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Enfranchisement and Representation: Italy 1909-1913

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Abstract

This paper presents evidence on the consequences of the 1912 introduction of "quasi-universal" male suffrage in Italy. The reform increased the electorate from slightly less than three million to 8,650,000 and left the electoral rules and the district boundaries unchanged. This allows us to exploit the heterogeneity in enfranchisement rates across electoral districts to identify the causal effects of franchise extension on a number of political outcomes. The reform caused an increase in the vote share of social reformers, revolutionaries and anti-constitutional candidates (Socialists, Republicans and Radicals), together referred to as the *Estrema*. One standard deviation in the share of newly enfranchised voters over the total number of registered 1913 voters caused an increase of around 2% in votes for *Estrema* candidates. At the same time it caused a modest decrease in the net parliamentary seat gains of these same candidates, while not reducing the chances of election for MPs of aristocratic and elite background. Other outcomes (Extrema candidacy decisions and Herfindel-Hirshman index of electoral competition) were also unchanged.These findings show that *de jure* political equalization did not cause major changes to political representation, although the voting choices of the formerly and newly enfranchised citizens differed on average. This apparent puzzle was in reality the consequence of the heterogeneity of the effect across a number of both social and political dimensions.

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"Everything must change so that everything can stay the same"
[Tomasi di Lampedusa: The Leopard]
"The big reforms must be proposed when the time is ripe, when the Country is calm"
[Giovanni Giolitti]

1 Introduction

The arrival of *de jure* political equality in many Western European countries during the late 19th and early 20th century was often followed by rapid changes in public policy. Lindert (1994, 2004), referring to what he defined *"the 1880-1930 laboratory"*, documents the historical proximity between franchise expansion and public provision of education, increased spending in social transfers, labour market reforms, the creation of income tax systems.[1] Correlations between the presence of democratic institutions and the type of policies that governments implement are generally well documented (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006a). Causal evidence on the consequences of democratization is more difficult to establish. Most empirical studies focus on cross-country comparisons, where institutional variation is richer and ultimately more relevant but where it is also more difficult to convincingly establish causality.[2] Natural experiments within a country have a better chance to identify causal relations, although both the institutional changes and the potential outcomes are necessarily more limited. Both cross-country and within-country studies also face another challenge: institutional reforms often come in "bundles", that do not allow to identify the effect of political equalization in itself. The British Second Reform Act of 1867, for example, almost doubled the size of the electorate but, at the same time, it modified the boundaries of a vast majority of electoral constituencies.

This paper presents evidence on the consequences of the 1912 introduction of "quasi-universal" male suffrage in Italy. This reform almost trebled the size of the electorate from slightly less than three million to 8,650,000 and left disenfranchised only about half million adult males. Figure 1 shows the number of registered voters from 1870 (year of the annexation of Rome) until fascism, indicating with a vertical line the year of the reform. Unlike the previous 1882 and subsequent 1918 enfranchisements, the 1912 reform left the electoral law and the electoral district boundaries unchanged: as a consequence the 1909 and 1913 elections happened under the same rules but with very different sets of registered voters. The natural experiment relies on the fact that enfranchisement levels varied substantially across the 508 single-member electoral districts. In the Sicilian district of Regalbuto, for example, the registered voters increased from 2,145 to 16,704, an increase of almost eight times and

[1] See also the discussion in section IV.C of Acemoglu and Robinson (2000).

[2] For a discussion of the limits of cross-country analysis for the study of institutions see Pande and Udry (2006).

such that the previously enfranchised voters became a tiny minority in 1913. On the other side, the second district of Milan saw an increase from 8,493 to 10,702 and the impact of the newly enfranchised on the outcome must have necessarily been more modest. Exploiting this variation we can identify what is the impact of franchise extension on a number of outcomes. Although we cannot analyse explicit policies in our context, the outcomes we study can be related to policy preferences and potential policy outcomes by using the prevailing theories of electoral competition.

Two pieces of information can be exploited for this purpose. The first is the party affiliation of the candidates: I show that enfranchisement caused an increase in the vote share of social reformers but a decrease in their net seat gains. Moreover, enfranchisement had an affect neither on the competitiveness of elections nor on candidacy decisions of social reformers. The second piece of information that I use regards the identity of the elected MPs: I show that aristocrats and other clearly identifiable elite members were not more or less likely to be elected as a consequence of enfranchisement.

These results can be related to a number of hypotheses advanced in recent years to explain democratization. Several scholars have proposed explanations for an apparent historical puzzle. A movement towards political equality gives higher political weight to people with policy preferences which are likely to differ from the preferences of previously enfranchised voters. In the case of the 1912 Italian reform, for example, the suffrage was extended to illiterate and relatively poorer voters. This must have changed the identity and policy preferences of the pivotal voter, therefore moving public policy away from the preferences of the elite (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). This is a common pattern in the Western world during the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th. So why did the elite extend the franchise? According to Acemoglu and Robinson (2000, 2006a), the elite was forced to extend the franchise by revolutionary threats.[3] In some specific circumstances, often triggered by economic crises, a revolution against the rich and propertied becomes possible. In such cases redistribution to meet the economic demands of the population may not be sufficient to appease the masses: an extension of the franchise works, in such cases, as a commitment device to future redistribution. Revolutionary threats are more credible when the poor manage to overcome collective action problems and organized labour is strong, which would explain why democratization only happened during the 19th and 20th century, in spite of being a feasible and sometimes demanded institutional arrangement for a long time.

An alternative possibility is that franchise extension is granted as a consequence of an internal conflict within the elite (Lizzeri and Persico, 2004; Oxoby and Llavador 2005). While the urban and industrial elite had an interest in public good provision, and particularly local public goods like sanitation, the rural landlords were generally opposed. Enlarging the

[3] A similar arguments has been proposed by Conley and Temimi (2001).

electorate makes pork-barrel politics less attractive for politicians and public good provision a more effective way to gain votes. Hence, by enfranchising larger segments of the population, non-swing elite groups, and particularly the urban and industrial elites were trying to move the equilibrium policy in the direction of more public good provision and less patronage. Such elite groups gained the upper hand gradually during the 19th century, which explains the gradual extension of the franchise that occurred during that period.

A third possibility is that democratization arrives as a consequence of economic equality and capital mobility (Boix 2003), since both reduce the equilibrium tax rates and reduce the opposition of elites to democratizing. Although this theory does not explain what triggered democratization, it generates some clear predictions on the patterns that we should expect from different countries and in different periods.

A key feature of both the external-conflict and internal-conflict hypotheses, as well as of Boix's theory, is that the newly and formerly enfranchised voters have, on average, different preferences.[4] It is this feature that generates revolutionary threats and the need for a commitment device (in the external-conflict approach), a policy change (in the internal-conflict approach), and the prominence of inequality and capital mobility (in Boix as well as in the other theories).[5]

This paper documents a non-negligible difference between the voting choices of the formerly and newly enfranchised voters, following the 1912 Italian reform. One standard deviation in enfranchisement led to an average 2% increase in the vote of social reformers. This is consistent with the theories of democratization discussed above. It is however remarkable that enfranchisement had instead a negative or null impact on the legislative representation of those same social reformers. One possible interpretation is that when, for whatever reason, the elite decides to democratize, it may exercise some effort to minimize the political impact of the newly enfranchised. Acemoglu and Robinson (2006b), for example, discuss how "captured democracies" can emerge because the newly created institutions maintain an advantage for elite groups.[6] In the context of the 1912 Italian reform I will also discuss an alternative possibility: the clerical conservatives had, thanks to the Catholic Church, a superior mobilizing capability in many parts of the Country. Hence, even without other

[4] I refer to "preferences" here not in the sense of a "primitive" of an economic model. Different policy preferences can be derived from the same primitive preferences but different endowments, in which case they would indicate an economic conflict rather than different intrinsic predispositions.

[5] The literature on the determinants of democratization is vast: here I only discuss the theories that are more closely related to the subsequent empirical investigation. Another prominent hypothesis goes under the label of "modernization theory" (Lipset, 1959). This theory posits that economic development and political development move in parallel since, for various reasons, markets have better chances to prosper under democratic regimes. At the moment this theory lacks microfoundations and, as stressed by Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992), it does not specify clear causality links. On empirical grounds, the modernization hypothesis has been criticized by Acemoglu et al. (2009).

[6] One example is the presence of a non-elected chamber, like in the UK or in Italy, or an extremely malapportioned one like in the USA.

restrictions, it was not obvious that franchise extension would have been beneficial for social reformers. If enfranchisement can, in some situations, be used as a conservative expedient, then a mechanical application of the Meltzer and Richard framework could, in such situations, be misleading. Although this might be a feature specific to Italian democratization, its broader relevance in other contexts has not been addressed yet by empirical research.

The interpretation of these results rests ultimately on which model of electoral competition we think is best at representing what happened at the time. Of key importance is whether we believe candidates were able to commit to their platforms or not. The assumption that politicians can fully pre-commit to their announcend platforms plays a crucial role in models of electoral competition. The possibility of policy convergence to the median depends on this assumption more than on assuming that politicians are office-seekers (Calvert 1985, Alesina 1988). In a Downsian context, policy change can be achieved without much political change. If the Italian elections of 1909 and 1913 happened in a Downsian world then it would not be surprising to find little impact of enfranchisement on political outcomes.

In theoretical terms, models that remove the full commitment assumption tend to stress the role of credibility and personal identity and therefore the importance of political selection.[7] In empirical terms, a number of recent papers show that personal identities generally matter for implemented policies.[8] This let us presume that the political affiliation and personal characteristics of elected representatives mattered for the delivery of public policies at the time of the Italian democratization too, suggesting that our findings relate to both political and policy consequences of enfranchisement. Overall, it appears that a mechanical identification between *de jure* political equality and *de facto* empowerment of individuals could be misleading in some cases.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 will present the historical and institutional background, introduce the main political actors and discuss the process and possible motivations that led to franchise extension. Section 3 will illustrate the empirical strategy and Section 4 will present the data, their sources and show how enfranchisement in the electoral districts correlates with social, economic and political variables. Section 5 presents our main results on the impact of enfranchisement on the vote share of social reformers, on their net seat gain, on their probability to file a candidate, on the competitiveness of districts and on the net seat gains of candidates with an aristocratic or elite background. Section 6 presents robustness checks and provides some preliminary attempts to explain the findings by uncovering possible heterogeneities in the effects, across a number of social and political dimensions. Section 7 discusses the results and shows how they relate to the findings of previous empirical research on enfranchisement, to broader theoretical debates on

[7] These include the models of representative democracy (better known as citizen-candidate model) of Osborne and Slivinsky (1994) and Besley and Coate (1995).

[8] Pande (2003), Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), Lee at al. (2004), Clots-Figueras (2010).

democratization, and to previous research on Italian democratization.

2 Historical background

2.1 The political landscape

The years between 1901 and 1914 are politically dominated by Giovanni Giolitti, to the point that historians commonly refer to them as the "Giolitti era". He was the Prime Minister when the electoral reform was introduced. Moderately progressive and close to the emerging industrial elite, Giolitti rejected the repressive policies that had characterised the governments of the last years of the 19th century. By refusing to use the military and the police to repress organized labour during disputes with employers, one of his main purposes was to establish a modern system of industrial relations. Giolitti's years were characterised by a substantial increase in real wages particularly in industrial sectors, possibly as a consequence of the increased bargaining power of unions (Zamagni 1984; Gentile, 2003).

2.1.1 The *Estrema*

The main focus of our attention will be the parties with a programme of radical social and institutional reform, since, according to the prevalent theories of democratization, they should be the main beneficiaries of universal suffrage. These parties were the Radical, the Republican and the Socialist, often refereed to as the *"Estrema"*, the extreme (although often moderate) left of the ideological spectrum. A first important distinction between these parties and the rest was that, unlike other groups and factions, they were in fact organized as parties in a modern sense. They held regular congresses, had a party organization, a party manifesto and an elected leadership.[9] Although coming from different histories and traditions, these parties advocated policies that, to a certain extent, were similar. They shared a demand for both economic[10] and democratic reforms.[11] Candidates of the *Estrema* often formed alliances for local elections, sometimes with good results. A remarkable case is the alliance in the municipal elections of Rome, where the Radical Ernesto Nathan was elected mayor in 1907 with the support of the Republicans and the Socialists. Parliamentary elections always remained local affairs. There never was a formal national alliance between

[9] *"In Italy only the Republicans, the Radicals and the Socialists can be called parties. They have a programme, distinct from the programme of other parties, and they are kept together by the purpose of implementing that programme. The programmes of the various constitutional groups, instead, are not clear (...) More than political parties (...) these can be called factions".* (Duca di Gualtieri 1910: Necessita' di una ricostituzione dei partiti politici, *Rassegna Nazionale*, 31-171, p.133. My translation from Piretti (1990), p. 107)

[10] Demands of an improvement in the economic conditions of the working classes were particularly important for the Socialist Party and, to a certain extent, were shared by the other two.

[11] These included universal suffrage, an elected upper chamber (Senators were appointed by the government) and the replacement of Monarchy with Republic.

the parties of the *Estrema* although they would sometimes support each other's candidates on a local basis. Alliances in run-off elections were also quite common although, again, not to be taken for granted.[12]

These parties remained mostly reformist during the Giolitti era. By 1904 the Radical Party had recognized the legitimacy of the Monarchy and had declared itself available for a government that would accept their democratic and progressive agenda. From 1906 most Radicals openly supported Giolitti although this ambiguous and unstable relationship came to an end when Giolitti became closer to the Catholics.[13] Giolitti also tried, unsuccessfully, to attract in the government area the most moderate MPs of the Socialist party. The Italian Socialist party (PSI) was crossed by profound divisions between its reformist and revolutionary components. With the exception of the period 1904-06, the PSI remained overall a reformist party, willing to negotiate with the government and sometimes supporting its reforms. A radical change occurred in 1912, when the revolutionaries took control of the party and the most moderate members (not the entire reformist group) were espelled. In the 1913 election we have therefore an official Socialist Party (PSI), controlled by the revolutionaries, and a Reformist Socialist Party, as well as some independent Socialist candidates that did not belong to either.

2.1.2 The Constitutionals

As typical for the time, Giolitti managed to maintain a firm control of parliament but had neither a party nor a stable majority. As a matter of fact, there was no proper party organization in the dominant "constitutional" camp. The vast majority of MPs elected to the *Camera dei Deputati,* were generally called "Liberals" but this was only a generic reference to their prevailing ideology: there was no Liberal party and no Liberal electoral manifesto.[14] There were instead factions, groups created around personal networks and the phenomenon of *"trasformismo"*, *"a system of political clientelism based on the formation of ad hoc parliamentary groups that monopolized political office by using patronage and fraudulent elections to ensure electoral success"*.[15] Parliamentary coalitions were therefore unstable and lacking a clear political identity.[16]

[12] Competition between parties of the Estrema was also not uncommon, especially in the first round. The district of Grosseto, for example, in the 1909 election had a three-horse race between a Socialist, a Republican and a Radical.

[13] Radicals always mantained a distinct anti-clerical position. Their candidates were often drawn from Freemasonry.

[14] There is nothing in Italian political history that parallels the development of a liberal and a conservative party like in the UK, and "liberal" here has to be understood as including both progressives and conservatives.

[15] Collier (1999), p. 70. To understand the pervasiveness of *trasformismo* in Italian politics it suffices to note that, during a brief period in which multimember districts and list voting were introduced (1882-1892), it was not unusual to find the same candidate in more than one list in the same district.

[16] The Liberal-constitutionals included conservatives like Sonnino and Salandra and moderate progressives like Giolitti. Positions, however, were always far from clear-cut and, considering their standing on a number

Liberal or constitutional MPs would generally be divided in "ministerial" and "opposition" on the basis of whether they supported the government or not. All costitutionals, however, accepted the current institutional arrangements and recognized the authority of the Monarchy. Whether conservative or moderately progressive, they had a perception of themselves as the ruling elite, the only people that could possibly govern the country.

2.1.3 The Catholics

Most constitutionals, including the conservatives, were against any compromise with the clericals. Italy had been unified half a century earlier at the expenses of, among others, the Catholic state. The Vatican had never recognized Italy and still maintained the *non-expedit*, the prohibition for Catholics to participate in public life. In the early 20th century, however, things began to change. Although the *non expedit* was mantained, local bishops could ask for a dispensation, usually on the ground that the Catholic vote was necessary to prevent the election of "subversive" candidates. The first few dispensations were granted in the region of Lombardy in 1904; there were a few such dispensations again in the 1909 election. Given that there was no official party affiliation for candidates or MPs, the presence of Catholic MPs in parliament did not embarass the Vatican, which remained against the creation of an official Catholic party, in spite of pressures coming from some influential activists. In the election on 1913 this process of unofficial entry of Catholics in Italian politics led to a secret alliance (known as *"Gentiloni pact"*) between the Catholic Electoral Association and Giolitti: *non-expedit* was suspended in about half the electoral districts. The 228 candidates that signed the secret *Patto* were mostly Giolitti's men, who committed to a number of pro-Catholic policies (regarding family and moral values, schools, Catholic education etc.).

2.2 The electoral reform

On March 18, 1911, during a parliamentary debate on a timid proposal of electoral reform,[17] Giolitti gave a landmark speech, declaring to *"believe that today an enlargement of the franchise cannot be postponed any longer. Twenty years after the last electoral reform, a big revolution has happened in Italy, which has produced a vast progress in the economic, intellectual and moral condition of the popular classes (...) I don't think that an exam on how easily a man can use the 24 letters of the alphabet should constitute the question to decide if he has the attitude to evaluate the big issues that interest the popular classes"*.[18] By expressing his favour to an extension of the franchise to the illiterate, Giolitti was making a

of issues, it is difficult to draw clear lines within the constitutional camp.

[17] The proposal of Prime Minister Luzzatti would have had only a limited impact on franchise but included other important institutional reforms: for example, it would have transformed the Upper Chamber, the Senate, into a partially elected body.

[18] *Camera dei deputati, Atti Parlamentari, Discussioni, legislatura XXIII*, 18 Marzo 1911, pp. 13549-13554. My translation from Ballini (2007), p.149.

U-turn compared to what he had declared in Parliament only two years earlier: *"I believe that we need to have universal suffrage but by a different mean: by teaching to everybody how to write and read"*.[19] In the words of the socialist Gaetano Salvemini, Giolitti was serving *"lunch at 8am"*. After this unexpected turn in the parliamentary debate, the Luzzatti government resigned and Giolitti was called by the King to form a new government, the fourth of his political career. The electoral reform was therefore the central point in the programme of the fourth Giolitti government.

The reform, strongly wanted by Giolitti and his ministerial group, was proposed in June 1911. The key points in the proposal were the extension of the franchise and the payment of MPs.[20] The last franchise extension, passed in 1882, granted the voting right on the basis of "capability", which was in turn identified with literacy and census criteria.[21] Giolitti's proposal maintained the capability criterion and therefore did not recognize voting as a citizenship right.[22] Historians refer to this reform as "quasi-universal" suffrage. In practice, it granted universal male suffrage to the over 30s while keeping the 1882 restrictions only for the population between 21 and 30.[23] Voting right was also granted to anyone above 21 that had served in the army. Since the tax payment threshold was already set at a rather low level, the main consequence of the reform was to extend the franchise to the illiterate.[24]

In spite of the many critiques received in parliament and outside (either because it was

[19] My translation from Piretti (2001), p. 552.

[20] *"I would like direct representatives of the popular classes to enter parliament and I prefer these direct representatives to those who are only their advocates"* (Giolitti, parliamentary speech of June 27, 1911. My translation from Piretti, 1995).

[21] According to the 1882 law, could be included in the electoral registers only the literate males aged at least 21. In addition, they needed to satisfy at least another criterion in a list of which the most important were: (a) a minimum of formal education (a two-year certificate); (b) paid at least 19.80 liras of income tax; (c) other criteria mainly consisting of owning or renting accommodation of some minimum square meters (the exact size depended on the town population). An income tax payment of 19.80 liras was easily reached by most dependent workers in urban areas. According to estimates by Zamagni (1984), the average industrial salary in 1911 was 2.67 liras per day. The income tax rate was 8%. The literacy criterion could be satisfied in two ways: either with a title of second year primary school (which was then sufficient to obtain the electorale) or by writing an application in front of a public official (in which case another criterion had to be satisfied).

[22] *"The electorate is undeniably a fundamental function of the State, but only those that have been proved to have sufficient capacity to accomplish this very delicate function can have the right to exercise it"* (Giolitti, parliamentary speech of May 9, 1912. My translation from Piretti, 1995, p. 175).

[23] On the ground that life experiences generate capability of judgment about political matters.

[24] The parliamentary committee in charge of the reform was firmly in the hands of Giolitti's "ministerials", but the proposal was passed not without amendments. The main amendment regarded the creation of an official ballot paper. Until then, there was no official ballot paper, there was no list of candidates and no need to officially declare candidacy. Voters would simply write the name of their preferred candidate on a piece of paper. To ensure that a person that cannot read and write could vote, Giolitti proposed the creation of an official ballot paper with pre-printed names: voters would then be required to cross the name of their preferred candidate. This required that candidates had to officially propose themselves a few days in advance of the election day. This proposal was rejected by the committee, that did not like the idea of putting restrictions of any sort on candidacy. Instead, to ensure that illiterate voters could exercise their right, they had the possibility to bring a pre-written paper from home. This would then be inserted in an official envelope and sealed to guarantee secrecy.

"*a jump in the dark*"[25] or because it was too little), in the final secret vote on May 25, 1912, the 346 present MPs were mostly favourable (284 voted in favour, 62 against). On June 29 the Senate, whose life-time members were appointed by the government, approved the law with 131 votes in favour and 40 against.

Very few MPs spoke in parliament against the reform. Even the leader of the conservative opposition, Sidney Sonnino, had in fact always been an advocate of universal suffrage: *"It is only from universal suffrage that the government can achieve the strength to represent and protect the general interest, which is continuously endangered by the particular interests of individuals, localities and small and egoistic groups".*[26] During the parliamentary debate Sonnino declared himself in favour of an even more radical reform, that could have included the women. He supported Giolitti's proposal on the ground that it was a move in the right direction. But not all conservatives agreed. A noteworthy exception was the MP and sociologist Gaetano Mosca, according to whom the inclusion of millions of illiterates could *"not increase the capacity of the electoral body to understand the big issues of national politics".*[27]

The reform was received with extreme favour by the Catholics in parliament, who proposed an extension to all adult males. The Catholic Filippo Meda, during the parliamentary debate, declared himself in favour of compulsory voting, although no amendment was proposed.

The public debate seemed to assume that the extremists would have benefitted from the reform. Not all commentators agreed on this point: *"The prevailing opinion is that the reform will damage the consitutional liberal party and benefit the extreme parties. It is widely believed that - with some exceptions - the beneficiaries will be the extreme parties in the urban areas and the conservative and reactionary parties in the rural areas. (...) There are in Italy around 80 prevailingly urban electoral districts and 428 rural districts. If the prediction will be correct then the conservatives and reactionaries will prevail"* [28] This might be a reason why the parties of the *Estrema* did not display much enthusiasm for the *lunch at 8am*, in spite of having demanded universal suffrage for some time. The PSI official newspaper *"L'Avanti!"* commented*: "democratic progress is not only and always obtained by extending political rights. The bourgeoisie easily concedes freedom and voting rights but they know other ways to keep intact their economic tyranny, while they concede more economic reforms in favour of the masses when they have a firm grip on the monopoly of political*

[25] *"This is an enormous jump in the dark.(...). Thirthy-one out of sixty-nine provinces, containing 215 districts, will have a majority of illerate voters".* Corriere della Sera, May 4, 1912. My translation.

[26] S. Sonnino, "Il partito liberale e il suffragio universale, *Nuova Antologia*, s. 5, vol. 239, pp. 305-314". My translation from Ballini (2007), p.164.

[27] Gaetano Mosca, parliamentary speech of May 9, 1912. My translation from Ballini (2007), p. 172.

[28] Suffragio universale e analfabetismo, *Nuova Antologia*, 46, 237, p. 335. My translation from Piretti (1990), 114-115.

power"[29] Floor debates show that MPs of the *Estrema* generally espressed a view that every adult male should have been enfranchised. Some, like the Radical Giulio Alessio, expressed their concern that universal suffrage could create the conditions for *"conservative forces to prevail in future national representations"* and for a halt to the *"reformist policies so strictly linked to the future of our country".*[30] Republican MP Mirabelli proposed an amendment to extend the voting rights to the women which encountered the favour of most speakers of the *Estrema* (and of the conservative leader Sonnino), but was defeated by large majority (209 against, 48 in favour).

As the previous numbers show, attendance and voting during parliamentary debate was generally not high. The Socialists were particularly absent from the debate, to the point that their leader Filippo Turati, explicitly felt the need to defend their lack of participation on the ground that *"the new law has all the signs (...) of a benefit which has not been conquered but imposed and to which our part could not impress any of our characteristics".*[31] This could have been just a tactic, to avoid conceding any merit to Giolitti for the reform. More likely, however, it reflected a real dilemma and a debate that had been going on inside the party for over a decade. For the dominant reformist faction *"universal suffrage is (...), like for any other democratic, the foundation of true popular sovereignity"* but *"the franchise in itself is an instrument, and without a force that knows how to use it, it can damage precisely those that demand it"*[32]. For advocates of universal suffrage, on the other side, *"it opens the field to the competition of all interests and of all parties. Disenfranchising a part of the population means that political parties will not normally be interested in the needs of the excluded; and that a big cause of political education is suppressed, since the many excluded from the voting rights will not find anybody interested in mobilizing them".*[33] This debate also reflected the fact that the moderate leadership was concentrated in the North, where blue collar workers were sometimes already enfranchised, and was generally suspicious about the real attitudes of the Southern disenfranchised.[34]

[29] L'Avanti!, May 9 1912. My translation from Ballini (2007), p. 175.

[30] Parliamentary speech of Radical MP Giulio Alessio, May 4, 1912. My translation from Ballini (2007), p. 176.

[31] "Il suffragio colla museruola", *Critica Sociale*, XXII, n. 10-11, pp. 145-146, May 1912. My translation from Ballini (2007), p. 176.

[32] Bonomi (1905), p.341. My translation.

[33] Salvemini (1905), p.371. My translation.

[34] Everyone in the PSI, instead, agreed on the need to move to proportional representation. The first, obvious reason, was that electoral boundaries had remained unchanged since 1892. At a time of rapid urban development, this had led to a situation where some districts could be several times larger than others. Typically, urban areas and rapidly industrializing areas were underrepresented and these were precisely the areas were the Socialists were stronger and growing faster. Second, the Socialists felt that proportional representation would move the focus of attention from individuals to programmes and that they could have benefitted from a more party-centered politics.

2.3 Why did Giolitti extend the franchise?

Universal suffrage arrived in Italy non differently than in the rest of Europe: as a concession from the elite. As for similar instances across Europe, historians have speculated for decades about the motivations that induced Giolitti to pass the reform. There are at least four main hypotheses. As we will see, these can be linked to more general ideas about democratization.

The first is that Giolitti genuinely believed in a stronger and more representative parliament; he had passed other reforms that had reinforced the *Deputy Chamber*[35] and this was just another step in a process of institutional modernization that Giolitti was confident to keep under his control.[36] This broadly corresponds to the so-called *enlightenment hypothesis*, i.e. the idea that the values of the elite were changing.[37]

A second motive, related to the previous, could have been Giolitti's desire to stabilize his majority by enlarging it to the left. It was difficult for Giolitti to fully implement a moderately progressive agenda in a predominantly conservative parliament. He had made repeated attempts to absorb parts of the *Estrema* into the government. He succeded with most Radicals (there were three Radical ministers in the fourth Giolitti government) but not with the Socialists, even the most moderate. This move could have represented an attempt to stabilize his majority to the left, in a context in which the *Estrema* was sufficiently moderate and the Socialists were led by the reformist faction. According to some historians, this amounted, in Giolitti's view, to a strategic alliance between the most progressive components of the elite and the emerging organized working classes in order to modernize the country (Montaldo, 2001). With a degree of approximation, this corresponds to the intra-elite conflict hypothesis of Lizzeri and Persico (2004).

A third possibility is that Giolitti was conscious of the risks associated with a massive suffrage extension but was convinced that it was inevitable, hence it would have been better for the liberals to guide the process rather than to be perceived as forced to concede it.[38] In this sense it might have been a pre-emptive move towards the Socialists, that sooner or later were expected to launch a campaign for universal suffrage. Also, by controlling the process of franchise extension, Giolitti could make sure that quasi-universal suffrage was implemented keeping everything else constant. There were no revisions in the district boundaries and, more importantly, there was no concession whatsoever in the direction of a more proportional representation: both would have given the *Estrema* a tangible increase in seats. This hypothesis, again with some approximations, corresponds to a mix of the external-conflict approach of Acemoglu and Robinson and the *party-competiton* approach, according to which

[35] He had increased the discretion of parliament in regulating its internal organization and had instituted the explicit vote of confidence at the beginning of a new government. Until then, there was presumption of confidence unless a confidence vote was called and lost by the executive.

[36] See Ullrich (1979) and De Felice (1980).

[37] See the discussion of this hypothesis in Acemoglu and Robinson (2000).

[38] Gentile (2003).

democratization was essentially driven by short term political considerations.[39]

Finally, immediate speculations were made about a possible link between the electoral reform and the war for the colonization of Libya.[40] *"Giolitti wanted with that concession to secure the support of the reformist Socialists to the conquest of Libya"*,[41] or at least to appease the anti-militarists in the *Estrema* (while the war in Libya could be regarded as a concession to the nationalists and the Catholics).[42] As a matter of fact, some reformists and, for different reasons, even some revolutionaries in the Socialist Party supported the war. The Libyan war was declared in September 1911, a few months after Giolitti's electoral reform proposal and, although Libya was declared annexed to the Italian kingdom in November 1911, the war was officially concluded only in October 1912. Hence, at the time when the proposal was debated and voted in parliament, Italy was still at war with Turkey over Libya, which gave another argument to pass the law: "*they have conquered*" their right to vote "*in the Tripoli battlefields; no-one asked then Southern peasants whether they were illiterate or not*"[43] This reconstruction of events conforms to some recent theoretical developments that link democratization to the presence of war and the need of mass-mobilization.[44] This interpretation of the 1912 reform, however, appears to have lost credit among historians.[45]

To sum up, although it is clear that the reform was wanted mainly by Giolitti and his supporters, the motives that induced such a sudden and unexpected turn remain still debated today. It is useful to highlight that, when Giolitti proposed his reform, revolutionary pressures were low. All the parties of the *Estrema* were controlled by relatively moderate leaderships and one party, the Radical, had three ministerial positions in the Giolitti government. Social conflict was relatively low if compared with previous years. Figure 2 reports the number of strikes and the number of recorded participants in strikes per year, both in industry and in agriculture. The red line corresponds to 1911, when Giolitti proposed the reform. The figure illustrates that conflict was in line with, and possibly lower than, the physiological levels it had mantained since 1900. From an economic standpoint, Italy's estimated average annual GDP growth rate between 1907 and 1913 was 1.8%, smaller than the 3.4% of the period 1899-1907. Average annual growth rate of salaries between 1901 and 1911 was 2.5%, in a context of rapid industrialization and good order in the public finances (Toniolo, 1988). In brief, it appears unlikely that the reform was triggered by either an economic crisis or the threat of a revolution.

[39] See the discussion of this approach contained in Acemoglu and Robinson (2000).

[40] Carocci (1961).

[41] Salvemini (1955). My translation.

[42] The Vatican had important economic interests in Libya that felt were not adequately guaranteed by the Turkish government.

[43] Sidney Sonnino, my translation from Ballini (2007).

[44] Scheve and Stasavage (2010), Vindigni and Ticchi (2008).

[45] See Montaldo (2001).

3 Empirical strategy

Our identification strategy is based on comparing the 1913 (post-reform) with the 1909 (the last pre-reform) election. The intensity of the treatment for an electoral district is represented by the magnitude of newly enfranchised population compared to the formerly enfranchised. This tries to approximate an experiment in which we compare the actual outcomes of the 1913 election with the outcomes that would have occurred without the reform. To be more precise, if we indicate with S_i^{13} the *Estrema* share of vote (or any other outcome of interest) in district i in the 1913 election, we can write

$$S_i^{13} = \alpha^{13} + \beta_P \frac{E_i^P}{E_i^{13}} + \beta_N \frac{E_i^{13} - E_i^P}{E_i^{13}} + e_i^{13} \tag{1}$$

where E_i^P and E_i^{13} are, respectively, the number citizens in district i that would have been enfranchised in 1913 under the old electoral rule, while E_i^{13} is the actual number of enfranchised citizens in 1913. β_P and β_N then represent the propensity to vote *Estrema* among, respectively, the formerly and newly enfranchised citizens. α^{13} is an effect which is common to all electoral districts in 1913 and e_i^{13} is a district-specific error. E_i^P is unobservable but we can approximate it with E_i^{09}, the actual number of registered voters in 1909, under the assumption that exit (voters that died or moved elsewhere) and entry (voters that met the capacity condition or moved in) in E_i^P balance each other.

If we are prepared to assume that average voters' propensities are constant over time (after taking into account the time-specific effects α^t), then we can write a similar equation for the 1909 election:[46]

$$S_i^{09} = \alpha^{09} + \beta_P + e_i^{09} \tag{2}$$

We are ignoring here possible differences in turnout rates across the two group of voters: β_P and β_N bypass that stage and represent the overall reduced-form propensity to vote Estrema (where the alternatives are both voting for other parties and not voting). By subtracting (1) from (2) we can now write our estimable equation:

$$S_i^{13} - S_i^{09} = (\alpha^{13} - \alpha^{09}) + (\beta_N - \beta_P)\frac{E_i^{13} - E_i^{09}}{E_i^{13}} + (e_i^{13} - e_i^{09}) \tag{3}$$

which can be written as

$$\Delta S_i = \widetilde{\alpha} + \widetilde{\beta}\frac{E_i^{13} - E_i^{09}}{E_i^{13}} + \eta_i \tag{4}$$

This specification allows us to recover the difference in the propensity to vote *Estrema* among the two group of voters. This is a differences-in-differences specification with a continuous

[46] This assumption ignores the possibility of strategic voting and, more generally, possible reactions of the formerly enfranchised to the new political situation.

treatment variable and it is equivalent to a fixed effects specification since by differencing we remove unobserved fixed characteristics of the electoral district. Like in all natural experiments of this sort we need to worry about changing rather than fixed characteristics. To address these concerns I will use control variables, province specific-trends and previous changes in the dependent variables. Regressions using placebo treatments will help us to understand what is the impact of pre-existing trends on our results.

The assumption that $E_i^{09} = E_i^P$ represents a reasonable approximation since the time span considered is short. It remains however true that the quantity of interest E_i^P is measured with an error that, even if randomly distributed, could bias our results downwards. Also, we cannot rule out the existence of a correlation between $(E_i^{09} - E_i^P)$ and $(e_i^{13} - e_i^{09})$. For example, districts with higher immigration could have better organized labour organizations and therefore experience larger increases in *Estrema* vote. One of the control variables employed, population change between 1901 and 1911, should at least partially deal with the possible bias that derive from this assumption. Controlling for changes in male literacy rates also helps us to better approximate what would have happened under the previous law that restricted the franchise on literacy grounds.

4 Data description

Between 1892 and 1913 Italy had 508 single-member electoral districts with a two-round majority system. District boundaries remained unchanged along the entire period and, since there was no Census in 1891, were based on 1881 population data. Registration data and electoral results for the three elections occurred between 1904 and 1913 were collected from the Parliamentary Archive in Rome (*Archivio Storico della Camera dei Deputati*). Since candidacy was individual and there was no official affiliation with political parties, the Archive only contains the number of votes obtained by each candidate but does not provide information on political affiliations. The matching between names and political parties has been possible thanks to currently still unpublished information collected by Maria Serena Piretti from newspaper articles of the period. This information has allowed me to reconstruct the vote share by party and by electoral district in the 1904-1913 elections. Tab 1 reports information on the number of candidates, votes and seats for the three elections.

Biographical information on members of parliament was collected from the three volumes of Malatesta (1940). This is a collection of short biographies of all Italian MPs from 1861 to 1924. We will use information regarding the social and economic background of the MPs: whether the MP is an aristocrat, whether he is a big landowner, whether he is a high-ranked military, whether he is a diplomat. These groups were generally very close to the Monarchy and represented the traditional elites. To this I also add information on whether the MP is a member of a political dynasty, which also signals belonging to

an established influential family. How good are these variables to capture the distinction between traditional as opposed to emerging elites? Aristocracy status can be determined with very high precision: the name reported by Malatesta (1940) gives nobility titles and is usually sufficient to identify whether the MP is an aristocrat or not. The other characteristics might have been underreported in the biographies, generating the possibility of false negatives in our dataset. Although measurement error cannot be ruled out, it is worth mentioning that these characteristics have a strong positive association, which makes me confident that the number of false negatives should be small. Tab. 2 reports aggregate numbers of aristocrat and elite members, as well as the changes that occurred between 1904 and 1913.

Data on the socio-economic characteristics of electoral districts have been reconstructed using the 1901 and 1911 Censuses. I use both the 1901-1911 changes and 1911 levels of the following variables: population in the districts, percentage (over the total population) of employees in industrial sectors, percentage of agricultural workers who do not possess land, percentage of agricultural workers cultivating their own land, percentage of the population which owns real estate, percentage of male classified as illiterate (over total male population aged six and above). For 1911 only I could also reconstruct the percentage of the population living in urban areas: this variable is thefore only introduced as a 1911 level.[47]

Details of other variables are provided in the next sections when they are used.

4.1 Correlates of enfranchisement

Figure 3 reports the distributions of registered voters by electoral district in 1909 and 1913. Figure 4 reports the distribution of our main explanatory variable, $\frac{E_i^{13}-E_i^{09}}{E_i^{13}}$, that from now on we will also call ΔE. Figure 5 plots ΔE over the male illiteracy rate from the 1911 Census. Not surprisingly we observe a strong positive correlation, since literacy was the most diffuse obstacle to registration before the reform. The correlation coefficient is 0.74. The graph also indicates whether the district was from the North-West (NW), North-East (NE), Center (C) or South (S), showing how illiteracy was strongly correlated with latitude.[48]

An OLS regression of ΔE over male illiteracy rates (column 1 in table 3) shows that 55% of the variation in enfranchisement can be explained by literacy alone. Figure 5 also shows that, while at high levels of illiteracy ΔE is always high, there is a substantial dispersion of ΔE at low levels of illiteracy. In other terms, some districts with high male literacy could

[47] Population data are available at the town level in both 1901 and 1911 and can therefore be easily aggregated at the electoral district level. Literacy is also available at the town level in 1911. All other variables have been gathered at the *circondario* level (the most detailed unit for which they were available). There were 206 circondarios in both Censuses. In about two thirds of cases an electoral district is entirely contained within a circondario. When it is not, I have estimated the district variable by using weighted *circondario* data, with weights given by town-level population data. This approximation is plausible since between *circondario* variation is substantially larger than within *circondario* variation. It is, in any event, the only route to recover a number of social and economic indicators at the electoral district level.

[48] See Table A.1 for a definition of these variables.

reach pre-reform enfranchisement rates close to 80% of the 1913 total. In others, with similar literacy rates, only as little as 20% of the 1913 registered voters were already enfranchised in 1909: these districts have therefore a ΔE which is not different from that of districts with the highest illiteracy rates. Literacy was a sufficient condition for enfranchisement only if determined by a formal certificate of two-year primary education. Hence, it is possible that many literates were not enfranchised since they did not possess a formal certificate and did not satisfy other census criteria. Hence, differentials in franchise extension in 1909 for given literacy rates could, at least in part, reflect different income levels. Another possibility is that, since illiteracy information refers to the overall population above six, the discrepancy could capture different trends in literacy across districts (since younger cohorts were probably more educated). We will return again on this issue at a later stage in the robustness checks section.

Column 2 in Table 3 provides other correlations. ΔE appears to have been smaller in urban districts and when the percentage of industrial workers was higher but also, controlling for other covariates, in areas with a higher share of agricultural workers that did not own their own land. ΔE is also higher in districts with a larger male population and in districts with higher population growth. Columns 3 and 4 use as dependent variable ΔE_{t-1}, constructed by using changes in enfranchisement between 1904 and 1909 (i.e. under the previous law). They show that changes in enfranchisement between 1904 and 1909 were still positively correlated with the size of a district (overall population) and with population changes but not with any of the other district characteristics. Moreover, enfranchisement between 1904 and 1909 grew faster in districts with lower illiteracy rates, which is what we should expect given the rules. Table 3 suggests that the reform of 1912 represented a shock compared to previous trends in our main treatment variable and that franchise extension across the electoral districts was substantially different from what could have been expected to be under the previous law.

An important question is whether ΔE is correlated with the political orientations of the districts. Columns 5 and 6 of table 3 report regressions of ΔE over previous electoral vote shares of the *Estrema,* including 1911 Census control variables, 1901-1911 differences and, in column 6, province fixed effects. The results show that ΔE was higher in districts where the parties of the *Estrema* were historically weaker, as confirmed by columns 7-10 that replicate the same regressions using the 1904 and 1900 *Estrema* electoral vote shares.

Figure 6 correlates ΔE with changes in the combined vote share of *Estrema* candidates between 1909 and 1913. The graph suggests that districts that experienced a larger enfranchisement also witnessed a larger variation in the votes given to reformers. However this variation is not always positive and cases of increases as well as decreases of vote shares seem equally likely. Although it would be premature to jump to conclusions, this graph suggests that average effects on the share of votes for social reformers could hide a substantial heterogeneity. In this case there is no clear correlation between gains/losses of Estrema and

the location of a district in one of the four geographical areas.

5 Results

5.1 Vote shares

Table 4 reports results when the dependent variable of equation 4 refers to the share of votes received by candidates of the *Estrema*. Column (1) is a simple OLS regression with no controls and shows a strongly significant effect of enfranchisement on the percentage of votes reported by candidates of the Estrema. Although no other covariate is included, by focussing on differences this specification takes into account fixed unobserved characteristics of the electoral districts. The constant represents a fixed 1913 time effect and is therefore the (constant across districts) difference between 1913 and 1909. In column (2) I include the 1901-1911 differences in the control variables.[49] This is equivalent to a fixed effects specification with control variables expressed in levels. Column (3) includes the 1911 levels in the set of control variables.[50] The specification of column (4) includes province fixed effects, which must be interpreted as 1909-1913 trends. To account for possible pre-existing trends, column (5) introduces lagged change in vote for the Estrema, i.e. the percentage change between 1904 and 1909. In column (6) I also introduce an interaction term between lagged vote change and enfranchisement. From column (5) it is clear that the lagged dependent variable has a significant effect on the 1909-1913 vote change, signalling that the performance of Estrema candidates was trending differently across districts.

The point estimates appear to be stable. They decrease to a minimum of 0.167 when control variables are introduced and increase to a maximum of 0.294 when province fixed effects are also included. Controlling for a lagged dependent variable gives us a coefficient of about 0.25. Statistical significance of at least 10% is always achieved.

The coefficients are easy to interpret, since both the dependent and independent variable are expressed as percentages. Taking column (6) as a benchmark, a 1% increase in ΔE caused a 0.25% increase in the votes of *Estrema*. The smallest estimate (column 3) is such that one standard deviation in enfranchisement (almost 12%) corresponds to a 2% increase in *Estrema* votes. A similar magnitude is implied by column (4), considering that within-province standard deviation is equal to 6.4. These magnitudes are non-negligible. They imply that the difference between the district of Regalbuto ($\Delta E = 87$) and that of Milan II ($\Delta E = 21$) generates a difference in votes for Estrema of about 11% due to enfranchisement only.

[49] These are Census data and therefore only available every ten years.

[50] For reasons discussed in the previous section I exclude the 1911 male illiteracy rate. Among the level variables I include the ratio of population living in urban areas, a variable which was not available at the same level of detail in 1901.

5.2 Elected MPs

In Table 5 I analyse the net gain of seats by the Estrema parties. Our dependent variable ΔS is equal to 1 if the Estrema gained the seat, -1 if they lost it and 0 otherwise, since each district only elects one member. Table 5 reports OLS estimates.[51]

The table displays negative ΔE coefficients across all specifications. Introducing the province fixed effects renders the coefficient significant at the 5% level. Including or not a lagged dependent variable makes again little difference on our estimates, although the statistical significance of the coefficient signals the presence of pre-existing trends in the Estrema net seat gains.

Using column (6) we estimate that a 1% increase in ΔE reduces ΔS by 0.009% and a standard deviation increase in ΔE decreases ΔS by about 0.5%. Overall, it appears that, in spite of the gains in votes, net seat gains remained unaffected (or marginally adversely affected) by the enlargement of the franchise.

5.3 Candidacy

There was no official candidacy stage in Italian elections until the 1918 reform. Voters could write any name on a piece of paper, which is why official records usually display a number of "dispersed" votes (often just one or two votes) for various "candidates". It is therefore difficult to define an officially uncontested seat. If we define as uncontested a seat where the sum of votes of the candidates except the winner is less than 50 then we have 79 such seats in 1909 and 40 in 1913. Other districts, especially in the South, were contested by more than one constitutional candidate but not by a candidate of the Estrema. There were 217 seats with no candidate from the Estrema in 1900, 81 in 1904, 156 in 1909 and 95 in 1913. Observing a candidate of the Estrema in 1913 but not in 1909 (and viceversa) could signal that expectations about the performance of Estema candidates in that districts have changed. Even not winning a seat, a good performance could set the stage for future progress and send a signal to voters that Estrema candidates were viable. In 1904, for example, both the Radicals and the Socialists had candidates in a large number of districts that received a single-digit number of votes. The number of candidates in 1909 was reduced (see Table 1) in order to concentrate resources and to avoid sending negative signals. The result was an overall clear improvement in the seat per vote ratio. We witness again an increase in the number of candidates in 1913, and it is useful to see whether this can be linked to the franchise extension, by revealing information on parties' expectations.

[51] Using maximum likelihood ordered probit (without the fixed effects) confirms the findings of table 5. Ordered probit models, however, cannot include fixed effects. Since the estimates are not substantively different, the opportunity to include province fixed effects appears to be a sufficient reason to prefer OLS estimates.

Table 6 reports our results. The dependent variable ΔC is coded as 1 if there was no Estrema candidate in 1909 and there is a candidate in 1913, -1 if there was an Estrema candidate in 1909 but no candidate in 1913, and 0 otherwise. The estimated coefficients show that larger enfranchisement was associated on average to new candidacies by the Estrema. However, this effect becomes statistically insignificant when province fixed effects are included. The estimated magnitudes are small, indicating, using the coefficient of column (6) which also includes a lagged dependent variable and its interaction term, that a 1% increase in franchise is associated with a 0.003% increase in ΔC.

5.4 Electoral competition

Regulated competition for power is a key characteristic of democracy. Did enfranchisement increase the overall level of electoral competition? To address this question I calculated the Herfindahl-Hirshman index (HHI) of competition using candidates rather than parties as units of observation (i.e. ignoring the candidates' party affiliation). Indicating with s_i the vote share of candidate i, the HHI index is calculated as $H = \sum_i s_i^2$. The index ranges from 0 (a large number of candidates with negligible number of votes) to 1 (an unopposed candidate). The results (reported in table 7) show that enfranchisement caused a slight increase in electoral competition, although the coefficient is statistically significant only in the simple regression of column (1).

5.5 MPs' identity

In 1909 and 1913, aristocrats represented almost one fifth of the elected MPs (91 in the 1909 parliament and 88 in 1913). In 1913 there were 31 transitions of an electoral district from an aristocrat to a non-aristocrats and 28 on the other direction. Let us call ΔA a variable equal to 1 if a district transits from a non-aristocrat to an aristocrat, -1 if the transit happens in the other direction and 0 otherwise. Tab 8 reports OLS coefficients where I use ΔA as dependent variable.

With no change in 449 out of 508 cases, the variation in the dependent variable is small. The coefficient of enfranchisement never achieves 10% significance level but, more importantly, the estimated coefficients are never negative. If we consider specification (4), which includes provice fixed effects, a coefficient of 0.0027 indicates that a higher enfranchisement level is more likely to have caused an aristocrat to gain a seat rather to loose it. One within-province standard deviation in enfranchisement gives us an increase in ΔA of around 2%.

I then created another analogoulsy defined variable $\Delta elite$ which includes other clearly identifiable members of the traditional elites. $\Delta elite$ includes aristocrats and non-aristocratic

landowners, military,[52] diplomats[53] and members of political dynasties. Although there is a substantial overlap between these groups (for example, most high ranked militaries were aristocrats), these newly defined elite variable includes 134 MPs in 1913 and 127 in 1909 with 45 negative and 37 positive transitions in the 1909-1913 period. The results are very similar to those we found for aristocrats alone, with slightly larger coefficients. Using again column (4) as benchmark, the 0.0044 coefficient implies a 3% increase in $\Delta elite$ as a result of an increase of one (within-province) standard deviation in enfranchisement. Both in table 8 and in table 9 the columns that include lagged dependent variables display smaller coefficients and larger standard errors.

6 Robustness checks and heterogeneous effects

6.1 Placebo treatments

For each of the outcomes analysed in the previous Section I re-run the regressions using as dependent variable the corresponding 1904-1909 change. Since enfranchisement in 1913 does not have an impact on previous elections, non-null results in these regressions would signal that pre-existing trends in outcomes are correlated with the subsequent enfranchisement and could therefore bias its estimated impact. In the interest of space, for each outcome I only report two results: one only with control variables (both the 1911 levels and 1901-1911 changes) and one which also includes province fixed effects. The results are reported in table 10. The vote share change of Estrema candidates in 1904-1909 appears to be negatively related to subsequent enfranchisement but is never significant at conventional levels (columns 1 and 2). These results, together with those obtained in columns (5) and (6) of table 4, make it unlikely that the change in the Estrema vote share between 1909 and 1913 is due to pre-existing voting trends.

Columns 3-12 present placebo treatment regressions for the remaining outcomes. Overall there appears to be no relationship between enfranchisement in 1913 and the other outcomes measured as 1904-1909 changes, with the notable exception of ΔA and $\Delta elite$. It is clear that the chances to be elected by aristocrats and elites were decreasing in the districts that display higher enfranchisement levels in 1913. The estimated coefficients are large and statistically significant: districts that experienced one standard deviation above the mean in ΔE saw a decrease in $\Delta elite$ between 1904 and 1909. The decrease ranges between 5% (using the coefficient of column 11 and the overall standard deviation which is almost 12) and

[52] High ranked militaries had to sworn their loyalty to the Crown and were usually recruited among aristocrats or other families trusted by the King.

[53] People in charge of foreign policy were usually very close to Crown and were recruited among the most traditional and influential families.

7% (using the coefficient of column 12 and the within province standard deviation of 6.4), depending on the specification. The corresponding figures for an aristocrat are respectively 4.4% and 5%. Since self-selection into treatment was not an option, we cannot rule out that enfranchisement stopped the decline in representation of aristocrat and elite MPs. These results are consistent with the presence of an intra-elite conflict: an emerging enfranchised bourgeoisie was increasingly replacing aristocrats and the traditional establishment. However, the massive extension of the franchise might have helped some elite members to keep their seats. Franchise extension would have delivered in such case an outcome which is the opposite of what predicted in Lizzeri and Persico (2004).

6.2 Male illiteracy rates

All regressions so far do not include male illiteracy rate in the list of control variables. The reason is that, being the franchise restricted on literacy grounds, illiteracy rates would absorb part of the causal effect that we are trying to estimate. The 1901-1911 illiteracy rate difference has instead always been included since this helps identifying a more appropriate counterfactual: franchise would have naturally expanded with literacy even without the reform.

In table 11 I report regressions that include the illiteracy rate of males aged 6 and above. The estimated impact of enfranchisement differs only marginally from our previous estimates, suggesting that literate and illiterate newly enfranchised voters did not behave differently on average.[54] The illiteracy coefficient is never significant, except in the equation referred to the aristocrat net seat gain. Ceteris paribus, aristocrats appear to have done worse in districts with high illiteracy rates.[55]

6.3 The geography of the effect

Italian regions differed in a number of characteristics. The North-West was the most industrialized and richer part of the country. It also had a higher share of agricultural workers who cultivated their own land, while large estates prevailed in the South. The North and some regions of the Centre, both in industrial and agricultural areas, had a better organized labour force, stronger unions and political organizations. Hence, our first step in uncovering possible heterogeneity and mechanisms is simply to run our regressions with an interaction term between ΔE and area dummies, corresponding to districts in the North-West, North-East,

[54] Since we observe an impact neither on the competitiveness of electoral districts nor on ΔC, we should also conclude that political actors did not expect literate and illiterate newly enfranchised voters to behave differently.

[55] I also run regressions that include an interaction term between illiteracy and ΔE. There is nothing relevant to report about those regressions (probably also because ΔE and illiteracy levels are highly correlated) with the exception of a positive interaction effect on ΔC.

Centre and South. Results are reported in Table 12, which focusses on vote shares of the Estrema and on net seat gains of, respectively, Estrema, aristocrats and elite. Since we cannot use province fixed effects, the benchmark specification now includes the area dummies: columns 1,3,5,7 report the results and show that, although some differences occour, the sign and approximate magnitude of the ΔE coefficient are not substantively affected by replacing the province fixed effects with the area dummies. We then introduce the interaction terms. Columns 2,4,6,8 provide a picture of the geography of the effect of enfranchisement which is unexpected. In terms of votes, although no interaction term is statistically significant, the magnitudes indicate that enfranchisement benefitted the Estrema mainly in the South, with a smaller positive effect in the North West and negative effects in the North East and Centre. In terms of net seat gains, the effect was negative everywhere and it is 10% statistically significant for the Centre. In the Centre we also have a positive and significant effect on the neat seat gains of aristocrats. The effect is positive but not significant in the North West and North East and is instead negative and significant in the South. Column 8 confirms that in the South enfranchisement had negative consequences for legislators coming from the elite, although the effect is now smaller and statistically insignificant. It was instead in the North West that the elite benefitted the most and the effect has similar size and direction, although with larger standard errors, in the North East and the Centre. These findings seem to suggest that Gaetano Salvemini was right after all: there is nothing suggesting that newly enfranchised Southerners voted more conservatively than in other parts of the country, while the opposite appears more likely.

6.4 Inequality

As discussed in previous sections, inequality is a key variable for theories of democratization. Larger inequality should amplify the consequences of enfranchisement by increasing the redistributive demands of the pivotal voter.

Measuring wealth or income inequality in the electoral districts of 1909-1913 is difficult, since data on income and wealth distribution is not available. There is, however, information that can be used to imperfectly approximate inequality. By using data from 1911 Census I have constructed the following indicator:

$$Inequality = \frac{[\%\text{ agricultural workers who do not own land} + \%\text{ blue collar industrial workers}]}{\%\text{ owners of real estate property}}$$

The numerator represents the percentage of employees not owning their means of production, while the denominator approximates the diffusion of property. As the percentage of real estate owners increases we assume property is more diffused and inequality goes down. As more people work in unskilled jobs and do not own their means of production we assume

inequality goes up. Both assumptions could clearly be wrong, since there is no upper bound to how much the richest could earn or own and we have no information about that in our index. Although this indicator would be inappropriate in a developed society, where property is diffused and employees' salaries absorb a consistent share of the output, it is probably less so in Italy 1911, when only about 10% of the population owned real estate and salaries where not far from subsistence levels.

Table 13 reports regression coefficients where our inequality indicator, normalized to be between 0 and 1, is included both as a direct effect and interacted with ΔE. Results show that where inequality was higher, enfranchisement reduced both the vote and the net seat gain for the Estrema. The direct effect of inequality is instead positive, which indicates that the parties of the Estrema were growing in more unequal districts. Although the standard errors are such that we cannot rule out the possibility of no effect, it is worth pointing out that the sign of the interaction term is opposite to what expected. So it is also for the net seat gains of aristocrats and elite, although the standard errors are too large in this case to allow any meaningful inference.

6.5 Swing districts

It is puzzling to find that Estrema parties increased their vote share where ΔE was higher but decreased their net seat gains in those same districts. This suggests that votes were gained where not needed and were instead lost where they mattered the most. That many votes end up making little or no difference is typical of majoritarian single-member districts.

To further investigate this possibility I contruct a dummy variable to separate swing from non-swing districts. The swing districts are defined as those satisfying at least one of the following: 1) the elected MP changed from Estrema to non-Estrema or viceversa in the 1909 election; 2) there was a run-off between an Estrema and a non-Estrema candidate in 1909; 3) the vote share of parties of the Estrema in 1909 was between 30% and 60%. The first two criteria are self-explanatory. The third allows a rather generous definition of marginality; however, it was not impossible for a candidate with 30% in the first round to reach the run-off stage and possibly be elected. Moreover, in an election that represented a *"jump in the dark",* 60% of votes in the previous election was still probably insufficient to define a seat as safe. By combining the three criteria above we identify 226 districts that we define as "swing".

The regressions reported in table 14 confirm our presumption. The parties of the Estrema did particulary poorly in swing districts with many newly enfranchised voters. For each increase of 1% in ΔE the Estrema lost between 0.3% and 0.4% of the votes, depending on the specification. Since the baseline effect in the swing variable is positive, compared to non-swing districts the Estrema gained votes in swing districts when $\Delta E < 45$ and lost them

otherwise. Columns 3 and 4 show that the Estrema also lost seats in swing districts with many newly enfranchised voters.

6.6 The "Gentiloni pact"

Several candidates in the 1913 election signed a pact with the Catholic Electoral Association led by Conte Ottorino Gentiloni. While the Association was not allowed by the Vatican to have its own candidates, it could provide support to specific candidates committed to Catholic values and policies. Local bishops could also demand a suspension of the *non-expedit* which, if obtained, would allow open support to favoured candidates. The so-called Gentiloni pact was signed secretly and the direct involvement of Giolitti (or whether Giolitti himself signed the pact or not) is still a matter of historical controversy. A list of signatories was revealed just after the election[56] by a Radical anti-clerical publication. It has been proved that the list contained many inaccuracies, though most names had been correctly identified.[57] A very detailed reconstruction of the events and a list of the signatories, based on extensive research in the Vatican archives, can be found in Piretti (1994). By using Piretti's list of signatories I construct a dummy variable "Gentiloni" equal to one in districts where one candidate signed the pact (there was never more than one signatory per district). It is possible that the impact of enfranchisement was different in districts that saw an explict participation of Catholics and a suspension of the *non-expedit* and that our previous estimates hide a relevant and historically important heterogeneity.

Table 15 reports regression results where we control for the dummy Gentiloni and introduce an interaction term between Gentiloni and enfranchisement. First, the impact of the Gentiloni pact on the vote share of the Estrema is unclear: positive if province fixed effects are included, negative otherwise, and always far from acceptable statistical significance. On the other side, its impact on the net seat gain of the Estrema is stable across specifications, large, negative and statistically significant. Had the Gentiloni pact been signed at random, we could have concluded that its impact on the net seat gain of Estrema candidates was large. It is instead reasonable to assume (as confirmed by historical research) that the pact was signed where the marginal return of the Catholic vote was higher and therefore we lack a proper counterfactual to assess its impact.

For what concerns our main variable of interest, a comparison of table 15 with table 4 shows that the positive impact of enfranchisement on the vote share of the Estrema is higher in districts where the pact was not signed (from the negative interaction term in table 15). The impact of enfranchisement on the net seat gain of Estrema parties is instead similar in the two type of districts. Our conclusion is that, although the pact may have reduced the

[56] "I candidati del Conte Gentiloni Vicario elettorale di Sua Santita'", *L'Idea democratica*, November 16, 1913.

[57] See Piretti (1994).

gains of the Estrema in terms of votes, its overall effect in terms of seats, which is substantial, is the same that it would have obtained without the franchise extension.

7 Final remarks

What are the consequences of a transition to universal suffrage? And why would an elite equalize *de jure* political rights? Recent theories of democratization, mostly developed by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, answer these questions by providing a one-dimensional representation of societal conflict based on economic interest. When this conflict is channeled into democratic institutions and the elite concedes political equality, the consequence is a larger government and more redistribution. A substantial body of evidence is compatible with this view.[58]

At the same time, the limited evidence we have from micro-data and natural experiments seem to provide a more nuanced picture. Aidt et. al (2010) study the expansion of the voting franchise in English and Welsh municipalities between 1868 and 1886 and conclude that franchise extension had a retrenchment effect, since demand for local public goods came from urban elite and not from the middle classes. Berlinsky and Dewan (2010) find little impact of the UK Second Reform Act franchise extension on the electoral support for the Liberal party. Both papers focus on British reforms that enfranchised only a fraction of the male population. After the Second Reform Act, which enfranchised mainly the urban working classes, only about one third of adult males had the right to vote in Britain.

This paper presents evidence on the consequences of enfranchising the poorest segments of the population by introducing (quasi) universal male suffrage. The Italian franchise extension of 1912 was a massive natural experiment: it trebled the electorate and left unchanged the electoral rules and district boundaries. Moreover, political rights were extended to the poorest segments of society in a context in which the labour unions and democratic and socialist political parties were well established political actors, pushing in the direction of radical economic and institutional reforms. This is an ideal setting to study the relationship between enfranchisement and political change and possibly to establish empirical links with the prevailing theories of democratization.

By documenting an impact of enfranchisement on the vote share of parties with a programme of social reforms, our results fit well with the Meltzer and Richard approach and the theories of democratization of Acemoglu and Robinson (2000), Boix (2003) and Lizzeri and Persico (2004). However, we also document that parliamentary representation and other political outcomes remained essentially unaffected by universal suffrage. This result indicates

[58] Some of this evidence is based on historical cross-country analysis, like Lindert (1994, 1996, 2004), Boix (2001) and Aidt and Jensen (2009). Husted and Kenny (1997) present evidence of a positive impact on welfare spending of removing literacy tests and poll taxes in the US states during the period 1950-1988.

that a mechanical link between democratization and political change is not warranted, conforming to the claim of Acemoglu and Robinson (2006b) that *"when elites who monopolize de jure political power lose this privilege, they may still exert disproportionate influence in politics by increasing the intensity of their collective action"*. It is well documented, for example, that the election of 1913 happened in a climate of unusual violence and intimidation (Piretti 1998).

Our analysis also documents that the effect of enfranchisement was not uniform across districts. Social reformers gained votes especially in the South, although they lost seats uniformly in all areas. Aristocrat and elite MPs were penalized in the South but possibly advantaged by franchise extension in the rest of the country. It appears therefore, and quite surprisingly, that enfranchisement had generally more progressive effects in the less-developed South than in the rest of the country. At the same time, inequality does not appear to play the role that it should have in the Meltzer and Richard model. Enfranchisement has a negative impact on the performance of social reformers, however measured, precisely in the most unequal districts, where demand for redistribution should be higher. This suggests that, in some contexts, inequality may facilitate "capture" rather than redistribution.

On political grounds, the fact that parties of the Estrema benefited of universal suffrage in terms of votes but suffered in terms of seats suggests that votes were gained where they were less needed. In particular, candidates of the Estrema were penalized by new voters in some key swing districts. Another consideration conserns the selected self-exclusion from politics of possibly the most conservative segments of the Catholic electorate. In districts where the Vatican's *non-expedit* was removed (thanks to the Gentiloni pact), the newly enfranchised voters did not, on average, appear too different from the formerly enfranchised. Since dispensation from *non-expedit* was not given at random, we cannot make causal claims on the consequences of the Gentiloni pact. However, that enfranchisement could have been used to please some particular conservative groups (namely, the clericals) remains a real possibility and casts at least some doubts on the hypothesis that universal suffrage was introduced to generate a policy change in the direction of more redistribution or more public goods provision.

The list of intriguing questions surrounding the reform that remain to be addressed is too long to be discussed here. For what concerns specifically the present study, at least three issues deserve better investigation. I have ignored entirely the possible reactions induced among the previously enfranchised by the reform. In one extreme case, these voters may have changed entirely their behaviour, for example because the fear of new voters may have induced more conservative choices. This is not a problem for our analysis: the counterfactual to actual 1913 election outcomes is what would have happened in 1913 without universal suffrage. If a change of any sort in the voting behaviour of the formerly enfranchised was induced by universal suffrage, then the voting returns of 1909 remain a valid counterfactual.

Nevertheless, this is an interesting question, especially in a context of increasing popularity of nationalistic and anti-democratic ideas which began to spread among the elites in those years.

A second dimension that I have ignored is turnout. Our coefficients bypass this stage and establish a direct link between registration and outcomes. Turnout, however, was different for the formerly and newly enfranchised, with the latter less likely to vote. While the political implications of our findings remain unaffected by this consideration, a detailed study of turnout would help clarifying the underlying mechanisms that generated our results.

A third, even more important issue, concerns the long term consequences of the reform. Although the impact of *de jure* political equalization on representation could be small in the short run, it may nevertheless trigger a reaction chain that manifests its effects only after some time, and in particular when the newly enfranchised voters are sufficiently mobilized and informed. The 1919 and subsequent elections are unfortunately very difficult to compare with what we analysed here. Not only did WWI change substantially the political landscape, but both the districts and electoral system were changed (to proportional representation with 54 multimember districts). Other contexts could be more favourable to explore this question with quantitative methods. This remains a very important question to be addressed by future research.

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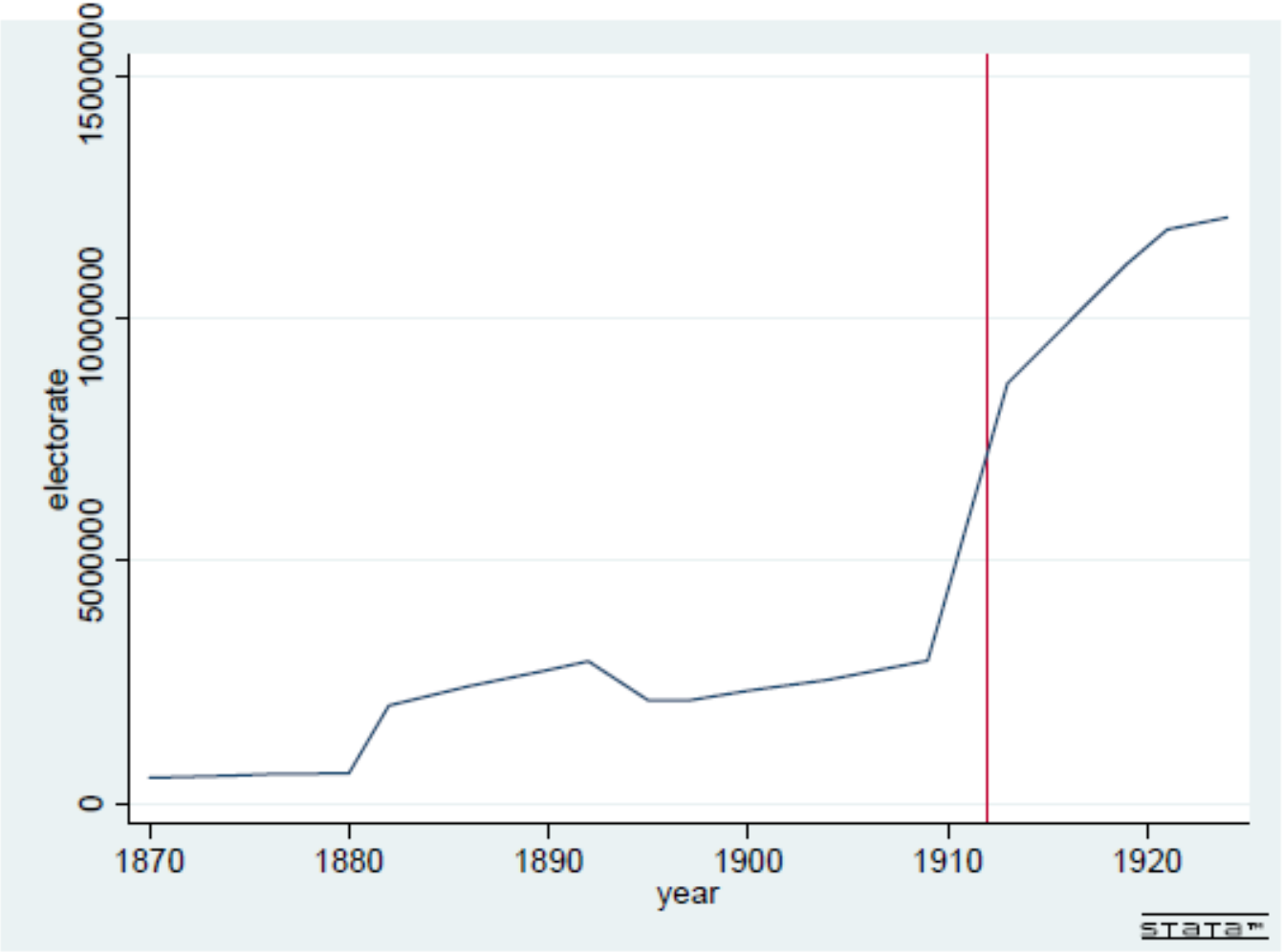

Figure 1. Number of registered voters in Italy (1870-1921)
(the red line indicates 1912)

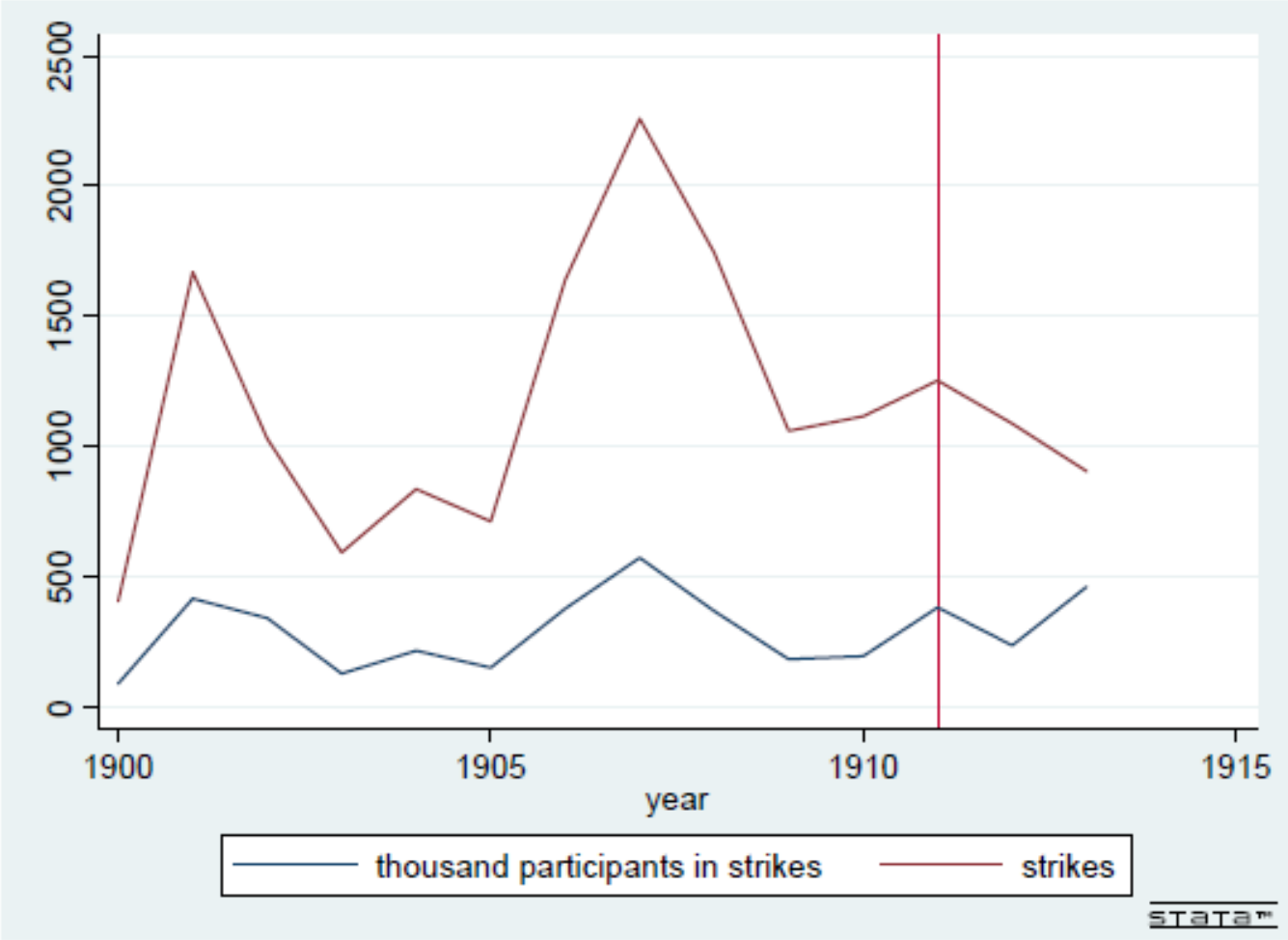

Figure 2. Number of strikes and participants in strikes (1900-1913)
(the red line indicates 1911, when the electoral reform was proposed)

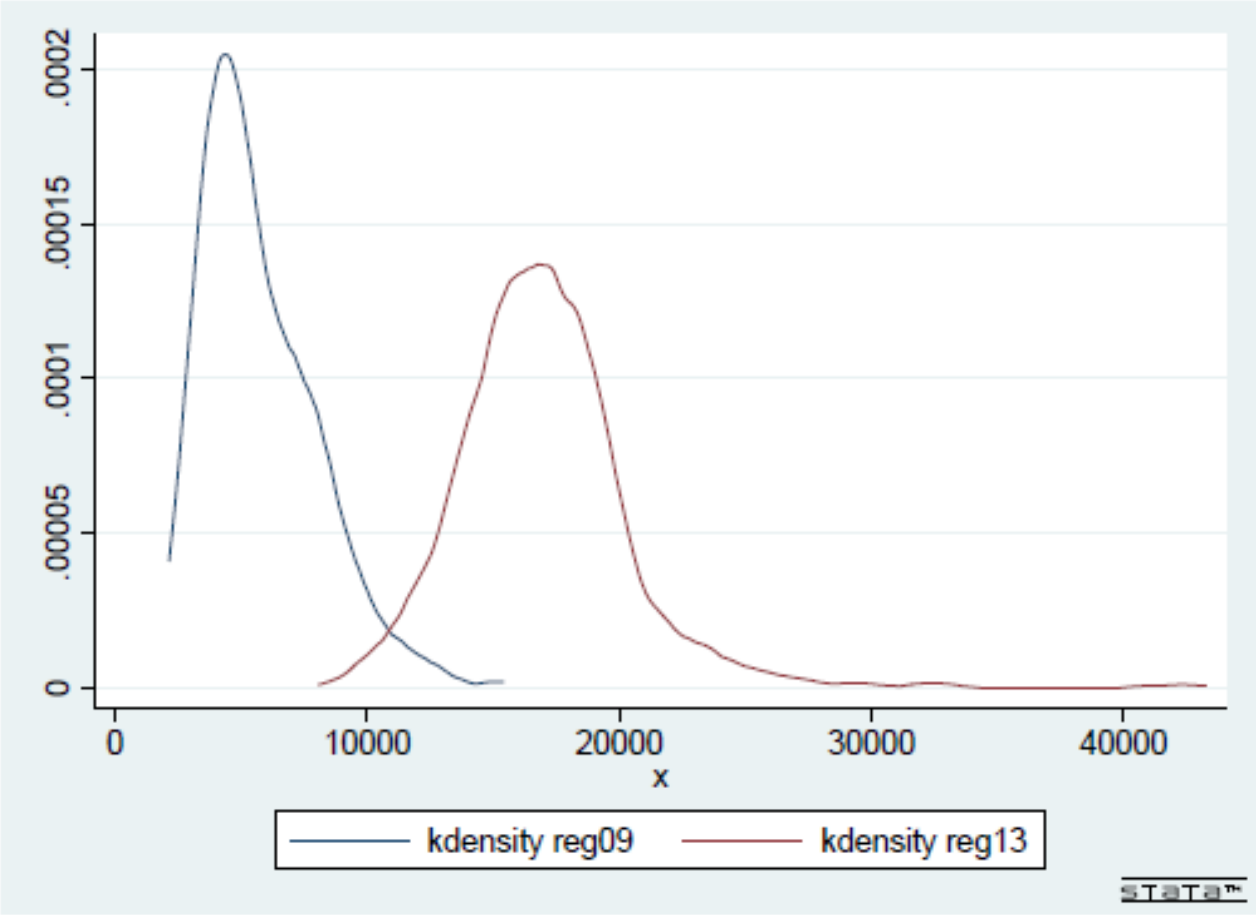

Figure 3. Registered voters by electoral district in 1909 and 1913

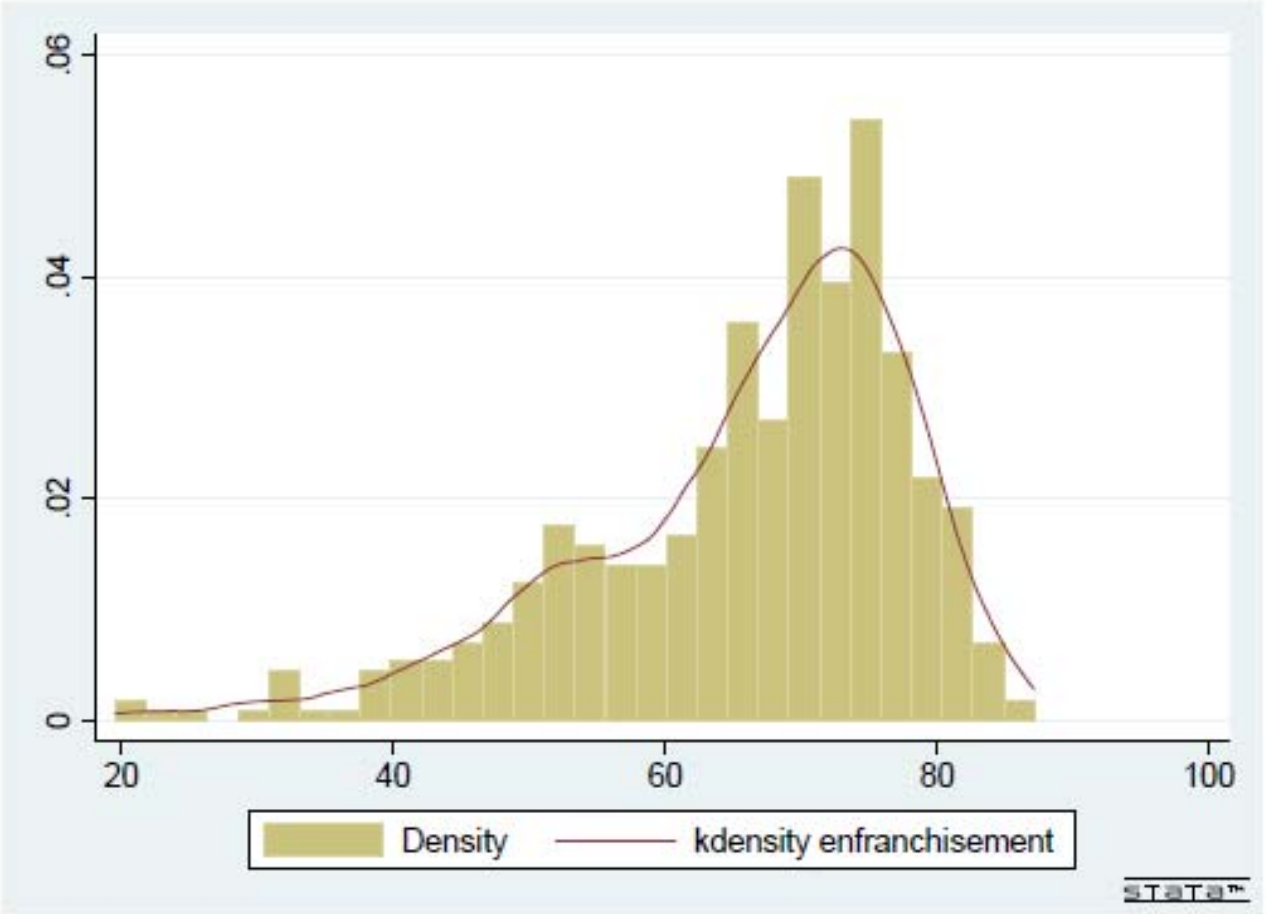

Figure 4. The distribution of ΔE across electoral districts

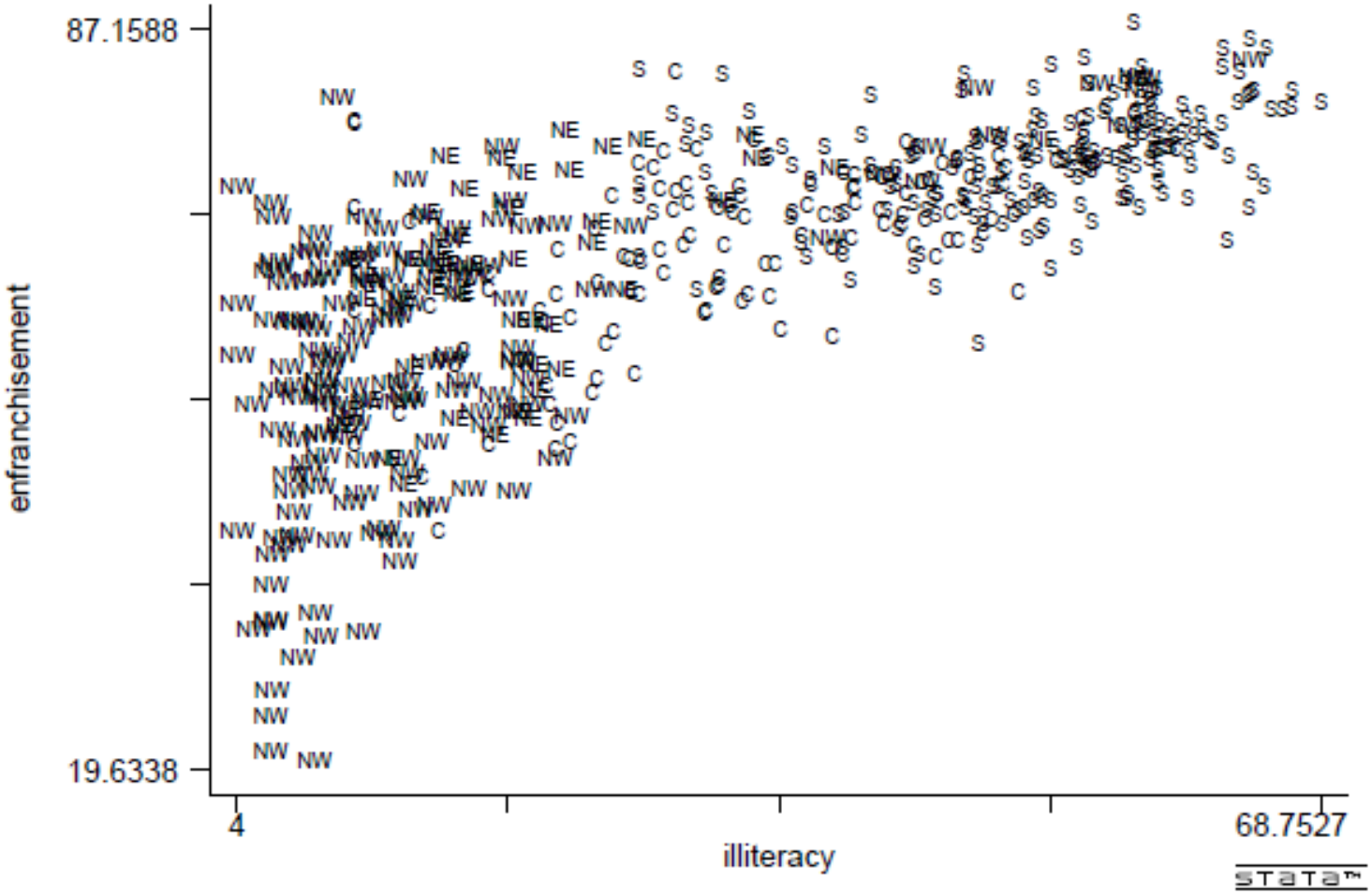

Figure 5. Enfranchisement and illiteracy rates across electoral districts (NW stands for North-West, NE for North-East, C for Centre and S for South)

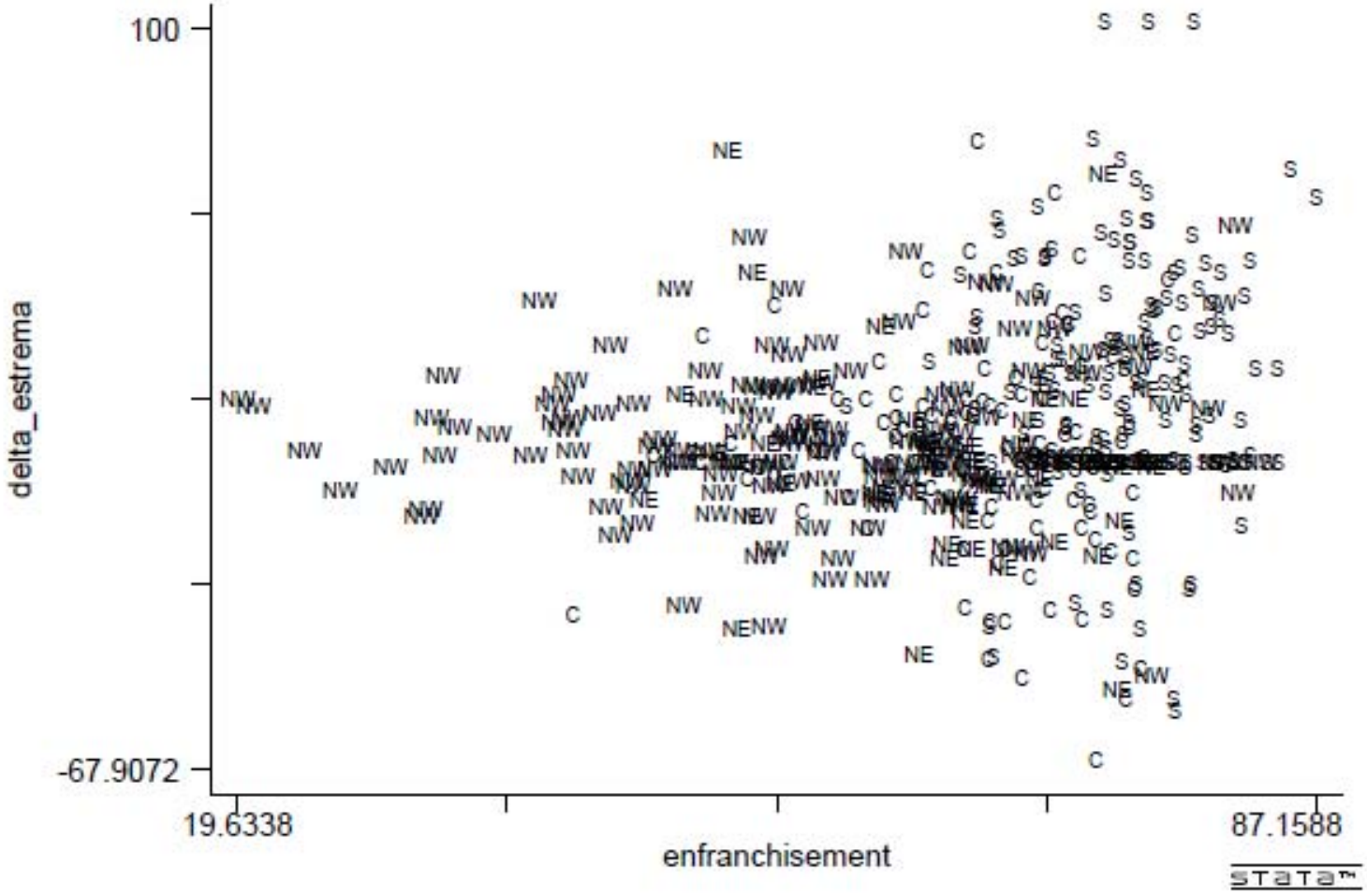

Figure 6. Enfranchisement and change in votes for candidates of the Estrema

Table 1: The parties of the Estrema between 1904 and 1913

Party	Year	number of districts with at least one candidate	average % vote per district	total national vote (%)	seats
Socialists	1904	377	17.01	20.85	27
	1909	234	14.17	18.59	40
	1913	351	20.91	23.02	78
Republicans	1904	77	4.34	4.26	21
	1909	50	4.43	4.35	23
	1913	67	3.5	3.52	17
Radicals	1904	116	9.32	9.08	32
	1909	130	10.98	11.57	53
	1913	150	12.78	12.35	73

Table 2. Aristocrats and elite in the *Camera dei Deputati*

	1904	1909	1913
Aristocrat	97	91	88
Landowners	27	23	27
Military	22	19	18
Diplomatic	10	6	8
Dynasty	54	44	36
Total	146	134	127

Table 3: Correlates of enfranchisement

Dep. variable	ΔE	ΔE	$\Delta E_{(t-1)}$	$\Delta E_{(t-1)}$	ΔE	ΔE	ΔE	ΔE	ΔE	ΔE
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
male illiteracy 1911 (%)	0.4696***	0.4927***	-0.0341**	-0.0119						
	(0.0211)	(0.0273)	(0.0172)	(0.0262)						
vote percentage Estrema 1909					-0.0041***	-0.0024***				
					(0.0003)	(0.0003)				
vote percentage Estrema 1904							-0.0964***	-0.0502***		
							(0.0162)	(0.0121)		
vote percentage Estrema 1900									-0.0897***	-0.0481***
									(0.0195)	(0.0142)
industrial workers (% population) 1911		-0.3406***		0.0669	-0.7027***	-0.2999**	-0.9842***	-0.4323**	-0.9386***	-0.4286**
		(0.1125)		(0.0880)	(0.1086)	(0.1472)	(0.1299)	(0.1852)	(0.1279)	(0.1851)
urbanized (% population) 1911		-0.0563***		0.0123	0.0257	-0.0750***	0.0250	-0.0813***	0.0313	-0.0750***
		(0.0201)		(0.0199)	(0.0234)	(0.0237)	(0.0271)	(0.0259)	(0.0275)	(0.0265)
agricultural workers own land (% pop) 1911		-0.0973		-0.0048	-0.9981***	-0.3661	-1.2384***	-0.3196	-1.1441***	-0.3025
		(0.1229)		(0.1111)	(0.1120)	(0.2700)	(0.1355)	(0.3125)	(0.1348)	(0.3168)
agr. workers not own land (% pop) 1911		-0.3138***		0.0824	0.1305*	0.2918**	0.0098	0.2300*	-0.0048	0.2204*
		(0.0629)		(0.0636)	(0.0705)	(0.1130)	(0.0851)	(0.1243)	(0.0859)	(0.1285)
property of real estate (% population) 1911		-0.0934		0.0518	0.4928***	-0.1929	0.5383***	-0.2831*	0.5021***	-0.2939*
		(0.0933)		(0.0897)	(0.1086)	(0.1612)	(0.1227)	(0.1708)	(0.1274)	(0.1713)
logarithm population 1911		4.5583*		3.0853	10.2107***	12.6074***	5.5723**	9.9833***	5.2793**	9.7030***
		(2.3802)		(2.0072)	(2.4891)	(2.3591)	(2.4879)	(2.2768)	(2.5198)	(2.3098)
(log pop 1911 - log pop 1901)		22.4079***		17.4587***	9.4654	4.2078	13.3898*	3.7828	13.4263*	4.4940
		(7.5874)		(5.9459)	(7.2184)	(8.4696)	(7.8097)	(8.7122)	(7.6802)	(8.7506)
Constant	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls (1901-1911 differences)	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.5472	0.6207	0.0076	0.0719	0.5788	0.8128	0.4823	0.7900	0.4709	0.7883

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in parentheses

Table 4: The effect of enfranchisement on the vote percentage of Estrema candidates

	Dep. variable: vote percentage change (1909-1913) of Estrema candidates					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	0.2509***	0.1771**	0.1672*	0.2943**	0.2515*	0.2533*
	(0.0756)	(0.0818)	(0.1004)	(0.1478)	(0.1437)	(0.1423)
Vote percentage change of Estrema candidates (1904-1909)					-0.2126***	-0.5456
					(0.0547)	(0.3381)
Vote change (1904-1909) x Enfranchisement (1909-1913)						0.0048
						(0.0050)
Constant	-8.9633*	-4.8679	-44.5906	-66.5627	-76.3220	-74.8758
	(4.7169)	(6.1427)	(62.5930)	(66.4891)	(67.1687)	(67.1198)
Controls (differences 1901-1911)	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls (1911 levels)	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Province fixed effects	no	no	No	yes	yes	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0167	0.0327	0.0483	0.2555	0.2891	0.2907

Notes. Control variables in 1901-1911 differences include: natural logarithm of population, percentage of male population above six which is illiterate, percentage population employed in industry, percentage of agricultaral workers (owning land), percentage of agricultural workers (not owning land), percentage of the population that owns real estate. Controls introduced as 1911 levels include all the above controls exept illiteracy rate and adds the percentage of the population living in urban areas. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 5: The effect of enfranchisement on the Estrema net gain of seats

	Dep. variable: Estrema net gain of seats					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	-0.0022	-0.0036*	-0.0036	-0.0089**	-0.0082**	-0.0082**
	(0.0018)	(0.0020)	(0.0024)	(0.0035)	(0.0033)	(0.0033)
Change in Estrema MPs (1904-1909)					-0.3769***	-0.5777**
					(0.0549)	(0.2907)
Change in MPs (1904-1909) x Enfranchisement (1909-1913)						0.0031
						(0.0045)
Constant	0.2486**	0.3094**	1.1541	-0.7227	-1.6623	-1.6235
	(0.1190)	(0.1513)	(1.2145)	(1.3324)	(1.3419)	(1.3369)
Controls (differences 1901-1911)	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls (1911 levels)	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Province fixed effects	no	no	No	yes	yes	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0033	0.0300	0.0417	0.2282	0.3137	0.3145

Notes. Control variables in 1901-1911 differences include: natural logarithm of population, percentage of male population above six which is illiterate, percentage population employed in industry, percentage of agricultaral workers (owning land), percentage of agricultural workers (not owning land), percentage of the population that owns real estate. Controls introduced as 1911 levels include all the above controls exept illiteracy rate and adds the percentage of the population living in urban areas. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 6: The effect of enfranchisement on candidacy (Estrema)

	Dep. variable: ΔC					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	0.0063***	0.0057***	0.0028*	0.0026	0.0020	0.0029
	(0.0015)	(0.0015)	(0.0017)	(0.0028)	(0.0023)	(0.0023)
Estrema candidacy change (1904-1909)					-0.5175***	-1.4892***
					(0.0509)	(0.3118)
candidacy change (1904-1909) x Enfranchisement (1909-1913)						0.0139***
						(0.0045)
Constant	-0.2959***	-0.2454**	-1.2890	-0.5558	-0.6322	-0.9675
	(0.0936)	(0.1179)	(1.1940)	(1.3222)	(1.0593)	(1.0539)
Controls (differences 1901-1911)	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls (1911 levels)	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Province fixed effects	no	no	No	yes	yes	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0260	0.0389	0.0550	0.2306	0.4355	0.4475

Notes. Control variables in 1901-1911 differences include: natural logarithm of population, percentage of male population above six which is illiterate, percentage population employed in industry, percentage of agricultaral workers (owning land), percentage of agricultural workers (not owning land), percentage of the population that owns real estate. Controls introduced as 1911 levels include all the above controls exept illiteracy rate and adds the percentage of the population living in urban areas. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 7: The effect of enfranchisement on electoral competition

Dep variable	Herfindahl-Hirshman index of electoral competition (1909-1913 change)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	-0.0020***	-0.0012	0.0005	-0.0009	-0.0013	-0.0012
	(0.0008)	(0.0008)	(0.0009)	(0.0014)	(0.0012)	(0.0012)
HHI (1904-1909)					-0.5640***	-0.2628
					(0.0515)	(0.3362)
HHI (1904-1909) x Enfranchisement (1909-1913)						-0.0043
						(0.0048)
Constant	0.0719	0.0257	-0.7697	-0.7448	-0.8620	-0.8499
	(0.0474)	(0.0571)	(0.6785)	(0.7530)	(0.5939)	(0.6011)
Controls (differences 1901-1911)	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls (1911 levels)	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Province fixed effects	no	no	No	yes	yes	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0111	0.0304	0.0756	0.2173	0.4338	0.4352

Notes. Control variables in 1901-1911 differences include: natural logarithm of population, percentage of male population above six which is illiterate, percentage population employed in industry, percentage of agricultaral workers (owning land), percentage of agricultural workers (not owning land), percentage of the population that owns real estate. Controls introduced as 1911 levels include all the above controls exept illiteracy rate and adds the percentage of the population living in urban areas. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 8. Are aristocrats more likely to be replaced when enfranchisement is higher?

Dependent variable	Dependent variable: net gain of seats by aristocrats					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	0.0019	0.0020	0.0028	0.0027	0.0018	0.0016
	(0.0015)	(0.0017)	(0.0020)	(0.0042)	(0.0040)	(0.0039)
Aristocrat net seat gain (1904-1909)					-0.1163**	-0.4084
					(0.0453)	(0.3319)
Arist. net seat gain (1904-1909) x Enfranchisement (1909-1913)						0.0043
						(0.0047)
Constant	-0.1310	-0.1274	-0.1301	-0.2149	-0.1148	-0.0626
	(0.1038)	(0.1234)	(0.9794)	(1.2294)	(1.2194)	(1.2195)
Controls (differences 1901-1911)	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls (1911 levels)	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Province fixed effects	no	no	No	yes	yes	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0044	0.0065	0.0143	0.1289	0.1408	0.1433

Notes. Control variables in 1901-1911 differences include: natural logarithm of population, percentage of male population above six which is illiterate, percentage population employed in industry, percentage of agricultaral workers (owning land), percentage of agricultural workers (not owning land), percentage of the population that owns real estate. Controls introduced as 1911 levels include all the above controls exept illiteracy rate and adds the percentage of the population living in urban areas. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 9.Did enfranchisement cause displacement of elites from parliament?

	Dependent variable: net seat gain by elite					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	0.0019	0.0027	0.0033	0.0044	0.0025	0.0022
	(0.0017)	(0.0019)	(0.0022)	(0.0044)	(0.0043)	(0.0042)
Elite net seat gain (1904-1909)					-0.1663***	-0.4214
					(0.0462)	(0.3039)
Elite net seat gain (1904-1909) x Enfranchisement (1909-1913)						0.0037
						(0.0043)
Constant	-0.1433	-0.2074	-0.2222	-0.6906	-0.3888	-0.4335
	(0.1140)	(0.1360)	(1.1340)	(1.3793)	(1.3473)	(1.3495)
Controls (differences 1901-1911)	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls (1911 levels)	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Province fixed effects	no	no	No	yes	yes	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0033	0.0083	0.0126	0.1227	0.1453	0.1469

Notes. Control variables in 1901-1911 differences include: natural logarithm of population, percentage of male population above six which is illiterate, percentage population employed in industry, percentage of agricultaral workers (owning land), percentage of agricultural workers (not owning land), percentage of the population that owns real estate. Controls introduced as 1911 levels include all the above controls exept illiteracy rate and adds the percentage of the population living in urban areas. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 10. Placebo treatment on 1904-1909 changes

Dep. Variable	Votes	Votes	Seats	Seats	Cand.	Cand.	HHI	HHI	Arist.	Arist	Elite	Elite
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
ΔE	-0.0002	-0.2014	0.0003	0.0019	-0.0017	-0.0011	-0.0003	-0.0006	-0.0037**	-0.0078**	-0.0042**	-0.0114***
	(0.0963)	(0.1645)	(0.0020)	(0.0032)	(0.0017)	(0.0030)	(0.0009)	(0.0014)	(0.0017)	(0.0034)	(0.0019)	(0.0034)
Constant	-44.6934	-45.9007	-2.2789*	-2.4927*	0.2282	-0.1477	-0.1583	-0.2077	0.7534	0.8607	1.7158	1.8147
	(58.5097)	(63.9131)	(1.3315)	(1.4210)	(1.3224)	(1.4125)	(0.6592)	(0.7470)	(0.8258)	(1.0054)	(1.1512)	(1.3027)
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Province FE	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0385	0.1727	0.0480	0.2083	0.0563	0.2077	0.0398	0.1756	0.0342	0.1652	0.0325	0.2009

Notes. The dependent variables in column 1-6 refers to the Estrema and it is, respectively, the Estrema 1904-1909 difference in percentage of votes (columns 1-2). the Estrema 1904-1909 net seat gain (columns 3-4), the Estrema 1904-1909 candidacy. The dependent variable in columns 7-8 is the Herfindhal-Hirshman index of electoral competition. Columns 9 and 10 refer to the net seat gain (1904-1909) of Aristocrats and columns 9-10 to the elite (1904-1909) net seat gain. Control variables include both 1911 levels and 1901-1911 differences as described in the Notes to Table 4. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 11: Introducing 1911 male illiteracy rate

Dep. variable	Votes	Votes	Seats	Seats	Candidates	Candidates	Aristocrat	Aristocrat	Elite	Elite
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
ΔE	0.2459*	0.2038	-0.0090**	-0.0090**	0.0009	0.0014	0.0037	0.0026	0.0049	0.0028
	(0.1479)	(0.1415)	(0.0036)	(0.0036)	(0.0027)	(0.0022)	(0.0043)	(0.0041)	(0.0046)	(0.0043)
Lagged dep. Variable		-0.5497		0.0000		-1.5098***		-0.4018		-0.4231
		(0.3421)		(0.0000)		(0.3110)		(0.3166)		(0.2967)
Lagged dep. variable x ΔE		0.0049		0.0000		0.0142***		0.0042		0.0037
		(0.0050)		(0.0000)		(0.0045)		(0.0045)		(0.0042)
Illiteracy rate 1911	0.4776	0.4877	0.0012	0.0012	0.0170**	0.0146**	-0.0098*	-0.0101*	-0.0052	-0.0061
	(0.3110)	(0.3072)	(0.0062)	(0.0062)	(0.0066)	(0.0059)	(0.0055)	(0.0054)	(0.0063)	(0.0061)
Constant	-79.9742	-88.5687	-0.7565	-0.7565	-1.0335	-1.3866	0.0604	0.2200	-0.5453	-0.2603
	(67.6834)	(68.0586)	(1.3558)	(1.3558)	(1.3225)	(1.0485)	(1.1886)	(1.1799)	(1.3661)	(1.3368)
	Controls (differences 1901-1911), Controls (1911 levels) and province fixed effects always included									
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.2587	0.2940	0.2282	0.2282	0.2404	0.4548	0.1350	0.1497	0.1239	0.1486

Notes. Illiteracy rate is taken from the 1911 Census. It is represents the percentage of male population above 6 classified as illiterate. The dependent variables in column 1-6 refers to the Estrema and it is, respectively, the Estrema 1909-1913 difference in percentage of votes (columns 1-2). the Estrema 1909-1913 net seat gain (columns 3-4), the Estrema 1909-1913 candidacy. Columns 7 and 8 refers to the net seat gain (1909-1913) of Aristocrats and columns 9-10 to the elite (1909-1913) net seat gain. Lagged dependent variables refer to the respective outcomes calculated in 1904-1909 differences. Control variables and their differences are described in the Notes to Table 4. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 12. The geographic distribution of enfranchisement effects

Dependent variable	Estrema vote percentage change	Estrema vote percentage change	Estrema net seats gain	Estrema net seats gain	aristocrat net seat gain	aristocrat net seat gain	elite net seat gain	elite net seat gain
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	0.0203		-0.0064**		0.0035		0.0047*	
	(0.1034)		(0.0026)		(0.0022)		(0.0025)	
Enfranchisement (1909-1913) x North-West		0.0928		-0.0049		0.0042		0.0060*
		(0.1184)		(0.0034)		(0.0029)		(0.0032)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913) x North-east		-0.2891		-0.0098		0.0053		0.0048
		(0.3589)		(0.0077)		(0.0063)		(0.0059)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913) x Centre		-0.2725		-0.0087*		0.0069*		0.0059
		(0.2602)		(0.0047)		(0.0036)		(0.0043)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913) x South		0.3454		-0.0098		-0.0101**		-0.0076
		(0.3865)		(0.0068)		(0.0051)		(0.0068)
Control variables	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Area dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
		(0.3866)		(0.0069)		(0.0051)		(0.0068)
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0786	0.0838	0.0592	0.0608	0.0168	0.0311	0.0168	0.0249

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standar errors in parentheses. See table A.1 for a definition of geographic areas. Control variables include all the level and differences controls as described in the notes to Table 4.

Table 13. The effect of enfranchisement at different levels of inequality

Dependent variable	Estrema vote percentage change	Estrema vote percentage change	Estrema net seats gain	Estrema net seats gain	aristocrat net seat gain	aristocrat net seat gain	aristocrat net seat gain	aristocrat net seat gain
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	0.2542*	0.4475*	-0.0000	-0.0044	0.0022	-0.0001	0.0018	0.0007
	(0.1342)	(0.2360)	(0.0032)	(0.0051)	(0.0026)	(0.0044)	(0.0029)	(0.0049)
inequality	23.4068*	25.0922	1.0964**	0.7092	-0.1795	-0.3932	-0.1912	-0.2841
	(13.2690)	(21.4721)	(0.4670)	(0.6135)	(0.7493)	(0.8811)	(0.7571)	(0.8974)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913) x inequality	-0.3119	-0.3395	-0.0124*	-0.0104	0.0018	0.0065	0.0060	0.0104
	(0.2435)	(0.2953)	(0.0072)	(0.0085)	(0.0111)	(0.0126)	(0.0114)	(0.0133)
Constant	-57.5301	-72.4084	0.5303	-0.9163	-0.0259	-0.0810	-0.1446	-0.3882
	(63.8313)	(67.8704)	(1.2144)	(1.3501)	(0.9659)	(1.2199)	(1.1392)	(1.3843)
Control variables	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Province fixed effects	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0504	0.2569	0.0554	0.2312	0.0150	0.1309	0.0153	0.1275

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. Control variables include both 1911 levels and 1901-1911 differences as described in the notes to table 4. Inequality is defined in section 6.4

Table 14. The effect of enfranchisement in swing districts

Dependent variable	Estrema vote percentage change	Estrema vote percentage change	Estrema net seats gain	Estrema net seats gain
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	0.3312**	0.4108**	0.0015	-0.0048
	(0.1495)	(0.1961)	(0.0022)	(0.0036)
swing	19.8646*	13.9225	0.5232**	0.4049
	(10.8650)	(11.6363)	(0.2309)	(0.2607)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913) x swing	-0.3902**	-0.2990	-0.0069*	-0.0055
	(0.1756)	(0.1854)	(0.0037)	(0.0041)
Constant	-81.3890	-96.9368	1.0510	-0.7887
	(65.7795)	(68.9311)	(1.2530)	(1.3411)
Control variables	yes	yes	yes	yes
Province fixed effects	no	yes	no	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0703	0.2698	0.0533	0.2331

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. Control variables include both 1911 levels and 1901-1911 differences as described in the notes to table 4. Swing is defined in section 6.5

Table 15. Enfranchisement and the Gentiloni Pact

Dependent variable	vote percentage of Extrema candidates					net seat gain of Estrema				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	0.2810***	0.2217**	0.2369*	0.4014**	0.3581**	-0.0026	-0.0035	-0.0029	-0.0085**	-0.0074**
	(0.1020)	(0.1035)	(0.1208)	(0.1642)	(0.1580)	(0.0023)	(0.0024)	(0.0027)	(0.0035)	(0.0032)
Gentiloni	-4.8208	-4.3054	-3.8520	4.5597	3.1830	-0.4029*	-0.3891*	-0.4339**	-0.4847**	-0.4836**
	(8.6698)	(8.4389)	(8.7963)	(9.8152)	(9.4616)	(0.2068)	(0.2060)	(0.2142)	(0.2359)	(0.2098)
Gentiloni x Enfranchisement (1909-1913)	-0.0902	-0.0987	-0.0976	-0.2051	-0.2008	0.0006	0.0005	0.0012	0.0020	0.0015
	(0.1402)	(0.1376)	(0.1437)	(0.1586)	(0.1537)	(0.0031)	(0.0031)	(0.0032)	(0.0035)	(0.0032)
Constant	-6.2000	-1.6656	-34.8873	-51.1760	-57.9104	0.4331***	0.5024***	1.6124	0.1328	-0.8423
	(6.3841)	(7.1729)	(62.4906)	(65.9349)	(66.6603)	(0.1509)	(0.1724)	(1.1370)	(1.2960)	(1.2728)
Controls (differences 1901-1911)	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Controls (1911 levels)	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Province fixed effects	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes
Lagged dep variable and interaction with enfranchisement	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	yes
Observations	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508	508
R-squared	0.0708	0.0842	0.0939	0.2851	0.3270	0.1627	0.1731	0.1822	0.3402	0.4467

Notes. Gentiloni is a dummy variable equal to 1 in electoral districts where one of the candidates signed the Gentiloni pact. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Other control variables are defined in the Notes in Table 4

Table A1: Summary statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Enfranchisement (1909-13)	66.134	11.929	19.634	87.159
Enfranchisement (1904-09)	12.99133	7.334	-29.490	43.991
vote percentage change of Estrema candidates (1909-1913)	7.632	23.142	-67.907	100.000
vote percentage change of Estrema candidates (1904-1909)	-1.101	21.922	-99.458	90.258
Δseats Estrema (1909-1913)	0.104	0.452	-1.000	1.000
Δseats Estrema (1904-1909)	0.051	0.394	-1.000	1.000
Δcandidacy Estrema (1904-1909)	0.120	0.465	-1.000	1.000
Δcandidacy Estrema (1904-1909)	-0.148	0.457	-1.000	1.000
ΔHHI (1909-1913)	-0.062	0.229	-0.755	0.630
ΔHHI (1904-1909)	0.021	0.208	-0.517	0.641
Δaristocrat (1909-1913)	-0.006	0.341	-1.000	1.000
Δaristocrat (1904-1909)	-0.012	0.349	-1.000	1.000
Δelite (1909-1913)	-0.016	0.402	-1.000	1.000
Δelite (1904-1909)	-0.020	0.407	-1.000	1.000
gentiloni	0.441	0.497	0.000	1.000
inequality	0.199	0.166	0.042	1.000
male illiteracy rate 1911	33.613	18.791	4.000	68.753
swing district	0.445	0.497	0.000	1.000
North-West	0.293	0.456	0.000	1.000
North-East	0.098	0.298	0.000	1.000
Centre	0.236	0.425	0.000	1.000
South	0.372	0.484	0.000	1.000

Notes: The number of observations is 508 for all variables. North-West includes Sardegna, Piemonte, Lombardia, Liguria. North-East includes Veneto (which also incuded current Friuli-Venezia Giulia); Centre includes all the remaining regions with the exception of the former Kingdom of Naples, which constitutes the South. All other variables are defined in the main text.