

The Battle of the Sexes for Mayoral Re-election: Gender Differences in Early Childcare Provision

Elena Renzullo

Abstract

Female leaders, due to the gender gap in policy priorities and competing behaviours, may adopt more or less gender-sensitive policies than their male counterparts. This work studies potential gender differences in public early childcare provision across Italian municipalities governed by male and female mayors leveraging a municipal-year administrative dataset (2002-2015) and a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) based on close mixed-gender elections. The initial findings of this work do not indicate significant gender differences in childcare provision. However, a notable gap emerges when comparing male and female mayors seeking re-election. Male mayors running for a second term allocate more resources and provide a greater number of early childcare spots for children compared to their female counterparts. Further analysis reveals that this gender difference is driven by male mayors allocating more resources specifically to gender-sensitive policies than their female counterparts. This gap widens in the pre-election and electoral years.