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The political budget cycle of child and youth welfare expenditures

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Abstract

In public finance, political budget cycles have been studied with respect to different policy fields and institutional contexts. The goal of this paper is to test for election cycle effects in child and youth welfare expenditures at the level of counties and municipalities in Germany. Exploiting the timing of local elections in different federal states and controlling for time and regional fixed effects as well as time varying regional characteristics the empirical analysis reveals increasing public spending on childcare institutions and youth work prior to elections. The effect for childcare institutions is driven by rural counties and counties with high financial power. The effect for youth work is only observed in larger cities and in states with a lower minimum voting age. Institutional heterogeneities can help to explain these findings.

Keywords: political economy, political budget cycles, election cycle, child and youth welfare, youth work, childcare

JEL Codes: D72, H72, H75, J13

1 Introduction

In Germany, the responsibility for child and youth welfare services (Kinder- und Jugendhilfe) lies to a large extent with local governments at the level of municipalities or counties (Rauschenbach et al. 2024). This paper focuses on public expenditures for these policies in the light of local elections contributing to the literature on political budget cycles in public finance. Specifically, the analysis exploits the timing of local elections in West German states in a difference-in-differences design to identify potential causal effects of election dates on public expenditure decisions with respect to child and youth welfare services.

Earlier empirical literature has documented distortionary effects of elections on tax setting and public spending resulting from strategic behavior of politicians who face electoral competition. For example, Alesina/Paradisi (2017) exploit a tax reform in Italy revealing that the closer the next local election date, the lower are property taxes set by municipalities. Benito/Bastida (2013) analyze cultural expenditures in municipalities in the Spanish region of Murcia observing an expenditure increase in election years and a decrease afterwards. In Sweden and Finland, municipalities employ more civil servants in election years compared to non-election years as shown by Dahlberg/Mörk (2011). For Germany, earlier papers studying election cycles at the local level found effects on business taxes being lower during and before an election year (Foremny/Riedel 2014), and on an increase in the number of construction permits granted before an election (Garmann 2017).

There might be different reasons why politicians implement such policies prior to elections and why rational voters would reward them. In a seminal contribution to the public choice literature, Nordhaus (1975) was the first to theoretically consider governments that consist of individuals driven by private interest like own income or reelection prospects beyond their roles as social planners. For example, Rogoff/Sibert (1988) and Rogoff (1990) argue that politicians seeking re-election want to signal their competency by increasing public spending at a given level of taxes or reduce taxes holding public spending constant. This can be rationalized by the imperfect observability of the fiscal (intertemporal) tradeoffs for the electorate. Moreover, politicians might have incentives to implement unpopular policies far away from upcoming elections if the impact of these policies is discounted by the voters (Nelson 2000). More popular policy decisions, such as an increase in public spending or tax cuts, on the other hand, would be implemented close to an election. Drazen/Eslava (2010) argue that politicians want to implement public policies in line with their voters' preferences leading to a shift in priorities prior to elections towards policies that are most valued by and most visible to the voters targeted by those politicians in office. Such voter targeting could vary by government ideology and composition of the electorate. In line with seminal work by Black (1948), who studied the role of preference distribution among voters for electoral outcomes, a larger fraction of young voters and families in the population could thus explain disproportionately higher spending on child and youth related expenditures. On the other hand, the scope of adjustment that policy makers face likely differs by policy field depending on legal grounds and financial resources (see e.g. Beznoska/Kauder

(2020) who find that the dynamics of different public expenditures in the German state of North-Rhine-Westphalia differ by local public debt).

Another strand of literature studies direct connections between politics and the local economy or society at the individual level. Using plant-level data from France, Bertrand et al. (2018) show that politically connected CEOs alter corporate employment decisions prior to local elections in order to support politicians in their re-election campaigns. Diegmann et al. (2025) analyze members of the federal parliament in Germany with dual roles as corporate managers finding that being appointed to a corporate board improves a company's credit rating and its survival rate. Their data also reveal that the share of firms with political connections in Germany has been steadily growing over the last 20 years.

So far, the field of child and youth welfare has not received much attention in the political economics literature. In Germany, child and youth welfare policies are administered at the local government level and include a wide range of services like the provision of childcare facilities, youth work and socio-educational support. The latter comprises measures ranging from consultation infrastructure for parents to foster care and out of home placement facilities for children and interventions following e.g. cases of child abuse and neglect. The different services vary regarding their share in the public budget, the degree of obligation by law for their provision and the visibility to the electorate. A couple of studies have focused on regional variation in the provision and expenditures for these services. Van Santen (2011), Mühlmann (2019) and Enste/Möller (2015) describe large regional heterogeneities for the provision of socio-educational support in Germany and do not find indicators, which substantially explain these cross-sectional differences. Cavalca et al. (2022) study regional variation in child protection decisions in Denmark and present evidence for effects of fiscal budget constraints on child protection at the municipal level. As for the role of politicians regarding child and youth welfare policy, Baskaran/Hessami (2023) and Baskaran et al. (2024) have studied how the demographic representation among members of local parliaments in Germany affect the provision of public childcare. They find that a higher share of young elected politicians and a higher share of females in parliament increase the provision of public childcare in the community. Riedel et al. (2021) find that left-wing local governments spend a higher share of their budget on social services. In a descriptive, cross-sectional study, Grohs/Reiter (2017) confirm this finding for youth work expenditures.

However, there is no literature analyzing political budget cycles for child and youth welfare expenditures so far. The subsequent analysis aims at filling this gap and reveals the presence of election cycle effects for expenditures on childcare institutions indicating that local governments increase spending on public childcare provision in pre-election years. This seems to be driven by direct expenditures on public institutions and not by subsidies for private institutions. The effects are most pronounced and statistically significant for smaller communities that are part of a larger county and particularly driven by the state of Bavaria (the state with the strongest increase in expenditures during the analysis period). I also find election cycle effects for youth work expenditures; these results are driven by larger cities which are not part of a county and by federal states with a minimum voting age of 16 (compared to states with a minimum voting age of 18).

On the other hand, I cannot identify any clear effects for other expenditure categories, which include promotion of care and upbringing in the family and socio-educational support. A possible reason might be that these policy fields are rarely high on the political agenda for local elections. The different results might also be explained by the heterogeneity in child and youth welfare with regard to the legal grounds for these services, which differ by expenditure category, as well as the organizational structure, i.e. institutions and political decision bodies, which vary between measures, county types and federal states. Moreover, the results suggest that the election cycle effect for institutional childcare, which corresponds to a substantial shift in public budgets, is rather driven by financially well-off counties. An interpretation of this finding could be that incumbents require an adequate financial scope to implement expansionary public budget adjustments prior to elections.

In the following, Section 2 describes the data used in the analysis and presents some descriptive statistics on child and youth welfare expenditures and local election dates for the sample period. Section 3 outlines the identification strategy as a basis for the regression analysis in Section 4. Section 5 concludes with a discussion of the results and potential avenues for future research with regard to the political economy of child and youth welfare.

2 Data and descriptive statistics

2.1 Data

The subsequent analysis relies on data from the German register on child and youth welfare expenditures, which is combined with further administrative data (local election dates, regional sociodemographic and economic characteristics, public financial accounts data) over the analysis period 2005-2019. In particular, expenditures from administrative units for different categories of services and measures are aggregated at the level of counties (Kreise). Counties can either be larger cities (kreisfreie Städte, Stadtkreise) or, typically in less densely populated regions, consist of several smaller communities (Landkreise). The analysis sample is restricted to West German states only. Communities and counties in East German states, which joined the Federal Republic of Germany in 1990, were subject to various mergers and structural reforms in the subsequent years including the beginning of the analysis period (see Holtkamp/Bathge 2014). The city states of Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg, which are special cases in many respects within the German federal structure, are also excluded from the analysis.

Importantly, the data covers child and youth welfare expenditures as registered in the local public accounts, which can be expenditures by public organizations or direct subsidies to private profit and non-profit organizations. Expenditures by non-public organizations from other sources (like donations) are not registered in the administrative statistics and thus not included in the analysis. The following results refer to gross expenditures without subtracting revenues (e.g. from user fees) because these are not separable for different service categories. However, revenues only covered about 6% of total expenditures for child and youth welfare services in Germany in 2019 (Bundesamt für Statistik 2020).

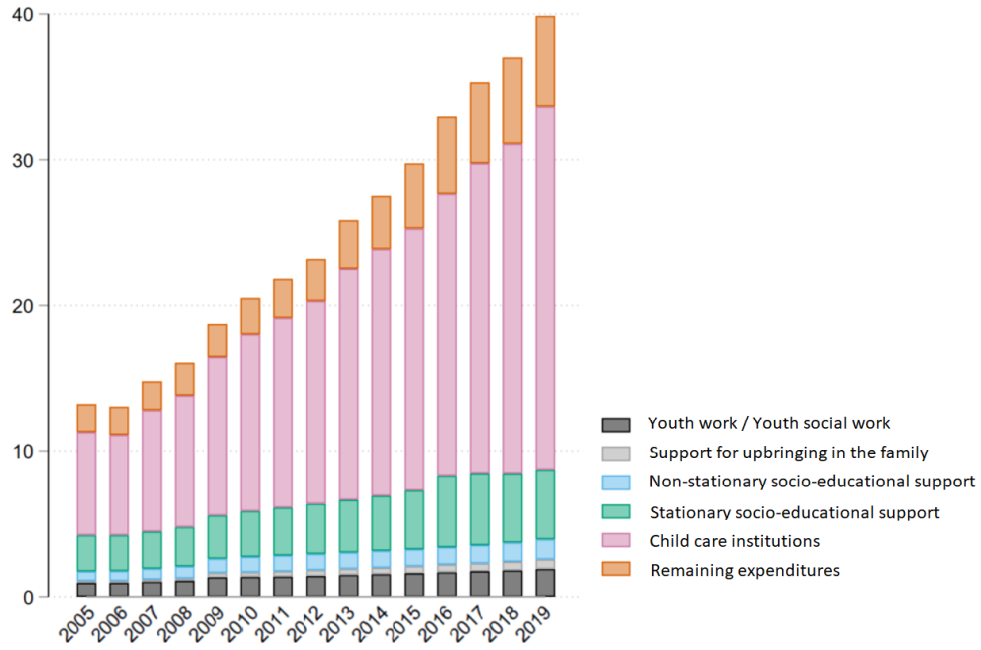
2.2 Descriptive statistics on child and youth welfare

Figure 1 shows that overall public expenditures on child and youth welfare heavily increased over the analysis period. Gross expenditures in 2019 were more than 300% higher than in 2005 (which still is an increase of almost 250% when adjusted for inflation during that time period). This increase is well documented for Germany as a whole (see e.g. Schayani/Olszenka 2025).

Expenditures on childcare institutions account for the largest share of child and youth welfare expenditures when compared to other categories during all of the considered years. Notably, institutional childcare expenditures increased particularly over the analysis period. Following a law, the so-called KiföG (Kinderförderungsgesetz), which came into force in 2008, all parents in Germany were given the right to obtain childcare for pre-school children aged one and older from 2013 onwards (Bundesanzeiger 2008). In Germany, public childcare is heavily subsidized; fees paid by the parents only cover about 20% of the actual costs, on average (Bauernschuster et al. 2016). Figure 1 shows that public childcare expenditures, which

consist of investments and running costs for institutions directly owned by the communities as well as subsidies paid to other profit and non-profit organizations, increased from 7.1 billion Euro in 2005 to 24.9 billion Euro in 2019. According to a survey by Bien et al. (2006), only 20% of working parents with an under three-year old child used public childcare in Germany in 2000. In that study, 84% of all non-employed mothers with an under three-year old child reported that they would like to work and more than half of those stated that a major reason is the lack of childcare opportunities. This shortage was mainly due to a lack of childcare provision in West German states because public childcare had been more common in the former GDR to which East German states belonged until 1990. Despite the heavy increase in capacities in the West German states, part of this gap is still existent until today. At the same time, there are also considerable differences in parents' demand for public childcare between East and West Germany (Kayed et al. 2024). This substantial heterogeneity between the East and West Germany will not be captured by the following analysis because East German states are excluded as outlined above.

Fig. 1: Child and youth welfare expenditures in billion Euro (nominal gross values) in West Germany (without city states).



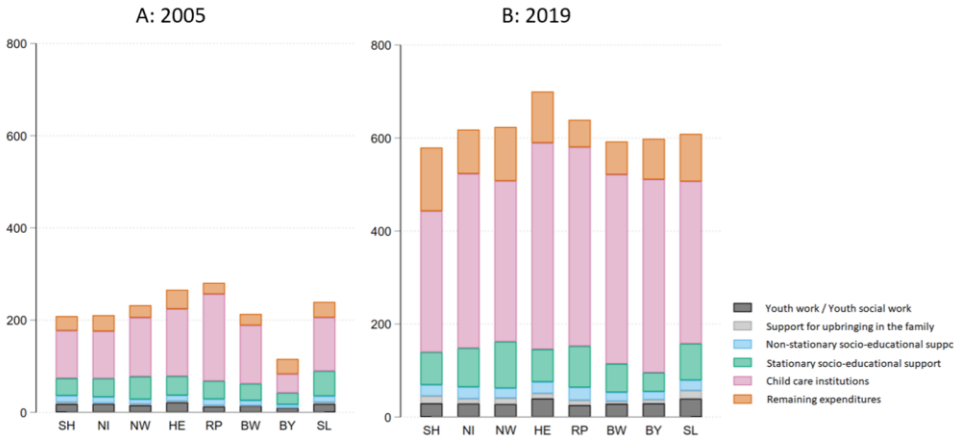
Source: Own calculations based on administrative registers, RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025).

Beyond institutional childcare, the following major expenditure categories for child and youth welfare will be distinguished here: youth work and youth social work, promotion of care and upbringing in the family, as well as non-stationary and stationary socio-educational support. Figure 1 shows that for those measures and services expenditures increased as well during the analysis period. The data reveal a steady and massive expenditure increase from 6.2 billion Euro in 2005 to 14.9 billion Euro in 2019. A large share (43% among non-childcare related expenditures in 2019) can be attributed to socio-educational support measures, which rather have an intervention character if children or parents are faced with problems affecting a child's wellbeing and which in most cases is accompanied by an individual assistance plan

elaborated by the authorities (Kindler et al. 2006). A stark increase by 15% in expenditures not related to childcare in 2015 and 2016 can be partly attributed to unaccompanied minors having migrated to Germany for asylum reasons (see e.g. Kiepe/Pothmann 2018).

When looking at expenditures per capita for the different spending categories, a substantial variation can be observed across federal states. Figure 2 shows child and youth welfare expenditures per inhabitant across states in 2005 and in 2019. Similar to the overall expenditure increase illustrated in Figure 1, Panel A shows much lower per population spending for 2005 than Panel B correspondingly for 2019. As for public childcare expenditures, the strongest increase can be observed for Bavaria from 41€ in 2005 to 415€ in 2019. Per capita expenditures are highest in 2019 for Hesse (444€) while they are lowest for Schleswig-Holstein (303€).

Fig. 2: Expenditures per capita (€, nominal gross values) for child and youth welfare in West German states (without city states) in 2005 and 2019.



Source: Own calculations based on administrative registers, RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025). SH: Schleswig-Holstein, NI: Lower Saxony, NW: North-Rhine-Westphalia, HE: Hesse, RP: Rhineland-Palatinate, BW: Baden-Württemberg, BY: Bavaria, SL: Saarland.

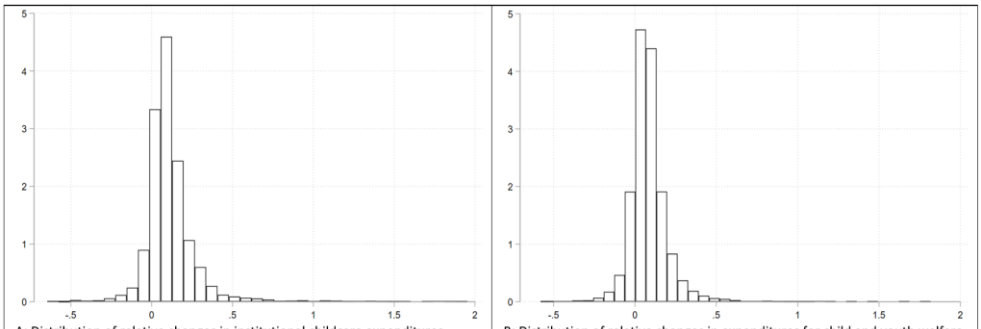
Figure 2 also shows per capita expenditures by state for other child and youth welfare services. Here, Baden-Württemberg (213€) and Bavaria (202€) have the lowest expenditures per capita in 2019. The highest values can be observed for NRW (317€), Saarland (311€) and Schleswig-Holstein (305€). States differ in their socio-demographic and economic structure which are certainly associated with differences in demand for those services. At the same time, there could be regional differences affecting the supply side. As mentioned above, the child and youth welfare statistics only cover expenditures by public funds. Some services though are offered by private profit and non-profit organizations with differing importance by region, which might explain part of the cross-sectional differences in per capita public spending (Böwing-Schmalenbrock/Tiedemann 2019). Strikingly, regional differences are also substantial with respect to spending on socio-educational support, which is budgeted based on an individual case for which private organizations are refunded by the local public administration.

To account for time constant heterogeneity between regions, the subsequent analysis will draw on longitudinal variation of the mentioned child and youth welfare expenditures at the county level and consider change rates

$$\boldsymbol{\tau_{i,t}} = \frac{\Delta \boldsymbol{Y}_{i,t}}{\boldsymbol{Y_{i,t-1}}} = \frac{\boldsymbol{Y_{i,t} - Y_{i,t-1}}}{\boldsymbol{Y_{i,t-1}}} \qquad (1)$$

with $\boldsymbol{Y_{i,t}}$ being the expenditure for a certain measure in county **i** in year **t**. Figures 3 and 4 present the distribution of yearly change rates of different child and youth welfare services pooled over the analysis period 2005-2019. Figure 3, Panel A refers to institutional childcare expenditures, Panel B to other child- and youth welfare services.[1] First of all, we observe more often expenditure increases than decreases, which is in line with aggregate data presented in Figure 1. Moreover, a large fraction of increases is quite substantial, with about 50% of the distributional mass of pooled annual change rates above 10.0% for institutional childcare and above 6.5% for other child and youth welfare services. Regarding institutional childcare in Germany, it is important to keep in mind that the analysis period includes those years after the KiföG law took effect in 2008 giving parents the right to claim institutional public childcare from 2013 onwards. Until the end of this time period, local communities were obliged to provide sufficient institutional childcare capacities to meet the demand leading to massive investments at the local level. This is reflected by the right-skewed distribution of expenditure changes in Figure 3, Panel A. In Panel B, we see that expenditures for other child and youth welfare services follows a similar pattern even though change rates are somewhat lower, on average.

Fig. 3: Distribution of pooled yearly change rates at the county level for child and youth services in West German states (without city states), 2006-2019.

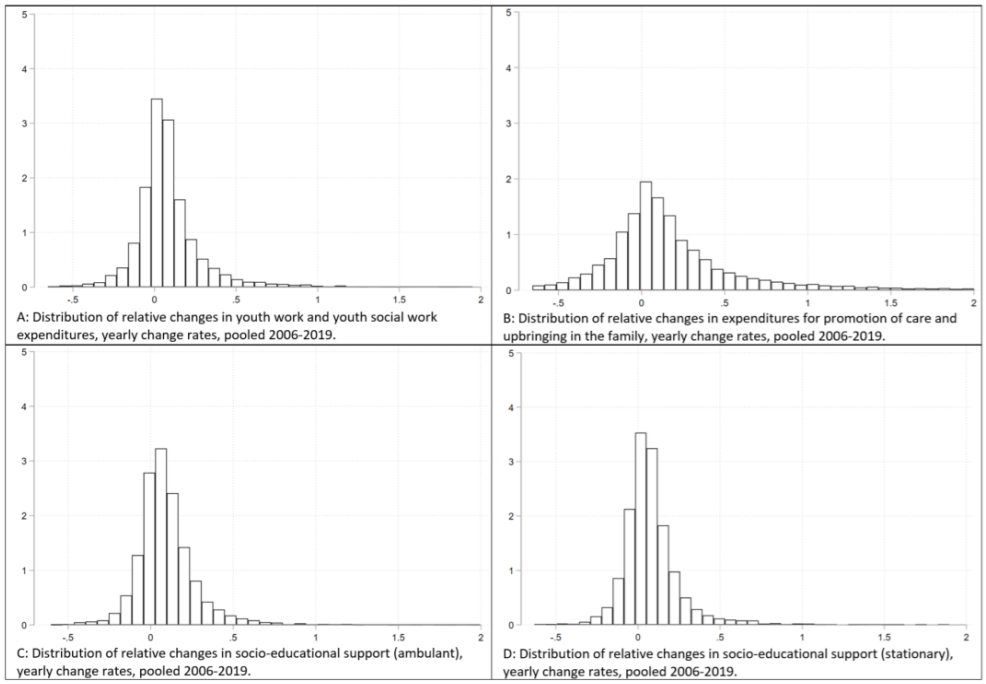


Source: Own calculations based on administrative registers, RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025).

1 For the change rate calculation the data are deflated using the consumer price index for Germany as published by the OECD (2025). For subsequent analysis, change rates with τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded as outliers from the sample.

However, when zooming into specific measures, which are part of the aggregate data in Figure 3, Panel B, we can observe some heterogeneities in the distributions. Figure 4 presents different categories separately ranging from more universal and preventive measures to measures with an intervention character: Panel A: youth work and youth social work, Panel B: promotion of care and upbringing in the family, Panel C: non-stationary socio-educational support, Panel D: stationary socio-educational support. Panel A and, in particular Panel B reveal a more dispersed distribution of expenditure change rates than Panel C and D. A reason for this can be differences in potential legal claims for these different services with those in Panel A and B being less compulsory and thus more subject to the discretion of the local administration than those in Panels C and D (see e.g. Grohs/Reiter 2017). However, the distinction of measures and services, in particular between B and C, is not always clear, for example concerning the more preventive and universal consultancy services, which can be either attributed to promotion of care and upbringing in the family or part of non-stationary socio-educational support. It is important to remember that the overall and absolute level of public spending is substantially different for these categories (see Figures 1 and 2). In 2019, the data reveal aggregate expenditures for institutional childcare of about 24.9 billion Euro and for socio-educational support of about 6.2 billion Euro while youth work, youth social work and promotion of care and upbringing in the family together accounted for only 2.6 billion Euro.

Fig. 4: Distribution of pooled yearly change rates (2006-2019) at the county level in West German states (without city states) for specific support measures as part of child and youth services shown in Figure 6, Panel B.



Source: Own calculations based on administrative registers. RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025).

2.3 Local elections

The following analysis will bring together the dynamics of child and youth welfare expenditures and the timing of local elections. During the analysis period, several elections took place at the local level in West Germany. Local elections are coordinated at the state level and generally follow a predetermined election cycle with elections being held every five to six years, depending on the state. This implies that states hold their local elections at different points in time as Table 1 shows.

In each state, elections are held for several types of councils and parliaments at the same time.[2] Counties can either be larger cities (kreisfreie Städte or Stadtkreise) or consist of several smaller communities or municipalities, which is generally the case for less densely populated counties (Landkreise). The latter have elected local parliaments (Gemeinderat) at the community level as well as a joint administration at the county level including an additional elected decision body for the whole county (Landkreistag, see e.g. Deutscher Landkreistag 2024). In larger cities (kreisfreie Städte or Stadtkreise), typically only one parliament (Stadtrat) is elected.[3] Policy decisions for child and youth services are either taken at the level of communities (e.g. concerning institutional childcare) or at the county level for most other child and youth welfare services (with some exceptions where child and youth welfare is administered locally below the county level – in some counties in the states of North-Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse, for example (Mühlmann 2019)[4]).

Tab. 1: Election dates in in West German states (without city states), 2004-2020.

	‘04	‘05	‘06	‘07	‘08	‘09	‘10	‘11	‘12	‘13	‘14	‘15	‘16	‘17	‘18	‘19	´20
SH					X					X					X		
NI			X					X					X				
NW	X					X					X	(X)					X
HE			X					X					X				
RP	X					X					X					X	
BW	X					X					X					X	
BY					X						X						X
SL	X					X					X					X	

Notes: The city states Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg are excluded due to their particular administrative structure, which differs from other states. SH: Schleswig-Holstein, NI: Lower Saxony, NW: North-Rhine-Westphalia, HE: Hesse, RP: Rhineland-Palatinate, BW: Baden-Württemberg, BY: Bavaria, SL: Saarland. In 2015, local elections in NW concerned some counties where mayors were elected after the local council elections. Exclusion of NW observations for 2013-2016 does not affect the results.

2 The structure and the responsibilities of local councils and parliament vary only slightly between states (Foremny/Riedel 2014). There are slight differences in voting systems for local elections across states (Leß/Schwarting 2020); as I do not use any information on candidates or parties, I consider these of minor importance for the present analysis but of potential interest for future research.

3 Special rules apply to city states of Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg, which I exclude from the sample.

4 My results are robust to the exclusion of the states of North-Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse.

3 Empirical identification strategy

Using a difference-in-difference type regression framework, the following analysis aims at identifying systematic variation in change rates for the presented expenditure categories around the election dates depicted in Table 1. Therefore, the following equation will be estimated:

$$\boldsymbol{\tau_{i,t}} = \boldsymbol{\delta}\,\mathbf{election_{i,t}} + \boldsymbol{\beta}\mathbf{X_{j,t}} + \boldsymbol{\epsilon_t} + \boldsymbol{\mu_i} + \boldsymbol{\varepsilon_{i,t}} \qquad (2)$$

The dependent variable on the left-hand side is $\boldsymbol{\tau_{i,t}}$, the change rates from year t-1 to year **t** in county **i** for a specific expenditure category as defined in equation (1). The explanatory variables on the right-hand side are a dummy vector $\mathbf{election_{i,t}}$, a set of county and time varying characteristics $\mathbf{X_{j,t}}$, year fixed effects $\boldsymbol{\epsilon_t}$, and county fixed effects $\boldsymbol{\mu_i}$. $\mathbf{election_{i,t}}$ consists of three dummy variables capturing election cycle effects for the pre-election year, the election year, and the post-election year:

$$\boldsymbol{election_{i,t}} = \begin{bmatrix} \boldsymbol{election_{i,t+1}} \\ \boldsymbol{election_{i,t}} \\ \boldsymbol{election_{i,t-1}} \end{bmatrix} \text{ and } \begin{cases} = \mathbf{1} \text{ in pre-election year, } \mathbf{0} \text{ otherwise} \\ = \mathbf{1} \text{ in election year, } \mathbf{0} \text{ otherwise} \\ = \mathbf{1} \text{ in post- election year, } \mathbf{0} \text{ otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The vector δ of coefficients to be estimated represents the election cycle effects of interest. $\mathbf{X_{j,t}}$ includes as control variables demographic characteristics of the county (population size (log), population share age 0-2, population share of age 3-18), a proxy for the poverty rate (quota of basic assistance (SGB-II) recipients), as well as the share of foreign national residents. Furthermore, ϵ_t accounts for time specific shocks affecting the dependent variable in all counties simultaneously and μ_i captures time constant heterogeneity between counties and, at the same time, different federal states. Additionally, the regressions include linear time trends at the state level. $\varepsilon_{i,t}$ captures any residual variation. Key to the identification strategy is the assumption that election dates vary quasi-randomly across federal states after controlling for time fixed effects, state fixed effects and further control variables and, thus, no unobserved confounders bias the estimates of $\boldsymbol{\delta}$.

4 Regression results

This section presents results from estimating equation (2) for relative expenditure changes in different child and youth welfare categories as distinguished in Section 2. As the administrative structure for child and youth welfare services differs between the two county types (Landkreise and kreisfreie Städte), estimates are presented for the pooled sample of all counties as well as separately for two subsamples by county type. Reported coefficient estimates and standard errors are those for $\boldsymbol{\delta}$ while corresponding detailed regression tables for the main results including all control variables are relegated to the appendix (Table A1, A2).

First, Table 2 refers to public institutional childcare expenditures as a dependent variable, separately for spending on all institutions (first three columns) as well as for the subset of institutions operated by the local public administrations (last three columns). Results support the existence of election cycle effects for institutional childcare expenditures in rural counties (Landkreise). The corresponding expenditure change rates are statistically significantly higher in pre-election years. This seems to be particularly driven by expenditures on childcare institutions operated by a public administration. The remaining expenditures are subsidies to private profit or non-profit childcare institutions. I do not find any statistically significant effects for the latter (see Table A3). Table A4 in the appendix suggests that the results in Table 2 are driven by counties with above median financial power in a given year and state. Financial power (Steuerkraft) is an indicator for how much revenues a local administration can collect from the tax base.[5] This finding is particularly interesting as we also observe an election cycle in business tax income in the data (Table A5), which is in line with what is documented by Foremny/Riedel (2014). Business taxes are a major income source for local governments in Germany. In the year before an election, there are statistically significant negative effects on change rates in business tax income, supposedly resulting from changes in the business tax rates as analyzed by Foremny/Riedel (2014). In our data, however, we cannot observe tax rates directly. Excluding the period following the financial crisis 2008-2010 (Table A6), when many local governments in Germany were financially constrained due to lower business tax incomes as well as higher expenditures (Arnold et al. 2015), also yields stronger results compared to those reported in Table 2. These heterogeneities suggest that financial resources are required for expansionary adjustments in institutional childcare expenditures in the light of the political budget cycle.

5 Information refers to average measures for financial power at the county level as published by the statistics office and available at the INKAR database (BBSR 2025). These are average indicators for all administrations within a county and abstract from the community specific tax adjustments, which are at the discretion of the local governments (Hebesätze).

Tab. 2: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on institutional childcare, 2006-2019.

	Childcare expenditures (τ)					
	All childcare institutions			Public childcare institutions		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0782*	0.0878*	0.0528	0.0268**	0.0299**	0.0288
	(0.0463)	(0.0479)	(0.0435)	(0.0110)	(0.0128)	(0.0212)
$election_t$	-0.00108	-0.00236	0.00121	-0.00671	-0.00944	0.00467
	(0.0172)	(0.0177)	(0.0252)	(0.0117)	(0.0125)	(0.0263)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0207	-0.0217	-0.0214	-0.00102	0.00306	-0.0125
	(0.0204)	(0.0218)	(0.0285)	(0.0140)	(0.0161)	(0.0302)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	319	236	83
Observations	4,371	3,217	1,154	4,307	3,212	1,095

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. 3: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on youth work/youth social work and promotion of care and upbringing in the family, 2006-2019.

	Youth work/youth social work expenditures (τ)			Promotion of care and upbringing in the family expenditures (τ)		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.00782	-0.00817	0.0599**	-0.0249*	-0.0183	-0.0311
	(0.0120)	(0.0133)	(0.0241)	(0.0148)	(0.0184)	(0.0226)
$election_t$	-0.0170	-0.0156	-0.0134	0.00535	0.0183	-0.0329
	(0.0176)	(0.0169)	(0.0313)	(0.0207)	(0.0283)	(0.0349)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0268	0.0241	0.0444	0.000623	-0.00667	0.0310
	(0.0286)	(0.0286)	(0.0367)	(0.0193)	(0.0233)	(0.0305)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	321	236	85
Observations	4,381	3,219	1,162	4,082	3,003	1,079

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

In a next step, the focus is on changes in expenditures for other child and youth welfare services as dependent variables. Table 3 shows that expenditures for youth work and youth social work increase before an election year in cities with county status but not in counties consisting of several communities. For promotion of care and upbringing in the family, we do not observe a similar effect. On the contrary, Table 3, Column 1 even documents a weakly statistically negative effect of an upcoming election on expenditure changes in this category.

Tab. 4: Regression results for change rates in socio-educational support, 2006-2019.

	Socio-educational support (ambulant) (τ)			Socio-educational support (stationary) (τ)		
Explanatory variables	**All counties**	Rural count. (Landkreise)	Urban count. (Stadtkreise)	**All counties**	Rural count. (Landkreise)	Urban count. (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.00442	0.00735	-0.00104	-0.0153	-0.0162	-0.0205
	(0.0127)	(0.0147)	(0.0165)	(0.0131)	(0.0146)	(0.0140)
$election_t$	-0.00802	-0.0108	0.00341	0.00572	0.01000	-0.0160
	(0.0158)	(0.0172)	(0.0258)	(0.0131)	(0.0143)	(0.0156)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0108	0.00424	0.0348*	0.0107	0.0100	0.0132
	(0.0178)	(0.0209)	(0.0205)	(0.0178)	(0.0196)	(0.0184)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year- FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Add. Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	321	236	85
Obs.	4,397	3,226	1,171	4,405	3,233	1,172

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

In Table 4, we turn to stationary and non-stationary socio-educational support. The latter makes up the largest share in expenditures after institutional childcare as Figures 1 and 2 show. For none of these expenditure categories, however, we observe any significant coefficient estimates for the dummy variable $\boldsymbol{election_{t+1}}$ suggesting that election cycle effects are not present here. Indeed, for socio-educational support, we would expect that any strategic adjustment to the budgets would be less likely for several reasons. First, there is a subjective legal claim for treatment in case social workers identify any need for support. Second, we would expect that visibility to potential voters is more limited for these policies compared to institutional childcare or youth work. Additionally, the potential for attracting votes with an increase in spending might be lower for these categories. This could explain the absence of expansionary polices or even declining priorities for these policy domains in the light of an upcoming election.

Hence, youth work and youth social work is the only expenditure category among non-childcare related services for which we observe any pre-election expansionary effects. Table 5 now shows that the effect for youth work and youth social work is

driven by youth work expenditures, which make up the largest share of the expenditures in the combined category (2019: 1.4 billion Euro youth work expenditures, 0.5 billion Euro youth social work expenditures). The separate estimation results for youth social work do not yield any significant coefficients (Table A7).

Tab. 5: Regression results for change rates in youth work, 2006-2019.

	Youth work expenditures (τ)								
	All states			States with minimum voting age 16			States with minimum voting age 18		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural count. (Landkreise)	Urban count. (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural count. (Landkreise)	Urban count. (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural count. (Landkreise)	Urban count. (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0120	-0.00462	0.0660***	0.0222**	-0.00402	0.0893**	0.00429	-0.00319	0.0293
	(0.0102)	(0.0107)	(0.0238)	(0.00871)	(0.00890)	(0.0340)	(0.0129)	(0.0147)	(0.0268)
$election_{t}$	-0.00856	0.000756	-0.0265	0.000169	-0.00692	0.0364	4.08e-05	0.0170	-0.0381
	(0.0157)	(0.0156)	(0.0301)	(0.00984)	(0.00824)	(0.0368)	(0.0183)	(0.0179)	(0.0392)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0255	0.0217	0.0451	-0.00882	-0.0101	0.00661	0.0305	0.0296	0.0449
	(0.0249)	(0.0235)	(0.0364)	(0.0108)	(0.0108)	(0.0357)	(0.0256)	(0.0243)	(0.0407)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year- FE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Add. Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	113	79	34	164	122	42
Obs.	4,378	3,217	1,161	1,519	1,058	461	2,251	1,674	577

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. States with minimum voting age 16 over the sample period are Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen, North-Rhine-Westphalia; States with minimum voting age 18 are Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Saarland; Baden-Württemberg is only included in Columns 1-3 as the minimum voting age changed with the election in 2014. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

The effect for youth work is only observed in municipalities that are not part of a larger county. A reason for the absence of political budget cycle effects on youth work in counties that consist of several communities (Landkreise) could be that the administration of non-childcare related child and youth services is mostly located at the county level. Compared to this, institutional childcare is administered to a large extent at the community level which is in line with the findings for election cycle effects in rural counties reported above. Administration at the county level, as is the case for most other services could make it more difficult for incumbents in a larger county to coordinate on shifting funds for strategic purposes before an election. Another reason might be that electoral competition is different at the county level compared to the community level. Moreover, financial constraints as well as the

possibilities for fiscal tradeoffs are likely to be different at those different levels of government.

Interestingly, Table 5 also reveals that the effect of higher youth work expenditures before a local election is driven by states in which the minimum voting age during the analysis period was 16 (Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen, North-Rhine-Westphalia), compared to other states with minimum voting age 18 (Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Saarland), where we do not observe a similar effect. Baden-Württemberg is excluded from this subsample analysis because the minimum voting age was reduced here from 18 to 16 in 2014 (see Table A8 for an overview of minimum voting age regulation in West German states during the analysis period). Detailed regression results for the main results reported in Table 5 can be found in Table A2. Results presented in Table A9 specifically refer to election cycle effects for youth work expenditures in Baden-Württemberg, where a reform took effect in 2014 decreasing the minimum voting age for local elections from 18 to 16. Column 2 confirms the findings presented in Table 5. The coefficient estimates of the interaction terms in Table A9, Column 3 indicate that election cycle effects are particularly strong before the 2014 election in Baden-Württemberg. Moreover, we also observe an increase in spending on youth work after this election possibly resulting from the implementation of policies with a stronger focus on the younger electorate.

In Table A10 we can check whether the results on election cycle effects for youth work expenditures as presented in Table 5 are also driven by financially better-off counties. In contrast to results presented in Table A4 for childcare, these subsample analyses do not reveal that the effect is driven by counties with above median financial power in a given year and state. A reason for this might be a lower overall level of expenditures for youth work compared to childcare institutions (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2) implying that a given positive change rate refers to a lower absolute increase in spending which might be less affected by financial constraints. In general, a potential concern with our data is that information on public accounts is aggregated across different public administration levels within a county consisting of several smaller communities. It is not possible to account for the heterogeneity in financial resources among communities within a county, which might play a role for the budget available at the county level. Moreover, several rules and automatic mechanisms are in place that determine financial relationships between the different levels of local governments and their actual financial constraints (see e.g. Hauptmeier 2007). Thus implications of financial power indicators are somewhat vague without further information from financial accounts data.

The appendix of the paper addresses a couple of further estimation- and data-related robustness analyses. As there are not enough federal states in the sample to calculate cluster robust standard errors at the state level (the unit of treatment), standard errors in the main analysis are clustered at the state-year level. The appendix presents robustness checks for the main results with two different clustering alternatives: at the county level (Table A11, A12) as well as with two-way clustering at the state-year and county level (Table A13, A14). Robustness of the results to alternative levels of clustering addresses potential concerns about false rejections of null effects in the presence of serial correlation of the error term (Cameron/Miller 2015).

Further robustness and sensitivity checks are presented in the appendix with various modifications to the main specification as presented in Table 2 and 5. I also estimate equation (2) without including control variables at the county level (Table A15, A16) and without country fixed effects (Table A17, A18), which also yields similar results. Furthermore, Table A19 and Table A20 shows robustness to the successive exclusion of single federal states from the analysis presented in Table 2 and 5. Results for childcare indicate that particularly the exclusion of Bavaria reduces the statistical significance of the estimates. In turn, this can be interpreted as Bavarian counties particularly driving the results on election cycle effects in public childcare expenditures. Finally, Table A21 and A22 show that a placebo reform with randomly generated election dates across the sample period does not produce similar effects; we even observe statistically significant negative effects in pre-placebo-election years for expenditures on public childcare institutions (Table A21, Columns 4-5).

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I empirically tested whether child and youth welfare expenditures in West German counties follow a political budget cycle induced by local election dates. Using administrative data at the county level and applying a difference-in-difference design with varying election dates between federal states, I estimated regressions explaining the change rate for expenditures with indicators for whether the closest election is in the subsequent, the current, or the previous year.

I found evidence for election cycle effects with respect to expenditures for institutional childcare. These results are driven by counties consisting of smaller communities (Landkreise) compared to counties that constitute only one larger city (kreisfreie Städte or Stadtkreise). Moreover, the effects are statistically significant for expenditures on public institutions and not for subsidies for private institutions. The data covers a time period that was characterized by massive expansion in public childcare capacities in West Germany. The findings suggest that the provision of public childcare served as a policy platform with potentially high visibility to the electorate, which could motivate incumbent policy makers to increase spending on childcare before an election. The results are robust to various alternatives to the estimated baseline model.

On the other hand, I do not find any robust evidence for election cycle effects with regard to socio-educational support or support for upbringing in the family. The reasons for this could be differences in the legal framework governing the provision of these services or organizational differences offering less discretion for policy makers to manipulate spending. Moreover, these child and youth welfare services might be less visible to the electorate not pushing them to the top of the agenda of local policy makers.

However, I do find an increase in spending on youth work before an election year. The legal framework governing expenditures on youth work is less binding than for socio-educational support or promotion of upbringing in the family (Bernzen/Bruder 2018, Wiesner 2018). Interestingly, the effect is observed only in counties consisting of one larger city and driven by states with a minimum voting age of 16. This suggests that voter targeting as motivated by Drazen/Eslava (2010) might be a relevant channel for explaining political budget cycles.

The election cycle effects for spending on childcare institutions seem to be driven by counties with administrations characterized by relatively high financial power, which suggests that financial resources might play a role here for whether political decision makers can shift expenditures following a political budget cycle. With more comprehensive data on government ideology, finances and individual characteristics of decision makers, future research can shed more light on the mechanisms behind these political business cycle effects. For example, Accenttura/Profeta (2018) have shown for Italian municipalities that election cycle effects are stronger in municipalities with male compared to female mayors or councilors in office. Moreover, any specificities of the electoral system or the expected closeness of an election might also have an impact on how pronounced the patterns of a political budget

cycle might evolve. Holtkamp/Garske (2024) stress that the role of individual political actors depends on the specific constellation of decision bodies, their individual authorities (e.g. veto rights) and the structural involvement of non-political actors in local social policy decisions. This remains to be studied in more detail, generally, with respect to social policy decisions and, specifically, with regard to child and youth welfare and the context of political budget cycles.

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6 Literature

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Appendix

Tab. A1: Detailed regression results for Table 2: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on institutional childcare 2006-2019.

	All childcare institutions			Public childcare institutions		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkr.)	Urban counties (Stadtkr.)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkr.)	Urban counties (Stadtkr.)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0782*	0.0878*	0.0528	0.0268**	0.0299**	0.0288
	(0.0463)	(0.0479)	(0.0435)	(0.0110)	(0.0128)	(0.0212)
$election_t$	-0.00108	-0.00236	0.00121	-0.00671	-0.00944	0.00467
	(0.0172)	(0.0177)	(0.0252)	(0.0117)	(0.0125)	(0.0263)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0207	-0.0217	-0.0214	-0.00102	0.00306	-0.0125
	(0.0204)	(0.0218)	(0.0285)	(0.0140)	(0.0161)	(0.0302)
Population share U3	-0.179	-0.0184	-0.388	0.274	-0.0109	0.339
	(0.154)	(0.305)	(0.304)	(0.234)	(0.371)	(0.580)
Population share 3-18	0.0276	0.0603	0.0143	0.0576	0.132**	-0.0373
	(0.0488)	(0.0582)	(0.0803)	(0.0477)	(0.0516)	(0.116)
Pop. share of foreigners	-0.000638	-0.00437	-0.0503**	-0.00831	-0.00170	-0.0493
	(0.0128)	(0.00940)	(0.0207)	(0.0117)	(0.0174)	(0.0358)
Pop. share SGB-II-recipients	0.00698	0.00292	0.0125	0.000850	0.00797	0.00305
	(0.00466)	(0.00632)	(0.00850)	(0.00622)	(0.00891)	(0.0107)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	319	236	83
Observations	4,371	3,217	1,154	4,307	3,212	1,095

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A2: Detailed regression results for Table 5 (Columns 1-6): Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on youth work 2006-2019.

	All states			States with minimum voting age 16		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkr.)	Urban counties (Stadtkr.)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkr.)	Urban counties (Stadtkr.)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0120	-0.00462	0.0660***	0.0222**	-0.00402	0.0893**
	(0.0102)	(0.0107)	(0.0238)	(0.00871)	(0.00890)	(0.0340)
$election_t$	-0.00856	0.000756	-0.0265	0.000169	-0.00692	0.0364
	(0.0157)	(0.0156)	(0.0301)	(0.00984)	(0.00824)	(0.0368)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0255	0.0217	0.0451	-0.00882	-0.0101	0.00661
	(0.0249)	(0.0235)	(0.0364)	(0.0108)	(0.0108)	(0.0357)
Population share U3	-0.231	-0.0904	-0.365	0.0584	0.119	0.0207
	(0.286)	(0.346)	(0.418)	(0.233)	(0.289)	(0.428)
Population share 3-18	-0.0197	-0.0225	0.0127	0.00637	0.176*	-0.134
	(0.0487)	(0.0628)	(0.107)	(0.0863)	(0.0927)	(0.141)
Pop. share of foreigners	0.0158*	0.0118	-0.00175	-0.00113	-0.00188	0.0424
	(0.00924)	(0.0228)	(0.0296)	(0.0114)	(0.0113)	(0.0463)
Pop. share SGB-II-recipients	0.00553	0.00364	0.00605	-0.00268	0.0205**	-0.0188
	(0.00672)	(0.0120)	(0.00980)	(0.00719)	(0.00979)	(0.0134)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	113	79	34
Observations	4,378	3,217	1,161	1,519	1,058	461

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. States with minimum voting age 16 over the sample period are Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen, North-Rhine-Westphalia; States with minimum voting age 18 are Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Saarland; Baden-Württemberg is only included in Columns 1-3 as the minimum voting age changed with the election in 2014. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A3: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on private childcare institutions 2006-2019.

	Private institutions		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.00260	-0.00986	0.0405
	(0.0183)	(0.0167)	(0.0309)
$election_t$	-0.0154	-0.0164	-0.0116
	(0.0133)	(0.0160)	(0.0214)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0218*	-0.0279*	0.00317
	(0.0127)	(0.0148)	(0.0193)
County-FE	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85
Observations	4,231	3,118	1,113

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggre-gate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A4: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on public childcare institutions and according to financial power relative to other counties in the same year and state, 2006-2019.

	Above median financial power			Below median financial power		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0450***	0.0382**	0.0339	0.00528	0.0237	0.0506
	(0.0128)	(0.0149)	(0.0215)	(0.0126)	(0.0143)	(0.0418)
$election_t$	-0.0126	-0.0209	-0.00495	-0.00168	0.00218	0.00754
	(0.0167)	(0.0175)	(0.0356)	(0.0134)	(0.0133)	(0.0363)
$election_{t-1}$	0.00101	-0.0128	0.0312	0.00283	0.0179	-0.0258
	(0.0189)	(0.0201)	(0.0385)	(0.0151)	(0.0190)	(0.0444)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	219	160	62	216	163	64
Observations	2,150	1,596	563	2,157	1,611	529

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A5: Regression results for change rates in business tax revenues 2006-2019 and liquidity credits 2010-2019.

	Business tax revenues (τ)			Liquidity credit (τ)		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	-0.0275***	-0.0146	-0.0641**	0.105***	0.111***	0.0913**
	(0.00846)	(0.00904)	(0.0299)	(0.0271)	(0.0310)	(0.0451)
$election_t$	-0.0199*	-0.0204	-0.0200	0.00647	0.00130	0.0243
	(0.0101)	(0.0125)	(0.0341)	(0.0313)	(0.0369)	(0.0516)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0138	-0.00891	-0.0249	0.0196	0.0114	0.0824
	(0.0116)	(0.0113)	(0.0366)	(0.0241)	(0.0302)	(0.0590)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	277	222	55
Observations	4,420	3,251	1,169	1,926	1,511	415

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 (2010-2019 for Columns 4-6) from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A6: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on institutional childcare 2006-2019 (excluding the financial crisis 2008-2010).

	All institutions			Public institutions		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0932**	0.109**	0.0450	0.0391***	0.0439***	0.0381
	(0.0465)	(0.0489)	(0.0401)	(0.0133)	(0.0157)	(0.0299)
$election_t$	0.0165	0.0243	-0.0173	0.00220	-0.00890	0.0378
	(0.0239)	(0.0257)	(0.0270)	(0.0141)	(0.0146)	(0.0349)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0196	-0.0183	-0.0348	-0.0247	-0.0268	-0.0214
	(0.0241)	(0.0266)	(0.0333)	(0.0160)	(0.0187)	(0.0381)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	319	236	83
Observations	3,421	2,517	904	3,378	2,519	859

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 (without 2008-2010) from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A7: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on youth social work, 2006-2019.

	All states			States with minimum voting age 16		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0229	0.0195	0.0242	0.0327	0.0256	0.0392
	(0.0239)	(0.0293)	(0.0262)	(0.0280)	(0.0354)	(0.0412)
$election_t$	-0.0223	-0.00886	-0.0654	-0.00845	0.0230	-0.0792
	(0.0166)	(0.0183)	(0.0400)	(0.0137)	(0.0244)	(0.0558)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0261	0.0311	0.00681	-0.0241	-0.00445	-0.0724*
	(0.0272)	(0.0280)	(0.0475)	(0.0381)	(0.0505)	(0.0383)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	318	234	84	111	78	33
Observations	3,742	2,777	965	1,303	931	372

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 (without 2008-2010) from administrative child and youth services data (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A8: Election dates and minimum voting age in West German states during the analysis period 2004-2020.

	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20
SH					16					16					16		
NI			16					16					16				
NW	16					16					16	(16)					16
HE			18					18					18				
RP	18					18					18					18	
BW	18					18					16					16	
BY					18						18						18
SL	18					18					18					18	

Notes: The city states Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg are excluded due to their particular administrative structure, which differs from other states. SH: Schleswig-Holstein, NI: Lower Saxony, NW: North-Rhine-Westphalia, HE: Hesse, RP: Rhineland-Palatinate, BW: Baden-Württemberg, BY: Bavaria, SL: Saarland. In 2015, local elections in NW concerned some counties where mayors were elected after the local council elections. Exclusion of NW observations for 2013-2016 does not affect the results.

Tab. A9: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on youth work 2006-2019, model with interaction effects for elections accounting for differences in minimum voting age and a reform lowering minimum voting age in Baden-Württemberg in 2014.

Explanatory variables	All elections	Interaction: elections with voting age 16	Interaction: election in Baden-Württemberg 2014
$election_{t+1}$	-0.00435	0.0382**	0.0597***
	(0.0111)	(0.0173)	(0.0184)
$election_t$	-0.00333	-0.00598	-0.0129
	(0.0166)	(0.0197)	(0.0173)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0429	-0.0403	0.118***
	(0.0346)	(0.0341)	(0.0324)
County-FE		X	
Year-FE		X	
Additional Controls		X	
Counties		321	
Observations		4,378	

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. States with minimum voting age 16 are Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen, North-Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg (2014 and later); States with minimum voting age 18 are Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Saarland, Baden-Württemberg (before 2014). Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A10: Regression results for change rates in youth work expenditures on child and youth welfare services in counties with above and below median financial power (in a given year and state), 2006-2019.

	Above median financial power			Below median financial power		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0170	-0.000294	0.0655*	0.0110	-0.00672	0.0631**
	(0.0137)	(0.0148)	(0.0350)	(0.0133)	(0.0135)	(0.0310)
$election_t$	-0.0117	-0.0190	-0.0260	-0.00247	0.0202	-0.0345
	(0.0175)	(0.0201)	(0.0410)	(0.0179)	(0.0180)	(0.0350)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0475	0.0550*	0.0619	0.00501	-0.00639	0.0446
	(0.0292)	(0.0327)	(0.0400)	(0.0236)	(0.0189)	(0.0488)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	221	160	63	217	163	66
Observations	2,197	1,601	582	2,181	1,611	576

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A11: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on institutional childcare 2006-2019, standard errors clustered at county-level.

	All institutions			Public institutions		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0782***	0.0878***	0.0528**	0.0268**	0.0299**	0.0288
	(0.0112)	(0.0120)	(0.0264)	(0.0122)	(0.0130)	(0.0340)
$election_t$	-0.00108	-0.00236	0.00121	-0.00671	-0.00944	0.00467
	(0.00743)	(0.00687)	(0.0230)	(0.00997)	(0.00985)	(0.0337)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0207**	-0.0217**	-0.0214	-0.00102	0.00306	-0.0125
	(0.00875)	(0.00872)	(0.0256)	(0.0121)	(0.0120)	(0.0383)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	319	236	83
Observations	4,371	3,217	1,154	4,307	3,212	1,095

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A12: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on youth work 2006-2019, standard errors clustered at county-level.

	All states			States with minimum voting age 16		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0120	-0.00462	0.0660**	0.0222	-0.00402	0.0893**
	(0.0114)	(0.0118)	(0.0284)	(0.0148)	(0.0124)	(0.0430)
$election_t$	-0.00856	0.000756	-0.0265	0.000169	-0.00692	0.0364
	(0.0105)	(0.0117)	(0.0235)	(0.0141)	(0.0137)	(0.0327)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0255*	0.0217	0.0451	-0.00882	-0.0101	0.00661
	(0.0132)	(0.0147)	(0.0302)	(0.0116)	(0.0130)	(0.0314)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	113	79	34
Observations	4,378	3,217	1,161	1,519	1,058	461

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. States with minimum voting age 16 over the sample period are Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen, North-Rhine-Westphalia; States with minimum voting age 18 are Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Saarland; Baden-Württemberg is only included in Columns 1-3 as the minimum voting age changed with the election in 2014. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab. A13: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on institutional childcare 2006-2019, standard errors 2-way clustered at county and state-year-level.

	All institutions			Public institutions		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0782*	0.0878*	0.0528	0.0268**	0.0299**	0.0288
	(0.0466)	(0.0481)	(0.0490)	(0.0128)	(0.0147)	(0.0523)
$election_t$	-0.00108	-0.00236	0.00121	-0.00671	-0.00944	0.00467
	(0.0175)	(0.0178)	(0.0290)	(0.0123)	(0.0131)	(0.0893)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0207	-0.0217	-0.0214	-0.00102	0.00306	-0.0125
	(0.0217)	(0.0220)	(0.0310)	(0.0200)	(0.0210)	(0.0616)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	319	236	83
Observations	4,371	3,217	1,154	4,310	3,215	1,095

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year and county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A14: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on youth work 2006-2019, standard errors 2-way clustered at county and state-year-level.

	All states			States with minimum voting age 16		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0120	-0.00462	0.0660**	0.0222**	-0.00402	0.0893**
	(0.0113)	(0.0119)	(0.0306)	(0.0108)	(0.00999)	(0.0415)
$election_t$	-0.00856	0.000756	-0.0265	0.000169	-0.00692	0.0364
	(0.0155)	(0.0159)	(0.0312)	(0.0113)	(0.0103)	(0.0457)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0255	0.0217	0.0451	-0.00882	-0.0101	0.00661
	(0.0254)	(0.0248)	(0.0380)	(0.0101)	(0.0123)	(0.0440)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	113	79	34
Observations	4,378	3,217	1,161	1,519	1,058	461

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. States with minimum voting age 16 over the sample period are Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen, North-Rhine-Westphalia; States with minimum voting age 18 are Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Saarland; Baden-Württemberg is only included in Columns 1-3 as the minimum voting age changed with the election in 2014. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year and county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A15. Regression results for change rates in institutional childcare expenditures 2006-2019, no county level control variables.

	All institutions			Public institutions		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0785*	0.0885*	0.0541	0.0278**	0.0316**	0.0298
	(0.0466)	(0.0476)	(0.0448)	(0.0110)	(0.0129)	(0.0217)
$election_t$	0.00154	0.00308	0.00254	-0.00324	-0.00414	0.00656
	(0.0173)	(0.0181)	(0.0257)	(0.0113)	(0.0126)	(0.0261)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0203	-0.0212	-0.0189	-0.000209	0.00400	-0.0121
	(0.0203)	(0.0217)	(0.0287)	(0.0141)	(0.0165)	(0.0303)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	-	-	-	-	-	-
Counties	321	236	85	319	236	83
Observations	4,431	3,268	1,163	4,366	3,263	1,103

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab. A16: Regression results for change rates in youth work expenditures 2006-2019, no county level control variables.

	All states			States with minimum voting age 16		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0127	-0.00362	0.0667***	0.0214**	-0.00150	0.0833**
	(0.0104)	(0.0108)	(0.0236)	(0.00843)	(0.00955)	(0.0348)
$election_t$	-0.00617	0.00399	-0.0251	0.00139	-0.00392	0.0322
	(0.0156)	(0.0154)	(0.0301)	(0.00915)	(0.00749)	(0.0352)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0253	0.0215	0.0470	-0.00958	-0.0126	0.00523
	(0.0255)	(0.0241)	(0.0368)	(0.0107)	(0.0120)	(0.0361)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	-	-	-	-	-	-
Counties	321	236	85	113	79	34
Observations	4,438	3,268	1,170	1,552	1,086	466

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfes-tatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. States with minimum voting age 16 over the sample period are Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen, North-Rhine-Westphalia; States with minimum voting age 18 are Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Saarland; Baden-Württemberg is only included in Columns 1-3 as the minimum voting age changed with the election in 2014. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab. A17: Regression results for change rates in institutional childcare expenditures 2006-2019, no county fixed effects.

	All institutions			Public institutions		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0760	0.0850	0.0536	0.0266**	0.0298*	0.0299
	(0.0597)	(0.0607)	(0.0561)	(0.0132)	(0.0157)	(0.0241)
$election_{t}$	0.00540	0.00561	0.00969	-0.00630	-0.00915	0.0106
	(0.0190)	(0.0194)	(0.0262)	(0.0131)	(0.0139)	(0.0264)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0156	-0.0170	-0.0122	0.000109	0.00293	-0.00589
	(0.0214)	(0.0245)	(0.0258)	(0.0157)	(0.0183)	(0.0316)
County-FE	-	-	-	-	-	-
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observations	4,371	3,217	1,154	4,307	3,212	1,095

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab. A18: Regression results for change rates in youth work expenditures 2006-2019, no county fixed effects.

	All states			States with minimum voting age 16		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
$election_{t+1}$	0.0129	-0.00440	0.0681**	0.0201**	-0.00302	0.0824**
	(0.0165)	(0.0162)	(0.0262)	(0.00932)	(0.00973)	(0.0329)
$election_t$	-0.00903	0.00182	-0.0246	-0.000301	-0.00596	0.0319
	(0.0195)	(0.0198)	(0.0296)	(0.00923)	(0.00894)	(0.0352)
$election_{t-1}$	0.0228	0.0200	0.0460	-0.00944	-0.0111	0.00336
	(0.0349)	(0.0332)	(0.0419)	(0.0110)	(0.0122)	(0.0346)
County-FE	-	-	-	-	-	-
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observations	4,378	3,217	1,161	1,519	1,058	461

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. States with minimum voting age 16 over the sample period are Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen, North-Rhine-Westphalia; States with minimum voting age 18 are Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Saarland; Baden-Württemberg is only included in Columns 1-3 as the minimum voting age changed with the election in 2014. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Tab. A19: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on public childcare institutions 2006-2019 (successively excluding each state from the analysis).

Explanatory variables	w/o SH	w/o NI	w/o NW	w/o HE	w/o RP	w/o BW	w/o BY	w/o SL
$election_{t+1}$	0.0243**	0.0209*	0.0348***	0.0248**	0.0334***	0.0285**	0.0130	0.0272**
	(0.0107)	(0.0119)	(0.0122)	(0.0118)	(0.0120)	(0.0125)	(0.0118)	(0.0111)
$election_t$	-0.00422	-0.0207	-0.00519	-0.00377	-0.00272	-0.0110	-0.00665	-0.00435
	(0.0121)	(0.0147)	(0.0122)	(0.0129)	(0.0114)	(0.0125)	(0.0126)	(0.0119)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.00910	0.00695	0.00143	0.000665	-0.00586	-0.00176	0.00670	-0.00235
	(0.0135)	(0.0149)	(0.0149)	(0.0165)	(0.0142)	(0.0150)	(0.0184)	(0.0140)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	304	274	266	293	284	275	224	313
Observations	4,100	3,718	3,606	3,968	3,823	3,698	3,012	4,224

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. SH: Schleswig-Holstein, NI: Lower Saxony, NW: North-Rhine-Westphalia, HE: Hesse, RP: Rhineland-Palatinate, BW: Baden-Württemberg, BY: Bavaria, SL: Saarland. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A20: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on youth work 2006-2019 (successively excluding each state with voting age 16 from the analysis).

Explanatory variables	w/o SH	w/o NI	w/o NW
$election_{t+1}$	0.0202*	0.0155	0.0332***
	(0.0105)	(0.0155)	(0.00790)
$election_t$	0.0105	-0.0131	-0.0198*
	(0.0124)	(0.0170)	(0.00974)
$election_{t-1}$	-0.0160	-0.0107	0.00967
	(0.0143)	(0.0213)	(0.00689)
County-FE	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X
Counties	98	68	60
Observations	1,312	919	807

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. States with minimum voting age 16 over the sample period are Schleswig-Holstein (SH), Niedersachsen (NI), North-Rhine-Westphalia (NW). Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Tab. A21: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on institutional childcare 2006-2019, "placebo" election dates.

	All institutions			Public institutions		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
Placebo $_{t+1}$	-0.00209	-0.0137	0.0318	-0.0360***	-0.0378***	-0.0232
	(0.0194)	(0.0197)	(0.0230)	(0.0114)	(0.0122)	(0.0214)
Placebo $_{t}$	-0.0153	-0.0218	0.00563	-0.0275**	-0.0347**	-0.000708
	(0.0125)	(0.0138)	(0.0153)	(0.0114)	(0.0140)	(0.0175)
Placebo $_{t-1}$	0.0547	0.0599	0.0381	-0.00687	-0.00617	-0.0152
	(0.0406)	(0.0435)	(0.0344)	(0.0129)	(0.0133)	(0.0206)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	319	236	83
Observations	4,371	3,217	1,154	4,307	3,212	1,095

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Placebo election dates were randomly generated: Schleswig-Holstein: 2008, 2011, 2019, Lower Saxony: 2006, 2013, 2015; North-Rhine-Westphalia: 2010, 2013, 2014; Hesse: 2011, 2012, 2015; Rhineland-Palatinate: 2012, 2013, 2019; Baden-Württemberg: 2005, 2010, 2015; Bavaria: 2006, 2011, 2015; Saarland: 2010, 2011, 2012.

Tab. A22: Regression results for change rates in public expenditures on youth work 2006-2019, "placebo" election dates.

	All states			States with minimum voting age 16		
Explanatory variables	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)	All counties	Rural counties (Landkreise)	Urban counties (Stadtkreise)
Placebo $_{t-1}$	0.00107	0.000454	-0.00128	0.0146	0.00793	0.0409
	(0.0168)	(0.0167)	(0.0266)	(0.00928)	(0.0117)	(0.0419)
Placebo t	-0.0156	-0.0162	-0.00949	-0.0113	-0.0119	0.0132
	(0.0104)	(0.0133)	(0.0174)	(0.0134)	(0.0102)	(0.0428)
Placebo $_{t+1}$	0.00752	0.00431	0.0163	-0.00815	-0.0119	-0.00361
	(0.0113)	(0.0133)	(0.0193)	(0.00700)	(0.00887)	(0.0273)
County-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year-FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Additional Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Counties	321	236	85	113	79	34
Observations	4,378	3,217	1,161	1,519	1,058	461

Notes: Own calculations based on West-German counties (city states Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen excluded) for time period 2006-2019 from administrative child and youth welfare statistics (Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik), RDC of the Federal Statistical Office and Statistical Offices of the Federal States (2025) as well as aggregate administrative data at the county level (INKAR, BBSR (2025)). τ <-0.66 or τ >2 are excluded from the analysis. States with minimum voting age 16 over the sample period are Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen, North-Rhine-Westphalia; States with minimum voting age 18 are Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Saarland; Baden-Württemberg is only included in Columns 1-3 as the minimum voting age changed with the election in 2014. Table reports coefficient estimates from linear fixed effects regressions; Control variables included as shown in regression equation (2); constant included. Standard errors are clustered at the state-year level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Placebo election dates were randomly generated: Schleswig-Holstein: 2008, 2011, 2019, Lower Saxony: 2006, 2013, 2015; North-Rhine-Westphalia: 2010, 2013, 2014; Hesse: 2011, 2012, 2015; Rhineland-Palatinate: 2012, 2013, 2019; Baden-Württemberg: 2005, 2010, 2015; Bavaria: 2006, 2011, 2015; Saarland: 2010, 2011, 2012.

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