shift in vote share away from the incumbent party's alignment toward opposing blocs, suggesting a breakdown in trust toward the previously dominant political force. Second, Figure A6 documents a rise in the number of blank ballots following the dissolution, another potential sign of political distrust.

OC-Controlled Votes: There is widespread evidence of the involvement of organized crime in controlling votes in Italy. On the one hand, journalistic and juridical inquiries have reported evidence of vote exchange, vote buying and coercion to vote by the organized crime (e.g. ANSA (2024); Polizia di Stato (2025)).[6] 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. 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 likely to be less associated with vote control practices. Second, while the general drop in voter turnout does not depend on the left-right affiliation of the dismissed city council (Section 5.3), Table A4 shows shifts in vote shares from the parties aligned with the dissoluted city council political area to those of other political extraction. These shifts rather point to a process of vote punishment following the loss of trust in the own political area than to a generalized cease in OC vote-control activities.

Income Effect: Fenizia and Saggio (2024) find that city council dismissals generate

[6] Since 1992, the bargain of votes involving mafia is explicitly punished by the article 416ter of the Italian Criminal Code.

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 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 lower turnout among poor voters in the city of Bologna. Timing is an important argument in our context. Voter turnout falls immediately after the city council dismissal, but 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.

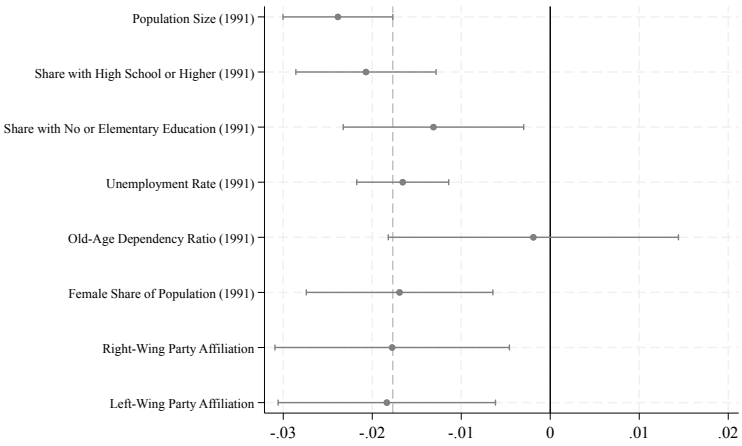
Migration Effect: Migration in the aftermath of OC-related CCDs could represent a concurrent mechanism to explain the turnout decline, in case it is driven by more politically active citizens. Fenizia and Saggio (2024) do not find any impact of CCDs on the population size of muncipalities, suggesting that this factor is likely minor. As shown in Figure A7, we also do not find any impact on the number of registered electors.

5.3 Effect Heterogeneity

In this section, we explore the characteristics that condition the magnitude of the turnout response to mafia-related dissolutions. Figure 7 plots the estimated baseline effect alongside its interaction with key pre-treatment municipal characteristics. The results suggest that municipalities that had larger populations in 1991 exhibit a significantly stronger decline in voter turnout following a dissolution. In contrast, municipalities with a higher old-age dependency ratio experience a considerably attenuated effect. Notably, it seems that the institutional shock transcends party lines as the political party affiliation of the mayor does not affect the magnitude of the turnout response.[7]

[7] For completeness, Figure A8 in Appendix presents the interaction coefficients without the baseline terms. That confirm population size, and demographic age structure as statistically significant and robust heterogeneities.

Figure 7: Impact of City Council Dissolutions on Voter Turnout Conditional on Observable Characteristics, 1991-2023



*Notes: The figure shows conditional estimates of the effect of municipal council dissolution due to mafia infiltration on voter turnout, based on the linear combinations of the coefficients. The dashed grey line represents the main (average) treatment effect estimated Equation (1). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Variables from the 1991 census are expressed in standard deviations. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, * $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

The stronger negative effect observed in larger municipalities may be explained by the fact that a dissolution due to mafia-related reasons is more salient in this context. This is not only because larger municipalities tend to receive more attention from regional and national media, but also because the public may perceive them as less likely to be infiltrated by organized crime due to their administrative capacity, institutional reputation, or political relevance. As a result, a dissolution in these settings may come as a greater shock to voters, leading to a stronger decline in turnout. In this sense, salience does not merely amplify the informational effect of the dissolution but also reflects its unexpectedness.

This observation motivates our subsequent analysis of salience of the dissolution, where we examine more directly whether the magnitude of the turnout response depends on how surprising the dissolution is to the public. This analysis serves two key purposes. First, it helps explain the mechanisms driving the observed heterogeneity in voter responses. Second, it provides additional support for the no-anticipation assumption by showing that stronger effects arise precisely where the dissolution was likely less expected by voters.

5.3.1 Salience

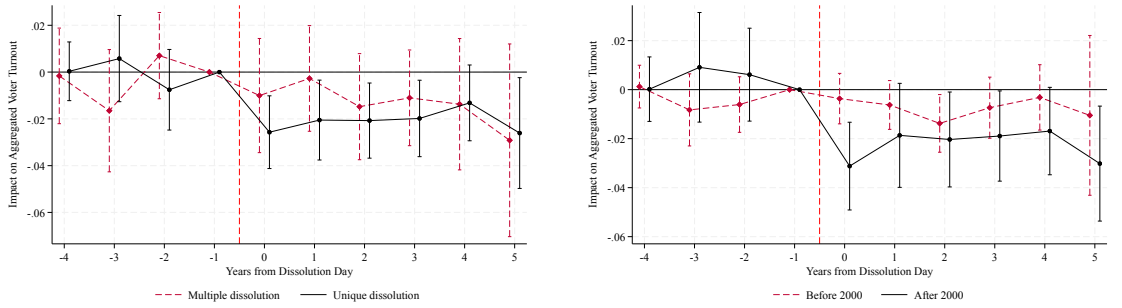
As argued, the strength of the turnout response is likely shaped not only by the information of the dissolution itself, but also by how unexpected the event is within the local political context. To explore this idea empirically, we examine two sources of variation that plausibly condition the saliency of the dissolution: the rarity of such events within a municipality and their timing relative to the historical patterns of mafia activity.

Figure 8 presents the results of this analysis. In particular, Figure 8a compares municipalities that experienced only one dissolution during our sample period with those that were dissolved multiple times. The logic here is that in municipalities that will go through repeated dissolutions, the public may already be aware of persistent mafia infiltration in the local governments, diminishing the perceived novelty, or shock value, of the event. Consis-

tent with this interpretation, we find that the negative effect on turnout is concentrated in municipalities that experienced a unique dissolution. In contrast, the response is close to zero in municipalities that go through multiple dissolutions.

The Figure 8b introduces a second dimension of saliency by comparing dissolutions that occurred before and after the year 2000 with the never treated control group. As previously documented, mafia-related crimes, particularly homicides, were more prevalent during the 1990s. In that earlier context, dissolutions may have been less surprising or less newsworthy, especially in areas already accustomed to high levels of criminal activity. After 2000, however, as mafia-related violence declined and legal enforcement became more institutionalized, the same events likely became more exceptional and more politically resonant. The results support this view: the turnout decline is significantly stronger for dissolutions that occurred after the year 2000.

Figure 8: Heterogeneities in the Impact of City Council Dissolutions on Voter Turnout, 1991–2023



(a) Multiple Dissolution

(b) Time heterogeneity

Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout, conditional on whether the municipalities incurred or not in multiple dissolutions (left) whether the dissolution occurred before or after 2000 (right). The samples include municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The analysis in panel (a) includes 43′386 *observations in* 2′923 *municipalities (multiple dissolutions) and* 44′860 *observations in* 3′039 *municipalities (unique dissolutions). The analysis in panel (b) includes* 22′352 *observations in* 2′885 *municipalities (pre-2000 dissolutions) and* 33′740 *observations in* 3′019 *municipalities (post-2000). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Taken together, these results highlight the importance of the salience of the shock in shaping citizens' political reactions to institutional interventions. Figure 8 also reinforces the credibility of our identification strategy by showing that the effects are strongest precisely where prior anticipation is least likely. More broadly, the post-2000 results highlight an emerging paradox in contemporary governance: even well-intentioned policies aimed at restoring democratic integrity may have increasingly adverse consequences for political participation in an era when such interventions are more visible, more surprising, and more politically charged.

5.4 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 dissolutions, 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 dissolution 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 B, 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 A6 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 A7 breaks down turnout by election type, revealing a consistent negative effect across all categories.

Fifth, Table A9 and Figure A13 present robustness checks assessing the influence of outliers. Table A9 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, measuring voter turnout at higher institutional levels to isolate demand-side effects on political participation and minimizing potential contamination from local political dynamics.

Our findings show that city council dismissals cause a significant and persistent reduction in turnout, averaging 2 percentage points in national, regional, and provincial elections. Placebo tests with municipalities dissolved for unrelated reasons confirm that the effect is specific to organized crime-related interventions. The effect is stronger in contexts where mafia-related events are more salient and less anticipated by the public, such as after 2000 and in municipalities dissoluted 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, even absent direct intervention, can reduce political engagement. This suggests that the mechanism likely operates through public awareness rather than institutional disruption alone.

Our contribution is twofold. First, we add 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. Second, by identifying an exogenous shock to political trust, we provide new empirical evidence for the causal link between institutional trust and electoral participation, a key yet difficult-to-identify relationship.

Taken together, our 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 disillusion voters and reduce democratic engagement. Designing these interventions in ways that preserve or even rebuild trust in political institutions should be a central concern for policymakers.

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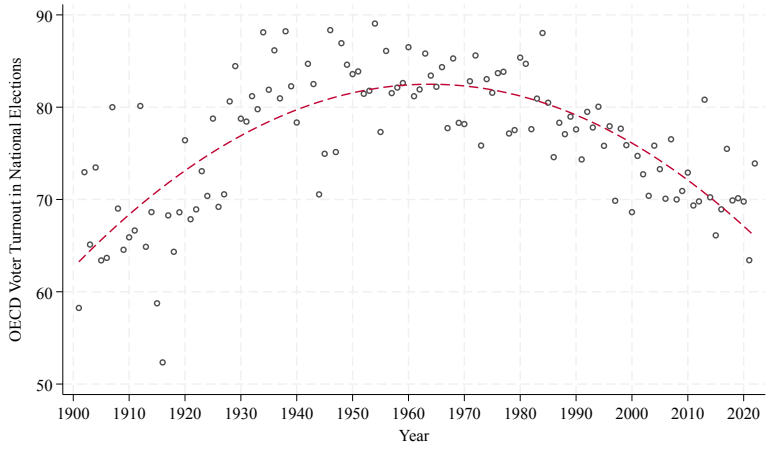
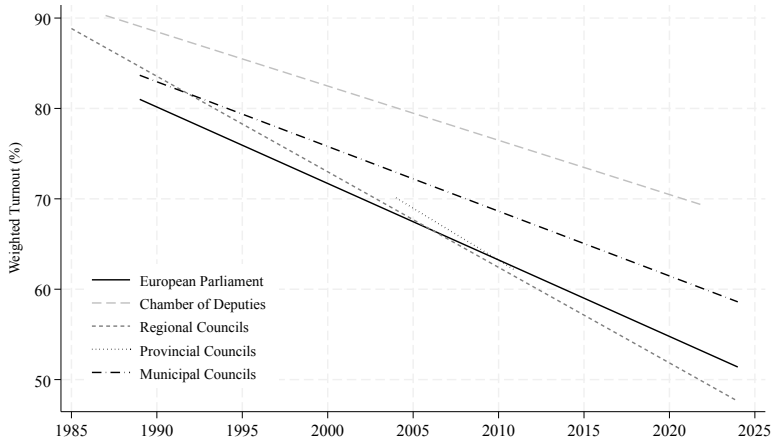
A Appendix

Figure A1: Average Turnout in OECD National Elections by Year, 1900-2020.



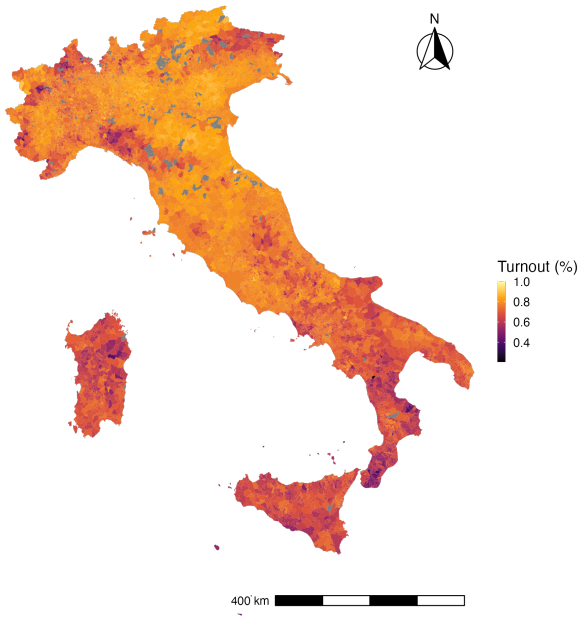
Notes: V-Dem. Sample: OECD countries. Method: Unweighted average by year. Source: Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).

Figure A2: Linear Fit of the Average Turnout by Election Type and Year, 1990-2020.



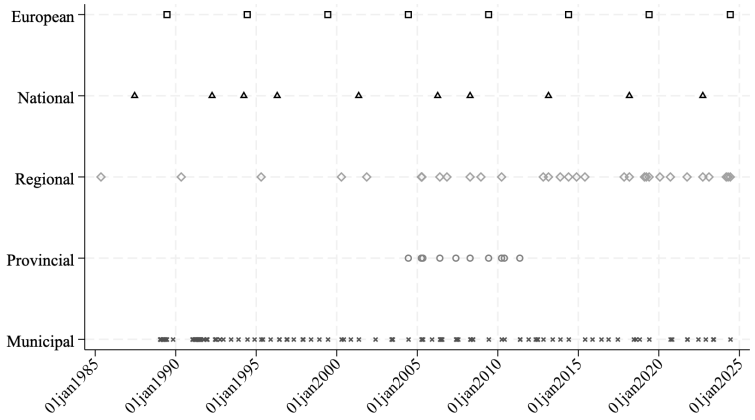
Notes: Source: Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).

Figure A3: Turnout in Chamber of Deputies Election by Municipality, 2013.



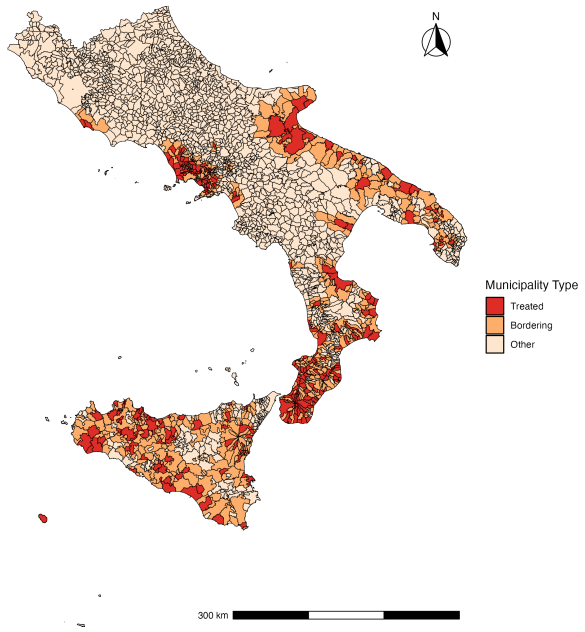
Notes: *Source: Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Figure A4: Covered Elections, 1985-2025



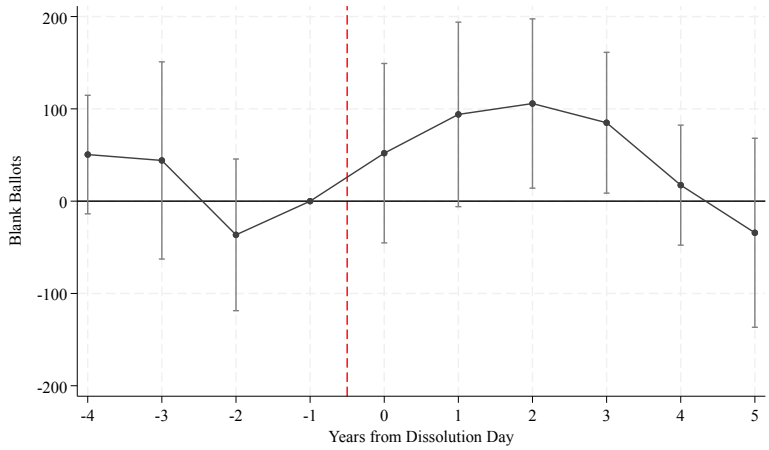
Notes: *Source: Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024). Methods: Within-election type, the size of the labels is weighted by the total number of eligible voters.*

Figure A5: Municipalities Neighboring City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime in Southern Italy, 1991-2023



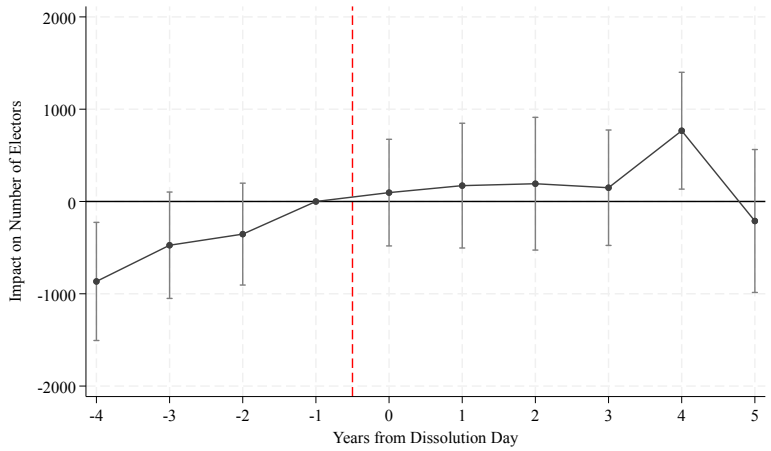
Notes: *Source: DAIT (DAIT, 2024).*

Figure A6: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Number of Blank Ballots, 1991-2023



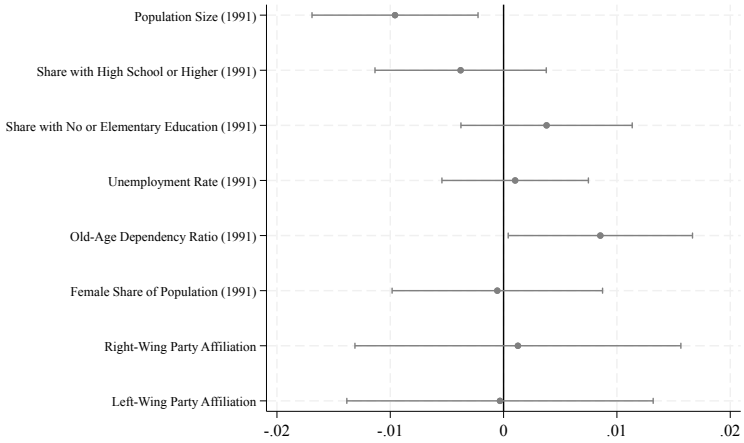
Notes: *The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on the number of blank ballots. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Blank ballots are measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The analysis includes* $29'466$ *observations across* $3'136$ *municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: **** $p < .01$, **** $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, *** $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. *Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Figure A7: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Number of Electors, 1991-2023



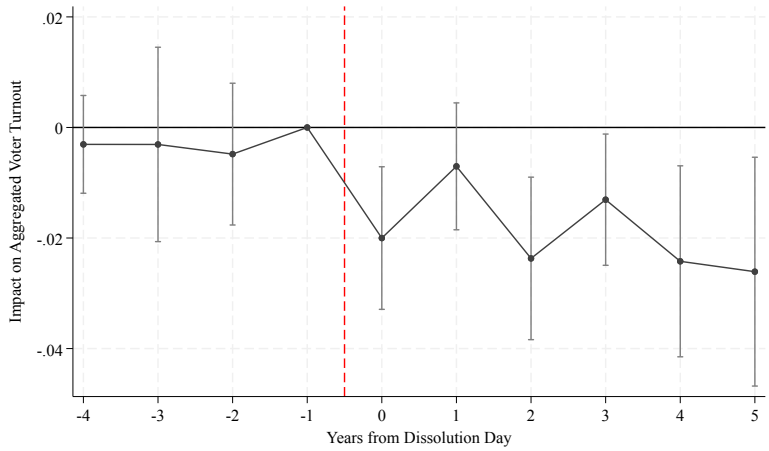
*Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on the absolute number of electors. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Electors are measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The analysis covers 45′387 observations in 3′115 municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, * $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Figure A8: Impact of City Council Dissolutions on Voter Turnout Interacted with Observable Characteristics, 1991-2023



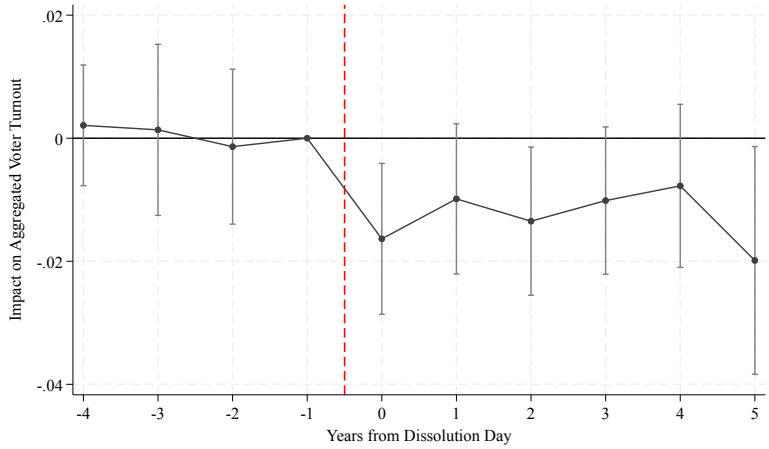
*Notes: The figure shows the conditional estimates of the effect of municipal council dissolution due to mafia infiltration on voter turnout, based on the interaction between the observable and the γ-coefficients estimated in Equation (1). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, * $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Figure A9: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout using Sun and Abraham (2021), 1991-2023



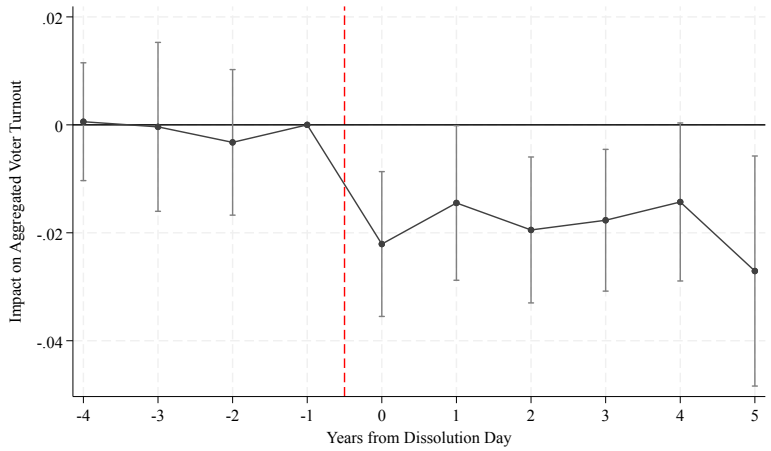
Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration, using Sun and Abraham (2021) interaction-weighted estimator, on voter turnout. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The analysis covers $45'558$ *observations in* $3'115$ *municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: **** $p < .01$, **** $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, *** $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. *Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Figure A10: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter using Matched Control Group, 1991-2023



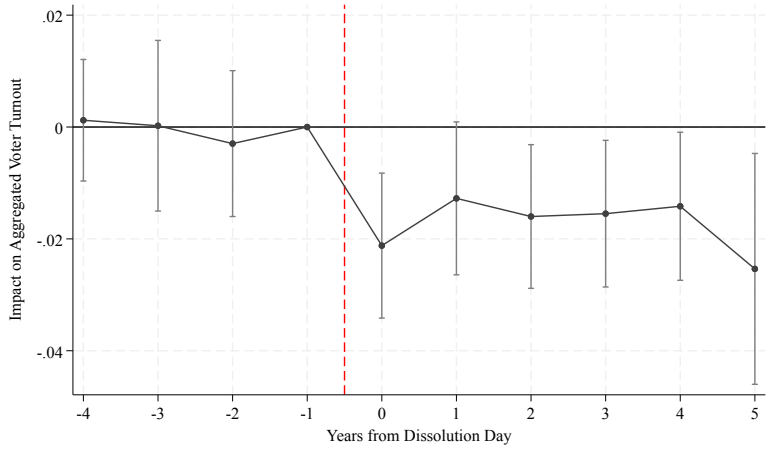
Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily matched to dissoluted municipalities by region year. Matching variables include turnout in the 5 years prior to the dissolution, population, the old dependency ratio, and unemployment rate. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The analysis covers $20'616$ *observations in* $1'474$ *municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: **** $p < .01$, **** $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, *** $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. *Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Figure A11: Impact of City Council Dissolutions on Voter Turnout removing Neighboring Municipalities, 1991–2023



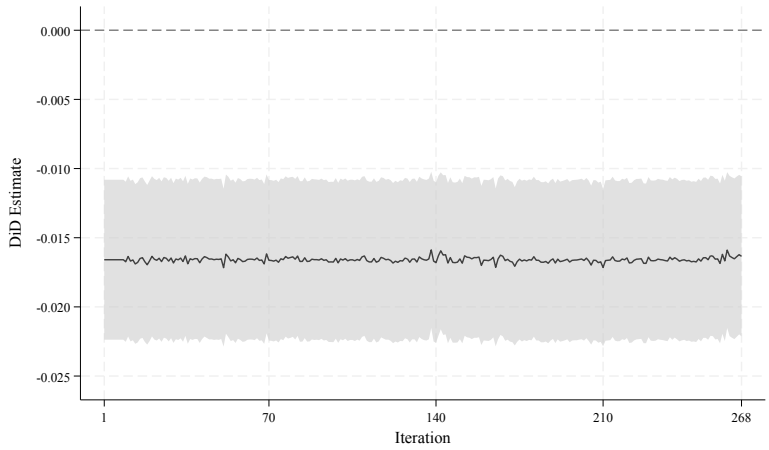
Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily excluding from the controls municipalities neighboring dissoluted municipalities. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The analysis includes $37'728$ *observations across* $2'591$ *municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: **** $p < .01$, **** $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, *** $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. *Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Figure A12: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter using Yearly Average Turnout, 1991-2023



Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dissolution 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 dissoluted municipalities. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The analysis covers $45'387$ *observations in* $3'115$ *municipalities. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: **** $p < .01$, **** $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, *** $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. *Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Figure A13: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout, Leave-One-Out, 1991-2023



*Notes: The figure presents the estimated effects of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout. 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 280 iterations. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $0.01 \leq p < 0.05$, * $0.05 \leq p < 0.10$. Source: Census (ISTAT, 2024), DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Table A1: List of Dissoluted Municipalities, 1991-2023

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), Casignana (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), Molochio (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), Stefanaconi (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), Lusciano (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), Gallipoli (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), Cerda (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), Termini Imerese (11.3.1993), Torretta (28.11.2005, 8.8.2019), Tortorici (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: *Department of Internal and Territorial Affairs (DAIT, 2024).*

Table A2: Reasons for Municipal Dissolutions

Reason	*Description*
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 A3: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout across Specifications, 1991-2023

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dissoluted	-0.0203***	-0.0177***	-0.0184***	-0.0177***
	(0.00414)	(0.00357)	(0.00342)	(0.00329)
Observations	46'758	46'756	46'756	45'387
R-squared	0.517	0.855	0.858	0.862
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 of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout. For clarity, the γ_k coefficients are binned in a post-period coefficient. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. 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), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Table A4: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Party Vote Shares, 1991-2023

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dissoluted	0.00931**	0.00867**	0.00868**	0.00876**
	(0.00402)	(0.00404)	(0.00403)	(0.00403)
Aligned	0.0399***	0.0396***	0.0396***	0.0403***
	(0.00232)	(0.00232)	(0.00232)	(0.00232)
Dissoluted×Aligned	-0.0515***	-0.0514***	-0.0514***	-0.0520***
	(0.0147)	(0.0147)	(0.0147)	(0.0147)
Observations	144'071	144'071	144'071	142'703
R-squared	0.010	0.011	0.011	0.012
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 effect of a municipal council's dissolution due to mafia infiltration on party vote shares (left, center, right). The panel is at the municipality–year–election level, covering elections held between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily. 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), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Table A5: Benchmarking the Impact of City Council Dissolutions 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	–1.6	–2.3
					1y	–2	–2.8
Giommoni (2021)	1-SD in corruption index	ITA	1999-2014	Mun.	1-2y		–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/–7.8	–10
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 A6: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout using Matched Control Group, 1991-2023

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dissoluted	-0.0108*	-0.0131***	-0.0134***
	(0.00598)	(0.00350)	(0.00310)
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 dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout. The sample includes municipalities in the Center, South, and Sicily matched to dissoluted municipalities by region year. Matching variables include turnout in the 5 years prior to the dissolution, population, the old dependency ratio, and unemployment rate. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. 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), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Table A7: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout by Election Type, 1991-2023

	National	Regional	Provincial
Dissoluted	-0.0136***	-0.0181***	-0.0154
	(0.00380)	(0.00444)	(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 dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout by election type. Turnout at each election is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. 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), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Table A8: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout by Region, 1991-2023

	Basilicata	Calabria	Campania	Lazio	Puglia	Sicilia
Dissoluted	-0.0144	-0.0330***	-0.0146***	-0.0431***	-0.00728	-0.000243
	(0.0324)	(0.00614)	(0.00473)	(0.0165)	(0.00913)	(0.00587)
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 dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout by region. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. 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), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Table A9: Impact of City Council Dissolutions due to Organized Crime Infiltration on Aggregate Voter Turnout by Region, 1991-2023

	Basilicata	Calabria	Campania	Lazio	Puglia	Sicilia
Dissoluted	-0.0144	-0.0330***	-0.0146***	-0.0431***	-0.00728	-0.000243
	(0.0324)	(0.00614)	(0.00473)	(0.0165)	(0.00913)	(0.00587)
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 dissolution due to mafia infiltration, as specified in Equation (1), on voter turnout by region. Turnout is measured between 1987 and 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. 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), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

B Appendix

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 2023 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 dissoluted 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 B.1 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.

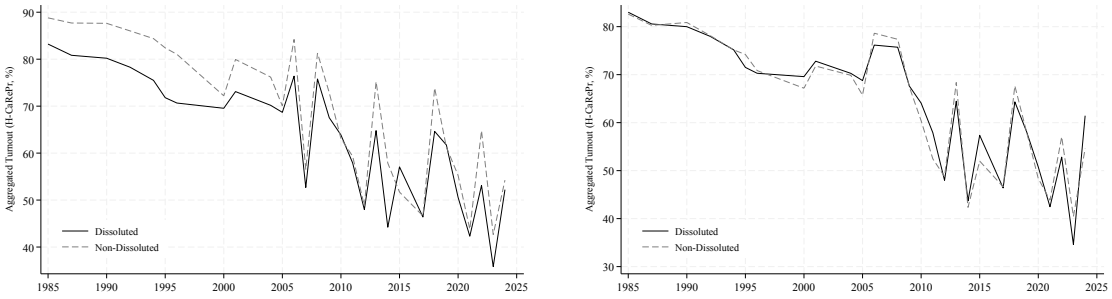
Table B.1: Balancing Table: Treated, Unconditional Control and Matched Control

	Treatment	Control	Matched Control	Std.Diff T–C	Std.Diff 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
N	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), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*

Figure B.1 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 B.1: Yearly trends in turnout, Unmatched and Matched Sample, 1985, 2023



(a) Control (b) Matched Control

Notes: *The figure presents the raw trends in voter turnout in municipalities dissoluted 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 2023, and treatment cohorts vary from 1991 to 2023. Source: DAIT (DAIT, 2024), Eligendo (Eligendo, 2024) and Sicilian Electoral Service (SEL, 2024).*