

The Local Curse: Spillover Effects of Mayoral Victories in Competitive Autocracies*

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PRELIMINARY AND INCOMPLETE
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Abstract

This paper investigates whether controlling local offices in competitive autocracies results in a better local electoral performance at the national level, as previous literature has suggested for democracies. Using newly coded electoral data from Venezuela and a regression discontinuity design in close elections, the study examines the causal effect of controlling the municipal executive on the national (and local) electoral performance of the pro-regime party. We find evidence of a negative spillover effect, where the election of a pro-regime mayor leads to a 4 percentage point decrease in their party's vote share in the subsequent national elections and a 24 percentage point reduction in the probability of electing a pro-regime mayor in the next election. To explain those results, we build a model of political selection in competitive autocracies, which suggests that a relevant channel may be a negative selection effect of pro-regime mayoral candidates.

Keywords: Non-democratic politics, Regression-discontinuity-design, political selection, populism

JEL Classification: D71 D72 D78 D79

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1 Introduction

Multi-level governments are a common feature of many countries. In democracies, this implies that elections are held at different levels (typically, on geographic bases: municipalities, provinces, regions...), potentially with “spillover effects” across levels of government.¹ In particular, it has been shown that, in democracies, control of local offices may translate into a stronger local partisan performance in national elections, and there is no evidence of a negative effect. The explanation relies on a combination of pork-barrel spending, name recognition and additional information on the party (Ventura, 2021; Ade and Freier, 2013). Evidence is more mixed, instead, when the outcome is the result of the next local election (i.e. a standard “incumbency advantage” study). Among many studies showing a sizeable incumbency advantage, especially in the United States (Lee, 2008; Fowler and Hall, 2014), there is also evidence of incumbency disadvantage in mayoral elections in Latin American democracies (Klašnja and Titunik, 2017). The explanation relies on very strict term limits and weak partisan control.

Much less is known about electoral processes in non-democracies (Egorov and Sonin, 2020), despite the fact that only 20% of the world population lives in a full democracy and that “hybrid” regimes (FreedomHouse, 2022), mixing “democratic with autocratic features” (Fearon and Laitin, 2003), are becoming more and more common.² In this paper, we study the causal “spillover effect” of controlling local offices, both across levels of government and within the same level, in a competitive autocracy, finding a strong and significant negative effect.

If the same logic that applies to democracies is at work in hybrid regimes, we should expect an even stronger positive spillover effect for the pro-regime party. It should work for the same reasons it works in democracies (pork barrel spending, name recognition...), and also for additional reasons: pro-regime local officials have more means (stronger

¹Relevant examples are Hainmueller and Kern (2008); Rosas and Lucardi (2020); Borcan (2020); Migueis (2013). When elections for different level of governments happen at the same time, the literature typically refers to “cottail elections” (Bracco and Revelli, 2018; Zudenkova, 2011; Broockman, 2009).

²Levitsky and Loxton (2013) define competitive authoritarian regimes as “*hybrid regimes in which formal democratic institutions are viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbent abuse skews the playing field to such an extent that the opposition’s ability to compete is seriously compromised.*”.

control on the media, as in Guriev and Treisman (2020), on the local police etc.) and more incentives (in term of career in government) to mobilise local voters in favour of their party, when national elections happen. Furthermore, pro-regime parties are certainly not weak, hence there should be a local incumbency advantage as well. Our results, instead, point toward a more nuanced reality. Using a regression discontinuity design in close election (Cattaneo et al., 2019; Cattaneo and Titiunik, 2022) for identification purposes, we compare national-level results, measured at the municipality level, in municipalities where the candidate mayor of the pro-regime party barely wins or barely loses. We find that a (marginal) mayoral election victory causes a drop of more than 4 percentage points in the pro-regime party vote share in national elections during the mayoral mandate. This effect is very stable and robust to the inclusion of controls and fixed-effects. Looking at the standard “incumbency effect” analysis, i.e. using as outcome variable the probability of victory for a pro-regime mayor in the following election, we find once again a strong negative effect: the probability of victory is reduced by roughly 25 percentage points.

In order to explain those results, we build a formal model of political selection, propaganda and hybrid regimes. To capture the hybrid nature of the electoral competitions we are considering, we assume that propaganda is effective and voters over-estimate the probability that a of pro-regime candidate is able to deliver a good outcome. Furthermore, selection into politics is endogenous. The model highlights the importance to take into account the presence of a strong negative selection effect in pro-regime parties in competitive autocracies. In particular, the exogenous pro-regime electoral bias may push lower quality candidates to run in the pro-regime party. Once in government, they may show their poor quality and hence cause a drop in the results of their party, despite the higher ability to mobilize voters. Although we cannot test the model directly, its main result provides a compelling explanation of the effect we observe empirically, both in national and in local elections.

Our paper makes three contributions. First, we document a previously unknown negative spillover effect across institutional layers in a competitive autocracy, coupled with a strong incumbency disadvantage. We believe we are the first paper that identifies

this effect in a non-democratic context. Second, we connect this effect with the possibility of negative selection into politics affecting the pro-regime party as a consequence of the peculiar nature of a competitive autocracy. This suggest that autocracies may be self-undermining equilibria, at least at the local level. Third, we present newly coded data on local political results in Venezuela.

Related literature We contribute to three strands of the literature. First, there is a well developed literature on the effect of holding local offices on national level performance in democracies (Ventura, 2021; Ade and Freier, 2013; Hainmueller and Kern, 2008; Carozzi et al., 2022; Rosas and Lucardi, 2020; Borcan, 2020; Migueis, 2013), finding either a positive or a zero effect. In terms of the more standard incumbency-effect at municipality level, the available evidence on democracies is again mixed. Freier (2015) finds a positive effect in Germany, De Magalhaes (2015) and Klačnja and Titiunik (2017) find a sizeable negative effect in Brazil. Moving beyond the municipality level, the available evidence points toward a positive incumbency effect in the United States and in most of the western world (Lee, 2008; Fowler and Hall, 2014; Ade and Freier, 2013; Dano et al., 2022; Ansolabehere et al., 2007; Eggers and Spirling, 2017; Fiva and Røhr, 2018) and negative outside (Duraisamy et al., 2014; Roh, 2017). Our paper complements those contributions studying how local incumbency effects and spillovers of local election victories on national level performance work in an hybrid regime. Second, we contribute to the expanding literature on the political economy of Venezuela. Handlin (2016) studies the role of mass organization, Knight and Tribin (2019) and Kronick and Marshall (2018) study the role of propaganda and opposition media, Fajardo (2020) and Kronick et al. (2021) focus on the rise of chavismo and the current regime and Morales-Arilla (2020) studies the electoral returns of presidential visits. We study the role of local level victories on local and national performance, suggesting a channel that passes through endogenous selection into politics. Finally, we contribute to the theoretial and empirical analysis of authoritarian regimes and elections (Denisenko, 2022; Guriev and Treisman, 2015; Magaloni, 2010; Koenig, 2019)

2 Empirical analysis

2.1 Institutional background

2.1.1 Venezuela's constitutional structure

The political system of Venezuela is determined by the Constitution of Venezuela (*Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela*), approved by a national constituent assembly in 1999 and promoted by the elected president Hugo Chavez Frias. It replaced the Constitution of 1961. The Constitution prescribes the election of public offices at 3 territorial levels. At the national level it predicts the election of a President (*Poder Ejecutivo*), who represents and manages the executive power (*Poder Público Nacional*), and the members of the National Assembly, who comprise the legislative power (*Poder Legislativo*). After the national level there is a regional (*Poder Público Estatal*) and a local power (*Poder Público Municipal*), represented and directed by governors (*Gobernadores*) and majors (*Alcaldes*), respectively.

The executive power is explained and regulated by Title V, Chapter II, Articles 225-252. The head of the executive power is the President who is elected every six years (without limits of terms) through universal, direct, and secret votes with a first-past-the-post system.

The regional and local powers are explained and regulated by Title IV, Chapters III and IV, Articles 159-184. Regarding the first one, Venezuela has 23 regions and a capital district. The head of the regional administration is elected every four years. Regarding local power, Venezuela has 335 municipalities, each of them being administered by a mayor who is elected every four years. Both positions are elected through universal, direct, and secret votes within a FPTP system and without term limits.

The election of regional and local offices is relatively new in Venezuela. Since 1961 it was the responsibility of the president to nominate the governors. The mayor was nominated by the local legislative assembly (so through an indirect election). This changed with the decentralization policies applied by the national Venezuelan government at the end of 1980s. The first direct election for governors and mayors occurred in December

1989.

The current Constitution of Venezuela predicted large powers and autonomy for regions and municipalities. For the regions, the Constitution states the following competencies: promulgating their Constitution to organize public authority; organization of their Municipalities; management of their assets and investment and management of their resources; organization, collection, control, and administration of their taxes; the governance and exploitation of non-metallic minerals that are not reserved to national power; creation, governance and organization of state public services. The municipality's competencies according to the Constitution are: territorial zoning and city planning matters; health and education services; prevention and protective services; public services such as water services; electricity and gas for household use; sewers, channeling and disposal of wastewater; cemeteries and funeral services; small claims courts; neighborhood prevention and protection and municipal police services; protection of the environment; urban and household sanitation including cleaning, waste collection, and treatment; civil protection; urban roadways, circulation and ordering of vehicular and pedestrian traffic on municipal thoroughfares; urban public passenger transportation services.

Regarding public finance, the regions are mainly financed through direct transfers from the central government while municipalities are financed both from direct transfers and local taxes fixed by the local authority. Both regions and municipalities can benefit from extraordinary transfers coming from the central national authority.

Finally, the election of National Assembly members is explained and regulated by Title V, Chapter I, Articles 186-224. The parliament is unicameral and deputies are elected by the electoral district through universal, direct, personalized, and secret ballot with proportional representation, using a constituency base of 1.1% of the total population of the country. The deputies were 167 and were elected through 70% nominal vote and 30% closed list vote. In 2020 the National electoral council increased the number of members to 277 and decided to change the formula to 48% being elected by nominal vote and 52% by closed list vote.

2.1.2 Political and electoral history

Since 1999, the year when Hugo Chavez became President, the political forces have been divided between pro-government forces and opposition forces. Both forces went through a homogenization and aggregation process within a context of open and increasingly mutual electoral confrontation. From 1999 up to 2022 there have been five presidential elections, five parliamentary elections, nine local elections and seven regional elections.³

Regarding the pro-government forces, the first political movement of Hugo Chavez, and with which won the election of 1998, was *Movimiento V República* (MVR), founded in 1997.⁴ The roots of this movement can be traced up to the failed military *coup d'état* organized for Hugo Chavez as an officer of the Venezuelan army against the government of Carlos Andres Perez in 1992 (Lucca, 2013). Chavez ended up in prison but from jail stated his intentions of leading a political change in the country against the political system established in 1961.⁵ After his liberation in 1994 due to a presidential general amnesty, Hugo Chavez started his race to become president of Venezuela (Lucca, 2013). The MVR was a newborn political group, created with the precise aim to support the presidential electoral campaign of Hugo Chavez that year. From 1999 up to 2006 the MVR was the electoral organization of the pro-government forces at all levels of political power (presidential, regional, and local). At the end of 2006, the MVR was replaced by a new political organization: *El Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (PSUV) by the decision and initiative of Hugo Chavez.⁶ The main objective of this party was to reduce and eliminate the universe of pro-government and left-wing political organizations which supported the government and to create a monolithic organization under the control of Hugo Chavez following some type of *Führerprinzip*⁷ and to have a national electoral

³Data from *Consejo Nacional Electoral* (CNE).

⁴See: <http://www.psuv.org.ve/temas/noticias/hace-20-anos-fue-creado-movimiento-quinta-republica-m#.YwNnVCORpNO>.

⁵The political system of 1961 was the result of a political alliance called "*puntofijismo*" (Lucca, 2013). In 1961 was approved the Venezuela Constitution of 1961 which existed until 1999.

⁶See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6192105.stm>.

⁷Article 3 of the PSUV's constitution: "As a multiethnic and diverse party, it nurtures its roots of Afro-Indianism bequeathed by Guaicaipuro and José Leonardo Chirino, all inspired by the fundamental leadership and revolutionary ideas of Commander Hugo Chávez...".

territorial capacity (Azcargorta and Hernández, 2014; Hawkins, 2003). A group of parties decided to remain strongly allied but separated from the PSUV. The electoral weight of those parties has been marginal: in the presidential election of 2012 from 55,25% achieved by the pro-governments the PSUV had 42,94% and the rest of parties 12,31%, with an average of 1,1% for every party. In the parliamentary elections of 2015 the marginality of this “periferic parties” increased: from 40,92% achieved by the pro-governments the PSUV had 37,85% and the rest of parties 3,07%, with an average of 0,1% for every party.

The political forces of opposition have a more fragmented history due to both endogenous (lack of clear leadership and divergent interests) and exogenous (persecution from the State) variables. Since the birth of democracy in Venezuela,⁸ the political system was characterized by two main political parties. This period is often called “*el bipartidismo*”, the bipartitism. These two parties were Acción democrática and COPEI (Lucca, 2013).⁹ At the end of the XX century, as a result of a political crisis, new parties were created and the old bipartidism system ended (McCoy, 1999). Since the election of Chavez in 1999, these political parties, the oldest and new ones, decided to unify forces to face the MVR and its subsequent evolution, the PSUV. The first attempt was La Coordinadora Democrática, operating between 2002-2004. This organization evolved into the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD), which operated between 2008 and today and achieved the biggest historically electoral results of the opposition in the parliamentary election of 2015 (Jiménez, 2021; Aveledo, 2021).

After the defeat of 2015 the PSUV decided to use its control over the State, created during the years of Hugo Chavez (Brewer Carías, 2010), to avoid other potential electoral disasters (Corrales, 2020).¹⁰ In 2017, after 4 months of anti-government protests, generated by a supreme judicial power sentence which blocked the legislative capacity of the National assembly,¹¹ the electoral power banned and inhibited an important number of political parties, creating a challenging situation for the political-electoral coordination

⁸The Venezuelan democracy started in 1958 after the end of Marco Perez Jimenez’s government (Lucca, 2013).

⁹Accion democratica was a social-democratic inspired party and COPEI a social-catholic party.

¹⁰Opposition (MUD) won 109 seats (qualified majority) and pro-governments forces (PSUV) 55.

¹¹See: <https://www.dw.com/en/venezuela-supreme-court-takes-over-legislative-powers-from-national-a-38214811>.

of the opposition and its candidates. The MUD, the most voted political organization in Venezuela’s history, was declared an illegal organization and was not allowed to participate in elections.¹² Other important opposition parties were or declared suspended (as *Voluntad Popular* or *Primero Justicia*)¹³ or the legal possession of the party was given to pro-governments politicians (this is the case of *Accion Democratica* and COPEI).¹⁴ The result was the fragmentation of the opposition votes into a universe of parties for the elections 2017 and forward, avoiding a threatening aggregation of opposition votes as in 2015.

From 2018 up to the end of 2021 the opposition decided to follow political strategies outside the electoral arena. The most important event was the creation inside the 2015 National assembly of an interim government led by National Assembly president Juan Guaido in January of 2019. This was an answer to the “illegitimate presidential election” of 2018 where Nicolas Maduro won. This parliamentary government was supported by the opposition forces and an important number of countries (Rosales and Jiménez, 2021; Boersner, 2020). At the end of 2021 the opposition forces decided to participate separately in the local and regional elections.

2.2 Empirical strategy

In order to identify the causal effect of controlling a local office on the pro-regime party subsequent national (and local) electoral performance, we adopt a standard regression discontinuity design (RDD) in closed elections (Calonico et al., 2019; Cattaneo et al., 2019; Cattaneo and Titiunik, 2022). The institutional framework is well suited for this exercise, as mayors are elected with a first-past-the-post system and they have very relevant powers on the local administration (local police, school, local infrastructures etc). Furthermore, the same parties are typically present at both national and local level, and this is always true for the pro-regime PSUV. Our unit of analysis is municipality x election year, and we estimate the following model on the sample of local elections where

¹²See National Supreme Court sentence: Sentencia N° 0053-2018.

¹³See National Supreme Court sentence: sentencia N° 0072-2020 and N° 0077-2020

¹⁴See National Supreme Court sentence: sentencia N° 0071-2020.

the PSUV candidate was first or second:

$$Y_{it+1} = \rho_0 + \rho_1 MV_{it} + \beta_0 Psuv_{it} + \beta_1 Psuv_{it} \cdot MV_{it} + \eta_{it}$$

where MV_{it} is the PSUV margin of victory in municipality i , election year t (negative if PSUV comes second); $Psuv_{it}$ is a dummy =1 if PSUV candidate wins and η_{it} is the error term. We use four different outcome variables: three of them capture spillover effects on local results in national elections (PSUV performance at the following National Assembly election; PSUV performance at the following national election (any); Average PSUV national performance in the 4 year mayoral mandate) and the fourth one is a standard municipality level “incumbency advantage” regression (unconditional on re-running): probability of a PSUV victory in the following mayoral elections. If everything else is continuous at the relevant threshold of the running variable (0, in this case), β_1 captures the causal effect of marginally electing a PSUV mayor (*vis-à-vis* an opposition one) on future electoral outcomes at local level. We cluster standard errors at the municipality level and we estimate the regression using MSE optimal bandwidth, local linear regression, triangular kernel. Following Marshall (2022), it is important to acknowledge that our “treatment” is not just the election of a pro-regime mayor, but also the fact that elections were close. However, note that this is taken into account by the theoretical model, hence this standard RDD remains a valid way to test the relative strength of the two forces highlighted above.

2.3 Data

We manually collected data on mayoral elections for the 335 Venezuelan municipalities for the period 2008-2021. Those include 4 municipal elections (2008, 2013, 2017, 2020), three National Assembly Elections (2010, 2015, 2020) and three Presidential Elections (2012, 2013, 2018). For municipal elections we have information on the partisan affiliation and the vote share of the winner and of the second-placed candidate. For national elections we have the Psuv vote share measured at municipality level. We complement this

dataset with a number of important socio-economic and political variables, taken from Handlin (2016) (share of public employees, total number of workers, pre-2008 national elections results, presence of a “communal council”) and from the last two rounds of the census (share of poor people, number of families, population, surface, health establishments, share of urban population and of males, share of indigenous inhabitants). Finally, we have data on internet access from ENCOVI (Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida).

Table 1: Summary statistics by election type

	Close		Not Close		Difference	
	mean	sd	mean	sd	b	t
Share of public employees	17.771	9.076	18.452	9.194	0.681	(1.135)
Share of poor, 2011	29.221	11.924	30.053	12.910	0.832	(1.029)
Number of workers	28523.301	78085.989	22880.260	49056.217	-5643.041	(-1.240)
Number of families, 2011	22749.557	51390.625	19187.347	33702.729	-3562.210	(-1.180)
Population, 2007	91788.997	219553.784	76610.167	142133.698	-15178.830	(-1.180)
Surface, 2007	2668.226	7211.567	2723.711	6979.236	55.485	(0.118)
Population density, 2007	262.247	674.711	312.142	778.008	49.895	(1.063)
Health Establishments per capita, 2007	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.000	-0.000	(-0.032)
Share of urban population, 2001	71.721	27.697	72.924	26.258	1.203	(0.672)
Share of males, 2001	50.982	1.674	50.768	1.789	-0.213	(-1.888)
Share of indigenous inhab., 2001	2.200	9.830	2.622	12.042	0.422	(0.584)
Communal Council per 1000 inhab., 2008	1.648	1.991	1.628	1.937	-0.019	(-0.150)
Abstention	34.974	8.170	40.305	10.072	5.332***	(9.104)
Observations	359		646		1005	

Summary statistics for elections included in the CCT optimal bandwidth.

2.4 Results

In the main body of the paper we present results for two of the outcome variables, i.e. the average of the PSUV national performance over a 4 years electoral mandate and the probability of electing a Psuv mayor in the next round. Results are similar for the other two national level variables are very similar and reported in appendix.

2.4.1 Average performance during the mayoral mandate

Figure 1 provides graphical evidence of the main effect, i.e. the negative effect of a PSUV mayoral victory on subsequent local performance in national elections. We plot binned data around the 0 threshold of the running variable, limiting the sample to what is included in the optimal bandwidth and adding the linear fit.

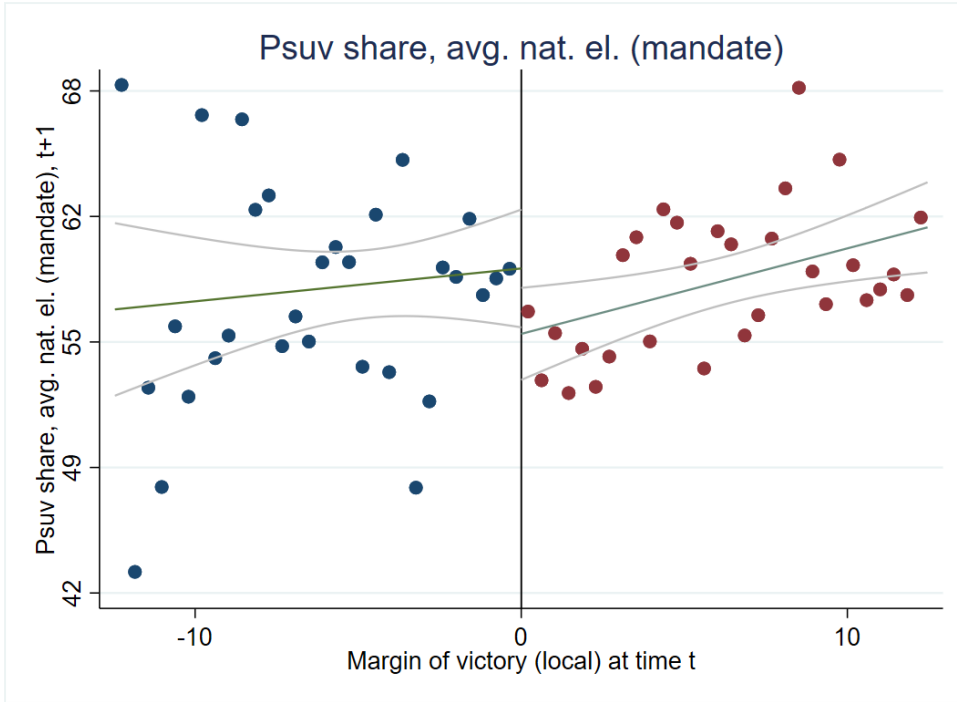


Figure 1: Plot of binned data around the 0 threshold of the running variable, limiting the sample to what is included in the optimal bandwidth and adding the linear fit.

Table 2 provides the regression coefficients (conventional, bias corrected and robust). Columns (2)-(6) shows that results are robust to the inclusion of the lagged dependent

variable, controls, election-year and region fixed effect, despite a reduction in the number of available observations.

Table 2: RDD, Average performance

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Conventional	-4.419** [1.986]	-4.757** [2.395]	-5.656*** [2.010]	-3.308** [1.519]	-4.850** [1.914]	-4.564*** [1.287]
Bias-corrected	-4.792** [1.986]	-5.500** [2.395]	-6.435*** [2.010]	-3.543** [1.519]	-5.315*** [1.914]	-4.821*** [1.287]
Robust	-4.792** [2.291]	-5.500** [2.781]	-6.435*** [2.339]	-3.543** [1.794]	-5.315** [2.198]	-4.821*** [1.569]
Robust 95% CI	[-9.282 ; -.302] [-10.95 ; -.051] [-11.019 ; -1.852] [-7.058 ; -.028] [-9.622 ; -1.008] [-7.895 ; -1.746]					
Observations	992	664	911	992	992	608
Conventional p-value	0.026	0.047	0.005	0.029	0.011	0.000
Robust p-value	0.036	0.048	0.006	0.048	0.016	0.002
MSE-BW	12.490	12.507	10.005	11.111	11.096	10.689
Obs. left	127	84	111	120	120	76
Obs. right	232	138	170	192	192	109
Lagged dpt. var.	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
Controls	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
El. year FE	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
Region FE	N	N	N	N	Y	Y

Dependent variable: $t + 1$ avg performance. S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression.

Finally, figure 2 shows that the coefficient does not change much if different groups of controls are introduced and then taken out.

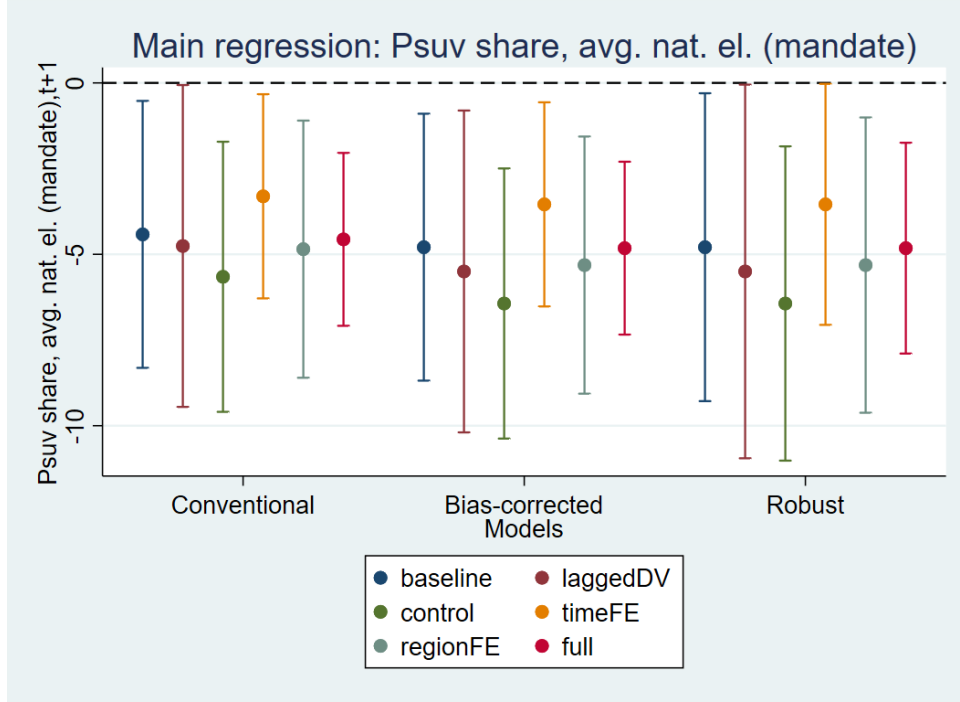


Figure 2: Treatment effect, inclusion of different subsets of controls. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

2.4.2 Probability of mayoral victory

Figure 3 provides graphical evidence of the main local incumbency effect. We plot binned data around the 0 threshold of the running variable, limiting the sample to what is included in the optimal bandwidth and adding the linear fit. The outcome variable is a dummy equal 1 if the winner of mayoral elections at time $t + 1$ is a PSUV candidate.

Table 3 provides the regression coefficients (conventional, bias corrected and robust). Columns (2)-(6) shows that results are robust to the inclusion of the lagged dependent variable, controls, election-year and region fixed effect, despite a reduction in the number of available observations.

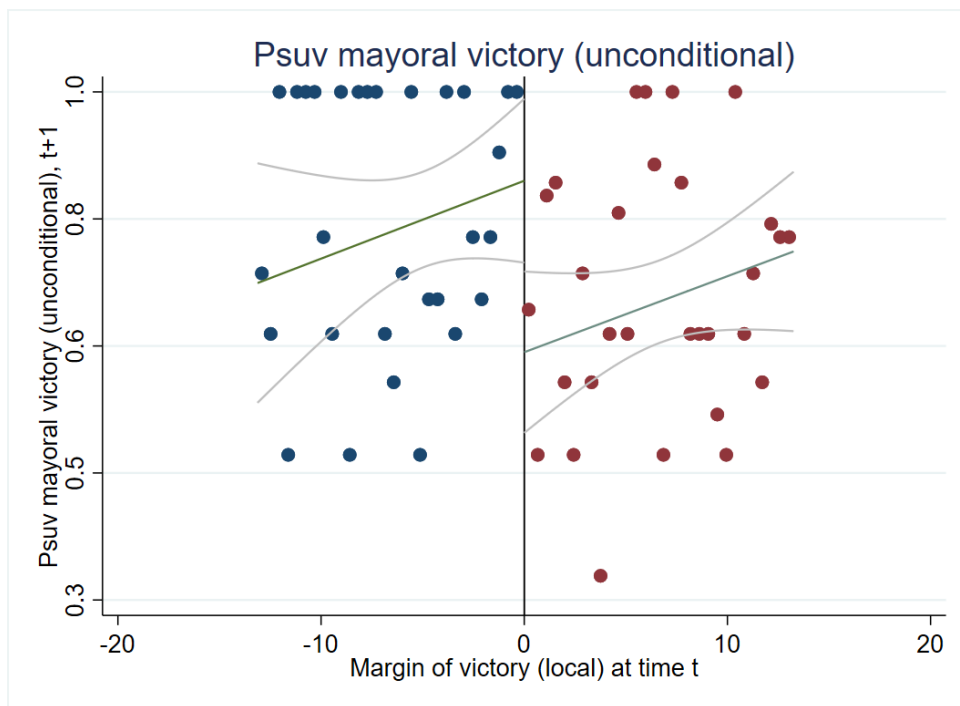


Figure 3: Plot of binned data around the 0 threshold of the running variable, limiting the sample to what is included in the optimal bandwidth and adding the linear fit.

Table 3: RDD, local incumbency advantage

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Conventional	-0.252*** [0.082]	-0.166* [0.093]	-0.276*** [0.086]	-0.261*** [0.068]	-0.262*** [0.078]	-0.348*** [0.077]
Bias-corrected	-0.240*** [0.082]	-0.156* [0.093]	-0.274*** [0.086]	-0.269*** [0.068]	-0.249*** [0.078]	-0.385*** [0.077]
Robust	-0.240*** [0.096]	-0.156 [0.110]	-0.274*** [0.102]	-0.269*** [0.080]	-0.249*** [0.092]	-0.385*** [0.089]
Robust 95% CI	[-.429 ; -.051]	[-.371 ; .059]	[-.475 ; -.074]	[-.425 ; -.112]	[-.429 ; -.069]	[-.559 ; -.211]
Observations	992	664	911	992	992	608
Conventional p-value	0.002	0.075	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.000
Robust p-value	0.013	0.155	0.007	0.001	0.007	0.000
MSE-BW	13.336	15.683	11.572	15.527	11.983	9.262
Obs. left	131	93	118	140	123	69
Obs. right	246	175	194	296	215	94
Lagged dpt. var.	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
Controls	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
El. year FE	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
Region FE	N	N	N	N	Y	Y

Dependent variable: $t + 1$ avg performance. S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression.

Finally, figure 4 shows that the coefficient does not change much if different groups of controls are introduced and then taken out.

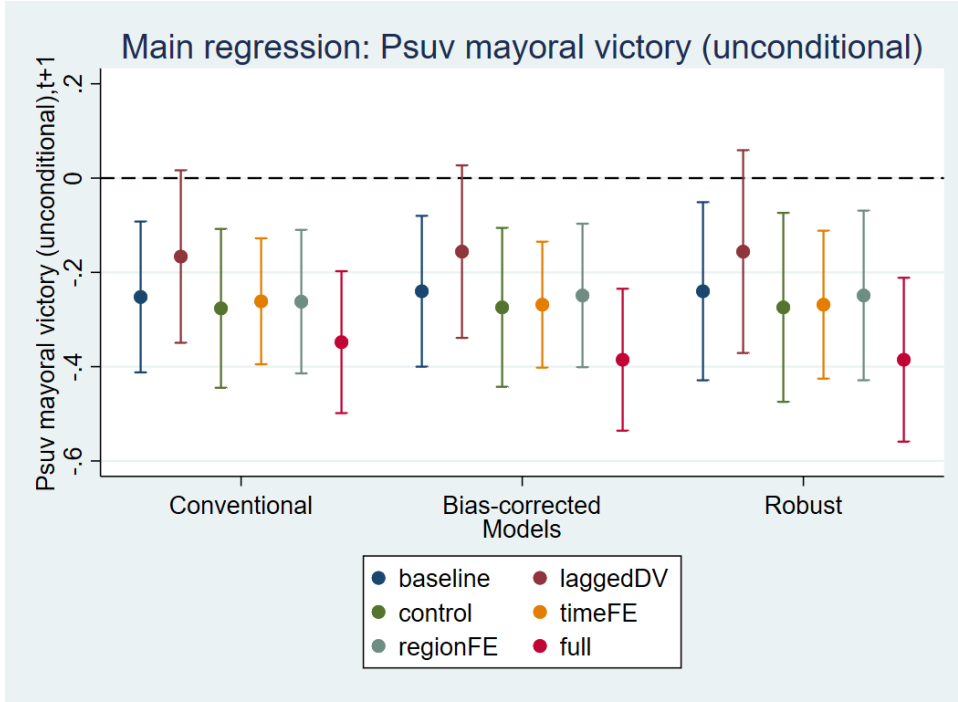


Figure 4: Treatment effect, inclusion of different subsets of controls. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

2.5 Robustness

To assess the credibility of our identification strategy, we show that there is no sorting at the threshold (Figure 5) and the continuity of our pre-determined (or almost pre determined) control variables (Figure 6) and pre-2008 electoral results (7) at the threshold. Coefficients are reported in table A1 and A2. Only population density exhibits a jump in the dependent variable, but its inclusion in the RDD regressions as a control variable does not change the results.

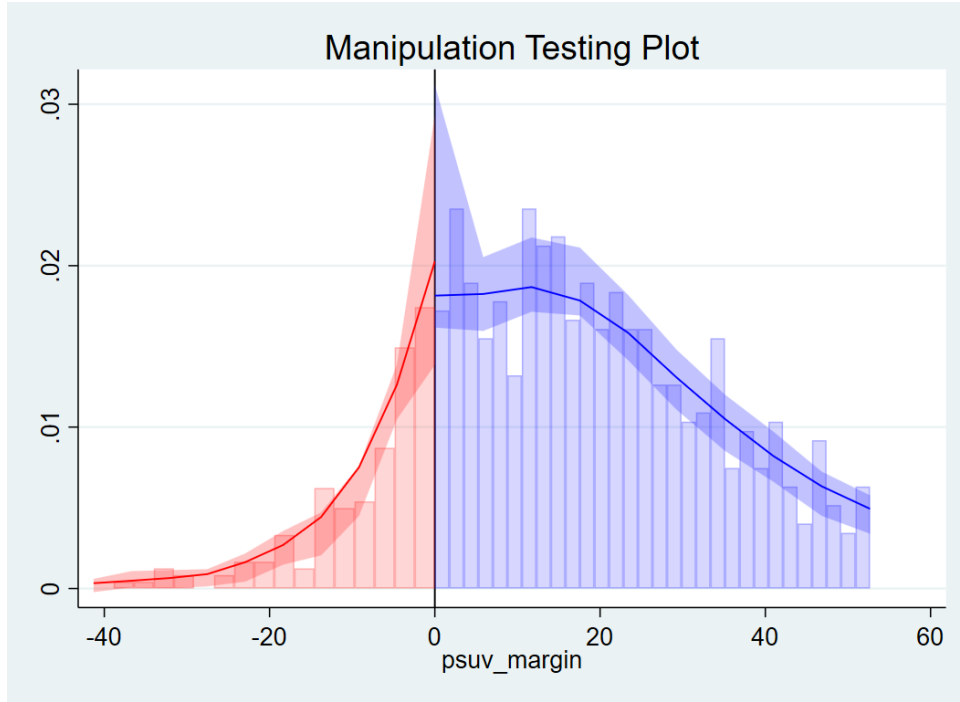


Figure 5: McCray test

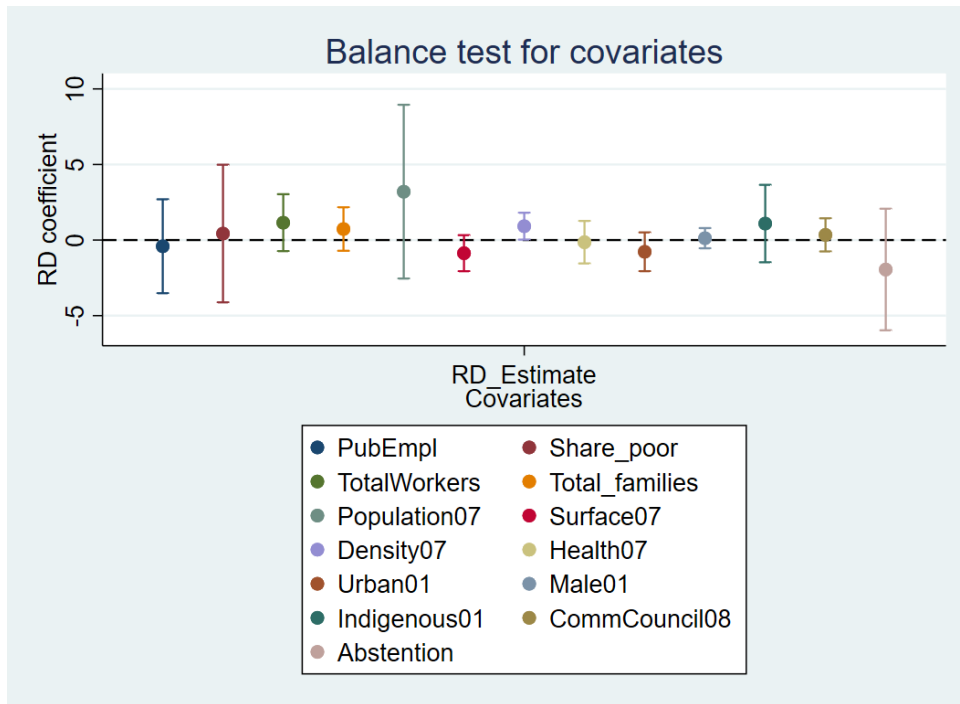


Figure 6: Balance test on covariates. No controls or FE included, clustering at municipality level. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

Finally, our results are robust to different choices in terms of bandwidths and to the exclusion of elections with evidence of government interference (both pre and post), and to a different level of clustering. Those results are reported in Appendix A. We also show

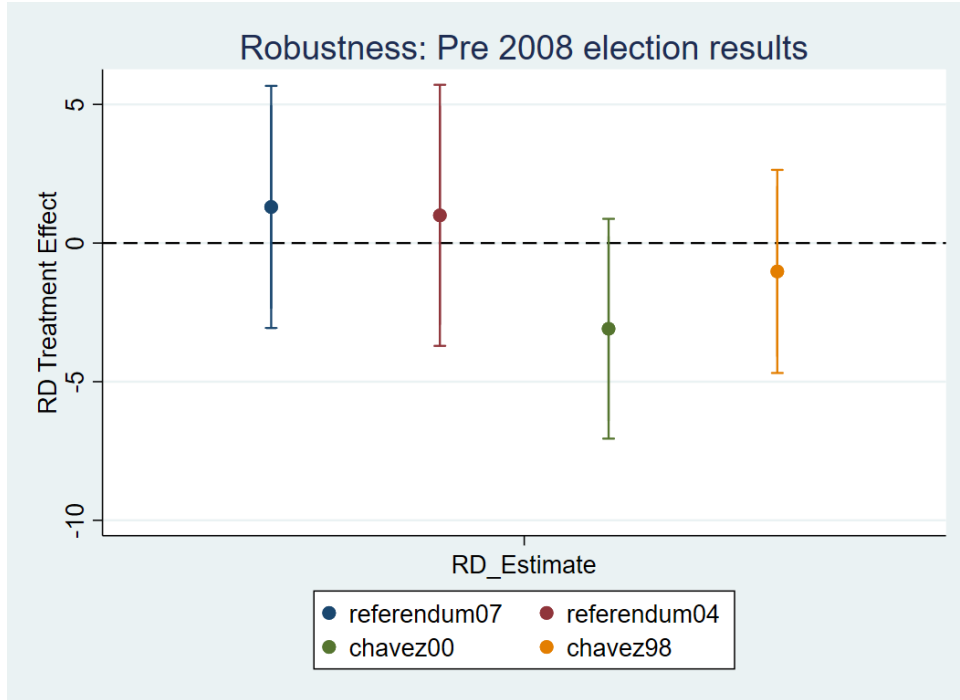


Figure 7: Balance test on pre-2008 elections. No controls or FE included, clustering at municipality level. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

that coefficients are stable to different calculation methods for the optimal bandwidth and that they behave as expected when we arbitrarily choose a bandwidth.

2.6 Reliability

Since we are using data from a hybrid regime, it is natural to ask whether our measure of electoral performance are reliable. The fact that there is no evidence of sorting at the threshold is reassuring. On top of this, table 1 shows that close elections (i.e. those included in the optimal bandwidth for the national level dependent variable) are not different from those outside the bandwidth in terms of observables. The sole significant difference is in turnout, consistently with the fact that close elections should increase participation.

Second, we run the RDD for every electoral year alone, and we show that our negative national spillover effect disappears when we look at the national performance after 2017 municipal elections. This test is summarized by Figure 8. Note that coefficients for post 2008 and post 2013 are significant at 10 percent level. The noise is due to the limited number of observations used to estimate them. This result is consistent with the fact

that the period 2017-2021 has been characterised by protests and stronger governmental interference in elections, leading to the ban of some important opposition parties. Hence, in a sense, we observe an effect as long as elections are meaningful.

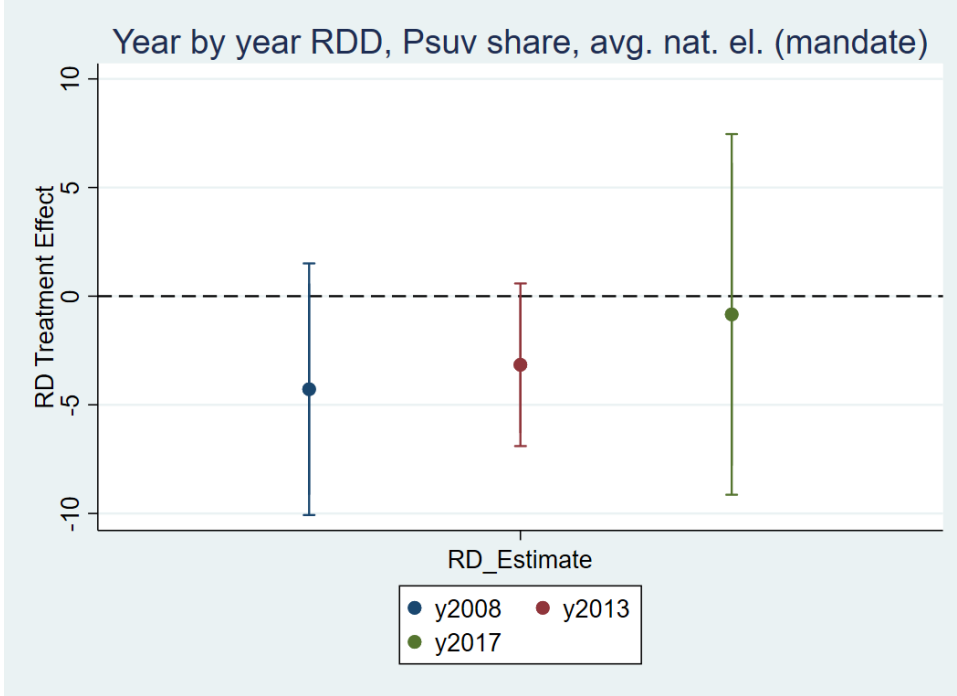


Figure 8: RDD coefficients for each separate election-year. No controls or FE included, clustering at municipality level. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

3 Theoretical framework

We build a model of multi-layer elections (local and national) in a competitive autocracy. Following the relevant literature on hybrid regimes, we characterize it with two assumptions. First, pro-regime local office holders can mobilize voters in support of their party during national elections. Second, the pro-regime party enjoys an exogenous electoral advantage over competing candidates both at national and local level. The model studies how this particular political environment affect electoral spillovers. Importantly, entry into politics is endogenous. The pro-regime electoral bias implies that candidates with a lower outside option are more motivated to run for the pro-regime party, than for the opposition. This implies that the quality of the pro-regime pool of politicians is lower,

but they are still elected because of the bias. Once in office, however, this poor quality is revealed to the voters. Hence, there are two forces pushing in opposite directions. On the one hand, the mobilization ability of pro-government mayors should increase their party's local performance in national elections. On the other hand, their low quality may translate into a negative updating on the overall quality of the pro-regime party, leading to a decrease in performance in the following election.

3.1 Setup

Consider a generic municipality. Politician i has quality $\theta^i \in \{\theta_h, \theta_l\}$ and national level affiliation $a^i \in \{g, o\}$, capturing whether she belongs to the government or to the opposition party. θ^o is observed before the elections (Gamalerio and Trombetta, 2022), but because of an exogenously assumed propaganda, voters observe $\tilde{\theta}^g = \theta_h$ irrespective of the true θ . In other words, voters believe all politicians belonging to the government party are of high quality. This captures the idea that, in hybrid regimes, the playing field is somehow biased in favour of the government. Once in power, elected mayors produce an outcome $u \in \{0, 1\}$ such that $Pr(u = 1) = \theta^i$. We assume $\theta_h = 1 > \theta_l > 0$. Politicians get 1 if in office and pay a (very small) running cost of c . They get 0 if defeated, so they run if $Pr(win) > c$ (Ashworth et al., 2021).

Parties can draw candidates from the same ability distribution, where $Pr(\theta^i = \theta_h) = q$. However, voters believe that $q_g = 1$ and $q_o = q$. Candidates decide whether to run without knowing the ability of the opponent (but are aware of V's bias) and parties keep picking candidates until someone accepts to run.

The timing of the game is as follows:

1. Candidates choice about running;
2. θ^o and $\tilde{\theta}^g$ observed by voters;
3. Local elections: voters vote on (perceived) ability, if indifferent randomize with equal probability.
4. u is realized depending on the ability of the mayor and voters update their beliefs.

5. The incumbent chooses whether to mobilize pro-government voters and national elections happen;

Our solution concept is subgame perfect Nash Equilibrium.

Pro-regime bias Basically, we assume voters are biased in favor of g candidates (e.g. because they believe in propaganda, as in Szeidl and Szucs (2022), or in the importance of connections). They associate higher effectiveness with pro-government candidates. However, they change their worldview once a “zero probability event” happens, i.e. when $u = 0 | \text{winner} = \theta^g$.

National level elections We assume that the government party’s performance at the national election is some function $f(\mathbb{E}u|g; m)$ where m is local mobilization. In other words, the government party local performance in national level elections depend on the updated beliefs of the voter on the quality of political parties and on the mobilization effort by pro-government mayors.

Formally, define the affiliation of local winner w . The (national) performance of the governing party is $f(1; m)$ if $w = o$ and if $w = g, u = 1$. It is $f(q; m)$ if $w = g, u = 0$ and it is $f(q, 0)$ if $w = o$. Clearly, we assume that $f'_1 > 0$ and $f'_2 > 0$.

3.2 Analysis

3.2.1 Benchmark: no bias

Suppose there is no pro-regime bias, i.e. voters observe the true ability of all candidates. The precise equilibrium candidacy structure depends on c , but there is no updating on overall quality following the realised performance. Hence, we should observe a stronger government’s performance in municipalities where $w = g$ because of $m > 0$.

3.2.2 Introducing bias

Consider now the case of pro-regime bias: voters choose g when $\theta^o = \theta_l$ and toss a coin otherwise. For sufficiently low c , both h and l government-party local politicians run.

Only h opposition politicians run, as they win with some probability. This implies that the realized in-office performance of opposition mayors is always 1, while pro-government mayors deliver both outcomes with positive probability. This cause a negative updating on the quality of the government party, that could translate into a worse performance at the national level. Proposition 1 states this result formally.

Proposition 1 *The average government performance at national level in municipalities where $w = g$ is lower than the performance in municipalities where $w = o$ if $(1 - q)f(q, m) + qf(1, m) < f(1, 0)$.*

4 Indirect tests and discussion

Although we do not have data on individual politicians that would allow us to test the negative selection channel directly, we can show one empirical result consistent with it: there is a negative causal effect of PSUV mayoral victories before 2017 on the number of places with internet access as measured in 2021. This is consistent with the idea that PSUV mayor try to reduce the possibility of accessing independent information, able to reveal their true quality. Figure 9 provides graphical evidence of the effect, while table 4 reports the estimated coefficients.

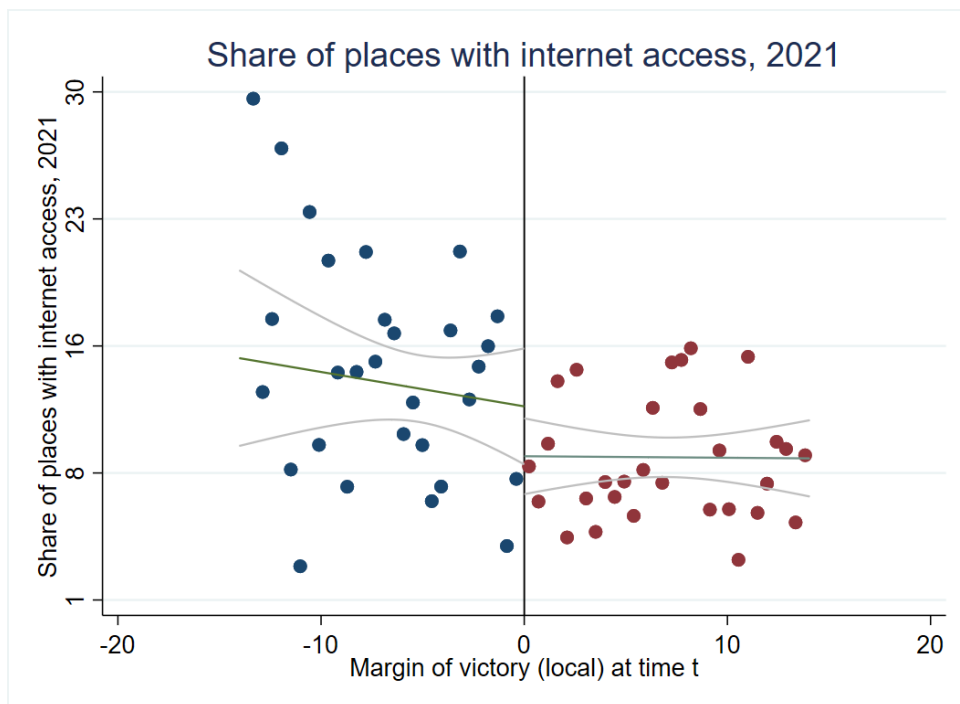


Figure 9: Plot of binned data around the 0 threshold of the running variable, limiting the sample to what is included in the optimal bandwidth and adding the linear fit.

Table 4: RDD, places with internet access

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Conventional	-3.591* [2.083]	-4.055*** [1.561]	-3.662* [2.083]	-4.664** [1.884]	-2.126** [0.929]
Bias-corrected	-4.035* [2.083]	-4.574*** [1.561]	-4.117** [2.083]	-5.247*** [1.884]	-2.083** [0.929]
Robust	-4.035* [2.398]	-4.574** [1.777]	-4.117* [2.402]	-5.247** [2.129]	-2.083* [1.100]
Robust 95% CI	[-8.734 ; .665]	[-8.058 ; -1.091]	[-8.824 ; .59]	[-9.42 ; -1.075]	[-4.24 ; .074]
Observations	658	605	658	658	605
Conventional p-value	0.085	0.009	0.079	0.013	0.022
Robust p-value	0.092	0.010	0.087	0.014	0.058
MSE-BW	14.081	9.359	13.829	10.190	8.305
Obs. left	113	90	112	101	87
Obs. right	212	132	207	143	122
Controls	N	Y	N	N	Y
El. year FE	N	N	Y	N	Y
Region FE	N	N	N	Y	Y

Dependent variable: share of places with internet access measured in 2021. S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression. Running variable defined on mayoral elections in 2008 and 2013.

This piece of evidence is also helpful in providing the correct interpretation of our results. In fact, the effect we find is a relative comparison, that can be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be that a Psuv victory reveals information to the voter, causing a negative updating on the quality of the governing party and hence a negative effect on the vote share. Second, it could be that a (small) Psuv local loss induces a reaction from the party, thus increasing the vote-share in the following national elections. If this second story is correct, however, we should not observe a reduction in internet availability in Psuv-controlled municipalities. If anything, the opposite effect should be going on (assuming that internet provides a relatively unbiased way to gather information).

5 Conclusion

We study the effect of marginal mayoral victories on subsequent performance in national and local elections for the pro-regime party in a competitive autocracy. We document a significant negative effect on both levels.

As previous literature document an opposite effect in democratic, we propose a model of political selection in competitive autocracies able to explain our results. It suggests that the effect may be due to the uneven playing field of competitive autocracies, where the advantage of pro-regime candidates implies that they are, on average, of lower quality than the competitors.

Our results suggest further avenues of research. First, it would be important to collect candidate-level information in order to test whether there is a difference in terms of quality between pro-regime and opposition candidates. Second, some of the implications of the model could be tested using measures of policy outcomes at municipality level.

Overall, a deeper understanding of important features of non-democratic regimes, including political selection and incumbency advantage, is crucial given their increasing importance on the world stage. Our paper is the first one studying their electoral dynamics across different government level and showing the existence of a local incumbency disadvantage. The channel we suggest, if confirmed, may imply that there is some

fragility in autocratic regime at the local level, where voters are typically more able to express their true preferences.

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A Additional tables and figures

A.1 Balance test on covariates

Table A1: Balance test

	(1) Public employees	(2) Poor	(3) workers	(4) families	(5) Population	(6) Surface	(7) Density	(8) Health str.	(9) Urban pop.
Conventional	-0.410 [1.585]	0.431 [2.323]	1.150 [0.961]	0.730 [0.734]	3.201 [2.933]	-0.869 [0.609]	0.918** [0.454]	-0.141 [0.718]	-0.776 [0.655]
Bias-corrected	-0.178 [1.585]	0.977 [2.323]	1.173 [0.961]	0.752 [0.734]	3.279 [2.933]	-0.930 [0.609]	1.186*** [0.454]	-0.041 [0.718]	-1.056 [0.655]
Robust	-0.178 [1.791]	0.977 [2.693]	1.173 [1.179]	0.752 [0.889]	3.279 [3.569]	-0.930 [0.715]	1.186** [0.528]	-0.041 [0.832]	-1.056 [0.738]
Observations	992	992	992	992	992	992	992	971	992
Conventional p-value	0.796	0.853	0.231	0.320	0.275	0.153	0.043	0.844	0.236
Robust p-value	0.921	0.717	0.320	0.398	0.358	0.193	0.025	0.961	0.153
MSE-BW	14.483	13.814	13.348	14.322	13.754	14.094	8.855	14.383	10.803
Obs. left	138	132	131	135	132	134	108	135	119
Obs. right	279	258	246	273	258	265	164	271	188

Balance test on covariates. Dependent variable: stated on each column. S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression. No controls or fixed effects.

Table A2: Balance test

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Males		Indigenous	Communal Council	Abstention	Yes, 2007	Yes, 2004	Chavez 2000	Chavez 1998
Conventional	0.123 [0.341]	1.091 [1.307]	0.344 [0.559]	-1.949 [2.052]	1.301 [2.228]	0.999 [2.402]	-3.090 [2.022]	-1.024 [1.869]
Bias-corrected	0.169 [0.341]	1.481 [1.307]	0.497 [0.559]	-2.457 [2.052]	1.752 [2.228]	0.769 [2.402]	-2.714 [2.022]	-0.949 [1.869]
Robust	0.169 [0.397]	1.481 [1.587]	0.497 [0.664]	-2.457 [2.444]	1.752 [2.612]	0.769 [2.878]	-2.714 [2.370]	-0.949 [2.123]
Observations	992	932	992	992	978	992	992	992
Conventional p-value	0.718	0.404	0.538	0.342	0.559	0.677	0.126	0.584
Robust p-value	0.671	0.350	0.454	0.315	0.502	0.789	0.252	0.655
MSE-BW	17.236	10.129	11.953	11.513	10.194	11.420	13.061	16.160
Obs. left	144	114	123	121	116	121	130	140
Obs. right	322	174	211	205	180	202	244	304

Balance test on covariates. Dependent variable: stated on each column. S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression. No controls or fixed effects.

A.2 Excluding elections preceded or followed by Government interference

Table A3: RDD, no elections followed by gov.'s intervention

	(1) Nat. Assembly	(2) Next el.	(3) Avg. mandate	(4) Mayoral victory
Conventional	-6.616** [2.847]	-5.051** [2.027]	-5.009** [2.132]	-0.243*** [0.083]
Bias-corrected	-7.314** [2.847]	-5.630*** [2.027]	-5.517*** [2.132]	-0.230*** [0.083]
Robust	-7.314** [3.340]	-5.630** [2.321]	-5.517** [2.468]	-0.230** [0.098]
Robust 95% CI	[-13.861 ; -.767]	[-10.179 ; -1.082]	[-10.354 ; -.68]	[-.421 ; -.038]
Observations	981	981	981	981
Conventional p-value	0.020	0.013	0.019	0.003
Robust p-value	0.029	0.015	0.025	0.019
MSE-BW	11.716	10.470	11.286	13.541
Obs. left	118	114	116	127
Obs. right	208	185	197	249

Dependent variable: stated on each column. Elections followed by a government intervention are excluded S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression. No controls or fixed effects.

Table A4: RDD, no elections preceded by gov.'s intervention

	(1) Nat. Assembly	(2) Next el.	(3) Avg. mandate	(4) Mayoral victory
Conventional	-5.900** [2.679]	-4.720** [1.984]	-4.506** [2.062]	-0.251*** [0.083]
Bias-corrected	-6.479** [2.679]	-5.314*** [1.984]	-4.972** [2.062]	-0.249*** [0.083]
Robust	-6.479** [3.136]	-5.314** [2.271]	-4.972** [2.380]	-0.249** [0.099]
Robust 95% CI	[-12.625 ; -.333]	[-9.765 ; -.863]	[-9.638 ; -.307]	[-.442 ; -.055]
Observations	982	982	982	982
Conventional p-value	0.028	0.017	0.029	0.003
Robust p-value	0.039	0.019	0.037	0.012
MSE-BW	12.619	10.386	11.699	12.958
Obs. left	125	116	120	127
Obs. right	236	181	206	242

Dependent variable: stated on each column. Elections preceded by a government intervention are excluded S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression. No controls or fixed effects.

A.3 Excluding asynchronous elections

Table A5: RDD, no asynchronous elections

	(1) Nat. Assembly	(2) Next el.	(3) Avg. mandate	(4) Mayoral victory
Conventional	-4.874** [2.387]	-4.379** [1.902]	-4.416** [1.998]	-0.259*** [0.083]
Bias-corrected	-5.536** [2.387]	-4.793** [1.902]	-4.774** [1.998]	-0.246*** [0.083]
Robust	-5.536** [2.747]	-4.793** [2.159]	-4.774** [2.306]	-0.246** [0.097]
Robust 95% CI	[-10.919 ; -.153]	[-9.024 ; -.563]	[-9.294 ; -.255]	[-.437 ; -.055]
Observations	981	981	981	981
Conventional p-value	0.041	0.021	0.027	0.002
Robust p-value	0.044	0.026	0.038	0.011
MSE-BW	15.964	11.797	12.454	13.090
Obs. left	138	121	124	128
Obs. right	298	205	228	240

Dependent variable: stated on each column. Elections in municipalities that voted in 2010 instead of in 2008 are excluded S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression. No controls or fixed effects.

A.4 Exclusion of post-2017 elections

Table A6: RDD, no elections after 2017

	(1) Nat. Assembly	(2) Next el.	(3) Avg. mandate	(4) Mayoral victory
Conventional	-5.049** [2.129]	-5.049** [2.129]	-4.067** [1.888]	-0.222*** [0.075]
Bias-corrected	-5.624*** [2.129]	-5.624*** [2.129]	-4.594** [1.888]	-0.200*** [0.075]
Robust	-5.624** [2.536]	-5.624** [2.536]	-4.594** [2.249]	-0.200** [0.086]
Robust 95% CI	[-10.595 ; -.654]	[-10.595 ; -.654]	[-9.002 ; -.186]	[-.368 ; -.032]
Observations	658	658	658	658
Conventional p-value	0.018	0.018	0.031	0.003
Robust p-value	0.027	0.027	0.041	0.020
MSE-BW	9.049	9.049	8.927	13.315
Obs. left	91	91	91	111
Obs. right	139	139	137	198

Dependent variable: stated on each column. Local and national elections held between 2018 and 2020 are excluded. S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression. No controls or fixed effects.

A.5 Regional level clustering

Table A7: RDD, regional level clustering

	(1) Nat. Assembly	(2) Next el.	(3) Avg. mandate	(4) Mayoral victory
Conventional	-5.823* [3.367]	-4.903** [1.918]	-4.704** [2.295]	-0.248** [0.101]
Bias-corrected	-6.820** [3.367]	-5.710*** [1.918]	-5.597** [2.295]	-0.268*** [0.101]
Robust	-6.820* [3.951]	-5.710*** [2.162]	-5.597** [2.594]	-0.268** [0.112]
Robust 95% CI	[-14.565 ; .924]	[-9.947 ; -1.473]	[-10.681 ; -.512]	[-.487 ; -.048]
Observations	982	982	982	982
Conventional p-value	0.084	0.011	0.040	0.014
Robust p-value	0.084	0.008	0.031	0.017
MSE-BW	12.843	9.726	10.881	13.600
Obs. left	126	110	117	130
Obs. right	241	176	190	249

Dependent variable: stated on each column. S.e. clustered at regional level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression. No controls or fixed effects.

A.6 Robustness to different bandwidths and selection of bandwidths calculation methods

A.6.1 Average performance

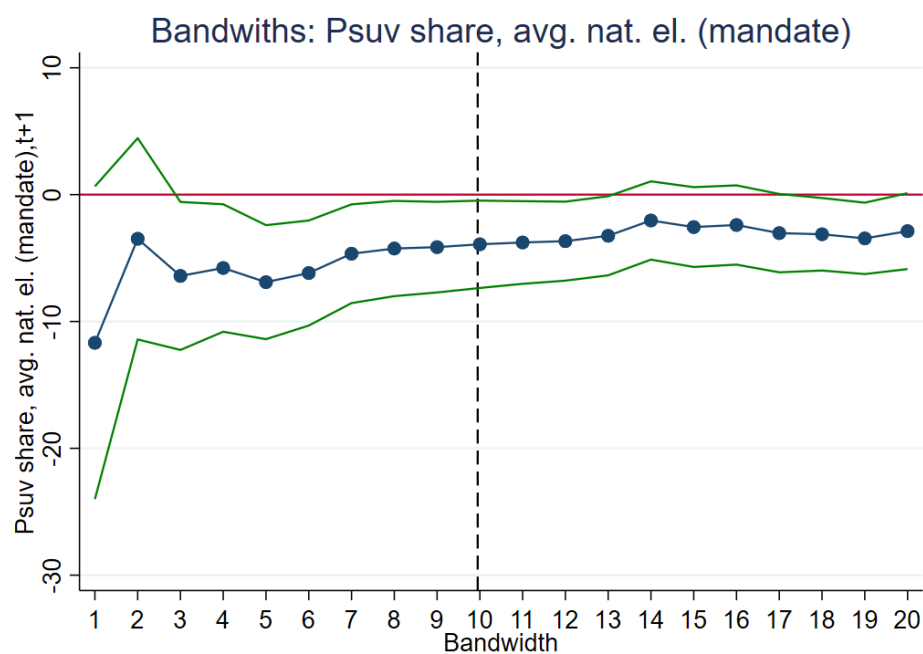


Figure A1: RD coefficient for different bandwidths. Vertical line is the MSE optimal bandwidth. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

A.6.2 Mayoral victory

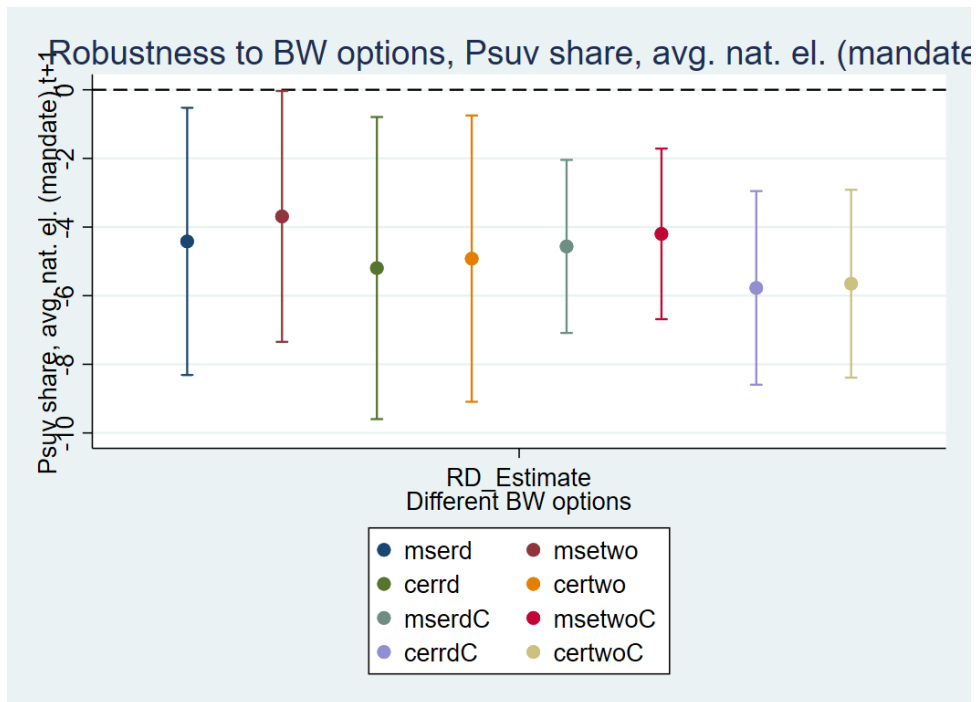


Figure A2: RD coefficient for different bandwidths calculation methods. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

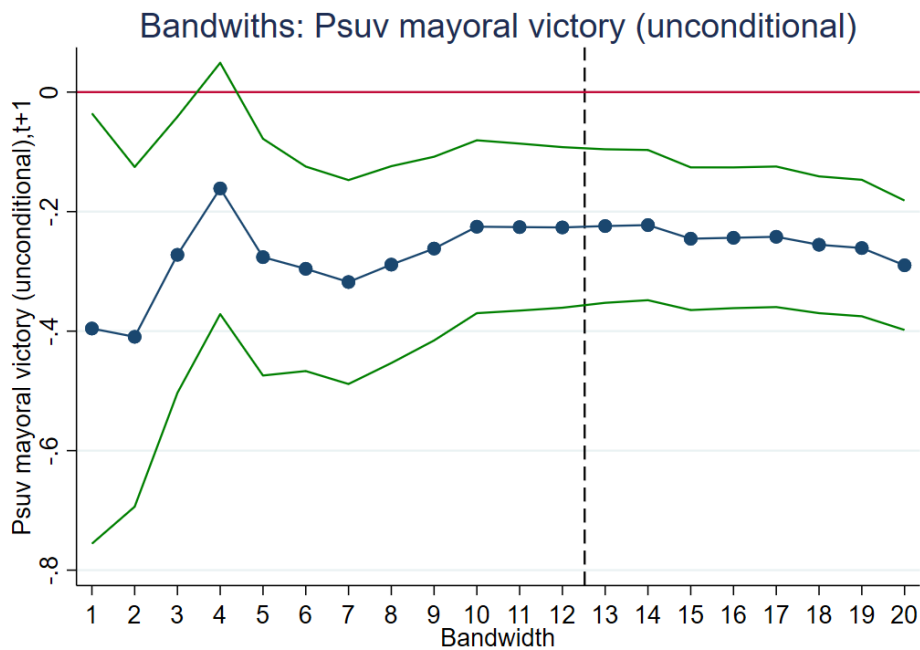


Figure A3: RD coefficient for different bandwidths. Vertical line is the MSE optimal bandwidth. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

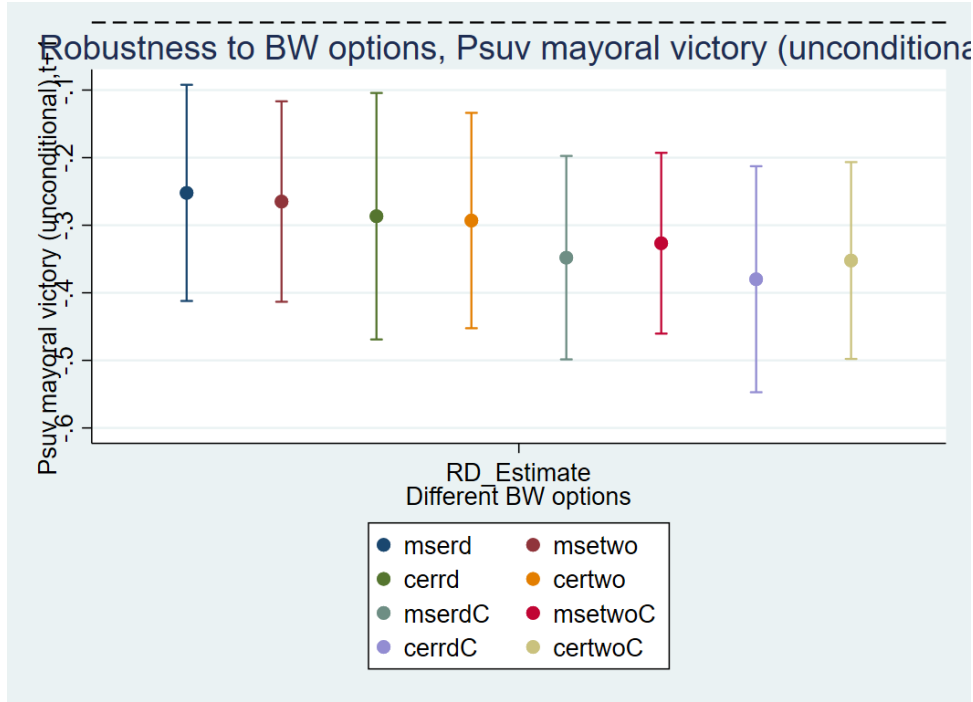


Figure A4: RD coefficient for different bandwidths calculation methods. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

B Additional national-level outcome variables

B.1 Next Election

In this subsection we use as outcome variable the PSUV result in the first national election that follows the local election.

Figure B1 provides graphical evidence of the main effect, i.e. the negative effect of a PSUV mayoral victory on subsequent local performance in national elections. We plot binned data around the 0 threshold of the running variable, limiting the sample to what is included in the optimal bandwidth and adding the linear fit.

Table B1 provides the regression coefficients (conventional, bias corrected and robust). Columns (2)-(6) shows that results are robust to the inclusion of the lagged dependent variable, controls, election-year and region fixed effect, despite a reduction in the number of available observations.

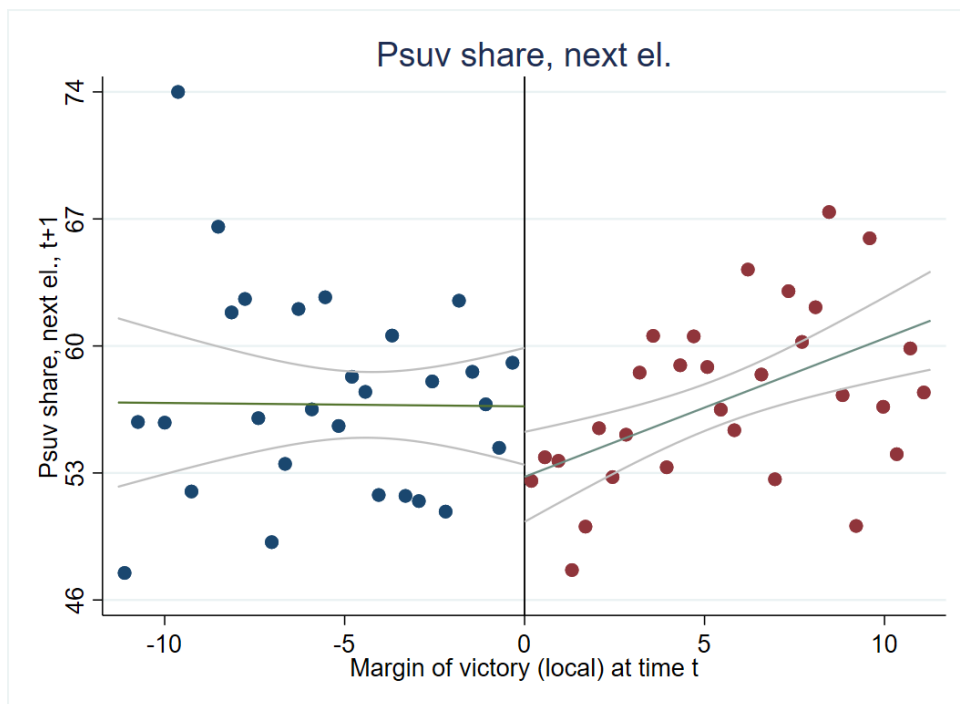


Figure B1: Plot of binned data around the 0 threshold of the running variable, limiting the sample to what is included in the optimal bandwidth and adding the linear fit.

Table B1: RDD, first national election

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Conventional	-4.664** [1.925]	-4.057** [1.975]	-5.924*** [2.034]	-3.457** [1.631]	-5.058*** [1.767]	-4.449*** [1.326]
Bias-corrected	-5.151*** [1.925]	-4.744** [1.975]	-6.770*** [2.034]	-3.802** [1.631]	-5.603*** [1.767]	-4.864*** [1.326]
Robust	-5.151** [2.189]	-4.744** [2.235]	-6.770*** [2.352]	-3.802** [1.889]	-5.603*** [2.009]	-4.864*** [1.600]
Robust 95% CI	[-9.442 ; -.86]	[-9.124 ; -.364]	[-11.38 ; -2.159]	[-7.504 ; -.1]	[-9.541 ; -1.665]	[-8.001 ; -1.728]
Observations	992	664	911	992	992	608
Conventional p-value	0.015	0.040	0.004	0.034	0.004	0.001
Robust p-value	0.019	0.034	0.004	0.044	0.005	0.002
MSE-BW	11.311	12.426	8.870	11.182	10.447	10.393
Obs. left	121	83	105	120	118	76
Obs. right	197	137	156	193	182	104
Lagged dpt. var.	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
Controls	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
El. year FE	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
Region FE	N	N	N	N	Y	Y

Dependent variable: first national level election after the local election. S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression.

Finally, figure B2 shows that the coefficient does not change much if different groups of controls are introduced and then taken out.

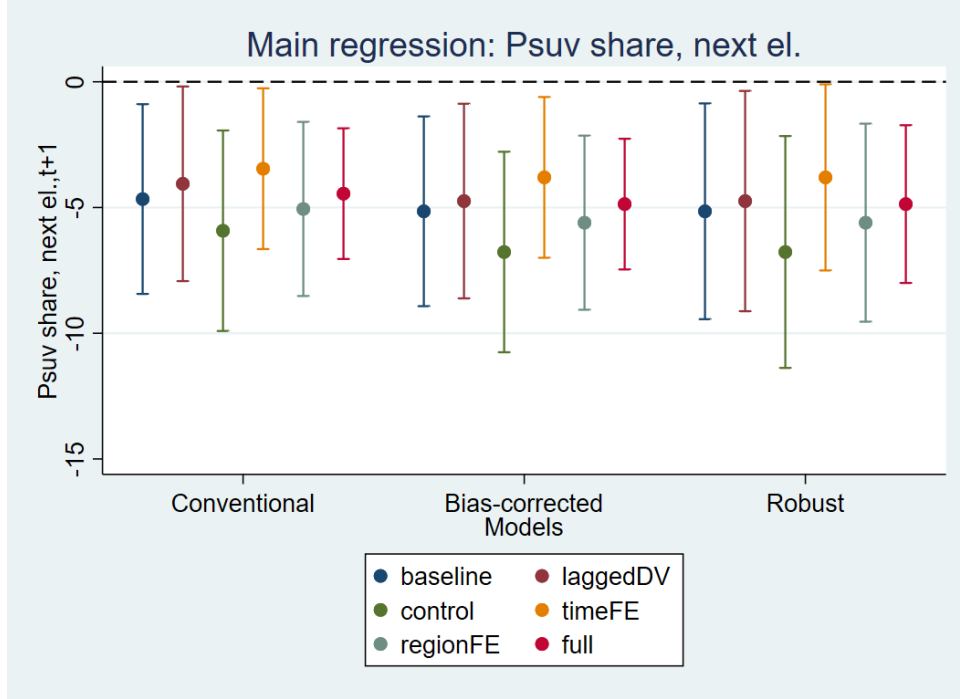


Figure B2: Treatment effect, inclusion of different subsets of controls. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.

B.2 National Assembly elections

In this subsection we use as outcome variable the PSUV result in the National Assembly election that follows the local election. We choose National Assembly elections because there is always one of them within the mandate of a mayor.

Figure B3 provides graphical evidence of the main effect, i.e. the negative effect of a PSUV mayoral victory on subsequent local performance in national elections. We plot binned data around the 0 threshold of the running variable, limiting the sample to what is included in the optimal bandwidth and adding the linear fit.

Table B2 provides the regression coefficients (conventional, bias corrected and robust). Columns (2)-(6) shows that results are robust to the inclusion of the lagged dependent

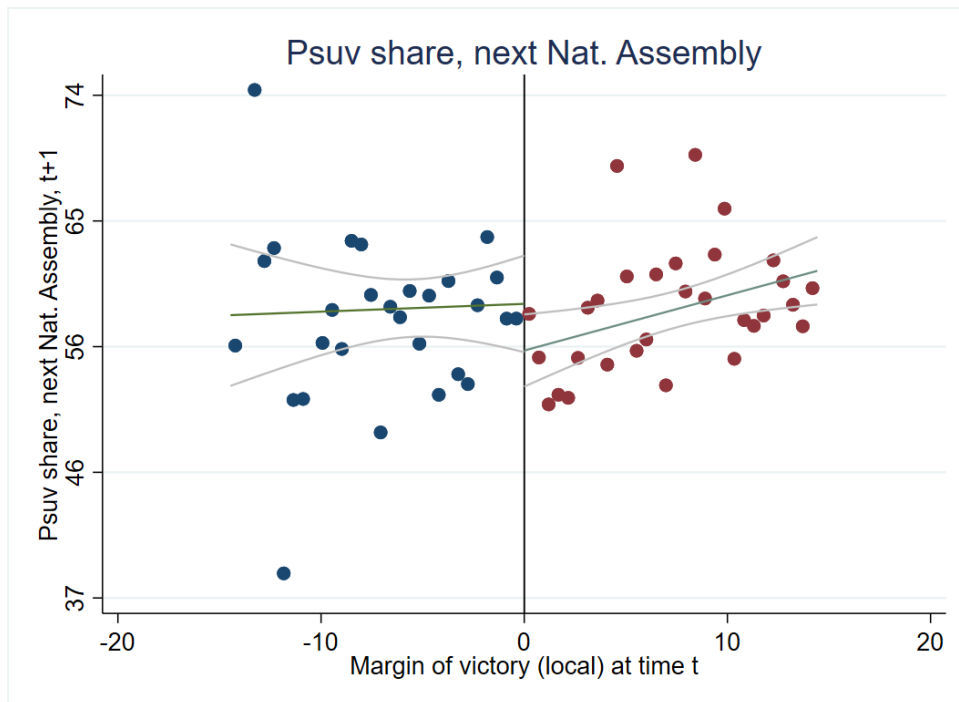


Figure B3: Plot of binned data around the 0 threshold of the running variable, limiting the sample to what is included in the optimal bandwidth and adding the linear fit.

variable, controls, election-year and region fixed effect, despite a reduction in the number of available observations.

Table B2: RDD, National Assembly election

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Conventional	-5.178** [2.470]	-5.798* [3.207]	-7.238*** [2.513]	-4.347** [1.811]	-5.695** [2.286]	-4.988*** [1.765]
Bias-corrected	-5.773** [2.470]	-6.751** [3.207]	-8.159*** [2.513]	-4.590** [1.811]	-6.377*** [2.286]	-5.175*** [1.765]
Robust	-5.773** [2.866]	-6.751* [3.800]	-8.159*** [2.952]	-4.590** [2.151]	-6.377** [2.578]	-5.175** [2.166]
Robust 95% CI	[-11.39 ; -.155]	[-14.199 ; .697]	[-13.946 ; -2.373]	[-8.807 ; -.373]	[-11.431 ; -1.323]	[-9.421 ; -.928]
Observations	992	664	911	992	992	608
Conventional p-value	0.036	0.071	0.004	0.016	0.013	0.005
Robust p-value	0.044	0.076	0.006	0.033	0.013	0.017
MSE-BW	14.463	13.362	10.987	11.724	13.418	11.287
Obs. left	138	87	116	122	132	78
Obs. right	279	142	183	208	246	111
Lagged dpt. var.	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
Controls	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
El. year FE	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
Region FE	N	N	N	N	Y	Y

Dependent variable: National Assembly election after the local election. S.e. clustered at municipality level. MSE optimal bandwidth, triangular kernel, local linear regression.

Finally, figure B4 shows that the coefficient does not change much if different groups of controls are introduced and then taken out.

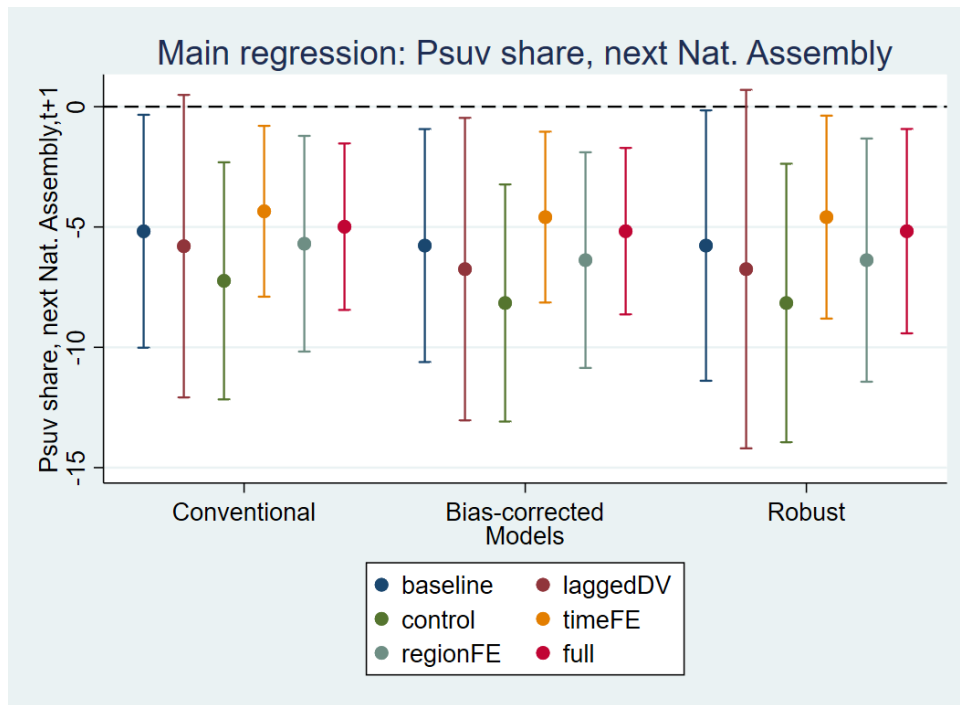


Figure B4: Treatment effect, inclusion of different subsets of controls. Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals.