No Time to Attend?
Effects of Family-Friendly Meeting Hours in Politics[*†]

Max-Emil M. King[‡]

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Abstract

Demands for work beyond conventional hours are a recognized driver of gender disparities in professional life. Combining new data on 3,500 meetings in Norwegian local councils with administrative records on each politician, I exploit meeting-by-meeting variation to estimate how session start times affect attendance. Despite recurring local claims that evening sessions deter women from politics, I find that family-friendly daytime hours do not significantly reduce absences for most women. Instead, they raise absences by 10-13% among politicians with private-sector employment, a group itself disproportionately underrepresented in local councils, with effects reaching 23% in the least flexible occupations.

Keywords: gender gap, political selection, meeting attendance

JEL Classification: D63, D72, J13, M51

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[‡]Ragnar Frisch Centre for Economic Research. E-mail: m.e.m.king@frisch.uio.no.

1. Introduction

Women hold 36% of local council seats worldwide, 27% of parliamentary seats, and just 11% of head-of-state positions (UN Women, 2023). This thinning of ranks is reminiscent of the corporate hierarchy, where demands for work beyond conventional hours drive women's attrition (Bertrand, Goldin and Katz, 2010; Goldin, 2014, 2021). In politics, inconvenient meeting times are often cited as a potential barrier to women's political careers (Franceschet and Piscopo, 2008; Baskaran and Hessami, 2022; Wylie, 2018). Could shifting meetings to daytime hours be a simple way to enhance their political representation? How much would such a reform achieve, and for whom?

The lack of representation in political office demands attention not just as a fundamental matter of justice and human rights, but also because who serves in office can have substantive effects on political decisions (Hessami and da Fonseca, 2020). Theoretical models such as the citizen-candidate framework posit that politicians' identities, including gender, play a role in shaping public policy (Besley and Coate, 1998; Osborne and Slivinski, 1996). For gender specifically, several studies have shown that it causally affects policy outcomes (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014; Baskaran and Hessami, 2019). While this picture may be more nuanced in developed-country settings (see, e.g., Ferreira and Gyourko, 2014), women and men consistently raise different topics in political debates (Bäck, Debus and Müller, 2014; Fiva, Nedregård and Øien, Forthcoming; Osborn and Mendez, 2010) and author different amendments (Lippmann, 2022). Women in office may further serve as role models that inspire women in other parts of society (Beaman et al., 2009; Campbell and Wolbrecht, 2006).

This paper offers the first direct evidence of how meeting times affect politicians' ability to serve in elected office. Using a newly constructed database of local council meetings in Norway, I hand-code individual-level attendance at 3,500 local council meetings held between October 2015 and September 2019. These data are linked to administrative registers, enabling me to observe sex (at birth), age, family relationships and occupational

background for every politician serving on these councils. I then exploit within-council variation in session timing to assess whether women in general – and mothers specifically – are less absent from meetings when they are held at more family-friendly hours. By treating observed attendance as a revealed-preference measure of differential attendance costs, I avoid the measurement error inherent in survey-based measures.

Norwegian politics represents a distinctive setting for my analysis. First, the country has a high number of political candidates from either gender and a strong commitment to gender equality overall.[1] Second, a number of councils exhibit substantial meeting-by-meeting variation in start times that is plausibly unrelated to other determinants of attendance. I expect this variation to affect attendance because politicians face different opportunity costs depending on when meetings are scheduled. For politicians who serve as primary caregivers in their family, evening meetings can be particularly costly. Consistent with this hypothesis, mothers serving on local councils have long called for more meetings to be moved from the evenings to daytime hours, as reflected in numerous news articles and opinion pieces across the country.[2]

I begin by showing that women with children are significantly more likely to serve on councils that meet predominantly during the daytime than in the evenings, a pattern that has been noted descriptively in earlier work. This relationship is likely driven by a combination of factors, not necessarily meeting times alone (or at all). In contrast, my meeting-level analysis finds no effects of family-friendly hours for the majority of women. This overall null result is robust to a range of specifications and subgroup analyses, suggesting that it does not reflect measurement artefacts or offsetting behavior. Instead, family-friendly sessions make it significantly harder for other groups to attend. For politicians with private-sector day jobs, family-friendly hours are associated with

[1] In Norway, seven out of the nine major political parties require that women make up at least 40% of candidates on political lists. Similar quotas apply elsewhere, including a 2003 law requiring publicly listed companies to have at least 40% representation of either gender on the board of directors.

[2] For example, a 2011 female council member was quoted in the press saying, *'Long evening meetings with uncertain end times makes it difficult to coordinate with a babysitter.'* (Sveen and Næsheim, 2011). Another statement, from 2015, reads: *'If we want to recruit [women], something must be done about the evening meetings.'* (Tjore, 2015). A third example, from 2016, states: *'It is too hard to combine political work with family life. Move the [local] council meetings from the evenings to the daytime.'* (Løvik, 2016).

a 10–13% *increase* in absences, rising to 23% for those with less flexible employment. This result may be especially discouraging given that their political representation in my setting, like that of women, is also disproportionately low (Geys, Murdoch and Sørensen, 2021, 2024).

My study relates to two broad literatures. First, I build on a substantial body of work in political science and economics examining the persistent underrepresentation of women in politics. Scholars have proposed a range of explanations, including that women are less politically ambitious than men (Fox and Lawless, 2004, 2005); that biases – conscious, or unconscious – from voters (Beaman et al., 2009; Baskaran and Hessami, 2018) or from party leaders (Casas-Arce and Saiz, 2015), hinder women's advancements; or that institutional features of the electoral system favor men (Profeta and Woodhouse, 2022).[3] Some scholars have found evidence that women are less willing to compete than men, which could have implications for candidate emergence or persistence (Buser and Yuan, 2019; Niederle and Vesterlund, 2007; Wasserman, 2021). More recently, Fiva and King (2024) document that women are more likely than men to drop out of the political arena when they become parents. Their finding aligns with prior research by Bernhard, Shames and Teele (2020) and Silbermann (2015), suggesting that gender gaps in politics evolve from unequal household and childrearing responsibilities, reflecting similar challenges in the workplace. Closely related to my analysis are a number of contributions that advocate aligning parliamentary sitting hours with standard business hours to make political work more compatible with family life (Childs, 2016; Palmieri, 2018; Wängnerud, 2015).

Second, I engage with the large and growing literature on gender gaps in the labor market (for an overview, see Blau and Kahn, 2017; Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2016). Several empirical studies point to parenthood as a pivotal moment that is associated with significant earnings penalties for women, but not for men (Andresen and Nix, 2022; Angelov, Johansson and Lindahl, 2016; Kleven, Landais and Leite-Mariante, 2023; Kleven, Landais

[3]In French Parliamentary elections, Le Barbanchon and Sauvagnat (2021) show that women are less likely to run for office in areas with unfavorable attitudes against women. However, voter bias does not appear to be a major factor in explaining gender gaps in the political arena (see, e.g., Teele, Kalla and Rosenbluth, 2018; Schwarz and Coppock, 2022).

and Søgaard, 2019).[4] The key reason for these gaps, argue Bertrand, Goldin and Katz (2010); Goldin (2014, 2021), is that firms have incentives to reward individuals who work extended hours, particularly in the evenings. Because women disproportionately carry the load associated with parenthood, they are unable to supply these hours, resulting in lower current earnings and reduced promotion prospects relative to men. Consistent with this mechanism, the 'child penalty' for women is typically found to be larger in professions with non-linear wage schedules, such as MBAs and lawyers (Bütikofer, Jensen and Salvanes, 2018), and in settings characterized by more stereotypical gender roles (Kleven et al., 2019). The local political setting I study shares structural features with entry-level corporate positions, as it serves as a stepping stone to higher-level offices (Cirone, Cox and Fiva, 2021). While my results may not transfer directly to corporate settings, they speak more broadly to how the timing of work shapes women's ability to participate in career-building activities.

Existing research on gender and work arrangements has focused on hours constraints, schedule predictability and contract regularity, showing that women systematically sort into jobs and firms that offer work arrangements better aligned with caregiving responsibilities (see, e.g., Azmat and Boring, 2021; Hotz, Johansson and Karimi, 2018; Wasserman, 2022). In a survey experiment, Mas and Pallais (2017) find that women with children are willing to forgo almost 40% of their wages to avoid working irregular or unpredictable hours. Consistent with their findings, Bolotnyy and Emanuel (2022) document that such preferences lead to a gender gap in earnings even in occupations with fully standardized work tasks. Ciasullo and Uccioli (2024) further find that a 2009 Australian reform allowing parents to reduce their working hours while maintaining schedule regularity – rather than shifting to irregular contracts – reduced the 'child penalty' in hours worked by almost 20%.

[4]See also Anderson, Binder and Krause (2002); Correll, Benard and Paik (2007); Lundberg and Rose (2000); Lundborg, Plug and Rasmussen (2017); Waldfogel (1998); and Angrist and Evans (1998). Studies using IVF treatment as an instrument for fertility suggest that the conventional event-study framework for estimating 'child penalties' may overestimate long-run effects (Bensnes, Huitfeldt and Leuven, 2023).

2. Institutional setting: Norway 2015–2019

Norway is a constitutional monarchy with a three-tiered system of governance (national, regional and local). This paper focuses on the local level. Despite being the lowest tier, local governments hold substantial autonomy in decision-making. They are responsible for key welfare services, including health care, childcare, and compulsory education, employing roughly 17% of the entire labor force. Each of the 428 municipalities (as of 2015) in Norway is governed by a local council, to which politicians are elected in September every four years.[5] Anyone who is eligible to vote and is registered as a resident on the day of the election can run for office. The median local council has 21 members, with a statutory minimum of 11. As of 2025, women account for 41% of council members.

The majority of local council members balance their official duties with regular careers outside of politics, as is common among lower-level politicians in many countries (see, e.g., Dal Bó et al., 2017; Kurtz et al., 2006). Regulations have been implemented to support the integration of the two roles. For example, politicians have a right to a leave of absence from work to attend political meetings (Local Government Act § 8-2). They are also entitled to receive reimbursement for documented losses of income (§ 8-3). According to a survey by Brandtzæg et al. (2022), the median local council member spends 31 hours per month on political work, nearly 20% of a Norwegian full-time equivalent position. They receive a standard compensation for their service, often as a fixed allowance per meeting attended.

2.1 *Local council meetings*

Local councils convene at designated venues on a semi-regular basis, often following a provisional schedule adopted in the preceding year.[6] Before each meeting, the agenda

[5] An amalgamation reform taking place between 2017 and 2020 reduced the number of municipalities from 428 (in 2015) to 356 (in 2020). The reform affected two councils in my sample that merged to form a new council in January 2017. I do not include observations from this post-merger council.

[6] Appendix Figures A.1 and A.2 show that local councils convene about nine times a year, generally on a monthly basis, and most commonly on Thursdays. There are almost no sessions held during school

and meeting time must be communicated with sufficient notice (Local Government Act § 11-3), in practice typically at least seven days in advance. Items for deliberation may originate from a variety of sources, including proposals from council members or citizens, referrals from subcommittees, applications from the public (building permits, liquor licenses, etc.), submissions from the municipal administration, or directives from the central government. A political secretariat provides administrative support during the meetings and records the minutes.

Using data that will be discussed further in Section 3.1, Panel A of Figure 1 plots the distribution of start times for local council meetings in Norway. Councils tend to convene either in the mornings or in the evenings, with start times around 17:00 being the most common. While evening sessions may reduce conflicts with regular work hours, they likely create conflicts in other domains. Brandtzæg et al. (2022) reports that 56% of politicians aged 30-39 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that 'political work is difficult to combine with family life'. 47% of the same group agreed or strongly agreed that 'too much of the meeting activity takes place in the evening'.

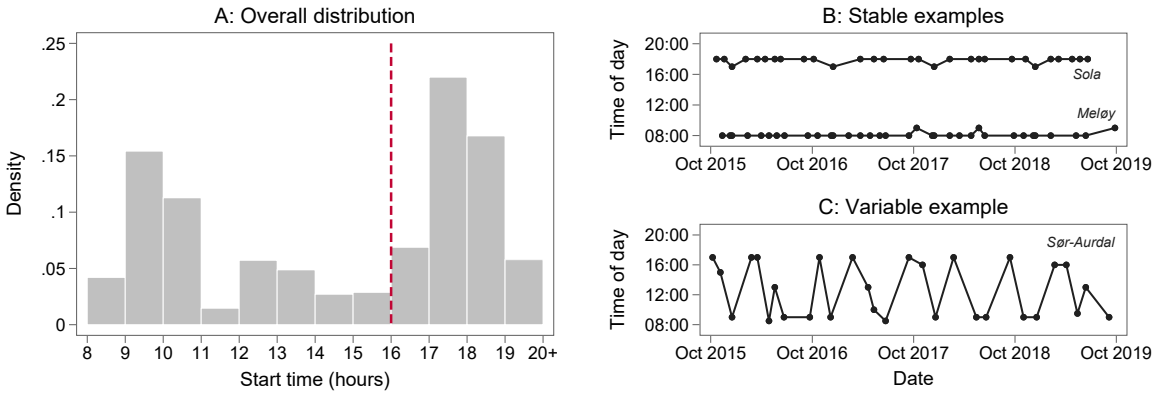
Panels B and C show examples of different scheduling patterns within councils. In Sola and Meløy municipalities (Panel B), meetings were consistently held around the same morning or evening hours, whereas in Sør-Aurdal municipality (Panel C), the times varied. Both of these practices, and in-between arrangements, are common in Norwegian local councils.[7]

The start time for a given session is formally decided by the meeting chair, who is usually the mayor. In councils where meeting times vary, this may reflect predetermined policies, such as a decision to alternate every second meeting between mornings and evenings. In the case of Sør-Aurdal, depicted in Panel C of Figure 1, the preceding council issued a directive in November 2011 (item 049/11) that four meetings per year were to be scheduled during the daytime, with the remaining held in the evenings. More

holidays, nor during the weekends. The average meeting duration is about four hours.

[7]Appendix Figure A.3 shows 'meeting time profiles', similar to those depicted in Panels B and C of Figure 1, for the 20 councils with the greatest within-council variation in start times.

Figure 1: Local council meeting times



Notes: Panel A plots the distribution of meeting start times for a 25% random sample of Norwegian municipalities over the October 2015 to September 2019 election period. The dashed vertical line marks the sample median. Panels B and C plot meeting start times over time for two councils with stable hours (B) and one with variable hours (C), respectively.

generally, fiscal deadlines prompt councils to hold special financial meetings in June and December, and these are often scheduled earlier in the day.[8] This pattern is visible in the plots of meeting times by calender month depicted in Appendix Figure A.4.

2.2 *Meeting attendance*

Elected officials are required to attend local council meetings in person unless they provide a valid reason for absence (Local Government Act § 8-1). What constitutes a valid reason is not regulated by national law, but councils commonly accept welfare grounds such as childcare alongside acute illness, urgent work, and major family events. Provided that the absence is reported in advance to the political secretariat, there is no formal sanction for missing a meeting, although it may induce a response from the party organization.[9] If a politician is unable to attend, their seat is normally filled by a deputy councilor, who

[8]For example, in Bygland municipality, the guideline established in February 2017 (item 4/17) states that local council meetings shall '*usually begin at 18:00, except for the accounting meeting in June and the budget meeting in December, which are held during the daytime.*'

[9]Appendix Figure A.5 shows a strong negative correlation between non-attendance and a politician's probability of renomination or reelection in the subsequent period, which is mediated by a change in rank position on the ballot. This pattern is consistent with party leaders penalizing candidates with high rates of absence, though it may also reflect less active politicians receiving lower ballot rankings for other reasons.

is one of the runner-up candidates from the same political party.[10] It is also possible for politicians to request discretionary leave during a part of a meeting.

A distinctive feature of the Norwegian system is that councilors are not able to resign once elected. They can, however, apply for a leave of absence or an 'exemption from official duties'. The criteria for obtaining such concessions are intentionally stringent, requiring approval through a council vote. Common grounds include documented medical issues, parenthood (for temporary leaves), election into higher-level offices, or relocation – since only residents of a municipality are eligible to serve on its council.

3. Methodology

3.1 *Data*

The basis for my empirical investigation is a novel dataset of local council meetings in Norway, which I compiled from official meeting minutes. The data record the date and start time of meetings held in all municipalities over the 2007–2023 period. I use this full dataset for descriptive purposes, while my main estimation draws on a 25% random sample of councils (107 of the 428) observed over the October 2015 to September 2019 election period. For this sample I have the complete meeting minutes (*møteprotokoller*) of essentially every council session held, from which I hand-code individual attendance (1 for present, 0 for absent) using the roll calls conducted at the start of the meetings. I also extract the full meeting agenda as a text string, along with end times where these are reported (around 75% of sessions). More information about data collection and the construction of these datasets is provided in Appendices B and C. Appendix Table C.1

[10]Local elections in Norway are determined by a *flexible-list* proportional representation system, where voters cast one vote for their preferred political party and may also cast personal votes for candidates on any party list. The number of local councils seats awarded to each party is determined by party votes, while the individuals who fill these seats are selected based on the number of personal votes they receive along with a bonus assigned by their party. Candidates who narrowly miss the threshold become part of that party's pool of deputy candidates. The mayor and an executive board are appointed directly by the council. Further details about the Norwegian electoral system are provided by, e.g., Fiva and King (2024).

Table 1: Summary Statistics, by gender

	Women				Men			
	All		25–49 w/ chld.		All		25–49 w/ chld.	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
A: In 2015								
Age	44.67	12.69	40.63	6.07	49.39	13.11	41.46	5.71
Any children (%)	80.36	39.75	100.00	0.00	84.38	36.32	100.00	0.00
3+ children (%)	34.75	47.64	39.53	48.94	40.23	49.05	40.13	49.06
Married (%)	66.10	47.36	68.10	46.65	74.31	43.71	72.24	44.82
Immigrant (%)	3.68	18.84	3.72	18.94	2.77	16.43	4.18	20.03
Years of education	14.92	2.34	15.28	2.17	14.20	2.40	14.37	2.29
Labor income (USD 1,000s)	61.98	31.43	67.45	26.62	72.99	43.26	83.45	36.33
Public sector job (%)	56.00	49.66	63.80	48.11	31.18	46.34	32.27	46.79
Private sector job (%)	27.01	44.42	25.64	43.71	42.04	49.38	52.51	49.98
Prior political experience (%)	42.68	49.48	40.31	49.10	48.13	49.98	40.30	49.09
B: During 2015–2019 election period								
Absent (%)	22.03	22.58	22.10	22.00	17.81	19.90	19.28	19.76
Idiosync. absent (%)	12.46	10.23	12.64	10.20	12.30	11.01	13.96	11.92
Consec. absent (%)	9.57	22.36	9.46	21.59	5.52	17.53	5.33	16.85
N	1,059		511		1,658		598	

Notes: The table reports means and standard deviations for all politicians in the estimation sample – separately by gender and, within each gender, for the subgroup aged 25–49 with children. Variables in the upper panel are measured at the start of the election period (2015); those in the lower panel are measured over the full 2015–2019 period. Sector of employment is defined according to the 2012 Norwegian Classification of Institutional Sectors, where 'Public' encompasses central and local government (categories 6100 and 6500), and 'Private' contains all remaining categories. Individuals whose main employment is 'politicians' are not included.

presents balance checks for the random draw.

In addition to the attendance data, I incorporate information from the Local Candidate Dataset by Fiva, Sørensen and Vøllo (2024). These data cover the universe of candidates in the 2003–2023 Norwegian local elections, enabling me to observe individual-by-election-period outcomes such as political experience and roles (e.g., council member, mayor). Each politician is then linked via a unique identifier to administrative registers, including the employer-employee register (*A-ordningen*) and the National Population Register, which provide information on monthly employment, occupation, socio-demographic characteristics, and family structure. In particular, I know the year and month of birth of politicians' children and their main occupation outside of politics

(ISCO-08) for all years of the sample.

The final estimation sample comprises 92,687 person-meeting observations from 3,546 local council meetings and 2,717 individuals. An empirical challenge arises in handling absences due to authorized leave or formal exemptions. I measure all non-attendances as absences unconditionally, with the sample fixed at the start of the period so that selection out of the council does not affect the composition. As a practical solution for distinguishing types of absence, I classify spells of five or more consecutive meetings missed as 'consecutive' and shorter spells as 'idiosyncratic'.

Table 1 reports summary statistics for the sample, separately by gender and, within each gender, for a subgroup aged 25–49 with children. Most politicians are parents (∼80%) and married (∼70%). Women are on average about five years younger than men (45 vs 49), slightly more educated (15.0 vs 14.2 years of schooling) but earn substantially less in their primary jobs (62k vs 73k). They are also sorted into different sectors, with women predominantly in the public and men more often in the private, a gap that widens among the younger subgroups. In contrast to studies of meeting attendance in other settings (Adams and Ferreira, 2009; Weeks and Baldez, 2015), women in my sample are absent more often than men (22% vs 18%). The gap, however, is driven entirely by consecutive absences likely reflecting leave spells, while gender differences in idiosyncratic, meeting-by-meeting absence are negligible.[11]

3.2 *Two margins of representation*

Political appointments in my setting resemble a secondary job that individuals take on for non-pecuniary reasons such as skill diversification or public service motivation (Averett, 2001; Dal Bó et al., 2017; Panos, Pouliakas and Zangelidis, 2014). An important insight from the multiple-job-holding literature is that the ability to sustain such roles depends on the time and flexibility that remain after primary commitments (Krishnan, 1990;

[11] Appendix Figures A.6 to A.8 show that absence rates are higher for younger politicians and those lower in the political hierarchy, and that they rise over the election period from around 10% at the first meeting to over 25% at the last. This increase is primarily due to consecutive absences, which account for 38% of absences overall.

Paxson and Sicherman, 1996; Shishko and Rostker, 1976). Evening meetings in politics may accommodate politicians' primary jobs, but they do so by shifting political service into hours central to caregiving and household production. Daytime meetings reverse this tradeoff. Given that responsibilities for childrearing are asymmetrically allocated within households, I expect evening meetings to be particularly costly for women with children, and daytime meetings to be particularly costly for politicians whose primary employment is inflexible.

These differential costs can affect political representation through two margins: (i) an extensive margin, i.e., who decides to enter (or remain in) office, and (ii) an intensive margin, i.e., which meetings politicians attend once in office. In Section 4.1, I begin by examining the extensive margin descriptively, asking whether councils that meet during the daytime have more women in their ranks. Isolating a causal effect on this margin is challenging, however, as differences in schedules across councils likely correlate with a range of unobservables.

The bulk of my analysis therefore focuses on the intensive margin, where I exploit within-person exposure to different meeting times among elected politicians. While selection into office may internalize the average cost of attendance, politicians still face meeting-by-meeting variation in opportunity costs depending on the timing of specific sessions. The attendance margin is consequential in its own right, as the accumulation of service that follows from attending meetings is likely a determinant of advancement to higher political offices (Cirone, Cox and Fiva, 2021).

3.3 *Empirical strategy*

My main empirical strategy is to estimate the following model,

$$Absent_{ism} = \alpha_i + \beta Early_{sm} + X'_{sm}\gamma + \varepsilon_{ism}, \tag{1}$$

where *Absent* is an indicator equal to 1 if local council member i was absent from meeting s in municipality m; α_i denotes individual level fixed effects; $Early$ is an indicator equal

to one if meeting *sm* convened before 16:00 (the sample median); X is a vector of meeting-level control variables; and ε is the error term. The coefficient of interest, β, captures the change in the probability of absence associated with an *Early* meeting.[12] Under the assumption that lower absences at specific times of day reveal lower costs of attending at those times, this can be interpreted as the average net benefit of daytime meetings. The fixed-effects α_i ensure that identification is based on within-individual variation by accounting for all time-invariant individual and municipality characteristics. Without these, estimates of β would likely be biased because *Early* varies across councils, and selection into the councils depends on other factors besides the times they convene.[13] Equation 1 also contains a vector of covariates, X, that accounts for observable meeting-level characteristics. These include four indicator variables for calendar years (the sample spans the years 2015 to 2019), eleven for calendar months, six for days of the week, plus a linear control for the number of items on the agenda. Conditional on these controls, I show in the subsequent section that meeting outcomes are balanced with respect to values of *Early*.

My central hypothesis is that β varies across groups of politicians, with $\beta < 0$ for women given their disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities. To estimate heterogeneous effects, I partition the sample into subgroups, and fit Equation 1 to the corresponding part of the sample. I first consider all women, before moving on to mothers with children. Estimates for fathers are provided in the appendix. In order to assess broader heterogeneity, I further categorize groups of politicians by their main occupation and place of work. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality/council level to account for arbitrary correlation among members of the same council.

[12] Although estimating politicians' responses across the entire distribution of meeting times would be ideal, the strongly bimodal distribution presented in Panel A of Figure 1 motivates the dichotomous definition of *Early*. Panel A of Appendix Table A.1 shows that this operationalization captures a within-council difference of approximately six hours in the start times of early meetings compared to late ones. I explore the impact of alternative definitions of *Early* in the appendix.

[13] A less flexible alternative to using individual-level fixed effects (α_i) would be to use municipality-level fixed effects (α_m). Since politicians can only serve on one council at a time, α_m is completely subsumed by α_i. I consider models with municipality-level effects in the appendix, showing that it has little impact on the results.

In the baseline analyses, I make no distinction between types of absences (idiosyncratic or consecutive), but I do so in the appendix. Both types can, in principle, be affected by *Early*, but consecutive absences are more likely to reflect persistent factors unrelated to specific meeting times, so the estimates will primarily capture idiosyncratic responses. Mayors are dropped from the sample prior to fitting Equation 1 due to their strong influence over scheduling. With 25 members on average, it is improbable that any other council member holds comparable influence over timing decisions.

3.4 *Assessing balance*

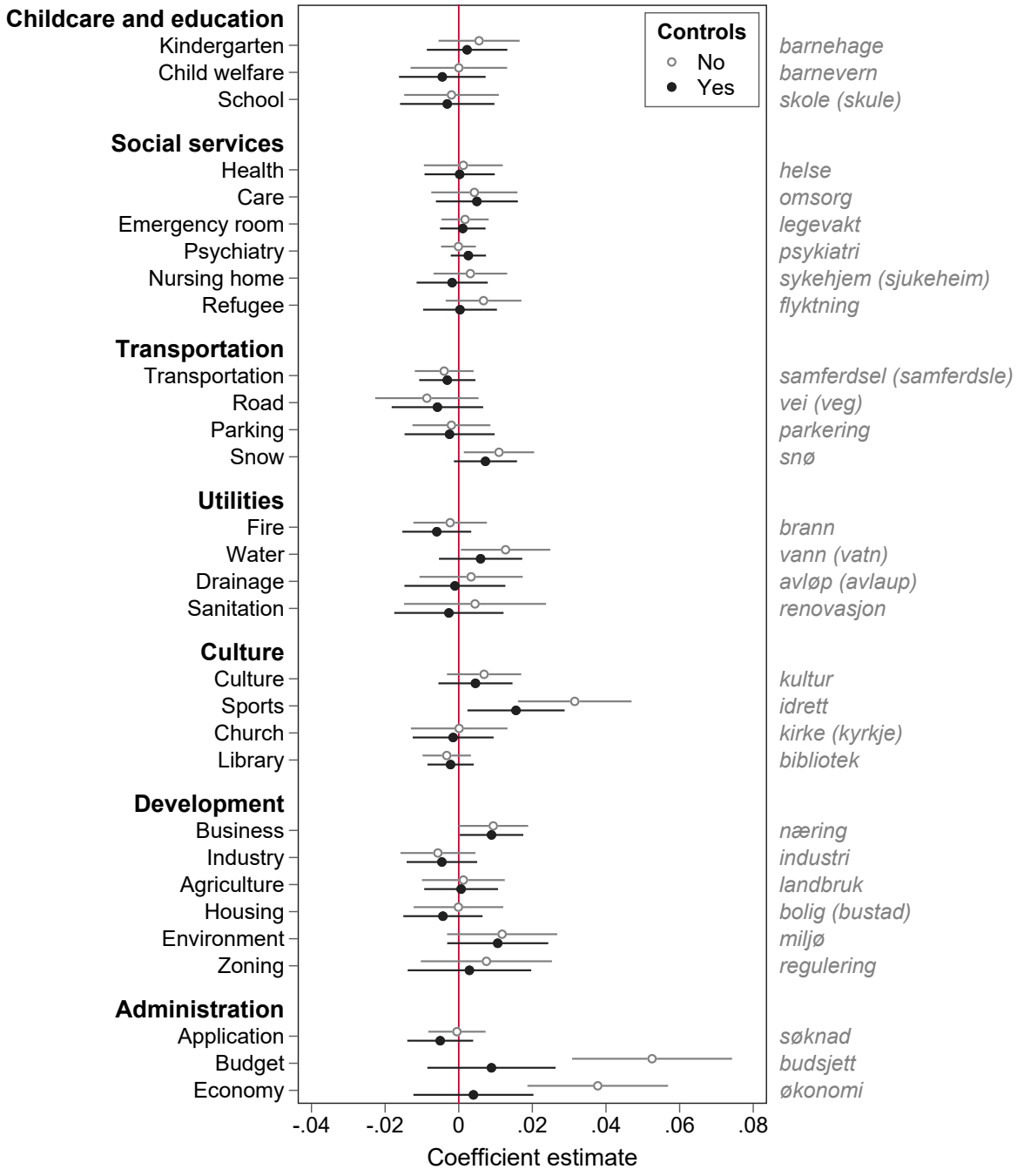
The identifying assumption in my empirical design is that determinants of meeting times within councils are uncorrelated with the individual council member's alternative motivations for attending. An immediate threat to this assumption is the possibility that meetings covering specific topics, which may be of higher importance to some demographics, are held at times when it is more convenient for these groups to attend. For example, one might suspect that whenever the agenda relates to *schools* or *kindergartens*, meetings are scheduled earlier in the day to accommodate politicians with children. One way to evaluate the credibility of the identifying assumption is to examine the relationship between meeting times and meeting contents. I do this by counting the occurrence of specific keywords in the meeting agendas – each representing an area of responsibility for municipal governments. I then regress the $Early$ indicator for meeting s in municipality m on the frequency of word j in that meeting, using the following equation:

$$Early_{sm} = \mu_m + Freq'_{sm}\delta + X'_{sm}\eta + \sigma_{sm}, \tag{2}$$

where $Freq$ is a vector containing the 30 frequency variables (as z-scores), μ represents municipality-level fixed effects, and σ is the error term. $Early$ and X are defined as in Equation 1. If $Early$ meetings are more likely to cover particular topics, this will be captured by δ.

The results are presented in Figure 2. Conditional on X_{sm}, there is no evidence that

Figure 2: Correlations between meeting content and start times



Notes: The figure presents coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals for δ in Equation 2, estimated separately with (filled circles) and without (hollow circles) meeting controls (X_{sm}). The independent variable of interest is the z-scored frequency of keyword j in the agenda from meeting sm. Keywords are listed on the left in English, with their specific Norwegian search term on the right. Words with alternative spellings in Norwegian's second official language form (Nynorsk) are listed in parentheses and counted together. Also included in both models are municipality fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level. The sample consists of 3,577 council-meeting observations from 107 municipalities.

any specific topic is more likely to occur during particular times of the day (filled circles). The 95% confidence intervals suggest that a one-standard-deviation increase in the frequency of any keyword is associated with at most a two- to three-percentage-point (4-6%) increase in the probability of an *Early* meeting. Without the controls, topics such as 'budget' and 'economics' are several times more likely to occur in *Early* meetings (hollow circles), though most other keywords appear balanced even in this model. Appendix Figure A.9 repeats the analysis using indicator variables for any occurrence of the keywords instead of frequency counts, yielding similar results.

Since I do not observe a correlation between meeting times and observable characteristics of the meetings, it seems unlikely that *un*observable characteristics pose a serious threat to the identification strategy. For completeness, I incorporate the 30 frequency variables as additional covariates into Equation 1 and present estimation results with and without these controls.

An important consequence of the fixed-effects research design is that individuals must experience both types of *Early* and late meetings during their term to contribute to the identification of β. 76 out of the 107 councils in my data exhibit such variation. Excluding councils where the variation is driven solely by the special meetings held in June and December reduces the number to 50. If selection into politics depends on factors specific to these councils, it could affect the external validity of my results. Using the same outcomes as those presented in Table 1, Appendix Table A.2 compares average characteristics for women serving on one of the 50 councils where *Early* varies to those serving on other councils. It is reassuring that neither women overall nor mothers specifically differ systematically across groups.

4. Results

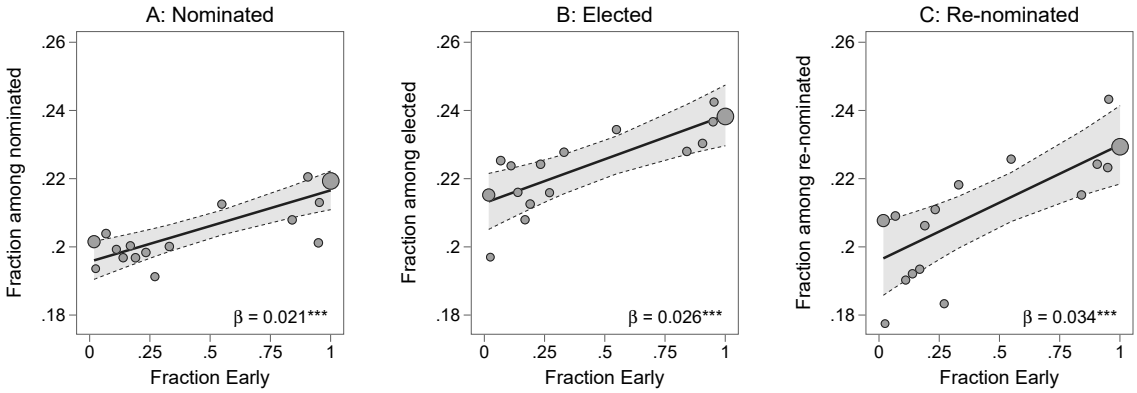
4.1 *Political selection*

Before turning to estimates of Equation 1, I assess the descriptive relationship between meeting hours and the extensive margin of political selection. Fiva and King (2024) and Solberg, Miklavic and Sund (2022) have already studied this margin in Norway using data from a single election period; they document that early meetings are associated with a higher share of women with children in local councils. This pattern speaks directly to the notion of descriptive political representation, capturing the extent to which an elected body mirrors the population it serves (Pitkin, 1967). I expand on their findings by drawing on four complete election periods and by examining multiple stages of the political selection process.

The first part of the investigation is presented in Figure 3. This figure illustrates the correlation between the fraction of *Early* meetings, defined as starting before 16:00, held in local council m during election period t, and the fraction of female candidates aged 25 to 49 within that specific council-period. Each data point represents a binned average derived from all 1,643 council-periods in Norway between 2007 and 2023. The data have been residualized by election year to account for temporal trends. Consider first Panel A, which examines candidates on electoral lists. On average, a municipality sees about 140 political candidates every election. 21% of these are women aged 25–49. The figure shows that these women occupy 2.1 percentage points – 11% – more list spots in councils with only daytime meetings compared to those without any daytime meetings. This correlation is illustrated by the solid black line, the slope of which is reported in the bottom right corner.

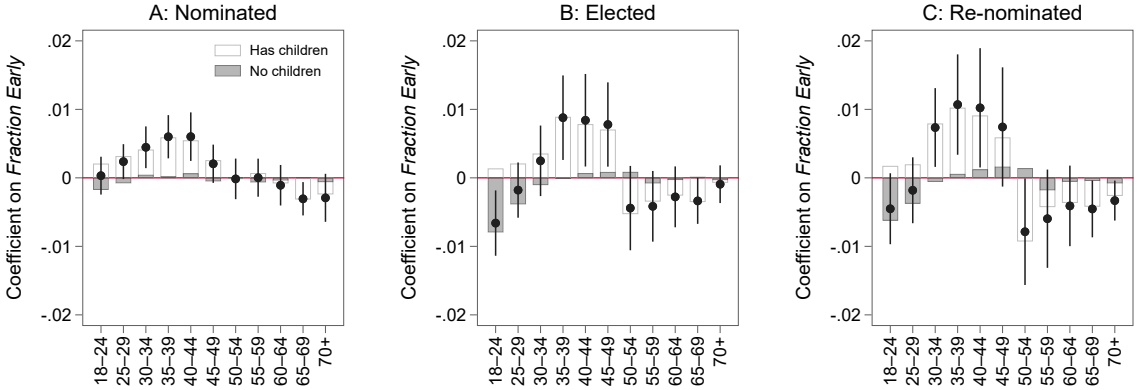
Panel B focuses on the about 1/6 of all nominees who are elected into office, showing that the positive relationship from Panel A persists among this group. The correlation then becomes slightly more pronounced in Panel C, which considers those re-nominated

Figure 3: Meeting times and the representation of women 25–49



Notes: Each panel plots the yearly-residualized share of Early meetings in municipality m during election period t against the share of women aged 25–49 in mt. Panel A covers all politicians on nomination lists, Panel B restricts to those elected into office, and Panel C further restricts to those who also appear on a nomination list in the subsequent period. A meeting is classified as Early if it begins before 16:00. Each data point represents a binned average across all 1,643 council-period observations in Norway between 2007 and 2023, weighted by bin size. Solid lines show fitted values from linear regressions, with 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered at the highest, post-merger municipality level (n = 356).

Figure 4: Meeting times and women's representation by age



Notes: Black circles plot coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals from separate linear regressions of the share of women politicians in the indicated age group on the share of Early meetings in municipality m during election period t. Panel A covers all politicians on nomination lists, Panel B restricts to those elected into office, and Panel C further restricts to those who also appear on a nomination list in the subsequent period. Bars show analogous estimates (without CIs) separately for women with (white) and without (gray) children. All models include year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the highest, post-merger municipality level (n = 356).

in the subsequent period, conditional on their election in period t. They account for about 3/5 of those elected. For this group, the point estimate of 0.034 suggests an approximately 17 percent higher share on daytime councils. Appendix Figure A.10 repeats the analysis for men in the same age range, showing no significant relationship on any outcome.

Figure 4 illustrates how the linear relationship between meeting times and representation varies across the entire age distribution for women. In this figure, each black circle denotes the estimated slope of the regression line for that specific age interval, corresponding to the slopes reported for women in the broader 25–49 range in Figure 3. Across panels, the coefficients follow an S-shaped pattern, where they are most positive for women around 40 years of age and then tend to be negative for older groups. The white and gray bars further decompose these relationships by parental status, revealing that the positive effects are predominantly driven by women who are mothers at the time of the observation. This is consistent with previous findings by Fiva and King (2024) and Solberg, Miklavic and Sund (2022).

In sum, the results suggest that councils meeting during the daytime are attractive to women with children, an effect which does not extend to other groups. Whether this can be attributed solely to meeting times, rather than to correlated factors, remains an open question. These councils may have other family-friendly policies in place, or their political parties may more actively recruit women. That substantial effects appear already at the nomination stage is hard to reconcile with meeting times as the main driver. I therefore turn to my within-council design that holds such factors constant, focusing on how meeting times shape attendance among already-elected politicians.

4.2 *Effect of early meetings on women's absences*

Table 2 presents estimates of β in Equation 1 for two types of women. Panel A considers all female politicians in my sample, while Panel B focuses on a smaller subsample consisting of women aged 25–49 with at least one child at the start of the election period (2015). Each column adds progressively more meeting controls (X_{sm}).

Table 2: Effects of meeting times on women's absences

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A: Overall						
Early	0.0041	0.0127	0.0084	0.0064	0.0069	0.0076
	(0.0087)	(0.0077)	(0.0088)	(0.0084)	(0.0085)	(0.0085)
	N = 35,249, n = 1,029, 107 clusters, $\bar{y}$ = 0.23					
B: Aged 25–49 with children						
Early	0.0004	0.0109	0.0037	0.0021	0.0031	0.0034
	(0.0129)	(0.0117)	(0.0121)	(0.0119)	(0.0120)	(0.0117)
	N = 16,934, n = 497, 107 clusters, $\bar{y}$ = 0.23					
Controls						
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda content	–	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression of Equation 1. Panel A covers all female politicians in the estimation sample; Panel B restricts to women aged 25–49 with children at the start of the election period (2015). All models include individual fixed effects, not reported. N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, in each panel (constant across columns). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Perhaps surprisingly, time does not seem to play a substantial role in explaining women's absences. For both the full sample in Panel A and the possibly more relevant subgroup in Panel B, the coefficient estimates are small in magnitude and statistically indistinguishable from zero. Control variables matter little for the results. The estimates are precise in relative terms, for example constructing a 95% confidence interval around the point estimate in column 6 of Panel B rules out effects smaller than -8.5% and larger than 11.4% relative to the mean absence of 0.23 reported below. The lack of significant effects implies that female politicians are equally likely to attend *Early* meetings as they are evening ones. If anything, the estimates point in the opposite direction of what we would expect if early meetings were more convenient. Corresponding results for men are presented in Appendix Table A.3. They show the same null result for fathers, but a slightly stronger positive effect on absences from *Early* meetings for men overall. This finding aligns with the framework's prediction that *Early* meetings impose costs on other

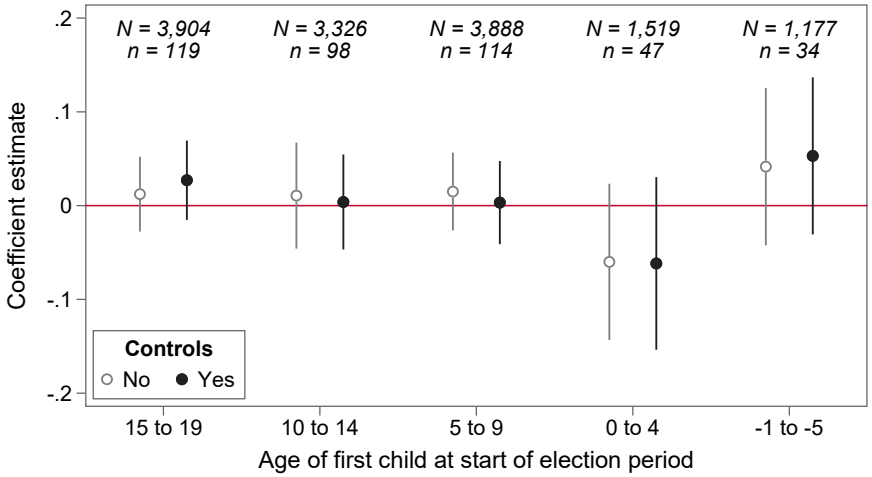
politicians, a result I return to in Section 4.4.

A battery of robustness checks in the appendix confirms the null effect for women. First, Appendix Table A.4 shows that using municipality-level fixed effects instead of the more restrictive individual-level fixed effects (substituting α_i with α_m) has little impact on the results. Second, Appendix Table A.5 shows that even when imposing larger fluctuations in *Early* by excluding sessions held between 12:00 and 16:00, there are still no noticeable impacts. Third, Appendix Table A.6 shows that the null effect for mothers aged 25–49 is robust to estimating it as a differential effect relative to all other politicians in the sample. Finally, Appendix Figure A.11 shows that the results are not sensitive to the cutoff used to define *Early*.

Time constraints may vary across stages of parenthood. To probe heterogeneity within the estimates reported in Table 2, I re-estimate Equation 1 separately for mothers grouped by the age of their first child at the start of the election period (October 2015). I use five-year bins ranging from -5 to 19, where negative values reflect mothers whose first child was not yet born. The bin width balances within-group sample size against meaningful variation across stages of parenthood. Even so, the analysis is constrained by limited statistical power.

The results are presented in Figure 5. Hollow circles show models without meeting controls (X_{sm}), while filled circles show models with controls, corresponding to the full control set in column 6 of Table 2. Most coefficient estimates remain near zero. The exception is a sharp negative dip among mothers whose first child was 0–4 years old at the start of the election period. With only 47 individuals in this group, the effect is imprecisely estimated, but the 95% confidence intervals are consistent with reductions in absences of up to 15 percentage points, more than 50% relative to a group mean of 27.5%, while ruling out increases of more than about 3 percentage points. Children in this age range arguably need more parental support in the evenings than at later stages of life, making an effect here theoretically plausible. In addition, corresponding results for fathers point in the same direction, though more muted and also not statistically

Figure 5: Effects of meeting times on mothers' absences, by age of the first child



Notes: The figure presents coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals for β in Equation 1, estimated with (filled circles) and without (hollow circles) meeting controls (X_{sm}). Each estimate comes from a separate regression for politicians whose first child was of the indicated age at the start of the election period (October 2015). N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, for each age group. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level.

significant (Appendix Figure A.12). Even if the true effect lies in the lower tail of the confidence interval in Figure 5, the affected group is too small to serve as the basis for a broad policy recommendation – mothers in the 0–4 age bin represent only 4.6% of women and less than 2% of politicians overall.

4.3 *Mechanisms*

The overall null result in the previous section stands in contrast to anecdotal accounts in which female politicians describe daytime sessions as substantially easier to attend (see footnote 2). This raises the question of whether *Early* meetings genuinely confer no net benefit on female politicians, or whether other mechanisms mask an underlying positive effect. I consider four such possibilities below.

The first factor I consider is the role of the anticipated duration of meetings. Appendix Table A.7 shows that, conditional on X_{sm}, *Early* meetings tend to be slightly longer than late ones. If politicians expect that *Early* meetings will last longer, and their attendance cost increases with duration, this could in principle attenuate the benefit of

Early meetings. Meeting duration may be endogenous to the starting time, making it less suitable to use as a control in my setup. I nevertheless investigate this mechanism by interacting *Early* with an indicator for short meetings in Appendix Table A.7, finding no evidence that it plays a significant role. This concern is further mitigated by the fact that attendance is recorded at the start of the meeting, and that politicians can generally leave meetings early if needed.

A second concern relates to features of the councils themselves, for example that meetings are too infrequent, or that absence rules are too strict to allow responses. To assess both, columns (1)–(2) of Appendix Table A.8 interact *Early* with an indicator for membership in a council with an above-median number of sessions per year, and columns (3)–(4) interact *Early* with an indicator for serving on a council with above-median absence rates, which proxies for more lenient absence rules. Effects are indistinguishable across groups in both cases.

A third possibility is that informal childcare softens the burden of being away from home in the evenings, masking benefits that would otherwise accrue to women without such support. Approximately two thirds of the mothers in the estimation sample are married. Also, over half reside in the same municipality as one of their parents (the children's grandparents). Columns (5)–(6) and (7)–(8) of Appendix Table A.8 use indicators for *not* having a spouse or at least one parent residing in the same municipality, respectively, as proxies for reduced childcare availability. There is no evidence that these significantly affect the results either.

A final consideration is whether conscientious politicians attend meetings regardless of their cost, and offset these costs elsewhere. One prominent channel would be to withdraw from politics in the subsequent election. The relationship between meeting times and re-election rates was examined in Panel C of Figure 3. Although women in the relevant age group are more likely to appear on subsequent ballots when the proportion of early meetings is higher, the relationship is only slightly stronger than the analogous relationships at earlier stages of the selection process (Panels A and B). This largely

rules out compensatory behavior through electoral withdrawal, though there remains a possibility that some offsetting occurs through other unobserved behaviors, such as disengaging during meetings or leaving them early.

4.4 *Effect of early meetings on working politicians' absences*

If *Early* meetings do not make it easier for mothers to attend meetings, do they matter at all? The majority of local council members in Norway maintain their appointments in conjunction with holding a regular day job. While institutional measures aim to facilitate the integration of the two roles, attending meetings during standard business hours is inevitably more burdensome for some politicians. The size of this burden may vary depending on their place of employment; for example, it is often recognized that public-sector jobs offer different amenities, including more job flexibility, greater job security, and less convex pay schedules compared to those in the private sector (see, e.g., Danzer, 2019; Nielsen, Simonsen and Verner, 2004; Pertold-Gebicka, Pertold and Datta Gupta, 2016). In Norway, most public-sector employees have a specific contractual right, governed by the Main Collective Agreement of the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (§14.1), granting up to twelve days of paid leave per year for attending to official duties. This benefit is generally not available for politicians in the private sector.

I proceed by estimating Equation 1 for politicians whose primary occupation lies outside of politics (regardless of gender), and divide the sample based on the institutional sector of the politicians' workplaces. Sectors are classified either as public or private, according to the 2012 Norwegian Classification of Institutional Sector.[14] Any persons without an occupation, such as students, retirees, or the unemployed, are excluded from the sample, along with politicians whose main occupation is listed as being a politician ($< 7\%$ of the overall sample). Occupation is measured using the November register of the

[14]Following Geys, Murdoch and Sørensen (2021, 2024), I let categories 6100 'Central government' and 6500 'Local government' denote the 'Public' sector, while all other groups – 73% of which are 2100 'Private non-financial incorporated enterprises' – are designated as 'Private'. The sectoral classification is based on the UN's 'System of National Accounts' and the 'European System of National Accounts'. For more information, see: https://www.ssb.no/en/klass/klassifikasjoner/39.

Table 3: Effects of meeting times on working politicians' absences, by sector

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A: Private sector						
Early	0.0215***	0.0274***	0.0284***	0.0272***	0.0283***	0.0280***
	(0.0063)	(0.0060)	(0.0065)	(0.0065)	(0.0065)	(0.0066)
		N = 31,989,	n = 1,161,	107 clusters,	$\bar{y}$ = 0.21	
B: Public sector						
Early	0.0028	0.0096	0.0065	0.0060	0.0058	0.0060
	(0.0084)	(0.0073)	(0.0073)	(0.0069)	(0.0070)	(0.0071)
		N = 35,869,	n = 1,267,	107 clusters,	$\bar{y}$ = 0.20	
Controls						
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda content	–	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression of Equation 1. Panels A and B restrict to politicians whose main occupation is registered in the private and public sector, respectively, excluding those employed as 'politicians'. Sector is defined according to the 2012 Norwegian Classification of Institutional Sectors, where 'Public' encompasses central and local government (categories 6100 and 6500), and 'Private' contains all remaining categories. Occupation is assigned based on the November register of the preceding year and updated annually throughout the election period. All models include individual fixed effects, not reported. N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, in each panel (constant across columns). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

preceding year and updated annually throughout the election period. The exception is observations from fall 2015, for which November 2015 is used instead.[15] Where individuals hold multiple jobs, I use the main occupation as recorded in the register.

The results are presented in Table 3. For private-sector politicians (Panel A), *Early* meetings are associated with an increase in absence rates of 2-3 percentage points (10%–13%). In contrast, there are no effects for politicians in the public sector (Panel B). Control variables have minimal impact, but they do slightly enhance the distinction between sectors. Appendix Tables A.9, A.10 and Appendix Figure A.13 present robustness checks analogous to those conducted for women, again yielding similar results. In addition, Appendix Table A.11 indicates that the observed variation in attendance is driven

[15] A reform to the occupation classification system between 2014 and 2015 means that 2014 occupations are not directly comparable to later years. Since the first observation in my sample is from October 2015, using occupations from November that year is a minor departure from the general rule.

predominantly by an increase in idiosyncratic absences. This is consistent with expectations, since consecutive absences should not be affected by sporadic changes in meeting times.

4.5 *Heterogeneity by job inflexibility*

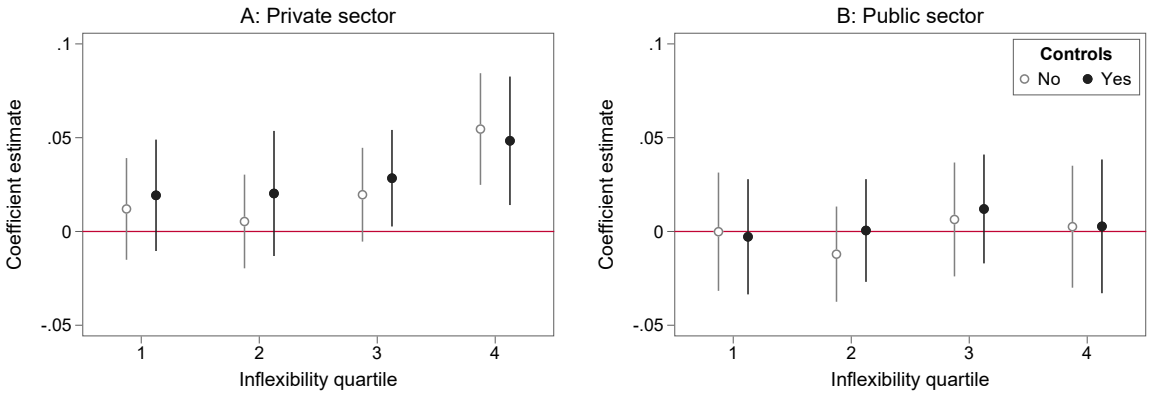
The sectoral split is informative, but it groups together very different kinds of jobs. To examine the underlying mechanisms more directly, I follow the method by Folke and Rickne (2025) in constructing an index of job inflexibility by occupation in Norway. Using data from the 2019 Norwegian Labour Force Survey (Arbeidskraftsundersøkelsen),[16] I create four indicator variables, each assigned a value of one when respondents report a low degree of flexibility in one of four dimensions that assesses the ability to work flexible hours and take time off on short notice.[17] I then compute an average score per dimension across all 4-digit ISCO08 occupations, and define the degree of inflexibility as the average of these four averages.

Appendix Figure A.14 plots the distribution of the occupation inflexibility index for politicians. Among the most flexible occupations (z-score) are 'Policy administration professionals' (-0.95), one of the largest occupational categories within the public sector, and 'Managing directors and chief executives' (-0.88). At the other end of the scale, inflexible occupations include 'Shop sales assistants' (1.03) and 'Nurses' (1.71). The most extreme cases include 'Service station attendants' (2.38), 'Locomotive engine drivers' (2.47) and 'Travel attendants and travel stewards' (3.10). Only a handful of politicians hold such jobs. Appendix Figure A.15 shows the correlation between occupational inflexibility and six background characteristics, indicating that inflexible jobs are often low-skilled and

[16]The survey uses telephone-based interviews to collect information about labor market outcomes for a representative sample of the Norwegian population aged 15–74. In 2019, the survey included specific questions addressing the flexibility of respondents' occupations ($n = 14,248$). For more information, see https://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/sysselsetting/statistikk/arbeidskraftundersokelsen

[17]For each of the following questions, the condition is defined as inflexible if respondents answered 'to a small degree' or 'not at all' (alternative responses are 'to a high degree', 'to some degree', 'don't know/prefer not to say'): 1) 'To what extent can you decide when to start and end your workday?', 2) 'How easy or difficult is it for you, on one day's notice, to take one or two hours off from work for personal or family reasons?', 3) 'How easy or difficult is it to take one or two days off from work, if you give at least three days' notice?', 4) 'To what extent can you determine your own daily work schedule?'.

Figure 6: Effects of meeting times on working politicians' absences, by sector and occupational inflexibility



Notes: The figure presents coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals for β in Equation 1, estimated separately for each sector-quartile of the occupational inflexibility index. Higher values imply less flexibility. Panel A reports results for private sector politicians; Panel B for public sector politicians. Estimates are reported with (filled circles) and without (hollow circles) meeting controls (X_{sm}). The sample restricts to politicians whose main occupation is registered outside of politics. Occupation is assigned based on the November register of the preceding year and updated annually throughout the election period.

held by younger politicians with lower income and education. Politicians in these jobs are also more likely to be female.

For both the public and private sectors, I divide the sample of politicians into four equally sized bins depending on the average degree of occupational inflexibility of the individual's job that year. I then estimate Equation 1 separately within each sector-quartile. The results are displayed in Figure 6. For private-sector politicians, shown in Panel A, absences driven by the time of day positively correlate with the degree of job inflexibility. While the most flexible politicians exhibit no effects, those in the least flexible quartile are about five percentage points (23%) more absent from *Early* meetings. Corresponding estimates for politicians in the public sector are shown in Panel B. Here, meeting times have no impact regardless of flexibility, which may suggest that the twelve days of paid leave granted to this group effectively insulate them from scheduling conflicts.

These results help explain the null effect for women observed earlier. Around 90% of mothers aged 25–49 in my sample are employed, and by the flexibility measure used here

they are in fact more likely than men to hold inflexible jobs (Appendix Figure A.15). For this group, the challenge of balancing political duties with primary employment may be at least as important as evening caregiving responsibilities. Shifting political meetings to the daytime does little to resolve this conflict.

The results in this section carry a further implication. We know that politicians from the private sector hold a disproportionately low number of council seats in Norway (Geys, Murdoch and Sørensen, 2021, 2024). It is also true that members of the working class are underrepresented in politics, both in Norway (Fiva, Nedregård and Øien, Forthcoming) and abroad (Carnes and Lupu, 2016; Folke and Rickne, 2025; Gulzar, 2021). It is hard to overlook that the attempt to address the underrepresentation of one group appear to come at the cost of representation for other groups.

5. Conclusion

A number of studies, together with substantial anecdotal evidence, have suggested that meetings held in the evenings pose a significant barrier to women's political careers. Given the role of local politics as a stepping stone to higher-level offices, shifting meetings to the daytime may seem a promising strategy for improving gender representation.

This paper provides the first direct evidence of how meeting times affect politicians' ability to serve in elected office. The Norwegian setting offers a promising environment to study these effects, as there is significant within-council variation in session start times that is plausibly unrelated to the individual council members' motivations for attending. My results indicate that family-friendly meeting hours do not significantly reduce absences for the majority of mothers, nor for women overall. While I cannot rule out a meaningful reduction in absences for mothers of small children, this group represents a tiny fraction of the overall sample. By contrast, family-friendly hours appear to be significantly more costly for politicians (men and women) who work in the private sector, especially those with inflexible jobs. For this group, early meetings are associated with an *increase* in

absences of about 23%.

My findings make meeting-hour reforms a less compelling solution for increasing women's political representation. This is consistent with recent evidence from workplace settings suggesting that schedule predictability matters more than the timing of work per se (Bolotnyy and Emanuel, 2022). They also align conceptually with other studies on gender-equity policies in Norway, which find that gender quotas have few effects beyond ensuring compliance with the quotas themselves (e.g., Bertrand et al., 2019; Geys and Sørensen, 2019). While proponents of early meetings may argue that attendance behavior does not fully reveal preferences – for example because women may bear costs of attending inconvenient meetings elsewhere – the strong opposite effects for working politicians make it difficult to envision a policy centered on earlier meeting times that would lead to broader improvements in political representation. To the extent that the political arena is reflective of other professional settings, we learn that the impact of family-friendly scheduling is limited, at least when the activity is layered on top of regular work commitments. More broadly, the results underscore a trade-off involved in accommodating the preferences of individuals with family responsibilities alongside those of others.

It remains an open question whether my results generalize to the margins of political entry and exit. In the absence of exogenous scheduling variation at the council level, the intensive margin offers the most credible evidence currently available. Future research that leverages natural experiments at the point of entry could shed further light on whether the null effects observed here extend to selection into office. Similar studies in other organizational settings would also help clarify whether these findings extend beyond the political context.

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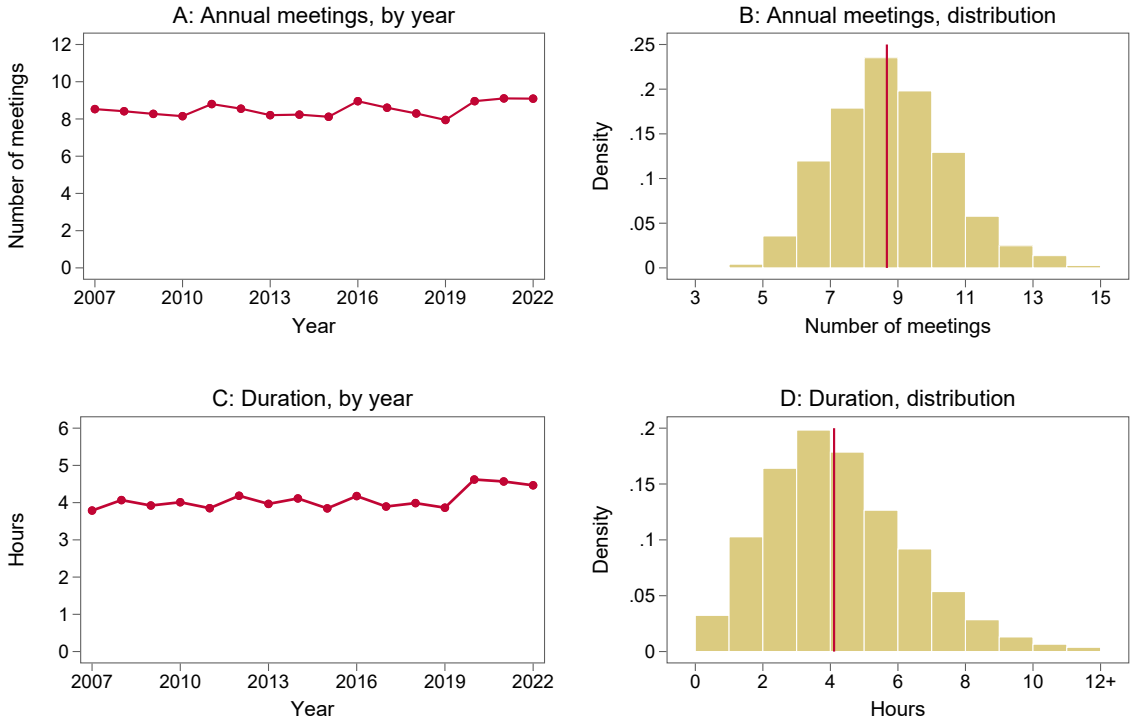
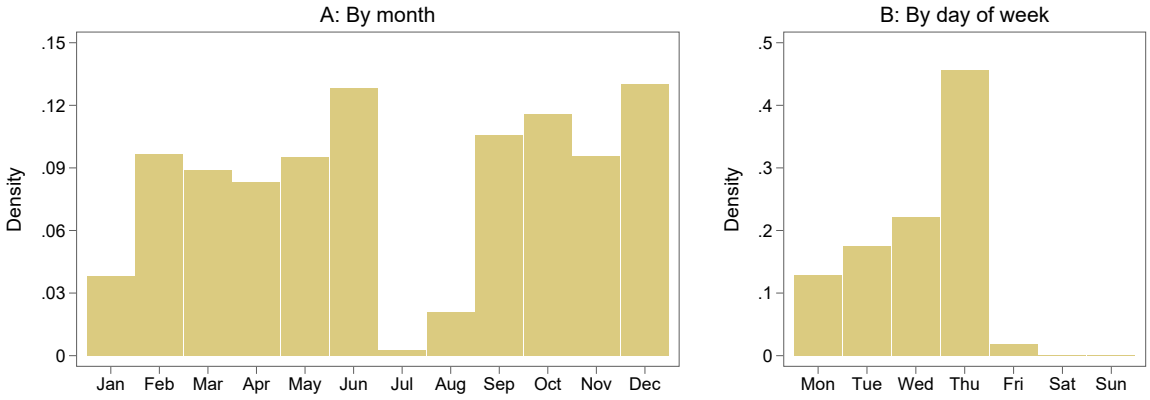
Appendix A: Supplementary material

Figure A.1: Local council meeting frequency and duration, 2007–2023



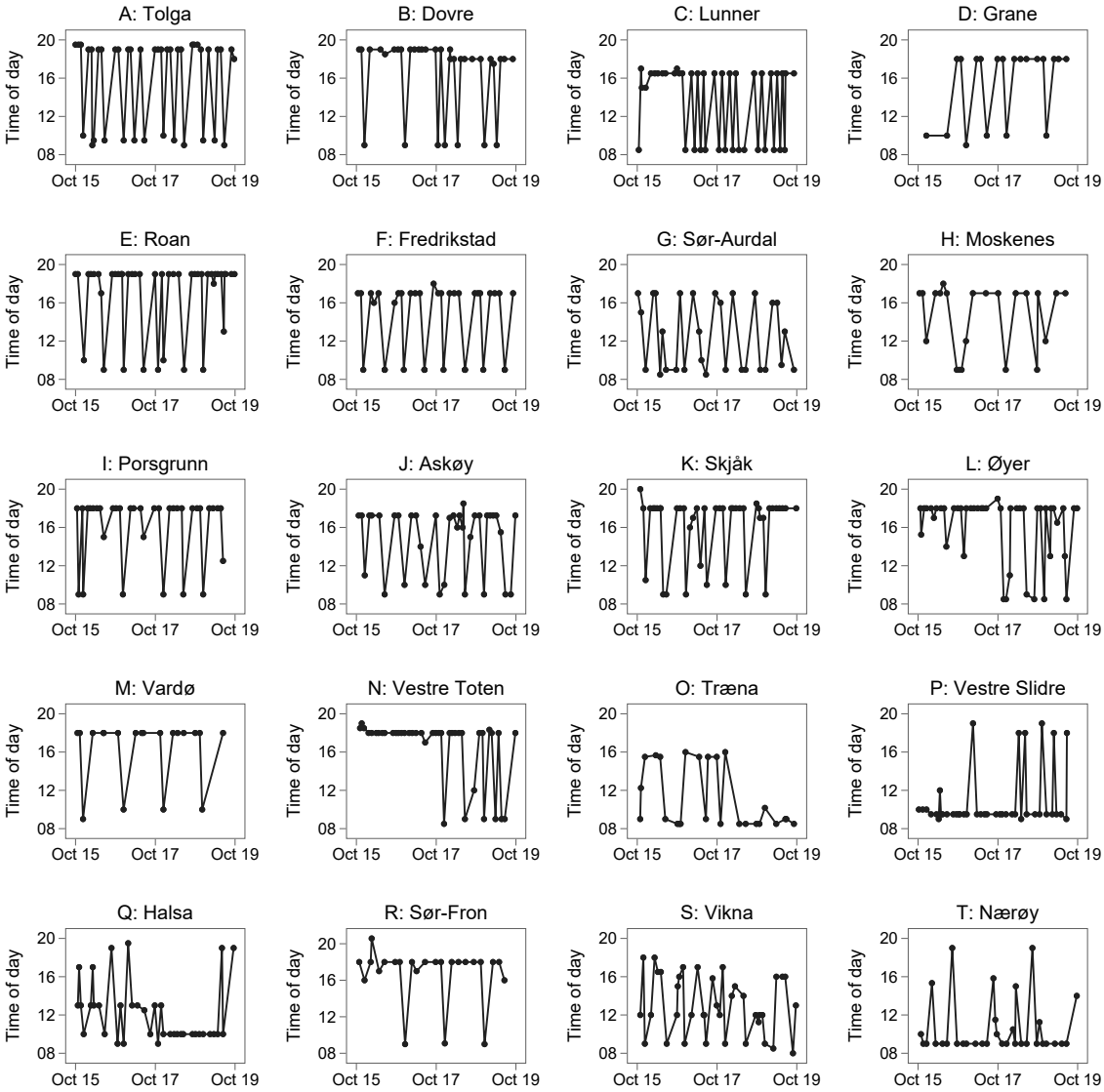
Notes: Panels A and C plot the evolution over time in the average number of meetings per council-year and the average session duration, respectively. Panels B and D show their distributions. The figure is based on all meetings in the Local Council Meetings dataset.

Figure A.2: Local council meeting distributions by month and day of week



Notes: Panels A and B show the distribution of local council meetings by calendar month and day of the week, respectively, using all meetings in the Local Council Meetings dataset.

Figure A.3: Meeting start times over time for the 20 most variable councils

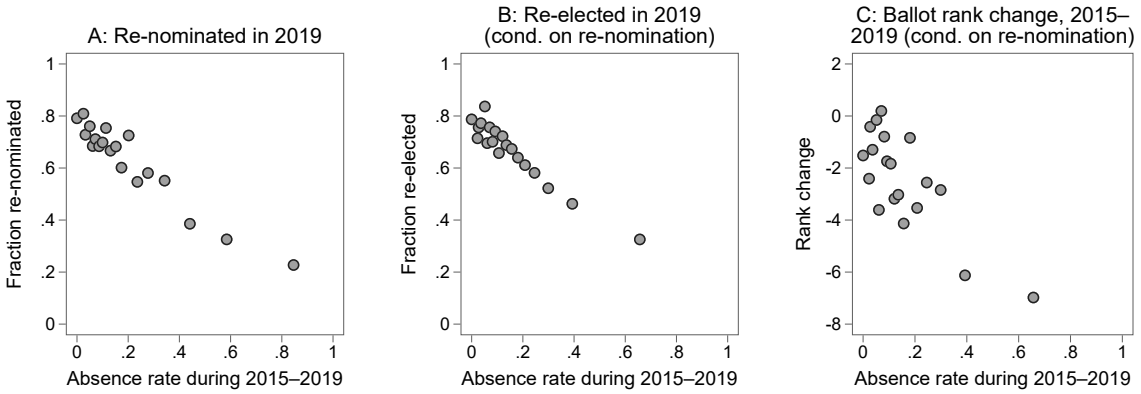


Notes: Each panel plots meeting start times over time for one of the 20 municipalities with the greatest within-council variation in start times, measured by the standard deviation. The sample uses a 25% random sample of municipalities in 2015–2019 election period.

Figure A.4: Average start time and meeting duration, by month and day of week

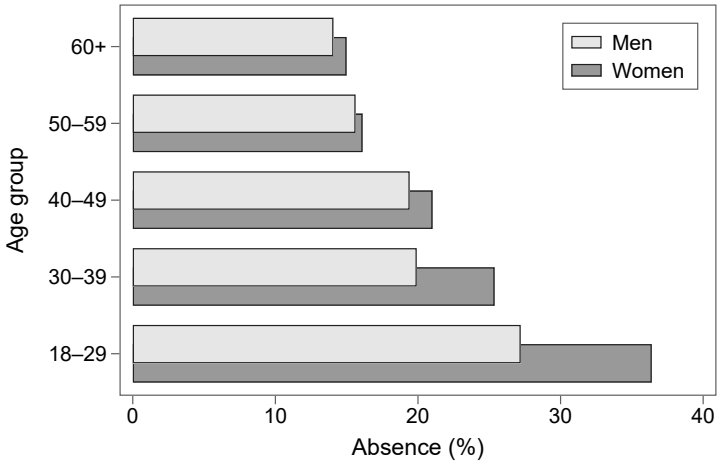
Notes: Panels A and B plot the average start time of local council meetings by calendar month and day of the week, respectively; Panels C and D do the same for average meeting duration. The figure uses all meetings in the Local Council Meetings dataset (2007–2022).

Figure A.5: Absence rates and subsequent election outcomes



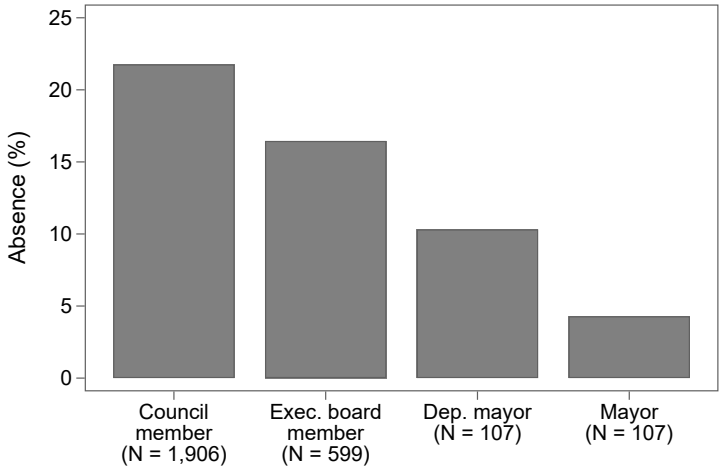
Notes: Each panel plots a binned scatter relating average absence rates during the 2015–2019 election period to outcomes in the 2019 election. Panel A covers all 2,717 individuals; Panels B and C restrict to the 1,729 council members who were renominated.

Figure A.6: Absences, by gender and age



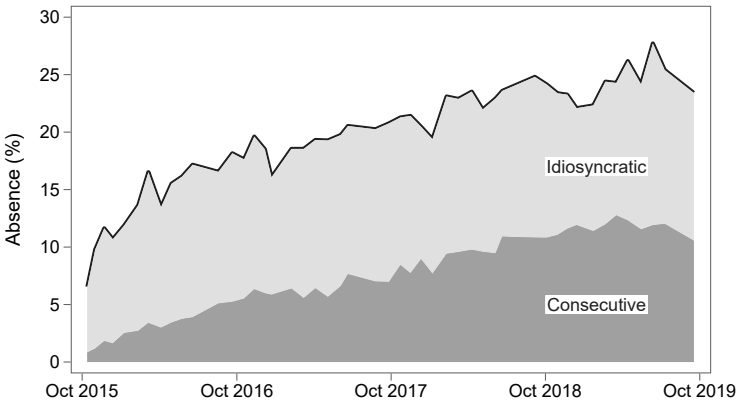
Notes: The figure plots average absence rates from local council meetings by gender and age group, based on all 92,687 person-meeting observations in the estimation sample.

Figure A.7: Absences, by level of the local political hierarchy



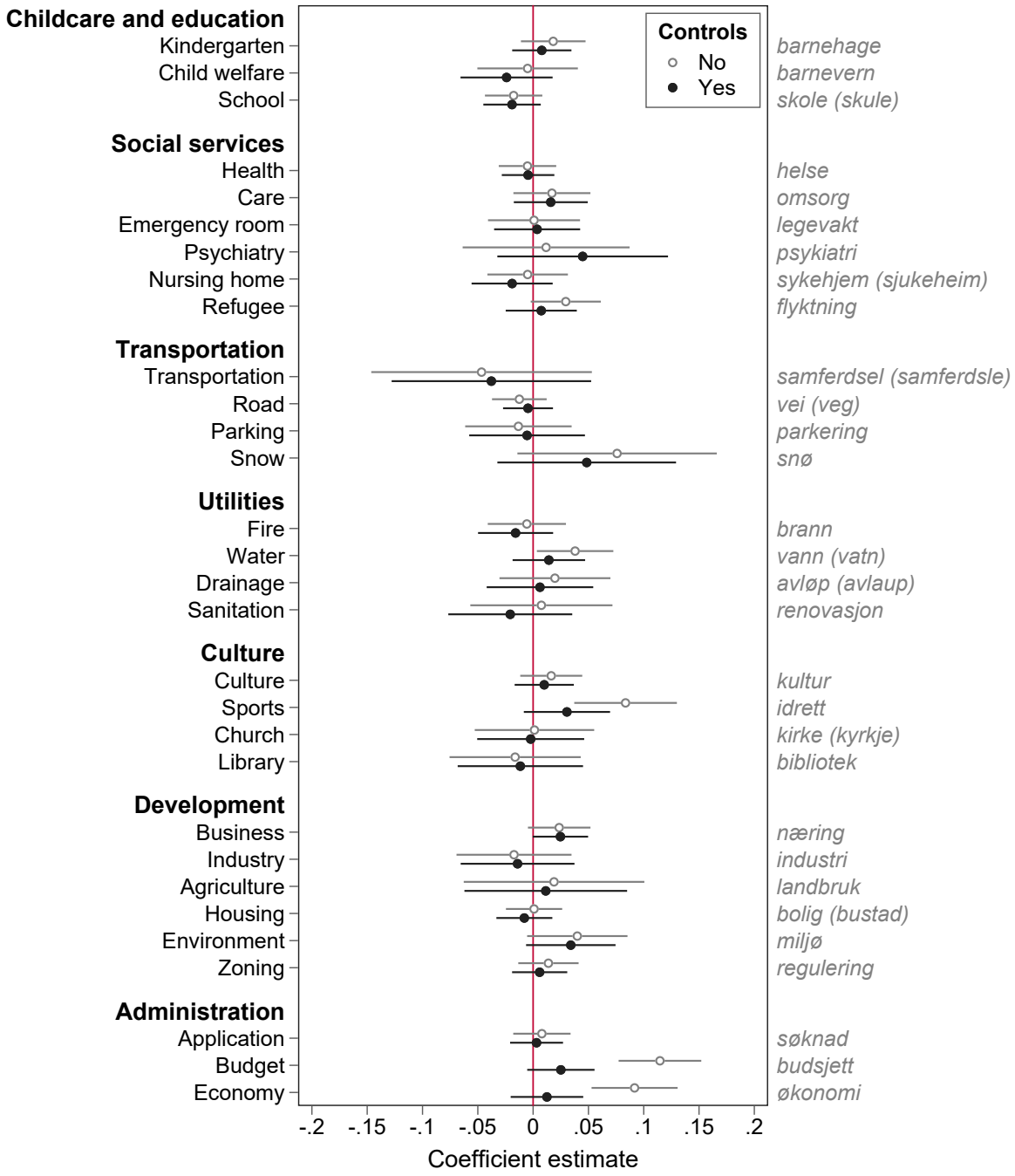
Notes: The figure plots average absence rates by level of the local political hierarchy, based on all 92,687 person-meeting observations in the estimation sample.

Figure A.8: Absence rates over the election period, by type



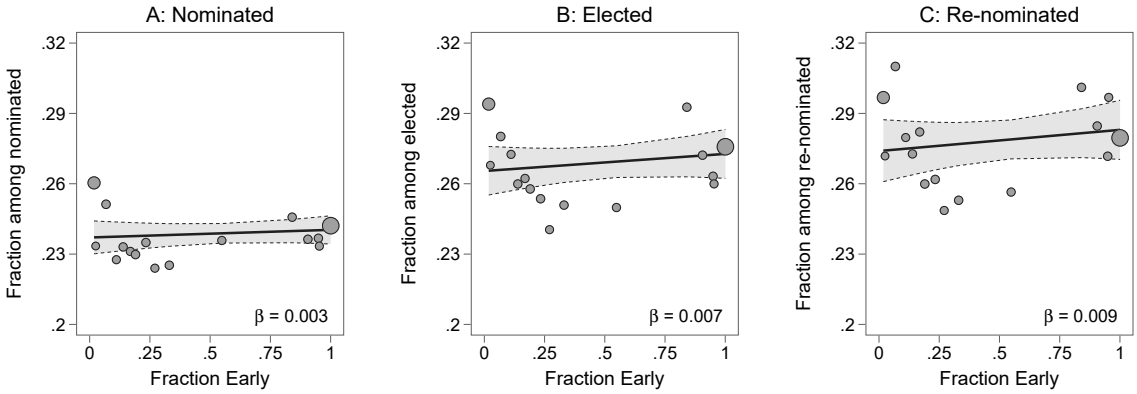
Notes: The figure plots the evolution of absence rates over the 2015–2019 election period. The solid black line shows overall absence, with shaded areas distinguishing between absence types: 'Consecutive' absences (five or more consecutive meetings missed), and 'idiosyncratic' (all other absences). Absence rates are computed from all 92,687 person-meeting observations in the estimation sample.

Figure A.9: Correlations between meeting content and start times



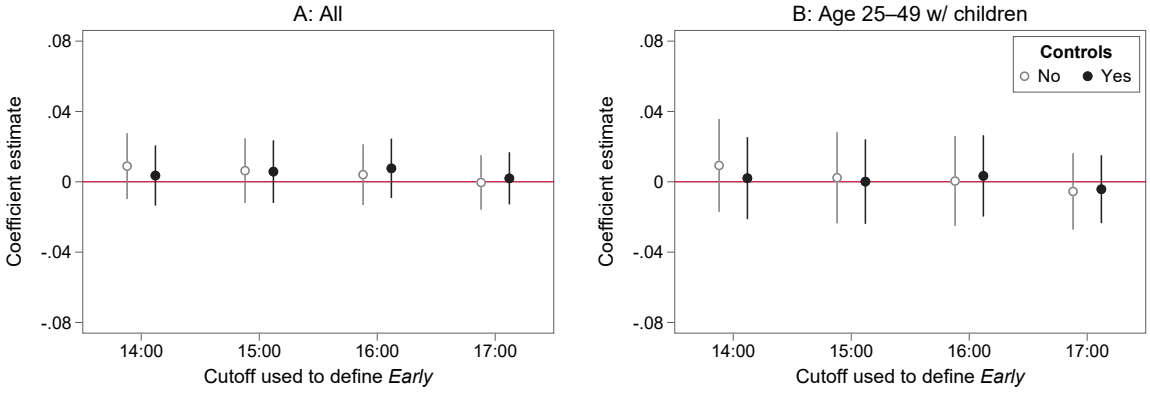
Notes: The figure presents coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals for δ in Equation 2, estimated separately with (filled circles) and without (hollow circles) meeting controls (X_{sm}). The independent variable of interest is an indicator for whether keyword j appeared in the agenda from meeting sm. For all other details, see notes to Figure 2.

Figure A.10: Meeting times and representation of men 25–49



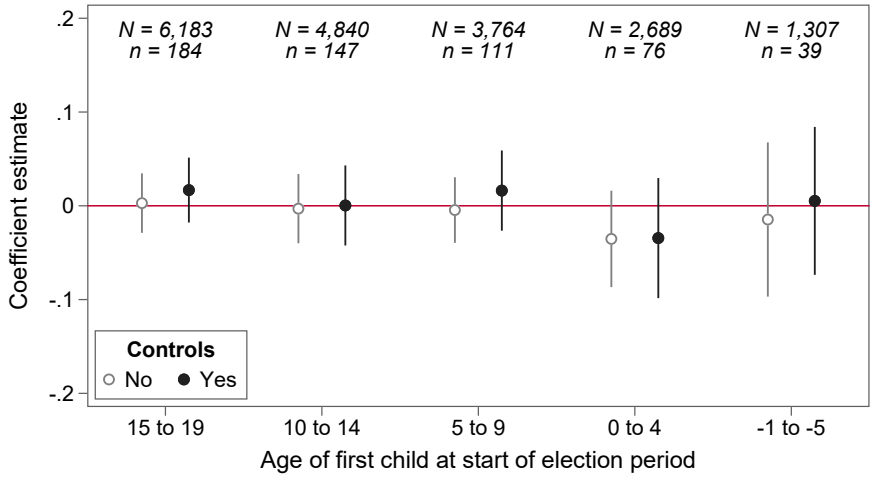
Notes: Each panel plots the yearly-residualized share of Early meetings in municipality m during election period t against the share of men aged 25–49 in mt. Panel A covers all politicians on nomination lists, Panel B restricts to those elected into office, and Panel C further restricts to those who also appear on a nomination list in the subsequent period. A meeting is classified as Early if it begins before 16:00. Each data point represents a binned average across all 1,643 council-period observations in Norway between 2007 and 2023, weighted by bin size. Solid lines show fitted values from linear regressions, with 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered at the highest, post-merger municipality level ($n = 356$).

Figure A.11: Effects of meeting times on women's absences: alternative treatment definitions



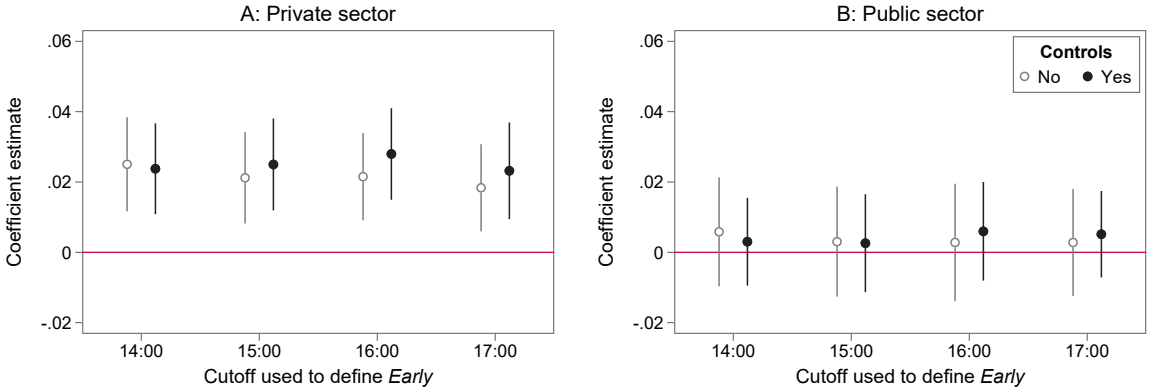
Notes: The figure presents coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals for β in Equation 1, using alternative definitions of Early. Each estimate comes from a separate regression. Panel A considers all female politicians in the estimation sample; Panel B focuses on women aged 25–49 with children (as of 2015). Estimates are reported with (filled circles) and without (hollow circles) meeting controls (X_{sm}). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level.

Figure A.12: Effects of meeting times on fathers' absences, by age of the first child



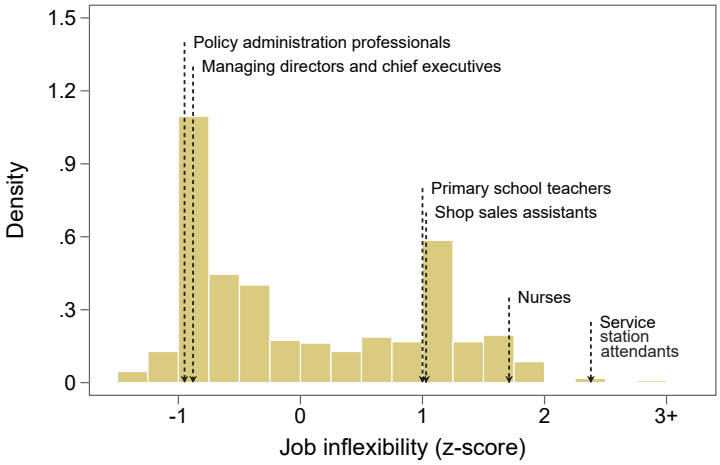
Notes: The figure presents coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals for β in Equation 1, estimated with (filled circles) and without (hollow circles) meeting controls (X_{sm}). Each estimate comes from a separate regression for politicians whose first child was of the indicated age at the start of the election period (October 2015). N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, for each age group. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level.

Figure A.13: Effects of meeting times on working politicians' absences, by sector: alternative treatment definitions



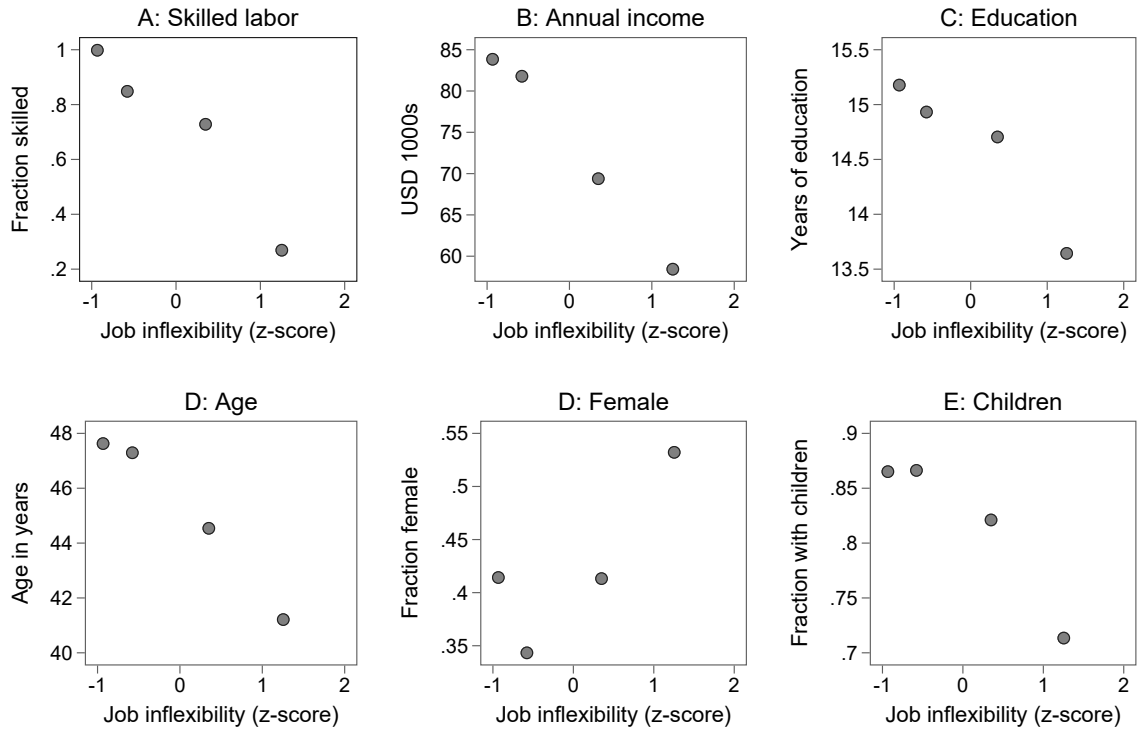
Notes: The figure presents coefficient estimates and 95% confidence intervals for β in Equation 1, using alternative definitions of Early. Each estimate comes from a separate regression. Panels A and B restrict to politicians whose main occupation is registered in the private and public sector, respectively, excluding those employed as 'politicians'. Estimates are reported with (filled circles) and without (hollow circles) meeting controls (X_{sm}). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level.

Figure A.14: Distribution of the occupational inflexibility index



Notes: The figure plots the distribution of the occupational inflexibility index. The sample consists of one observation per individual in 2015, conditional on having an occupation registered outside of politics (2,092 individuals). Arrows indicate the relative ranking of six selected occupations. Higher values imply less flexibility.

Figure A.15: Correlations between inflexibility and occupational characteristics



Notes: Each panel plots a binned scatter of occupational inflexibility against one of six background characteristics. The sample consists of one observation per individual in 2015, conditional on having an occupation registered outside of politics (2,092 individuals). Each point represents the average within a quartile of the inflexibility index. Higher values imply less flexibility.

Table A.1: The *Early* indicator and meeting start time and duration

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
A: Start time					
Early	-5.9409***	-5.9489***	-5.7537***	-5.7516***	-5.7354***
	(0.2781)	(0.2785)	(0.2848)	(0.2871)	(0.2885)
		N = 3,546,	107 clusters,	$\bar{y}$ = 14.18	
B: Duration					
Early	2.2444***	2.2486***	1.6624***	1.6798***	1.5701***
	(0.1796)	(0.1797)	(0.1742)	(0.1745)	(0.1728)
		N = 2,747,	96 clusters,	$\bar{y}$ = 4.14	
Controls					
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression of meeting start time (Panel A) or duration in hours (Panel B) on the Early indicator, at the meeting level. All models include municipality fixed effects, not reported. The sample covers all local council meetings in the estimation sample from October 2015 to September 2019. Meetings with missing end times, for which duration cannot be computed, are dropped from Panel B. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Table A.2: Comparison of women on councils with vs. without variation in meeting times

A: Overall	Variation	No variation	Diff
Age	44.744	44.600	0.144
Children (%)	81.452	79.396	2.056
3+ children (%)	32.863	36.412	-3.549
Married (%)	66.129	66.075	0.054
Immigrant (%)	3.226	4.085	-0.859
Years of education	14.970	14.882	0.087
Labor income (USD 1,000s)	61.942	62.022	-0.080
Public sector job (%)	58.266	53.996	4.270
Private sector job (%)	25.605	28.242	-2.637
Prior political experience (%)	44.153	41.385	2.768
N	496	563	

B: Age 25-49 w/ children	Variation	No var.	Diff
Age	40.738	40.524	0.213
Children (%)	100.000	100.000	
3+ children (%)	37.705	41.199	-3.494
Married (%)	69.262	67.041	2.221
Immigrant (%)	3.689	3.745	-0.057
Years of education	15.354	15.221	0.133
Labor income (USD 1,000s)	66.030	68.739	-2.709
Public sector job (%)	64.344	63.296	1.048
Private sector job (%)	25.410	25.843	-0.433
Prior political experience (%)	40.984	39.700	1.283
N	244	267	

Notes: The table reports mean outcomes for all female politicians (Panel A), and for women aged 25–49 with children (Panel B), across councils. 'Variation' denotes the 50 councils with identifying variation in meeting times (excluding variation from June and December), while 'No variation' denotes the remaining 57 councils. 'Diff' reports the difference between the two groups, along with the results from a test of statistical significance using standard errors clustered on the council level. None of the differences are statistically significant.

Table A.3: Effects of meeting times on men's absences

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A: Overall						
Early	0.0097	0.0162***	0.0185***	0.0180***	0.0188***	0.0183***
	(0.0065)	(0.0059)	(0.0066)	(0.0065)	(0.0066)	(0.0068)
		$N = 53{,}892$, $n = 1{,}581$, 107 clusters, $\bar{y} = 0.18$				
B: Aged 25–49 with children						
Early	-0.0003	0.0056	0.0054	0.0055	0.0064	0.0052
	(0.0105)	(0.0101)	(0.0114)	(0.0114)	(0.0115)	(0.0118)
		$N = 19{,}180$, $n = 570$, 107 clusters, $\bar{y} = 0.20$				
Controls						
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda content	–	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression of Equation 1. Panel A covers all male politicians in the estimation sample; Panel B restricts to men aged 25–49 with children at the start of the election period (2015). All models include individual fixed effects, not reported. N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, in each panel (constant across columns). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Table A.4: Effects of meeting times on women's absences: municipality-level FEs

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A: Overall						
Early	0.0041	0.0127	0.0084	0.0064	0.0070	0.0077
	(0.0087)	(0.0077)	(0.0088)	(0.0084)	(0.0085)	(0.0085)
	N = 35,249, n = 1,029, 107 clusters, $\bar{y}$ = 0.23					
B: Aged 25–49 with children						
Early	0.0004	0.0109	0.0037	0.0021	0.0031	0.0034
	(0.0129)	(0.0117)	(0.0121)	(0.0119)	(0.0120)	(0.0117)
	N = 16,934, n = 497, 107 clusters, $\bar{y}$ = 0.23					
Controls						
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda content	–	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression of Equation 1, replacing individual fixed effects (α_i) with municipality fixed effects (α_m). Panel A covers all female politicians in the estimation sample; Panel B restricts to women aged 25–49 with children at the start of the election period (2015). N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, in each panel (constant across columns). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Table A.5: Effects of meeting times on women's absences: excluding mid-day meetings

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A: Overall						
Early	0.0111	0.0147	0.0085	0.0067	0.0071	0.0068
	(0.0103)	(0.0096)	(0.0107)	(0.0106)	(0.0106)	(0.0106)
	$N = 31{,}296$, $n = 1{,}029$, 107 clusters, $\bar{y} = 0.23$					
B: Aged 25–49 with children						
Early	0.0103	0.0131	0.0049	0.0032	0.0037	0.0038
	(0.0145)	(0.0140)	(0.0147)	(0.0147)	(0.0147)	(0.0144)
	$N = 14{,}813$, $n = 497$, 107 clusters, $\bar{y} = 0.24$					
Controls						
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda content	–	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression of Equation 1, excluding meetings starting between 12:00 and 16:00. Panel A covers all female politicians in the estimation sample; Panel B restricts to women aged 25–49 with children at the start of the election period (2015). N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, in each panel (constant across columns). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Table A.6: Effects of meeting times on mothers' absences, DiD specifications

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Early	0.0090*	0.0162***	0.0158***	0.0146***	0.0153***	0.0152***
	(0.0051)	(0.0043)	(0.0046)	(0.0044)	(0.0045)	(0.0045)
Early × Women 25–49 w/ children	-0.0086	-0.0074	-0.0071	-0.0067	-0.0064	-0.0061
	(0.0116)	(0.0117)	(0.0117)	(0.0118)	(0.0118)	(0.0118)
	$N = 89{,}141$, $n = 2{,}610$, 107 clusters, $\bar{y} = 0.20$					
Controls						
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda content	–	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression extending Equation 1 with an interaction between Early and an indicator for women aged 25–49 with children. Regressions are estimated on the full estimation sample. All models include individual fixed effects, not reported. N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, in each panel (constant across columns). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Table A.7: Effects of meeting times and duration on absences of mothers aged 25–49

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Early	0.0137	0.0214	0.0083	0.0076	0.0076	0.0061
	(0.0175)	(0.0172)	(0.0176)	(0.0176)	(0.0175)	(0.0171)
Short	0.0220*	0.0180	0.0215*	0.0212*	0.0210	0.0192
	(0.0128)	(0.0121)	(0.0125)	(0.0125)	(0.0130)	(0.0130)
Early × Short	-0.0178	-0.0144	-0.0104	-0.0103	-0.0103	-0.0076
	(0.0172)	(0.0155)	(0.0156)	(0.0157)	(0.0157)	(0.0155)
	N = 13,637, n = 446, 96 clusters, $\bar{y}$ = 0.24					
Controls						
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda content	–	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression extending Equation 1 with an interaction between Early and an indicator for meetings lasting less than the median duration of four hours (Short). The sample restricts to female politicians aged 25–49 with children. Around 20% of observations are excluded due to missing meeting end times. N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, in each panel (constant across columns). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Table A.8: Effects of meeting times on absences of mothers aged 25–49, sample splits

	m = High frequency		m = High absence		m = No spouse		m = No grand-parents in mun.	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Early	-0.0123	-0.0044	0.0018	0.0009	0.0034	0.0046	-0.0024	0.0008
	(0.0157)	(0.0148)	(0.0200)	(0.0185)	(0.0133)	(0.0129)	(0.0166)	(0.0151)
Early × m	0.0187	0.0114	-0.0024	0.0044	-0.0097	-0.0040	0.0065	0.0059
	(0.0233)	(0.0210)	(0.0261)	(0.0229)	(0.0228)	(0.0222)	(0.0222)	(0.0211)
Controls	–	Yes	–	Yes	–	Yes	–	Yes
Observations	16,934	16,934	16,934	16,934	16,934	16,934	16,934	16,934
Clusters	107	107	107	107	107	107	107	107
Mean DV	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression extending Equation 1 with an interaction between Early and an indicator for belonging to the specified subset, denoted by c. Columns (1)–(2) split by the median council's annual meeting frequency (low/high); columns (3)–(4) by the median council's overall absence rate (low/high); columns (5)–(6) by whether the politician was married in 2015 (yes/no); columns (7)–(8) by whether the politician resided in the same municipality as at least one parent in 2015 (yes/no). The sample restricts to female politicians aged 25–49 with children. N and n denote the number of observations and individuals, respectively, in each panel (constant across columns). All models include individual fixed effects, not reported. 'Controls' are as defined in Table 2, column (6). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Table A.9: Effects of meeting times on working politicians' absences, by sector: municipality-level FEs

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A: Private sector						
Early	0.0186***	0.0251***	0.0258***	0.0244***	0.0258***	0.0253***
	(0.0063)	(0.0060)	(0.0065)	(0.0065)	(0.0065)	(0.0066)
		$N = 31{,}989$,	$n = 1{,}161$,	107 clusters,	$\bar{y} = 0.21$	
B: Public sector						
Early	0.0030	0.0108	0.0081	0.0073	0.0071	0.0070
	(0.0087)	(0.0072)	(0.0074)	(0.0070)	(0.0071)	(0.0072)
		$N = 35{,}869$,	$n = 1{,}267$,	107 clusters,	$\bar{y} = 0.20$	
Controls						
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda content	–	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression of Equation 1, replacing individual fixed effects (α_i) with municipality fixed effects (α_m). Panels A and B restrict to politicians whose main occupation is registered in the private and public sector, respectively, excluding those employed as 'politicians'. For all other details, see notes to Table 3. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Table A.10: Effects of meeting times on working politicians' absences, by sector: excluding mid-day meetings

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A: Private sector						
Early	0.0301***	0.0330***	0.0336***	0.0316***	0.0321***	0.0311***
	(0.0077)	(0.0079)	(0.0084)	(0.0086)	(0.0085)	(0.0086)
		$N = 27{,}919$,	$n = 1{,}159$,	107 clusters,	$\bar{y} = 0.21$	
B: Public sector						
Early	0.0076	0.0109	0.0070	0.0077	0.0076	0.0077
	(0.0091)	(0.0081)	(0.0083)	(0.0088)	(0.0089)	(0.0088)
		$N = 31{,}924$,	$n = 1{,}267$,	107 clusters,	$\bar{y} = 0.19$	
Controls						
Year effects	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month effects	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day-of-week effects	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agenda length	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes
Agenda content	–	–	–	–	–	Yes

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression of Equation 1, excluding meetings starting between 12:00 and 16:00. Panels A and B restrict to politicians whose main occupation is registered in the private and public sector, respectively, excluding those employed as 'politicians'. For all other details, see notes to Table 3. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Table A.11: Effects of meeting times on working politicians' absences, by sector and absence type

A: Private sector	Any absence		Idiosyncratic		Consecutive	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Early	0.0215***	0.0274***	0.0177***	0.0272***	0.0039	0.0008
	(0.0063)	(0.0060)	(0.0062)	(0.0071)	(0.0033)	(0.0034)
Controls	–	Yes	–	Yes	–	Yes
Observations	31,989	31,989	31,989	31,989	31,989	31,989
Clusters	107	107	107	107	107	107
Mean DV	0.21	0.21	0.14	0.14	0.08	0.08
B: Public sector	Any absence		Idiosyncratic		Consecutive	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Early	0.0028	0.0096	-0.0032	0.0031	0.0060**	0.0029
	(0.0084)	(0.0073)	(0.0071)	(0.0066)	(0.0030)	(0.0026)
Controls	–	Yes	–	Yes	–	Yes
Observations	35,869	35,869	35,869	35,869	35,869	35,869
Clusters	107	107	107	107	107	107
Mean DV	0.20	0.20	0.12	0.12	0.07	0.07

*Notes: Each column reports estimates from a separate regression of Equation 1, where the dependent variable is as specified in the column header. Panels A and B restrict to politicians whose main occupation is registered in the private and public sector, respectively, excluding those employed as 'politicians'. All models include individual fixed effects, not reported. 'Controls' are as defined in Table 3, column (6). Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level and reported in parentheses. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Appendix B: Local Council Meetings dataset

The **Local Council Meetings** dataset contains meeting times for over 50,000 political meetings held in Norway between October 2007 and September 2023. The dataset was constructed using official meeting records collected from municipal administrations across the country. There are two versions of the dataset: The **raw** version is structured in long panel format, with each observation representing a separate meeting s in municipality m. The **collapsed** version includes the average meeting times for each council-election period. It functions as a direct add-on to Fiva, Sørensen and Vøllo (2024), and can be merged to these data using an `m:1` merge in Stata with the variables `year` and `knr_loc`.

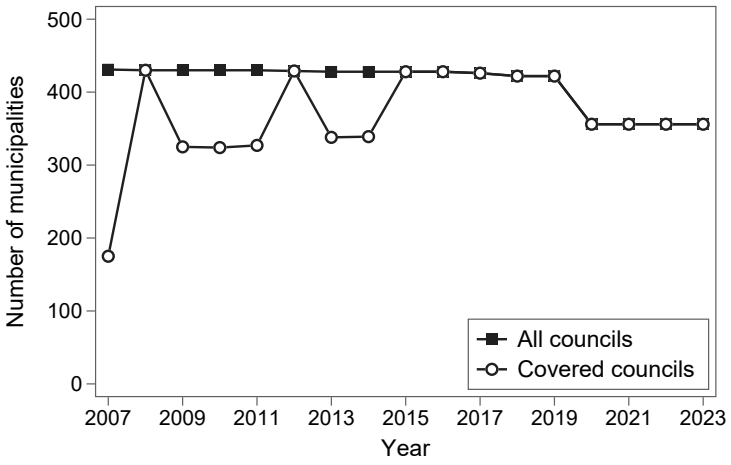
Description

The sample covers local council meetings from October 2007 to September 2023 across all 430 municipalities that existed in Norway during this period. There are no missing municipalities, however, for approximately one quarter of the municipalities, coverage prior to October 2015 includes only two representative years (2008 and 2012). In addition, individual meetings within municipalities may be missing due to technical or clerical errors in document retrieval, or because meetings exempt from public disclosure are not always included in compilations.[B1] Meetings held in the last three months of 2007 are also missing for about 250 councils. Appendix Figure B.1 illustrates the number of councils per year with data coverage, while Appendix Figure B.2 provides a map detailing the coverage level for each municipality.

Only officially-recorded local council meetings are included in the sample. Other meetings that politicians have to attend, such as committee meetings or executive board meetings, are not covered. In addition, local council sessions without formal deliberations, such as training days, site inspections, or briefing meetings, are generally excluded, unless

[B1] In the 2020 amalgamation reform, local councils for the new municipalities were formed in October 2019, three months before the implementation date on January 1, 2020. During this transition period, some outgoing councils continued to serve their original municipalities until dissolution. Meetings held by outgoing councils after September 2019 are excluded.

Figure B.1: Number of councils with data coverage, by year



Notes: The figure displays the total number of municipalities and those with data coverage, respectively, by year. Council-years with partial coverage are categorized as 'covered'.

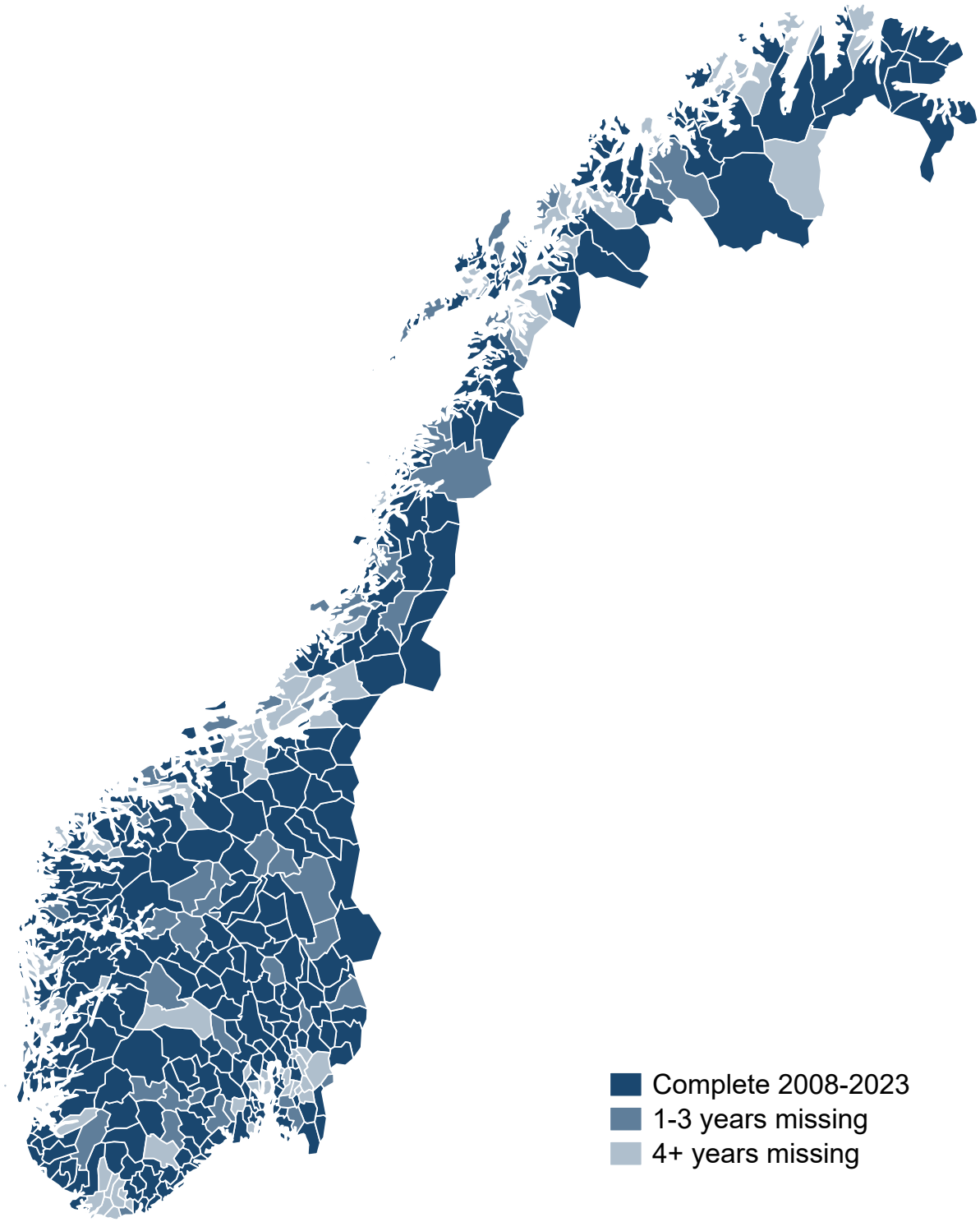
the administrations explicitly document them. Meetings that are scheduled to take place over multiple days (not common) are recorded as separate inputs. For about 2/3 of the meetings, end times are reported in addition to the start times.[B2] A handful of records in the dataset contain missing dates or start times, reflecting cases where a meeting is known to have occurred but the details are unknown.

Data sources

Data collection was carried out during spring and summer 2023. I have relied primarily on official meeting minutes from local councils that have been provided to me directly by the municipal administrations, or downloaded from digital archives accessible from the municipalities' official websites. In some cases, I have visited municipal archives to obtain copies of the records directly. I also relied on informal sources – such as meeting calendars and interviews with former politicians – in a small number of cases where document retrieval proved difficult. The data were processed primarily using computer automation,

[B2]The accuracy of end times depends on the accuracy of the minute taker. While start times are normally published in official channels several weeks before the meeting, the end times are manually imputed after the meeting, usually by someone from the political secretariat.

Figure B.2: Data coverage across Norway



Notes: The figure illustrates the municipal structure of Norway as of January 1, 2015, with colors representing the degree of data coverage for political meetings in each municipality.

though hand-coding was employed where necessary (e.g., when reading timestamps in nonstandard formats).

Codebook

Raw version

- **knr** Municipality identifier (ISO 3166-2:NO)
- **knr_str** Municipality identifier in string format
- **kname** Municipality name
- **year** Year identifier
- **date** Meeting date
- **idMeeting** Seq. identifier for meetings within council-year (not an official id)
- **timeStart** Start time of meeting (hh:mm:ss)
- **hStart** Start time of meeting (hours)
- **timeEnd** Meeting end time (hh:mm:ss)
- **hEnd** Meeting end time (hours)
- **hDuration** Duration of meeting (hours)
- **numYr** Number of included meetings in year

Collapsed version

- **knr_loc** Municipality identifier from Fiva, Sørensen and Vøllo (2024)
- **year** Election-period identifier, corresponding with Fiva, Sørensen and Vøllo (2024)
- **fracEarly** The fraction of meetings in the election period convening before 16:00
- **hStart_avg** Average start time of meetings in period (hours)
- **hStart_med** Median start time of meetings in period (hours)
- **hStart_mod** Modal start time of meetings in period (hours)
- **numEp** Number of included meetings in election period

Appendix C: Attendance dataset

The **Attendance** dataset reports individual meeting-by-meeting attendance at political meetings from October 2015 to September 2019 from a 25% random sample of Norwegian municipalities (107 of the 428 municipalities existing in 2015). It also contains meeting-level variables describing the content of each meeting, including the full agenda as a text string (in Norwegian).

Description

The dataset is arranged in panel format, with each observation representing an individual council member at a specific meeting. There are 92,735 person-meeting observations from 2,718 individuals and 3,546 meetings.[C1] This includes the full roster of politicians in the sample municipalities at the start of the 2015 election period. While I have aimed to include every official council session held between October 1, 2015 and September 30, 2019, a small number of meetings may be sporadically omitted where minutes are missing or attendance records are unavailable.

The main outcome is a binary indicator for meeting attendance. Typically, the minutes report separate lists of members present and absent at the roll call conducted at the start of the meeting. In some cases, the reporting is more detailed and includes information on partial attendance. When the minutes explicitly report partial presence, a member is coded as attending if they were present at the start of the meeting or if they arrived within the first hour. If a person was on leave or had received a permanent exemption from official duties at the time of the meeting, their attendance is coded as 0.

The complete agenda for each meeting is consolidated into a single string variable, with items delineated by "//". Each segment, marked by this separation, begins with a series of digits (x/yy) denoting the official item ID in a format that have been harmonized across

[C1] The de-identified version of the dataset used for matching with administrative registers contains 92,687 observations from 2,717 individuals, as one individual's records are lost during the matching process.

councils.[C2] Only official agenda items (*protokollsaker*) are included, i.e., items explicitly labeled as 'briefing items' (*orienteringssaker*) or 'matters for reporting' (*referatsaker*) are generally not included unless they are assigned an official item ID. Different practices may result in some inconsistencies across councils. The agenda items generally appear as written in the minutes, i.e., in Norwegian *bokmål* or *nynorsk* languages, including (if any) punctuation or spelling errors. To streamline processing, all '/' embedded in the text strings – except item numbers – have been re-coded as '-', excess spaces have been eliminated, and all letters have been converted to lowercase.

Appendix Table C.1 reports balance checks for the random sample using 2015 municipality-level outcomes from Fiva, Halse and Natvik (2020). A map illustrating the geographic distribution of the covered municipalities is shown in Appendix Figure C.1.

Data sources and accuracy

The data originate from the same sources as those discussed in Appendix B. Meeting-level outcomes such as the date, time and agenda were extracted from the minutes using computer-assisted methods. Attendance was hand-coded by a team of research assistants, each working independently on separate sets of councils in autumn 2023. I then manually inspected the data for consistency, and found an accuracy rate of 99.3%.[C3]

[C2] Item numbers are formatted in an x/yy pattern, where $x = 1, 2, ..., n$ is the official sequential ID, and $yy = 15, 16, ..., 19$ denotes the year the case was brought to the agenda. Numbers may not always align sequentially, as some items may have been added, removed, postponed or addressed out of sequence. An incremental gap between items may not indicate a missing item, but larger gaps in some cases do.

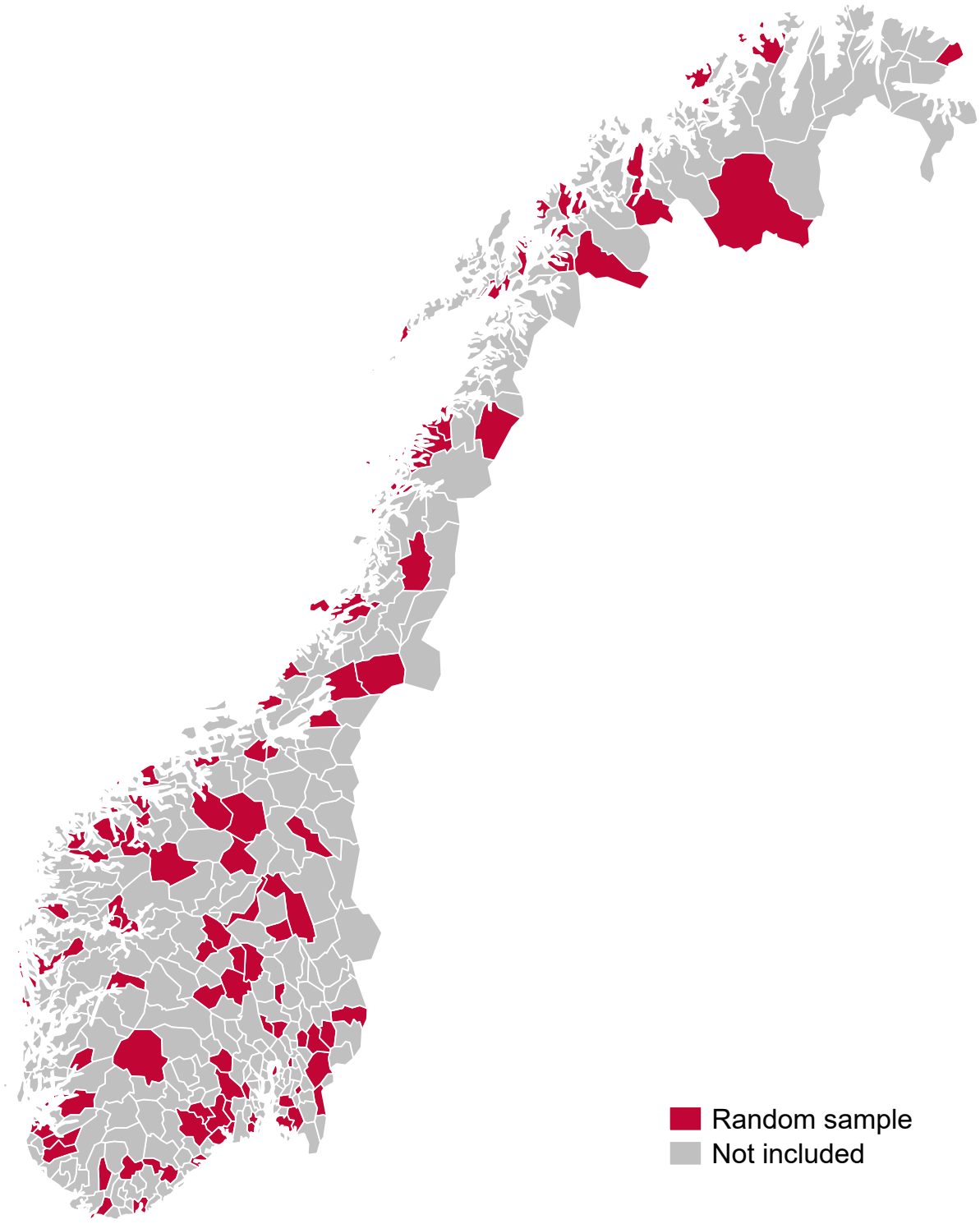
[C3] The manual inspection covered 500+ arbitrarily selected meetings (at least four per council-period). Every detected mistake was corrected, and led to a subsequent review of more meetings from that council. The final accuracy rate is therefore likely above 99.3%.

Table C.1: Balance checks

	Sample	Excluded	Diff.
Demographic outcomes			
Population (in Logs)	8.549	8.508	0.041
Share 0-6 years	0.077	0.077	0.001
Share 7-15 years	0.110	0.110	0.000
Share 16-20 years	0.066	0.067	-0.000
Share 21-25 years	0.060	0.061	-0.000
Share 26-30 years	0.055	0.054	0.001
Share 31-35 years	0.056	0.054	0.002
Share 36-40 years	0.059	0.058	0.000
Share 41-45 years	0.070	0.070	0.000
Share 46-50 years	0.071	0.071	-0.000
Share 51-55 years	0.066	0.067	-0.001
Share 56-60 years	0.066	0.066	0.000
Share 61-65 years	0.063	0.063	-0.001
Share 66-70 years	0.061	0.061	-0.000
Share 71-75 years	0.042	0.042	-0.001
Share 76-80 years	0.031	0.031	-0.000
Share 81+ years	0.047	0.048	-0.001
Share women	0.491	0.492	-0.000
Unemployment	0.022	0.020	0.002*
Geographic outcomes			
Latitude	62.143	62.245	-0.102
Longitude	10.503	10.604	-0.101
Political outcomes			
Turnout	0.656	0.663	-0.007
Council size (seats)	25.755	24.925	0.830
Share women councilors	0.388	0.375	0.013
Share of votes, right	0.569	0.581	-0.013
Share of votes, left	0.351	0.348	0.002
Parties in council	5.897	6.022	-0.125
Spending share			
Cultural services	5.016	5.147	-0.130
Transport and infra.	2.712	2.912	-0.200
Health and social serv.	13.923	13.613	0.311
Central administration	8.629	8.448	0.181
Education	20.765	20.863	-0.098
Elderly care	27.310	27.892	-0.581
Childcare	10.152	9.847	0.305
Other purposes	11.492	11.279	0.213
N	107	321	

*Notes: The table reports mean outcomes (in 2015) at the municipality level using data from Fiva, Halse and Natvik (2020). 'Sample' includes the 107 randomly-selected municipalities, whereas 'Comp.' denotes the rest. 'Diff' reports the difference between the preceding columns, along with the results from a test of statistical significance using robust standard errors. *p < 10%, **p < 5%, ***p < 1%.*

Figure C.1: Map of randomly selected municipalities in Norway



Notes: The figure illustrates the municipal structure of Norway as of January 1, 2015, with municipalities that were selected to be part of the 25% random sample colored in red.

Codebook

- **knr** Municipality identifier (ISO 3166-2:NO)
- **knr_2015** Municipality identifier per Jan 1, 2015
- **kname_2015** Municipality name per Jan 1, 2015
- **year** Year identifier
- **date** Meeting date
- **date_str** Meeting date in string format
- **idMeeting** Seq. identifier for meetings within councils (not an official id)
- **timeStart** Start time of meeting (hh:mm:ss)
- **hStart** Start time of meeting (hours)
- **timeEnd** Meeting end time (hh:mm:ss)
- **hEnd** Meeting end time (hours)
- **hDuration** Duration of meeting (hours)
- **itemsNum** Number of items on the agenda
- **itemsFrom** The first item on the agenda (official item no.)
- **itemsTo** The last item on the agenda (official item no.)
- **itemsStr** String containing all items on the agenda, separated by '//'
- **idPers** Unique person ID
- **candidatename_std** Name of candidate from Fiva, Sørensen and Vøllo (2024)
- **pid_lcd** Candidate ID from Fiva, Sørensen and Vøllo (2024)
- **present** Present at meeting (1=present, 0 = absent)
- **absent** Absent from meeting (0=present, 1 = absent)