Who Governs at Subnational Levels?

Introducing the Subnational Elections Database*

Julian Michel†

Subnational governments are elected in over 89% of democratic country-years since 1990, yet no unified global dataset identifies which parties win subnational executive elections. This gap matters because governors and key mayors are central to distributive politics (Stokes et al. 2013; Novaes 2018), party formation and survival (Cyr 2017; Sells 2020), subnational democratic stability (Gibson 2013; Grumbach 2022), and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (OECD 2019). To address this gap, we introduce the *Subnational Elections Database*. This dataset has two components: At the country-level, it reports the number of highest subnational offices obtained by party in 85 democracies (1990–2025). At the province-level, it offers results for subnational executive elections in 372 provinces across 18 Latin American democracies (1990–2025). We show that national chief executives' parties have not increased their control of highest subnational offices since 1990. However, subnational electoral competitiveness has declined in 15 of 18 Latin American democracies.

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1 Introduction

Subnational executive offices are elected in over 89% of democratic country-years since 1990.[1] While measures of how much authority subnational offices hold are widely used (Hooghe et al. 2016; Ladner et al. 2025), we lack harmonized global data on subnational election outcomes under democracy. This is a significant gap: governor- and key mayorships typically rank among the most authoritative offices, are linked to progress on 65% of the Sustainable Development Goals (OECD 2019), and lead administrations that in 2020 accounted for 21 and 45% of total government spending in unitary and federal democracies, respectively (OECD-SNFG 2022).

Recent cross-national datasets on subnational elections have vastly improved data availability. However, these efforts have been skewed towards OECD democracies (e.g., Schakel 2025; Röth et al. 2025). For non-OECD countries, researchers typically cannot rely on a single dataset to study subnational election outcomes across countries. This uneven coverage has likely contributed to geographic biases in the literature on multi-level governance. According to a recent review, "the study of regionalism, federalism, and territorial governance has historically been dominated by research on Europe and North America," thus representing "only a fraction of the global diversity of territorial politics" (Vampa et al. 2025, 7). This risks that our generalizations about the role of subnational elections and governments derive from unrepresentative contexts.

By introducing the *Subnational Elections Database* (SED), this article seeks to contribute to a more geographically diverse scholarship on multi-level governance. Specifically, the SED provides data on how many highest elected subnational governments were obtained by party in regular subnational election years in 51 democracies (1990–2025), and subnational MP seat shares for an additional 34 countries. Further, for 372 provinces in 18 Latin American democracies (1990–2025), it offers vote shares, candidate names, and party affiliations for the election of the highest, directly elected subnational government. In combination, the SED constitutes the most comprehensive dataset on subnational election outcomes in post-1990 democracies.

[1] This relies on V-Dem items of "electoral democracy" ("v2x_polyarchy">=0.5) and the election of local/regional government (Coppedge et al. 2026) between 1990 and 2025.

After outlining our measurement approach and validating the SED, we apply the data to obtain novel insights relevant to the study of democracy: First, despite the "third wave of autocratization" (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019), national chief executives' parties under democracy have not, on average, increased their control of highest subnational offices after the Cold War. Second, subnational electoral competitiveness has declined in 15 of 18 Latin American democracies. Third, following Little and Meng (2023), we show that objective and expert-coded indicators of subnational democracy yield divergent inferences about subnational backsliding in Latin America in the 1990s and 2000s. Next, we provide evidence that close subnational election outcomes in Latin America are plausibly exogenous, enabling researchers to leverage the SED for causal identification in region-wide close-election discontinuity designs. Overall, these data will open up avenues for novel research on the causes and consequences of subnational election outcomes and how who governs at subnational tiers shapes outcomes of interest.

2 Existing Datasets on Subnational Elections

The increasing relevance of subnational government has fueled efforts to assemble high-quality data on subnational election outcomes. In particular, the path-breaking research program by Arjan Schakel (e.g., Schakel 2013, 2021, 2025) has generated a dataset on election results and characteristics for province-level legislative elections in 30 OECD countries (1945–2015). Röth et al. (2025) provide province-level legislative election results for 13 mostly European OECD democracies (1941–2019) and also offer information on provincial government composition. Focusing mostly on non-European cases, Fidalgo (2022) and Pérez Sandoval (2023) compiled subnational election data for 12 countries (1980–2016 and 1980–2021, respectively) which they use to evaluate the quality of subnational democracy. There have also been efforts—by researchers and national electoral authorities—to provide granular subnational election data for specific countries: e.g., the United States (de Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023), Germany (Heddesheimer et al. 2025), India (Agarwal et al. 2021), Colombia (Pachón et al. 2014), and Uruguay (Schmidt et al. 2022).[2]

[2]See also the "Subnational Politics Project" for data on Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico (Giraudy et al. 2025).

At the country-level, and moving from vote shares to offices obtained, V-Dem (2026) measures whether one party controls most subnational governments in at least 66% of subnational units. While offering exceptional coverage, this measure doesn't distinguish local and regional levels of government, doesn't identify the party in question, and is too coarse to capture most variation in subnational control. For instance, out of 2,817 democratic country-years between 1990 and 2025 with elected subnational executive office, only 525 (18.6%) display a party that controls most subnational governments in 66% or more of subnational units.

Overall, despite the significance of subnational governments under democracy, there currently is no dataset of a global scope that provides harmonized information on the outcomes of highest subnational elections. In the following section, the *Subnational Elections Database* is introduced that will dramatically improve access to information on *how many subnational governments were won by party* in post-1990 democracies, with particularly disaggregated data offered for Latin America.

3 The Subnational Elections Database

To be eligible for inclusion in the SED, a country needs to be democratic and hold direct or indirect elections for the highest subnational executive office (SEO). Countries are coded as democratic if their V-Dem "electoral democracy" score is equal to or larger than 0.5—a conventional minimal threshold used in the literature (Coppedge et al. 2026). V-Dem also provides information on whether provincial or local governments are elected. If a country holds elections at at least one of those levels, we rely on information from the electoral agencies to understand which *regular* election years existed for highest SEOs.[3,4]

[3]We used the case appendices to Hooghe et al. (2016) and Wikipedia to identify highest elected SEOs when elections were held for multiple offices at tiers V-Dem treats as "regional."

[4]This excludes irregular election years—those in which some units hold elections before the initially scheduled end of term. If all units hold elections earlier than anticipated, this is considered a regular election year.

3.1 Country-Level Data on Subnational Election Outcomes in 85 Democracies (1990–2025)

The first component of the SED provides—at the country-subnational election year-level—the share of highest subnational offices obtained by party in 85 democracies. Out of 106 democracies that held direct or indirect elections for SEO anytime during 1990–2025, we were able to code how many highest SEOs were won by party for 51 countries. For another 34, we decided to include seat shares in highest subnational parliaments instead. These were typically cases with indirectly elected subnational governments.[5,6] Of the remaining 21 democracies, six were excluded because they held non-partisan subnational elections, and fifteen had missing data. Lists of included and excluded countries, and office type coded, can be found in Appendices A.I and A.II. For the coding scheme and key sources, see Appendices D and E, respectively. Overall, this dataset is the most comprehensive to date on how many subnational governments were won by party in democracies between 1990 and 2025.[7]

In our coding scheme, the office type included shifts from mayors to governors when a country introduces regional executive elections (e.g., Chile in 2021, Bolivia in 2005). For countries with subnational units that differ in the year in which they hold regular elections, as in Mexico, we offer a harmonized country-subnational election year coding alongside the raw data. In the harmonized version, offices obtained are aggregated across years to years in which an absolute majority of SEO elections take place or, if there is no such year, national lower house election years. In the second case, a party's SEO count would include all SEOs won after the last national lower house election year, including offices obtained in the present election year. This harmonization prevents that such countries are weighted more heavily in analyses at the country-subnational election year level. For those 15 of 85 democracies with heterogeneous subnational election years, temporally aggregated data is available (see Appendix A.I).[8]

[5]Where SEOs are indirectly elected, sources such as election reports by electoral agencies and newspapers would collectively often not allow for a country-wide coding of indirectly elected executive offices by party.

[6]Researchers who decide to include both SEOs (51 countries) and MPs (34 countries) should show robustness across both samples. For five of 34 countries, SEO data became available for later years (Appendix A.I).

[7]All data will be made available upon publication at the dedicated project website at "https://julianmichel.net/subnational-elections-database/".

[8]Note that when spatial variation in the type of highest elected SEO exists, for instance, if only parts of the country elect governors, all SEOs presiding over a first-level subdivision in the ISO 3166-2 norm are included.

A challenge in coding highest SEOs won by party is to distinguish parties from (a) factions and (b) coalitions. Further, parties may run under a local label that by name is not easily recognizable as associated with that party. To overcome these challenges, we first learned which national-level parties existed from the "Database of Political Institutions" (DPI) (Scartascini et al. 2021), "Who Governs?" (Nyrup and Bramwell 2020), and the "Constituency Level Elections Archive" (CLEA) (Kollman et al. 2016). Second, we studied which parties and coalitions ran in subnational elections according to the respective electoral agency and Wikipedia.[9] Ultimately, we searched for sources that allocated offices obtained among parties the aforementioned datasets suggest were "core parties" at that time. For other entities winning subnational office, we examined whether they were local manifestations of national parties or not (e.g., parties with purely subnational ambitions). In our party-level coding, both factions and local manifestations of national parties would fall under that party. While subnational coalitions consist of multiple parties, we exclusively consider the party occupying highest office.[10,11]

3.2 Province-Level Data on Subnational Election Outcomes in 18 Latin American Democracies (1990–2025)

The second component of the *Subnational Elections Database* is at the province-subnational election year level. For those 18 democracies in Latin America that held *direct* elections for highest SEOs (1990–2025), the SED provides vote shares, candidate names, and party affiliations for 2,399 races across 372 provinces. Conceptually, these races are for governorships, if existing. Otherwise, the included SEO for a province is a particularly important mayor: If the province contains the capital city, we choose the mayor in the capital. Then we would examine if the province has a city that is among the country's ten most populous and otherwise select

[9] Wikipedia is widely used in this type of research (e.g., "The Comparative Legislators Database" (Göbel and Munzert 2022), "V-Party" (Düpont et al. 2022), and "Party Facts" (Döring and Regel 2019)).

[10] The party affiliation of the governor or mayor is the deciding characteristic.

[11] In terms of data sources, we prioritized official information from the electoral agencies when available. When official information had been taken offline, we examined whether the "Wayback Machine" provided access. Further, we relied on reputable online newspaper reports, published research, Wikipedia, and information obtained from inquiries with the relevant authorities. All sources were double-checked in the research team and are listed by country-subnational election year in the dataset.

the mayor in the provincial capital.[12] In combination, we are providing the first region-wide coding of elections for the highest directly elected SEO by province in Latin America.

Specifically, we collect the vote shares and party affiliations of the top four contenders in the final election round. If a candidate runs for a temporary alliance, we treat votes for that candidate as having been given to the party the candidate is affiliated with. More durable alliances that contest multiple state and national elections consecutively, such as Chile's Alianza por Chile and Concertación, are treated as parties. To obtain official election results, we utilize electoral commission reports and data, governmental gazettes, existing datasets[13], websites of subnational offices, and newspapers. In some cases, we also approached local and regional administrations directly. The resulting dataset is complete, except for two election years in Ecuador in the early 1990s and the 1993 municipal elections in Honduras. Appendix B.1 provides information on included countries and electoral races; the coding scheme is included in Appendix C.

3.3 Validating the SED

In this section, we cross-validate the SED against existing datasets on subnational elections. First, we plot data on gubernatorial election results for Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico taken from Giraudy et al. (2025) against the SED to compare vote share differences and alternation rates (Figure I, panels A-B). For both items, we find very strong correlations of "0.97" (two-party vote share differences)[14] and "0.94" (incumbent alternation), respectively. The inclusion of first-round results in Giraudy et al. (2025), even when a second round was decisive, accounts for vote share differences to the SED.[15] Second, we match the SED's country-level data against V-Dem's indicator of whether "a single party control[s] important policymaking bodies across subnational units (regional and local governments)" (V-Dem 2026, p.110). This mea-

[12]Note that the province-level coding implies that only one municipal race per province is included when only local elections exist. In contrast, the country-level data would consider *all* mayorships obtained by party.

[13]We are grateful to REDACTED for sharing data on Colombian elections (REDACTED). For Uruguay, electoral results were taken from the "Boreluy" R package, which is provided by researchers at Unidad de Métodos y Acceso a Datos (UMAD), Universidad de la República, Uruguay (Schmidt et al. 2022).

[14]Two-party vote share differences are given by $\frac{VS_{P1_e}}{VS_{P1_e}+VS_{P2_e}} - \frac{VS_{P2_e}}{VS_{P1_e}+VS_{P2_e}}$.

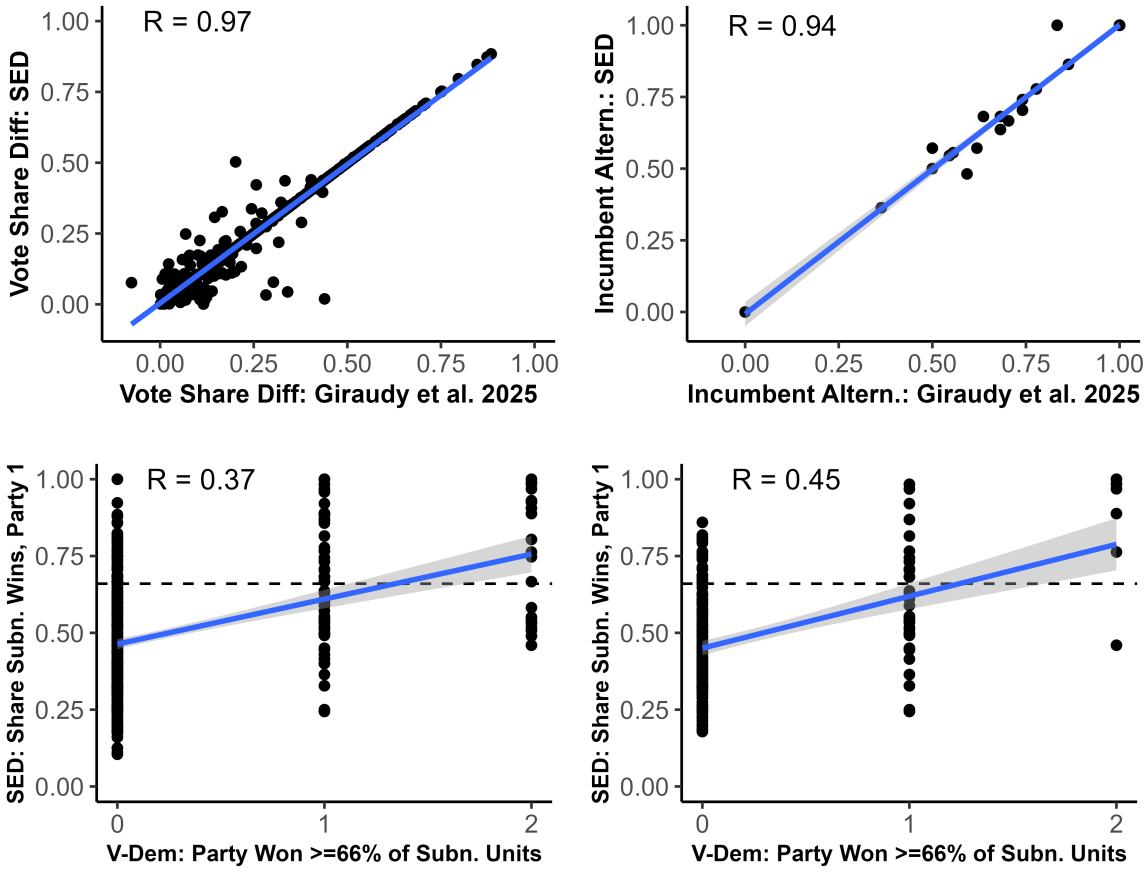
[15]This is also why the plot reveals a negative vote share difference (the winner being coded as having won fewer votes than the runner-up) for this data.

sure is ordinal and was rescaled such that higher values indicate that one party controls most policymaking bodies in at least 66% ("v2pssunpar_ord"= 1) or 90% ("v2pssunpar_ord"= 2) of subnational units, and is "0" otherwise. While conceptually broader than partisan control of *highest SEOs*, this measure of subnational control is the only existing to offer high coverage.[16]

For subnational election years in the SED, we plot V-Dem's measure of subnational control against the country-wide office share obtained by the party that won the most offices (panel C). Despite being positively correlated, in 21.9% of cases both measures disagree about whether one party won control of at least 66% of offices. When subsetting to countries that only held local elections (panel D), both measures correlate more strongly, but even here 19.6% of cases yield incongruent classifications. While V-Dem's indicator will be useful to scholars interested in a measure of subnational control across subnational levels and legislative and executive offices, the country-level SED enables a much more nuanced, continuous coding of office shares by party for a clearly-defined office type.

[16]For instance, Röth et al. (2025) offers information for 13 of 85 democracies included in the SED.

FIGURE I. Cross-Validating the Subnational Elections Database



Notes: This figure presents cross-validations of SED indicators against existing measures of subnational election outcomes for subnational election years in the SED. In panel A, two-party vote share differences for gubernatorial elections in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico are plotted. Panel B shows alternation rates for these races. For visualization purposes, points are at the country-election year level, whereas Pearson's correlation coefficient is estimated for province-election years. Incumbent alternation is coded as NA if previous incumbent elected under authoritarianism or the office was newly created. Panels C and D match the office share obtained by the party winning most offices (SED) against V-Dem's indicator of subnational control ("v2pssunpar_ord", rescaled so that higher values indicate higher control). A horizontal line at y-axis values of "0.66" demarcates cases above that should score at least a "1" on V-Dem's item if both measures yielded perfectly congruent classifications. Fitted lines with 95% CIs estimated via R's "geom_smooth(method="lm")" command. Panels C and D rely on the temporally aggregated version of the SED for countries with spatial variation in subnational election years, consistent with the logic of V-Dem's subnational control item.

4 Descriptive Insights From the Subnational Elections Database

In the following, we utilize the SED to generate novel descriptive insights relevant to the study of (subnational) democracy. We begin by examining if national chief executives have consolidated their subnational control in post-1990 democracies. Then, we show that races for highest SEOs have become noticeably less competitive in Latin America. At the same time, both al-

ternation rates and electoral competitiveness continue to display striking spatial variation, even inside countries. Finally, we highlight that expert-coded and objective measures of subnational democratic quality in Latin America diverge over whether there was subnational democratic backsliding in the 1990s and early 2000s.

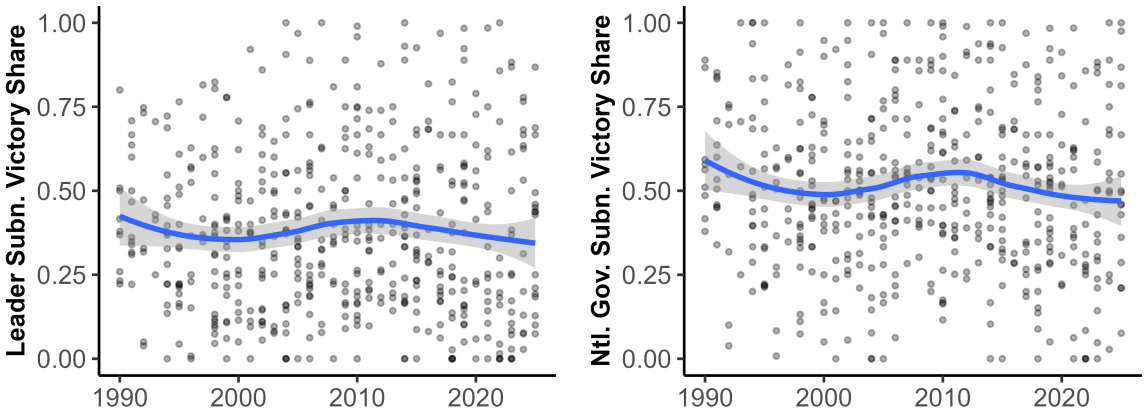
4.1 Country-Level Data: Are National Chief Executives Increasingly Controlling SEOs?

Given the recent emphasis in the study of democratic backsliding on subnational governments as "laboratories against democracy" (Grumbach 2022; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018) or—if opposition-led—sources of democratic stability (Michel 2024),[17] we leverage the SED descriptively to explore if parties of chief executives (presidents or prime ministers) under democracy have consolidated their subnational control over time. For a first impression, we can examine the correlation between the chief executive's control of highest subnational office and levels of national and subnational electoral democracy in the subnational election year, respectively. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we find for both cases that they tend to obtain higher subnational control at lower levels of democracy (Appendix Figure VI). But have chief executives started to control ever higher shares of subnational offices?

There is no discernible upward trend in the share of highest subnational offices obtained by the chief executive's party (1990-–2025; Figure II, plot A). In this period, leader parties won control of 37.7% of such offices. When also considering the chief executive's coalition partners at the national level, we again find no surge in subnational control (Figure II, plot B). Parties inside the national government obtained 51% of subnational offices in the SED. Subsetting to the 51 countries with highest SEOs coded preserves both trends (see Appendix Figure VII). Overall, at least for countries qualifying as electoral democracies at the national level, parties of national chief executives are not winning more subnational elections than they used to.

[17] For an excellent review of this literature, see Gervasoni 2024.

FIGURE II. Leader's Share of Subnational Victories by Subnational Election Year

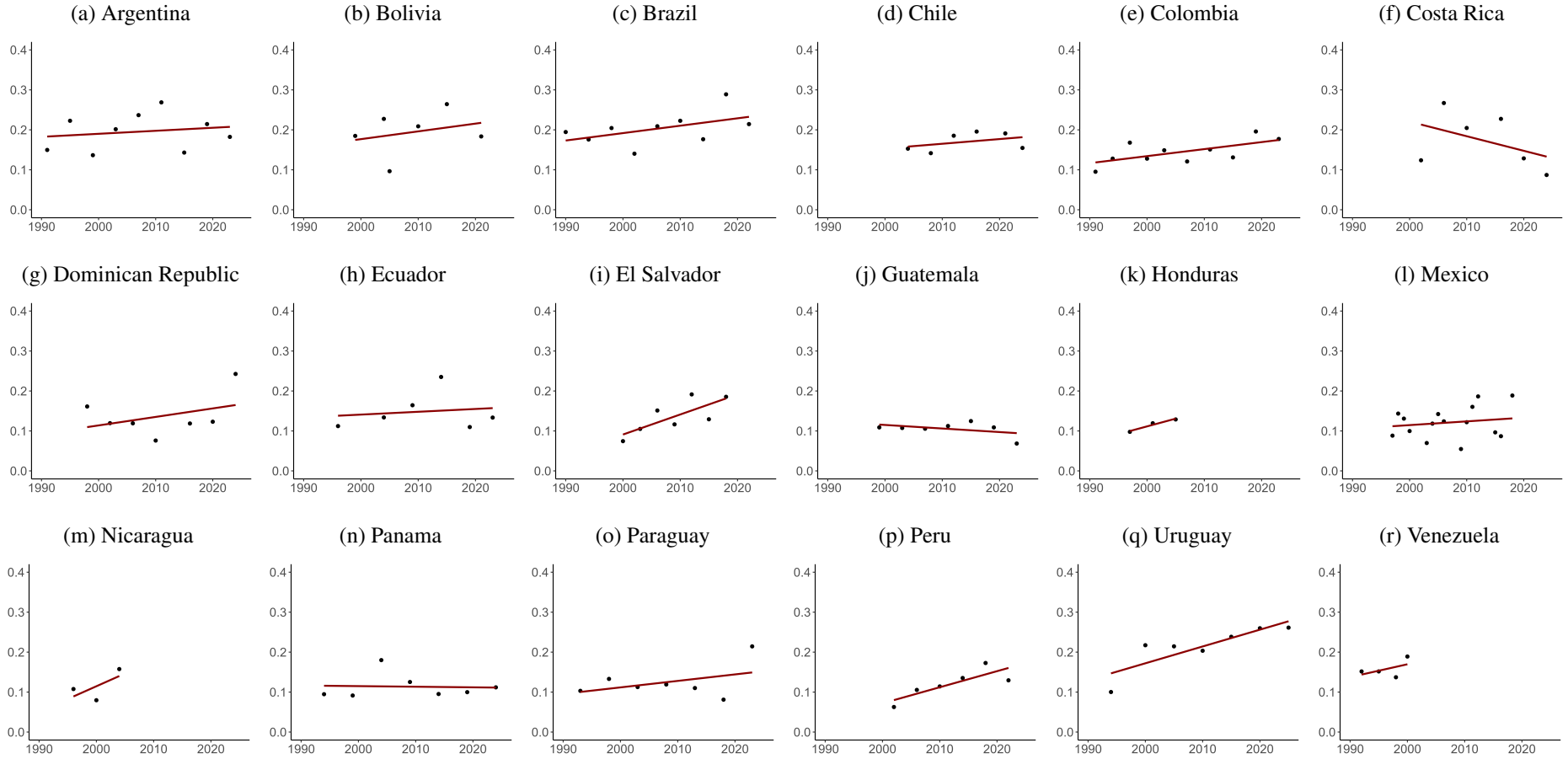


Notes: This figure presents LOESS-smoothed annual averages of the chief executive's party's share of highest subnational offices won for subnational election years (panel A). In panel B, both the chief executive's party and its coalition partners at the national level are considered. Coding of chief executive party and coalition partners (as of January 1st after a subnational election year) is taken from the DPI (Scartascini et al. 2021). If chief executives are coded as independent, the party supporting the national government that has the largest seat share in the national lower house is entered. For 2021 through 2025, the authors extended the DPI coding.

4.2 Province-Level Data: Subnational Elections Have Become Less Competitive in Latin America

Leveraging the province-level data from 18 Latin American democracies, we find that elections for highest SEOs have become less competitive in 15 of 18 countries. As a measure of electoral competitiveness, we study vote share differences between the winner and runner-up. Figure III shows that only in Costa Rica and Guatemala have elections become closer over time, while Panama's races display high continuity in competitiveness. On average, however, highest subnational executive elections have become noticeably less competitive in Latin America. While most increases have been less dramatic than in El Salvador, where vote share differences approximately doubled in two decades, the median difference across all units increased by 28.8% from 10.3% (1990–2010) to 13.27% (2011–2025). If we follow scholars who treat electoral competitiveness as an indicator of the quality of democracy (e.g., Dahl 2008; Vanhanen 2000; Pérez Sandoval 2023) and a predictor of the responsiveness of government, this novel descriptive finding could be seen as a worrying trend.

FIGURE III. Average Vote Share Difference by Country (1990–2025)



Notes: These figures present the average absolute vote share difference between the top two contestants for highest subnational executive office ($VS_{P1} - VS_{P2}$). Only election years under national-level electoral democracy included in which at least five races took place.

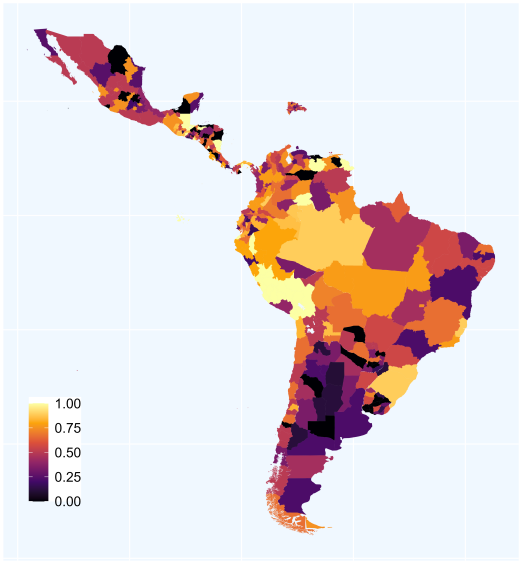
The SED also allows for province-level, cross-country investigations into the persistence of subnational undemocratic regimes—a major theme in the comparative study of subnational democracy (Giraudy 2015; Gervasoni 2010; Behrend 2011; Mickey 2015; McMann 2018). Employing indicators of electoral competitiveness and alternation, we find profound variation among the 372 Latin American provinces under democracy. Strikingly, 41 provinces across eleven countries had not experienced a single instance of party-level alternation in highest SEO under democracy as of December 2025 (Figure IV, plot A). Alternation rates are visibly higher for incumbents (Figure IV, plot B), in part because of "no immediate reelection" regulations in Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. Overall, 52.5% of races lead to party-level alternation and 76.8% allocate office to an incumbent different from the previous one.[18]

In plots C and D of Figure IV, we visualize the average electoral competitiveness of a province's subnational elections under democracy (1990–2025). Reassuringly, most provinces have been meaningfully electorally competitive, with a median absolute vote share difference between the top two contestants of 13.67%. However, as the literature on authoritarian enclaves under democracy would suggest, we detect some strikingly uncompetitive, low-alternation states in Argentina (e.g., Formosa and Santiago del Estero). Yet, other oft-discussed cases of authoritarian enclaves such as Oaxaca (Mexico) and Bahia (Brazil) don't appear exceptional, reflecting that these have become more electorally competitive in recent years.

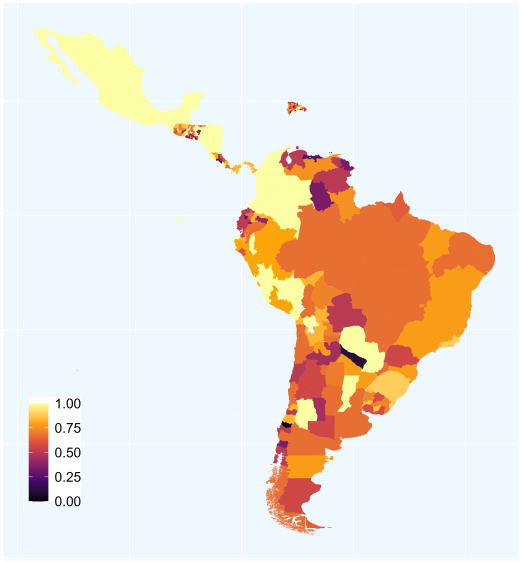
[18]The alternation coding is "NA" for races where the previous incumbent obtained office under dictatorship or when the office was newly created. Party alternation coded as "0" when the incoming party was the successor party of the previous incumbent's party. Coding does not reset when regional elections replace local ones as highest SEO races.

FIGURE IV. Subnational Electoral Competitiveness and Alternation in 372 Latin American Provinces Under Democracy (1990–2025)

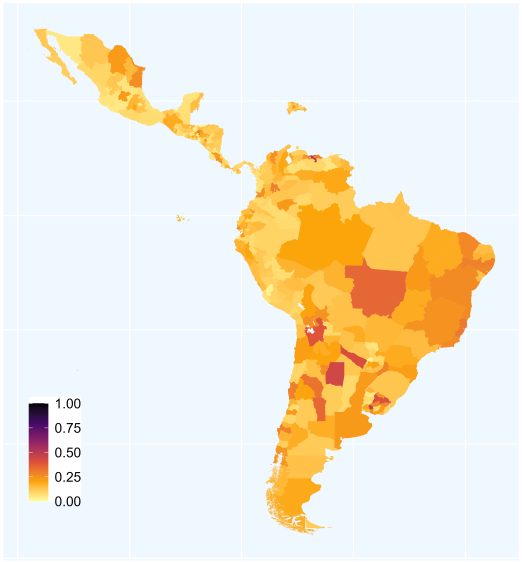
(a) Party-Level Alternation Rate



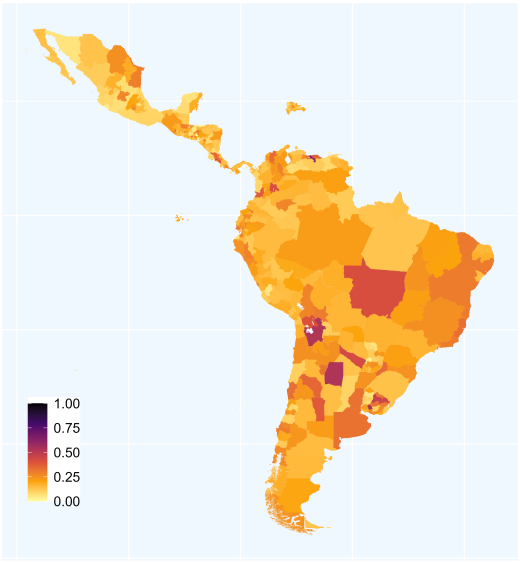
(b) Incumbent-Level Alternation Rate



(c) Average Absolute VS Difference



(d) Average Two-Party VS Difference



Notes: This figure presents province-level averages as of December 31, 2025, for four indicators. These averages consider the highest SEO elections under national democracy in that province (1990–2025). Plots A and B show alternation rates at the party and incumbent level, respectively. Plots C and D present average absolute and two-party vote share differences between the top two candidates in races for a province's highest SEO races, respectively. Darker colors indicate lower alternation rates (plots A and B) and those with less competitive elections (plots C and D). In systems with multiple election rounds, vote shares pertain to the final round. Entre Rios not shown as the shape file is missing from "geoboundaries" (Runfola et al. 2020). Countries without subnational executive elections under democracy not shown.

Finally, we analyze if objective and subjective measures of subnational democracy agree on whether there has been subnational democratic backsliding in Latin America. We follow Little and Meng (2023) by comparing objective measures—alternation rates and electoral competitiveness—to V-Dem's expert-rated coding, here of the freeness and fairness of subnational elections ("*v2elffelr_ord*").[19,20] Conceptually, V-Dem's item asks "Taking all aspects of the pre-election period, election day, and the post-election process into account, would you consider subnational elections (regional and local, as previously identified) to be free and fair on average?" (V-Dem 2026, p.99f.). This measure is broader than our objective measures, for instance, by considering both regional and local elections simultaneously, including for legislative office. We note, however, that substantial deterioration in subnational democracy—including its liberal facets—should be visible in the form of lower electoral competitiveness and reduced alternation rates in highest SEO elections as arguably the most important type of subnational contest.

We find that objective and subjective measures of subnational democracy in Latin America yield divergent inferences about subnational democratic backsliding. In Figure V, we plot V-Dem's measure against two indicators of electoral competitiveness (plot A) as well as party- and incumbent-level alternation (plot B). The data is at the country-subnational election year-level and for all measures restricted to the same set of democracies holding at least five SEO races that year. According to V-Dem, the 1990s were a period of subnational democratic backsliding in Latin America. Average subnational democratic quality dropped from very high levels in the early 1990s to being closer to the "some degree of fraud and irregularities" category (V-Dem 2026, p.100) in the late 1990s.[21] This reflected subnational democratic decline in countries such as Colombia and Venezuela, but also the entry of new democracies, particularly from Central America. Average losses were then reversed in the 2000s, and subnational democracy remained at very high levels till the end of observation in 2025.

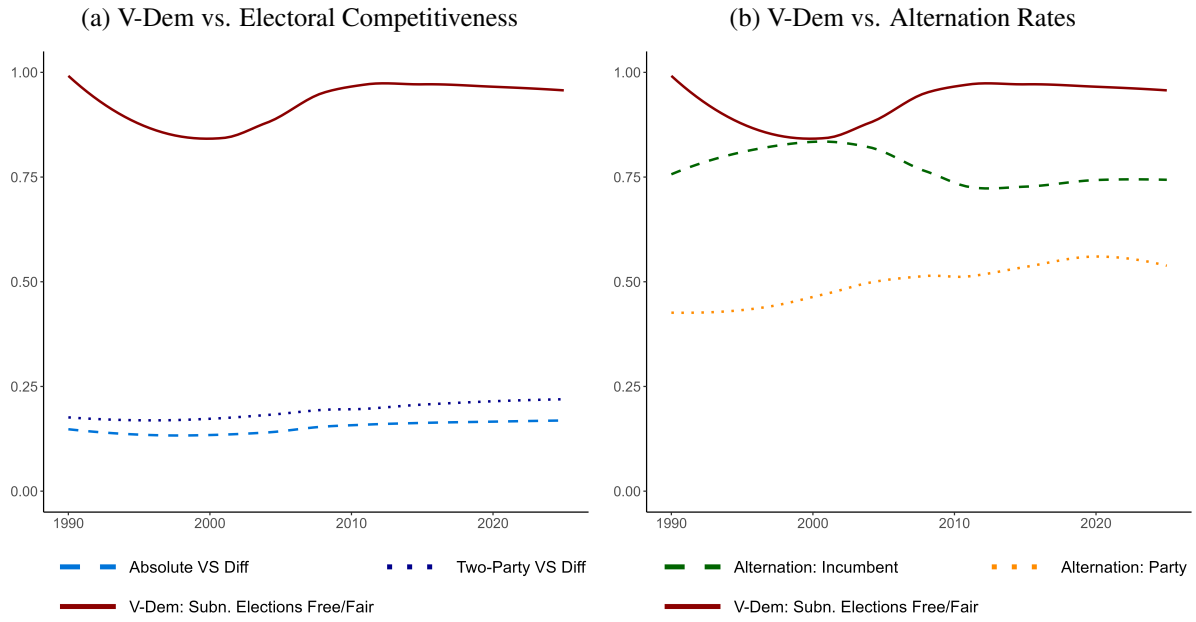
In contrast, the 1990s witnessed the highest electoral competitiveness in our data, with both absolute and two-party vote share differences increasing slowly but noticeably over time (Figure

[19] Whereas Little and Meng (2023) also examine autocratic periods, we exclusively focus on subnational elections under national democracy.

[20] On measuring subnational democracy, see also McMann (2018); Fidalgo (2022); Pérez Sandoval (2023).

[21] This category is represented by "0.75" after rescaling.

FIGURE V. Subnational Democratic Quality in Latin America (1990–2025)



Notes: This figure presents V-Dem's item of the free- and fairness of subnational elections ("v2elffelr_ord", rescaled to the 0-1 range) and objective indicators of subnational democracy for subnational election years with at least five SEO races (1990–2025). Figure A shows average absolute and two-party vote share differences, whereas Figure B includes party- and incumbent-level alternation rates. All trends are smoothed across election-years via the default Loess function in R's "geom_smooth" command.

V, plot A). Strikingly, the subnational democratic backsliding in the 1990s (V-Dem) overlaps with a peak in incumbent-level alternation rates (Figure V, plot B). Later subnational democratic gains in V-Dem in the 2000s contrast with a decline in the alternation of incumbents. Our measure of party-level alternation also does not signal subnational democratic backsliding in the 1990s, but—similar to V-Dem—indicates relative stability since 2010. As a robustness check, we exclude all countries that experience democratic reversals at the national level between 1990 and 2025 and thus would exit from the SED. We find comparable discrepancies between the V-Dem and SED measures (Appendix A.5). Overall, this exercise highlights the value of analyzing both objective and expert-coded indicators of subnational democracy, which make divergent statements about subnational democratic backsliding in Latin America in the 1990s and 2000s.

5 The Potential for Causal Insights on the Consequences of Subnational Election Outcomes

The potential of the SED is not limited to descriptive and correlational findings. For scholars interested in causal inference, the disaggregated data on Latin America allow for the application of a close-election regression discontinuity design. In these, particularly close subnational elections are used to identify how winning office affects outcomes of interest (e.g., subsequent election performances (Klašnja and Titiunik 2017; Feierherd 2020), legislative behavior (Lee et al. 2004), and development trajectories (Brollo and Nannicini 2012; Marx et al. 2025)). This design yields an unbiased estimate of winning office under the assumption of the continuity of potential outcomes (Calonico et al. 2014). While fundamentally untestable, this assumption is credible if provinces with elections marginally won and lost by an actor have comparable covariate profiles at the electoral discontinuity. In companion projects, the SED is used inside a discontinuity design to show that opposition parties marginally winning highest SEOs in Latin America experience large province-level electoral gains in the next national lower house elections (Michel 2024) but witness more defections by national MPs elected in that province than where the opposition marginally lost the subnational race (Michel 2026).

Are provinces with subnational elections marginally won and lost by the opposition comparable on average? If this were not the case, any discontinuous covariate could confound the treatment effect ascribed to the opposition party winning the race. Therefore, establishing covariate balance at the discontinuity is a critical validity check for any discontinuity design. Indeed, for a range of fourteen country-level covariates, we can show that covariate balance holds (see Appendix B.2.1 for placebo RDDs).[22] Similarly, province-level characteristics such as area size, subnational HDI, and previous electoral competitiveness in national and subnational elections appear balanced at the discontinuity (Appendix B.2.2). Leveraging the Latin American Legislators Dataset (Weiss and Kouba 2025), we observe that national MPs elected in provinces with marginally winning and losing opposition parties have similar gender profiles, opposition party

[22] In placebo RDDs, we examine if the close election outcome can predict a pre-treatment covariate. If this is the case, the covariate is not continuous around the continuity.

status, and prior experience as MPs (Appendix Figure X).[23] Overall, these covariate balances support that close subnational election outcomes in Latin America provide plausibly exogenous variation in incumbency that can be used in close-election RDDs for causal identification.

Methodologically, the SED helps alleviate two of the key constraints of using close-election discontinuity designs to identify impacts of subnational election outcomes. First, close-election RDDs can suffer from low statistical power (Stommes et al. 2023). This is why RDDs in the literature almost exclusively focus on the more numerous local elections even when elected regional office exists. By pooling close elections from 18 countries, we can examine province-level impacts of races for the highest subnational executive office. This allows us to study the type of office that is more authoritative in most settings, while drawing statistical power from up to 2,399 subnational races (1990–2025). Second, this design has limited external validity. This limitation holds even when applying this design to the SED, but here results speak to close subnational election outcomes for 18 democracies. Thus, inferences are informative for a larger set of democracies than is typically the case in the RDD literature.[24]

6 Conclusion and Outlook

This article provided evidence from the *Subnational Elections Database*—the largest dataset on (1) the share of highest subnational offices obtained by party (85 democracies; 1990–2025) and (2) election results for highest, directly elected subnational executive offices in Latin America (372 provinces; 1990–2025). We showed that parties of chief executives under democracy have not increased their subnational control after 1990. However, elections for subnational executive offices in Latin America have become less competitive in 15 of 18 democracies. Finally, we highlighted that objective and expert-coded indicators of subnational democracy lead to opposite conclusions about subnational backsliding in Latin America: Elections are closest and party-level alternation most common in the late 1990s, precisely the period in which expert-coded evaluations of subnational democracy in Latin America are lowest.

[23] See Bertoli and Hazlett (2025) and Marshall (2024) on what is identified by a close-election RDD.
[24] On pooling close elections across democracies, see also Marx et al. (2025).

The *Subnational Elections Database* will enable research on a range of important questions: When do powerful subnational executives undermine provincial democratic quality? Are development and corruption levels affected when provincial and national officeholders are from different parties? Does subnational incumbency satisfy or embolden leaders of ethnic groups contemplating secessionism or even insurgency? Precisely because governors and mayors under democracy are overwhelmingly elected and hold real authority (Hooghe et al. 2016) will knowing who governed cities and provinces help us better understand high-stakes outcomes: how much the poor can access scarce state services (Boulding and Holzner 2021; Stokes et al. 2013; Beramendi 2012), whether subnational politicians implement or obstruct development projects (Cruz and Schneider 2017), whether natural resources are protected or exploited (Burgess et al. 2012; Pailler 2018), and ultimately who gets to be descriptively and substantively represented (Dahl 2005; Smith et al. 2026). In short, to better explain outcomes we need to combine data on the extent of regional and local authority with information on who exercised those.

For applied researchers, the Subnational Elections Database comes at an exciting time. Never before has there been such rich information—often quasi-global in scope—on party characteristics (e.g., V-Party (Düpont et al. 2022)), province-level socio-economic data (Smits and Permanyer 2019; Crombach and Smits 2024), deforestation and nighttime luminosity (e.g., Zhao et al. 2022), geocoded political event (e.g., GDELT (Leetaru and Schrodt 2013)) and ethnic group data (Vogt et al. 2015), subnational democratic quality (V-Dem 2026), the authority held by subnational governments (Hooghe et al. 2016; Ladner et al. 2025), subnational legislative elections (Schakel 2025), and now also which party won highest subnational executive offices. Thus, we are increasingly able to investigate political phenomena at subnational levels across dozens of democracies, including those outside the OECD.

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A Subnational Elections Database: Country-Level Data

A.1 SED: Included Countries

TABLE I. Sample Description: Included Countries (1990–2025)

Country	Years	Regional	Office	Highest Exe	Aggregated
Albania	2007 – 2023	0	Mayor	1	0
Argentina	1991 – 2023	1	Governor	1	1
Australia	1993 – 2025	1	Premier & Chief Minister	1	1
Austria	1990 – 2024	1	Governor	1	1
Belgium	1995 – 2024	1	Regional MP	0	0
Benin	2002 – 2015	0	Local Councillor	0	0
Bolivia	1995 – 2021	0[25]	Mayor, Governor	1	0
Bosnia & Herz.	1998 – 2025	1	Governor, Premier	1	0
Brazil	1990 – 2022	1	Governor	1	0
Bulgaria	1991 – 2023	0	Mayor	1	0
Burkina Faso	2006 – 2016	0	Local Councillor	0	0
Cape Verde	1991 – 2024	0	Local MP[26]	0	0
Chile	1992 – 2024	0[27]	Mayor, Governor	1	0
Colombia	1991 – 2023	1	Governor	1	0
Costa Rica	2002 – 2024	0	Mayor	1	0
Croatia	2001 – 2025	1	Prefect	1	0
Cyprus	1991 – 2024	0	Mayor	1	0
Czech Republic	1990 – 2024	0[28]	Local/ Regional MP[29]	(0)	0
Denmark	1993 – 2025	1	Regional MP, Council Pres.	0[30]	0
Dom. Republic	1998 – 2024	0	Mayor	1	0
Ecuador	1992 – 2023	1	Prefect	1	0
El Salvador	2000 – 2018	0	Mayor	1	0
Estonia	1999 – 2025	0	Local Councilor	0	0
Fiji	2005	0	Mayor	1	0
Finland	1992 – 2025	0	Local MP	0	0
France	1992 – 2021	1	Regional President	1	0
Gambia	2018	0	Local MP	0	0
Georgia	2006 – 2021	0	Mayor[31]	1	0
Germany	1990 – 2025	1	Minister President	1	1
Greece	1990 – 2023	1	Prefect, Governor	1	0
Guatemala	2003 – 2023	0	Mayor	1	0
Honduras	1997 – 2005	0	Mayor	1	0

[25] Bolivia introduced regional elections in 2005.
[26] From 2012 onwards, data for presidents of the municipal chamber was available.
[27] Chile introduced regional elections in 2021.
[28] Czech Republic introduced regional elections in 2000.
[29] From 2016 onwards, data for governors was available.
[30] From 2009 onwards, data for council presidents was available.
[31] For 2006, local MPs were coded. Not democratic in 2010, thus temporarily excluded.

Hungary	1994 – 2014	1	Assembly Pres., Mayor	1	0
Iceland	1990 – 2022	0	Local MP	0	0
India	1991 – 2014	1	Chief Minister	1	1
Indonesia	2010 – 2024	1	Governor	1	1
Italy	1990 – 2025	1	Regional President	1	1
Ivory Coast	2018	1	Regional President	1	0
Kosovo	2007 – 2025	0	Mayor	1	0
Latvia	2001 – 2025	0	Local MP	0	0
Lesotho	2005 – 2022	0	Local MP	0	0
Lithuania	1995 – 2023	0	Local MP, Mayor	(0)[32]	0
Luxembourg	1999 – 2023	0	Local MP	0	0
Malawi	2014, 2025	0	District Councillor	0	0
Maldives	2011, 2021	0	Local MP	0	0
Mali	2004 – 2016	0	Local MP	0	0
Malta	1996 – 2024	0	Local MP	0	1
Mauritius	2001 – 2025	0	Local MP	0	0
Mexico	2000 – 2021	1	Governor	1	1
Moldova	1995 – 2023	1	District Councillor	0	0
Montenegro	2004 – 2022	0	Mayor	1	1
Namibia	1992 – 2025	1	Regional MP	0	0
Nepal	2017 – 2022	1	Regional MP	0	0
Netherlands	1991 – 2023	1	Regional MP	0	0
Nicaragua	1996 – 2004	0	Mayor	1	0
Niger	2004, 2020	0	Local MP	0	0
Nigeria	2014, 2019	1	Governor	1	0
North Macedonia	2005 – 2025	0	Mayor	1	0
Norway	1991 – 2023	0	Local MP	0	0
Panama	1994 – 2024	0	Mayor	1	0
Paraguay	1993 – 2023	1	Governor	1	0
Peru	2002 – 2022	1	Regional President	1	0
Philippines	2001[33] – 2013	1	Governor	1	0
Poland	1990 – 2024	0	Mayor	1	0
Portugal	1993 – 2025	0	Mayor	1	0
Romania	1992 – 2024	0	County Council President	1	0
Serbia	2004 – 2012	0	Mayor	1	0
Sierra Leone	2008 – 2023	0	District Chairperson	1	0
Slovakia	1998 – 2022	1	Governor[34]	1	0
Slovenia	1994 – 2022	0	Mayor	1	0
South Africa	1999 – 2024	1	Premier	1	0
South Korea	1995 – 2022	1	Governor	1	0
Spain	1991 – 2023	1	Regional President	1	1
Sri Lanka	1997 – 2025	0	Local MP	0	0
Sweden	1991 – 2022	1	Regional Councillor	0	0
Switzerland	1991 – 2023	1	Reg. Exec. Council Members	1	1

[32]From 2015 onwards, data for mayors was available.
[33]Election years of 1992, 1995, and 1998 excluded as only partial data available.
[34]For 1998, local elections were coded.

Taiwan	1997 – 2022	1	Magistrate, Mayor	1	1
Tunisia	2018	0	Local MP	0	0
Turkey	1994 – 2002	0	Mayor	1	0
Ukraine	2006, 2020	1	Regional MP	0	0
United Kingdom	1991 – 2019	1	Multiple[35]	(0)	1
United States	1990 – 2022	1	Governor	1	1
Uruguay	1994 – 2025	1	Intendent	1	0
Venezuela	1992 – 2000	1	Governor	1	0
Zambia	2011	0	Local MP	0	0

Notes: The table shows countries and offices included in the national-level dataset. *Years* refers to the first and last subn. election included. *Regional* is "1" if highest elected subn. office is at the regional level. *Office type* explains which office was coded. If multiple offices are listed, this means either (a) that different subn. election years had different office types coded, e.g., because regional elections were introduced or results weren't consistently available (see footnotes for each case), or (b) that in a given election year, subn. units vary in what the highest elected subn. executive office is (e.g., in the UK). *Highest Exe.* is "1" if the highest subn. executive could be coded. *Aggregated* is "1" if subn. units varied in their election timing, requiring aggregation of country-level subn. control across years.

[35] All offices presiding over what is a first-level subdivision in the ISO 3166-2 norm were included.

A.2 SED: Excluded Countries

TABLE II. Sample Description: Excluded Countries (1990–2025)

Country	Years	Reason Excluded
Armenia	2021	Missing Data[36]
Bangladesh	1994 – 2000	Missing Data[37]
Bhutan	2011 – 2021	Non-partisan
Canada	1990 – 2025	Incomplete data
Comoros	2006 – 2014	Missing Data
Guyana	2020	Missing Data
Israel	1993 – 2024	Non-partisan
Jamaica	1990 – 2024	Missing Data
Japan	1991 – 2025	Non-partisan
Lebanon	2010 – 2016	Non-partisan
Madagascar	1995 – 2008	Missing Data
New Zealand	1992 – 2025	Non-partisan
Palestine	2004 – 2005	Missing Data
Papua New Guinea	1992 – 2002	Missing Data
Russia	1992	Missing Data
Sao Tome and Principe	1995 – 2022	Incomplete data[38]
Senegal	1996 – 2022	Incomplete data
Solomon Islands	1990 – 2024	Missing Data
Timor-Leste	2005 – 2016	Non-partisan
Trinidad and Tobago	1990 – 2023	Missing Data
Vanuatu	1990 – 2025	Missing Data

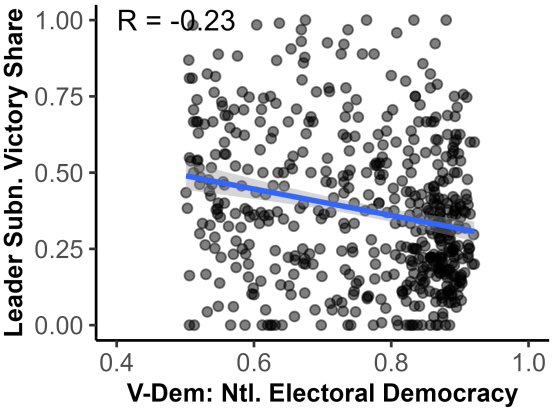
Notes: The table shows countries excluded in the national-level data despite them meeting the scope conditions of being at least electoral democracies and having direct or indirect elections for subnational executive office.

[36] Additionally, only a tiny share of subnational units had elections that year.
[37] Data is available, but language barrier was insurmountable.
[38] Data collected only pertained to Principe, not Sao Tome.

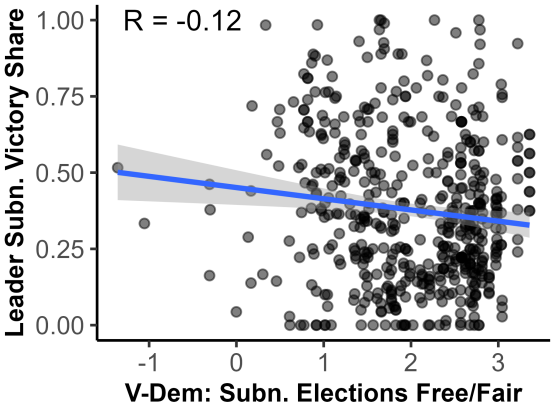
A.3 Quality of Democracy and Leader Victories at the Subnational Level

FIGURE VI. Scatterplots: Subn. Control and Quality of National/ Subnational Democracy

(a) Leader's Subn. Control & Ntl. Democracy



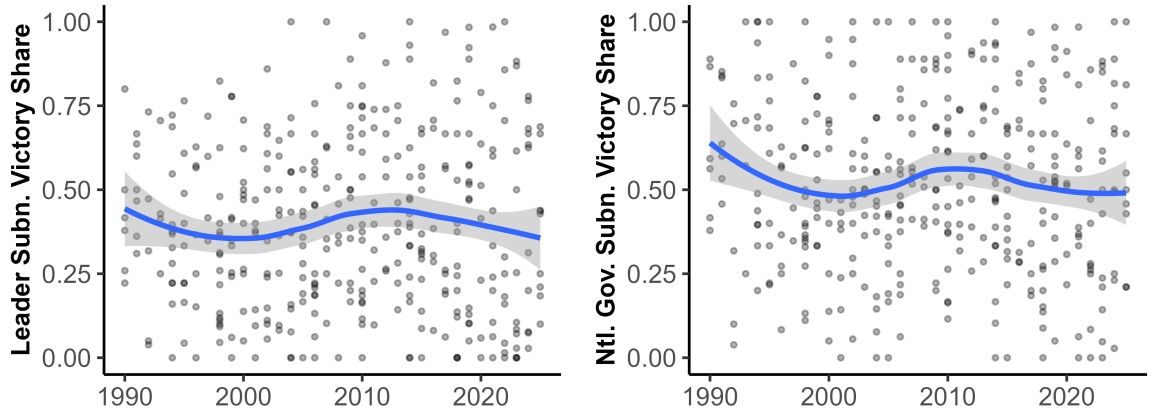
(b) Leader's Subn. Control & Subn. Democracy



Notes: This figure presents the chief executive party's share of highest subnational office obtained against national or subnational democracy scores for subnational election years in democracies with subnational elections (1990–2025). Government affiliation is coded via the DPI (as of January 1st after a subnational election year) and extended for 2021 onwards, for which DPI data is unavailable. Information on national (electoral) democracy ("v2x_polyarchy") and subnational democracy ("v2elffelr") is taken from V-Dem (2026). For both, higher values indicate more democratic systems. The line represents a linear fit with 95% confidence intervals. Pearson's correlation coefficient is reported on the top left.

A.4 Control of Highest SEOs By Parties Inside the National Government

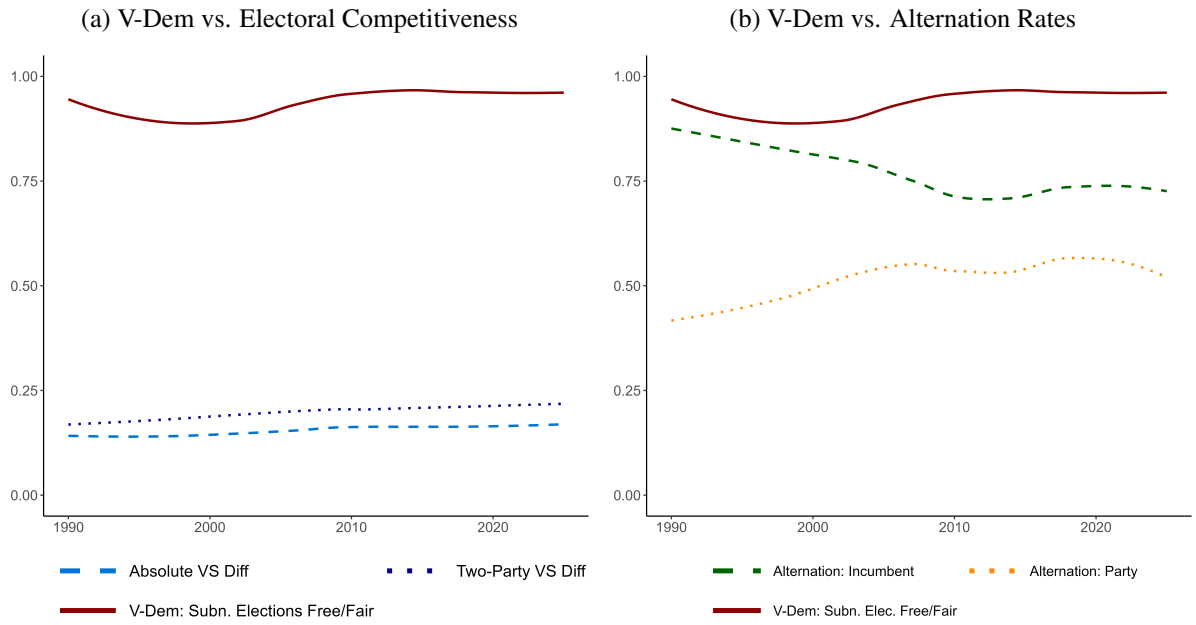
FIGURE VII. Leader's Share of Subnational Victories by Subnational Election Year, Only Highest SEOs



Notes: This figure presents smoothed annual averages of the chief executive's party's share of highest SEOs won for subnational election years (panel A). In panel B, both the chief executive's party and its coalition partners at the national level are considered. Only those 51 countries included for which we could consistently code highest executive offices at the subnational level (governors or mayors). Coding of chief executive party and coalition partners (as of January 1st after a subnational election year) is taken from the DPI (Scartascini et al. 2021). If chief executives are coded as independent, the party supporting the national government that has the largest seat share in the national lower house is entered. For 2021 through 2025, the authors extended the DPI coding.

A.5 Robustness: Objective Versus Expert-Rated Measures of Subnational Democratic Quality in Latin America

FIGURE VIII. Subnational Democratic Quality in Latin America (1990–2025), Without Countries Experiencing Democratic Reversals



Notes: This figure presents V-Dem's item of the free- and fairness of subnational elections ("v2elffelr_ord", rescaled to the 0-1 range) and objective indicators of subnational democracy for subnational election years with at least five SEO races (1990–2025). Plot A shows average absolute and two-party vote share differences, whereas plot B includes party- and incumbent-level alternation rates. All trends are smoothed via the default Loess function in R's "geom_smooth" command. In contrast to Figure V, all countries excluded throughout which experience a democratic reversal (V-Dem electoral democracy score falling below "0.5") after entering the SED.

B Subnational Elections Database: Province-Level Data

B.1 Descriptive Statistics

TABLE III. Subnational Elections Database: Overview (1990–2025)

	Years	First Obs. Election	Office Type	# Races	Mean Absolute VS Difference	# Alternation: Party	# Alternation: Incumbent
Argentina	1990–2025	1991	Province	216	0.206	53	139
Bolivia	1999–2025[a]	1999	Province (2005-)	56	0.19	37	42
Brazil	1990–2025	1990	Province	243	0.203	144	171
Chile	2004–2025	2004	Province (2021-)	92	0.17	54	57
Colombia	1991–2025	1991	Province	330	0.147	192	297
Costa Rica	2002–2025	2002	Municipal	42	0.173	16	22
Dominican Rep.	1996–2025	1998	Municipal	223	0.137	99	136
Ecuador	1990–2025	1996	Province	137	0.15	79	79
El Salvador	1999–2020	2000	Municipal	98	0.136	42	48
Guatemala	1997–2025	1999	Municipal	153	0.105	123	118
Honduras	1991–2008	1997	Municipal	54	0.115	16	42
Mexico	1996–2023	1997	Province	136	0.119	57	134
Nicaragua	1996–2006	1996	Municipal	50	0.115	23	46
Panama	1991–2025	1994	Municipal	66	0.113	29	48
Paraguay	1993–2025	1993	Province	124	0.123	36	106
Peru	2001–2025	2002	Province	155	0.12	113	117
Uruguay	1990–2025	1994	Province	133	0.214	32	90
Venezuela	1990–2002	1992	Province	91	0.158	39	46
N				2,399		1,184	1,739

Notes: The table displays descriptive information for LAC democracies with direct elections for subnational executive office. Alternation coding is NA for the first election when prior incumbent was elected under authoritarianism or elected subnational executive office did not exist immediately prior. This is why the amount of candidate alternations does not equal the number of races even when immediate reelection is not permitted. Note that alternation rates reported in the main text did not consider races for which alternation was "NA" for a province's first included election.

[a]Not democratic in 2019 and 2020.

B.2 Balance Checks–Discontinuity Design

B.2.1 Placebo RDDs With Country-Level Pre-Treatment Covariates (Source: Redacted)

TABLE IV. Robustness Checks: Country-Level Placebo RDDs 1

DV:	Elec. Democr.	Lib. Democr.	Subn. El. Quality	Leg. Vote Share	Pres. Vote Share
Estimate (Opp. Victory$_{\pm 5\%}$)	-0.018	-0.026	-0.08	-3.8	-1.41
Standard Error	(0.051)	(0.072)	(0.32)	(5.17)	(3.48)
Estimate (Opp. Victory$_{\pm 10\%}$)	0.009	0.015	-0.004	-3.62	-2.03
Standard Error	(0.036)	(0.05)	(0.218)	(3.85)	(2.425)
Covariates	No	No	No	No	No
N$_{\pm 5\%}$; N$_{\pm 10\%}$	226; 464	226; 464	226; 464	226; 464	226; 464

Notes: The table reports results for the effect of subnational opposition victories on country-level pre-treatment covariates for two bandwidths ($\pm 5\%$; $\pm 10\%$). Estimation relies on a first-order polynomial. Only gov-vs.-opp races included. Outcomes all rely on V-Dem data (Coppedge et al. 2026) and are as follows: Model 1: Electoral democracy index. Model 2: Liberal democracy index. Model 3: Subnational elections free and fair. Model 4: Vote share of largest (lower chamber) party in previous national leg. elections. Model 5: Vote share of president in previous presidential elections. Races up to 2021 included. Source: REDACTED. **Significance:** * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

TABLE V. Robustness Checks: Country-Level Placebo RDDs 2

DV:	GDP/Capita	Inflation	Oil Rent/ GDP	Gas Rent/ GDP	Share Urban Pop.
Estimate (Opp. Victory$_{\pm 5\%}$)	-1369	-9.44	-1.88	-0.4	-0.06
Standard Error	(1598)	(33.5)	(1.54)	(0.29)	(4.38)
Estimate (Opp. Victory$_{\pm 10\%}$)	-474	-25.2	-1.48	-0.31	0.991
Standard Error	(1089)	(67.17)	(1.07)	(0.19)	(3.05)
Covariates	No	No	No	No	No
N$_{\pm 5\%}$; N$_{\pm 10\%}$	220; 455	194; 396	226; 464	226; 464	226; 464

Notes: The table reports results for the effect of subnational opposition victories on country-level pre-treatment covariates for two bandwidths ($\pm 5\%$; $\pm 5\%$). Estimation relies on a first-order polynomial. Only gov-vs.-opp races included. Outcomes, taken from the World Development Indicators Dataset (World Bank 2023b), are as follows: Model 1: GDP/capita. Model 2: Inflation rate. Model 3: Oil rent/ GDP. Model 4: Gas rent/GDP. Model 5: Share of population residing in urban area. Races up to 2021 included. Source: REDACTED. **Significance:** * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

TABLE VI. Robustness Checks: Country-Level Placebo RDDs 3

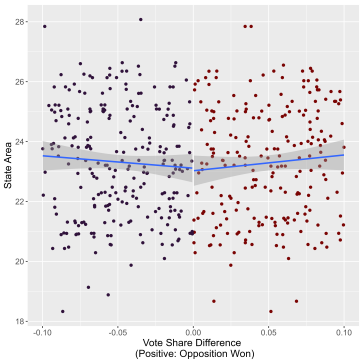
DV:	Unemployed (%)	Protest	RAI	Year
Estimate (Opp. Victory$_{\pm 5\%}$)	0.87	0.228	3.03	-3.78
Standard Error	(1.28)	(0.435)	(3.34)	(2.7)
Estimate (Opp. Victory$_{\pm 10\%}$)	-0.352	-0.01	2.9	-2.146
Standard Error	(0.94)	(0.315)	(2.334)	(1.86)
Covariates	No	No	No	No
N$_{\pm 5\%}$; N$_{\pm 10\%}$	204; 412	226; 464	226; 462	226; 464

Notes: The table reports results for the effect of subnational opposition victories on country-level pre-treatment covariates for two bandwidths ($\pm 5\%$; $\pm 5\%$). Estimation relies on a first-order polynomial. Only gov-vs.-opp races included. Outcomes are as follows: Model 1: Share unemployed of labor force. Model 2: Frequency & size of pro-democracy mass mobilization. Model 3: Regional Authority score. Model 4: Subnational Election Year. Races up to 2021 included. Source: REDACTED. Regional authority data taken from Hooghe et al. (2016). Protest data source: Coppedge et al. (2026). Unemployment data source: World Bank (2023b). **Significance:** * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

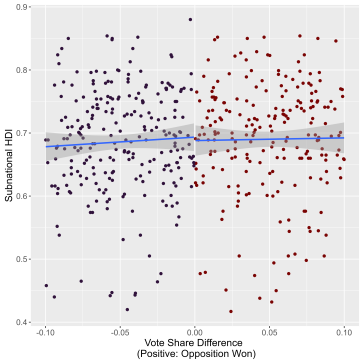
B.2.2 Scatterplots: Balance of Province-Level Covariates (Source: Redacted)

FIGURE IX. Province-Level Balance in Pre-Treatment Covariates

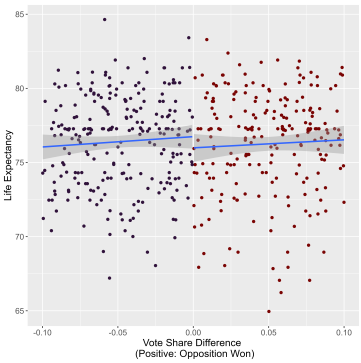
(a) Area (in m^2; log.)



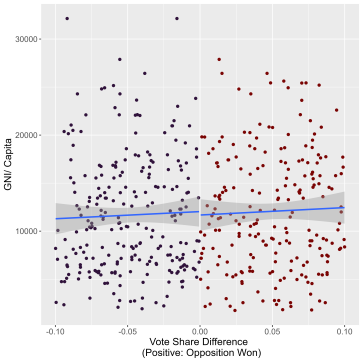
(b) HDI



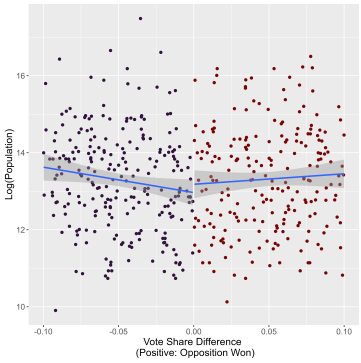
(c) Life Expectancy (in Years)



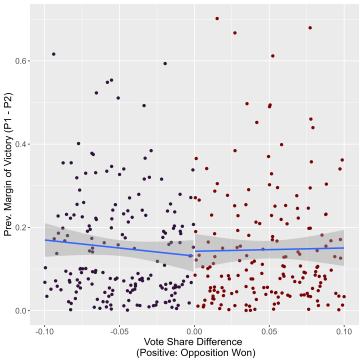
(d) GNI/ capita (2011$, PPP)



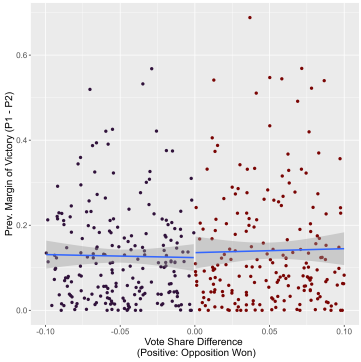
(e) Population (in Million; log.)



(f) Prev. Subn. Competitiven.



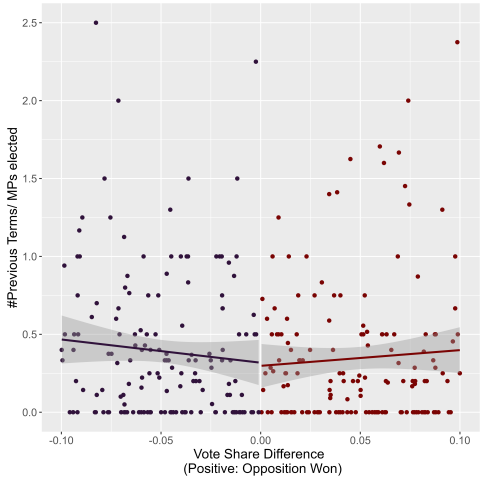
(g) Prev. Ntl. Legisl. Compet.



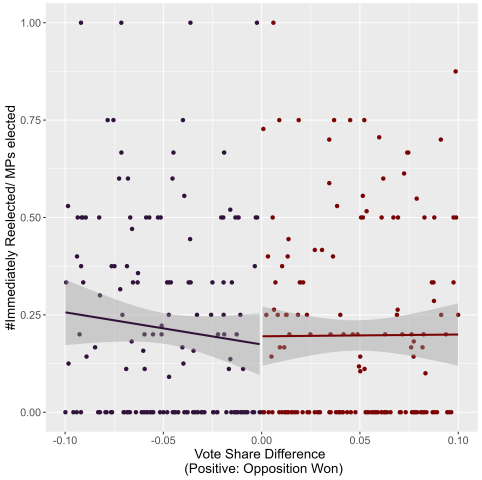
Notes: These figures show linear fits for each side of the electoral discontinuity—the two party vote share difference where an opposition party moves from marginally losing to marginally winning— for seven pre-treatment province-level covariates. If the point estimate overlaps with the CI on the other side, the covariate can be said to be balanced. Population size and life expectancy data were extrapolated. In plot g, the margin of victory in the previous national lower house elections in a province is matched against the opposition party's two-party vote share difference in the SEO races. Races up to 2021 included. Data sources: geoBoundaries Project; Runfola et al. (2020). Global Data Lab; Smits and Permanyer (2019). World Bank (2023a). Subnational Elections Database; REDACTED. CLEA; Kollman et al. (2016). These figures are taken from REDACTED.

FIGURE X. MP-Level Balance in Pre-Treatment Covariates

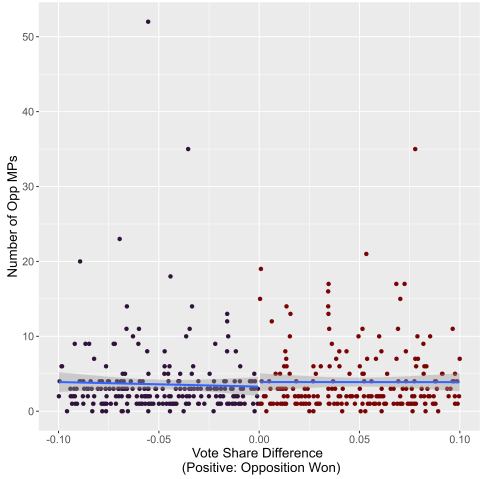
(a) Prior Terms/ MPs



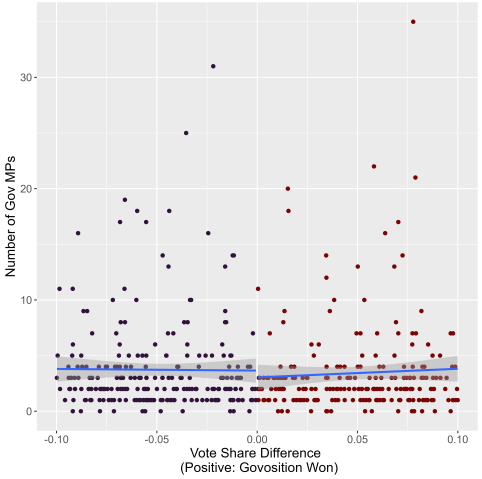
(b) Immediate Reelections/ MPs



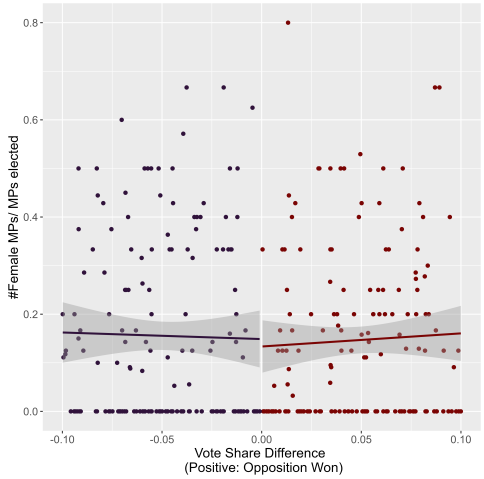
(c) Number of Opp MPs



(d) Number of Gov MPs



(e) Female MPs/ MPs



Notes: These figures show linear fits for each side of the electoral discontinuity for five pre-treatment province-level covariates. Only considers MPs elected in a province before (but still sitting) or consecutive to the sub-national race. Races up to 2021 included. Data sources: LALD; Weiss and Kouba (2025). SED; REDACTED. Figures taken from REDACTED.

C Coding Scheme: Province-Level Electoral Data

1. **Country** *("Country")*

   Country name in English.

2. **Year** *("Year")*

   Year of subnational election (if multi-round elections, this pertains to the final round).

3. **Province** *("Province")*

   Province name in English.

4. **Province ISO Identifier** *("shapeISO")*

   Province ISO identifier (source: geoboundaries, Runfola et al. (2020)).

5. **City** *("City")*

   City name in English.[39]

6. **Date of Election** *("Elec_Date")*

   Date of Election (format: Month/Day/Year).

7. **Regional Elections Dummy** *("Level_Indicator")*

   Equals "1" if regional election and "0" when local election.

8. **Name of 1st-Place Candidate** *("C1_Name")*

   Name of candidate who obtained the highest vote-share.

9. **Name of 1st-Place Party** *("C1_Party")*

   Name of the political party the 1st-place candidate is affiliated with.

10. **V-Party Name 1st-Place Party** *("C1_Party_Vparty_Me")*

    V-Party name for the political party the 1st-place candidate is affiliated with. (Only available for parties obtaining at least 5% in the previous/simultaneous national legislative elections, thus misses smaller and purely subnational parties for which this is NA.)

11. **V-Party Name Abbreviation 1st-Place Party** *("C1_Party_Vparty_Abr_Me")*

    V-Party abbreviation for the political party the 1st-place candidate is affiliated with. (Available for parties gaining 5% or more in the previous/simultaneous ntl. legislative elections, thus misses smaller and purely subnational parties for which this is NA.)

[39] Only coded when local elections are the highest subnational elections. Unless the province holds the national capital or one of the country's ten most populous cities, this is the provincial capital. If it holds multiple of the ten most populous, the one with the largest population is selected. To identify the most populous city by state in 2021, we relied on the World Cities Database, the UN's city population data, and the World Population Review.

12. **CLEA Identifier 1st-Place Party** *("C1_Party_Clea")*

    Numeric Constituency Level Elections Archive Identifier for the 1st-place party. (Not available if party did not run in the national lower house elections in that province.)

13. **Vote Share 1st-Place Party** *("C1_Vote_Share")*

    The share of votes obtained by the 1st-place party in the final election round. (Note that if a party can nominate multiple candidates *and* aggregation occurs at the candidate level, this vote share is exclusively for this candidate.)

14. **Sources 1st-Place Party** *("C1_Sources")*

    Sources used to code candidate and party name as well as vote share.

15. **Name of 2nd-Place Candidate** *("C2_Name")*

    Name of candidate who obtained the second-highest vote-share.

16. **Name of 2nd-Place Party** *("C2_Party")*

    Name of the political party the 2nd-place candidate is affiliated with.

17. **V-Party Name 2nd-Place Party** *("C2_Party_Vparty_Me")*

    V-Party name for the political party the 2nd-place candidate is affiliated with. (Only available for parties obtaining at least 5% in the previous/simultaneous national legislative elections, thus misses smaller and purely subnational parties for which this is NA.)

18. **V-Party Name Abbreviation 2nd-Place Party** *("C2_Party_Vparty_Abr_Me")*

    V-Party abbreviation for the political party the 2nd-place candidate is affiliated with. (Available for parties gaining 5% or more in the previous/simultaneous ntl. legislative elections, thus misses smaller and purely subnational parties for which this is NA.)

19. **CLEA Identifier 2nd-Place Party** *("C2_Party_Clea")*

    Numeric Constituency Level Elections Archive Identifier for the 2nd-place party. (Not available if party did not run in the national lower house elections in that province.)

20. **Vote Share 2nd-Place Party** *("C2_Vote_Share")*

    The share of votes obtained by the 2nd-place party in the final election round. (Note that if a party can nominate multiple candidates *and* aggregation occurs at the candidate level, this vote share is exclusively for this candidate.)

21. **Sources 2nd-Place Party** *("C2_Sources")*

    Sources used to code candidate and party name as well as vote share.

22. **Name of 3rd-Place Candidate** *("C3_Name")*

    Name of candidate who obtained the third-highest vote-share.

23. **Name of 3rd-Place Party** *("C3_Party")*

    Name of the political party the 3rd-place candidate is affiliated with.

24. **V-Party Name 3rd-Place Party** *("C3_Party_Vparty_Me")*

    V-Party name for the political party the 3rd-place candidate is affiliated with. (Only available for parties obtaining at least 5% in the previous/simultaneous national legislative elections, thus misses smaller and purely subnational parties for which this is NA.)

25. **V-Party Name Abbreviation 3rd-Place Party** *("C3_Party_Vparty_Abr_Me")*

    V-Party abbreviation for the political party the 3rd-place candidate is affiliated with. (Available for parties gaining 5% or more in the previous/simultaneous ntl. legislative elections, thus misses smaller and purely subnational parties for which this is NA.)

26. **CLEA Identifier 2nd-Place Party** *("C3_Party_Clea")*

    Numeric Constituency Level Elections Archive Identifier for the 2nd-place party. (Not available if party did not run in the national lower house elections in that province.)

27. **Vote Share 3rd-Place Party** *("C3_Vote_Share")*

    The share of votes obtained by the 3rd-place party in the final election round. (Note that if a party can nominate multiple candidates *and* aggregation occurs at the candidate level, this vote share is exclusively for this candidate.)

28. **Sources 3rd-Place Party** *("C3_Sources")*

    Sources used to code candidate and party name as well as vote share.

29. **Name of 4th-Place Candidate** *("C4_Name")*

    Name of candidate who obtained the fourth-highest vote-share.

30. **Name of 4th-Place Party** *("C4_Party")*

    Name of the political party the 4th-place candidate is affiliated with.

31. **V-Party Name 4th-Place Party** *("C4_Party_Vparty_Me")*

    V-Party name for the political party the 4th-place candidate is affiliated with. (Only available for parties obtaining at least 5% in the previous/simultaneous national legislative elections, thus misses smaller and purely subnational parties for which this is NA.)

32. **V-Party Name Abbreviation 4th-Place Party** *("C4_Party_Vparty_Abr_Me")*

    V-Party abbreviation for the political party the 4th-place candidate is affiliated with.

(Available for parties gaining 5% or more in the previous/simultaneous ntl. legislative elections, thus misses smaller and purely subnational parties for which this is NA.)

33. **CLEA Identifier 4th-Place Party** *("C4_Party_Clea")*

    Numeric Constituency Level Elections Archive Identifier for the 4th-place party. (Not available if party did not run in the national lower house elections in that province.)

34. **Vote Share 4th-Place Party** *("C4_Vote_Share")*

    The share of votes obtained by the 4th-place party in the final election round. (Note that if a party can nominate multiple candidates *and* aggregation occurs at the candidate level, this vote share is exclusively for this candidate.)

35. **Sources 4th-Place Party** *("C4_Sources")*

    Sources used to code candidate and party name as well as vote share.

D Coding Scheme: Country-Level Data on Subnational Election Outcomes

1. **Country** *("Country")*

   Country name in English.

2. **Year** *("Year")*

   Year of subnational elections.

3. **Heterogeneous Subnational Election Years** *("Temporal_Aggregation")*

   Equals "1" if subnational units differ in their regular subnational election years and "0" otherwise.

4. **Elected Regional Office Dummy** *("Elected_Regional_Office")*

   Equals "1" if regional election and "0" when local election.

5. **Name of Administrative Level** *("Name_Administrative_Tier")*

   In English; e.g., canton, department or region.

6. **Name of Highest Elected Subnational (Executive) Office** *("Office_Type")*

   In English; e.g., governor, mayor, prefect or regional president. For indirectly elected executives, we frequently included highest legislative offices (e.g., "regional councilors").

7. **Date of Election** *("Elec_Date")*

   Date of Election (format: Day/Month/Year).

8. **Total Number of Seats** *("Overall_Number_Of_Seats")*

   Total number of seats allocated in this year's subnational elections for the office coded under "Office_Type".

9. **Total Number of Seats Coded** *("Overall_Coded")*

   Amount of seats allocated in this dataset to the nine best performing parties (in terms of their seat amounts).

10. **Name of 1st-Place Party** *("M_Ov_1st_Party")*

11. **Amount of Seats Obtained, 1st-Place Party** *("M_Ov1_Won_Seats")*

12. **V-Party Name Abbreviation, 1st-Place Party** *("Vparty_P1_Pashname")*

    V-Party abbreviation for the political party that won the most offices in these subnational elections. (Available for parties gaining 5% or more in the previous/simultaneous ntl.

legislative elections, thus misses smaller and purely subnational parties for which this is NA.)

13. **DPI Name Abbreviation, 1st-Place Party** *("DPI_P1_Name")*

    Database of Political Institutions (DPI) abbreviation for the political party that won the most offices in these subnational elections.

    Note that these coding steps are conducted for the nine best-performing parties. Variables for parties 2-9 omitted here for brevity.

14. **Certainty of Coding** *("M_Ov_Certainty")*

    RAs coded the certainty of coding on a scale from 0 to 2. A measure of the quality of the underlying sources – higher values indicate higher quality.

15. **Coding Sources** *("M_Ov_Sources")*

    Sources used to code offices obtained in subnational elections by party.

E Key Sources: Country-Level Data on Subnational Election Outcomes

Note: This list only considers main data sources. For the complete set of sources by country-subnational election year, please refer to the dataset.

ALBANIA
Komisioni Qendror i Zgjedhjeve; Komisioni Qendror i Zgjedhjeve; Wikipedia.

ARGENTINA
Subnational Electoral Authority of each Province; Ministerio del Interior; Consulta de Escrutinios Definitivos.

AUSTRALIA
Subnational Electoral Authority of each State and Territory; The University of Western Australia: Australian Politics and Elections Archive 1856-2018; Wikipedia.

AUSTRIA
Subnational Electoral Authority of each State.

BELGIUM
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