Female Enfranchisement and the Conservative Voting Gap: Evidence from Gender-Separated Precinct Returns*

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Abstract

Newly enfranchised German women in the 1920s consistently voted against the party that had secured their political rights. Despite being poorer and mobilized largely through the Social Democratic Party, women's vote share for confessional center parties was 10 percentage points higher than men's. To understand why, we leverage a unique institutional feature of Munich's 1924 election: ballots counted separately by gender. This allows us to construct precinct-level observations of male and female voting behavior which we link to newly digitized pre-suffrage data on occupations, socioeconomic status, and religion. While religious identity serves as a powerful predictor of female voting behavior, proxies for material self-interest have no explanatory power, suggesting that the 'identity payoff' dominated the 'redistributive payoff' for newly enfranchised women. Our findings demonstrate that cultural and religious identity, more than material self-interest, can shape the voting behavior of disadvantaged groups.

Keywords: Female suffrage, Voting behavior, Religion, Cultural identity

JEL codes: D72, N42, J16

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1 Introduction

Female suffrage fundamentally reshaped political representation, public policy, and social inequalities (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000). Standard political economy models predict that extending the vote to poorer groups should shift governments leftward, increasing support for redistribution (Lott and Kenny, 1999; Edlund and Pande, 2002; Miller, 2008). Yet historical evidence reveals a puzzle: newly enfranchised women often favored tradition-based parties over the redistributive offerings of the left (Ogburn and Goltra, 1919; Willey and Rice, 1924; Tingsten, 1937; Morgan-Collins, 2015). In Weimar Germany, for instance, women supported confessional center parties by a margin of ten percentage points over men, voting against both their economic class and the Social Democratic Party that had secured their rights.

Among the factors that could explain this divergence, cultural identity, and religion in particular, has long been recognized as a slow-moving determinant of political preferences (Bisin and Verdier, 2001; Alesina and Giuliano, 2015; Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2010). In empirical research on interwar Germany, Catholic affiliation is consistently identified as a powerful determinant of voting behavior, often acting as a bulwark against the extreme right while mobilizing support for moderate confessional parties (Falter, 1991; King et al., 2008; Spenkuch and Tillmann, 2018; Becker and Voth, 2023). Given that women were disproportionately Catholic, we hypothesize that their support for confessional parties, which acted as a shield against both the socialist left and the nationalist right, was driven by traditional religious values rather than economic self-interest.

We test this hypothesis using a newly constructed dataset for Munich's 1924 election that exploits gender-separated ballot counts at the precinct level. By linking these returns to pre-suffrage census records on religion, occupation, and socioeconomic status, we observe how men and women in the same neighborhood voted differently and can trace that difference to specific covariates. This level of resolution is unavailable in the aggregate electoral data used by prior studies of interwar voting.

Economic characteristics do not explain the gender gap. We measure economic status through occupational income scores and the presence of elite women (independent, non-widowed female household heads); both are statistically indistinguishable from zero. The share of women in a precinct does exhibit some predictive power, but its effect is about half the size of the religious

channel.

Religious identity, by contrast, is the dominant predictor. While a large literature has established that Catholicism shaped voting patterns across interwar German cities and regions (Falter, 1991; King et al., 2008; Spenkuch and Tillmann, 2018; Becker and Voth, 2023), our within-city evidence shows this held at the precinct level: precincts with more Catholic women relative to men display markedly higher female support for the confessional center, an association far stronger than any economic or demographic effect. Crucially, Catholic identity did not produce a general conservative drift: it mobilized women for the confessional center while simultaneously dampening support for the nationalist right.

Other mechanisms frequently emphasized in the historical literature also fail to account for the gender gap. Using highly granular precinct-level data, we construct proxies for local social networks and local human capital. While these factors mattered for political participation overall, they do not explain the systematic divergence between women's and men's votes.

As supplementary evidence, we present instrumental variable estimates in Appendix C, using historical church proximity to instrument for Catholic density. These estimates are consistent with our baseline findings, though the exclusion restriction rests on assumptions we cannot fully verify.

Our findings contribute to a longstanding debate in political economy over the political effects of franchise extensions. While models of redistribution predict leftward shifts, historical evidence from interwar Germany and the United States shows that newly enfranchised women often favored confessional center-right parties that had been ambivalent about their enfranchisement, challenging the standard prediction (Lott and Kenny, 1999; Edlund and Pande, 2002; Inglehart and Norris, 2000). (Hicks, 2013) posits that war acts as an exogenous catalyst for suffrage; we show that in the aftermath of such a shock, the resulting electoral dynamics are governed by pre-existing social identities rather than the economic redistribution predicted by standard models. We extend this literature by demonstrating that in Weimar Munich, cultural identity, and specifically religious affiliation, systematically outweighed economic self-interest in shaping women's votes.

More broadly, our results connect to work on identity economics (Bénabou and Tirole, 2011; Shayo, 2009) and contemporary debates on franchise expansions. Theoretical models suggest that when social identity is highly salient, voters may sacrifice their material self-interest to align with

cultural or religious values (Shayo, 2009). Bozzano (2017) shows that historically rooted religious identities shape women's willingness to participate in politics across Italian provinces, extending this link beyond voting to active political engagement. Our results provide granular historical evidence for this mechanism. Recent extensions of voting rights (to immigrants, naturalized citizens, or younger cohorts) often assume that new voters will align with economic interests (Hainmueller et al., 2017; Verbeek, 2021). Kammas and Sarantides (2025) document a similar gender voting gap following women's enfranchisement in 1950s Greece, finding that the gap is conditional on urbanization and female labor force participation. Our evidence from Munich suggests that religion, rather than labor force exclusion, was the primary channel. More generally, our results caution that such expectations may be misleading if entrenched cultural identities shape voting behavior independently of material incentives (Alesina et al., 2021; Tabellini, 2020).

The paper proceeds in four steps. After describing the historical background, we begin our analysis by descriptively documenting gendered voting gaps using precinct-level returns. We then examine whether economic differences explain these patterns and show they do not. Next, we turn to religion, finding it to be the dominant predictor of women's confessional voting, a result that is robust across specifications and sample compositions. Finally, we test alternative mechanisms highlighted in the historical literature, such as local networks and human capital, and show that they play little role.

2 Conceptual Framework

To interpret the voting behavior of newly enfranchised women, we draw on two competing theoretical frameworks in political economy: standard redistributive models and identity economics.

Standard rational choice models, most notably Meltzer and Richard (1981), posit that voters support policies that maximize their material self-interest. A key prediction of these models is that franchise extensions to poorer segments of the population should shift the median voter to the left, increasing support for redistribution and social spending. In the context of Weimar Germany, women entered the electorate with significantly fewer assets and lower labor market earnings than men. Under the standard model, this economic disadvantage should have driven female voters toward the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which championed redistribution and social welfare.

Identity economics, however, suggests that political preferences are shaped not only by material consumption but also by adherence to social norms and group prescriptions (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Bénabou and Tirole, 2011). Shayo (2009) formalizes this trade-off, proposing that voters maximize a utility function that weighs both economic payoff and social distance to their identified group. When the salience of a specific social identity (e.g., religion) is high, voters may derive greater utility from aligning with that group's prescribed political behavior, even if it contradicts their economic class interest. The fragmentation of interwar Munich may have intensified the trade-off between economic payoffs and social distance, compelling women to prioritize 'group-specific protections' over broader material gains (Snower and Bosworth, 2021).

The relevance of this framework extends well beyond the historical context. It applies to contemporary political puzzles where social groups, such as religious minorities or immigrant communities, prioritize cultural or religious values over economic interests. In these cases, the 'identity payoff' of supporting a party aligned with cultural values outweighs the material gains offered by a party aligned with their economic interests.

Weimar-era Munich provides a sharp test of these competing predictions. The Catholic Church maintained a dense network of social organizations that sustained the high salience of religious identity, i.e., the confessional milieu. For Catholic women, the 'identity payoff' of voting for the center (Zentrum/BVP) potentially outweighed the 'redistributive payoff' of voting for the socialist left. Furthermore, this framework helps explain the rejection of the nationalist right: if the relevant identity is defined by *confession* rather than *nation*, voters will reject parties that threaten the church's autonomy, even if those parties share some conservative social values.

3 Historical Background

At the onset of women's suffrage in 1918, German politics was commonly described as divided into three broad ideological blocs. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) supported suffrage and expected electoral returns for its redistributive platform. The Confessional Center, led by the Catholic Zentrum party, emphasized the protection of church interests and Christian social ethics. Parties on the Nationalist Right, by contrast, opposed the Weimar Constitution itself, advocating for a return to the monarchy and a pre-republican social order (Bielefeld, 2023).

3.1 Elections during the Weimar Republic: 1919–1933

World War I ended on November 9, 1918 with the proclamation of the German Republic (*Deutsche Republik*), later known as the Weimar Republic. Seeking to overcome a structural disadvantage from the Imperial run-off system (in which it often led in the first round but lost to a unified conservative in the second), the SPD backed a new electoral law signed on November 30 that granted the vote to all men and women over twenty and replaced run-offs with proportional representation (Winkler, 1993, p. 65). Less than two months later, the first election of the Weimar Republic formed the National Constitutional Assembly on January 19, 1919. The Assembly signed the Treaty of Versailles and drafted the Weimar Constitution. It dissolved on May 21, 1920, with regular Reichstag elections held on June 6, 1920 (Winkler, 1993).

The Weimar Republic is famous for its fragmented multi-party system (Kronenberg, 2007). In part because proportional representation lacked an electoral threshold, the number of parties competing in Reichstag elections rose from seven in 1920 to nineteen in 1932 (Kronenberg, 2007). Broadly speaking, these parties fell into three ideological blocs (Falter et al., 1986):

The Confessional Center The Catholic Zentrum party and its Bavarian counterpart, the Bavarian People's Party (BVP), represented the interests of the Catholic minority. While Zentrum accepted female suffrage as part of the Weimar constitutional framework, it framed women's political engagement strictly within the context of religious duty and the preservation of the Christian family.

The Center Left: The Social Democratic Party (SPD) was the dominant center-left force, focused on workers rights, social welfare and redistribution, with the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) and the Communist Party (KPD) positioned further to the left. Crucially, the SPD was the driving force behind female suffrage and campaigned on themes of gender equality and women's political participation.

The Nationalist Bloc: The German Democratic Party (DDP) and German People's Party (DVP) both opposed the Weimar Republic and the broader societal changes it introduced, including ex-

panded rights for women.[1] These parties instead advocated for nationalist values such as a return to the monarchy in addition to traditional gender roles. In our empirical analysis, we group these parties under the label “Center-Right." While the bloc ranged from liberal (DDP) to far-right (NSDAP), our interest lies in the contrast between confessional center parties and the two flanking blocs. We do not analyze NSDAP vote shares separately, as the party received negligible support in Munich’s 1924 election.

3.2 Winning women’s vote

Parties quickly targeted new female voters with distinct appeals. On the political left, the SPD campaigned on gender equality and female civic agency (Figure 1a), reflecting decades of activist organizing within the SPD (Sneeringer, 2002, p. 14). While both centrist and nationalist parties emphasized motherhood, social order, and traditional gender roles (Figures 1b–c), the values underpinning these appeals differed. For centrist parties, Christian faith provided the central frame, symbolized in Figure 1b by the cross around the woman’s neck. For nationalist parties, by contrast, the nation-state was the primary reference point, conveyed in Figure 1c through the prominent flag and the absence of religious symbols. These campaign posters reflected the ideological visions on offer for the country: secular emancipation on the one hand or traditional gender and family roles inspired by religion on the other (Sneeringer, 2002, p. 57).[2]

Despite leading the fight for female suffrage, the SPD struggled to win women’s votes. In a number of special election counts, women consistently supported parties other than the SPD, including in cities like Cologne, Munich, and other Bavarian towns (Sneeringer, 2002; Falter et al., 1986). Instead, female voters were more likely to support Zentrum or the BVP, reflecting the continued importance of religion and tradition in shaping women’s political preferences.[3] Prom-

[1]The nationalist bloc also includes extreme far-right parties such as the German National People’s Party (DNVP) as well as Hitler’s National Socialist Freedom Movement (NSDAP).

[2]The efficacy of confessional parties in mobilizing women around a shared religious identity mirrors modern evidence in Fałkowski (2022). They demonstrate that religiosity remains a robust driver of civic participation and turnout, even in secularizing or post-communist contexts, suggesting a persistent relationship between religious commitment and political engagement.

[3]We confirm these accounts collecting extensive data on election counts by gender. Appendix Figure B.1 reports average vote shares for center-left and center parties for 34 large cities separately by gender. In every city, center-left parties gained fewer votes from women, while center parties gained more.

inent suffrage activists, often independent and secular women, appear to have over-estimated the breadth of support for their agenda, under-weighting the pull of religion and family structures among the median female voter (Sandmann-Bremme, 1956; Sneeringer, 2002).

What Sneeringer (2002) called the "Culture versus Butter" trade-off defined the primary axis of female political life during the mid-1920s. While the SPD offered material redistribution and social welfare, the *Bürgerblock* (the non-socialist bourgeois coalition) offered culture: the preservation of traditional family structures and religious education. The SPD's failure to capture the median female voter, despite intensive mobilization, suggests that women maximized utility through culture rather than redistribution. This was not a result of information asymmetries; the SPD's agenda was pervasive in urban environments (Boak, 2013). Rather, the preference for the Zentrum represented an informed prioritization of a collective-religious identity over the secular-individualistic model, indicating that the 'identity payoff' systematically outweighed material incentives, even in urban centers such as Munich 1924.

Taken together, the historical record points to a persistent pattern: women were less likely than men to support the party that secured their franchise. The irony of women's suffrage in the Weimar Republic is that confessional parties, which had historically viewed women's rights advocacy with suspicion, became the political home of large blocs of female voters. By effectively mobilizing women around religious identity, these parties successfully competed against the Socialist Left while simultaneously insulating Catholic women from the appeals of the Nationalist Right.

4 Data

Our analysis is based on newly digitized data from historical sources. The unit of observation is the electoral precinct for the 1924 Munich elections, which report results separately by gender. This yields a precinct-by-gender stacked cross-sectional dataset, enabling us to exploit within-precinct variation.

Gender-separated election results: Our analysis is based on precinct-level election results for Munich in 1924, which were tabulated separately for women and men. A precinct is the smallest level of aggregation and on average aggregates the vote of 879 men and 1,056 women in 1924 (Table 1).

Two sets of documents survived in the archives: (1) the election results by precinct number and (2) a list of each address and the precinct to which it belongs. We use this mapping between addresses and election results to identify the exact households per voting district per election. We merge these election results to our directory data in 1924, effectively linking the universe of 219,087 households to one of the 175 voting precincts in which they were located.

We define our main dependent variable, $Center_{p,g}$, as the vote share for the center party from gender $g \in \{w, m\}$ in precinct p:

$$Center_{p,g} = \frac{Votes\ Center_{p,g}}{\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} Votes_{i,p,g}} \tag{1}$$

where the denominator sums the votes across all parties $\mathcal{I}$ from gender $g \in \{w, m\}$.[4]

City Directories (Address Bücher): We obtain pre-franchise covariates from the city directory in 1910. As noted in Bühler et al. (2024), city directories were the primary source to locate and contact people in a city. They contained the names of the heads of each household in the city, the exact address, occupation of the household head as well as an indicator for whether a woman leading a household was a widow. We obtain scanned copies of the 1910 directory from the Bavarian State Library and transcribe the entries with the help of a data entry company. Bühler et al. (2024) note that the transcription error is less than 0.1% and contains the universe of all households in Munich. We use this data in order to generate precinct-level aggregates of occupational income scores by gender. Table 1 shows that as expected, women have a 10% lower occupational income score than men. This is likely an overestimate, as only non-widowed, independent women are observed in the directory but wives are subsumed under their husband. We use the number of observable women to create the share of households led by independent women.

There are two primary reasons why information from the Munich city directories is especially suitable for quantitative analysis. First, during the late 19^{th} and early 20^{th} century, Munich was a large, industrial and rapidly growing urban center in the country with active political participation across the spectrum. Second, the records are published by the police administration of the state of Bavaria and by the city of Munich and rely on resident registration records, making the data

[4]This specification ensures that the denominator is restricted to the total votes cast by the specific gender group, rendering the measure invariant to gender-based turnout shocks.

accurate and complete.

City Census: We collect data from the last pre-franchise census in 1910 to construct the 1912 voting precincts. These data come from the city archives and contain information at the address level (i.e., an apartment building, but not the specific unit within the building). In this census, enumerators recorded the exact number of men and women at every address. We thus use this data to calculate precinct level measures of the share of population that is male or female. This census also contains data at the level of *Stadtbezirk* (city district), which details the share of catholic inhabitants by gender.[5] Table 1 shows that in 1910, the average precinct contained 1,398 men and 1,595 women. In terms of religious composition, the share of Catholic women was 4.6 percentage points higher than that of men.

Linking procedure Our data construction operates at the address level and proceeds in three steps. First, we start from 16,351 addresses recorded in the 1910 city census, each containing on average 17 men and 19 women. We link 99.4% of these addresses to the 1910 city directory, extracting household-level covariates (occupation, socioeconomic status, gender of household head) for more than 170,000 households. Second, we use the 1924 city directory to identify the voting precinct assigned to each address in the 1924 election. Because both directories record the same physical addresses, we can track locations across the 14-year gap: 14,145 addresses (86.5%) in 906 streets can be linked to a precinct in both 1924 and 1912. We then calculate expected votes from each address for each party, using the ratio of households per address to households per precinct.[6] Third, we aggregate these address-level expected votes and covariates to the precinct boundaries of 1912, producing a precinct-by-gender dataset with pre-franchise controls.

[5]There are 26 city districts in Munich. Data available in 'Statistisches Amt der Stadt München (1912), Mitteilungen des Statistischen Amtes XXIV, Heft 1, 1. Teil, Page 25. This implies precincts lie within a city district. Aggregating to or clustering at the city district level does not quantitatively affect our results.

[6]In precinct 151, with 1,363 households in 135 addresses, the center party gained 138 votes from men and 324 from women. Thus, each household is expected to contribute 0.339 votes to the center party's total tally. That is, at the average address in precinct 151, the center party gains 1 vote from men and 2.4 votes from women.

Measurement error from the 14-year gap We use 1910 data deliberately: pre-franchise covariates cannot be affected by post-suffrage political sorting, which would contaminate 1924-based measures. The cost is measurement error, as neighborhood composition may have shifted between 1910 and 1924, a period that includes the First World War. We view this as a favorable trade-off. Any such measurement error works *against* our findings: classical measurement error attenuates coefficients toward zero, making our estimates conservative lower bounds. Moreover, religious affiliation is likely the most persistent characteristic in our data, as confessional identity in early twentieth-century Bavaria was transmitted intergenerationally and reinforced by dense parish networks. The high address-linking rate (86.5% across 14 years, including a world war) suggests that the physical urban fabric of Munich remained largely intact.

We summarize our data in Table A.1, highlighting differences between women and men per precinct in 1910. We acknowledge that directory-based occupational scores likely measure female socioeconomic status with greater noise than for men, as directories primarily recorded household heads and may omit informal female labor. This classical measurement error suggests our OLS estimates for economic controls may be attenuated. Yet, the census shows that precincts contained, on average, 196 more women than men. Women are also 4.6% more likely to be Catholic, and poorer on average.

5 Female Voting Gap

We first document the gender gap in the 1924 election descriptively, exploiting the granular nature of our data in three ways.

First, Figure 2 provides a geographical visualization of both our data and spatial voting patterns in Munich. The maps show precinct-level vote shares for the confessional center parties (Zentrum and BVP), separately for men (Panel a) and women (Panel b). Several patterns emerge. While male support for these parties appears somewhat dispersed and weaker across the city, female support is notably more concentrated and intense, especially in the central and eastern districts. The darker areas on the right-hand map indicate precincts where over 35 percent of women voted for confessional parties, substantially higher than the corresponding male support in the same locations. This spatial divergence provides early visual evidence of gendered voting behavior and

highlights the granularity of our precinct-level dataset.

Second, in Figure 3 we plot the vote share for the center by gender across all 175 precincts in Munich. Each vertical line connects the male (black square) and female (white square) vote shares within the same precinct, sorted in increasing order of the gender gap. The figure reveals a consistent pattern: in every single precinct, more women voted for confessional parties than men. The gender gap is substantial, with virtually no overlap in the distributions. This pattern aligns with historical accounts emphasizing the role of religion and traditional values in anchoring women's political preferences.

Finally, Table 1 quantifies these distinct gender gaps across the political spectrum. Female voters significantly penalized the Left, recording an 8.6 percentage point deficit despite the bloc's redistributive platform. This political exit was almost entirely captured by the Confessional Center, which enjoyed a 10.1 percentage point surplus among women. By contrast, the aggregate vote share for center-right parties remained largely unchanged, indicating that the gender gap was driven by a substitution from the left to the center rather than a rejection of the right.[7] Regarding participation, although the female electorate was significantly larger, lower female turnout rates resulted in a negligible gap in total ballots cast (averaging just 13 additional female votes per precinct).

Crucially, this consolidation around the center did not imply a simple shift to the right. Greater female support for confessional parties came at the expense of both the socialist left (SPD) and the nationalist right. As we show later in our analysis, this implies that female enfranchisement in Munich strengthened the constitutional center against both political extremes, rather than fueling a uniform conservative drift.

6 Drivers of the Female Voting Gap

The descriptive evidence points to a substitution from the left to the confessional center. We now use regression analysis to test whether this pattern is driven by religious affiliation or economic characteristics, exploiting the precinct-by-gender structure of our data.

[7] Results by party are shown in Table A.1.

6.1 Empirical Design

We exploit the precinct-by-gender structure of our data to estimate gender-differential effects of religion and economics on confessional voting. Before turning to our main specification, we present cross-sectional regressions of precinct-level center vote shares on Catholic population shares and income, estimated separately by gender.

Figure 4 plots the coefficients of local religious composition on voting behavior, stratified by gender. A one-percentage point increase in the Catholic female population share correlates with a 0.4 percentage point rise in the female Center Party vote share. Conversely, the effect of Catholic male density on male voting is statistically zero. Unlike religion, income levels do not produce a gendered voting gap.

These cross-sectional estimates are, however, vulnerable to unobserved heterogeneity at the local level. If latent factors (idiosyncratic precinct-level political traditions, socio-economic shocks) correlate with both religious composition and gendered voting, the coefficients will be biased. To isolate the effect of religious density from these confounders, we transition to a specification including precinct fixed effects, ensuring identification relies solely on within-precinct variation between genders.

To this end, our main strategy estimates parameters of the following empirical specification:

$$\begin{aligned} Center_{1924,p,g} = {} & \beta_0 Female\ Vote_{p,g} + \Gamma_p \\ & + \beta^F Share\ Female\ Catholic_{1910,p} \times Female\ Vote_{p,g} + \delta^F Female\ Income_{1910,p} \times Female\ Vote_{p,g} \\ & + \beta^M Share\ Male\ Catholic_{1910,p} \times Female\ Vote_{p,g} + \delta^M Male\ Income_{1910,p} \times Female\ Vote_{p,g} \\ & + \Theta_p \times Female\ Vote_{p,g} + \epsilon_{p,g} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Where Center$_{p,g}$ is the vote share for confessional parties in precinct p for gender g. Female Vote$_{p,g}$ is a binary variable set to 1 for female votes and 0 for male votes.

The constant β_0 captures the raw gender gap in support for these confessional parties. In other words, it measures the average difference in voting between women and men across all 175 precincts. Precinct fixed effects, denoted by Γ_p, absorb all characteristics common to both genders within a precinct, allowing us to interpret coefficients on interactions with the female indicator as differential effects on women, relative to men in the same precinct.

To explore cultural drivers of the voting gap, we include the share of Catholics (measured sep-

arately for men and women) in the precinct and interact each with the female vote indicator.[8] Since these measures are constant within a precinct, β^F identifies whether women in precincts with more Catholic women vote more for confessional parties than their male counterparts. Similarly, β^M isolates whether women in precincts with more Catholic men vote more for confessional parties than their male counterparts.[9]

To test the economic channel, we include gender-specific economic characteristics in our estimation. These include (i.) occupational scores (as proxies for income); (ii.) the relative size of the female/male population in the precinct; and (iii.) the share of independent women, all measured prior to female suffrage and collected from historical directories and census sources. We define independent women as non-widowed women who appear in the city directory as household heads (i.e., living without a husband).[10] Our data indicate that these women disproportionately belonged to the economic elite, with high representation among rentiers and business owners. These measures form the vector $Female\ Income_{1910,p}$ and $Male\ Income_{1910,p}$, which we interact with the female vote indicator to estimate how economic characteristics shaped women's voting behavior differently from men's.

Finally, we include a set of precinct-level controls, denoted by Θ_p, which capture additional dimensions of local economic and social activity that may affect male and female voters differently. Specifically, we measure the distance to the nearest school, as a proxy for access to human capital, and the distance to the nearest inn, as a proxy for information dissemination and social networks which have been shown to shape political participation (Satyanath et al., 2017). As with

[8] We duplicate the share of female Catholic representation at the precinct level across both genders. This procedure is necessary because the impact of religious density may be non-uniform across genders: while a higher Catholic share might increase support for confessional parties among women, it may correlate with a decrease in support among men. Measuring the share of Catholics by gender alone would not allow us to disentangle these directional effects. By focusing on female-specific shares, the interaction term more accurately captures the 'identity payoff' unique to newly enfranchised women within the Catholic social milieu.

[9] An alternative specification is to regress the differences between men and women in voting behavior on differences in the Catholic share. The results in Appendix A.1 support our baseline interpretation.

[10] The share of independent women does not have a male counterpart because we cannot observe which male household heads are married, widowed or unmarried. Thus, the male residential density is a share of households headed by men, whereas the share of independent women is the share of unmarried and un-widowed women leading a household.

the cultural and economic measures, these controls are interacted with the female vote indicator to capture gender-specific effects.

These coefficients should be interpreted as descriptive rather than causal. They capture systematic gender differences net of precinct-level characteristics, but do not establish a causal mechanism. We probe the robustness of these results through coefficient stability tests and sample sensitivity analysis in Section 7, and present supplementary instrumental variable estimates in Appendix C.

6.2 Baseline Results

Table 2 reports the results from estimating equation 2. We focus on the coefficients for the female-specific measures of our economic and religious variables; the corresponding male measures are included in all specifications but omitted from the table for brevity.[11]

Female Voting Gap: In column 1 we estimate the coefficient on the gender dummy, providing a benchmark for the magnitude of the gender gap documented in Figures 2 and 3. Pooling across all 175 precincts, women vote 10 percentage points more for center parties than men. This difference is substantial, amounting to nearly a 63 percent increase relative to the mean dependent variable for men (i.e., center in 1924 won 16.4 percent of the male vote) and corresponds to the average difference reported in Table 1.

Religious Affiliation: Previous evidence on religion and voting in interwar Germany relies primarily on comparisons across cities or regions (Falter, 1991; King et al., 2008; Spenkuch and Tillmann, 2018; Becker and Voth, 2023). Our precinct-level data allow us to test whether this confessional alignment shaped voting patterns within a single urban context. In column 2 of Table 2, we investigate the influence of female Catholic affiliation on female voting behavior. The coefficient of interest suggests that a one percentage point increase in the share of catholic women in a precinct increases female voting for center parties by nearly 0.8 percentage points. The overall female voting gap now switches sign and is estimated with less precision, suggesting that religious affiliation is a significant driver of the overall voting gap.

[11] Voting results by gender without precinct fixed effects are shown in Appendix Table A.2. Full results for male coefficients can be found in Appendix Table A.3.

Economic Drivers: Column 3 introduces gender-specific measures of economic activity to contrast economic explanations of voting behavior with religious and cultural ones. We use three indicators: occupational scores (as proxies for income), the share of the precinct population that is female, and the share of elite women (i.e., independent women).

Our results show little evidence that income-related measures significantly shaped women's voting behavior. We interpret these null results with caution, as our directory-based occupational proxies for women likely contain classical measurement error, which may attenuate the estimated coefficients. However, even allowing for potential attenuation, the stark contrast between the precise null effects of economic variables and the large, robust magnitude of the religious coefficient suggests that material factors were secondary to cultural identity. While economic theory predicts that newly enfranchised, lower-income women should lean left, our results suggest that religious integration severed this link, channeling female support into center parties instead. While the size of the female population does exhibit some predictive power, its coefficient is only about half the magnitude of the Catholic coefficient, and $t-$tests confirm that the two differ significantly. The inclusion of economic variables nearly triples the overall gender gap coefficient, which, as in column 2, remains negative and marginally significant. Taken together, these findings suggest that the raw gender voting gap was primarily driven by religious affiliation and, to a lesser extent, demographic composition rather than economic characteristics.

The stability of our religious coefficient relative to the null effect of economic variables suggests that behavioral norms often override material incentives. Stegmueller (2013) shows that religious identity causes voters to adopt conservative positions on both moral and economic dimensions, leading them to reject redistributive parties even when redistribution would benefit them materially. This is consistent with the survey by Schnellenbach and Schubert (2015), who note that cognitive biases and social images frequently lead to political outcomes that deviate from the standard rational voter model.

Social Networks and Human Capital: Column 4 adds our interacted precinct-level controls: distance to the nearest school (as a proxy for human capital) and distance to the nearest inn (as a proxy for social networks and information exchange). Including these measures does not alter the overall patterns in the data. The share of Catholic women continues to be the dominant and most

precisely estimated predictor of female support for the confessional center.

Overall, the inclusion of additional economic, demographic, and contextual controls does little to alter the core finding: female Catholic affiliation remains the dominant predictor of women's support for the confessional center. The estimated coefficient is stable across specifications, reinforcing the interpretation that religious identity, rather than material circumstances, drove the observed gender gap. While this stability is suggestive, it does not eliminate the threat of omitted variable bias. We probe the robustness of these results further in the following section.

7 Robustness

Our main analysis documents a robust association between Catholic identity and female support for the confessional center. In this section, we probe the sensitivity of these results to specification changes and sample composition. Supplementary instrumental variable estimates using historical church proximity are presented in Appendix C.

7.1 Coefficient Stability and Measurement Error

The stability of the religious coefficient across specifications provides some reassurance that our results are not driven by selection on observables. Comparing the univariate results (Column 2) to the full specification with economic and precinct controls (Column 4), the coefficient on Catholic affiliation moves from 0.763 to 0.823. Following the logic of Altonji et al. (2005) and Oster (2019), this stability implies that unobserved confounders would need to be proportionally much larger than our observable controls to explain away the result. We note, however, that the covariates introduced in columns 3 and 4 offer limited additional explanatory power, which reduces the informativeness of this stability test. The stability is suggestive but does not rule out confounders that are weakly correlated with our controls yet strongly related to the outcome.

We also address the null result for our economic variables. A potential concern is that we fail to find an economic effect due to attenuation bias, as female occupational scores in city directories likely contain measurement error. While we acknowledge this limitation, the fact that the religious coefficient remains large and stable as we add economic controls suggests that measurement noise in economic variables is not masking a dominant economic channel. If economic factors were

truly the primary driver but attenuated by noise, adding controls should destabilize the religious coefficient, which we do not observe.

7.2 Sample Sensitivity

We probe the sensitivity of our results to sample composition to ensure our findings are not driven by outliers or specific sub-regions. We replicate our baseline estimation while systematically dropping individual city districts and precincts (Figure A.1). We further test robustness by excluding precincts in the top and bottom deciles of population size, as well as those with the historically largest and smallest support for the confessional center. Across all subsamples, the estimated effect of Catholic affiliation remains positive, statistically significant, and quantitatively similar to our baseline estimates.

8 Discussion: Identity or Economics

Table 3 reports the full specification from Table 2, column (4), separately for center, center-left, and center-right parties, augmented with the relative impact of a one-standard deviation change in female Catholic share and female population (reported in italics). This comparison provides a direct empirical test of our conceptual framework, weighing the 'identity payoff' of the confessional milieu against the 'redistributive payoff' of standard rational choice models.

The results show that a one-standard deviation increase in female Catholic share (5.3%) raises vote shares for the confessional center by 4.4 percentage points. In contrast, the only significant proxy for the redistributive interests of newly enfranchised women, the female population share, increases support by only 1.2 percentage points. The significantly larger magnitude of the religious coefficient suggests that for Catholic women, the utility derived from group alignment outweighed the potential material gains offered by redistributive platforms. Supplementary IV estimates in Appendix C confirm this pattern, with the religious coefficient increasing to 8.1 percentage points under 2SLS.

This trade-off is further reflected in the results for center-left and center-right parties. The absence of a gender voting gap for the socialist left indicates that the redistributive appeal of these parties was insufficient to bridge the social distance created by religious identity. Furthermore,

the negative predictive power of female Catholicism for nationalist parties underscores that when identity is rooted in confession rather than nation, voters reject parties that threaten the church's autonomy. This remains true even when those parties share broader conservative social values, suggesting that the 'identity payoff' is contingent on the protection of the specific group's institutional milieu.

9 Conclusion

Our analysis of Munich's 1924 election provides precinct-level evidence on the voting behavior of newly enfranchised women. Despite facing lower average incomes, women supported center parties by a margin ten percentage points higher than men. Standard socio-economic indicators, including occupational scores and elite female presence, do not account for this gap. Instead, Catholic affiliation serves as the consistent predictor: precincts with higher shares of Catholic women relative to men exhibit a corresponding increase in support for the confessional center. This alignment did not manifest as a general rightward shift; rather, the concentration of the female vote in the center occurred alongside reduced support for both the socialist left and the nationalist right.

Our results examine a core assumption of standard redistributive models which predict that extending the franchise to lower-income groups increases support for redistribution. Our evidence from Weimar Munich suggests instead that cultural and religious values can be more predictive of voting behavior than economic position, aligning with models of identity economics where salient social identities decouple political choice from material incentives.

This mechanism offers a generalizable framework for understanding why economic status often fails to predict the political mobilization of low-income populations in contemporary democracies. It suggests that when political platforms emphasize cultural or symbolic alignment, the utility derived from group identity can outweigh the expected gains from redistributive policies. Hopkins et al. (2025) show that identity-oriented coverage has become increasingly prominent in modern political media, suggesting that the activation of social identities, including religious identity, remains a potent force in shaping voter behavior. In this framework, 'identity politics' represents a shift in the primary dimension of voter utility rather than a departure from rational choice;

cultural signaling becomes the dominant determinant of electoral behavior even when material stakes are high.

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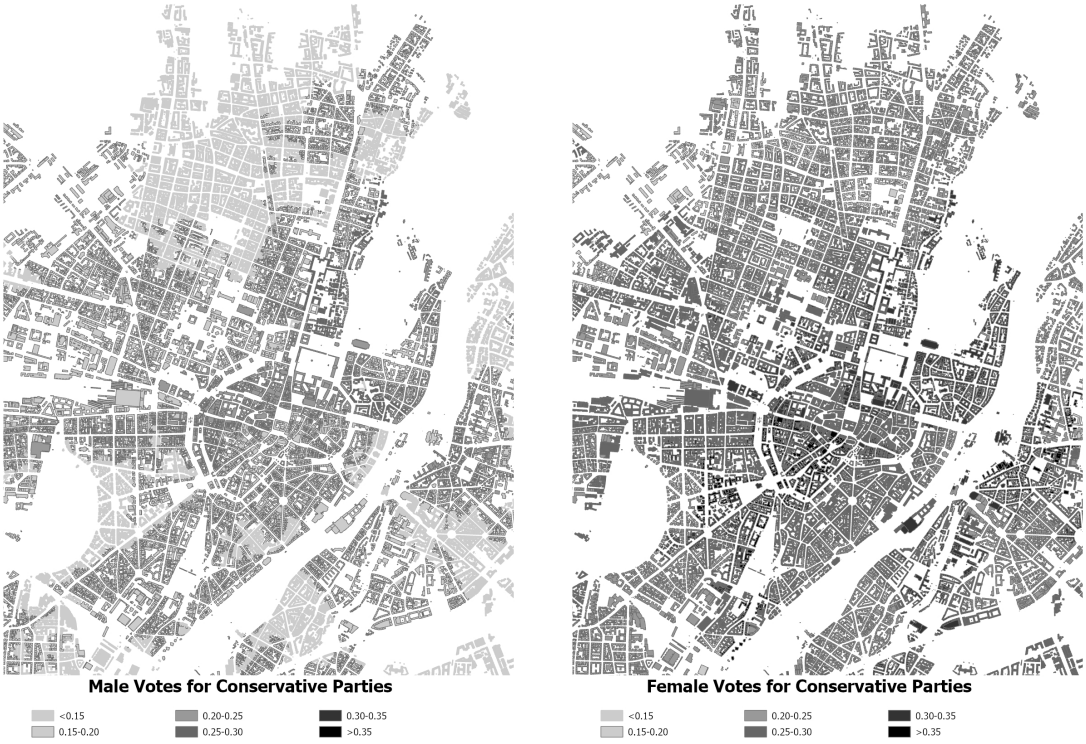
Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Selected election posters (1920)

(a) SPD **(b)** Zentrum **(c)** DVP

These election posters are from the 1920 election of the Weimar Republic. The left shows the poster of the SPD (social democratic party) promoting equality between men and women (*Same Rights=Same Duty*). The center poster shows the Zentrum (christian-conservative party) asking "*Who saves the Christian mothers children?*" The right shows a poster of the German People's Party (DVP) promoting women as mothers, saving the future of their children.

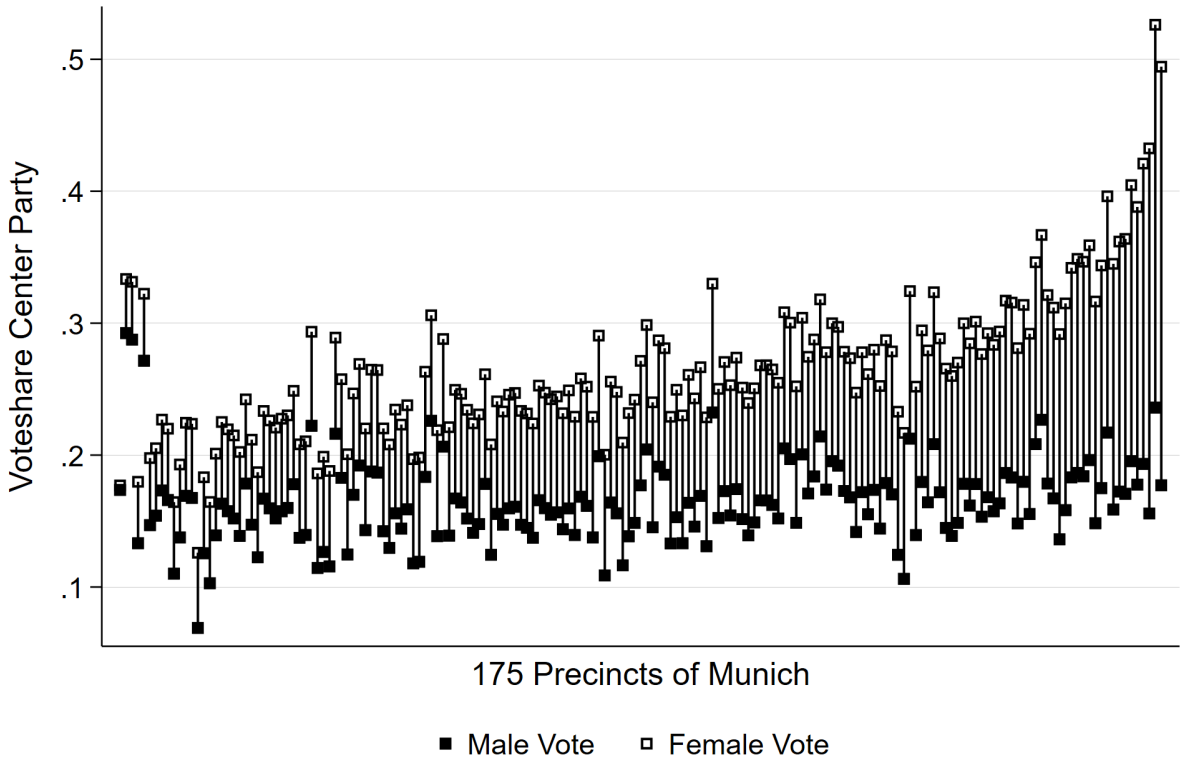
Figure 2: Spatial voting patterns in Munich



(a) **Male Votes** **(b)** **Female Votes**

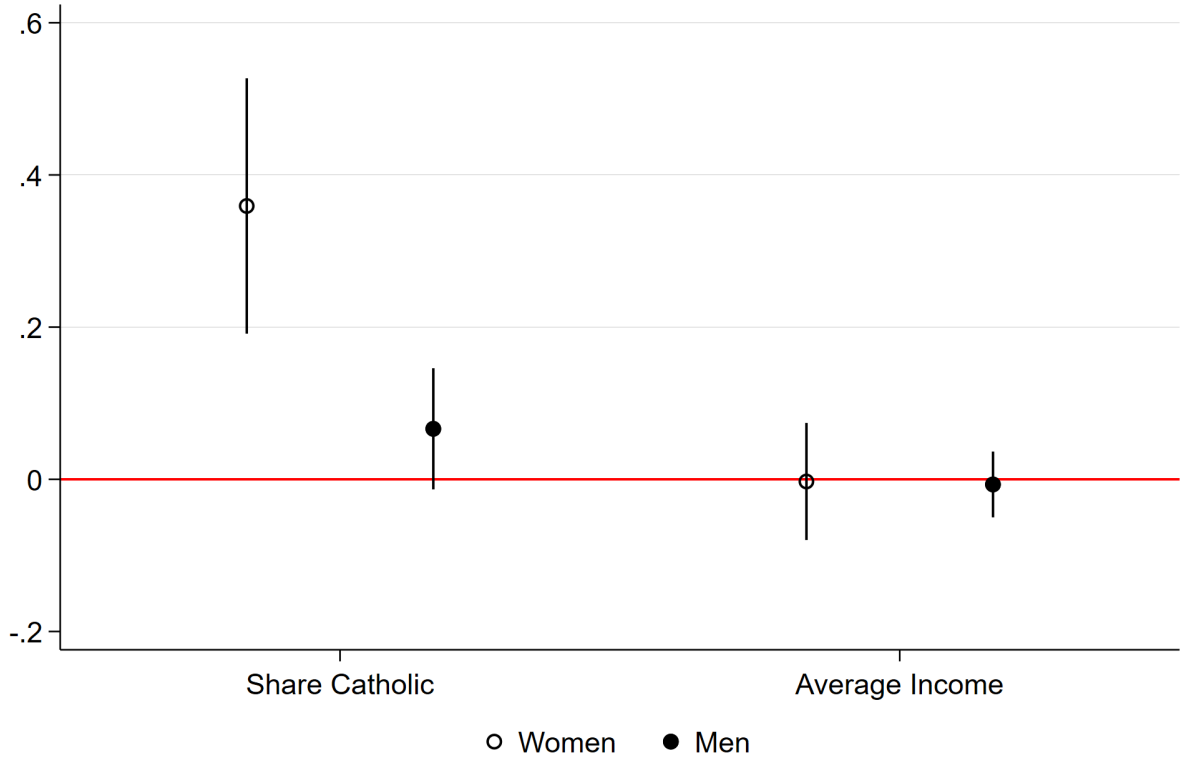
This map assigns each address its exact precinct. Shades denote the vote share for conservative-center parties in 1924 for men (a) and women (b).

Figure 3: Voting patterns in Munich



This figure plots the votes of women and men in every precinct of Munich. No single precinct records more center votes from men than from women. Precincts sorted by the size of the conservative voting gap.

Figure 4: Religion and Economics



This figure plots the coefficient of two regressions, each regressing the vote share of the center party for women (men) on the share catholic women (men), their average income and population, as well as other controls. We report the coefficients on the share catholic women and their average income on the female vote share on center parties (hollow circle) and the coefficient on the share catholic men and their average income on the male vote share on center parties (solid circle). Full results in Table A.2.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

By source and gender

	Men		Women		Difference		Source
Variable	Obs.	Average	Obs.	Average	Obs.	Average	
Voting outcomes:							
Center Left	175	0.369	175	0.283	175	-0.086	Election Archives
Center	175	0.164	175	0.265	175	0.101	Election Archives
Center Right	175	0.420	175	0.401	175	-0.019	Election Archives
Other Parties	175	0.047	175	0.051	175	0.004	Election Archives
Electorate	175	879	175	1,056	175	177	Election Archives
Votes	175	657	175	670	175	13.1	Election Archives
Turnout	175	0.749	175	0.633	175	-0.117	Election Archives
Religion:							
Share Catholics	175	0.796	175	0.843	175	0.046	Census 1910, city district
Economic:							
Population	175	1,398	175	1,595	175	197	Census 1910, address
Share Population	175	0.533	175	0.467	175	0.066	Census 1910, address
Occupation Score	175	4.618	175	4.575	175	-0.044	Directory 1910

The variables are constructed as follows from the indicated sources and averaged within the precinct. Results for all parties in Table A.1. *Share Catholic*: The Stadtbezirks representation of the 1910 census details the share catholic for each gender. *Population*, and *Share Population*: Using the address-level census in 1910 detailing the number of men and women per address. *Occupation Score*: following Bühler et al. (2024) and using the stated occupation in the directory to categorize occupational income score for each individual. Since only 11.2% of households are led by women, this variable likely suffers from measurement error.

Table 2: The Female Voting Gap

Conservative Center Parties

	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) OLS	(4) OLS
Female Vote	0.101***	-0.100*	-0.273*	-0.254
	(0.003)	(0.054)	(0.159)	(0.163)
Share Female Catholic × Female Vote		0.763***	0.834***	0.823***
		(0.184)	(0.228)	(0.228)
Average Income of Women × Female Vote			-0.016	-0.016
			(0.014)	(0.014)
Share Female Population × Female Vote			0.355**	0.330*
			(0.176)	(0.181)
Share Independent Women × Female Vote			0.015	0.018
			(0.181)	(0.183)
Distance to closest Pub × Female Vote				0.000
				(0.000)
Distance to closest School × Female Vote				-0.006
				(0.024)
Observations	350	350	350	350
Precincts	175	175	175	175
Male controls		Yes	Yes	Yes

This table establishes the female voting gap for conservative center parties. The unit of observation is a precinct by gender. Precincts are normalized to the 175 precincts of 1912. Precinct fixed effects included in all columns. *Female Vote* is a binary variable indicating the vote share of women voting for center parties. The coefficient in column (1) thus denotes the average voting gap between women and men for conservative parties. *Share Female Catholic* gives the average share of women reporting catholic as their religious affiliation (84.3%). We control for the male share of individuals reporting catholic as their religious affiliation in Male controls (79.6%). Variables constructed from the city-district census in 1910. *Average Income* denotes the average occupational score of women in a precinct (4.575, men: 4.618). Variable constructed from the directory in 1910. *Share Female Population* denotes the share women living in a district (53.3% or 1,595 women). Variable constructed from the address-level census in 1910. *Share Independent Women* denotes the share of women that are recorded as household heads in the directory of 1910, but are non-widowed (8.0%). *Distance to closest Pub* and *Distance to closest School* is the average distance to the closest pub (82m) or school (311m) in each precinct. Variables constructed from the directory in 1910. Full results, including the male variables reported in Table A.3. Supplementary 2SLS estimates are reported in Appendix

Table 3: The Female Voting Gap

Center-left and center-right parties

	Center	Center left	Center right
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	OLS	OLS	OLS
Female Vote	-0.254	-0.174	0.431***
	(0.163)	(0.109)	(0.100)
Share Female Catholic × Female Vote	0.823***	0.098	-0.986***
	(0.228)	(0.127)	(0.155)
One SD change in Female Catholic:	*[0.044]*	*[0.005]*	*[-0.052]*
Share Female Population × Female Vote	0.330*	0.170**	-0.396***
	(0.181)	(0.085)	(0.109)
One SD change in Female Population:	*[0.012]*	*[0.006]*	*[-0.015]*
Observations	350	350	350
P-value: economic = religion	0.002	0.499	0.000
Male controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic controls × Female Vote	Yes	Yes	Yes
Precinct characteristics × Female Vote	Yes	Yes	Yes

This table establishes the female voting gap for all parties and contrasts the impact of religion to the impact of economic variables. The unit of observation is a precinct by gender. Precincts are normalized to the 175 precincts of 1912. Precinct fixed effects included in all columns. *Female Vote* is a binary variable indicating the vote share of women voting for either party. The coefficient in column (1) thus denotes the average voting gap between women and men for the respective party. *Share Female Catholic* gives the average share of women reporting catholic as their religious affiliation (84.3%). We control for the male share of individuals reporting catholic as their religious affiliation in Male controls (79.6%). Variables constructed from the city-district census in 1910. *Share Female Population* denotes the share women living in a district (53.3% or 1,595 women). Variable constructed from the address-level census in 1910. Below each variable, we report the estimated percentage point change in voting outcomes, if the dependent variable changes by one standard deviation. *P-value: economic = religion* reports the p-value from a test on whether the coefficients

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A Additional Tables and Figures

Table A.1: Summary Statistics

By source and gender

	Men		Women		Difference		Source
Variable	Obs.	Average	Obs.	Average	Obs.	Average	
Center left:							
SPD	175	0.180	175	0.156	175	-0.025	Election Archives
USPD	175	0.005	175	0.004	175	0.000	Election Archives
KPD	175	0.184	175	0.123	175	-0.061	Election Archives
Center							
Zentrum	175	0.014	175	0.012	175	-0.002	Election Archives
BVP	175	0.150	175	0.253	175	0.103	Election Archives
Center right:							
DVP	175	0.120	175	0.118	175	-0.002	Election Archives
DNVP	175	0.011	175	0.010	175	0.001	Election Archives
DVB	175	0.289	175	0.273	175	-0.002	Election Archives
Uncategorized							
BBMB	175	0.002	175	0.002	175	-0.000	Election Archives
BGG	175	0.002	175	0.002	175	0.001	Election Archives
BMG Südgau	175	0.005	175	0.005	175	0.000	Election Archives
Deutscher Block	175	0.029	175	0.024	175	0.004	Election Archives
FFF	175	0.001	175	0.001	175	0.000	Election Archives
Haeusserbund	175	0.001	175	0.001	175	-0.001	Election Archives
RPD	175	0.002	175	0.001	175	-0.001	Election Archives
Religion:							
Share Catholics	175	0.796	175	0.843	175	0.046	Census 1910, city district
Distance to closest Church					175	385m	Directory 1910
Economic:							
Share Population	175	0.533	175	0.467	175	0.066	Census 1910, address
Average Occupation Score	175	4.618	175	4.575	175	-0.044	Directory 1910
Share Independent Women					175	0.080	Directory 1910
Precinct characteristic:							
Distance to closest Pub					175	82m	Directory 1910
Distance to closest School					175	311m	Directory 1910

The variables are constructed as follows from the indicated sources and averaged within the precinct. *Share Catholic*: The Stadtbezirks representation of the 1910 census details the share catholic for each gender. *Share Population*: Using the address-level census in 1910 detailing the number of men and women per address. *Average Occupation Score*: following Bühler et al. (2024) and using the stated occupation in the directory to categorize occupational income score for each individual. *Share Independent Women*: Using the directory we relate the number of households headed by non-widowed women to the number of households in that precinct. *Share Household heads*: counting the number of female and male first names per address in the directory. *Distance to closest Church*: Using the directory we locate the exact geo coordinates of the closest church and calculate the distance to every address. *Distance to closest School*: Using the directory we locate the exact geo coordinates of the closest school and calculate the distance to every address. *Distance to closest Pub*: Using the directory we locate the exact geo coordinates of the closest Pub and calculate the distance to every address.

Table A.2: Voting By Gender

Conservative Center Parties

	(1) Women	(2) Men	(3) Women	(4) Men
Share Catholic	0.240***	-0.014	0.359***	0.066
	(0.081)	(0.039)	(0.085)	(0.040)
Population Share	0.544***	-0.202**	0.192	-0.018
	(0.183)	(0.092)	(0.194)	(0.092)
Average Income	0.045	0.009	-0.003	-0.007
	(0.035)	(0.022)	(0.039)	(0.022)
Distance to closest Pub			0.000	0.000
			(0.000)	(0.000)
Share Independent Women			0.623***	0.354***
			(0.192)	(0.105)
Distance to closest School			0.008	0.014
			(0.028)	(0.013)
Observations	175	175	175	175
Precincts	175	175	175	175
Mean center vote share	0.265	0.164	0.265	0.164
Adjusted R-squared	0.132	0.068	0.204	0.131

This table establishes the female voting gap for conservative center parties. The unit of observation is a precinct. Precincts are normalized to the 175 precincts of 1912. *Share Catholic* gives the average share of women (Columns 1 & 3: 84.3%) and men (Columns 2 & 3: 79.6%) Variables constructed from the city-district census in 1910. *Average Income* denotes the average occupational score in a precinct (women: 4.575, men: 4.618). Variable constructed from the directory in 1910. *Share Population* denotes the population share living in a district (53.3% or 1,595 women). Variable constructed from the address-level census in 1910. *Share Independent Women* denotes the share of women that are recorded as household heads in the directory of 1910, but are non-widowed (8.0%). *Distance to closest Pub* and *Distance to closest School* is the average distance to the closest pub (82m) or school (311m) in each precinct. Variables constructed from the directory in 1910. Standard errors clustered by precinct shown in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

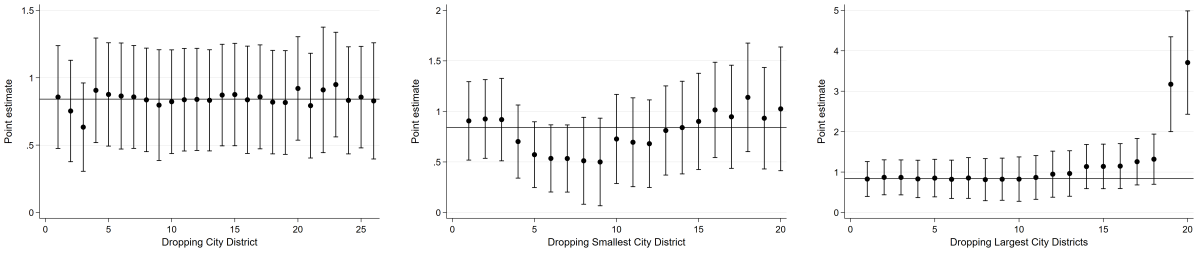
Table A.3: The Female Voting Gap

Full results for center parties

	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) OLS	(4) 2SLS	(5) OLS	(6) 2SLS
Female Vote	0.101***	-0.100*	-0.273*	-0.254	-0.305**	-0.399*
	(0.003)	(0.054)	(0.159)	(0.163)	(0.153)	(0.210)
Share Female Catholic × Female Vote		0.763***	0.834***	0.823***	1.431***	1.517***
		(0.184)	(0.228)	(0.228)	(0.485)	(0.523)
Share Male Catholic × Female Vote		-0.555***	-0.544***	-0.539***	-1.005***	-1.069***
		(0.142)	(0.191)	(0.191)	(0.329)	(0.406)
Average Income of Women × Female Vote			-0.016	-0.016		-0.015
			(0.014)	(0.014)		(0.016)
Average Income of Male × Female Vote			-0.003	-0.003		-0.025
			(0.021)	(0.021)		(0.023)
Share Female Population × Female Vote			0.355**	0.330*		0.508**
			(0.176)	(0.181)		(0.218)
Share Independent Women × Female Vote			0.015	0.018		-0.162
			(0.181)	(0.183)		(0.230)
Distance to closest Pub × Female Vote				0.000		0.000
				(0.000)		(0.000)
Distance to closest School × Female Vote				-0.006		-0.003
				(0.024)		(0.025)
Observations	350	350	350	350	350	350
Precincts	175	175	175	175	175	175
Adjusted R2	0.807	0.829	0.839	0.838	0.854	0.865
First Stage F-Statistic					25.05	26.66
Male controls		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

This table establishes the female voting gap for conservative center parties. The unit of observation is a precinct by gender. Precincts are normalized to the 175 precincts of 1912. Precinct fixed effects included in all columns. *Female Vote* is a binary variable indicating the vote share of women voting for center parties. The coefficient in column (1) thus denotes the average voting gap between women and men for conservative parties. *Share Female Catholic* gives the average share of women reporting catholic as their religious affiliation (84.3%). We control for the male share of individuals reporting catholic as their religious affiliation in Male controls (79.6%). Variables constructed from the city-district census in 1910. *Average Income* denotes the average occupational score of women in a precinct (4.575, men: 4.618). Variable constructed from the directory in 1910. *Share Female Population* denotes the share women living in a district (53.3% or 1,595 women). Variable constructed from the address-level census in 1910. *Share Independent Women* denotes the share of women that are recorded as household heads in the directory of 1910, but are non-widowed (8.0%). *Distance to closest Pub* and *Distance to closest School* is the average distance to the closest pub (82m) or school (311m) in each precinct. Variables constructed from the directory in 1910. Standard errors clustered by precinct shown in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure A.1: Leaving out each city district one-by-one



(a) Dropping any District **(b)** Dropping the smallest districts **(c)** Dropping the largest districts

Figure (a) separately the coefficient on $Share\ Catholic_{1910,p,g} \times Female\ Vote_{p,g}$ from 26 regressions, leaving out city districts one by one. Figure (b) reports the same coefficient but successively dropping the smallest districts. Figure (c) reports the same coefficient but successively dropping the smallest districts. Whereas the estimation sample in Figure (a) always contains 25 districts, the sample in Figures (b) and (c) contain 25 districts when dropping the smallest (largest), and 6 districts when dropping the 20 smallest (largest) districts.

A.1 Within-precinct, differenced specification

Another way to assess the importance of religion in the voting gap is to regress the differences in voting preferences on the differences in religious affiliation. Our starting point is a conceptual decomposition, representing precinct-level vote shares as the sum of gender-specific factors, precinct-level influences, and observable characteristics:

$$Center_p^g = \beta_g + \delta \mathcal{X}_{p,g} + \Gamma_p + \epsilon_{p,g} \quad \forall g \in \{Women, Men\}. \tag{3}$$

Here, $Center_p^g$ denotes average precinct-level support for center parties from gender group g. Subtracting male from female vote shares within the same precinct yields:

$$\Delta Center_{j,p} = \beta_{Female\ Voting\ Gap,j} + \Delta \mathcal{X}_{p,g} + \varepsilon_{j,p}. \tag{A.1}$$

Equation (A.1) thus captures the precinct-level gender difference in vote shares, with male vote shares serving as the baseline.

Empirically, this design amounts to regressing precinct-level female–male differences in party support on differences in covariates, including measures of religious affiliation such as proximity to Catholic churches. Because both male and female outcomes are observed within the same precinct and election, the differenced formulation absorbs all common precinct-level characteristics.

To ensure that covariates are unaffected by enfranchisement, we rely on pre-suffrage measures from the 1910 city directory.

While conceptually equivalent to the formulation used in the main text, this differenced regression offers a simpler way to quantify descriptive gender gaps net of observable characteristics. Table A.4 suggests that if women are as Catholic affiliated as men, the voting gap is 10.6%. If, however, women are 5 percentage points more religious than men, the voting gap *increases* to 12.2%, a 15% increase in magnitude that underscores the importance of Catholic affiliation for the voting decision of women. The corresponding IV estimates, reported in the even columns of Table A.4, are consistent with these patterns.

Table A.4: The Female Voting Gap

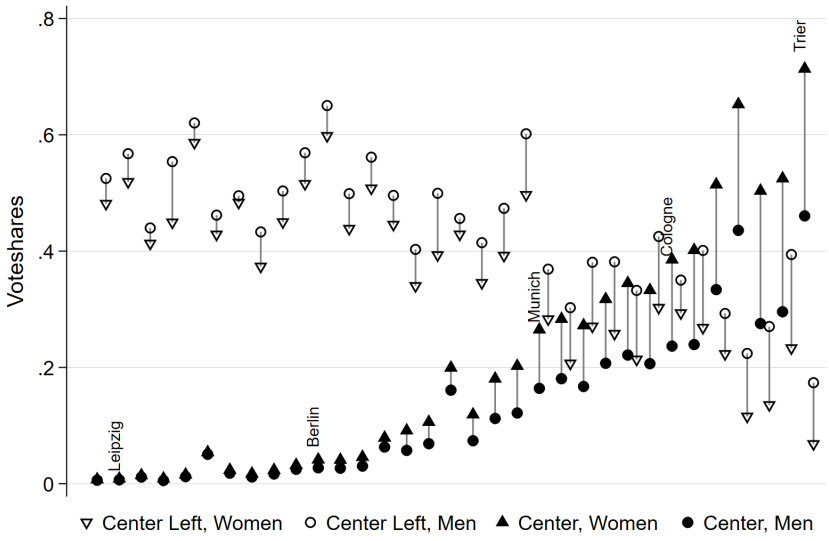
Differenced Specification

	Center		Center Left		Center Right	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	OLS	IV	OLS	IV	OLS	IV
Average Vote Gap	0.106***	0.061**	-0.123***	-0.114***	0.026**	0.065***
	(0.017)	(0.025)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.010)	(0.019)
Share Catholic (1910)	0.312**	1.644***	0.137**	-0.136	-0.464***	-1.621***
	(0.149)	(0.541)	(0.068)	(0.283)	(0.110)	(0.440)
Economic Covariates (1910)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Precinct Covariates (1910)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Male Vote	0.164	0.164	0.369	0.369	0.420	0.420
Observations	175	175	175	175	175	175
Adjusted R2	0.863	0.766	0.929	0.922	0.354	-0.321
First Stage F-Stat		14.859		14.859		14.859

This table establishes the female voting gap for conservative center parties. The unit of observation is a precinct by gender. Precincts are normalized to the 175 precincts of 1912. Precinct fixed effects included in all columns. *Female Vote* is a binary variable indicating the vote share of women voting for center parties. The coefficient in column (1) thus denotes the average voting gap between women and men for conservative parties. *Share Female Catholic* gives the average share of women reporting catholic as their religious affiliation (84.3%). We control for the male share of individuals reporting catholic as their religious affiliation in Male controls (79.6%). Variables constructed from the city-district census in 1910. *Share Female Population* denotes the share women living in a district (53.3% or 1,595 women). Variable constructed from the address-level census in 1910. *Average Income* denotes the average occupational score of women in a precinct (4.575, men: 4.618). Variable constructed from the directory in 1910. *Share Independent Women* denotes the share of women, relative to the total female population, that are recorded as household heads in the directory of 1910, but are non-widowed (4.4%). Standard errors clustered by precinct shown in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

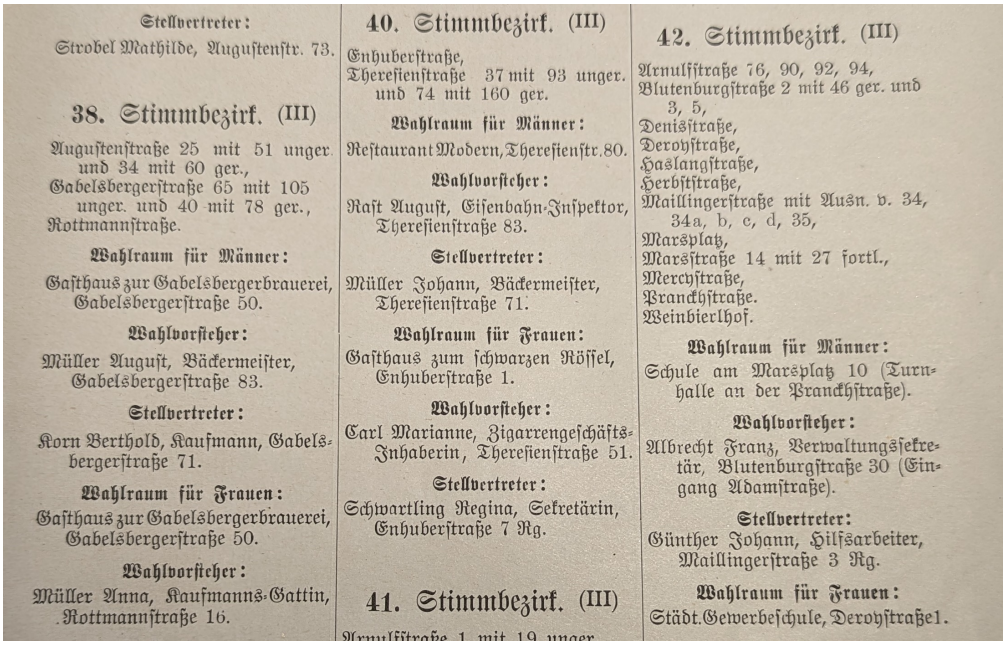
B Historical Background and Data

Figure B.1: The Conservative Voting Gap across German Cities



This figure plots average vote shares for the conservative center and the center-left, defined as SPD and KPD separately for women and men across 33 German cities between 1920 and 1930.

Figure B.2: Precinct division 1924



Stellvertreter:
Strobel Mathilde, Augustenstr. 73.

38. Stimmbezirk. (III)

Augustenstraße 25 mit 51 unger. und 34 mit 60 ger.,
Gabelsbergerstraße 65 mit 105 unger. und 40 mit 78 ger.,
Rottmannstraße.

Wahlraum für Männer:
Gasthaus zur Gabelsbergerbrauerei, Gabelsbergerstraße 50.

Wahlvorsteher:
Müller August, Bäckermeister, Gabelsbergerstraße 83.

Stellvertreter:
Korn Berthold, Kaufmann, Gabelsbergerstraße 71.

Wahlraum für Frauen:
Gasthaus zur Gabelsbergerbrauerei, Gabelsbergerstraße 50.

Wahlvorsteher:
Müller Anna, Kaufmanns-Gattin, Rottmannstraße 16.

40. Stimmbezirk. (III)

Enhuberstraße,
Theresienstraße 37 mit 93 unger. und 74 mit 160 ger.

Wahlraum für Männer:
Restaurant Modern, Theresienstr. 80.

Wahlvorsteher:
Rast August, Eisenbahn-Inspektor, Theresienstraße 83.

Stellvertreter:
Müller Johann, Bäckermeister, Theresienstraße 71.

Wahlraum für Frauen:
Gasthaus zum schwarzen Rössel, Enhuberstraße 1.

Wahlvorsteher:
Carl Marianne, Zigarrengeschäfts-Inhaberin, Theresienstraße 51.

Stellvertreter:
Schwartling Regina, Sekretärin, Enhuberstraße 7 Rg.

41. Stimmbezirk. (III)

Arnulfstraße 1 mit 19 unger.

42. Stimmbezirk. (III)

Arnulfstraße 76, 90, 92, 94,
Blutenburgstraße 2 mit 46 ger. und 3, 5,
Denisstraße,
Derovstraße,
Haslangstraße,
Herbststraße,
Maillingerstraße mit Ausn. v. 34, 34a, b, c, d, 35,
Marsplatz,
Marsstraße 14 mit 27 fortl.,
Mercystraße,
Pranckhstraße.
Weinbierlhof.

Wahlraum für Männer:
Schule am Marsplatz 10 (Turnhalle an der Pranckhstraße).

Wahlvorsteher:
Albrecht Franz, Verwaltungssekretär, Blutenburgstraße 30 (Eingang Adamstraße).

Stellvertreter:
Günther Johann, Hilfsarbeiter, Maillingerstraße 3 Rg.

Wahlraum für Frauen:
Städt. Gewerbeschule, Derovstraße 1.

This figure illustrates the assignment of streets and individual addresses (e.g. Arnulfstraße 76, 90, 92, 94 in precinct 42) to precincts in the May 1924 Munich election. The three voting precincts highlight the detail of our data: In precinct 38, men and women cast their votes at the same polling station, while in precinct 40, polling was gender-segregated, and the election officers were exclusively female.

To illustrate the precision of our spatial linking procedure and the heterogeneity in electoral arrangements, Figure B.2 maps address-to-precinct assignments for the May 1924 election. Each address in the city directories is matched to its corresponding precinct using administrative records listing which streets belonged to which precinct. Figure B.2 highlights two precincts to demonstrate variation in gendered polling practices: Precinct 38, where men and women voted at the same location, and Precinct 40, where polling was segregated by gender and female election officers administered the women's station. [12]

Figure B.3 uses the 1924 directory to find the poll station for precinct 40 (a), the election officer (b) and its substitute (c), from Figure B.2. While we can identify these individuals, there exist no individual-level census data for the period of interest that allow to geolocate individuals with their exact address, their full name, and occupation; especially not of women.

[12] This variation, visible in administrative forms and confirmed in archival notes, shows that precinct-level election records not only capture vote shares by gender but also reflect institutional variation in how newly enfranchised women were incorporated into the democratic process.

Figure B.3: Directory (Adressbuch) 1924

(a) Poll station **(b)** Election Officer **(c)** 2nd. Election Officer

Locating poll station (a) and individuals (b-c) for precinct ("Stimmbezirk") 40 in the 1924 directory.

C Instrumental Variable Strategy

As a supplementary check on our baseline results, we implement an instrumental variable strategy that uses the distance to the nearest Catholic church in 1910. We argue that sorting based on anticipated voting power is unlikely because suffrage was an unanticipated shock following the collapse of the Empire. Furthermore, Munich's proportional representation system meant that relocating across precinct lines offered no advantage for representation, as all precincts belonged to the same electoral district.

The identifying assumption requires that proximity to a church in 1910 influences voting behavior through religious exposure rather than secular economic channels. We acknowledge that proximity likely captures more than nominal affiliation. It proxies for integration into the social fabric of the church, including attendance and access to church-run charity. These mechanisms remain distinct from the secular economic self-interest that standard models predict should drive voting. Even if proximity increases support for confessional parties by strengthening women's reliance on church services, this validates our core argument: the church functioned as a cultural institution that successfully competed with class-based political mobilization.

The credibility of our instrument rests on the assumption that proximity to a church in 1910 affects 1924 voting behavior only through religious exposure and not through omitted variables. Church locations were predetermined, reflecting historical parish expansions and urban planning from the 19th century, and were fixed decades before the political upheaval of 1918. It is also highly improbable that households sorted geographically based on anticipated voting power; in 1910, female suffrage was an unforeseen institutional shock following the sudden collapse of the Empire.

We acknowledge, however, that the exclusion restriction would be violated if church placement correlates with gender-specific factors (neighborhood norms around female piety, the density of women's religious organizations) that independently predict confessional voting. We cannot fully rule this out. The IV estimates presented here should therefore be interpreted as supplementary evidence that reduces, rather than eliminates, the threat of omitted variable bias.

Table C.1 reports the 2SLS estimates alongside the full OLS specification (column 4 from Table 2) for comparison. The first stage is strong, with an F-statistic of approximately 25, indicating

that historical church location is a powerful predictor of local Catholic density. The IV estimates confirm our baseline findings: precincts with higher religiously-driven female density exhibit significantly higher support for the confessional center. While the magnitude of the IV coefficient is larger than the OLS estimate, standard errors overlap. This is consistent with measurement error in the directory data attenuating the OLS results, or with the instrument isolating the behavior of the most socially integrated Catholic women.

The fact that instrumenting for religion increases the estimated effect also suggests that measurement noise in the religious variable was attenuating the OLS estimate. If economic factors were truly the dominant driver but masked by noise, we would expect instrumentation to destabilize the religious coefficient, which we do not observe.

Table C.2 extends the IV analysis to center-left and center-right parties.

Table C.1: The Female Voting Gap — IV Estimates

Conservative Center Parties

	(1) OLS	(2) 2SLS	(3) 2SLS
Female Vote	-0.254	-0.305**	-0.399*
	(0.163)	(0.153)	(0.210)
Share Female Catholic × Female Vote	0.823***	1.431***	1.517***
	(0.228)	(0.485)	(0.523)
Average Income of Women × Female Vote	-0.016		-0.015
	(0.014)		(0.016)
Share Female Population × Female Vote	0.330*		0.508**
	(0.181)		(0.218)
Share Independent Women × Female Vote	0.018		-0.162
	(0.183)		(0.230)
Distance to closest Pub × Female Vote	0.000		0.000
	(0.000)		(0.000)
Distance to closest School × Female Vote	-0.006		-0.003
	(0.024)		(0.025)
Observations	350	350	350
Precincts	175	175	175
First Stage F-Statistic		25.05	26.66
Male controls	Yes	Yes	Yes

This table reports 2SLS estimates of the female voting gap for conservative center parties, instrumenting Share Female Catholic with distance to the nearest Catholic church in 1910. Column (1) reproduces the full OLS specification from Table 2, column (4), for comparison. The unit of observation is a precinct by gender. Precincts are normalized to the 175 precincts of 1912. Precinct fixed effects included in all columns. Standard errors clustered by precinct shown in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table C.2: The Female Voting Gap — IV Estimates

Center-left and center-right parties

	Center		Center left		Center right	
	(1) OLS	(2) 2SLS	(3) OLS	(4) 2SLS	(5) OLS	(6) 2SLS
Female Vote	-0.254	-0.399*	-0.174	-0.150	0.431***	0.549***
	(0.163)	(0.210)	(0.109)	(0.127)	(0.100)	(0.134)
Share Female Catholic × Female Vote	0.823***	1.517***	0.098	-0.014	-0.986***	-1.552***
	(0.228)	(0.523)	(0.127)	(0.303)	(0.155)	(0.395)
One SD change in Female Catholic:	*[0.044]*	*[0.081]*	*[0.005]*	*[-0.001]*	*[-0.052]*	*[-0.082]*
Share Female Population × Female Vote	0.330*	0.508**	0.170**	0.141	-0.396***	-0.541***
	(0.181)	(0.218)	(0.085)	(0.115)	(0.109)	(0.138)
One SD change in Female Population:	*[0.012]*	*[0.019]*	*[0.006]*	*[0.005]*	*[-0.015]*	*[-0.020]*
Observations	350	350	350	350	350	350
P-value: economic = religion	0.002	0.007	0.499	0.488	0.000	0.001
First Stage F-Statistic		26.66		26.66		26.66
Male controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic controls × Female Vote	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Precinct characteristics × Female Vote	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

This table reports OLS and 2SLS estimates of the female voting gap for center, center-left, and center-right parties. Odd columns report OLS; even columns report 2SLS, instrumenting Share Female Catholic with distance to the nearest Catholic church in 1910. The unit of observation is a precinct by gender. Precincts are normalized to the 175 precincts of 1912. Precinct fixed effects included in all columns. Below each variable, we report the estimated percentage point change in voting outcomes for a one standard deviation change. Standard errors clustered by precinct shown in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$