UNEQUAL DEMOCRACIES

Working paper n°36

August, 2022

When Identity Trumps Class: Women, Workers and Statistical Representation Under Low Party Gate-keeping

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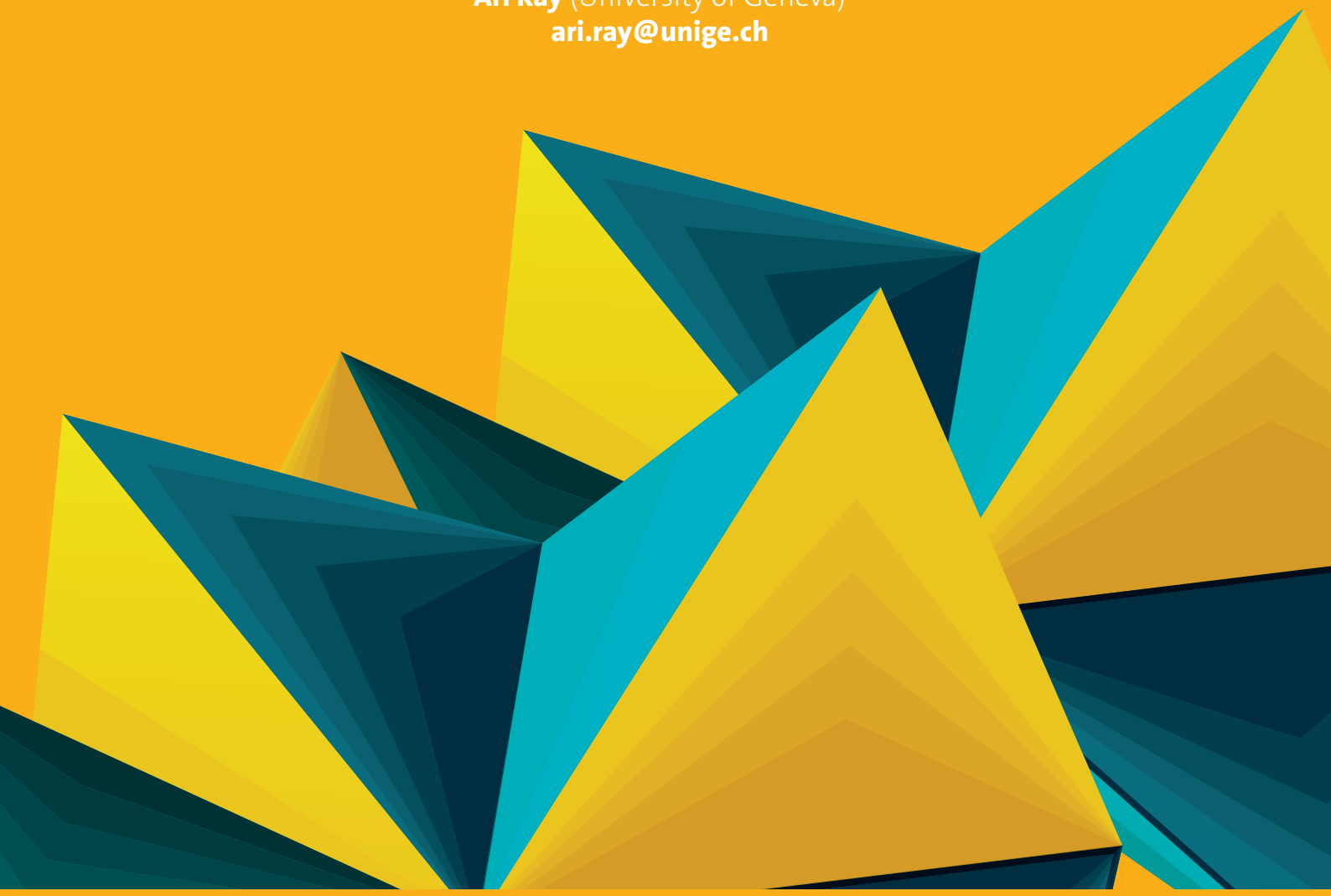

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

ABSTRACT:

Are there trade-offs in the representation of women and workers? I analyze Italian archival data to examine how an exogenous increase in the number of women in elected office affects legislature class composition. For this, I leverage an natural experiment, in which some municipalities temporarily introduced gender quotas on party lists in the mid-1990s. Findings show that having a singular election with a gender quota has positive effects on the descriptive representation of women who belong to the lower middle and working classes. The political opportunities of upper-middle class women were unaffected by the quota, as are those of working-class men. Instead, it is middle-class men who lose out as a result of quota adoption. Results highlight that—in contexts characterized by low levels of party gate-keeping—gender parity rules can work to bolster the prevalence of social groups that are the most under-represented in politics. When this occurs, these improvements come mainly at the cost of groups that are traditionally over-represented.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The research for this paper was funded by the Unequal Democracies Project at the University of Geneva (European Research Council Advanced Grant no. 741538) and supported by the Swiss Institute in Rome. Previous versions of this paper were presented at workshops at the Universities of Geneva (November 2021, May 2022) and Bergen (December 2021) as well as the Annual Conference of the Council for European Studies in Lisbon (June 2022). For insightful comments, I thank participants at these events and, in particular, Reto Bürgisser, Francesco Colombo, Simon Hug, Alice Iannantuoni, Sergi Martinez, Lachlan McNamee, Pietro Panizza, Jonas Pontusson and Elisa Volpi.

1 Introduction

Recent years have seen a surge in scholarly work centering on the statistical representation of women in politics[1]—and for good reason. In nearly all democracies in this world, women represent more than fifty percent of the voting age population. Despite this, women are systematically under-represented in legislatures in the vast majority of these countries, as well as in all levels of government within them (Paxton et al., 2020; UN Women, 2021).

The academic debate about women legislators hardly stems from a vacuum in public discourse. Globally, gender parity in politics has become a major topic of debate. Numerous popular initiatives—in countries as disparate as Switzerland and Jamaica—have formed afresh, in efforts to improve the sex ratio among lawmakers (UN Women, 2021). Equally, left-of-center political parties have started adapting their party programs to make the increased legislative participation of women a distinct policy objective. As part of this trend, there has been renewed interest in adopting a policy designed specifically to improve direct female inclusion in the legislative process: gender quotas.

Per definition, gender quotas—when functional— will serve to bolster the statistical representation of women in legislatures. What is less clear, however, is *which women* benefit from the quotas, as well as *which men* lose out. When in force, several important studies have shown that quotas asymmetrically privilege individuals that are well-educated, well-established and well-connected (Folke et al., 2021; Baltrunaite et al., 2014; Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee, 2020). These findings suggest that upper class women may be replacing another politically disenfranchised group: working class men. This framing—of gender quotas as an elite driven policy that serves to oppress working class men, and which are of little consequence to women who don't belong to the upper echelons of society—is a rhetoric that may well be leveraged by quota opponents. But does it have merit? Are there always trade-offs in the statistical representation of women and workers?

This paper tests this by examining how quotas affect the political opportunity of both women and men, when specifically accounting for social class. Drawing on historical data on a universe of Italian municipal policymakers, it leverages the temporary introduction of gender quotas on party lists to examine how quotas affect the political opportunity of both women and men across upper-middle, lower-middle and working classes. The study design comes with a distinct advantage, as it allows me to assess two related yet distinct causal processes: a) the direct effect of gender quotas on class representation, but also b) how an exogenous surge of women entering office during a singular election had down-run effects on the socio-demographic composition of legislatures—even after quotas were abolished. The latter

[1] See e.g. Barnes and Holman (2020); Casas-Arce and Saiz (2015); Clayton et al. (2020); Clayton and Zetterberg (2018); Folke et al. (2015, 2021); Hughes et al. (2017); O'Brien and Rickne (2016); Paxton et al. (2020); Profeta and Woodhouse (2018); Teele et al. (2018); Thomsen and Swers (2017); Turnbull (2021).

effect is identified as incumbency advantages bolster the re-election propensities of women in elections that directly follow gender quota termination (Bhavnani, 2009; Meserve et al., 2020; Shair-Rosenfield, 2012).

Empirical findings are noteworthy. Results suggest that gender quotas have enduring, positive effects on the rates of lower-middle and working class women that manage to attain political office. This runs contrary to accounts, which suggest that it is mainly socio-economically privileged women who benefit from quotas being adopted. Moreover, results suggest that quotas have, if anything, a positive effect on the likelihood that working class men succeed in attaining political office—and that this effect does not negatively impact the numerical representation of women. It is sooner the political opportunity of middle class men, which declines as a result of quota adoption. Findings thus suggest that, when party gate-keeping is weak, gender parity rules can work to bolster the prevalence of other social groups that are heavily under-represented in politics—and that they do so mainly at the cost of groups that are traditionally over-represented. And results emphasize that quotas designed to aid singular politically marginalized groups, may have indirect, positive spillover effects to other political minorities (Barnes and Holman, 2020).

2 Women legislators and class representation

A large body of work has highlighted the substantive benefits of improving the statistical representation of women in political legislatures. These studies have found that higher rates of female politicians serve to reduce gender stereotypes: both among voters (Beaman et al., 2009; De Paola et al., 2010) as well as party elites (Bhalotra et al., 2013; Bhavnani, 2009). Women policymakers also seem better at increasing female turnout in elections (De Paola et al., 2014), and encouraging other forms of female political participation (Nagarajan et al., 2011). On the level of policy, studies find women legislators to be more prone towards supporting bills that are strongly favored by their female constituents (Bratton, 2005; Schwindt-Bayer, 2006). And, ultimately, a range of research finds that policies favored by female voters are more likely to be adopted when women are well-represented in elected government (Andreoli et al., 2021; Braga and Scervini, 2017; Bratton and Ray, 2002; Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Taylor-Robinson and Heath, 2003).

In tandem with this work on female representation, a separate yet related literature, has examined the substantive effects of working class representation in politics. These accounts are fewer in number, but they uncover similar results to studies on gender. For one, they have found blue collar voters to hold more positive views of electoral institutions, when they are represented by legislators coming from their own social class (Barnes and Saxton, 2019; O'Grady, 2019). And—similar to gender scholars—they have shown that blue-collar legisla-

tors are more likely to advocate and vote for policy programs that redistribute to low-income voters, who suffer from stronger employment insecurity (Carnes, 2012; Carnes and Lupu, 2015; O'Grady, 2019).

If the numerical representation of both gender and class matters for policy responsiveness, this raises questions about how policies to improve gender equity in legislatures, in turn, affect class representation. By definition, women will benefit from these efforts. But only where policies bolster the representation of women from lower class strata, and where they refrain from harming the political opportunity of working class men, will they function to improve statistical class representation. This issue is arguably of considerable consequence for democratic efficacy, as neither women nor workers are statistical minorities.

2.1 Secondary effects of female inclusion on class representation

How does the inclusion of women affect the social class composition of democratically elected legislatures? Resolving this question in an empirically robust manner is difficult, as polities represented by higher rates of female policymakers are also—for a multitude of reasons—more likely to produce legislatures in which workers are numerically well-represented (Carnes and Lupu, 2021; World Bank, 2022). Here statistical inference is deceiving, because female and working class representation may well be correlated, without the former factor influencing the latter. An ideal experimental set-up for this question would randomly assign the share of a legislature's seats that are given to women: a factor we can't—nor want to—manipulate as social scientists. But the adoption of gender quotas allows us to approximate this experimental ideal, as their adoption induces an exogenous positive shock to the number of women that run for office.

A handful of studies have leveraged gender quota enactment to examine how quotas affect the socio-economic composition of political legislatures. Almost none look the outcome I focus on in this paper: social class, conceptualized as a person's occupation. However, their findings on how quotas affect the statistical representation of caste, ethnic and educational groups have informed this study greatly, as these variables are typically correlated with occupational class. Table 1 provides an overview of these experimental studies: the cases they test, the secondary dimension of descriptive representation that they examine, and the direction of effects that they uncover, if any. All studies examine national population samples of municipal councils, with the exception of Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee (2020), who look more narrowly at district councils in the Indian capital city of Delhi. Moreover, in all studies quotas are set on party lists that are prepared in advance of local elections.

As highlighted by the overview, extant work finds that efforts to bolster the rate of women in office have either no effects on secondary dimensions of descriptive representation—or

Table 1: Secondary effects of gender quotas on statistical representation

Study	Case	Secondary group	Effect
Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee (2020)	Delhi, 2007-2017	Low caste groups	Negative
Baltrunaite et al. (2014)	Italy, 1984-1996	Educational attainment	Positive
Profeta and Woodhouse (2021)	Italy, 2012-2018	Educational attainment	Null
Bagues and Campa (2021)	Spain, 2012-2018	Educational attainment	Null
Folke et al. (2015)	Sweden, 1984-1990	Immigration-background	Null
Besley et al. (2017)	Sweden, 1984-1990	Pre-political career income	Positive
Folke et al. (2021)	Sweden, 1984-1990	Dynasty legislators	Positive
Lassébie (2020)	France, 2010-2016	Higher-level occupational class	Null

that they work actively to harm the political opportunity of individuals from other under-represented groups. Based on prior findings, it is thus easy to formulate the prediction that gender quotas should serve also to suppress also working class representation. That said, there are good reasons to believe that case selection and operationalization choices may, at least in part, be skewing our theoretical priors.

First, it is arguably inappropriate to generalize too broadly on the basis of singular studies. In India, Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee (2020) show that gender quotas have a negative effect on the rate of persons from low caste groups that manage to attain elected office. This occurs as lower castes hold highly conservative values, which impede the ability of women from this social stratum to stand for election. As such, quotas—inadvertently—lead to higher rates of upper caste Hindu women entering office, at the cost of low-caste men. The main caveat of this study stems from its case selection: one in which women with dispriviledged socio-economic backgrounds also belong to extremely gender-conservative communities. In these, the authors themselves find that roughly every third woman perceives domestic violence to be acceptable within the confines of marriage (Ibid, pg. 766). And as a result, they themselves this posit that the 'negative spillover effects', which they uncover will not necessarily be detectable in more socially progressive contexts.

Second, the operationalization of some outcome variables are more strongly correlated with social class than others. Particularly difficult is forming strong theoretical priors on the basis of studies that have examined gender quota effects on the educational attainment of legislators. This subset of work has focused on policymaker competence as opposed to political representation. Because of this, educational attainment is measured by the average years of education that legislators have upon entering office, where differences in schooling years across quota and non-quota municipalities provide estimates of quota effects. Here two of the three studies, on contemporary Italy and Spain, yield null effects (Profeta and Woodhouse, 2021; Bagues and Campa, 2021). The third study, in contrast, focuses on 1990s Italy and uncovers

that gender quotas positively affect the human capital formation of legislators (Baltrunaite et al., 2014). But at one to three months of schooling, on average, this effect size is small— and it is far from given that this difference is generated by variation in the ability of legislators from different social classes to attain office.

Among causally identified papers, the most studied case of quota effects is most certainly Sweden. Here one paper on the effects of the Swedish Social Democratic zipper quota, finds that the policy has no impact on the representation of individuals with immigration backgrounds (Folke et al., 2015). A second study shows that the policy instead asymmetrically benefited persons with higher pre-political career earnings (Besley et al., 2017). In this analysis, the authors use a sophisticated indicator of pre-political income that is adjusted for age, gender, locality, education and employment sector. Any inferences that we may make on quotas negatively affecting those who are under-privileged in society, thus hinges on the assumption that these people are also those who are given lower wages, when adjusting for aforementioned socio-demographic variables. Then again: this assumption seems weak in nature when one examine other results that Folke et al. (2021) have when evaluating the very same quota. Namely, that it disproportionately benefits women who are informally connected to former or current office-holders via family ties.

Finally, one singular study has directly examined quota effects on the occupational class composition of legislatures. Analyzing the 2001 introduction of municipal-level gender quotas in France, Lassébie (2020) finds that quotas have no effect on the occupational background of policymakers. However, she shows that quotas serve to increase the rate of pensioners that attain council seats— and that they do so at the cost of individuals that are active in the labor market. The social class of these pensioners is hard to establish, as their occupational and family information is unavailable. As such, missing data issues makes it difficult to draw strong conclusions on how quotas affect class representation from this study.

2.2 Party-gatekeeping and quotas vs. female inclusion

Aside from the more specific points discussed above, authors from nearly all aforementioned studies highlight that they perform analyses on cases characterized by high levels of party-gatekeeping. Party gate-keeping dynamics are well-documented empirically—especially in the Swedish case (Dancygier et al., 2015, 2021; Eriksson and Vernby, 2021)—and occur when party selectorates block the entry of politically marginalized candidates into politics by keeping them off party lists that are formed in advance of elections. This behavior is rationally underscored. Parties, as organizations, are risk-averse, and therefore biased towards backing socio-demographically conventional candidates in the belief that these will be more likely to win elections (Doherty et al., 2019; Esaiasson and Holmberg, 2017; Norris and Lovenduski,

1995). As a result, others find it difficult to attain support from within their own party ranks, resulting e.g. in unattractive positions on party ballots (Wängnerud, 2009). Not only does gate-keeping thus directly reduce the probability of winning in case one decides to run for office (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016; Koppell and Steen, 2004; Lutz, 2010; Meredith and Salant, 2013)—but it also disincentivizes the socio-economically underprivileged from standing for election in the first place (Marble and Lee, 2018; Wängnerud, 2009).

When gender quotas are in force, party-gatekeeping may reduce the overall efficacy of the quota policy (Esteve-Volart and Bagues, 2012). It tends, however, to disproportionately advantage female candidates that are well-connected (Folke et al., 2021), and/or belong to socio-economic majority groups (Hughes, 2011). This occurs as party selectorates—in light of a primary necessity to improve sex ratios on their party lists—place additional value on backing females that present secondary socio-demographic characteristics, which are perceived of as desirable. Given this, researchers who examine cases characterized by strong party-gatekeeping will also be more likely to discover that quotas have regressive effects on secondary dimensions of representation.

Importantly, candidate selection processes under gender quota rule are concurrently driven by two factors: the quota being in force—but also the effects of increased female inclusion within that comes about as a result of the quota (Pansardi and Pedrazzani, 2022). On the one hand, the quota itself imposes a hard criteria for party selectorates to meet. It thus accentuates the relative bargaining power of particularly female incumbents, who have proven their worth by running successful campaigns, and who—by virtue of being in office—are in possession of more substantial campaign resources.[2]. This increase in bargaining power comes mainly at the cost of male incomers, who are risky for selectorates to endorse as they will have to replace male incumbents (Jankowski et al., 2019; Turnbull, 2021).

However, quotas may also affect list composition by changing the median preference of the selectorate itself (Meserve et al., 2020; Barnes and Holman, 2020; Shair-Rosenfield and Hinojosa, 2014; Folke et al., 2021). This alternative mechanism comes about, in part, as increased rates of female office-holding also raises the influence of non-candidate women within the party, who are more likely to back atypical female candidates (Kittilson, 2006; Cheng and Tavits, 2011). And because selectorates—regardless of their gender composition—often grow more likely to accommodate statistically atypical candidacies once they have experienced electoral success with female candidates (Bhavnani, 2009; Jankowski et al., 2019; Folke et al., 2021).

Disentangling the differences between aggregate quota effects and independent effect of female inclusion, is per definition difficult as they operate in tandem. A well-considered case, however, allows us to discriminate between the two mechanisms.

[2]Note that these resources must not necessarily be monetary in nature, but cam stem from e.g. network capital, name recognition among voters, information advantages etc.

3 Research Design

To probe the theoretical claims posited above, I analyze how the enactment of gender quotas affected the class composition of Italian municipal councils between 1983 to 2008. The single-country design of my study comes with a number of advantages. The pure of number of municipalities in Italy allows for the effective use of large N statistical methods. In 2008, there were 7915 of them and this number has remained stable throughout the period I analyze.

Moreover, I examine a period of Italian contemporary history that is characterized by uniquely low levels of party gate-keeping: the early years of the Italian Second Republic. And I specifically analyze the effects of a *temporary* quota. The temporary nature of the quota allows me to assess how the quota influenced intersectional representation both when in force—but also after it was abolished. The latter permits us ascertain how an increase in female inclusion affects intersectional representation, absent the prevalence of a quota. Higher levels of female office-holding is discernible post-quota abolition as incumbency advantages bolster the ability of women to get re-elected in the elections that take place directly after quotas have been nullified (Bhavnani, 2009).

3.1 The Quota of the Early Italian Second Republic

The 'Second Republic' is a broad term used to denote the current Italian electoral system, which underwent underwent extensive reform during the early 1990s. The majority of these changes to electoral rules were enacted as part of a reform-package in 1993—in the direct aftermath of a string political corruption cases, commonly referred to as the Tangentopoli ('*Bribesville*') crisis (Donovan, 1995; Norris, 1995). The Tangentopoli scandal centered on the discovery that numerous politicians from the two main political parties that had ruled Italy post-WWII—Democrazia Cristiana (DC) and Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI)—had been accepting large bribes. Aside from bringing about notable changes to electoral rules, the scandal also engendered a complete re-writing of the of the Italian post-WWII party system, as both corruption-afflicted political parties collapsed in its wake (Katz, 1996; Morlino, 1996).

As part of the 1993 reform package, Italy temporarily enforced mandatory gender quotas on party lists in municipal elections. The quotas mandated that a maximum of two thirds of any party list be assigned to any gender—but were only in force until 1995, when the Italian supreme court ruled them unconstitutional (Palici di Suni, 2012). As such, only municipal elections that were held between April 1993 and September 1995 were subject to quota rules.

In Italy, because of historically frequent municipal government breakdowns and the subsequent calling of snap elections, not all municipalities hold elections simultaneously. Figure 1 displays the yearly number of municipal elections elections held in my sample. The exogenous timing of elections allows to me to leverage an identification strategy in which I com-

pare municipalities that held elections when gender quotas were mandatory, with all other municipalities. Figure 2 illustrates the geographical spread of treated and control group municipalities, when employing this assignment rule.[3]

Figure 1: Italian municipal elections per year, 1983-2008

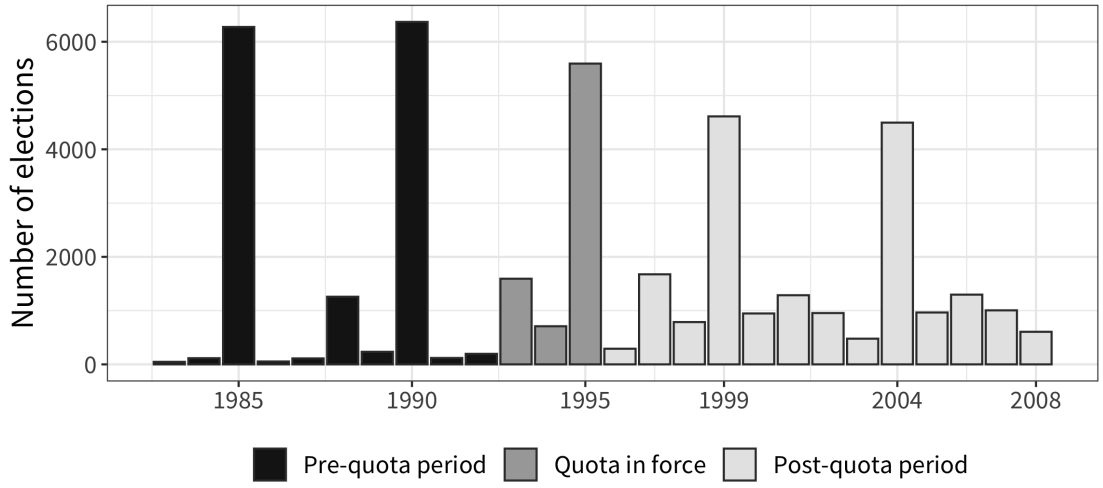
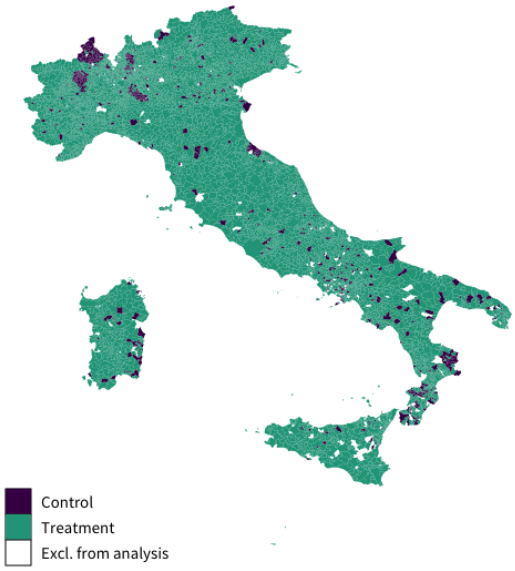


Figure 2: Sampled municipalities, by treatment assignment



Note: Map based on municipality borders of 1991. Municipalities run by delegated commissioners (i.e. non-elected government officials) have been delimited from sample. See appendix A.2 for discussion.

The identification strategy has been employed in a number of previous studies. First by De Paola et al. (2010), who find that the quota has a persistent, positive effect on the num-

[3]For more information on co-variate balance across the two sub-groups see table B.1 in the appendix.

ber of women that get elected into government. Baltrunaite et al. (2014) closer inspect this result, showing that quota municipalities elect legislators with higher levels of schooling into office, as women that enter office are on average more educated than their male counterparts. Other papers have used the quota policy to examine the long-run effects of bolstered female inclusion in legislatures on outcomes other than political representation. In doing this, De Paola et al. (2014) uncover that the quota election was effective in bolstering electoral turnout among female voters. Moreover, two studies test how the quota election affects municipal fiscal and macroeconomic performance (Braga and Scervini, 2017; Rigon and Tanzi, 2012). Both find that quota municipalities were more likely to increase spending on public administration—as opposed to other expenditure areas, such as social assistance and/or education, that are often associated with the interests of the female electorate. Braga and Scervini (2017), however, finds that the quota also positively affects fertility rates—which they argue suggests that additional spending may well indirectly have improved the efficacy of socioeconomic policies targeting women.

Aside from the direct findings of this body of work, none of the aforementioned studies find any evidence of strategic election timing, by which municipalities would have intentionally set election dates to be subject to and/or avoid quota rules. Moreover, all papers concur that quotas positively effect the number of female policymakers that get elected into mayoral offices, as well as municipal councils, and that this effect persists even after quota abolition. The latter result echoes that of Bhavnani (2009) who finds that gender quota rules in India were functional even long after they were withdrawn—a tendency attributable mainly to incumbency effects.

Aforementioned findings are important for this paper. In order to evaluate how the rapid inclusion of women affects the class composition of political bodies, not only must quotas exist—they must also function towards their intended goal of improving sex ratios in legislatures. Particularly in the case of Italy, where adherence to quota rules is at times questionable, aforementioned work thus bolsters the credibility of my case selection.

3.2 Municipal government and elections in Italy

There are roughly 8000 municipalities in Italy, which jointly control approximately 15% of state spending. They are responsible for a wide array of public policies, including land zoning, water and waste management, local transportation, cultural policy, social housing policy and pre-primary and primary education. Municipal governments consists of two main bodies: The mayor (*sindaco*), who appoints and leads an executive committee—and a municipal council (*consiglio comunale*), which retains legislative authority.

Mayoral and municipal council elections are closely linked in Italian politics. Voters may

formally split their vote to select different parties for the mayoral office and the council. Yet, electoral rules noticeably reduce incentives of voters to do so. In municipalities consisting of 15'000 inhabitants or less, two thirds of council seats get automatically allocated to the party list of the candidate that wins the mayoral office.[4] Remaining council seats get proportionally allocated to the other parties, according to party vote share and by means of the D'Hondt formula. In metropolitan municipalities with more than 15'000 inhabitants the rule is similar, but the mayoral party list gets 60 percent of seats. This system of proportional representation with a majority bonus is not unique to the Italian political system, or even municipal politics. Currently, it is employed in French local elections and elections for Greek parliament (Bedock and Sauger, 2014).[5]

The inter-connected nature of mayoral and council elections allows me to discriminate between some theoretical mechanisms by design. Mayors are granted substantial power in Italian politics, as electoral rules automatically hold them accountable to a council that is controlled by his or her own party list. Council elections are thus low salience, as they stand in the shadow of mayoral elections that take place simultaneously. This raises the likelihood that changes in the socio-demographic composition of councils are supply-side driven, as opposed to stemming from the attitudinal biases of voters. In absence of media coverage, voters will find it hard to assess other traits of council candidates than their gender. Unlike in other European countries, only candidate names are provided on voting ballots. Moreover, the fact that at least 60% of council seats get allocated to the mayoral party raises the probability of gender quotas operating via a direct change in the sex ratio *within* party lists, as opposed to a change across them. As party lists are closed, a majority of lawmakers that win office will automatically have appeared on the list of a party that wins mayoral office.

3.3 Data

In my study, I draw on policymaker data compiled by the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs annually between 1985 and 2008. These contain information on the gender, age, birthplace and party affiliation of all Italian municipal politicians, as well as their educational attainment and occupational background. I delimit the time period examined as gender quotas—both voluntary, as well as mandatory—were reintroduced after 2008, which puts into question how comparable the period of 1996-2008 is to the years that have followed.[6] As elections

[4] Mayoral candidates must be formally endorsed by at least one party list. Party lists or list coalitions must in turn contain a number of candidate councilpersons, which may not exceed the number of actual council posts.

[5] Historically, it has also been in use in countries as diverse as Mexico, South Korea and Chad (Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001, p.14).

[6] In 2009, the social democratic *Partito Democratico*, became the first major party in Italy to introduce voluntary gender quotas on their party lists. Mandatory gender quotas were thereafter re-introduced in local elections in 2012. Currently, no party list can contain more than 40% of any sex. Failure to comply with the rule leads to

were mandatory every four years between 1993 and 2008, municipalities conduct, on average, four elections after the quota reform.

Information on the gender of politicians is fully complete. Data on their occupational background has a higher, yet still low NA rate at 6%.[7] As a result, my analysis covers data on 659'261 unique council posts, in +41'800 council elections. Council size varies between 1 to 80, where the number of council seats is determined by population size. Only fifty of all unique municipal elections I analyze have generated a council with fewer than five members (<0.09%).

To capture the social class of legislators, I code a series of dummy variables based on gender and occupational information provided by the ministry. I first code occupational descriptions into four social classes, in line with a conceptualization posited by Wright (1997) and operationalized by Oesch (2006). Exploring social class via the lens of occupation comes with a number of advantages. First, occupational belonging remains fairly stable throughout the life-time individuals, unlike indicators based on e.g. income. Second, a person's occupation provides us with a good indication of his or her workplace characteristics, as well as the nature of income and unemployment risks that she or he faces. Both these factors are associated with micro-level processes, which are theorized by political sociologists to underscore class-based public opinion divides (Evans, 2000; Manza and Brooks, 2008; Oesch, 2006; Rennwald, 2020; Carnes and Lupu, 2015).

Oesch's class schema distinguishes between occupation-based social classes on the basis of four dimensions of socio-economic vulnerability prevalent in capitalist societies. These are a given individual's relation to (1) means of production, (2) authority, (3) skill scarcity as well as (4) his or her number of employees (Oesch, 2006, p.14-15). In doing this, he attains five distinct classes: the higher grade service class, the lower grade service class, small business owners, skilled workers and unskilled workers.

While my coding is similar to the class schema posited above, it has been modified in three ways. First, the raw occupational data provided by the ministry does not allow for differentiation between business-owners and employees. As such, 'number of employees' does not figure as an axis determining social class in my operationalization. For a more elaborate discussion of the implications of this see appendix A.1. Second, I collapse both skilled and unskilled workers into a singular group, simply dubbed 'workers', as women from both these occupational classes are so underrepresented in Italian politics that it becomes difficult to analyze them separately.

Third, Oesch's class schema does not provide a clear guidelines for how to conceive of the

noticeable sanctions in the form of cuts to party financing or an outright rejection of the party list in twelve of Italy's twenty regions (IDEA, 2021).

[7] For now I treat this missingness as MCAR, as has been done by De Paola et al. (2010) and Baltrunaite et al. (2014).

social class of persons with low labor market attachment: i.e. persons such as homemakers, pensioners and students. Particularly as other variables, such as income, marital status and pre-pension occupation are missing from my data, it is thus difficult to appropriately code the class status of this segment of Italian legislators. As such, I simply opt to code them into a separate, residual group. With these modifications employed, I then attain four distinct classes: the upper grade service class, the lower grade service class, workers and individuals that are inactive in labor markets.

Table 2 provides examples of how raw occupations have been coded along my four-category class scheme, and how this differs from Oesch's coding scheme. While hierarchically ordered, is important to note that this distinction of social classes deviates from traditional divisions between the 'upper', 'middle' and 'working' classes. In political sociology, the upper class is typically conceived of as rentiers, who acquire a significant share of their income simply from rents on their economic assets. Numerically, this group of individuals is very small—and rarely participates directly in local government by standing for office. As such, one may best define the higher-grade service class as the *upper-middle class*; the lower-grade service class as the *lower-middle class* and workers simply as the *working class*. To reduce language complexity, I use the latter set of terms in this paper.

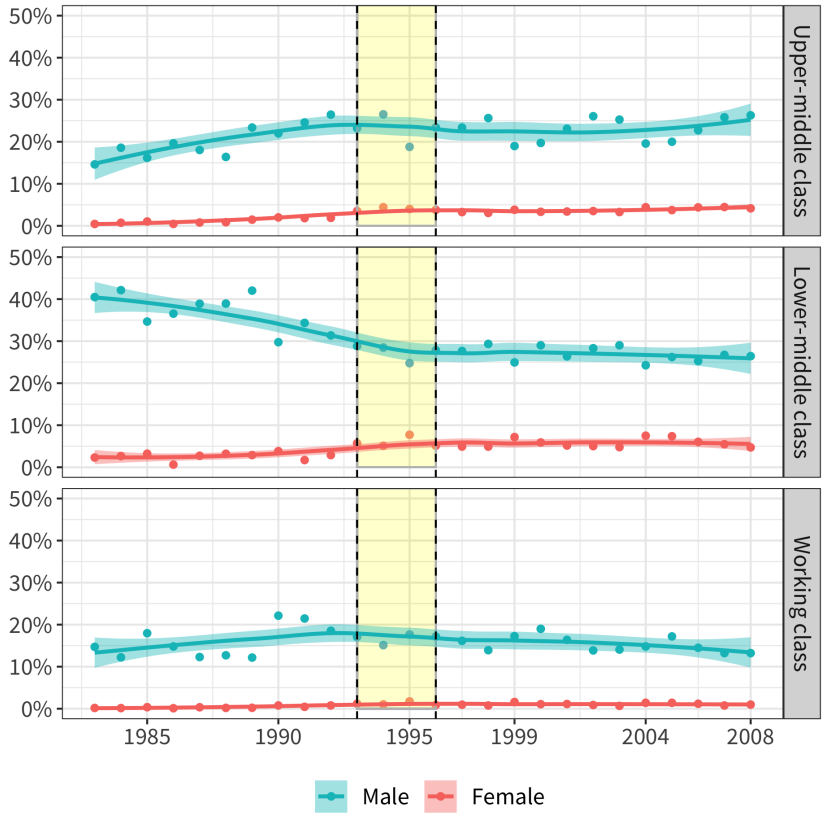
Table 2: Social class coding based on occupational belonging

Occupations ***(examples from raw data)***	**Oesch (2006) coding**	**Four cat. coding**
Company directors, Senior civil servants, Lawyers, Engineers, Financial analysts, University professors, Journalists	Higher grade service class	Upper middle class
Hospitality managers, Police inspectors, Technicians, Sales agents, Designers, Librarians and curators	Lower grade service class	Lower middle class
Bank-tellers, Travel consultants, Legal secretaries, Customer service reps, Fire fighters, Craftsmen	Skilled workers	Working class
Drivers, Machine operators, Assemblers, Farm workers, Waiters, Hairdressers, Cleaners	Unskilled workers	Working class
Homemakers, students, retirees, unemployed	—	Inactive in labor market

Having attained a categorical indicator of class background, I thereafter combine it with a binary indicator of gender to attain eight intersectional class-gender groups. I focus my analysis on the groups where class belonging is clearly distinguishable. Data on persons that were inactive in labor markets is thus accounted for when generating my outcome variables, but I refrain from examining their council shares separately as an outcome.

My outcome variables of interest concern the probability of individuals from each distinct class-gender group to attain a seat on a municipal council. To measure this, I collapse the data to generate a series of variables that measure the share of each group that were elected into council, at a given municipality during an election year. Figure 3 displays the annual average share of Italian municipal councils that consisted of a given social class, by gender.

Figure 3: Annual average share of Italian municipal councillors, by class and gender



Note: As the number of elections varies noticeably per year, trend lines indicate smoothened conditional means, attained by means of loess estimation. Bands indicate 95% confidence intervals. Period in between dashed lines indicates time during which gender quotas were in force.

What becomes clear is how incredibly few women and workers were active as municipal politicians throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. At maximum level of numerical representation, in 2008, the average share of women that got elected into an Italian municipal council was 15%—dramatically lower than the female labor force share that year, which is estimated to be 40%. But equally, at max, working class men made up 17% of newly elected municipal councils in 1993, but made up 43% of the entirety of the active Italian workforce (ILO, 2021).

3.4 Model choices

To evaluate quota effects, I run a series of OLS regressions based on a difference-in-difference (DiD) strategy first proposed proposed by De Paola et al. (2010), and additionally used by Baltrunaite et al. (2014). I update it, however, to better understand how treatment effects vary over time. The model specification can be formalized as:

$$\begin{aligned} R_{ijt} = \beta_1(QuotaMunicipality_k) + \beta_2(ElectionRound_j) + \\ \beta_3(QuotaMunicipality_k * ElectionRound_j) + \beta_4 X_{kt} + \epsilon_{it} \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where R_{ijt} is a continuous variable indicating the fraction of a given class-gender category i in a municipal council j, during an election year t. $QuotaMunicipality_k$ is a dichotomous treatment assignment variable, which denotes if a municipality k held an election when gender quotas were mandatory.

$ElectionRound_j$ is a categorical variable indicating the election round that a given council is elected into office. It is centered around a set of elections that took place between 1993 to 1996: an election round in which only councils elected between between April 1993 and September 1995 were subject to quota rules. I use election round as a time indicator—as opposed to election year—as treatment is assigned on the basis of the election year itself.[8] In appendix B I present a series of tests, where I examine pre-treatment trends in municipalities assigned to treatment and control, by election round. These consistently suggest that parallel trends assumptions are upheld—across all outcomes that I examine in this paper.

$QuotaMunicipality_k * ElectionRound_j$ is an interaction term, where the coefficient β_3 captures my main estimate of interest: namely, the effect of gender quotas on differences in class representation between municipalities that held vs. did not hold elections with mandatory gender quotas, by election round. X_{kt} is a vector of municipal-level control variables. These include population size, municipal population squared, unemployment rate and educational attainment, as measured as the fraction of the population in possession of a tertiary schooling degree. All control variables are indexed to time t, and are based on data from the population census closest in time.[9] Finally, ϵ_{it} is an error term. In all specifications, I cluster standard errors at the municipality level: i.e. the level of treatment assignment.

[8] A full matrix table of the number of unique municipal councils I examine, by election year and election round, is provided in appendix A.3.

[9] For this I follow the procedure of the Italian Ministry of Interior. Additional information on this is provided in appendix A.4.

4 Results

4.1 Gender quota effects on class representation

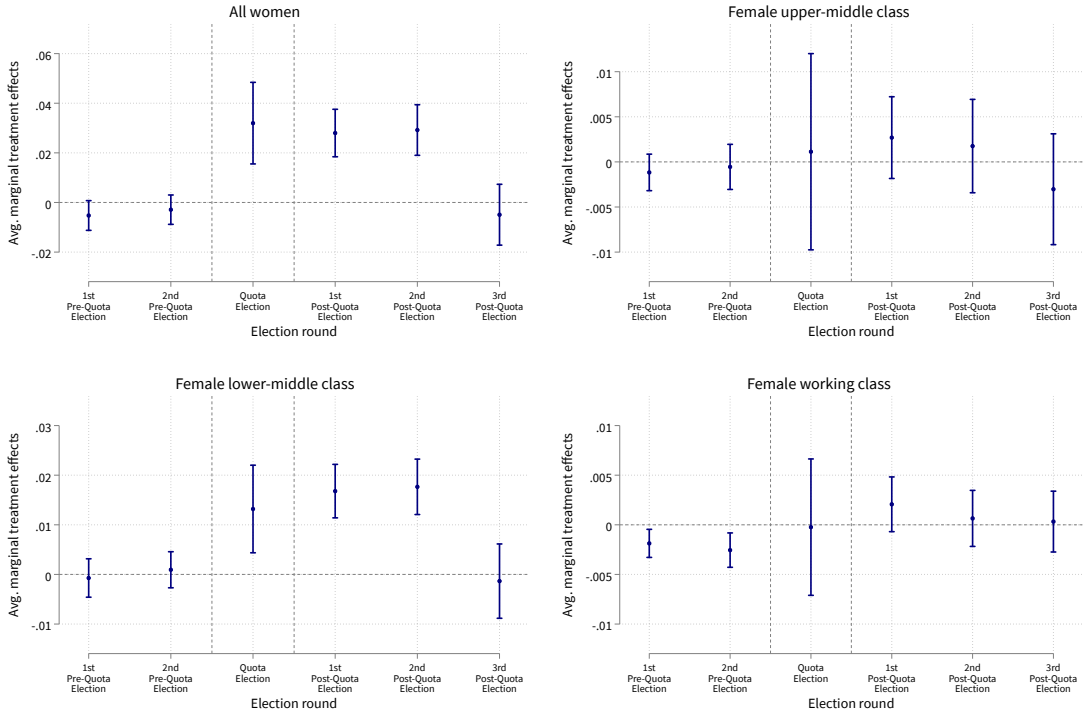
How were class-specific patterns of statistical representation been affected by the introduction of gender quotas? Figure 4 presents results from my regression estimations, where outcomes center on the representation of women in municipal councils. The upper-left facet shows the over-time ability of all women, regardless of class background, to attain a council seat. These results are presented to contextualize other estimates, which portray quota effects for female representation, by social class.

To better understand differences between quota and non-quota municipalities prior to the introduction of quotas, we can examine marginal treatment effects in the two election rounds that occurred prior to quota adoption. Importantly, they show that women were just as likely to attain office in quota municipalities as in non-quota municipalities: a finding which bolsters my choice of identification strategy. Looking at class-specific differences, we see that disparities in the political opportunity of both upper and lower middle class women, were statistically insignificant in this period. In contrast, the election propensities of working-class women differed slightly. Municipalities that would later have a quota election were 0.25 percentage points less likely to elect working class women for council posts ($p < 0.05$). In robustness checks, however, I show that pre-treatment trends evolve in a parallel fashion also for this social class (see appendix B).

What about the effect of quotas in themselves? Here coefficients show that—in spite of representational improvements being experienced most strongly by women from the upper middle class after 1992 (see figure 3)—gender quotas work mainly to bolster the rate of women from the other two social classes that obtain office. The upper-right facet suggests that the quota may have had a slight positive effect on the ability of upper-middle class women to gain council seats. Coefficients, however, are statistically insignificant.

Effects look different for lower-middle class women. The quota increased the election probabilities of these women by approximately 1.75 percentage points when in force ($p < 0.05$), as well as in the two election rounds that followed suit ($p < 0.01$). The female working class too experienced a smaller, yet statistically significant improvement in statistical representation as a result of quota adaption ($p < 0.05$). But unlike for lower-middle class women, these positive effects are lagged. In the first hand, women workers were insignificantly affected by the quota rule itself. Improvements to their political opportunity instead came in the first post-quota election round, at roughly 0.5 percentage points when compared to pre-quota election rounds. As such, gender quotas only indirectly affected the statistical representation of working class women in a positive manner.

Figure 4: Treatment effects on female representation in municipal councils, by social class

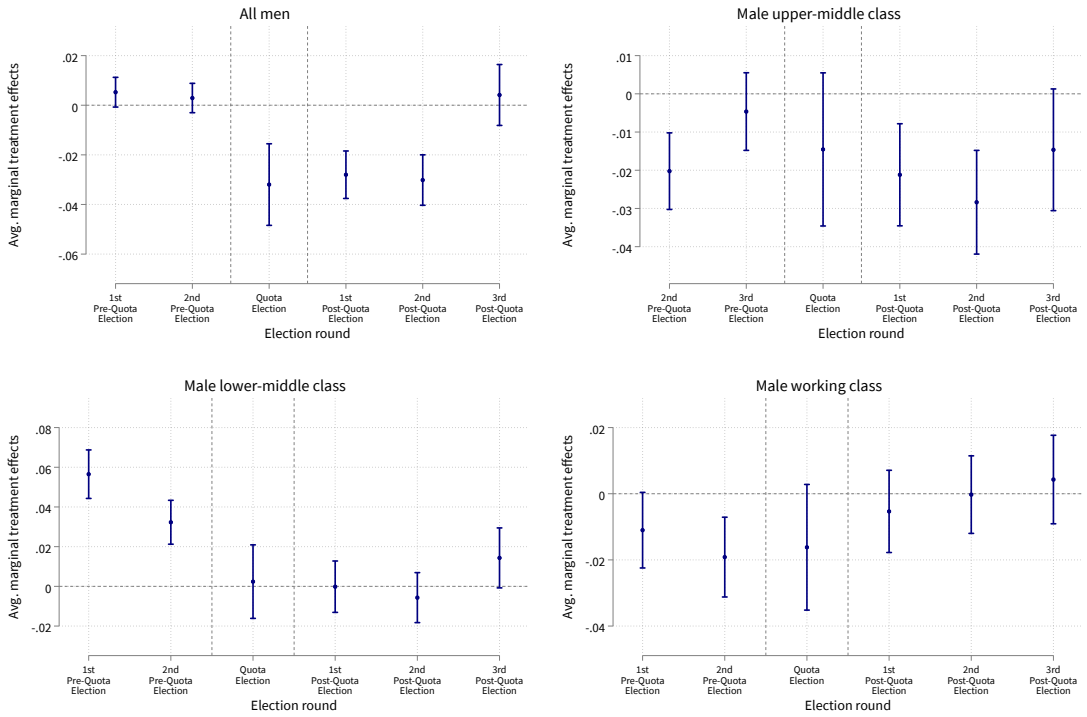


Note: Bandwidths indicate 95% confidence intervals. Y-axis scales vary across plots, to better display effect sizes and confidence intervals. All model specifications include municipal level controls. Standard errors are clustered on a municipality level.

The class-specific magnitude of positive effects for lower-middle and working class women are indeed small, ranging between 1.75 to 0.5 percentage points. But they need be seen in light how incredibly under-represented women were in the period that preceded the adoption of quotas. In 1990, a year in which +6200 councils got elected into office, lower middle class women made up a minuscule 3.8 percent of them, on average. The same figure for working class women was not even half of that at 0.8 percent. Results thus still suggest that—in the late 1990s—the statistical representation of these groups would have increased by between 45 to 65 percent for both groups, as a result of the quota having been in place once.

If the gender quotas served to bolster the inclusion of women in office, which men were most affected by this shift? To examine this, figure C.2 presents regression estimates where outcomes capture the rate of male legislators in municipal councils, by class. Again: the top-left plot contextualizes class-specific findings, by illustrating quota effects on all men.

Figure 5: Treatment effects on male representation in municipal councils, by social class



Note: Bandwidths indicate 95% confidence intervals. Y-axis scales vary across plots, to better display effect sizes and confidence intervals. All model specifications include municipal level controls. Standard errors are clustered on a municipality level.

If we center our comparisons to the election round just prior to the quota round, there were no differences between quota and non-quota municipalities in terms of male upper-middle class representation, pre-1993. This changes, however, upon gender quota enactment. During quota round elections, men from this class grow 2.5 percentage points less likely to attain office. Moreover, this negative effect is stable over time, persisting in the two election rounds that followed quota elimination.

Just prior to quotas coming info force, lower-middle class men were three percentage points better represented in municipal councils that would later adopt quotas. This tendency, however, disappears in the post-quota election rounds. In the quota election itself, their statistical advantage dissipates, as they become 1 percentage point less likely to attain office. This negative effect of quota adoption persist in the two post-quota election rounds.

Quota effects attained from models that examine the statistical representation of working class men point to something particularly interesting. In elections held just prior to the adoption of gender quotas, male workers were four percentage points less likely win a seat in councils in quota municipalities ($p<0.05$). This tendency remains stable also in the quota round, though it loses statistical significance suggesting more variation across municipalities. In the two successive election rounds, male working class representation seemingly increases, as male

workers become just as prevalent in quota and non-quota municipality councils. Overall effects, however, are statistically insignificant.

In sum, my results thus show that the first Italian gender quota served to bolster the political opportunity of lower middle class and working class women—and that this came at the cost of only over-represented middle-class men. For lower middle class women, increases to statistical representation are clearly engendered by the quota itself. But for working class women, effects are lagged suggesting that the quota induced a change which had down-run consequences for their election propensities.

5 Assessing potential causes of quota effects

Obtained effects suggest that both lower middle and working class women benefited from the gender quota—but they can't elucidate on the dynamics by which the quota aided these female policymakers. Data availability issues render it impossible to perform direct mechanism tests in this specific case: Italian public authorities maintain no historical archives of party lists in municipal elections. Because of this, there is no direct means to assess whether gender quota effects come about as a result of changes to the class-composition of party lists—or solely changes to the electoral preferences of voters. That said, the scope and panel structure of my data, allow me to better understand how quotas aided two different sets of policymakers: incumbents and newcomers.

5.1 Quota effects on propensities of re-election and office entry

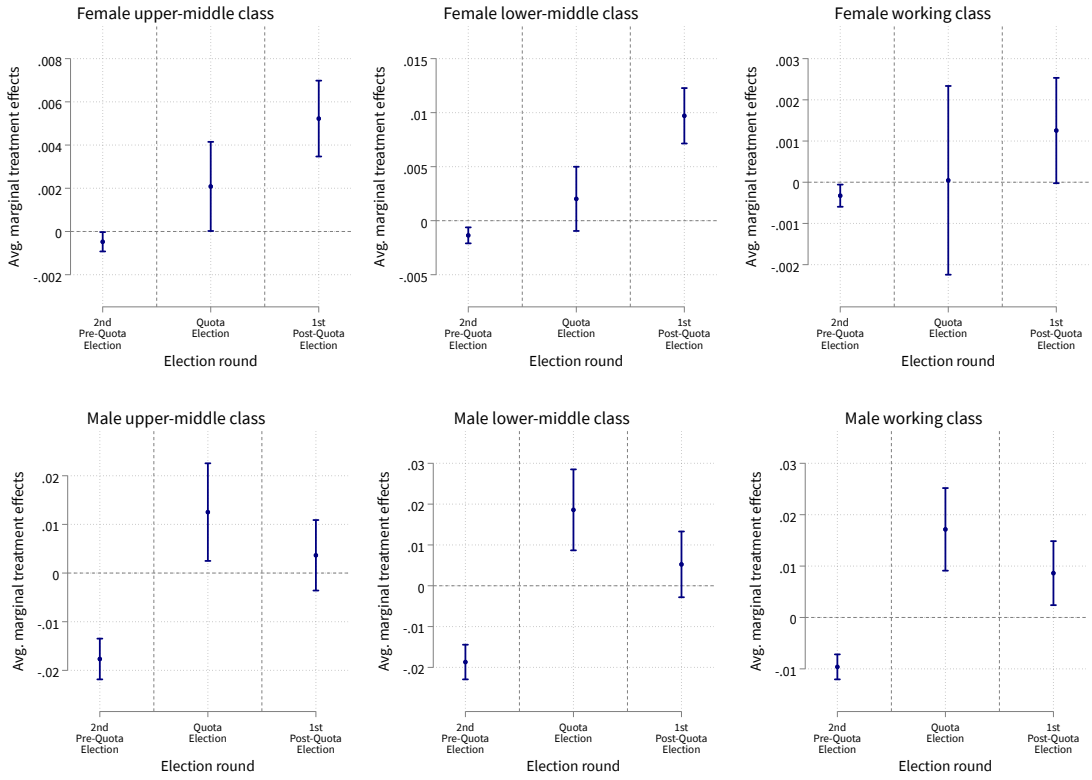
To better understand how quotas affected political competition for council posts, I first examine whether quotas generated diverging effects across two types of policymakers: those who were already in office before quotas were adopted, and those who conversely made their first entry into the realm of politics. For this, I replicate my analysis on two alternative outcome variables, which capture gender-class specific propensities of re-election vs. first time entry into municipal councils.

Re-election propensities indicate the extent to which quotas affected the share of seats in a given council, that was won by directly re-elected persons from a given intersectional group. Conversely, first-time entry propensities denote the group-specific share of legislators that attained their first political office during a given election. The latter variable is obtained upon examining population-level data on all Italian legislators at municipal, provincial or regional levels of Italian government after 1983—both elected and non-elected.[10]

[10] As data is available only starting 1983, this operationalization naturally generates a variable in which policymakers are more likely to be coded as first time entrants in earlier election rounds. However, these differences should be as good as equal across municipalities assigned to treatment and control, and I examine only differ-

As quota effects demonstrably diminish over time, I center my analysis on three elections rounds. These are the direct pre-quota election round, the quota round itself, as well as the round of elections that directly followed its abolition. Results obtained on gender-class specific re-election propensities are displayed in figure 6. They show us that the quota induced an overall increase in legislature stability. Recall that this occurs in the backdrop of an enormously turbulent time in Italian politics: a period where established parties are collapsing and substantial amounts of new legislators start entering office.

Figure 6: Treatment effects on re-election propensities in municipal councils, by gender and social class



Note: Bandwidths indicate 95% confidence intervals. Y-axis scales vary across plots, to better display effect sizes and confidence intervals. All model specifications include municipal level controls. Standard errors are clustered on a municipality level.

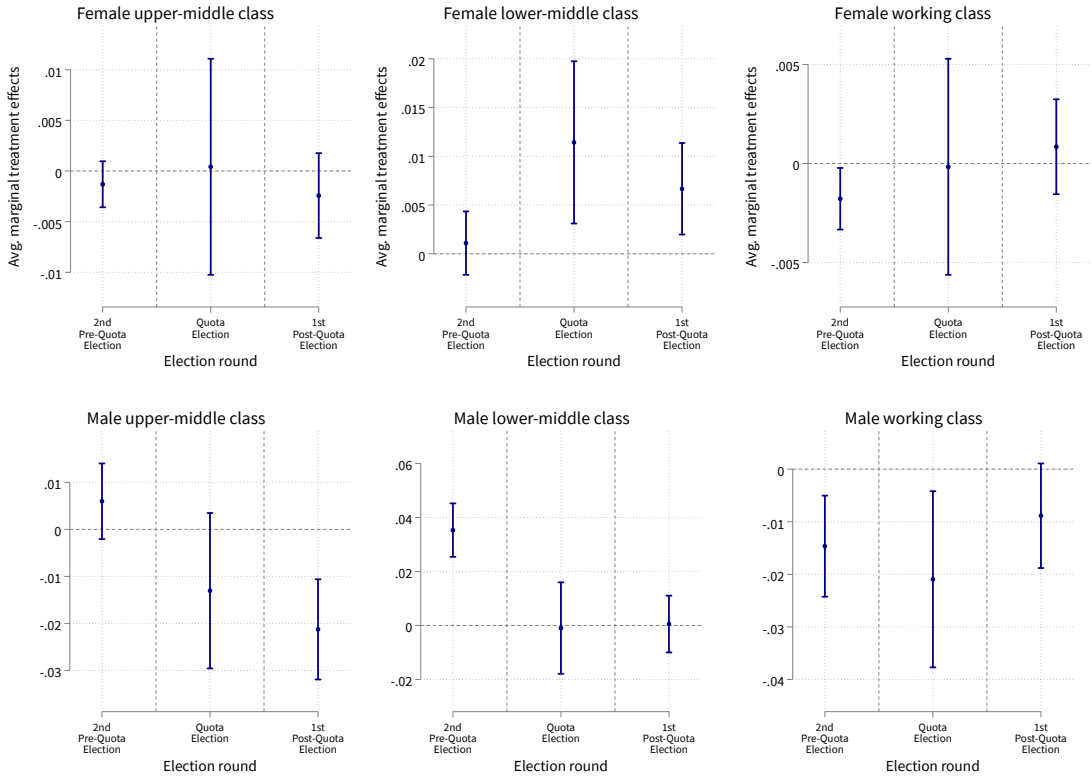
In the pre-election quota-round, legislators from all six intersectional groups were significantly less likely to get re-elected in quota municipalities—but this difference gets reversed upon quota enactment. When in force, the quota itself significantly improved the re-election propensities of legislators from all gender-class groups—with the exception of working class women. But in the direct post-quota round, there is a clear divergence in trends along the

ences between these categories of municipalities.

gender line: Female legislators from all social classes, continue to experience an increased likelihood of re-election, while male legislators do not.

Figure 7 allows us to better understand how improvements to female statistical representation came about, in spite of the quota having facilitated the re-election prospects of even male legislators. It displays the extent to which the quota affected shares of first-time elected policymakers, by gender and class. And here trends look more similar to those we uncover when looking at quota effects on the shares of council seats obtained by persons from different gender-class groups.

Figure 7: Treatment effects on first-entry propensities in municipal councils, by gender and social class



Note: Bandwidths indicate 95% confidence intervals. Y-axis scales vary across plots, to better display effect sizes and confidence intervals. All model specifications include municipal level controls. Standard errors are clustered on a municipality level.

The quota had positive, yet statistically insignificant effect on the entry-rates of female policymakers from the lower-middle and working classes. However, upper and lower-middle class men were held back from obtaining office because of the gender quota. Results thus demonstrate that the influx of new middle class male legislators declines significantly in quota municipalities, upon quota introduction—and suggest that this decline is persistent even after quotas are scrapped. All-in-all, findings thus suggest that positive quota effects on female

representation, come about mainly because quotas enable women from lower-middle and working classes to get re-elected—while simultaneously reducing the number of new male legislators from upper- and lower middle classes. Aside from this core finding, results also suggest an important difference between the composite effects of maintaining a gender quota vs. the independent effect of increased female presence in democratic legislatures.

Quotas themselves work to bolster rates of female office-holding, but they also systematically privilege persons who are already in office. Most likely, this tendency is onset by supply-side changes to the process of election list formation, which occurs in advance of elections. For theoretically, its noticeably harder to construe of a reason whereby voters would be more likely to re-elect *both* women and men across all classes, as a result of quota adoption.

When quotas are installed, parties who have a deficit of female candidates must proactively work improve the sex ratio of their party lists. This typically benefits extant female office-holders, who are encouraged to stand for re-election. It can, however, also positively affect incumbent male legislators whose bargaining position towards the party selectorate may improve, given that the campaigns of their female peers are being facilitated (Fréchette et al., 2008).

The intra-party process of list formation naturally changes after gender quotas are abolished. But even in this instance, re-election can also become more likely for female legislators—not because a hard numerical target must be met during list formation, but because the median preference of the selectorate changes. This preference shift, as before discussed, comes about either because of direct changes in the gender composition of the selectorate, and/or because of attitudinal changes in how selectorates assess the electability of statistically atypical female candidates. This may, in turn, explain why the gains by women—particularly from the working class—continue to increase after quotas are abolished, but stay stable for men across all class categories.

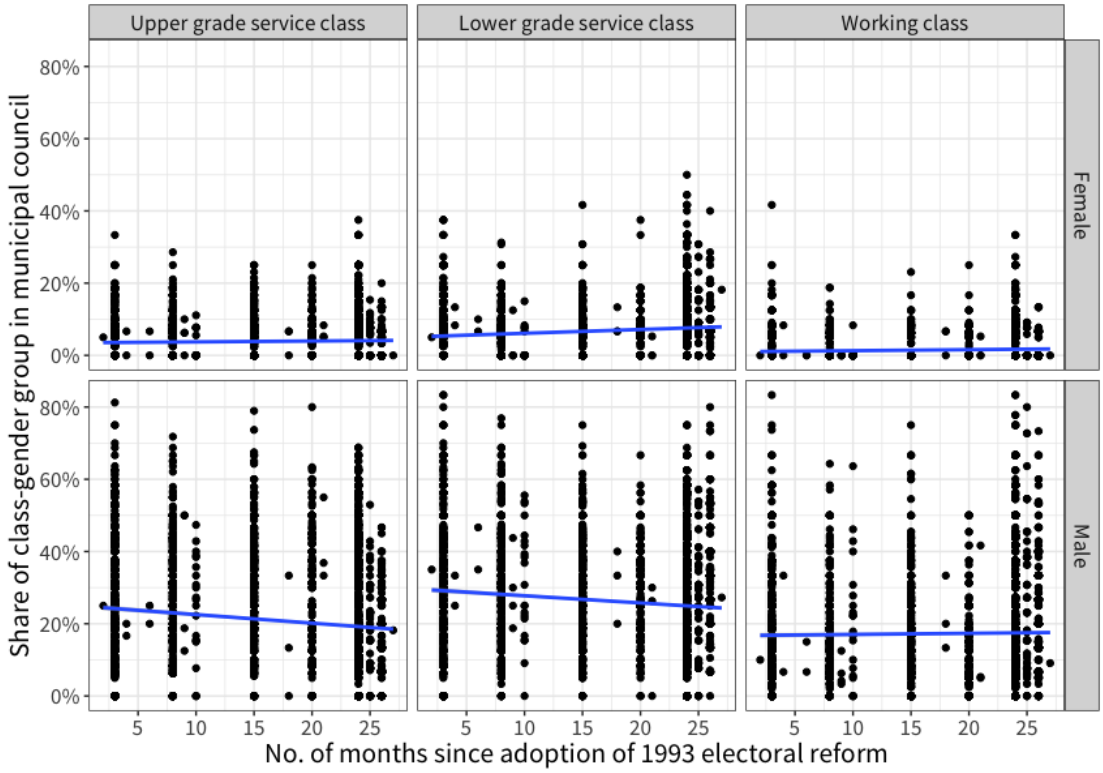
6 Alternative explanations and robustness

As a final step in my analyses, I conduct a series of tests to ensure the validity of my findings. A core premise of my research design is that changes in the political opportunity of political candidates stem from the adoption of gender quotas, and not other developments that occur in the treatment window of 1993 to 1995. Here it is important to acknowledge that the reform package of 1993 brought forth a number of changes in electoral rules for municipalities, aside from the enactment of gender quotas. Most importantly for municipal councils, these include a shift from a classic proportional electoral system to the hybrid proportional/majoritarian system I describe above. This shift occurred for all municipalities with a population of more than 5000 inhabitants. As my assignment rule—election timing—is exogenous

to population size, this does not affect the validity of my identification strategy. However, in robustness checks I add a dummy variable indicating whether a given municipality was subject to this rule change (1) or not (0), to ensure that obtained effects are not fully mediated by this reform. The inclusion of this control does not affect my statistical estimates.[11].

More critically, given that the Tangentopoli scandal asymmetrically affected the traditional political ruling class, it is possible that treatment effects that I attain stem from the prevalence of a strong anti-elite sentiment among voters in the direct aftermath of scandal. To the extent that this sentiment is stronger in the direct aftermath of quota adoption, this poses a problem for my identification strategy as municipalities that are more likely to vote out upper and lower middle-class men from office, will be assigned to treatment. To examine whether this tendency holds, I run a separate analysis, where I subset my data to look only at municipal councils that were elected when quotas where in force. As elections are held in different years, and even different months throughout the year, I run simple regressions where I estimate how the share attained by each gender-class group in a municipal council, varies as a function of the number of months since the 1993 reform package was adopted.

Figure 8: Over-time change in probability of attaining municipal council by class-gender group, April 1993- Sept. 1995



[11]See appendix C.1 for elaboration on this, as well as further tests that take into account reforms also to interlinked mayoral elections.

In case the sorting problem I describe above poses a problem, we should see that under-represented intersectional groups—i.e. women of all classes and working class men—should benefit the most from having an election right after reform adoption, when the salience of the Tangentopoli scandal was highest. Equally, we would predict that traditionally over-represented men from upper and lower middle classes, should lose the most in elections in these elections. As shown in figure 8 below, however, I uncover the exact opposite.[12]

Women legislators of all classes benefit the further away that municipal election is held from the crisis; time has no effect on the probability of voters electing working-class men; and, finally, men from upper and lower middle classes are more harmed in elections that take place two years after the crisis, than in elections that take place straight after the crisis. Taken in sum, this suggests that—to the extent that sorting problems are occurring in my treatment assignment—these should actually reduce the likelihood that I uncover the treatment effects that I do.[13]

Finally, to ensure the robustness of my findings, I re-run my analysis on a second outcome that is associated with social class: university-level educational attainment. In this analysis, I examine how the quota effects the educational diversity of legislators, by gender. The results of this analysis are presented in figure 9.

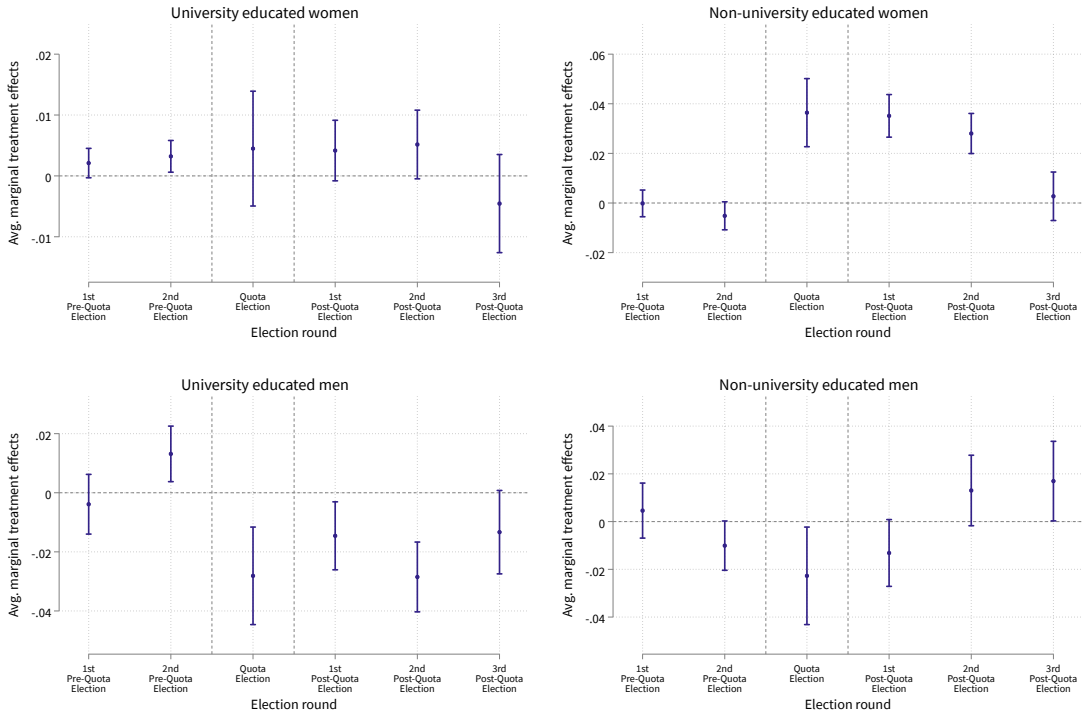
In spite of now accounting for a full set of legislators—including those with low labor market attainment, such as students and homemakers— they display a pattern fully consistent with gender-class specific effects. University educated women are—on average—unaffected by the gender quota, while women with lower levels of educational attainment benefit from the quota in the quota round, as well as in the two successive election rounds that follow. In contrast, university educated men lose out from the quota, while their less educated male peers are unaffected—until the second post-quota election round, where they actually start to benefit from it ($p < 0.05$).

Findings need be contextualized in two ways. First, as educational attainment is not perfectly matched with social class, some discrepancies in quota effects on educational vs. class diversity are to be expected. Most notably, persons from neither the lower-middle nor the working classes are typically in possession of a university degree. Second, my findings run contrary to those of Baltrunaite et al. (2014). Here it is important to stress that these authors examine educational attainment as a continuous variable indicating years of schooling. As such, their findings may well diverge from mine as their effects stem from variation brought about by within-group schooling-year differences among legislators that are either university educated or not.

[12] For full regression results, see C.2.

[13] Additional analyses that examine the likelihood of potential sorting problems are included in appendix C.4.

Figure 9: Treatment effects on statistical representation in municipal councils by educational attainment



Note: Bandwidths indicate 95% confidence intervals. Y-axis scales vary across plots, to better display effect sizes and confidence intervals. All model specifications include municipal level population controls. Standard errors are clustered on a municipality level.

7 Discussion

To conclude, this paper shows that gender quotas can be designed to directly bolster the political opportunity of lower-middle and working class women—and that it is then non-working class men who lose out as a result of this policy change. Given that the case I examine, Italy during the mid-1990s, was characterized by an extreme weakening of formal political party structures, the finding gives credence to a claim has been made in work on political selection, but is simultaneously subject to very limited to empirical scrutiny: when party-gatekeeping is low, quotas on gender can make legislatures more representative in other socio-demographic dimensions.

One may question the generalizability of uncovered findings, given that nearly all political systems display strong levels of party gatekeeping. While this critique would is valid, it also bypasses an important point. Party gatekeeping is not a formalized institution. It is sooner a reflection of behavioral characteristics displayed by party selectorates at a given point in time. As such, results presented in this paper highlight an important prescriptive: if parties

value the inclusion of both gender and class, efforts to lower bias in procedures of party list formation are a crucial complement to the introduction of hard gender quotas. Extant work has highlighted that this can be done e.g. by formalizing the rules of intra-party competition for candidate selection.

The findings of this paper also highlight why gender quotas may well be important to ensure class equity. Not all women are equipped with equal resources in the political marketplace. Unlike their male counterparts, working class women have a weaker history of forming mass-based political organizations such trade unions—entities that particularly left-of-center political parties actively recruit from. Formalized gender quotas may thus serve level the playing field: to bolster the electoral chances of a large part of the citizenry, who simultaneously make up a minuscule share of legislatures.

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Appendix

A Data and coding

A.1 Policymaker occupational class

Ministry data on policymaker backgrounds allow me to account for fine-grained sectoral employment (i.e an individual's relation to means of production), individual-level managerial competency (authority) as well as skill-specificity. It does not, however, allow me to directly differentiate between business-owners, the self-employed and employees. That means that e.g. an individual coded to belong to a managerial class may either be employed in a management position by a larger enterprise, or simply act as a manager in a family-owned firm. Equally, individuals in some high-skill service professions—such as architects or accountants—are automatically coded as belonging to the upper grade service class, as opposed to being owners of small firms.

It is likely that firm ownership generates mixed economic vulnerabilities, as firm owners face economic insecurities that stem both from household and business finances. It remains an open question, however, whether their social class should be treated as entirely distinct from those of employees. Some work has for instance shown that the economic policy preferences of business owners overlap significantly with those of the employed. Concerning social policy, for instance, small business owners generally have preferences that are more progressive than the lower grade service class, but less so than skilled and unskilled workers (Ares and Häusermann, 2021). Regardless of what position one takes in this debate, it is important to stress that my class scheme is noticeably more differentiated than that which is commonplace in the literature on descriptive representation.[14] For reasons of limited data availability, this work differentiates mainly between blue- and white- collar labor, on the basis of solely of sectoral employment and skill-specificity.

A.2 Municipality units

While no municipal mergers occurred during the period examined, 22 new municipalities were formed as the result of municipal splits. These have been delimited from the data set. Also dropped from the analysis, are municipalities that were forced into government oversight via the appointment of municipal commissioners. Since 1993, the central government can temporarily appoint mayorships to commissioners. This occurs very rarely—mainly ad interim, in the aftermath of corruption scandals and/or gross mismanagement of public funds.

[14] See e.g Carnes and Lupu (2016); Carnes (2012); Carnes and Lupu (2015); Lassébie (2020).

A.3 Election rounds

The number of unique municipal councils included in sample are displayed in table B.1, split by election year and election round. The number of elections included per election round varies as the data is centered around the period of March 1993 to December 1996.

Table A.1: Municipal councils, by election year and election round

	Election Round						
Election year	1st pre-quota round	2nd pre-quota round	**Quota round**	1st post-quota round	2nd post-quota round	3rd post-quota round	*Total*
1983	46	0	0	0	0	0	46
1984	111	1	0	0	0	0	112
1985	6172	19	0	0	0	0	6191
1986	53	1	0	0	0	0	54
1987	71	40	0	0	0	0	111
1988	93	1163	0	0	0	0	1256
1989	9	225	0	0	0	0	224
1990	86	6286	0	0	0	0	6369
1991	0	119	0	0	0	0	119
1992	0	196	0	0	0	0	196
1993	0	2	1591	0	0	0	1593
1994	0	0	709	0	0	0	709
1995	0	0	5594	0	0	0	5594
1996	0	0	291	0	0	0	291
1997	0	0	0	1668	7	0	1675
1998	0	0	0	764	23	0	787
1999	0	0	0	4570	42	0	4612
2000	0	0	0	725	222	0	947
2001	0	0	0	60	1220	6	1286
2002	0	0	0	18	918	19	955
2003	0	0	0	10	417	51	478
2004	0	0	0	51	4322	122	4495
2005	0	0	0	21	686	254	961
2006	0	0	0	50	65	1166	1281
2007	0	0	0	28	39	887	954
2008	0	0	0	14	32	471	517
Total	6641	8049	8185	7979	7993	2976	41'832

A.4 Census data

Control variables in the study were coded by means of using historical census data from the censuses of 1991, 2001 and 2011. Table A.2 presents an overview of coding decisions related to the operationalization of these variables. These are consistent with the conventions of the Italian Ministry of Interior Affairs.

Table A.2: Census data used for municipality-level control variables

Variable operationalization	**Census wave**	**Used for period:**
Population size		
Absolute number of inhabitants	Census 2011	2001-2008
Absolute number of inhabitants	Census 2001	1991-2000
Absolute number of inhabitants	Census 1991	1983-1990
Educational attainment		
Fraction of population aged 9 and above with tertiary degree	Census 2011	2001-2008
Fraction of population aged 6 and above with tertiary degree	Census 2001	1991-2000
Fraction of population aged 6 and above with tertiary degree	Census 1991	1983-1990
Unemployment		
Fraction of population in unemployment, aged 15 and above	Census 2011	2001-2008
Fraction of population in unemployment, aged 15 and above	Census 2001	1991-2000
Fraction of population in unemployment, aged 15 and above	Census 1991	1983-1990

Census data from 2011 and 2001 was extracted from online repositories of Italian statistical authorities. For census data from 1991, I collated data from provincial census dossiers (*'Popolazione e Abitazioni: Fasicolo provinciale'*). These are split along historical province lines, and available in PDF form via the ISTAT e-library[15].

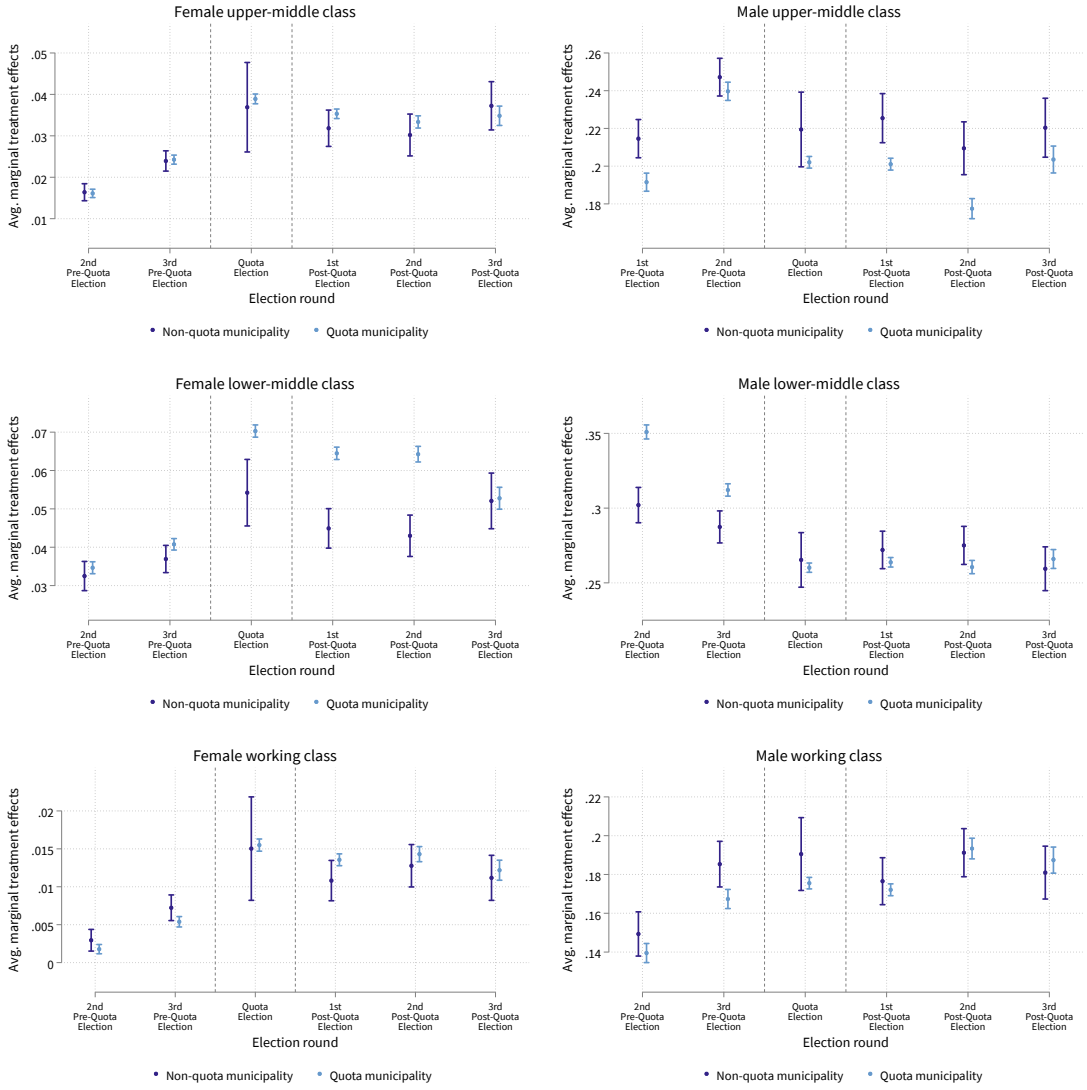
In each province dossier I draw on data from Table 3.5 (*'Indicatori relativi a popolazione e lavoro per Comune'*) to code municipal level unemployment. And I make use of Tables 5.3 (*'Popolazione residente in età da 6 anni in poi per grado di istruzione, sesso e Comune'*) to capture my indicator on educational attainment. Data coverage on unemployment rates and educational attainment is, for each variable, over 99%.

[15]Stable url: https://ebiblio.istat.it/SebinaOpac/resource/IST0071571. (Last accessed 26.04.2022).

B Parallel trends and balance checks

B.1 Tests on parallel trends assumptions

Figure B.1: Parallel trends in gender-class representation in municipal councils



Note: Bandwidths indicate 95% confidence intervals. Y-axis scales vary across plots, to better display effect sizes and confidence intervals. Municipal-level controls on population size, population size squared, unemployment and educational attainment are included in all models. Standard errors are clustered on the municipality level.

B.2 Balance checks

Table B.1: Covariate balance across treatment and control groups

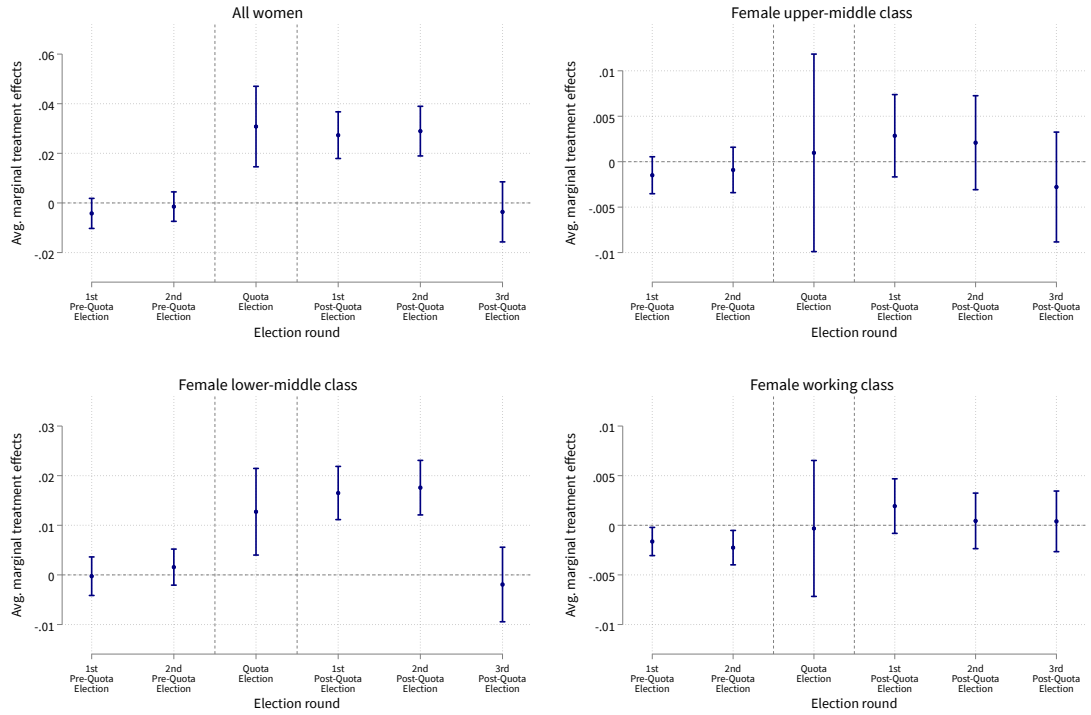
	Treatment $N = 7276$	Control $N = 648$	All $N = 7924$	Min	Max
NUTS-2 level regions					
North-West	0.37	0.52	0.39	0	1
North-East	0.19	0.11	0.19	0	1
Center	0.132	0.042	0.12	0	1
South (incl. islands)	0.30	0.33	0.31	0	1
Municipality size (1991 Census)					
+200K inhabitants	0.0021	0.0000	0.0019	0	1
50-200K inhabitants	0.012	0.017	0.012	0	1
15-50K inhabitants	0.056	0.040	0.054	0	1
-15 K inhabitants	0.93	0.94	0.93	0	1
Educational attainment (1991 Census)					
Tertiary schooling	0.020	0.019	0.020	0	0.46

C Robustness checks

C.1 Accounting for electoral system change

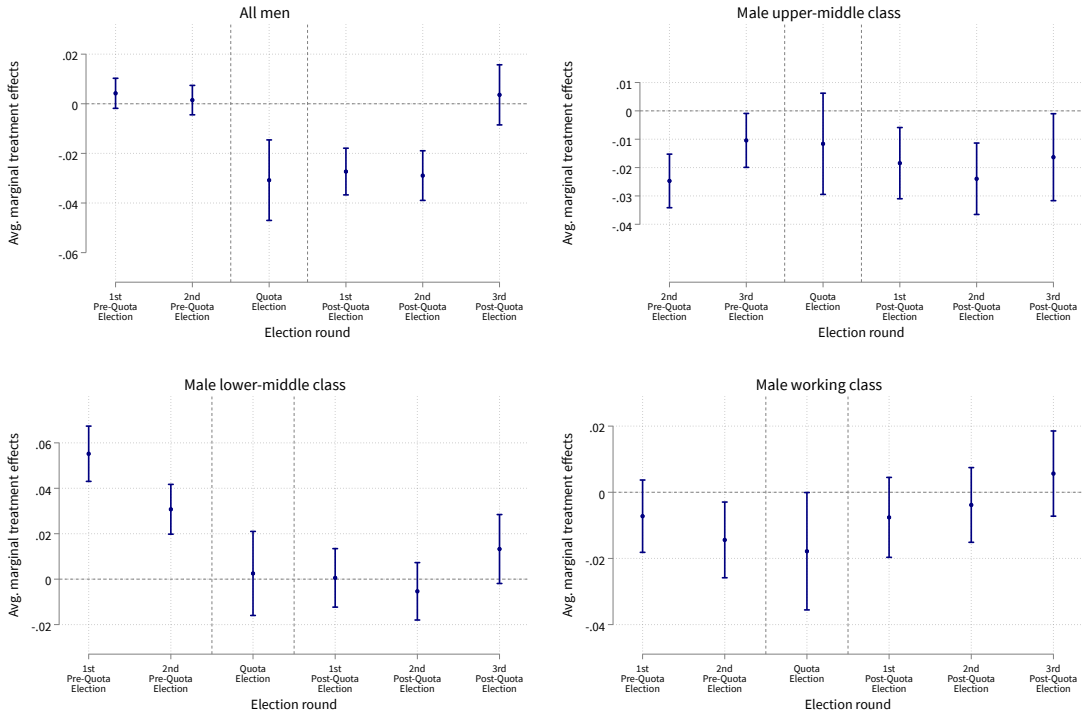
The 1993 gender quota was introduced concomitant with a major reform change in Italy, in which municipalities with over 5000 inhabitants shifted from a proportional to quasi-majoritarian electoral system (Donovan, 1995). Municipalities below the 5000 inhabitant threshold were unaffected by the policy change, as they maintained quasi-majoritarian electoral rules also prior to the reform. Moreover, in municipalities with population sizes above 15'000 inhabitants were, dual-stage elections were introduced for the mayorship. Particularly the latter policy has been shown to impact candidate pools, on the mayoral level (Bordignon et al., 2016)—and given that mayoral elections have been linked to council elections post-1993, it is plausible that the policy impacts dynamics of political competition for council posts. To ensure that obtained treatment affects are not fully mediated by these other reforms, I statistically control for whether municipalities were subject to any of these reform changes, by means of including dummy variables to my main statistical model. Estimates from this exercises are displayed below, and show that my findings are robust to the inclusion of these controls.

Figure C.1: Main results on female representation, when controlling for electoral reform changes



Note: Bandwidths indicate 95% confidence intervals. Y-axis scales vary across plots, to better display effect sizes and confidence intervals. All model specifications include municipal level controls. Standard errors are clustered on a municipality level.

Figure C.2: Main results on male representation, when controlling for electoral reform changes



Note: Bandwidths indicate 95% confidence intervals. Y-axis scales vary across plots, to better display effect sizes and confidence intervals. All model specifications include municipal level controls. Standard errors are clustered on a municipality level.

C.2 Distance to manipulite: Full regression results

Table C.1: Distance to manipulite — Women

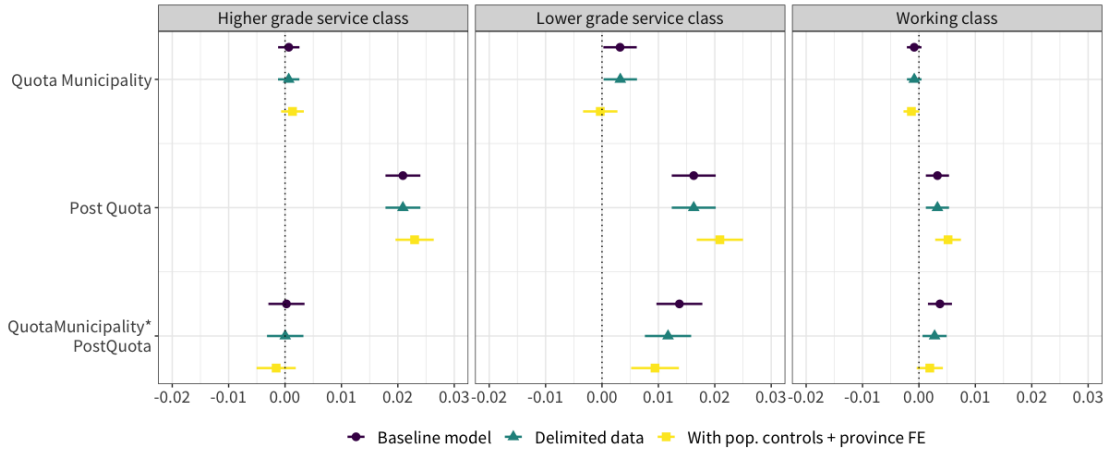
	Dependent variable: Avg. share of municipal council:					
	Female upper middle class		Female lower middle class		Female working class	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Distance to manipulite (in months)	0.0002***	0.0003***	0.001***	0.001***	0.0003***	0.0002***
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Constant	0.035***	0.034***	0.051***	0.053***	0.010***	0.011***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Observations	7,773	7,772	7,773	7,772	7,773	7,772
Population size FE		✓		✓		✓
Population size^2 FE		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.001	0.003	0.014	0.018	0.004	0.008
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.003	0.014	0.017	0.004	0.007
Note:						*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.2: Distance to manipulite — Men

	Dependent variable: Avg. share of municipal council:					
	Male upper middle class		Male lower middle class		Male working class	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Distance to manipulite (in months)	−0.002***	−0.002***	−0.002***	−0.002***	0.0003	−0.00000
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Constant	0.249***	0.229***	0.298***	0.295***	0.167***	0.180***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Observations	7,773	7,772	7,773	7,772	7,773	7,772
Population size FE		✓		✓		✓
Population size^2 FE		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.018	0.076	0.013	0.015	0.0003	0.028
Adjusted R^2	0.018	0.075	0.013	0.014	0.0002	0.028
Note:						*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

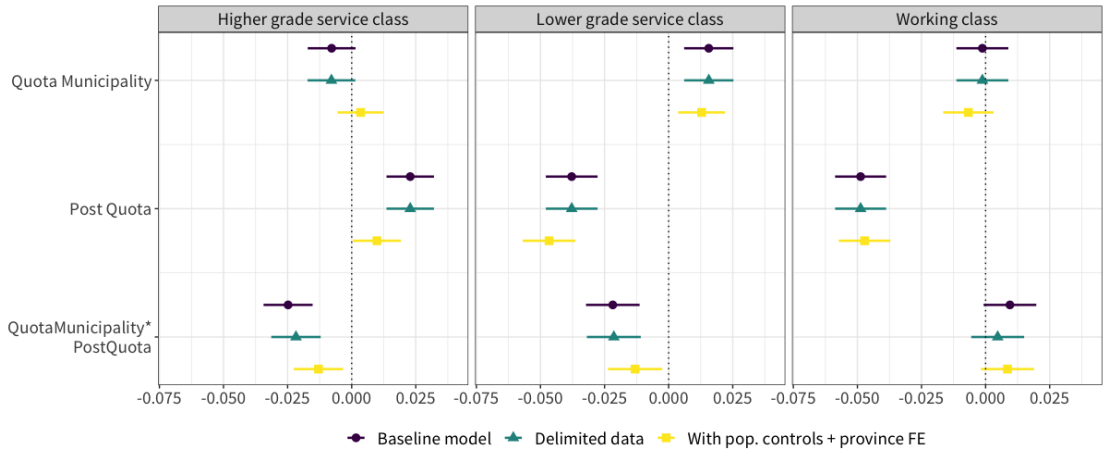
C.3 2x2 Difference-in-difference estimations

Figure C.3: Diff-in-diff estimates of the effect of the gender quota on women's representation in municipal councils, by class



Note: Model specifications include a) the full sample without controls; b) a subsetted sample without controls (no observations where quotas from when quotas were in force) and c) the full sample with municipal-level population controls and province level fixed effects. In all specifications, standard errors are clustered on a municipality level. Bandwidths indicate 90% confidence intervals.

Figure C.4: Diff-in-diff estimates of the effect of the gender quota on men's representation in municipal councils, by class



Note: Model specifications include a) the full sample without controls; b) a subsetted sample without controls (no observations where quotas from when quotas were in force) and c) the full sample with municipal-level population controls and province level fixed effects. In all specifications, standard errors are clustered on a municipality level. Bandwidths indicate 90% confidence intervals.

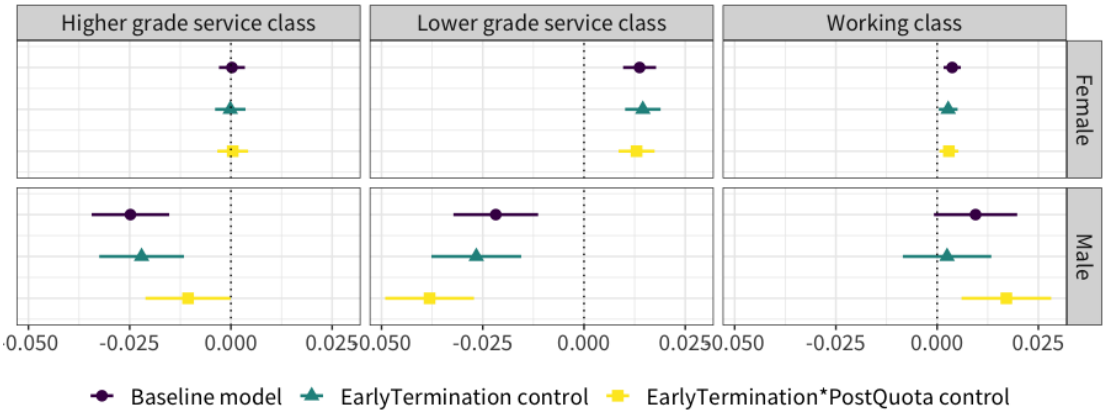
C.4 Accounting for early termination of government

I probe my identification strategy further by addressing one factor that could theoretically confound my results. Municipalities that hold elections before or after the regular electoral schedule do so as they have suffered from historical breakdowns of government. One study, focusing on the time period of 1993 to 2003, shows that municipal governments are more likely to collapse when led by a female mayor (Gagliarducci and Paserman, 2012). They posit that this occurs, as gender biases make it harder for female policymakers to enforce voting discipline in elected legislatures. If this tendency holds in the pre-treatment period of my study, this would affect the assignment of municipalities into treatment and control groups.

To test whether this is the case, I follow the approach of Baltrunaite et al. (2014), and generate an additional dummy variable indicating whether a given municipality was forced to run a snap election prior to 1993 (1) or not (0). I then run robustness checks, where I a) present baseline 2x2 DiD effects, b) include pre-term dummy as a control variable, as well as c) control for the interaction between this variable with the $PostQuota$ dummy. The results of this exercise are displayed below in figure C.5.

While model specifications slightly alter coefficient sizes, treatment effects that are statistically significant in baseline models, remain statistically significant in the other two model specifications. This reduces the likelihood of attained treatment effects being the result of sorting around treatment assignment thresholds.

Figure C.5: Treatment effects, when controlling for early termination probabilities



Note: Point estimates indicate $QuotaMunicipality * PostQuota$ coefficients, in a) the baseline model specification, b) when adding a dummy control for municipalities experiences a pre-term collapse of government in the pre-quota period, and c) when interacting said control with the $PostQuota$ dummy. In all specifications, standard errors are clustered on a municipality level. Bandwidths indicate 90% confidence intervals.