Peasants into Citizens: Suffrage Expansion and the Rise of Mass Politics

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The concurrent rise of mass politics and democratic institutions represent two major global political trends of the past two centuries. We examine the relationship between these historical developments by investigating how voting rights have influenced mass political mobilization. Utilizing the discontinuous variation in suffrage levels in the French local elections during the July Monarchy (1830-1848), we find that broader suffrage increased political interest, collective mobilization, and opposition to autocracy. Even when introduced and practiced within an authoritarian system, the right to vote facilitates the development of a pro-democratic mass public.

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1 INTRODUCTION

A distinguishing feature of the modern state is the extent to which "people participate in politics and are affected by politics" (Huntington, 1968, 36). Over the past two centuries, politics in most places has transformed from an elite-level business to one marked by social movements, popular insurrections, and mass electorates and parties (Bendix, 1978). Peasants, workers, and other "lower classes," previously dismissed as passive and disorganized "potatoes in a sack" preoccupied with parochial matters, began to pay attention and take part in national-level politics.

The politicization of the masses often emerged alongside major democratic reforms, the most significant of which was the expansion of suffrage (Hobsbawm, 1973; Palmer, 2014; Rokkan, 1961; Tilly, 2004). How are these two foundational historical developments related? The classical theories of democratization argue that ruling elites extended suffrage to quell mass mobilization, implying that mass politics causally precedes democratic institutions (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000, 2006; Boix, 2003; Przeworski, 2009). Modernization theory, on the other hand, posits that mass politics resulted from economic development, and is causally independent of formal political institutions (Deutsch, 1961; Lerner, 1958). Absent a modern economy, people, even with formal rights, act not as "citizens" but as "peasants" – provincial in their political outlook, deferent to local elites, and incapable of an independent judgment (Moore, 1976; Weber, 1976; Sabato, 2001).

We propose and systematically test a new hypothesis about the relationship between democratic institutions and the rise of mass politics. Our theorizing builds on two observations. First, ruling elites often feared the expansion of political rights precisely because they thought this would would agitate popular mobilization. Neither democratization nor modernization theory can accommodate this widely reported fact.[1] Second, the classical and modern political theorists have argued that the formal right to vote facilitates

[1] See Kahan (2003) on Western Europe, Rivera (2012) on Latin America, Jansen (2002) on Japan, and Hill (2020) on republican China.

the skills and incentives for political participation, both individual and collective. We hypothesize that the expansion of suffrage contributed to the rise of mass politics.

We test this hypothesis using the case of 19th-century France. As it was the first country to introduce universal male suffrage (first in 1789 and then in 1848), the French case is at the center of the debate on whether democratic institutions alone, in the absence of a modern state and economy, facilitate citizenship (Agulhon, 1970; Weber, 1976). To our knowledge, this paper is the first quantitative empirical contribution to this debate. We are able to make this contribution because of a unique feature of the local election law in 1830-1848, which induced quasi-exogenous variation in suffrage. Combining this variation in suffrage with multiple measures of mass politicization in the period from 1847 to 1852, we quantify how the experience of having wider suffrage impacts later mass politicization.

We find that the communes with wider suffrage later became more politicized in three ways: they showed a greater interest in public affairs, they saw more insurgencies against the anti-democratic coup by Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in 1851, and they showed higher opposition to the anti-democratic reforms proposed in the Napoleonic plebiscites in 1851 and 1852. An auxiliary analysis suggests that our measures of politicization are predictive of electoral support for pro-democratic candidates during the Second French Republic (1848-1852). Taken together, our findings suggest that voting rights, even when limited to local elections under a (competitive) authoritarian regime, can stimulate the rise of a nationally-minded and pro-democratic mass public.

These findings further our understanding of how formal institutions shape political development. Even though the conceptual distinction between political inclusion and democracy is well-known (Dahl, 1972; Stasavage, 2020), suffrage expansion is often treated as synonymous with democratization (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000, 2006). That the two are not equivalent is evidenced by universal suffrage being a norm even among dictatorships. The expansion of suffrage, especially before the "third wave of democ-

ratization," was often introduced by ostensibly autocratic regimes that limited electoral competition and manipulated the voting process.[2] How, then, should we think about the role of suffrage expansion in the history of democratic development? For the public to pose a credible threat of mass mobilization, which is often considered necessary for the emergence of democracy (Boix, 2003; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006) and its defense against executive takeovers (Weingast, 1997; Svolik, 2020), it must be politicized in the first place. Our results suggest that political inclusion has downstream consequences that are favorable for the emergence and survival of democracy.

Our findings suggest a revision to the classical theories of democratization: mass political mobilization may not only be a cause of formal institutional change, as these theories suggest (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000, 2006; Aidt and Franck, 2015; Boix, 2003; Przeworski, 2009), but also its consequence. Our results lend support to the conjecture by Tilly (2004, 254) that "the prior presence of citizenship, other things equal, facilitates democratization." Our findings also challenge a central thesis in modernization theory, namely, that mass politicization cannot emerge from formal political institutions without the growth of industry, migration, and communication technologies that disrupt traditional forms of governance and identities (Deutsch, 1961; Huntington, 1968; Lerner, 1958).[3] Modernization does not appear a necessary condition for the emergence of mass politics, though it may be a sufficient one.

The existing literature on the suffrage expansion reforms has examined its effects on electoral turnout and representation (Berlinski and Dewan, 2011; Cassan, Iyer and Mirza, 2020; Corvalan, Querubin and Vicente, 2020; Larcinese, 2024). However, because the electoral behavior of the excluded population cannot be observed, such studies cannot distinguish whether the franchise has a compositional or a transformational effect; that is, whether newly enfranchised voters were already different from the previously eligible

[2]Examples include New Spain (Rivera, 2012), Imperial Germany (Anderson, 2000), and the French Second Empire (Price, 2001).

[3]This thesis is distinct from another claim by modernization theory that economic development causes democracy (Przeworski and Limongi, 1997).

ones or if, instead, franchise expansions transform the attitudes or behaviors of the new voters. In our setup, the outcomes are measured at the time when all adult males were enfranchised, whereas the treatment is the antecedent level of suffrage, which varied by localities. As a result, the effects of suffrage expansion that we estimate are not due to the changes in the composition of the eligible population.[4]

Another related literature uses individual-level variation in vote eligibility by age to show that eligibility increases participation and pro-democratic values (Dinas, 2012; Khoban, 2019; Meredith, 2009). We draw a similar micro-level implication, but our goal is quite different, because we aim to understand the relationship between macro-level historical developments. Because these studies are conducted in modern states and leverage individual-level variation in voting rights, they cannot tell us whether voting rights politicize the masses in the absence of a modern state and economy, which is our central question.

Finally, Aidt and Leon-Ablan (2023) find that changes in parliamentary representation following the Great Reform Act in Britain increased civic activism; and Finkel, Gehlbach and Olsen (2015) show that serf emancipation in Russia intensified violent mobilization.[5] Although these results can be broadly interpreted as consistent with our findings, our study differs in both independent and dependent variables: we specifically focus on the expansion of voting rights and examine outcomes that encompass both peaceful and violent forms of mass political mobilization.

2 The Institutional Roots of Mass Politics

Mass politicization is characterized by two transitions that began in 19th-century Europe and the Americas, and late elsewhere: the expansion in the "magnitude of politics" de-

[4] One of the outcome variables we use – deliveries of newspapers – is from 1847, right before the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1848.

[5] Another related work shows how the Voting Rights Act in the U.S. reduced political violence (Lacroix, 2023). The result speaks more about the change in the mode of mass politics (ballots vs bullets) rather than the scale, which is our focus.

fined as "the ratio of political activity, however institutionalized, to all of the other activity that takes place in society" (Palombara, 1963, 42-43), and the shift from "embedded to detached identities as a basis of political rights and obligations" (Tilly, 2004, 253). In the process of mass politicization, a broader range of individuals became interested and involved in politics, the focus of their involvement shifted from parochial to national issues, and their political behavior became more independent from local traditional elites. Take peasants, historically the most populous class. Traditionally, they played a minor role in national-level politics and were largely neglected by central decision-makers, but "with the development of systems of mass politics, electoral or otherwise, their attitude forms parts of the permanent calculations of politicians" (Hobsbawm, 1973, 17).

We investigate whether this transformation of "peasants" into "citizens" was influenced by their inclusion in electoral politics. On a basic level, this is evident: expanding the right to vote mechanically increases the proportion of the population that participates in elections. A more compelling question is whether the expansion of suffrage politicizes the masses beyond the mechanical increase in the share of the population that votes. Specifically, we hypothesize that acquiring the right to vote facilitates a greater interest in public affairs, collective mobilization, breakdown of the deference to local elites, and engagement with national political issues in addition to local economic ones.

The first suggestion that the expansion of formal rights of political participation contributes to mass politicization comes from the contemporaries of the debates regarding suffrage expansion. The ruling elites, apprehensive of popular disturbances, imposed franchise restrictions based on property, education, or lineage in fear that mass elections would lead to mass mobilization. Imperial Japan limited suffrage specifically "to minimize the possibility of rootless radicalism" (Jansen, 2002, 415). In Germany, suffrage restrictions were grounded in fear that "lower classes" would erupt in violence and "destroy everything – culture and liberty" (Rose, 1972, 133). The French elites insinuated that universal suffrage "carries within it the seeds of a social revolution" (Price, 2001, 105). Al-

though it is possible that the ruling elites invoked the fear of mass mobilization tactically to justify restrictions on suffrage, we need to take seriously the possibility that it reflected their genuine perception of the political consequences of expanded suffrage.

The fear that wide suffrage would facilitate mass political mobilization was grounded in a plausible logic, familiar to the contemporaries of major franchise reforms. Tocqueville argued that suffrage expansion undermines local elites and puts the general population in direct relationship with the central authorities" making the "common people" both subjects and actors in national-level politics (Rokkan, 1961, 133).

At the individual level, the right to vote created the demand for information about issues, candidates, or parties. As Rousseau noted in the *Social Contract*, "however feeble the influence my voice can have on public affairs, the right of voting on them makes it my duty to study them." John Stuart Mill argued that people learn how to "practice popular government" by actually doing it rather that "being told how to do it," in the same way as they learn how to read or swim. Because it rarely takes place in isolation from the wider political context, voting is a "formative practice" (Carpenter et al., 2018) as it facilitates other types of political participation such as reading newspapers, discussing political affairs, petitioning, or protesting. At an aggregate level, the right to vote facilitates collective action: social movements "parallel and feed on electoral politics" by using it as a platform for signaling their support and articulating demands (Tilly, 1993, 275).

As the masses become involved in politics through voting, political entrepreneurs are motivated to mobilize mass support. This mobilization can take the form of *electioneering*: campaigning, organizing parties, or getting out the vote (Amat et al., 2020). However, it can also manifest through *public policy*, such as the expansion of mass education (Paglayan, 2021), transportation (Weber, 1976), redistribution (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006), or the provision of public services (Ansell and Lindvall, 2021). These two processes are mutually reinforcing: mass mobilization incentivizes mass-oriented policy, which, in turn, raises the stakes in national-level politics for the masses. This suggests that the effect

of suffrage might operate not only at the individual level but also at the aggregate level: even individuals who have not personally been granted the right to vote might become politicized by virtue of their peers having such a right.

Mass political mobilization has contributed not only to the development of mass democracy but also to mass dictatorship (Moore, 1966), resulting in what Tilly (2004, 8) terms "nondemocratic citizenship." We predict the mass politicization that emerges specifically from extension of voting rights would be of democratic character. At the individual level, this prediction is supported by a long-standing tradition of theorists who argued that electoral participation is not only habit-forming but also creates citizens more concerned with the public good and generally better suited for democracy (Tocqueville, 2000; Mill, 1863; Kaufman, 2017). By generating a sense of political ownership and responsibility towards society, the ability to participate in politics diminishes "tendencies towards non-democratic attitudes in the individual" (Pateman, 1970, 105) and overall "does make better citizens" (Mansbridge, 1995).[6] At the collective level, the processes triggered by suffrage expansion – social movements, mass party campaigning, party organizations – facilitate civil society, which is crucial for the emergence and survival of democracy (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2023).

Our hypothesis that suffrage expansion promotes democratic mass politicization requires certain scope conditions. The logic behind the hypothesis requires an institutional environment where voting involves some choice. Only then do voters have incentives to engage in politics, and political entrepreneurs are motivated to mobilize mass support. We would not expect voting rights to contribute to mass politicization in non-competitive single-party elections where voting cannot influence outcomes. This scope condition is not a characteristic of the regime but of the specific electoral institution. If, for example, national elections are not competitive, but local elections are, then we would expect only the local voting rights to engender mass politicization.

[6]For recent empirical evidence on this point, see (Khoban, 2019).

3 Suffrage and Mass Politics in France

We use data from France from 1830 to 1852, a period marking a shift from the July Monarchy (1830-1848) through a short-lived parliamentary democracy in the Second Republic (1848-1852) to a new authoritarian rule under the Second Empire (1852-1870).

3.1 The politics of suffrage

The July Monarchy of King Louis-Philippe, established after a rebellion in July 1830, restricted suffrage by tax requirements, similar to most states during the period. In the national-level parliamentary elections, only 200,000 adult males out of a population of 35 million were permitted to vote. At the same time, the regime democratized local-level governance. The 1831 municipal law introduced triennial elections to municipal councils and granted voting rights to about 2.7 million adult males, thirteen times more than at the national level.[7] A peculiar feature of the law, which we exploit in our empirical analysis, was that it allocated more voting rights to communes with smaller populations.

The preferential treatment of small communes was a result of a trade-off. Popularly elected municipal councils were expected to facilitate local administration by monitoring centrally appointed officials.[8] But the reformers feared that extending suffrage would galvanize anti-regime popular mobilization. The perception was that densely populated areas had already shown their capacity to revolt, and expanding suffrage in such places would only exacerbate these tendencies (Crook, 2021, Ch. 1). Small, rural communes were perceived as passive and conservative; the more permissive suffrage in such places was not expected to provoke further mass mobilization. As the rapporteur for the 1831 law in the Assembly put it, "Giving the vote to a tenth of the population in communes of

[7]Since 1800, mayors and municipal councils had been appointed by prefects. Under the 1831 municipal law, mayors were still appointed but had to be selected from the elected municipal councils. The mayoral powers were constrained as most decisions had to be approved by prefects (Tanchoux, 2013).

[8]Statement on the Assembly floor: "I dare say that [the government] needs, as much or even more than the people themselves, these communal magistratures." *Archives Parlementaires*, Second Serie, Volume LXVII, 437, January 31, 1831.

1,000 inhabitants and below does not appear dangerous because the interests are simple and the populations do not have the germs of these passions that erupt so easily in other places [whereas] too large assemblies will carry real dangers and the consequences of such elections would be disastrous."[9]

The July Monarchy was overthrown by a revolution in February of 1848. The Second Republic, a parliamentary democracy with universal male suffrage, was established. The republican left hoped that universal male suffrage would give them an advantage but the conservatives prevailed in the legislature. Moreover, a conservative Louis Napoleon, Napoleon Bonaparte's nephew, was elected president. On December 2, 1851, after failing to modify the constitution to allow him a second term, Louis Napoleon staged a coup against the parliament. The coup was met with the largest peasant rebellion since 1789 (Margadant, 1979). Shortly after suppressing the rebellion, Bonaparte conducted a referendum to extend his presidency and then another one in 1852 to establish the Empire – both using universal male franchise. Bonaparte proclaimed himself an unconditional champion of universal suffrage and used it as the "sanction" of his autocratic regime (Marx, 1871). Foreshadowing later fascism and electoral authoritarianism, the Bonapartist system was "the first manifestation in Europe of a plebiscitarian, nonliberal authoritarian solution to the crisis of democracy" (Linz, 2000).

3.2 Mass Politicization

The politicization of the masses, which in 19th-century France mainly meant the peasantry, was much debated by contemporaries. Having used their newly acquired suffrage to elect conservatives, the peasants were held in contempt by the liberals as "isolated in their ignorance" (Price, 2004, 241), malleable by land owners and local notables, and afflicted by "rural imbecility" (Stasavage, 2020, 275-6). Instead of liberating themselves from the rural elites, as the republicans had hoped they would, many peasants voted

[9] *Archives Parlementaires*, Second Serie, Volume LXVII, 616, February 9, 1831.

in deference to them. Louis Blanc (1880, 68), one of the leaders of the 1848 revolution, bemoaned that "universal suffrage was only the victory of rural districts, the sojourn of ignorance, over a city, radiant source of light."

The success of Bonaparte's plebiscites was blamed on insufficient politicization of peasants. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx wrote that "the Bonapartes are the dynasty of the peasants" and derided the latter for their "belief in the miracle that a man named Napoleon would bring all glory back to them." Peasants were "immature masses," "potatoes in a sack" with "no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them." Marx's paternalistic view of peasants echoed the traditional opponents of suffrage expansion who saw peasants as lacking "political capacity" to use their voting rights in a socially responsible manner (Kahan, 2003).

In this context, granting voting rights for peasants did not amount to much because "elections [were] political only in appearance" as "the ideological and extra-local aspects of national politics remained the preserve of traditional leaders" (Weber, 1982, 367). The uprising of 1851 against Bonaparte's coup was not indicative of mass politicization either, as it was an example of "archaic" politics driven by local economic grievances and influences of the traditional elites (cf. Soboul, 1956). In line with the modernization theory, Weber posited that peasants started being politicized only in the 1870s, with the expansion of the state through mass education, conscription, and communication networks.

While it may be true that a major push in the politicization of the French peasantry came later, many historians have pushed back on the notion that the peasants were previously politically docile across the board. According to Agulhon (1970, 256), the "descent of politics towards the masses" started well before the 1870s and cannot be attributed solely to socio-economic changes. The results of the 1849 legislative elections also suggested peasants' gradual emancipation from local elites: although it brought a conservative majority to the assembly, there was substantial progress of the left in rural areas as compared to the 1848 election (Furet, 1999, 427).

While local influences and economic issues certainly mattered for the mobilization in the 1851 uprisings, national-level concerns about political liberties and the system of government were also important motivating factors for the participants (McPhee, 1992, 235-242). In a national-level study of the uprising, Margadant (1979) rules out local economic distress as a primary driver and argues that the insurgents were able to mobilize in places where the republican secret societies managed to gain the support of peasants and were able to mobilize in the face of repression. The success of such a strategy was likely more successful in places where peasants were already politicized.

The early politicization of peasants was catalyzed in part by electoral politics (Price, 2004). Before 1848, this came mostly from municipal elections during the July Monarchy, which generated intra-commune conflicts and often enabled peasants to vote out rich landowners who previously dominated local politics.[10] Many historians identify these elections as a critical juncture: even though the "level of such politics was lower," it was "enough to wrench [the popular classes] from their passivity" (Agulhon, 1983, 13). They served as "a first apprenticeship for peasants of public, if not political, life" (Tudesq, 1982, 218). Although municipal councils' capacity to shape policy outcomes at the commune level was constrained by administrative centralization (Tanchoux, 2013), it appears that there was a meaningful choice between candidates. Archival sources contain reports by local prefects complaining that the municipal law reduced the power of the "enlightened landowners" and that the elections were too "political" as they aroused overly strong "passions" within the constituencies.[11]

In sum, the historical record contains many indicators that the French masses were politicized to some degree already before 1870, but unevenly: only in some places did they vote for the republicans during the Second Republic, rose up against the Bonaparte's coup, and voted against him in the plebiscites. We hypothesize that the uneven distribution of mass politicization can, in part, be accounted for by the differential exposure to

[10] See Agulhon (1970, 269-273), Vigier (1973) and Guionnet (1997, 559).
[11] Report on the 1846 elections from the National Archives, cote F/20/282/52.

electoral politics in the municipal elections during the July Monarchy. We now describe the data and methods we use to test this hypothesis.

4 Data and Measures

The unit of analysis is the commune, the smallest administrative division in France. Appendix A describes how we constructed the commune-level dataset and Table A.1 provides the summary statistics of the main variables.

4.1 Suffrage

Under the 1831 election law, the number of the highest tax contributors eligible to vote in a commune with n inhabitants was determined by the following formula:

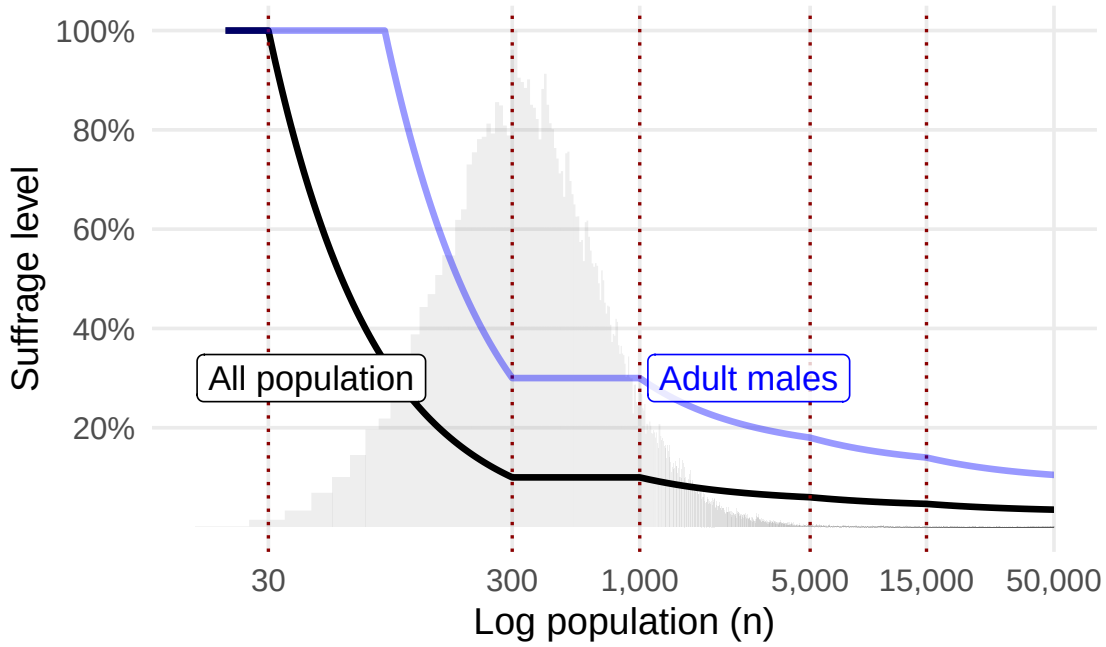
$$v(n) = \begin{cases} 30 & \text{if } n < 300, \\ 0.1 \times n & \text{if } 300 \leqslant n \leqslant 1{,}000, \\ v(1{,}000) + (n - 1{,}000) \times 5\% & \text{if } 1{,}000 < n \leqslant 5{,}000, \\ v(5{,}000) + (n - 5{,}000) \times 4\% & \text{if } 5{,}000 < n \leqslant 15{,}000, \\ v(15{,}000) + (n - 15{,}000) \times 3\% & \text{if } n > 15{,}000. \end{cases}$$

The absolute number of voters was increasing in the commune's total population but at a decreasing rate, creating a proportional advantage for smaller communes. We focus on the variation in suffrage of adult males as this was the only group allowed to vote in this period. Letting m be the proportion of adult males in the population, the suffrage in a commune with n inhabitants is

$$f(n) = \min\left\{1, \frac{1}{m}\frac{v(n)}{n}\right\} \times 100\%.$$

During this period, adult males (20 years or older) were about 31% of the population (Tabah, 1947, 352), which we round to one-third for simplicity giving us $m = 1/3$. Figure

Figure 1: The suffrage assignment rule.



Note: The black curve is the suffrage level as a percentage of the total population. The blue curve is the function $f(n)$, the suffrage as a percentage of adult males. The histogram in the background is for the communal population in 1831-1846.

1 displays suffrage levels as a function of the total and the adult male population, using population figures from the quinquennial French National Census (Motte and Vouloir, 2007). The law created a great deal of variation in the share of the adult males who could vote. Whereas in a commune with less than 90 residents, every adult male could vote, in a commune with 50,000 inhabitants only 10.5 percent of the highest male tax contributors could do so.

4.2 Measuring Mass Politicization

We measure mass politicization in three ways: (i) consumption of newspapers in 1847, (ii) participation in the insurrection against the coup by Louis Napoleon in 1851, and (iii) voting in the Napoleonic plebiscites of 1851 and 1852. Due to the lack of commune-level data, which is required by our empirical design, we cannot study the effect of municipal

suffrage during the Second Republic before Napoleon's coup of December 1851, which is an important omission.[12] However, we supplement our results with the canton-level analysis of elections during the Second Republic (see Section 8).

Newspapers. The first outcome measures the number of newspapers delivered to each commune from the Postal Survey of 1847 (Marin and Marraud, 2016). The crucial role of the printing press in the emergence of mass politics is widely acknowledged. The press is "the public sphere's preeminent institution," according to Habermas (1991, 181). The spread of information and ideas in a common vernacular creates a shared identity and engenders local interest in national-level affairs (Anderson, 1983). The contemporaries saw the spread of the press through postal deliveries as a key development in the growth of an informed public: "the post comes to deposit enlightenment at the threshold of the hut of the poor as at the gate of palaces" (Tocqueville, 2000, 9).[13]

We treat newspaper deliveries as indicative of local interest in public affairs. Of course, newspapers carried entertainment news and literature but the political dimension was important. This fact is laid bare by the concern by the July Monarchy that the press might incite public disorder, which led to an adoption of the libel laws in 1835; nonetheless, the newspapers continued to comment on political events in "long, serious articles" (Collins, 1959, 86). Even non-political material like crime stories and the emergent genre of "social novel" was often interpreted in terms of their underlying political message (Collins, 1959, 91). Contemporaries complained that the people pay little attention to national affairs but also noted that "in the towns, where newspapers are read and discussed, the Chamber debates are followed with great interest" (Weber, 1976, 243).

Insurrection. Bonaparte's coup of December 1851 against the National Assembly was met with a short-lived but widespread insurrection. Special administrative tribunals were

[12]The dataset by Cagé and Piketty (2023) reports election results for the Second Republic at the level of commune, but these data are statistically imputed from canton-level results making them unsuitable for our analysis.

[13]Even where the local population was not highly literate, the news content was passed down to the masses by local notables (Charle, 2009, ch 2).

created in the aftermath to prosecute the participants. These tribunals tried a total of 26,884 individuals, all of whom were documented in a comprehensive list of arrests. We obtained this list from Farcy and Fry (2013), who digitized the original files from the archives.[14] To create a commune-level measure of insurrection participation, we linked each individual case to their commune of residence at the time of arrest and calculated the total number of insurgents per commune.[15]

Some historians argue that peasants followed the lead of pro-republican urban elites without fully understanding the implications of the insurrection (Agulhon, 1970; Margadant, 1979). Others emphasize peasant agency and support for social change: "the ultimate objective of this rural revolt was a desperate attempt to impose a radical – even revolutionary – social change" (McPhee, 1992, 242). In either case, participation in the insurrection reflected some form of politicization as it went against the interests of traditional rural elites.

One concern is that the arrest data are more indicative of the local repressive capacity than the actual participation in the revolt. A detailed study of the same lists has shown an 83% correlation between the department-level arrests and the measures of revolt derived from local sources and reports (Margadant, 1979, 309). Although this is reassuring, we also conduct robustness and validation checks to address this issue.

Plebiscites. The third outcome variable comes from the Napoleonic plebiscites of 1851 and 1852. We have digitized the original documents with the commune-level results of the two plebiscites.[16] The 1851 plebiscite asked to designate Bonaparte as chief executive with the right to establish a new constitution, which was approved by 75% of eligible voters. The 1852 plebiscite asked to approve re-establishing the Empire with Bonaparte as its emperor, which was approved by 77% of eligible voters.

Turnout in the plebiscites would seem a natural measure of mass politicization. How-

[14]The arrest list is publicly available at poursuivis-decembre-1851.fr.
[15]We were able to link 26,568 (~ 99%) of the individuals to their communes of residence.
[16]B/II/1047-B/II/1132 (1851) and B/II/1135-B/II/1223 (1852), the French National Archives.

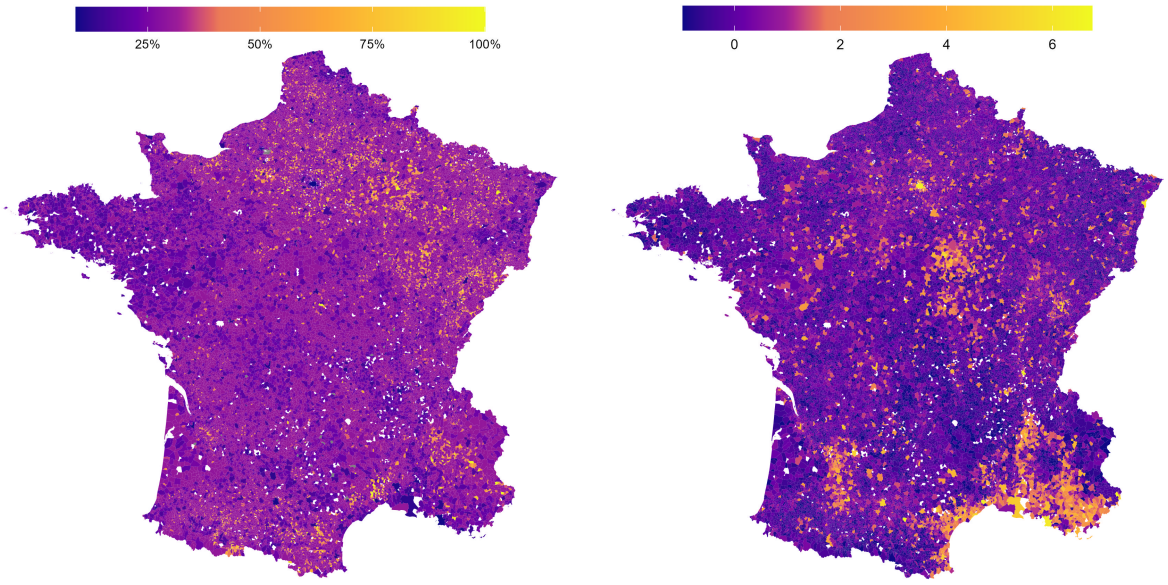
ever, we do not use turnout because its meaning is ambiguous in the context of Napoleon's electoral autocracy. Napoleon employed "tremendous administrative pressure" with the help of local officials, priests, and the police to secure high turnout leading to a perception that "abstention was not permissible" (Crook, 2021, 165). Two contradictory predictions about the relationship between politicization and turnout are possible in such a context: politicized individuals should be more likely to vote, and at the same time, because the regime wanted to demonstrate its force through a large turnout, politicized individuals might have expressed their opposition through abstention.

Instead of turnout, we use the share of NO votes per commune, averaged between the two plebiscites, as the outcome variable. Given the constitutional reforms proposed in the plebiscites, we interpret this variable as capturing opposition to Bonaparte's autocratic rule and support for the parliamentary republic. Such votes also capture the capacity to resist administrative and social pressures to vote in favor of the proposed reforms – an indication of political agency. Our prediction is that this outcome variable should take higher values in the communes with higher suffrage during the July Monarchy.

One concern is that the returns of the plebiscite might have been manipulated because the margins in favor of Louis-Napoleon were exceedingly large. Historians suggest that these high margins were more indicative of the wide support for Napoleon than fraud (Furet, 1999, 437). Many experts of the period have used the returns of the plebiscite as the barometer of the support of Napoleon (Zeldin, 1958; Bluche, 2000; Price, 2004). Even if fraud was present, it would only invalidate our results if there was more of it in the communes with higher suffrage during the July Monarchy. We are not aware of a plausible mechanism that would generate such a pattern.

Extensive and intensive margins. We measure mass politicization on the extensive and the intensive margin. The extensive version is an indicator equal to one if the variable takes a positive value and zero otherwise: any newspapers were delivered, any participants in the insurrection, and any NO votes in either of the two referendums. The

Figure 2: The spatial distribution of the main variables.



(a) Suffrage (1841-1846)

(b) Intensive Politicization (1847-1852)

intensive versions measure the number of newspapers delivered, the number of participants in the insurrection, and the share of NO votes averaged over the two plebiscites. We apply the $\ln(x+1)$ transformation for the intensive measures to address their skewness.[17]

Indexes of politicization. The three outcome variables capture distinct but conceptually related dimensions of mass politicization. To summarize these dimensions, we create two index variables: *Extensive Politicization* and *Intensive Politicization*. The *Extensive Politicization* index is constructed by standardizing the three binary outcome indicators and then averaging them. Similarly, the *Intensive Politicization* index is created by standardizing the three continuous outcome variables and averaging them. To maximize the number of available data points, we compute the index as long as at least one of the outcomes is not missing.

Spatial distribution. To illustrate the granularity of our data, Figure 2 shows the spatial distribution of the two key variables: (a) suffrage levels during the July Monarchy in 1841-1846 imputed from the formula f and (b) the index of Intensive Politicization.

[17]Recent literature highlights potential issues arising from such log-transformations (Chen and Roth, 2024), which we address in robustness checks.

Suffrage tended to be higher in the northeastern region and in the mountainous areas in the south known for their republican inclinations. There is also some regional clustering in the levels of politicization. To ensure that our results are not driven by such macro-level patterns, our robustness checks include regressions with department fixed effects.

4.3 Covariates

Geographic covariates include latitude, longitude, area, and altitude from Motte and Vouloir (2007), distance to the nearest road, forest, and river from Ancien Regime *Cassini* map (Perret, Gribaudi and Barthelemy, 2015), terrain ruggedness from Nunn and Puga (2012), and wheat suitability from the GAEZ project of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The political pre-treatment covariates mostly measure different aspects of political mobilization prior to the July Monarchy: the presence of political societies in 1789-1794 (Boutry et al., 1992), distance to the brigades of the military police (*gendarmerie*) in 1810, rebellions against the *gendarmerie* in 1800-1830 (Lignereux, 2008), and political conflicts in 1789-1830 (Chambru and Maneuvrier-Hervieu, 2023).

5 Empirical Strategy

5.1 Regression Kink Design

The electoral rule used in the municipal elections during the July Monarchy, as shown in Figure 1, has several discrete changes in the slope – kinks. We exploit this feature to estimate the impact of suffrage on the politicization measures using a Regression Kink Design (RKD) (Card et al., 2015, 2017). In contrast to the more familiar Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD), which identifies a discrete change in the *level* of the outcome variable at a specific value of the running variable, RKD focuses on a discrete change in the *slope* of the relationship between the outcome and the running variable.

Our running variable is the size of the population n, which determines the suffrage

level according to the function f. Let $\gamma(n) = \mathbb{E}(Y|n)$ denote the expectation of an outcome variable Y given the population size n. The RKD estimand at the kink point k is

$$\tau = \frac{\lim_{n \to k^+} \gamma'(n) - \lim_{n \to k^-} \gamma'(n)}{\lim_{n \to k^+} f'(n) - \lim_{n \to k^-} f'(n)}. \tag{1}$$

The numerator represents the change in the slopes at the kink point k in the reduced-form regression of the outcome Y on the size of the population n. The denominator represents the first-stage effect of the kink in the population size on the levels of suffrage. Under identifying assumptions that we discuss later, τ can be interpreted as the expected change in the outcome variable caused by a one percentage point increase in suffrage levels.

Although the suffrage assignment rule has four kink points (300, 1,000, 5,000, 15,000), we only focus on the kink at 300, for two reasons. First, the RKD is underpowered if the change in suffrage induced by the change in population around the kink point is small. The differences in slopes around the 300-inhabitant point are far more pronounced than the differences around other kink points (see Figure 1). The difference in slopes around the 300 point is

$$\lim_{n \to 300^+} f'(n) \; - \lim_{n \to 300^-} f'(n) = 0 - \frac{1}{m}\left(-\frac{30 \times 100}{300^2}\right) = 1/10. \tag{2}$$

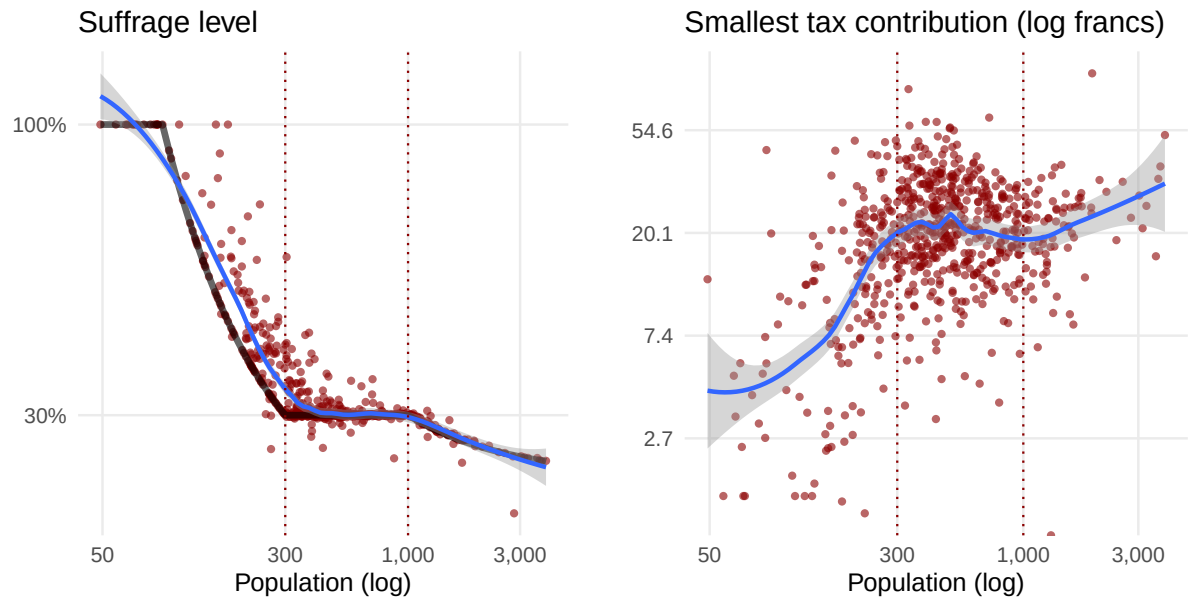
The respective differences in slopes at the other cutoffs are between six and five hundred times smaller in absolute magnitude.[18] Second, while there are more than 4,000 communes within a 50-inhabitant bandwidth around the 300 cutoff, the amount of data around other cutoffs is too small for RKD (see Ando, 2017).

5.2 Compliance

Ideally, τ in equation (1) should be estimated using a fuzzy kink RD. This requires data on eligible voters per commune, which were not centrally collected. Consequently, we

[18] The respective values are 1/200 at 1,000, 1/500 at 5,000, and 1/15000 at 15,000.

Figure 3: Compliance with the suffrage rule



Left: the vertical axis is the percentage of commune residents with the right to vote. The black curve is the suffrage rule f. Right: the vertical axis the smallest tax contribution (in logged francs) among the enfranchised. In both plots, the blue curve is the loess fit of the data with 95% confidence bands.

are limited to estimating the intent-to-treat effect rather than the substantively more interesting treatment effect, i.e., the effect of the suffrage law rather than actual suffrage. If compliance with the law is high, the two effects are close to each other.

To assess the degree of compliance, we obtain the lists of eligible voters in municipal elections during the July Monarchy for the 791 communes from the archive of the Somme department.[19] The descriptive patterns shown in Figure 3 suggest a high degree of compliance. The left panel shows the actual adult male suffrage as a function of population. The empirical relationship between the two (blue curve) closely approximates the formal rule (black curve). This is despite likely measurement errors arising from inaccuracies in the original documents and their digitization. The formal suffrage rule f accounts for over 93% of the variation in the actual suffrage levels.

These lists also include data on the tax contributions of the eligible individuals. As shown in the right panel of Figure 3, the smallest tax contribution is increasing in popu-

[19] 3M63-179 and 3M184-210 at the Departmental Archives of Somme.

lation in the intervals where the suffrage is decreasing (below 300 and above 1,000) and it is invariant in population size within the interval where suffrage is invariant to the size of the population as well (between 300 and 1,000). This is another indication of the high level of compliance with the suffrage rule.

Given this evidence of compliance, we proceed under the assumption that the equation (2) holds empirically, and so our estimand of interest is a scaled sharp RKD coefficient

$$\tau = \frac{\lim_{n \to 300^+} \gamma'(n) - \lim_{n \to 300^-} \gamma'(n)}{1/10}. \tag{3}$$

The denominator re-scales the reduced form effect in the numerator so that τ measures the effect of a one percentage point increase in the share of the adult male population that can vote. The numerator is estimated through the local polynomial regression

$$\gamma(n_i) = E(Y_i | n_i) = \sum_{p=0}^{P} \left(\alpha_p (n_i - 300)^p + \beta_p (n_i - 300)^p \times \mathbb{1}\{n_i \geqslant 300\} \right), \tag{4}$$

The parameter β_1 is the difference in the slopes at the kink point so that $\tau = \beta_1 \times 10$. Following Card et al. (2017), in baseline specifications, we use linear regression ($P = 1$), triangular kernels, and MSE-optimal bandwidths (Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik, 2015). Per recommendation by Ganong and Jäger (2018, 503), we use robust estimation and report bias-corrected estimates (Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik, 2014).

5.3 The Running Variable

Suffrage levels in the municipal elections changed with each census (1831, 1836, 1841, 1846), which means that the communes could switch in and out of the "treatment" status.[20] Since all of the outcomes were measured after 1846, the use of earlier census in-

[20] Municipal councils were renewed by half every three year starting in 1831 (art. 17 of the 1831 municipal law) and the census was conducted every five years. Electoral lists were established at the beginning of every year by the mayor and local tax collectors, but it was possible to demand rectifications within one month (art. 32-37). As a result, the closest census should be a good approximation for the actual number used. For instance, the 1846 census was conducted after the establishment of electoral lists, but given the

troduces measurement error. To account for that, we construct the running variable in several ways. First, we use each of the four censuses separately, with the expectation that the estimates from the earlier censuses should be smaller due to a larger temporal gap between the treatment and the outcome. Second, we use a running variable defined as the minimum population recorded in the two closest censuses, from 1841 and 1846. This transformation ensures that communes that had fewer than 300 inhabitants at least once during the 1840s are classified as having been exposed to the larger franchise, which is our treatment of interest.

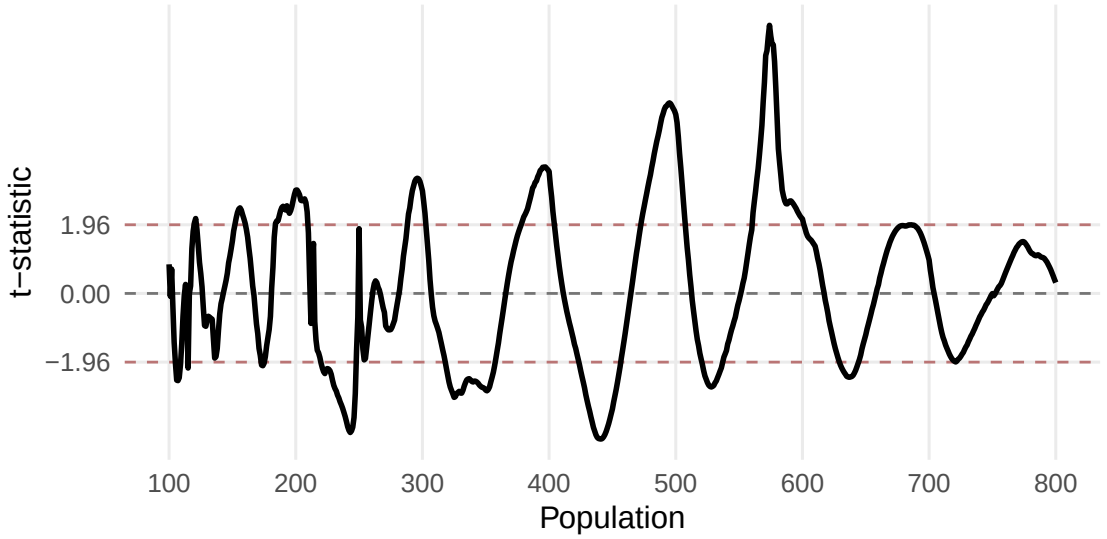
5.4 Bunching

A standard threat to any discontinuity-based design is endogenous sorting into the treatment condition. Without any formal test, we can see in Figure 1 a bunching of communes at the 300-inhabitant point. If the mechanism that generates this bunching confounds the relationship between suffrage and mass politicization, it threatens our design. This is unlikely for several reasons. First, because the election law did not induce abrupt changes in the *levels* of suffrage, the incentives to manipulate census figures for the purpose of increasing or reducing suffrage were low. Second, we formally test for bunching at all population levels from 100 to 800. As shown in Figure 4, bunching occurs not just at the 300-inhabitant, but also at 200, 400, and 500, among others. We are not aware of any other policies at these cutoffs in France during this period that would explain these bunches.[21] Our best guess is that the bunching is an artifact of population figures being rounded during census collection or processing. If our results were driven by endogenous sorting, then we should observe the effects not only at the 300-inhabitant cutoff but also at 200, 400, and 500, but our results hold only for the 300-inhabitant cutoff (see Section 7).

yearly updating of lists and the complaint system, 1846 census population should be a better approximation than 1841.

[21] With the exception of an 1833 law, which required communes with more than 500 inhabitants to build primary schools for boys.

Figure 4: Bunching tests for different cutoffs



Note: Bias-adjusted t-statistics for the continuous density test (Cattaneo, Jansson and Ma, 2018) at a given population cutoff. Evidence of bunching is detected when the t-statistics exceed the critical values shown as red dashed lines. We see that bunching is not unique for the 300 cutoff.

5.5 Balance

We check whether the pre-treatment outcomes are balanced around the 300-inhabitant cutoff. Table 1 lists thirteen covariates significantly correlated with at least one politicization index. At the 300-inhabitant cutoff, all pre-treatment variables are balanced in their level (RDD results) as well as the slopes (RKD results). It is especially reassuring that we have the balance on the last four variables in the table, each of which measures pre-existing levels of political mobilization.

Additionally, we check that our results are not driven by sample attrition resulting from changes in the administrative boundaries of communes (see discussion in Appendix A). Indeed, the 1837 municipal law made it easier to merge communes below 300 inhabitants by not requiring the consent of the municipal council (art. 4), raising potential concerns. Reassuringly, however, analyses in the appendix show that the 300-inhabitant cutoff does not predict commune mergers in RDD or RKD designs (Figures A.2 and A.3), suggesting that the policy was scarcely implemented and thus does not confound our

Table 1: Balance tests

	Correlation with		Balance tests					
	Intensive	Extensive	RDD			RKD		
			Est.	S.E.	N	Est.	S.E.	N
Longitude	0.03**	0.05**	−0.16	(0.20)	14,061	0.03	(0.02)	8,631
Latitude	−0.01	−0.04**	−0.19	(0.21)	14,061	0.00	(0.02)	9,205
Min altitude	−0.16**	−0.16**	−0.09	(0.15)	14,601	−0.02	(0.02)	9,401
Max altitude	−0.11**	−0.10**	−0.06	(0.12)	14,818	−0.01	(0.01)	9,332
Dist roads	−0.13**	−0.14**	0.04	(0.08)	12,475	−0.02	(0.02)	8,060
Dist forest	0.05**	0.05**	−0.07	(0.10)	12,139	−0.03	(0.02)	8,272
Wheat suitability	0.03**	0.01*	−0.03	(0.15)	12,421	0.00	(0.02)	7,396
Ruggedness	−0.11**	−0.09**	−0.01	(0.11)	11,609	0.01	(0.02)	8,270
Dist rivers	−0.03**	−0.05**	0.04	(0.10)	8,199	0.03	(0.04)	5,786
Dist Gendarmerie (1810)	−0.13**	−0.17**	0.09	(0.07)	7,206	0.00	(0.03)	5,864
Population 1821 (log)	0.41**	0.42**	−0.04	(0.02)	7,052	0.01	(0.01)	4,644
Political societies (1789-1794)	0.31**	0.39**	0.04	(0.05)	12,651	−0.01	(0.01)	8,688
Rebellions (1800-1830)	0.11**	0.16**	−0.08	(0.04)	7,720	−0.02	(0.02)	6,150
Conflicts (1789-1830, log)	0.25**	0.35**	−0.04	(0.03)	7,296	−0.01	(0.01)	6,168
Conflicts (1789-1830, any)	0.20**	0.24**	−0.06	(0.05)	6,829	−0.02	(0.02)	5,841

The first two columns show Pearson correlation between the listed variable and the intensive and extensive indexes of politicization. The last four columns show regression discontinuity (RDD) and kink regression (RKD) estimates using each variable as the outcome (normalized for comparability). The running variable is the population in the 1840s. 'N' is the number of observations within the optimally selected bandwidth. S.E.'s are clustered by department. $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$.

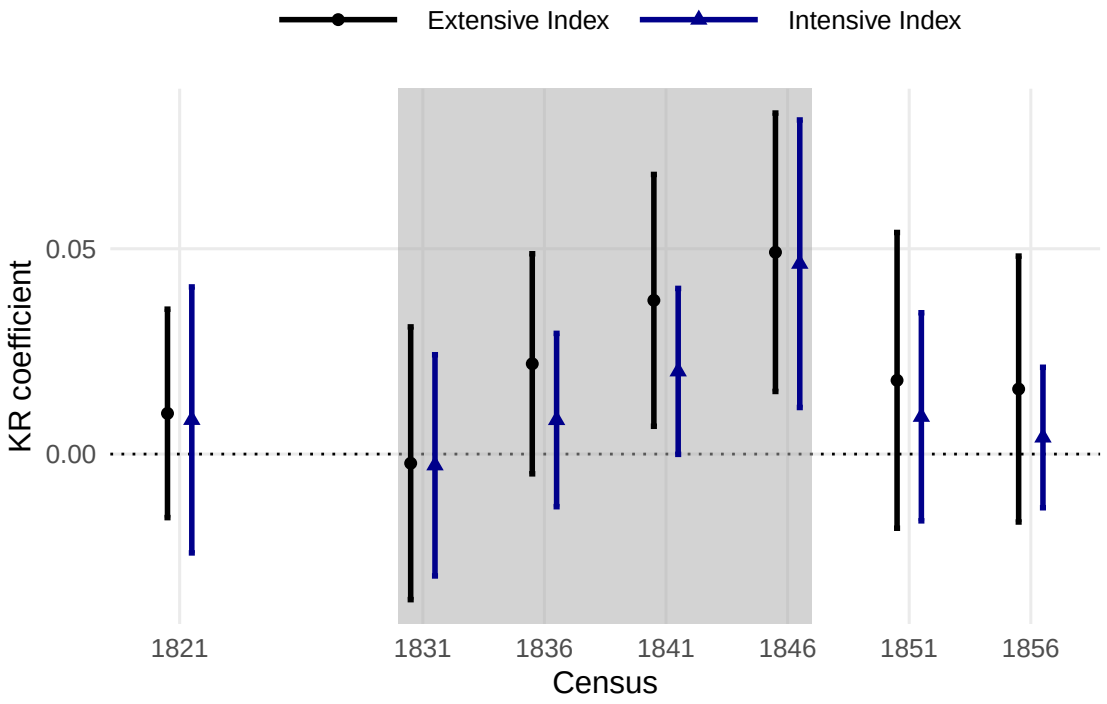
analyses. Our main results are also robust to the exclusion of communes with administrative changes during the period of interest (Table A.5).

6 Results

Figure 5 shows the estimated RKD coefficients for the two indexes of politicization using population figures from the censuses of 1821, 1831, 1836, 1841, 1846, 1851, and 1856.[22] The censuses of 1821, 1851, and 1856 serve as placebo cases: the population counts from them did not determine suffrage levels; furthermore, the census of 1856 also comes after the measurement of the outcomes. Notably, the estimates for all of the placebo censuses

[22]No census was conducted in 1826 (Biraben, 1963).

Figure 5: Kink regression estimates from different running variables



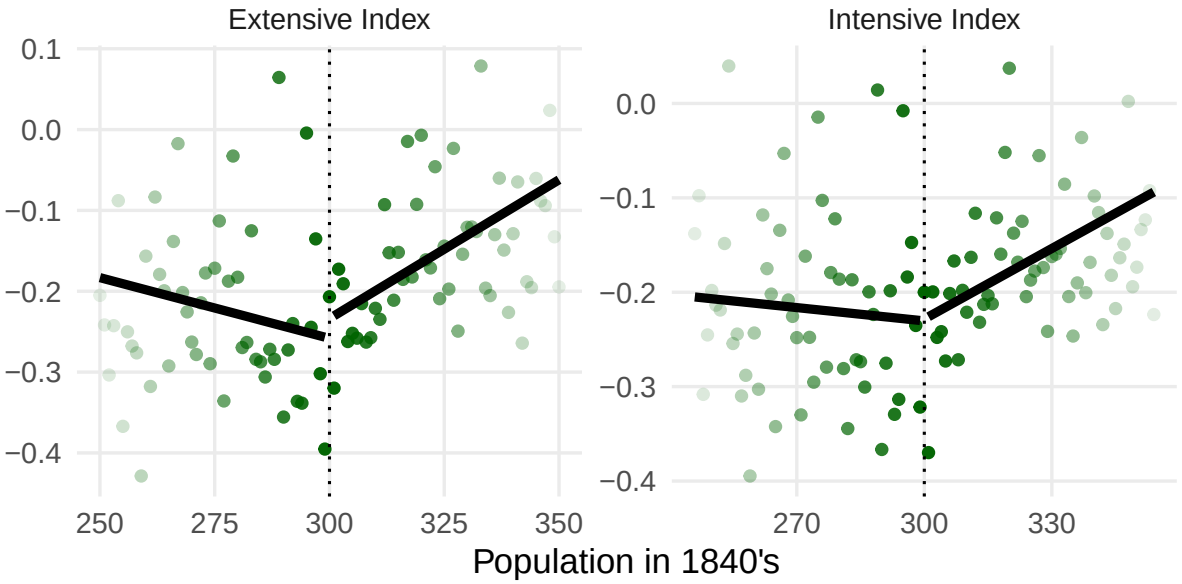
The x-axis shows the census year from which the running variable was constructed, and the shaded area indicates the period in which the municipal suffrage law was in effect. 95% confidence intervals were constructed using robust errors clustered at the department level.

are close to zero and statistically insignificant.

Within the period where census data did determine the suffrage levels, the estimates become larger with each consecutive census. This is not entirely surprising, since the effect of exposure to suffrage is likely to be erased by successive changes in franchise size as communes fluctuate above and below the 300-inhabitant cutoff over time. The estimated effects of suffrage in 1831 and 1836 are small and insignificant for both indexes. The estimated effects of suffrage in 1841 and 1846 are positive and, in three out of four cases, significant at the 95 percent level. Going forward, we use the minimum population during the 1840s as the running variable, which combines information from the two censuses that are most proximate to the outcomes (see Section 5.3).

Using the minimum population in the 1840's we display the kink regression results

Figure 6: Kink regression plots



Note: Binned averages (dots) and the linear regression fit on each side of the kink point using weights from the triangular kernel (darker colors represent larger weights). The x-axes differ between the plots because the graphs display data within the optimally selected bandwidths, which varies by the outcome.

for the two indexes of politicization in Figure 6 (Figure A.1 shows plots for individual outcomes). In contrast to what we would be looking for in an RDD plot, here the *levels* of the outcome variables do not change discontinuously around the cutoff point (Table A.2 shows that there are no RDD effects on any of the outcomes). This makes sense because the suffrage levels did not change discontinuously. Instead, here we compare the *slopes* on each side of the kink point. The slope on the right minus the slope on the left, after dividing by the scaling factor 1/10, gives us the estimate of τ. As the slope on the right is positive and that on the left is negative, the figure implies a positive effect of suffrage on each of the two indexes of politicization.

Table 2 reports the RKD coefficients (τ) for the two indexes and the individual outcome variable from which the indexes were constructed. All eight estimates of τ are positive and significant at the 95% level indicating that higher suffrage politicized the general public. According to the estimates in columns (1) and (2), one percentage point increase in the suffrage levels in the adult male population in the 1840s led to a 0.07 point

Table 2: Kink regression estimates for the indexes and individual outcomes.

	Index 1847-1852		Newspapers 1847		Insurrection 1851		Plebiscites 1851-1852	
	Ext. (1)	Int. (2)	Ext. (3)	Int. (4)	Ext. (5)	Int. (6)	Ext. (7)	Int. (8)
Coef. ($\hat{\tau}$)	0.07**	0.05**	0.05**	0.10*	0.02*	0.02**	0.02*	0.05*
S.E.	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
SATT ($\hat{\tau} \times \Delta$)	−0.09	−0.07	−0.06	−0.14	−0.02	−0.03	−0.05	−0.09
Bandwidth	53	55	53	54	53	54	78	66
Effective N	4,866	5,099	4,614	4,614	4,958	4,958	6,857	5,742
Outcome mean	−0.19	−0.19	0.77	1.88	0.05	0.05	0.55	0.74
Outcome SD	0.60	0.53	0.42	1.28	0.21	0.28	0.50	0.90
Suffrage range	[30,36]	[30,37]	[30,36]	[30,36]	[30,36]	[30,36]	[30,41]	[30,38]

Kink regression coefficient estimates with standard errors clustered by department. Estimations use MSE-optimal bandwidths and linear slopes. The running variable is the minimum population in the 1840s. "Ext." and "Int." stand for extensive and intensive measures, respectively. "SATT" is the sample average treatment effect on the treated (defined in the text). $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$.

(11% of SD) higher Extensive Politicization and a 0.04 point (21% of SD) higher Intensive Politicization. The estimates in columns (3)-(8) indicate a positive effect on suffrage on each of the individual outcomes from which the indexes were constructed.

To interpret these effects on a more meaningful scale, we calculate the sample-averaged treatment effect on the treated (SATT): the average effect of lowering male suffrage in each commune with less than 300 inhabitants (more than 30% suffrage) to what it would have been had the commune had more than 300 inhabitants (30% suffrage). To compute the SATT, the estimate $\hat{\gamma}$ is rescaled by the factor:

$$\Delta = \frac{\sum_i [f(300) - f(n_i)] \mathbb{1}\{n_i < 300\}}{\sum_i \mathbb{1}\{n_i < 300\}}, \tag{5}$$

where we only use observations within the selected bandwidth (hence, the averaging is within the effective sample). Because $f(300) < f(n_i)$ for all $n_i < 300$, the scaling factor Δ is always negative as it represents the average *reduction* of suffrage within the sample.

The SATT's for all outcomes are reported in the third row of Table 2. Had the suffrage

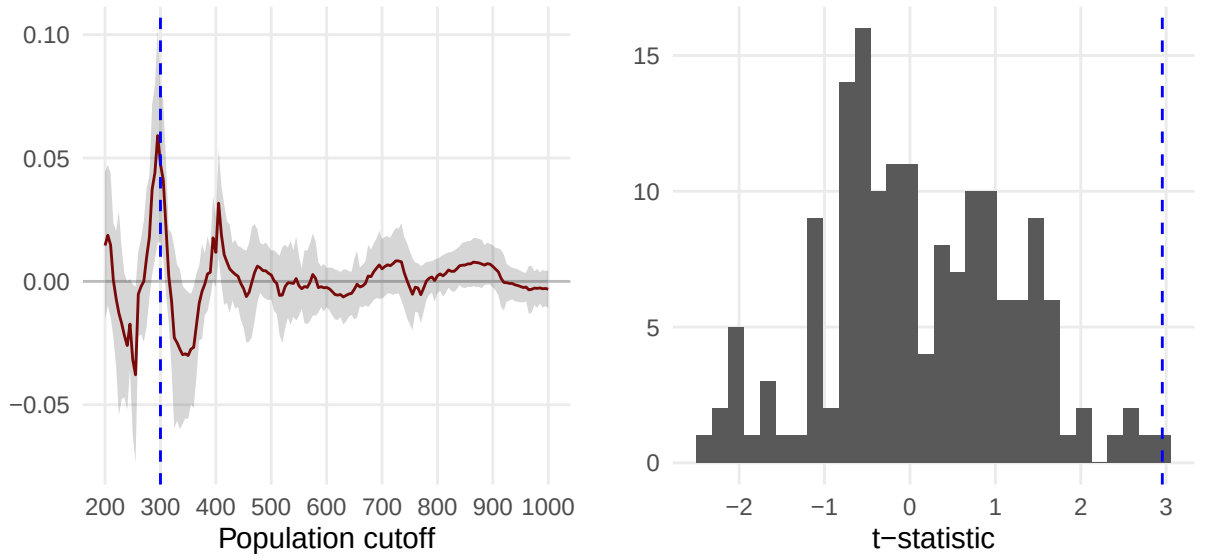
in the communes with less than 300 inhabitants been kept at 30%, 14 percentage points fewer of them would have ordered newspapers (column 3), 5 percentage points fewer of them would have participated in the insurrection (column 5), and 11 percentage points fewer of them would have registered opposition against Napoleon in the plebiscites. On the intensive margin, these communes would have had 0.31 units (25% of SD) lower volume of newspapers (column 4), 0.05 units (20% of SD) lower participation levels in the insurrection, and 0.2 units (22% of SD) lower log-percentage of NO votes in the plebiscites. Admittedly, these estimates are not huge, but note that they represent the effects of a limited variation in suffrage in the range of at most eleven percentage points.

7 Robustness and Validity Checks

Following Ando (2017) and Ganong and Jäger (2018), we estimate the RKD coefficients for a range of cutoffs from 200 (10th percentile) to 1,000 (75th percentile) in increments of five, using the Intensive Index as the dependent variable. The RKD coefficients should not be significant when using cutoffs other than 300, where the suffrage levels had no kinks. Figure 7 confirms this expectation: the magnitude of the RKD coefficient peaks around the 300 inhabitant cutoff; of the twelve significant coefficients, all but one are near 300. The distribution of t-statistics shown in the right panel of Figure 7 indicates that the t-statistic for the 300 inhabitant cutoff is rather extreme.[23]

In the main specifications, we use MSE-optimal bandwidths per standard recommendations (Card et al., 2017; Ganong and Jäger, 2018). Figure A.5 in the Appendix shows the RKD coefficients with 95% confidence intervals for a range of manually set bandwidths. If the underlying structure of the data is non-linear, expanding the bandwidths reduces the variance of the estimator at the expense of bias (Card et al., 2017). In line with this, while the effect is substantial and statistically significant at lower bandwidths, it gradually diminishes and tends toward zero as the bandwidth increases.

[23]The results of the same test for the Extensive Index are nearly identical (see Figure A.4).



Left: the RKD coefficients with 95% confidence intervals for different population cutoffs. Right: the distribution of t-statistics for estimates using different population cutoffs. The vertical bar is for the t-statistic obtained at the 300-inhabitant cutoff. The outcome variable is the Intensive Index, and the running variable is the minimum population in the 1840s.

Figure 7: RKD estimates at alternative cutoffs

We also check if our results are not too dependent on the linearity assumption (P = 1) by re-estimating our baseline specifications using quadratic polynomials (P = 2). The estimated coefficients are similar in sign and magnitude to the baseline results, even though the estimates are slightly noisier; specifically, the coefficients for the plebiscites lose statistical significance (Table A.3 in Appendix). The noisiness of the RKD estimates with higher-degree polynomials is a known issue in the literature (Card et al., 2017).

Our results could be confounded by department-level factors. The variation in the 1851 insurgency could be capturing the ability of departmental prefects, public prosecutors, and the police to take preemptive measures (Margadant, 1979, Ch. 9). Prefects, the state's local representatives, were also focal actors on which Napoleon relied to control voting (Zeldin, 1958). To rule out such department-level effects, we estimate the baseline regressions with fixed effects for departments, and find that the results are largely similar to our baseline (Table A.4 in Appendix). We also show that qualitatively identical results are obtained if we exclude departments one by one from the estimation, suggesting that

no particular department drives our results (Figure A.6).

Another concern is that our results are driven by spatial correlations in the treatment and the outcomes. We create a spatial placebo treatment to rule out this alternative explanation of our results. We estimate the RKD regressions using the median population size in the adjacent communes as the running variable. If an unobserved spatial factor were driving our results, we should see that mass politicization is impacted by suffrage in the neighboring communes. Table A.6 shows that this is not the case: all RKD coefficients using the placebo treatment are small in magnitude and insignificant. Finally, since our outcomes include zeros, our intensive margin estimates may be affected by the log + 1 transformations (Chen and Roth, 2024). We calibrate the value placed on the extensive and intensive margins as recommended by Chen and Roth (2024), and find that the results are robust across a range of extensive-margin values (Figure A.7).

8 Mass Politicization and Democracy

Our results show that the experience of wider suffrage turned some French peasants into politicized citizens. Historically, however, the political mobilization of peasants has contributed not only to the development of mass democracy but also to mass dictatorship (Moore, 1966). Was the transformation of peasants into citizens democratic in character, in line with our theoretical expectations?

Establishing empirically that voting rights promoted a pro-democratic citizenry is difficult because we cannot measure what peasants thought about democracy. However, legislative elections during the Second Republic provide a narrow window into this question. The elections for the Constituent Assembly in 1848 and the National Assembly in 1849 saw competition among three groups of candidates: the Party of Order on the right, Moderate Republicans on the center-left, and Democratic Socialists ("La Montagne") on the left.[24] For both parties on the left, "democracy, both as a set of procedures and a code

[24]Formal party organizations did not exist at that time. These traditional labels refer to rather loose

of civic behavior, was [...] a point of departure" (Nord, 1995, 254). Democratic Socialists were especially preoccupied with the defense of the parliamentary republic against the authoritarian aspirations of the Party of Order; they "were the only true partisans of the Republic" (Agulhon, 1983, 81). For them, "the terms 'democracy' and 'republic' were synonymous" (Berenson, 2014, 107), and the Republic was, above all, defined by "liberal democracy completed by a few strong values" (Lancelot et al., 1996, 89).[25]

Accordingly, the support for Democratic Socialists during the Second Republic is a plausible measure of "pro-democratic" mobilization. Ideally, we would want to replicate our RKD regressions on this outcome, but the commune-level data from these elections are not available. As the second-best option, we use canton-level data from these legislative elections (Cagé and Piketty, 2023) to assess the correlation between our measures of mass politicization and electoral mobilization by *démoc-socs* during the Second Republic.

We regress each measure of mass politicization on the electoral mobilization by Democratic Socialists: the number of votes cast for the candidates in this block relative to the number of eligible voters. We control for the number of eligible voters to avoid confounding by the population size and include department fixed effects to ensure that we draw on comparisons of geographically proximate cantons.

Table 3 shows that each measure of mass politicization is positively and significantly associated with support for Democratic Socialists during the Second Republic. Our measures of mass politicization thus do not capture a generic public engagement in politics, but rather one directed in support of "liberal" democracy rather than Napoleon's "plebiscitarian" or "Caesarean" rule.[26] The earlier experience of suffrage during the July Monarchy seems to have created demand not just for the right to vote but also the right

ideological groupings. In the data from Cagé and Piketty (2023) that we use, the ideological labels are constructed from local newspaper coverage of the candidates.

[25]The terminology might be anachronistic to the period. See Nicolet (1982) for a detailed exploration of the meaning of "republic" and "democracy" in French history.

[26]Napoleon combined universal franchise with autocracy. The peasants who rebelled against Napoleon's coup or voted against him in the plebiscites could not have done so in demand for voting rights, which they already had under Napoleon.

Table 3: Mass politicization and support for Democratic Socialists

	Index 1847-1852		Newspapers 1847		Insurgency 1851		Plebiscites 1851-1852	
	Ext. (1)	Int. (2)	Ext. (3)	Int. (4)	Ext. (5)	Int. (6)	Ext. (7)	Int. (8)
DemSoc	0.8**	1.2**	0.07*	0.6**	0.3**	0.7**	0.4**	1.2**
	(0.07)	(0.1)	(0.03)	(0.1)	(0.04)	(0.1)	(0.04)	(0.1)
Voters	0.2**	0.3**	0.03**	0.2**	0.05**	0.1**	0.07**	0.2**
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.007)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.03)
Observations	2,467	2,467	2,451	2,451	2,467	2,467	2,376	2,376
Within R^2	0.2	0.2	0.02	0.04	0.1	0.1	0.09	0.2
Dept. FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

OLS regressions with canton-level data. 'DemSoc' is the number of votes cast for Democratic Socialists relative to the vote-eligible population, averaged over 1848 and 1849. 'Voters' is the vote-eligible population (logged). Standard errors clustered by the department. $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$.

to organize and choose – the "liberal" dimension of democracy abolished by Napoleon.

Casting a vote for a radical republican candidate during the Second Republic was not only an indication of alignment with democratic ideas but also an expression of autonomy from elites in national-level politics. Where mass politicization remained low, conservative elites could mobilize the deferent and dependent peasants against the republicans (cf. McPhee (1992, Ch. 6) and Price (2004, 230)). In contrast, in politicized communities, the electorate was less vulnerable to such local pressure, and politicians had more success in transmitting republican ideals (Price, 2004, 267).

9 Conclusion

The expansion of suffrage in 19th-century France facilitated the rise of a more politicized and more pro-democratic mass public. The finding supports the view that local elections during the July Monarchy were "the apprenticeship in modern politics" (Guionnet, 1997) and an introduction for peasants to "public, if not political, life" (Tudesq, 1982, 218). More

generally, the results of this paper align with the view, often expressed by contemporaries of democratic reforms, that the expansion of suffrage leads to mass political mobilization, even in an economically and socially "pre-modern" environment.

Our results speak to the cross-sectional variation in the degree of mass politicization across French localities, not its overall levels. Marx in the *The Eighteen Brumaire* and Eugen Weber in *Peasants into Frenchmen* were both right that most peasants in the period were not politicized despite being able to vote. However, despite generally low overall levels of mass politicization, there was notable geographic variation attributable to earlier local institutional conditions. While most peasants might not have cared about politics and did not resist Louis Napoleon's autocracy, those who did tended to be concentrated in communes that previously had more extensive suffrage.

Our findings have implications for theories of democratization. After the demise of the Second Republic, its supporters concluded that the Republic "had faltered for want of citizens" and, therefore, "teaching good citizenship" was an essential task in the process of bringing democracy back and keeping it alive (Nord, 1995, 251). This is in line with the view of scholars within the revolutionary threat tradition, who argue that a politically mobilized public is necessary for the birth and survival of democracy (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003; Przeworski, 2009; Weingast, 1997). From the perspective of this tradition, our results indicate that the right to vote promotes the skills of "good citizenship" that are conducive to democracy. The modernization theorists believed such skills could not develop without railroads, mass literacy, and state expansion. Our analysis not only shows that pro-democratic citizenship can develop independently of economic modernization but also that it is shaped by political institutions.

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APPENDIX

Online Supporting Information for "Peasants Into Citizens: Suffrage Expansion and the Rise of Mass Politics"

A CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMMUNE-LEVEL DATASET

Our reference file for communes is based on the Cassini website (Motte and Vouloir, 2007), which contains information on all the communes that were recorded in the census at some point between 1793 and nowadays (43,500 communes in total). Our dataset includes *all communes existing at some point during our period of interest, 1831-1852*: 37,432 communes.[27] This is close to the 36,779 figure found in a 1834 official report on municipal elections.[28] Since our outcomes are all measured after 1847, we set administrative geography in 1848 as our reference.[29]

Among these communes, 2,436 (6.5%) see shifts in communal administrative geography between 1831 and 1848. There are four cases. Between 1831 and 1848, communes may: (1) be *merged* with a larger commune (979 communes); *cede* some part of their territory (342) ; *absorb* another commune or parts of a commune (834); be *created* from the amalgamation of other communes or parts of communes (308).

[27] Corsica is excluded.
[28] *Compte-rendu au roi sur les élections municipales de 1834*, p.24.
[29] Only four communes shift departments between 1831 and 1852.

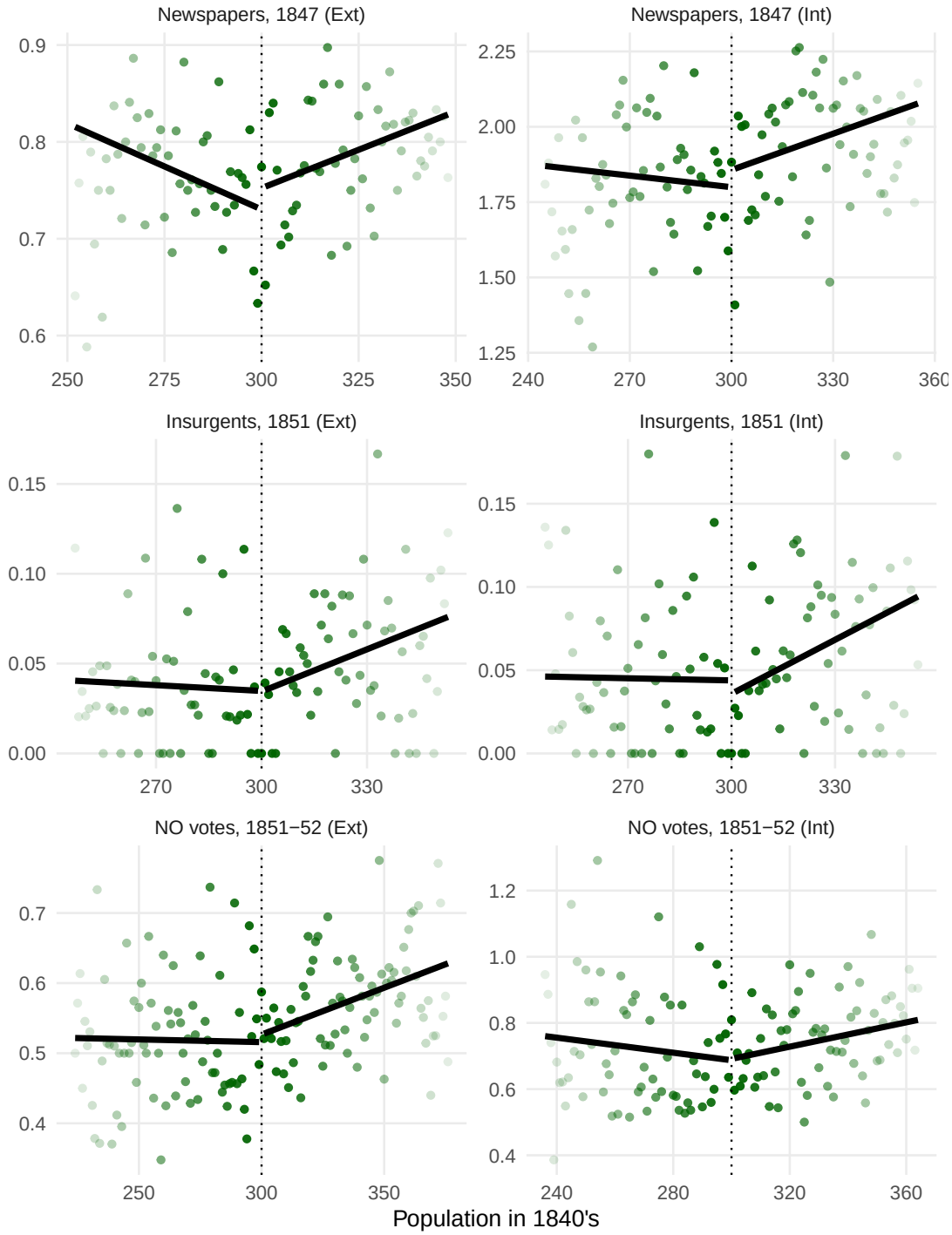
B Additional Tables and Figures

Table A.1: Summary statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
All data					
Suffrage (1841-1846)	28174	9.08	100.00	32.50	14.15
Extensive Index	28174	-1.32	3.15	0.08	0.69
Intensive Index	28174	-0.97	7.00	0.08	0.77
Newspapers, 1847 (Ext)	23733	0.00	1.00	0.86	0.34
Newspapers, 1847 (Int)	23733	0.00	7.52	2.50	1.39
Insurgents, 1851 (Ext)	28174	0.00	1.00	0.11	0.31
Insurgents, 1851 (Int)	28174	0.00	6.08	0.16	0.55
NO votes, 1851-52 (Ext)	26186	0.00	1.00	0.68	0.47
NO votes, 1851-52 (Int)	26186	0.00	4.55	0.85	0.90
Population between 200 and 400					
Suffrage (1841-1846)	9092	30.00	45.00	33.10	4.41
Extensive Index	9092	-1.32	3.15	-0.19	0.60
Intensive Index	9092	-0.97	5.81	-0.20	0.52
Newspapers, 1847 (Ext)	8286	0.00	1.00	0.77	0.42
Newspapers, 1847 (Int)	8286	0.00	6.66	1.85	1.29
Insurgents, 1851 (Ext)	9092	0.00	1.00	0.05	0.21
Insurgents, 1851 (Int)	9092	0.00	3.22	0.05	0.26
NO votes, 1851-52 (Ext)	8636	0.00	1.00	0.55	0.50
NO votes, 1851-52 (Int)	8636	0.00	4.47	0.74	0.89

Note: The upper panel presents summary statistics for the main variables in all communes with available population data from the 1841 and 1846 censuses. The lower panel focuses exclusively on communes with populations between 200 and 400 inhabitants.

Figure A.1: Kink regression plots for individual outcomes



Binned averages (dots) and the linear regression fit on each side of the kink point using weights from the triangular kernel (darker colors represent larger weights). The bins are identified using the procedure in (Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik, 2015). The x-axes differ between the plots because the graphs display data within the optimally selected bandwidths, which may vary by the outcome.

Table A.2: RDD effects of suffrage

	Index		Newspapers		Insurrection		Plebiscites	
	Ext. (1)	Int. (2)	Ext. (3)	Int. (4)	Ext. (5)	Int. (6)	Ext. (7)	Int. (8)
Coef. ($\hat{\tau}$)	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01
S.E.	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.12)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Bandwidth	118	118	102	114	100	106	155	132
Effective N	10,444	10,368	8,371	9,359	8,830	9,421	12,507	11,059
Outcome mean	−0.19	−0.20	0.77	1.85	0.05	0.05	0.54	0.73
Outcome SD	0.61	0.53	0.42	1.29	0.21	0.28	0.50	0.89
Suffrage range	[30, 49]	[30, 49]	[30, 45]	[30, 48]	[30, 45]	[30, 46]	[30, 62]	[30, 54]

Table A.3: Kink regressions using quadratic polynomials

	Index		Newspapers		Insurrection		Plebiscites	
	Ext. (1)	Int. (2)	Ext. (3)	Int. (4)	Ext. (5)	Int. (6)	Ext. (7)	Int. (8)
Coef. ($\hat{\tau}$)	0.10**	0.08*	0.10**	0.45**	0.02*	0.03*	0.03	0.04
S.E.	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.13)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.05)
SATT ($\hat{\tau} \times \Delta$)	−0.24	−0.18	−0.19	−0.65	−0.06	−0.08	−0.12	−0.11
Bandwidth	79	79	67	55	93	91	116	95
Effective N	7,204	7,204	5,706	4,743	8,369	8,213	9,816	8,195
Outcome mean	−0.18	−0.19	0.77	1.88	0.05	0.06	0.55	0.74
Outcome SD	0.61	0.53	0.42	1.28	0.21	0.29	0.50	0.89
Suffrage range	[30, 41]	[30, 41]	[30, 39]	[30, 37]	[30, 43]	[30, 43]	[30, 49]	[30, 44]

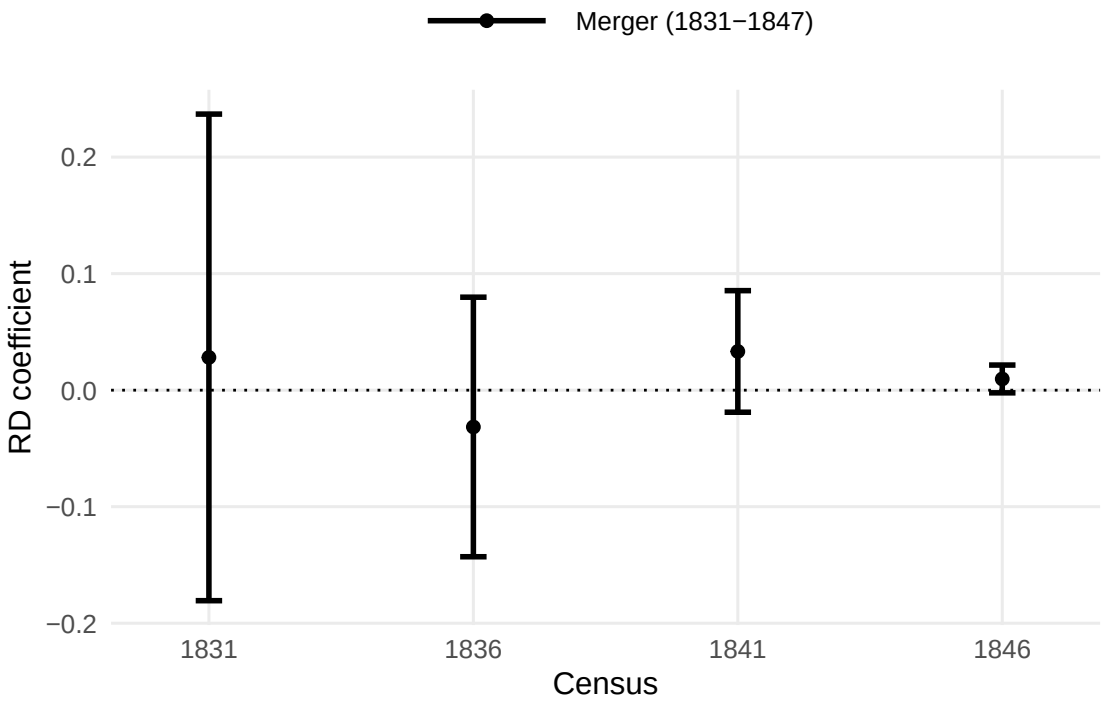
Table A.4: Kink regressions with department fixed-effects

	Index		Newspapers		Insurrection		Plebiscites	
	Ext. (1)	Int. (2)	Ext. (3)	Int. (4)	Ext. (5)	Int. (6)	Ext. (7)	Int. (8)
Coef. ($\hat{\tau}$)	0.07**	0.05**	0.03*	0.10*	0.01*	0.01*	0.03*	0.05
S.E.	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.03)
SATT ($\hat{\tau} \times \Delta$)	−0.08	−0.06	−0.05	−0.12	−0.02	−0.03	−0.05	−0.08
Bandwidth	48	48	51	47	64	71	62	54
Effective N	4,429	4,429	4,366	4,121	5,808	6,417	5,428	4,834
Outcome mean	−0.19	−0.20	0.77	1.89	0.05	0.06	0.54	0.73
Outcome SD	0.60	0.53	0.42	1.28	0.21	0.29	0.50	0.89
Suffrage range	[30, 36]	[30, 36]	[30, 36]	[30, 36]	[30, 38]	[30, 39]	[30, 38]	[30, 37]

Table A.5: Kink regressions excluding communes with changes in administrative geography

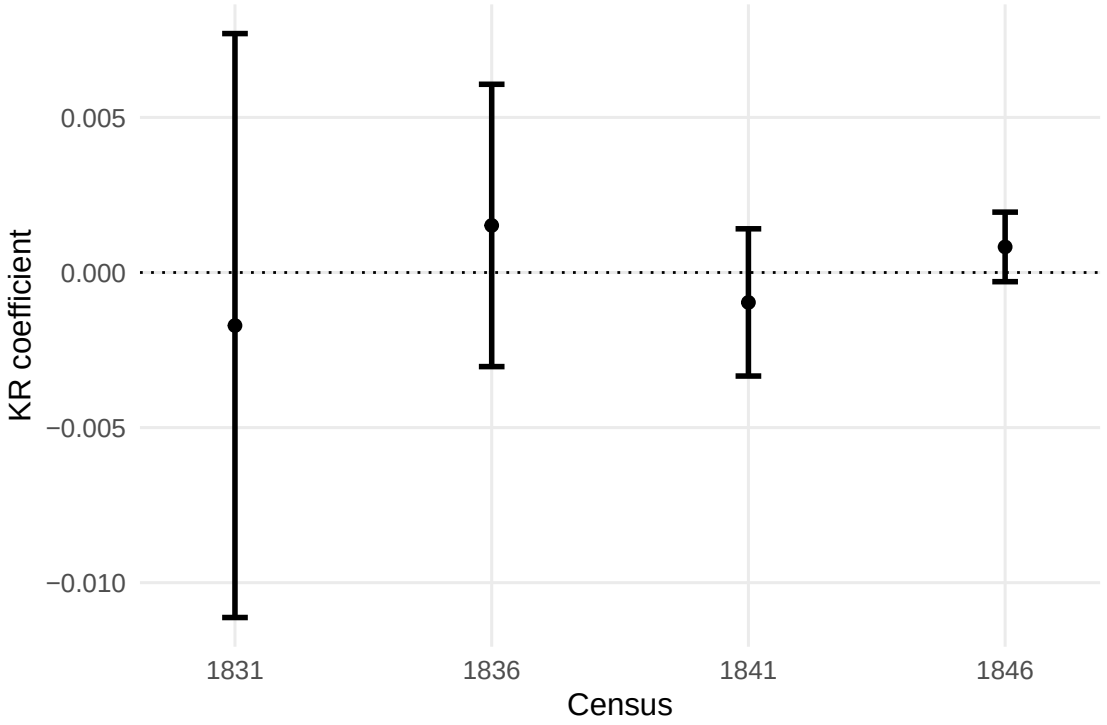
	Index		Newspapers		Insurrection		Plebiscites	
	Ext. (1)	Int. (2)	Ext. (3)	Int. (4)	Ext. (5)	Int. (6)	Ext. (7)	Int. (8)
Coef. ($\hat{\tau}$)	0.08**	0.06**	0.05**	0.12**	0.02*	0.02*	0.03*	0.06*
S.E.	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
SATT ($\hat{\tau} \times \Delta$)	−0.11	−0.08	−0.07	−0.17	−0.02	−0.03	−0.05	−0.10
Bandwidth	49	51	51	53	54	53	75	64
Effective N	4,356	4,531	4,222	4,379	4,784	4,784	6,251	5,447
Outcome mean	−0.19	−0.19	0.78	1.88	0.05	0.05	0.55	0.74
Outcome SD	0.60	0.53	0.42	1.28	0.21	0.29	0.50	0.90
Suffrage range	[30, 36]	[30, 36]	[30, 36]	[30, 36]	[30, 36]	[30, 36]	[30, 40]	[30, 38]

Figure A.2: Impact of the 300 cutoff on commune mergers: regression discontinuity estimates



The x-axis shows the census year from which the running variable was constructed. 95% confidence intervals were constructed using robust errors clustered at the department level.

Figure A.3: Impact of the 300 cutoff on commune mergers: kink regression estimates



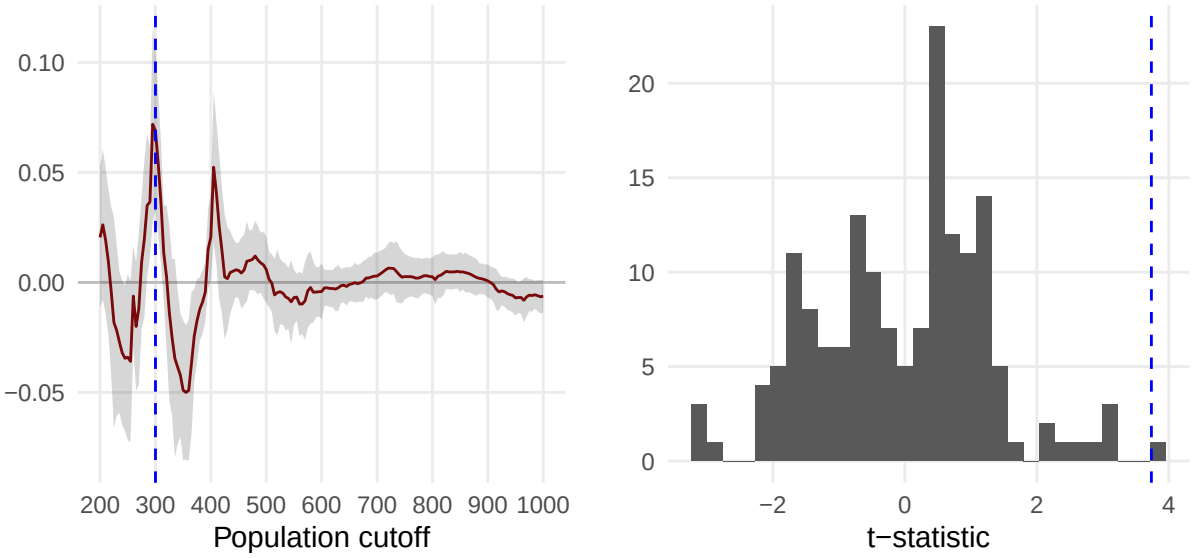
The x-axis shows the census year from which the running variable was constructed. 95% confidence intervals were constructed using robust errors clustered at the department level.

Table A.6: Kink regressions with spatial placebo running variable

	Index		Newspapers		Insurrection		Plebiscites	
	Ext. (1)	Int. (2)	Ext. (3)	Int. (4)	Ext. (5)	Int. (6)	Ext. (7)	Int. (8)
Coef. ($\hat{\tau}$)	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.06
S.E.	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.05)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.03)
SATT ($\hat{\tau} \times \Delta$)	−0.04	−0.05	−0.02	−0.02	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.08
Bandwidth	79	80	83	85	91	86	89	71
Effective N	4,826	4,858	4,540	4,620	5,510	5,253	5,337	4,264
Outcome mean	−0.04	−0.02	0.83	2.22	0.07	0.09	0.63	0.89
Outcome SD	0.64	0.65	0.38	1.36	0.25	0.38	0.48	0.95
Suffrage range	[30, 41]	[30, 41]	[30, 41]	[30, 42]	[30, 43]	[30, 42]	[30, 43]	[30, 39]

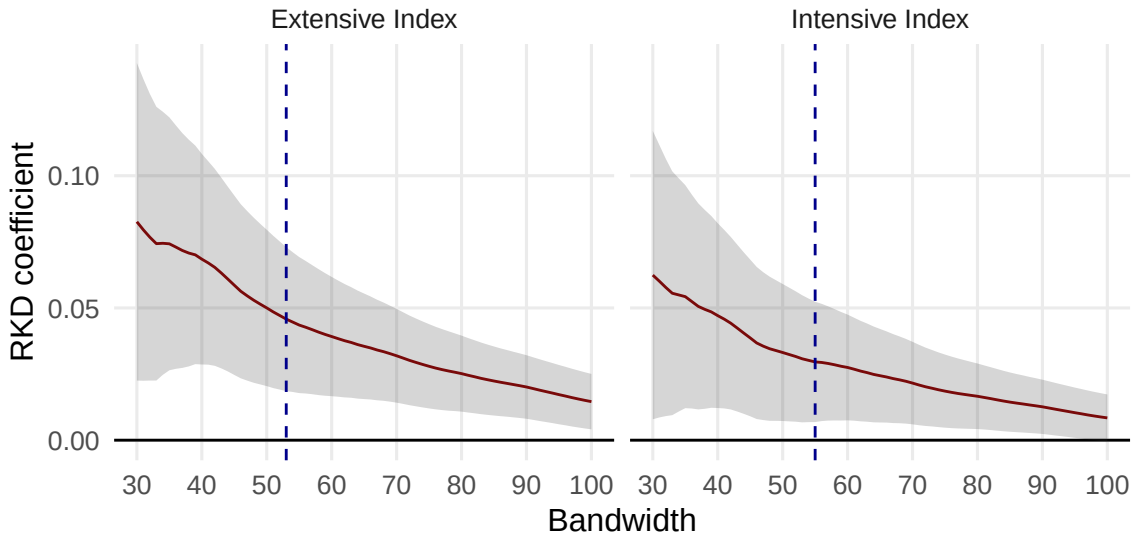
The running variable is the median population in the neighboring communes. S.E.'s clustered at the level of the department. $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Figure A.4: Estimates at alternative cutoffs (Extensive Index)



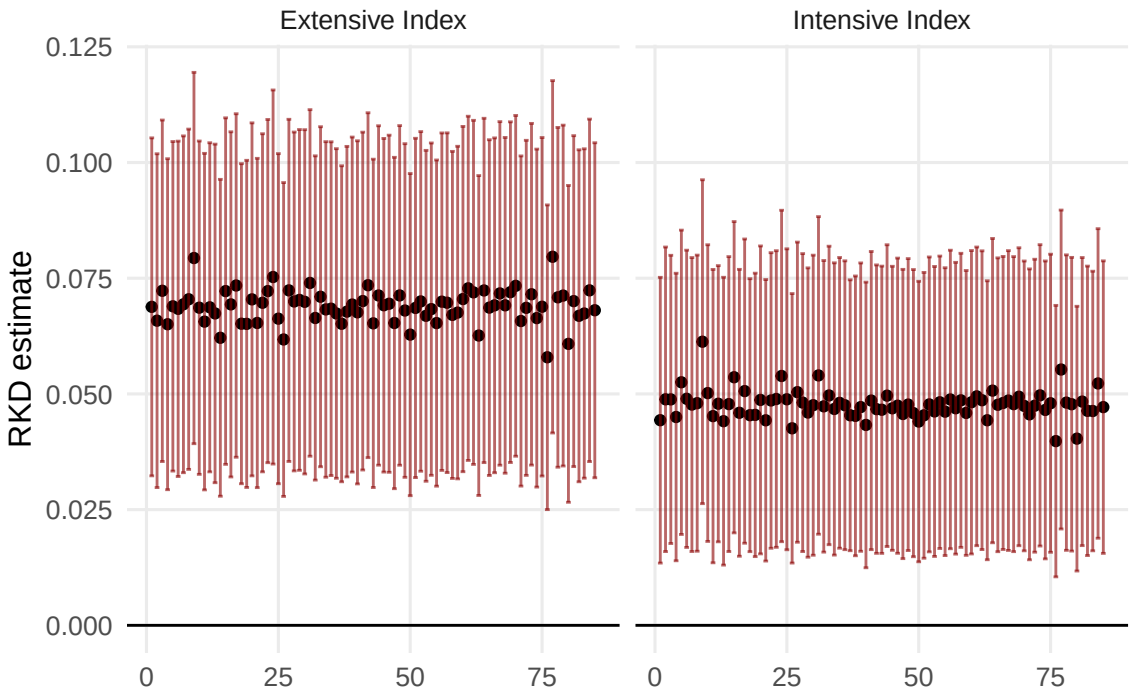
Left: the RKD coefficients with 95% confidence intervals for different population cutoffs. Right: the distribution of t-statistics for estimates using different population cutoffs. The vertical bar is for the t-statistic obtained at the 300-inhabitant cutoff. The outcome variable is the Extensive Index and the running variable is the minimum population in the 1840s.

Figure A.5: Estimates from alternative bandwidths



The dark red line represents the conventional RKD estimates obtained using the bandwidths indicated on the horizontal axis, assuming linear slopes. The gray ribbons are the 95% confidence intervals constructed using errors clustered at the department level. The left-hand side plot shows the estimates using the Extensive Index, while the right-hand side plot shows the estimates using the Intensive Index. Dashed lines represent the MSE-optimal bandwidths in each case.

Figure A.6: Sensitivity test



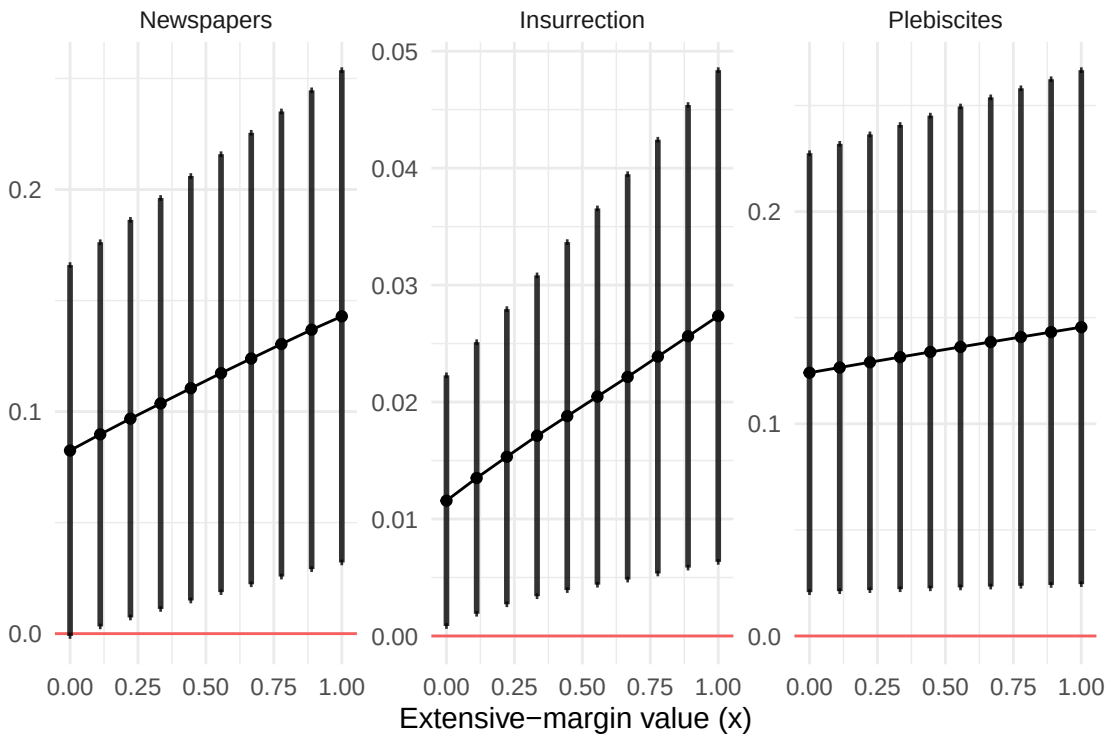
Each point is the kink regression coefficient estimate from the baseline regression excluding one department. The bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Table A.7: Suffrage and turnout

	% Total population			% Eligible population		
	1851	1852	1851-1852	1851	1852	1851-1852
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Coef. ($\hat{\tau}$)	0.10	−0.13	0.01	0.22	−0.34	0.04
S.E.	(0.10)	(0.21)	(0.13)	(0.29)	(0.36)	(0.19)
SATT ($\hat{\tau} \times \Delta$)	−0.27	0.21	−0.02	−0.62	0.62	−0.12
Bandwidth	89	63	79	95	67	97
Effective N	6,427	4,876	6,645	5,460	5,409	8,130
Outcome mean	26.20	26.29	26.18	87.34	88.56	88.04
Outcome SD	4.68	4.67	4.43	15.54	10.18	10.25
Suffrage range	[30, 43]	[30, 38]	[30, 41]	[30, 44]	[30, 39]	[30, 44]

Kink regression estimates. The dependent variable is the turnout in Napoleon's referendums as the percentage of the total population (columns 1-3) or the percentage of the eligible population (columns 4-6). The running variable is the minimum population in the 1840s. S.E.'s clustered at the department level. $^{***}p < 0.01$; $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{*}p < 0.1$.

Figure A.7: Calibration of the Extensive Margin



This figure reports estimates of the treatment effect using the extensive-margin calibration recommended in Chen and Roth (2024). The outcome variable is $m(Y)$, which is is $log(y)$ for $y > 0$ and $-x$ for $y = 0$. The outcomes are normalized so that $Y = 1$ corresponds to the minimum nonzero value. Therefore, the treatment effect assigns a value of $100x$ log points to an extensive-margin change from 0 to the minimum nonzero value of Y. The bars are 95% confidence intervals constructed using errors clustered at the department-level.