

Gender in Elections: The Consequences of Killing Women Activists on Election Outcomes*

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Abstract

Do women engage more in politics when women get killed? Two growing literatures hold opposing views on this question. To that end, this article adds important nuance to this discussion by exploring how the identity of victims of violence influences the full electoral circle in Colombian municipal elections. We argue that violence against women activists is used strategically by armed groups to influence electoral outcomes and reinforce gendered norms of order. Building on research on gendered patterns of violence, we show that violence against women activists reduces women's willingness to run for public office, increases voter turnout and promotes voters' demands for male political leadership. Drawing on novel fine-grained data on sex of killed activists, we find strong support for our hypotheses and show in additional analyses a reversed effect during the peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) with more women candidates and votes for women. Our findings demonstrate that taking into account victim identities provides powerful new insights into the gendered consequences of violence for elections.

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Introduction

Public outrage over the high number of femicides in the world is growing, and women's movements in Latin America have coined the term "femicides" to express that the killings of women are political in that not only male perpetrators are responsible, but also the state and legal structures that facilitate, normalize or fail to prevent killings of women (Zulver, 2022). This outrage has not been translated into an analysis of the differential impact of victimization on voting behavior in armed conflicts. Victims, voters and election results are often treated as independent of gender (Bardall et al., 2020). How does the victimization of women affect local elections during conflict?

Armed groups seeking control over territories may resort to violence, including killing civilians, in order to disrupt democratic processes like elections and foster a militarized order (Alacevich and Zejcirovic, 2020; van Baalen, 2023). Elites and other armed actors specifically target activists and politicians who challenge the status-quo to warn communities to adhere to established social hierarchies (Albarracín et al., 2023). From environmental defenders in Brazil to human rights advocates in Mexico and Turkey, the pattern of targeting individuals who stand up for democracy, social justice, environmental protection, and community rights is a troubling aspect of how democratic engagement is disturbed and often manipulated by violence (Krain et al., 2024). Within the already selective victimization of politicians and human rights defenders, violence against publicly active women, *activists*, proves to be a particularly insidious form of persecution, highlighting the intersection of gender-based discrimination and activism-related risks. Violence against women activists and politicians (Daniele et al., 2023; Håkansson, 2023) is a deliberate tactic used by armed groups and perpetrators to uphold power structures and traditional gender norms (Stallone and Zulver, 2024).

Despite the critical nature of the issue, there is a notable gap in our understanding of the implications of violence against women activists, particularly regarding the gendered consequences on political participation and electoral preferences. Two emerging literatures hold contrasting perspectives on this question, violence against women could increase gender bias against female leadership in elections (Bhatia and Monroe, 2023; Glaurdić and Less-

chaeve, 2023) but also lead voters to favour a policy change that could reduce the presence of men (Kreft, 2019; Morgan and Buice, 2013). Exploring the political consequences of violence against women activists is crucial for advancing the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG).¹ By understanding how these acts of violence deter women from participating in political processes, we can address and mitigate barriers to gender equality in elections.

We develop a theoretical framework to explain how victimization against women activists influences female political participation, voter turnout, and preferences for female politicians. Based on the previous ambiguities in the literature, we theorize that violence against women may in fact have dual effects on political participation and preferences. However, killings that exclusively target women should increase voter turnout because they trigger voters' emotions in the run-up to elections due to the roles ascribed to women in society.

We focus on killings of women activists and municipal elections in Colombia between 2007 and 2019.² Colombia is a suitable case to assess our theory for several reasons. First, local elections have been held during the civil war and thus provides a rare opportunity to assess how ongoing insecurity—and not only pre-election violence—affects elections. Second, women's movements and women general have proven to be powerful political actors in Colombia, for example by claiming their seat at the table during the peace negotiations, but they also face gender discrimination (Stallone and Zulver, 2024). Third, Colombia is the tragic leader in violence against women activists. In the wake of Colombia's historic peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgency, a watershed moment that promised to turn the page on decades of armed conflict, the nation has witnessed a disturbing trend that threatens the fragile gains of peace. Since the signing of the accord in December 2016 until December 2023, there has been a harrowing increase in violence against men and women activists. Fourth, in the Colombian context, activists and politicians are clearly separable categories with different roles in society. Very rarely do activists run for political office. Fifth, due to its size, Colombia offers within-case variation along important variables which allows us to explore under which conditions violence against women

¹"Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."

²We focus on who was elected as mayor and on violence against women perpetrated by armed actors. We never refer to domestic violence unless specifically stated.

activists influences women's performance in elections

Our main findings broadly support our hypotheses and show that the killing of women activists reduces women's candidanship by 7.4 percentage points (pp) and women's vote share by 9.5 pp, but increases turnout by 2 pp. To that end, we conclude that the identity of victims of violence—both gender and activism—significantly alters the electoral process by constraining women's access to public office, motivating citizens to vote, and reducing support for female leadership (Krook, 2020).

We explore the conditions which moderate the effect of women activists' killings in auxiliary analyses. The effect is only observable for women activists, but not for female civilians or female politicians. The killings of men activists do not affect any of the outcomes, suggesting that the female identity of victims and not their activism drives the results. We also provide evidence that our findings are not driven by armed conflict or illicit economies shocks. Regarding heterogeneous effects, we show that the effects of victimization against women activists are significantly mediated by the historical presence of non-state armed actors. Moreover, we find that during the period of the peace talks between the FARC insurgency and the government the killings of women activists had a reverse, positive push effect for women's candidacy and for the vote share of women. Finally, we assess the timing of the killings and find that the impact of killings emanates in the six months prior to local elections, confirming that the killings of women activists are strategically motivated to influence elections.

Our article advances the existing literature on the impact of violence on elections (e.g., Trelles and Carreras, 2012; Condra et al., 2018; Alacevich and Zejcirovic, 2020; van Baalen, 2023) by offering a theory and empirical assessment of how violence against women activists affects both female candidates' decision to run as candidates, and voters' mobilization and gendered voting preferences. Our article also adds to the growing 'war-women's empowerment' debate by shifting the level of analysis from the aggregate country level to the sub-national level (Kreft, 2019; Webster et al., 2019; Bakken and Buhaug, 2021). This allows us to advance an understanding of women's political engagement that is closer to the lived realities of communities than national-level politics.

Prior Research on the Consequences of Violence on Elections

The relationship between electoral violence and electoral preferences, as well as political participation, is complex and multifaceted, suggesting that violence can both suppress voter turnout and alter electoral preferences. Ley (2018) reveals that organized crime groups' strategic violence during electoral campaigns significantly demobilizes voters in Mexico. Similar results are reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Alacevich and Zejcirovic, 2020). The occurrence of electoral violence exacerbates the perceived sense of insecurity among citizens (Trelles and Carreras, 2012; Arjona, 2018). Electoral violence can benefit incumbent candidates not only by intimidating opposition and suppressing turnout in their strongholds but also by galvanizing support and increasing turnout in areas where the incumbent is already favored as van Baalen (2023) showed for the Côte d'Ivoire case or Hafner-Burton et al. (2018) in a cross-national data of 122 countries. However, voters also reject candidates associated with political violence, often casting their ballots against those implicated in perpetuating aggression (Gutiérrez-Romero and LeBas, 2020).

Armed conflict violence constitutes a critical form of electoral violence, directly impacting electoral dynamics by shaping voter behavior, candidate viability, and overall electoral integrity. There is a body of literature that delves into how the presence of armed conflict and related violence influences the willingness and ability of citizens to participate in elections. For instance, Balcells and Torrats-Espinosa (2018) reveal that terrorist attacks perpetrated by Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain, regardless of whether they are lethal or nonlethal, significantly increases people' intention to participate in forthcoming democratic elections (Robbins et al., 2013; Gallego, 2018). Conversely, Condra et al. (2018) present evidence that in Afghanistan insurgent attacks lead to a reduction of voter turnout, as these attacks undermine people's backing of the government and undermine the credibility of electoral processes. In a historical study, Lupu and Peisakhin (2017) finds that historical violence against Crimean Tartars reduces turnout among ancestors while—paradoxically—increasing their self-reported willingness to vote.³

³Note that an erratum has been published in 2023 which reports results that diverge from the original article.

Armed conflict violence also shapes voters' political preferences, driven by increased political polarization and instances of violent coercion. In Israel, Berrebi and Klor (2008) find that terrorist attacks lead to an increase in public support for right-wing political parties. Focusing on interwar period in the Weimar Republic, De Juan et al. (2023) show that communities severely affected by the human costs of war are more likely to vote for right wing parties. Paramilitary groups in Colombia delivered votes in favor of candidates in national elections that align more closely with their own interests (Acemoglu et al., 2013). Haass and Ottmann (2022) show that former rebels generate electoral support through clientelism in post-conflict Indonesia. Rozenas et al. (2017) explore the intergenerational impact of Stalin's repression in Ukraine and show that affected communities were less likely to vote for pro-Russia parties.

Questions related to the identities of the victims of armed conflict violence have increasingly received attention in research on the effect of violence on elections (Balcells and Stanton, 2021). This includes the political consequences of killing civilians involved in informal politics, who, despite not being formal political actors, play a crucial role in shaping political landscapes through grassroots movements, community organizing, and advocacy (Prem et al., 2022; Krain et al., 2024). Killing these publicly active civilians correlates with low voter turnout (Albarracín et al., 2023). The killings of politicians prior to elections affect voter turnout and preferences for peace policies (Daniele and Dipoppa, 2017; Gutiérrez et al., 2020).

One other critical identity category to understand the consequence of violence on elections is obviously the sex and gender of the victims. The role of women, both as victims, candidates, and voters, can significantly mediate the relationship between armed conflict violence and electoral results, potentially altering the dynamics and outcomes of elections. Individual women are often perceived as symbolic representatives of all women when they engage in public activities (Yan and Bernhard, 2024), and they may mobilize other women to participate in protests and even in armed resistance groups (Mehrl, 2023). Krook (2020) established that violence against women poses a major barrier to women's political engagement. The implications of fewer women in politics can be drastic. For instance, Kuipers (2020) shows that narrow victories of female candidates in local council elections in Indonesia reduce acceptance of domestic violence among both women and men.

Armed conflict violence impacts female political participation, creating an environment where the barriers to entry and engagement for women in politics are significantly heightened (Campbell, 2017). Gender-based perception differences about the impact of conflict on political aggression result in women expressing much less desire to engage in politics (Hadzic and Tavits, 2019). Violence also affects electoral preferences. Male and female candidates are often perceived as having expertise in distinct policy areas, a phenomenon that stems in part from gender-based trait stereotypes attributing typically masculine or feminine traits to them (Campbell, 2017). Insecurity decreases political preferences for female leadership in Afghanistan and Croatia (Bhatia and Monroe, 2023; Glaurdić and Lesschaeve, 2023) and support for male candidates due to stereotypes of men as stronger (Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Kim and Kang, 2022). Studies on the gendered consequences and dynamics of killing female politicians show that violence against women decrease their visibility in politics (Bardall et al., 2020; Daniele et al., 2023; Håkansson, 2023).

On the other hand, conflict violence can also serve as a catalyst for the political engagement of women. Women are often at the forefront of political change, advocating for rights and reforms, yet their experiences with electoral violence remain underexplored. Gaikwad et al. (2023) find that areas that suffered mass killings in Cambodia are associated with more female representation in local elected positions. Similarly, García-Ponce (2017) shows that exposure to insurgent violence triggers more female political participation in Peru. Women in Colombia often became political activists for human rights after experiencing traumatic forms of violence (Zulver, 2022) but they also experience gender-specific threats for their activism (Stallone and Zulver, 2024).

The identity of the victims killed prior to elections appears to be critical to electoral mobilization and voting preferences; however, expectations on the consequences of gendered killings for electoral outcomes are less clear.

Gendered Consequences of Violence Against Women on Elections

Recent studies suggest that conflict and violence affect gendered voting preferences, but the findings are ambiguous (García-Ponce, 2017; Hadzic and Tavits, 2021). Our theory contributes to this body of literature by examining gendered violence and gendered consequences of violence. First, our theory focuses on the supply and demand of women and men in elections during conflict. We integrate this gendered perspective with a procedural perspective of elections and thereby assume that the sex of civilian victims affects the complete electoral process from political candidacy, over voter mobilization to electoral preferences.

Second, we unpack the “violence” blackbox and differentiate between violence against female and male civilians. The notion that gendered violence may affect electoral outcomes builds on a set of studies showing that violence against men and women promotes civic and political mobilization at the grassroots level (Kreft, 2019; Hadzic and Tavits, 2021; Koos and Traunmüller, 2024; Lindsey and Koos, 2024). The question who benefits of this mobilization, women or men, is more unclear and is subject of our theory.

Third, our theory deconstructs the category of ‘civilian’ by describing how the status and visibility of victims can amplify gendered effects of violence within electoral districts. Voters’ electoral behaviour may depend on whether the woman killed was a housewife, church leader, human rights defender, or market vendor. To examine the effect of female victims, we conceptualize civilian attacks on women as the killing of a woman who was engaged in local social and political activism. The killing of women activists is likely to be known by more constituents and thus should have stronger effects on electoral outcomes compared to the killing of female civilians. Based on women activists we can draw conclusions about whether citizens actually form their electoral preferences on the killings of women because activism should amplify the effect of killings of female civilians.

Socially active women, often referred to as social activists, are not local elites or politicians. In most cases, they are housewives or farmers who have voluntarily placed themselves in a position where they can advocate for victims of the armed conflict, provide legal assistance to displaced people, organize strikes in communities and implement development projects.

They can easily become targets of armed groups to contain civilian protest and secure access to illicit businesses. The killing of these women influences dynamics in society because “their activism breaks social norms around women’s idealized roles within the private space” (Stallone and Zulver, 2024, 4).

Firstly, the fact that women are fighting grievances in public and challenging the social order in armed conflicts rather than remaining in the private sphere could create resentment that affects voting preferences. Secondly, their deaths publicly demonstrate that women are not adequately protected from armed groups who perceive them as a threat because they “transgress armed groups’ gendered visions of appropriate roles for men and women within society” (Stallone and Zulver, 2024, 3). When these women are killed, their deaths are widely publicized, and citizens realize that they were killed because they tried to help their communities and because the community and by extension the state failed to protect them.

People’s voting preferences and motivations, hence, should most strongly be influenced by the killing of a socially active woman who was close not only to a single family but to the whole community. We describe in the sections below how the killing of women activists could affect women’s candidacies, voter mobilization, and women’s electoral performance.

Women’s Candidacies after Violence Against Women Activists

We first turn to the fundamental question when a politically engaged person decides to run as a candidate in an upcoming election. Violence influences people’s views on politics and shapes their perceptions of the political arena (Kalyvas, 2003; Balcells, 2012). During times of war, individuals may perceive politics as confrontational and aggressive, leading those with these traits to be more inclined to engage in politics compared to those who do not share these perceptions (Rozenas et al., 2017; Hadzic et al., 2020). Violence can result in the political sphere being associated with masculine characteristics and the aim to reinforce traditional gender norms, where men are viewed as rulers and protectors of their communities (Goldstein, 2003; Handrahan, 2004; MacKenzie and Foster, 2017). This perception of politics as masculine may encourage men to seek political roles while potentially discouraging women

from standing for election (Hadzic and Tavits, 2019).

Violence against women activists indicates that powerful groups view women's activism as an inappropriate role for women in society (Stallone and Zulver, 2024). If women witness other women being targeted by armed groups, they may avoid public roles that could lead to social and political change (Håkansson, 2023). The murder of women activists is likely to instill fear in women, dissuading them from running for political positions. Husbands, fathers and other family members may also discourage women in their families from campaigning publicly for fear of armed actors. There may be a gender bias causing women to believe that female civilians are killed for not adhering to traditional gender roles, deterring them from participating in elections. Thus, living in an environment where women are targeted is likely to decrease their willingness to run for political office.

Another path could be that violence against women becomes a critical juncture for women's engagement and that citizens want more agency for women as potential agents of change, defending themselves, uniting against violence, or having political power. The killing of women activists could motivate women to run in elections because they want to publicly stand up for the women who have lost their lives fighting for their communities (Kreft, 2019; Zulver, 2022). They may realize that the violence against women has to stop and that men are not protecting women effectively. Running as political candidates might be based on a hope that as politicians, they can fight for changing the safety of all women in their communities. Additionally, much of the post-conflict engagement literature builds on the assumption that wars destroy social hierarchies and thereby enable formerly marginalized groups, including women, to take up political positions previously occupied by men and agency in peace building. (Tripp, 2015; García-Ponce, 2017; Webster et al., 2019; Bakken and Buhaug, 2021). Women could take free positions as a window of opportunity to become politically and socially active, especially when they witness violence against women.

Hypothesis 1A: Women run less as political candidates when women activists were killed prior to elections than in communities with no killings.

Hypothesis 1B: Women run more as political candidates when women activists were killed prior to elections than in communities with no killings.

Turnout in Response to Violence Against Women Activists

We now turn from women's candidacies to voter mobilization by proposing how gendered violence can affect turnout. Violence often lowers voter turnout when potential voters have reason to fear an outbreak of conflict prior to elections (Gallego, 2018; Alacevich and Zejcirovic, 2020; van Baalen, 2023). By extension, the killings of social activists could also reduce voter turnout (Albarracín et al., 2023). However, the disproportionate killing of only women does not signal to the local population that electoral violence against the whole community is to be feared. The killing of women activists signals to society that armed actors have killed these women because they have violated gendered expectations of appropriate roles for women (Stallone and Zulver, 2024). It shows that women who are active in the public sphere cannot expect to be safe. Yet women, including activists, have a protected status in society. People's emotions in the run-up to elections could be triggered by killings that exclusively affect women, as they ascribe a certain role to all women in society.

Violence against women activists, often perpetrated by male members of armed groups, underscores men's failure to protect women. The murder of women serves as a signal from the perpetrators to the broader male community (Goldstein, 2003; Lindsey, 2022), damaging their honor and status (Connell, 2020). Even if men hold gender biases against women activists, they are concerned about external perceptions that a woman's killing reflects a failure to protect her. This could lead to increased male participation in elections to influence future policies aimed at restoring their honor.

The killings of women activists may motivate women to vote for better protection measures. This could be driven by a desire for self-engagement and the need for new policies that support women's safety. Women may feel let down by men's failure to protect them and seek political change that prioritizes women's security. Conversely, some women may go to the ballot box to vote for more male representation to ensure protection. Overall, the emotions generated by the targeting and killing of women activists are likely to increase voter turnout for women and men, regardless of political affiliations.

Hypothesis 2: Citizens are more likely to vote in communities in which female civilians

were killed in communities with no killings.

Voting Preferences and Violence Against Women Activists

Finally, we focus on how violence against women activists can affect electoral preferences. If the killings of women activists mobilize electoral and political participation, the killings could also influence the electoral support female candidates get in local elections.

During conflict many societies display a longing for a strict gender order in which men rule and protect the women in their communities (Goldstein, 2003; Handrahan, 2004; MacKenzie and Foster, 2017). Although gender roles are socially constructed and performed, we assume that citizens use a gender lens to inform their voting preferences and evaluate potential candidates depending on their gender and gender performance. Citizens tend to stereotype men as more competent, decisive, and stronger leaders with better conflict-handling abilities. Women are seen as too compassionate and soft to hold political offices in times of crises (Campbell, 2017; Glaurdić and Lesschaeve, 2023). We witness, hence, that wartime institutions are dominated by male civilians and that non-state forms of order often take on masculine elements of order, punishment, and aggression (Hadzic et al., 2020).

Citizens have masculine and feminine trait stereotypes that influence their voting during conflict (Campbell, 2017). When citizens observe that publicly known women have become targets of armed conflict, they could favor men in politics because they believe they are better able to deal with violence and better able to protect the women in their communities. Citizens could reject women in politics because they believe that women in politics are not strong enough or able to confront the violence against them and their community (Sanbonmatsu, 2002). Men and women might take the killing of women activists, women who were active in public, as a sign that it is better to exclude women from public engagement in politics. This leads to a higher proportion of male candidates being elected after the killing of women activists.

In contrast, many post-conflict engagement studies suggest that wars can disrupt social hierarchies, leading to potential shifts in voters' preferences for traditional gender roles.

(García-Ponce, 2017; Webster et al., 2019; Bakken and Buhaug, 2021). When men are absent, citizens could vote for women because they are the best available candidates. Men and women may see the killings of women as a failure of the existing establishment, often perceived as male, and prefer a change in politics embodied by female candidates (Morgan and Buice, 2013). In post-conflict and during peace processes and peacebuilding, female candidates could receive more votes as war institutions weaken, men are absent, and international mediators and donors change patriarchal views (Koos and Lindsey, 2022).

Hypothesis 3A: Citizens are less likely to vote for women candidates when women activists were killed prior to elections than in communities with no killings.

Hypothesis 3B: Citizens are more likely to vote for women candidates when women activists were killed prior to elections than in communities with no killings.

Local Politics, Activism, and Violence in Colombia

To understand the meaning of killed women for electoral processes we take a closer look at social activists in Colombia. It is necessary to examine what role (female) social activists play in local politics and who benefits when activists are killed.

The size of Colombian municipalities ranges from 65,000 to just 15 km², and the population density ranges from almost 8 million in Bogotá to just 50,000 in María La Baja in the department of Bolívar. Colombian electoral politics are very decentralized. Since 1986 mayors and governors work and are elected independently (Carbó, 2006, 113). Voters cast ballots to elect mayors and councilors in each of the 32 departments of the country. In each of the 1,102 municipalities, citizens vote every four years for a mayor who exercises political authority, is head of the local administration or legal representative of the territorial entity and a municipal council, composed of between seven and 21 members, according to the respective population that exercises political control over the municipal administration. Colombian municipal elections are held under a closed-list format and there is a 30 per cent women quota for the candidate list. All potential political candidates should have access to the same financial resources for their campaign (Tula, 2015).

In rural areas, the state's authority is primarily enforced through military presence, with limited access to public and legal services (Chernick, 1998). As a result, local authorities, who are often connected to the main economic activity in the region, take on the role of providing public services instead of the state. These local authorities, which can include businessmen, cattle ranchers, armed group leaders, or drug cartels, resolve conflicts, establish social rules, and hold meetings to address community issues and make important decisions (Arjona, 2018). These local elites, often supported by private armies, are generally regarded by the population as the state or as the "establishment", but elites do not exclusively or solely influence local electoral politics (Posada-Carbó, 2007, 124).

Local politics in times of war is characterized by non-state forms of order (Arjona, 2018). Some communities are directly governed by guerrillas, paramilitaries or other armed groups that provide a comprehensive social order that goes beyond public order and taxation (Aponte González et al., 2024). In others, there is a strong civilian community that governs public life but relies on armed groups for protection. In rural areas, the state's authority is primarily enforced through military presence, with limited access to public and legal services (Chernick, 1998). As a result, local authorities, who are often connected to the main economic activity in the region, take on the role of providing public services instead of the state. These local authorities, which can include businessmen, cattle ranchers, armed group leaders, or drug cartels, resolve conflicts, establish social rules, and hold meetings to address community issues and make important decisions (Arjona, 2018). These local elites, often supported by private armies, are generally regarded by the population as the state or as the "establishment", but elites do not exclusively or solely influence local electoral politics (Posada-Carbó, 2007, 124). Local politics in times of war is characterized by non-state forms of order (Arjona, 2018). Some communities are directly governed by guerrillas, paramilitaries or other armed groups that provide a comprehensive social order that goes beyond public order and taxation (Aponte González et al., 2024). In others, there is a strong civilian community that governs public life but relies on armed groups for protection.

Social activists play a critical role by providing the public with a face to contact when political candidates and state authorities fail. They often act as intermediaries between ru-

ral communities and the government, helping communities to implement measures such as land restitution, promotion of local development initiatives and replacement of cocaine plantations (Gutiérrez et al., 2020; Marín Llanes, 2020; Prem et al., 2022). Citizens perceive that social activists support them in their demands for redistribution measures, call for concrete microfinancing for infrastructure projects and denounce corruption and human rights violations (Lobo et al., 2016; Orbegozo-Rodríguez, 2021). In local elections, citizens rely on these activists to channel community demands, monitor the performance of locally elected bodies and the implementation of projects, and report cases of corruption.

Social activists are often seen as a threat when they challenge the authority of the state, by for example organizing strikes. Over time, the role of social activists in local politics has shifted from human rights-oriented activism as part of a broader left-wing movement in the 1970s and 1980s to a more practically oriented activism that advocates for the funding of specific projects or the restitution of certain territory to victims (González-Jácome, 2018). Social activists often threaten the economic and social interests of armed groups, local elites, and the state by campaigning for land restitution (Marín Llanes, 2020; Orbegozo-Rodríguez, 2021), opposing mining, natural resource exploitation projects (Vélez-Torres et al., 2022) and coca cultivation. Moreover, social activists highlight the state's inability to protect its citizens. If they are killed, armed groups, local elites, and the state can expect fewer public protests and more freedom to implement their projects, be it the commercialization of illegal crops or land grabbing. Paramilitary groups also benefit from killing social activists in their fight against a perceived "communist" threat (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Vargas, 2017) and in many cases, social activists have been directly targeted by paramilitary or guerrilla forces to facilitate territorial control (Steele, 2018).

Threatening and killing social activists dates back at least to the emergence of the paramilitary groups in 1982 (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Vargas, 2017). After the demobilization of several paramilitary units in 2007, the number of attacks on social activists decreased, but increased again when the FARC announced a ceasefire during the peace talks with the government in Cuba in 2012. Since 2016 when the peace agreement was signed, we see a stark increase in social activist killings in mostly regions that the FARC abandoned. In the territories where

the FARC were most active, new groups started to fight for territorial control via intimidating and targeting civilians and social activists. Simultaneously, some former displaced community members returned to their places of origin to reclaim their land and many social activists demanded security and development projects more fearlessly (Orbegozo-Rodríguez, 2021; Prem et al., 2022).

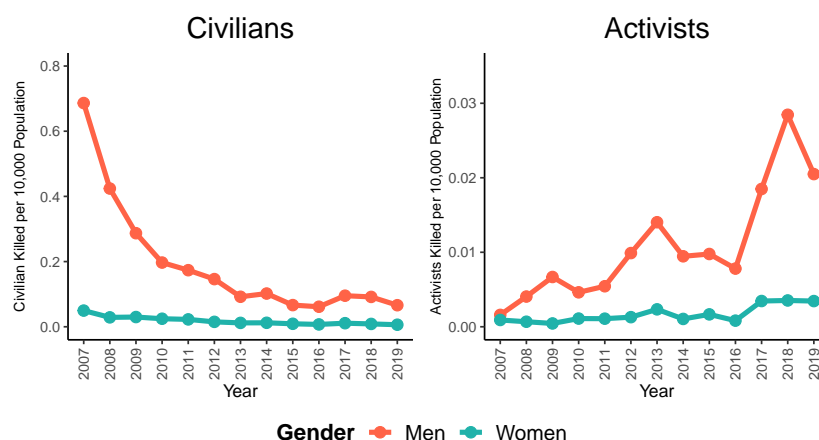
Women activists are often targeted by armed groups because their activism is seen as a threat to the armed groups' dominance and because, as active and outspoken women, they break the traditional gender order that paramilitary groups establish and use to secure their political power over a community (Barreto Daza, 2017). Armed groups, which are often dominated by men, feel threatened by these women who mobilize communities and challenge gender hierarchies (Stallone and Zulver, 2024). Many of the women activists killed in the past were active in human rights organizations and groups that advocate for victims of the armed conflict, minorities and women. Because of the areas in which these women were active and the social roles ascribed to women, these activists directly challenge the power of the armed groups. Killed male activists were often engaged in land dispossession and labor unions. However, there is no clear gendered disparity in activism of killed social activists based on the dataset from *Somos Defensores*, a Human Right NGO based in Colombia.⁴

Figure 1 shows the extent of killings of civilians and social activists by sex between 2007 and 2019.⁵ It reveals two distinct patterns of violence against civilians in Colombia. Firstly, we observe a pronounced reduction in violence against civilians for both sexes. This trend can be plausibly linked to the shifting dynamics of the Colombian armed conflict, particularly during the period marked by the demobilization of paramilitary groups and the strengthened institutional presence of the Colombian government. In contrast to this, the level of victimization among social activists, while lower relative to civilians, displays a pattern of increasing victimization over time. In 2007, there was a modest incidence of victimization, with a total

⁴Analysis of the victims' affiliations indicates that 31% of leaders represent armed conflict and land dispossession organizations, minorities and female organizations take 29% of the victims, followed by human rights organizations (22%), labor unions (15%), and environmental organizations (5%).

⁵The data from *Somos Defensores* contains the names of the victims. Based on the names, we were able to determine the sex of the victims. We did not include LGBT individuals in this (binary) count because the only two case descriptions included information on gender.

Figure 1: Evolution of killings by sex in Colombia, 2007–2019



Notes: This figure presents the evolution of killings of civilians and social activists discriminating by sex from 2007 to 2019.

of 10 victims (7 male activists and 3 women activists). As time passes, Figure 1 shows a gradual rise in victimization events. Notably, Figure 1 shows a higher incidence of male activists' victimization, which could potentially be attributed to a greater number of males being involved in social activism than women activists. By 2015, it shows 47 killings for male activists and 11 for females (81% and 19%). Finally, there is a notable spike in 2016, coinciding with the signing of the peace agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government (Prem et al., 2022). This year marks a dramatic increase in incidents for both genders, with male activists' victimization peaking at around 138 and women activists at about 21. Post-2016, although there is a slight decrease, the level of victimization for men and women remains elevated compared to the pre-2016 figures, suggesting a persistent increase in risk for activists following the peace agreement.

In sum, local politics in Colombia is characterized by a strong mistrust of the state and a perceived threat from armed groups. In this environment, social activists act as local catalysts representing communities and their interests, with different perceptions depending on gender. We focus explicitly on the killings of women activists as an amplifier of killings of female civilians because we want to understand whether the victimization of women matters for local voting behaviour.

Data Collection

Women Activists Killings

The information about the killings of social activists comes from the database of *Somos Defensores*, a Human Right NGO based in Colombia, dedicated to documenting and advocating against violence towards human rights defenders and social activists in Colombia.⁶ This NGO's comprehensive data collection encompasses detailed reports on incidents of aggression, including killings, threats, and other forms of violence against activists, making it a relevant resource for analyzing the patterns of such violence. It contains important details, including the characteristics of the incidents, geographic locations, dates, and victims' demographic information. We collect the victim's name, incident date, the specific location (municipality), and type of activism for each reported incidence. By focusing on these key variables, we ensure an understanding of each incident, facilitating a detailed examination of the correlation between violence against women activists and election results.

The victimization events are presented as a panel dataset at the municipal-electoral year level in Colombia, spanning 2003 to 2019. This structure is ideal for our study since it enables a flexible analysis of trends over time and across different geographical units. While *Somos Defensores* records primary reports on a daily basis, our study consolidates this data annually. The adoption of this aggregation approach is in line with the main objective of our study, which is to analyze the influence of women activists victimization on electoral outcomes at the local level.

Somos Defensores provides culturally and contextually rich information, as it is deeply integrated into the local context. This focus allows for a more nuanced understanding of the local dynamics of violence, which might be more granular and contextually relevant than the broader, global information provided, for instance, by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program(UCDP). However, there are several potential shortcomings to consider when handling event data. The accuracy of it

⁶There are different publicly available records of the killings of social leaders (e.g., INDEPAZ and Pacifista) We chose the data from *Somos Defensores* because it had the most detailed case descriptions

depends heavily on the reporting mechanisms and the willingness of individuals to report incidents. Underreporting may occur as a result of concern regarding potential retaliation, shame, a lack of confidence in the reporting mechanism, or simply because some incidents go unnoticed.⁷

Descriptive statistics highlight an increasing trend in the number of killings over the years, with the annual count rising from 10 in 2007 to 116 in 2019, illustrating a significant increase. The average age of victims was 40 years, with a standard deviation of 14 years, indicating that activists across a broad age range are being targeted. Sex distribution among the victims shows 86% male and 14% female, underscoring a significant disparity in the data and suggesting that the killings of women activists in Colombia represent a particularly selective phenomenon within the already selective victimization characteristic of violence against social activists.

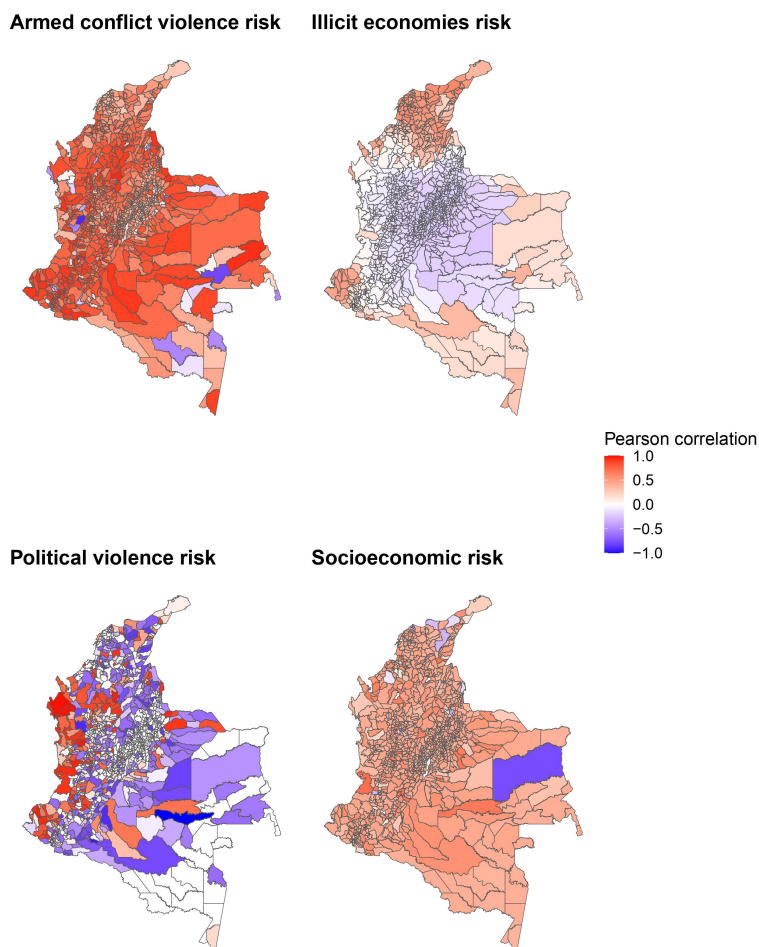
In the dataset, the perpetrators behind the killings of social activists are identified in varying proportions: unknown actors are responsible for 85% of the cases, highlighting the challenge of impunity and the difficulty in achieving justice; state forces are implicated in 2.2% of the incidents, reflecting concerns about state involvement or complicity; the ELN (National Liberation Army) and FARC are attributed with 0.1% and 3% of the killings, respectively, indicating the continued influence of these guerrilla groups despite peace efforts; and paramilitary groups are linked to the remaining 6%. This distribution not only reflects the multifaceted nature of the conflict in Colombia but also underscores the diverse threats faced by social activists, complicating efforts to protect them and hold perpetrators accountable.

We created a comprehensive set of victimization risk indices, specifically designed to measure and examine the vulnerability of social activists to violence resulting from armed conflict, the existence of illegal economies, political violence, and socioeconomic issues.⁸ Figure 2 il-

⁷We have made a methodological decision to exclude data prior to 2003 due to concerns about the consistency and reliability of these earlier records. On examining the available data, we observed inconsistencies in the recording of dates and the presence of duplicates, which raised questions about the accuracy of this information. Hence, we focused on data from 2003 onwards.

⁸We employ a principal component analysis (PCA) to develop four distinct indices: armed conflict violence, the presence of illicit economies, political violence, and socioeconomic risk. The armed conflict violence risk index includes variables such as cases of land dispossession, violent threats, forced disappearance, forced displacement, homicides, physical and psychological injuries, kidnappings, torture, and conflict events. The illicit economy risk index includes measures such as the presence of coca crops, the number of primary inputs and cocaine labs

Figure 2: Social activists victimization and risk factors in Colombia, 2007-2019



Notes: This map illustrates the geographic correlation of killings of social activists in Colombia at the municipal level between 2007 and 2019 with indices of armed conflict violence, presence of illicit economies, political violence, and socioeconomic variable.

illustrates the spatial distribution of the correlation between each of the four indices and the number of social activist killings normalized by population size. Areas with a high positive correlation are marked in the darkest red. Conversely, areas in darkest blue indicate a strong negative correlation.

destroyed, hectares covered by eradication operations, the distance from a municipality centroid to the closest military, to the closest port, to the largest city, and to Bogotá. The political violence risk index includes a measure of electoral risk and the number of politicians and government officials who are getting killed. Finally, the socioeconomic risk index includes a region dummy indicator, population size, municipality size, tax revenue, government spending, number of teachers, standardized test scores, and crime rates.

The killings of social activists in Colombia are highly correlated with violence driven by the long-standing armed conflict in the country as it has created a pervasive culture of violence and impunity (Prem et al., 2022; Albarracín et al., 2023). In regions where the conflict is most intense, social activists frequently become targets owing to their advocacy for human rights, land restitution, and social justice (Marín Llanes, 2020; Orbezo-Rodríguez, 2021). The rate of killings of social activists in Colombia is also closely linked with the presence of illicit economies, especially the cultivation and trafficking of coca as indicated in Figure 2. These activists expose the environmental and social harm caused by coca cultivation and directly challenge the economic foundations of many armed groups and criminal networks that profit from the drug trade.

Violence against social activists in Colombia seems to deviate significantly from the pattern of violence targeting politicians and government officials, according to Figure 2. This divergence stems from the differing roles and perceptions of these two groups within the societal and political landscapes. Politicians and local officials, especially those in higher positions of power, usually have greater visibility, formal political influence, and access to state protection resources, all of which can discourage overt acts of violence. Finally, violence against social activists is linked with broader socioeconomic challenges, including poverty, limited access to education and health services, and prevalent crime, factors often coexisting with the presence of violent actors and illicit economies.

Gendered Electoral Outcomes

The election data used in this analysis is obtained from the *Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil*, the official entity responsible for organizing and supervising elections in Colombia. It includes information on local elections in 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019. To ascertain the sex of each municipal candidate, we employed a methodology based on the names of the candidates as listed in the electoral records.⁹ This approach enabled us to categorize candidates as male or female, allowing for a sex-based analysis of electoral outcomes.

Using this sex-identified data, we calculated several key indicators. First, we computed

⁹None of the candidates were registered as transgender.

the share of female candidates in the municipal elections, an indicator that offers a perspective on gender representation in the political arena. This statistic is particularly telling in understanding the extent to which women are present and active in the political landscape of Colombia. Next, we estimated voter turnout (the percentage of eligible voters who participated in the elections) to understand public engagement in the electoral process within different municipalities. Finally, we assessed the vote share for female candidates, which reflects the proportion of votes received by female candidates relative to the total votes cast. This measure provides insights into the level of electoral support for female leadership at the local level and also serves as a marker of gender inclusivity and progress in political representation.

Other Data

We expand these data by incorporating a wide range of municipality-level data from the *Centro de Estudios sobre Desarrollo Económico* (CEDE) at Universidad de los Andes. We include various socioeconomic and geographic indicators such as population, size of the municipality, distance to the closest mayor city, distance to Bogotá, an index of rurality, presence of coca crops, eradication operations, tax revenues, government spending, number of school teachers, standardized test scores, and crime rates. We also utilize data on electoral risk provided by *Misión de Observación Electoral* (MOE). This data includes assessments of risks related to electoral processes, such as political violence, voter intimidation, and fraud. Further, our study integrates data on conflict events that encompasses detailed accounts of conflict-related incidents from Universidad del Rosario. We complement these conflict data with an official registry that identifies and records individuals who have suffered harm as a result of the armed conflict in the country, from *Registro Único de Víctimas* (RUV), and on cases of selective violence from *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (CNMH). Key aspects of the RUV include cases of: abandonment or forced dispossession of land, threats, forced disappearance, forced displacement, homicides, physical and psychological injuries, kidnappings, and torture. Finally, we incorporate information regarding the destruction of cocaine labs, primary input

labs, and eradication operations from *Observatorio de Drogas de Colombia*.

Empirical Strategy

Estimation

Our empirical strategy is designed to assess the impact of violence against women activists compared to no killings municipal election outcomes in Colombia between 2007 and 2019. By focusing on the variation in both the timing of these killings and their geographical occurrence across the Colombian municipalities, we aim to isolate the causal effects of killings of women activists on the electoral outcomes during municipal elections. This is the reason why our main empirical strategy is based on a *stacked difference-in-differences* model (Gardner, 2021; Baker et al., 2022; Rexer et al., 2022; Dube et al., 2023).

An episode of victimization is defined as a dummy indicator of any incident of killing that specifically targets women social activists occurring within the non-electoral period between two consecutive regional elections in Colombia. For example, an episode in the year 2007 in a given municipality encompasses all instances of killings that occurred from November 2003 (immediately following the regional elections of that year) to October 2007 (just before the regional elections of 2007). The same procedure is consistently applied for each electoral period in the study (2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019). This approach aims to create a systematic method for identifying and categorizing instances of victimization in relation to the electoral timeline¹⁰.

For the *stacked difference-in-differences*, each identified episode of victimization forms the basis for creating an episode-specific dataset. This dataset is constructed by integrating all treated municipality-election instances within a defined three-electoral-periods event window that encompasses the episode. The treated municipalities are those directly impacted by victimization events against women activists. Alongside these, we include a selected sample

¹⁰We employ a *stacked differences-in-differences* approach due to the unique characteristics of our treatment, where the occurrence of violence against women activists—our treatment variable—can switch on and off multiple times throughout our sample period. This feature means a municipality may experience the treatment on multiple occasions, diverging from scenarios best suited for traditional DiD or staggered DiD models.

of control units that were chosen for their absence of any victimization event, thereby serving as a baseline for our counterfactual. Following the formation of these episode-specific datasets, we proceed to append each of these episodes into a single, comprehensive dataset. More formally, using the subindex e to denote an episode, i to denote municipalities, and t to denote electoral years, we estimate:

$$y_{ite} = \alpha_i \times \gamma_e + \delta_t \times Coca_i \times \gamma_e + \beta_1 \times Treat_{ie} \times Post_{te} + \varepsilon_{ite} \quad (1)$$

where y is an electoral outcome for municipality i in election t (the share of female candidates in the municipal elections, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates). $Treat_{ie}$ is a dummy that takes the value one for municipalities with events of victimization. $Post_{te}$ is a dummy that takes the value one for the post-treatment period. α_i is a municipality fixed effect that captures any time-invariant municipal-level heterogeneity. δ_t is an electoral year fixed effect that captures any aggregate time shock. $Coca_i$ is the share of coca cultivation relative to the size of a municipality measured before 2007. We include an episode fixed effect, γ_e , to fully saturate the model with the municipality and year fixed effects. This effect interacts with $Coca_i$ to account for any differential impact caused by the incidence of coca cultivation and the presence of illegal economies. Since a municipality may be treated multiple times or the same municipality may serve as a control unit in different episodes, the error term ε_{ite} is allowed to be correlated at the municipal level.

We extend the core framework of Equation 1 by incorporating a *triple differences* (DDD) approach to examine heterogeneous effects. This empirical strategy allows us to uncover how the impact of violence varies across different groups, conditions, or municipal characteristics. In this case, we estimate:

$$\begin{aligned} y_{ite} = & \alpha_i \times \gamma_e + \delta_t \times Coca_i \times \gamma_e + \beta_1 \times Treat_{ie} \times Post_{te} + \\ & \beta_2 \times Treat_{ie} \times Z_{te} + \beta_3 \times Post_{te} \times Z_{te} + \\ & + \beta_4 \times Treat_{ie} \times Post_{te} \times Z_{te} + \varepsilon_{ite} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where Z_{te} is the measure we include as a heterogeneity. β_4 estimates the additional effect of violence on electoral outcomes for the variable Z_{te} in the post-treatment period.

Identification

Our coefficient of interest in Equation 1 is β_1 ¹¹, which captures the differential change on any of our outcome variables after events of victimization against women activists, relative to the change in municipalities that did not report any kinds of violence after taking into account any differential effect driven by fixed municipal features, any aggregate time shock, and the incidence of coca cultivation. β_1 in Equation 1 allows us to retrieve the *average treatment effect on the treated* (ATT), that is, the effect of victimization on the electoral outcomes in municipalities that experienced violence during the sample period we consider in our analysis.

The main identification assumption is the parallel trends assumption. In this particular case, the parallel trends assumption posits that in the absence of victimization events against women activists, the electoral outcomes in both treated (municipalities experiencing victimization) and control (municipalities without victimization) groups would have followed a similar trend over time. Our empirical model would attribute any divergence in trends during the post-treatment period to the impact of violence against women activists in Colombia. We test this identifying assumption following Roth (2022) and Rambachan and Roth (2023).

The stacked specification can be conceptualized as a conventional two-way fixed effects (TWFE) regression, computed independently for each episode. This type of regression may be biased in the presence of effect heterogeneity (de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfœuille, 2020; Goodman-Bacon, 2021; de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfœuille, 2022; Roth et al., 2023). To avoid any inclusion of already-treated and not-yet-treated units in our control group, we only use never-treated municipalities that never experienced any violent events during our sample period. In doing so, we try to avoid any bias driven by negative weights (de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfœuille, 2020; Callaway and Sant’Anna, 2021; Goodman-Bacon, 2021; Sun and Abraham, 2021; de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfœuille, 2022; Roth et al., 2023; Borusyak et al., 2024).

¹¹Or β_1 and β_4 in Equation 2.

Employing a *stacked difference-in-differences* strategy to investigate the causal impact of women activists' killings on local electoral outcomes introduces identification threats due to the potential non-independence of the treatment variable. Specifically, the killings of women activists may correlate with violence against other groups, such as female civilians, politicians, and male targets, complicating the isolation of the treatment's unique effect amidst a broader spectrum of violence. Moreover, these incidents might coincide with other conflict-related or eradication shocks, such as military operations or policy interventions, which independently influence electoral outcomes. To robustly address these challenges, we conduct detailed sensitivity analyses to ensure the credibility of our findings in delineating the specific causal effects of women activists' killings on electoral behavior.

Results

Main Results

We begin by studying the impact of violence against women activists on municipal election outcomes in Table 1. We do this by using Equation 1, where $Treat_{ie}$ takes the value of one if we observe any case of violence against a women activist in municipality i . This approach allows us to isolate the impact of such violence by comparing electoral behavior before and after incidents across affected and unaffected municipalities, providing insights into the relationship between these events and political engagement at the local level. Focusing on violence against women activists rather than female victims in general highlights the targeted suppression of women, who are pivotal in advocating for change, thereby shedding light on the specific mechanisms through which gender-based violence is used as a tool of political and social control.

Column (1) in Table 1 shows that women activists' victimization decreases the share of female candidates. The reduction in the share of female candidates is, on average, 7.4 percentage points (pp). The municipal average share of female candidates is 13.3%, so this reduction represents almost 66% of the dependent variable sample mean. These results confirm hypoth-

Table 1: Women activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Share of	Turnout	Female
	female		candidates
	candidates		vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-7.373*	1.962*	-9.449*
	(3.507)	(0.833)	(3.833)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.112	0.688	0.163
Observations	46,510	46,510	46,510
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	257	257	257
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral-year episodes of victimization against women activists. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of female social activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include turnout, vote share for female candidates, share of female candidates, and a dummy of a female candidate winning an election. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

esis 1A and reject hypothesis 1B. The gendered consequence of the killings of women activists is that fewer women run for office, which is consistent with qualitative evidence from Colombia showing that women do not run for office because they perceive politics as clientelistic and male-centred (Velásquez Leal et al., 2007).

Column (2) in Table 1 shows that there is an average increase in voter turnout of 2 pp, suggesting a mobilization effect among the electorate (Hypothesis 2). Though we normally see a lower turnout when social activist get killed in Colombia (Albarracín et al., 2023), the killings of exclusively women seems to increase people’s willingness to go to the ballot box.

Despite the increased turnout, column (3) in Table 1 shows a decrease of on average 9.5 pp in the vote share for female candidates after the killings of women activists. The municipal average vote share for female candidates is 16.3%, so this reduction represents almost 58% of the dependent variable sample mean. These results indicate that while the electorate is more motivated to vote when women activists get killed, women are less willing to run for office

(Hypothesis 1A) and citizens are more swayed against female candidates in municipal elections (Hypothesis 3A). Since there are no gender-disaggregated election results, we can only surmise that these results are based on a preference for men in politics after women activists were killed because citizens trust men to deal with violence and protect their communities.¹²

Our findings shed light on the gendered consequences of violence against women activists on local politics in Colombia. The distinct patterns observed in electoral outcomes, such as the increased voter turnout juxtaposed with decreased support for female candidates, emphasize the nuanced and complex nature of this impact. It is evident that the victimization of female social activists not only activates a higher level of political engagement among the electorate but also seems to reshape attitudes and perceptions towards female political participation and leadership.

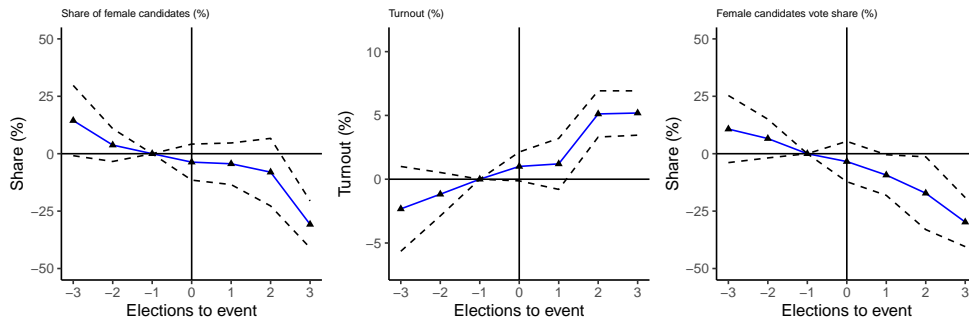
Robustness Checks

One of the main concerns arising from our finding in Table 1, particularly in the context of using a *difference-in-differences* approach, is the potential violation of the parallel trends assumption. This assumption is fundamental to the validity of the empirical model, as it underpins the causal interpretation of the estimated effects. For example, in regions where female social activists are more likely to be victimized, there could also have been a rising trend of political mobilization and engagement among women, independent of any violence. This pre-existing trend could be driven by various factors, such as heightened awareness of gender issues, increased educational opportunities for women, or broader social movements empowering women's participation in politics. In this case, any increase in voter turnout or changes in the electoral success of female candidates in these regions might be partially or wholly due to this underlying trend rather than the victimization events per se.

Figure 3 displays the event study plot representation of Equation 1, specifically highlight-

¹²The results shown in Table A1 in the Appendix demonstrates that the victimization of women activists leads to a decrease in the number of female candidates as the number of male candidates increases. Similarly, Table A2 shows that the observed reduction in the vote share for female candidates is counterbalanced by a corresponding increase in the vote share for male candidates, indicating a shift in voter preferences rather than a protest against the candidates available. This pattern is further substantiated by the absence of any significant change in the blank vote share, which suggests that voters are not resorting to protest voting but are instead reallocating their support between male and female candidates in response to the circumstances.

Figure 3: Event study: Women activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes in Colombia, 2007-2019



Note: This figure shows coefficients from stacked event-study regressions described in Table 1 based on Equation 1 together with the 95% confidence interval on electoral year data for three different municipal election outcomes, indicated in each subfigure title. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level.

ing the subset of victimization episodes involving women activists as in Table 1. It shows that point estimates in the pre-event window hover around zero and are not statistically significant, indicating no pre-existing differential trends between the treatment and control groups. Then, in the post-event window, the coefficients become statistically significant and deviate from zero. Most of these point estimates are statistically significant at the 5%.

An important methodological issue to consider is the possibility of underpowering in pre-trends tests, like the one shown in Figure 3 to confirm the assumption of parallel trends in *difference-in-differences* models (Roth, 2022). For example, smaller sample sizes reduce the statistical power of the test, making it harder to detect significant differences even if they exist. Figure A1 considers the sensitivity of our findings to linear pre-trends at different levels of statistical power. In all instances, linear trends detected with 90% power show statistically significant coefficients for the post-event window. We also impose some restrictions on possible post-event violations of the parallel trends assumption in Figure A2 as suggested by Rambachan and Roth (2023). Overall, we find that our results are robust to linear and non-linear violations of the parallel trends assumption.

The causal interpretation of the relationship between the victimization of women activists and local electoral outcomes, as depicted in Table 1, could indeed be threatened by the presence of simultaneous external shocks. For example, alongside the targeted victimization of women activists, there could be a surge in general violence against women. Table A3 shows

that the relationship observed between the victimization of women activists and the specific electoral outcomes in our study is distinct and not attributable to broader trends of violence against women in Colombia. We also discard any impact caused by targeted acts of violence against female civilians and female politicians separately, as Tables [A4](#) and [A5](#) depict in the Appendix. Our analysis, as detailed in Tables [A6](#) and [A7](#), confirms that our results are not driven by victimization events against male activists or male victims overall. The results in Table [1](#) could also be driven by conflict and coca eradication shocks, or patterns of violence during previous elections. Tables [A8](#), [A9](#), and [A10](#) show this not the case. Finally, we excluded candidates with a low vote share from our sample to ensure that our findings were not driven by outliers or marginal candidates. After implementing this refinement, our results remained consistent as Table [TAL](#) shows.

An important aspect of our control group is that it comprises units that have never been treated. However, it is important to acknowledge that the treatment and control groups may still differ in terms of observable and non-observable characteristics. To address potential bias arising from the way we define our control group, particularly in relation to the distinct characteristics of the treated units, we have implemented a propensity score matching approach. This method allows us to refine our control group to include only those units that closely resemble the treated units for each specific episode of women activists' victimization. Our selection criterion for the control group is stringent, encompassing units within a range of 0.2, 0.15, 0.1, and 0.05 of the propensity score of the treated unit.¹³ This range ensures that the control units are not only statistically similar but also narrowly tailored to mirror the conditions of the treated units. Figure [A3](#) replicates the estimates of Table [1](#) iterating on the propensity thresholds mentioned above. It confirms that our findings hold after modifying the composition of our control groups. Finally, Tables [A12](#) y [A13](#) show that results are robust to control groups that include only municipalities where female activism victimization or male activism victimization never occurred.

The robustness checks presented here lend support to a causal interpretation of Table [1](#). First, our findings have demonstrated robustness to potential violations of the parallel trends

¹³We estimate a probit model including 34 municipal characteristics, all of them reported in Figure [2](#).

assumption. Additionally, our analysis has accounted for the possibility of external shocks that could confound the results, ensuring that the observed effects are not simply the byproduct of broader social or political phenomena unrelated to our specific focus on women activists' victimization. Furthermore, the composition of our control group does not appear to introduce any bias in our main estimates.

Heterogeneous Effects

Figure 2 demonstrates a clear association between violence against social activists and particular characteristics of the Colombian armed conflict. This correlation emphasizes the importance of analyzing heterogeneous effects in our main analysis based on such characteristics. Thus, we focus on female activism victimization as the primary treatment in a heterogeneous effects test. Table 1 highlights the challenges and risks faced by women activists, who often confront both gender-based discrimination and the dangers associated with activism. Specifically, we look at three municipal characteristics: historical engagement with non-state armed actors, the timing of the peace agreement with the FARC insurgency, and the timing of electoral violence.

The presence of non-state armed actors in a region can significantly shape political preferences since the local origins of combatants, their social background, and interaction with the community, can further affect public perception (Dunning, 2011; Gallego, 2018). From a feminist perspective, women in armed groups can serve as role models, inspiring other women and the broader community. Seeing women in such assertive roles can motivate both women and men to support female political participation (Thomas, 2023). Table A14 focuses in the differential effect driven by the historical presence of non-state armed groups, namely paramilitary groups, and the FARC and ELN insurgencies as this historical presence is measured as a dummy indicator of any attack perpetrated by a non-state actor between 2000 and 2006 (pre-sample period). Table A14 reports a major reduction in both the share of female candidates and the vote share for female candidates following victimization events against women activists, specifically in municipalities with a high historical engagement with

paramilitary groups. Conversely, in municipalities where the FARC played a more dominant role, the occurrence of victimization events against women activists is associated with an increase in the vote share for female candidates. These differential effects can be attributed to the roles women played within both non-state armed groups. In the FARC, women had a notably higher participation rate compared to paramilitary groups, which could have fundamentally altered the local perception of women's roles in communities (Gutiérrez-Sanín, 2008). This higher visibility and participation of women in the FARC might have fostered a more inclusive perception of women's capabilities and leadership potential, translating into increased support for female candidates in regions historically influenced by the insurgency.

The timing of the peace agreement with the FARC insurgency in Colombia could play a mediating role in the relationship between the killings of women activists and electoral outcomes. The peace agreement, signed in 2016, brought with it expectations for improved human rights and gender equality, making the electorate potentially more attuned and responsive to violations of these principles.¹⁴ Table A15 focuses on the differential effect driven by the local elections that took place in 2015 during the peace negotiations. It shows that more women took on roles as candidates for municipal elections and people voted more for female candidates after killings of women activists. The peace negotiations with the FARC represented a historic moment in Colombia's long-standing conflict, and voters may have been more inclined to support female candidates who were perceived as embodying this change, especially if these candidates advocated for peace, reconciliation, and social justice (Lounsbury et al., 2022; Ta-Johnson et al., 2022).

The timing of victimization of women activists plays an important role in shaping local electoral outcomes, particularly when these incidents occur near election dates. Close to elections, these events tend to attract greater media coverage, keeping the issue at the forefront of public discourse and amplifying its significance (Acemoglu et al., 2013; Condra et al., 2018).

Additionally, the timing of these incidents can significantly influence political campaigns,

¹⁴The Colombian government has recognized the need to address gender inequalities, particularly by ensuring the rights of women in rural areas, enhancing women's political participation, and focusing on the rights of victims following the end of the armed conflict (Gobierno Nacional and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo, 2016).

with candidates and parties potentially adjusting their platforms to address the heightened concerns about activism, women’s rights, and violence. From the voters’ standpoint, the timing of these violent acts can lead to an immediate emotional and political response from voters, who may alter their preferences (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Dolan, 2014). Table A16 reports the heterogeneous effects of the timing of victimization, with a specific focus on the electoral year period. The electoral year is divided into two semesters. The reductions in the share of female candidates and in the vote share for female candidates are mostly associated with incidents of violence that involved women activists occurring during the last semester of the electoral year. This temporal proximity amplifies the impact of such violence on voter behavior, highlighting the acute sensitivity of electoral dynamics to the timing of these events.

Our findings indicate a nuanced interaction where historical exposure to non-state armed groups, notably, shapes the electoral landscape, suggesting regions with prolonged conflict exposure exhibit different patterns in the political participation and representation of women. On the other hand, the peace talks with the FARC insurgency emerge as a pivotal moment, altering the strategic calculus of electoral violence. In the wake of these talks, we observe shifts in voter turnout and the representation of female candidates, hinting at a reevaluation of political engagement by communities affected by violence. Additionally, the strategic timing of violence—particularly when it occurs close to elections—appears to be a deliberate effort to manipulate electoral outcomes. These patterns underscore the strategic logic of electoral violence within the broader context of armed conflict dynamics, revealing how such violence is employed to achieve specific political ends.

Conclusion

This study has argued that understanding the identity of the victims killed prior to elections is key in examining the enduring impacts of violence on electoral outcomes. We have shown that the killings of women activists prior to elections reduce women’s willingness to run as candidates, increase voter turnout, and decrease the vote share for female candidates.

We hypothesize that women and men experience violence differently due to societal norms, roles, and expectations. The increase in voter turnout reflects a community's anger about acts of violence against women, galvanizing voters to participate more actively in the electoral process. The reduction in female candidacy and vote shares might stem from a preference for masculine traits in the wake of such targeted violence.

The empirical analyses employing a *stacked difference-in-differences* regression model of municipal elections in Colombia between 2007 and 2019 provided strong support for the causal mechanism between violence against women activists and electoral outcomes. A focal point of our analysis is the intersectionality between gender and social activism recognizing the significance of killing not just women but women who are publicly known for their activism for electoral behaviors and outcomes at the local level. The results are robust to potential violations of the parallel trends assumption and other definitions of the control group such as killing men activists or killings overall. In addition, our results are not driven by general violence or other types of violence.

Heterogeneous effects show that historical exposure to the influence of non-state armed groups can shift local political preferences and affect female political participation. They also suggest that the peace talks with the FARC insurgency could reshape local political preferences and enhance female political participation by fostering a climate of optimism and opening new spaces for political engagement and advocacy. The reverse impact of gendered killings on elections during peace negotiations suggests that while we cannot completely rule out the existence of gender bias in the affected communities, it is the killing of women and not or not only the pre-existing hatred of women that influences local elections. Finally, violence near elections can intimidate communities, skewing local political preferences towards security-focused candidates and dampening female political participation due to heightened concerns for personal safety and the perpetuation of gender-based political repression.

This study has several implications and demonstrates that gender dynamics and the victims' roles in society are key factors to consider when understanding the consequences of violence on electoral outcomes. Violence against women is not a random act; it is often strategically employed by armed groups and perpetrators of violence to maintain existing power

structures and gendered norms of order. Killing women activists who challenge these boundaries in public spaces is a signal to the communities to behave according to traditional gender roles that dictate women's place in society. This work highlights that citizens react to these gendered killings with voting differently than in communities with no killings. Although this article focuses on Colombia, it contributes to using a gendered lens to understand democratic elections in violent contexts in countries such as Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, or Brasil (Krook, 2020; Bardall et al., 2020). Our findings on the consequences of gendered violence also provide additional support for existing work on femicides, hatred of women and LGBT individuals, and backlash to women's engagement (Webster et al., 2019; Kreft, 2019).

For the Colombian context our results imply that violent dynamics pose a significant challenge to the political engagement of women, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support and protect female candidates and activists.¹⁵ The results underscore the importance of creating a safe and supportive political landscape for women, which is crucial not just for the sake of gender equality but for the health and inclusivity of the democratic process in Colombia. Our findings are hopeful about the impact of past and future peace processes on democratic elections, as they show that more women have participated in politics in these times.

One of the limitations of our study is that we are not able to disaggregate our findings based on voters' sex. Though we find evidence that more men and less women run for elections, we only have very tentative evidence that a higher voter turnout depends on male, not female voters' higher willingness to go to the ballot box. It remains unknown whether men and/or women vote less for women candidates after the killings of women activists. Another point is the municipal data limits us in actually assessing the mechanisms of individual voting preferences. Gender norms present in campaigning could also disadvantage potential women political candidates in the Colombian context (Velásquez Leal et al., 2007). Moreover, we cannot be sure that all killings of women are (correctly) reported due to questions of honor and shame when women are not protected from violence. Finally, although our findings for

¹⁵This is not to devalue violence against men (activists). We are aware that men activists in Colombia are more often killed and that their deaths have long lasting consequences for their communities that we did not explore further in this research.

the killings of women are robust, we cannot be sure that these killings are gendered because we do not know how the victims self-identified or how they were viewed by the community or the perpetrators.

Future studies on the consequences of violence on elections could separate between gender bias among right-wing voters and left-wing voters in areas exposed to war violence to understand how ideology and gender interact (Glaurdić and Lesschaeve, 2023). It is also necessary to differentiate between the perpetrators of violence against women to better grasp how gendered violence is utilized for group-specific conflict objectives. Having data on individual voting tendencies, including gender biases at the municipal level across all municipalities in Colombia, would help in comprehending these mechanisms. The gendered repercussions of the killings of female activists create an atmosphere where authentic democratic participation and gender equality are compromised. Understanding how the targeted killings of women symbolically impact the obstacles women encounter in political and public spheres is crucial because all forms of femicides reinforce patriarchal norms and limit women's opportunities.

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A Online Appendix

Appendix Tables

Table A1: Women activists victimization and number of candidates running in municipal elections, 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Female candidates	Male candidates	
	(1)	(2)	
Post \times Treated	-9.449*	9.524*	-0.075 (0.240)
Dependent variable mean	12.1	86.8	1.14
Adjusted R ²	0.163	0.155	0.047
Observations	46,510	46,510	46,453
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	257	257	257
Municipality \times Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date \times Event \times Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral-year episodes. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the number of female candidates, and the number of male candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A2: Women activists victimization and vote shares in municipal elections, 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Female candidates	Male candidates	Blank
	vote share	vote share	vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-9.449*	9.524*	-0.075
	(3.833)	(3.850)	(0.240)
Dependent variable mean	12.1	86.8	1.14
Adjusted R ²	0.163	0.155	0.047
Observations	46,510	46,510	46,453
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	257	257	257
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral-year episodes. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the number of female candidates, and the number of male candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A3: Women victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Share of	Turnout	Female
	female candidates		candidates
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-3.163	1.291*	-4.201
	(2.294)	(0.562)	(2.629)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.112	0.687	0.163
Observations	526,300	526,300	526,300
Events	645	645	645
Municipalities	687	687	687
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 590 municipality-electoral-year episodes. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A4: Women civilians victimization and municipal elections outcomes 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Share of female candidates	Turnout	Female candidates vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-1.433 (2.574)	0.990 (0.605)	-2.192 (2.987)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.112	0.687	0.163
Observations	481,421	481,421	481,421
Events	590	590	590
Municipalities	671	671	671
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 1,421 municipality-electoral year episodes. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women civilians victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A5: Women politicians victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Share of female candidates	Turnout	Female candidates vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	0.808 (9.380)	2.827 (2.388)	6.675 (6.017)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.113	0.689	0.165
Observations	15,501	15,501	15,501
Events	19	19	19
Municipalities	222	222	222
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 19 municipality-electoral year episodes. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women politicians victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A6: Men activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Share of	Turnout	Female
	female		candidates
	candidates		vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post \times Treated	0.895 (1.978)	-0.290 (0.477)	0.975 (2.368)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.112	0.687	0.163
Observations	186,044	186,044	186,044
Events	228	228	228
Municipalities	420	420	420
Municipality \times Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date \times Event \times Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 228 municipality-electoral year episodes of victimization against women activists. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of men activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A7: Men victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Share of female candidates	Turnout	Female candidates vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	0.956 (2.112)	-0.702 (0.540)	0.618 (2.499)
Post × Treated × Civilians	-0.853 (2.424)	0.626 (0.568)	-1.731 (2.847)
Post × Treated × Politicians	-2.008 (2.546)	0.431 (0.688)	0.808 (3.451)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.113	0.684	0.163
Observations	674,824	674,824	674,824
Events	827	827	827
Municipalities	825	825	825
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 827 municipality-electoral year episodes of victimization against men. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of male victimization. *Civilians* is a dummy indicator of male civilians victimization. *Politicians* is a dummy indicator of male politicians victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A8: Conflict shocks and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Share of	Turnout	Female
	female		candidates
	candidates		vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-1.294 (1.778)	0.515 (0.439)	-1.015 (1.991)
Dependent variable mean	13.4	73.0	11.9
Adjusted R ²	0.742	0.115	0.172
Observations	703,168	703,168	703,168
Events	1,149	1,149	1,149
Municipalities	941	941	941
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 1,149 municipality-electoral year episodes of conflict. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of conflict shocks. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A9: Coca eradication shocks and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019

Dependent variable	Share of female candidates	Turnout	Female candidates vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	0.533 (0.487)	0.354 (1.992)	-0.372 (2.336)
Dependent variable mean	73.6	13.3	12.0
Adjusted R ²	0.741	0.095	0.159
Observations	501,537	501,537	501,537
Events	774	774	774
Municipalities	654	654	654
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 774 municipality-electoral year episodes of eradication operations. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of eradication shocks. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A10: Women activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019: Violence in previous elections

Dependent variable	Share of	Turnout	Female
	female		candidates
	candidates		vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-8.561*	2.419*	-11.606*
	(4.286)	(0.979)	(5.163)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.107	0.687	0.157
Observations	46,510	46,510	46,510
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	257	257	257
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Prior violence FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral year episodes of victimization against women activists. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A11: Women activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019:
Dropping outliers

Dependent variable	Share of	Turnout	Female
	female candidates		candidates vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-9.345** (4.285)	1.962** (0.833)	-9.640** (3.860)
Dependent variable mean	13.1	73.0	11.8
Adjusted R ²	0.161	0.688	0.165
Observations	46,510	46,510	46,510
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	257	257	257
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Prior violence FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral year episodes of victimization against women activists. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A12: Women activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019 (Control group: No violence against women activists)

Dependent variable	Share of	Turnout	Female
	female		candidates
	candidates		vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-7.313* (3.427)	1.995* (0.823)	-9.828** (3.739)
Dependent variable mean	14.1	69.5	12.8
Adjusted R ²	0.113	0.789	0.145
Observations	121,408	121,408	121,408
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	586	586	586
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral year episodes of victimization against women activists. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A13: Women activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019 (Control group: No violence against male activists)

Dependent variable	Share of	Turnout	Female
	female		candidates
	candidates		vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-6.554 (3.479)	1.813* (0.827)	-8.641* (3.807)
Dependent variable mean	13.6	68.4	12.4
Adjusted R ²	0.093	0.843	0.131
Observations	90,457	90,457	90,457
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	452	452	452
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral year episodes of victimization against women activists. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A14: Women activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019: Presence of non-state armed groups

Dependent variable	Share of female candidates	Turnout	Female candidates vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-6.579 (5.442)	2.061 (1.921)	-12.515 (6.462)
Post × Treated × Paramilitary groups	-14.695* (7.455)	0.193 (2.045)	-16.335 (8.483)
Post × Treated × FARC	9.547 (7.887)	-1.535 (1.544)	18.009* (9.026)
Post × Treated × ELN	-3.663 (8.648)	-0.827 (2.001)	-0.011 (9.819)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.121	0.693	0.169
Observations	46,510	46,510	46,510
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	257	257	257
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral year episodes of victimization against women activists. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. *Paramilitary groups*, *FARC*, and *ELN* are dummy indicators of one-sided violence committed by these groups between 2000-2006. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table A15: Women activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019: Peace talks with the FARC insurgency

Dependent variable	Share of female candidates	Turnout	Female candidates vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-9.895* (4.217)	1.972* (0.984)	-11.273* (4.404)
Post × Treated × Peace talks	15.717* (6.670)	-0.833 (1.404)	13.530 (7.192)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.113	0.688	0.163
Observations	46,510	46,510	46,510
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	257	257	257
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral year episodes of victimization against women activists. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. *Peace talks* is a dummy indicator of the 2015 regional elections. Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

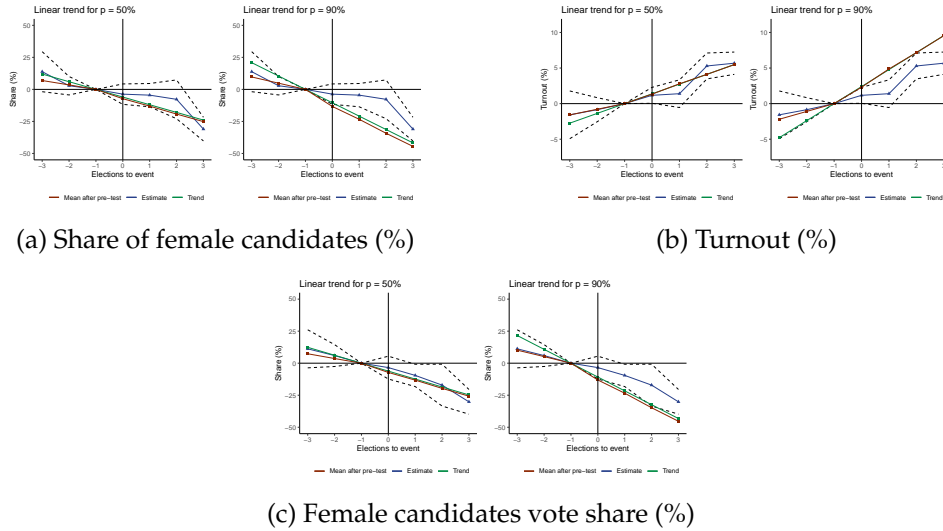
Table A16: Women activists victimization and municipal elections outcomes, 2007-2019: Electoral violence

Dependent variable	Share of female candidates	Turnout	Female candidates vote share
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Post × Treated	-3.792 (3.668)	2.373* (1.030)	-4.052 (3.952)
Post × Treated × First semester	-5.956 (9.197)	-2.216 (1.298)	-10.144 (5.165)
Post × Treated × Second semester	-15.108* (7.421)	-0.890 (1.192)	-22.126** (7.806)
Dependent variable mean	13.3	73.0	12.1
Adjusted R ²	0.113	0.688	0.163
Observations	46,510	46,510	46,510
Events	57	57	57
Municipalities	257	257	257
Municipality × Event FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Date × Event × Coca FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the municipal level. The sample is an electoral year panel in stacked event-specific datasets. It includes 57 municipality-electoral year episodes of victimization against women activists. *Treated* is a dummy indicator of women activists victimization. *Post* is a dummy indicator of post-treatment. *First semester* is a dummy indicator of the months covering the first six months of the regional electoral period as *Second semester* is a dummy indicator of the months covering the last six months of the regional . Outcome variables include the share of female candidates, turnout, and the vote share for female candidates. Each column provides estimates of treatment effects for a different outcome, as indicated in the table header. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

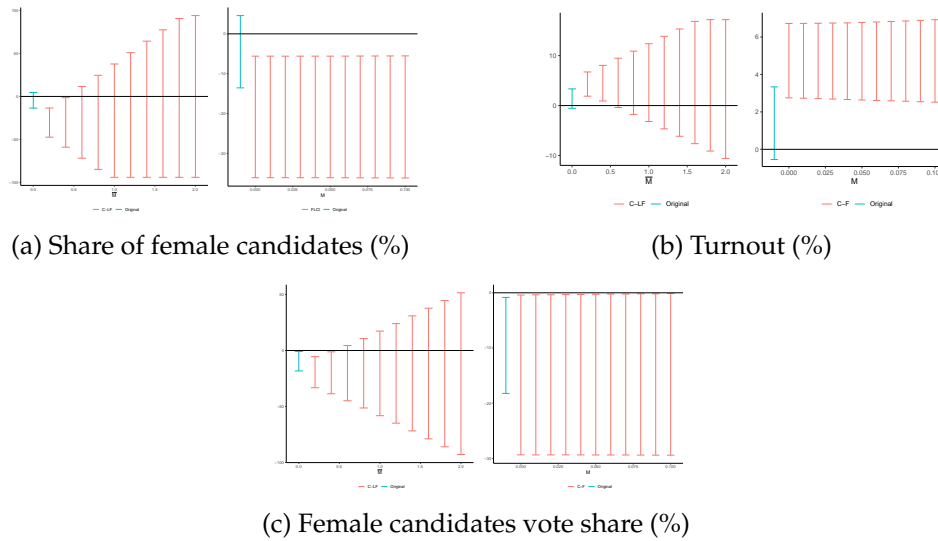
Appendix Figures

Figure A1: Parallel trends power analysis



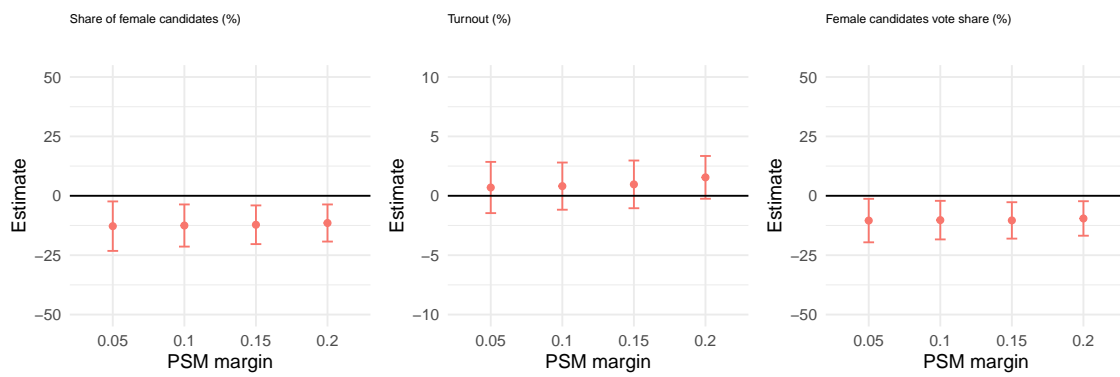
Note: This figure shows pre-test power analysis from Roth (2022)

Figure A2: Sensitivity analysis using relative magnitudes and smoothing restrictions



Note: This figure shows plausible violations of parallel trends from Rambachan and Roth (2023)

Figure A3: Propensity score matching results



Notes: This figure presents the propensity score analysis of Table 1.