

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ENDANGERED LOCAL WATCHDOG

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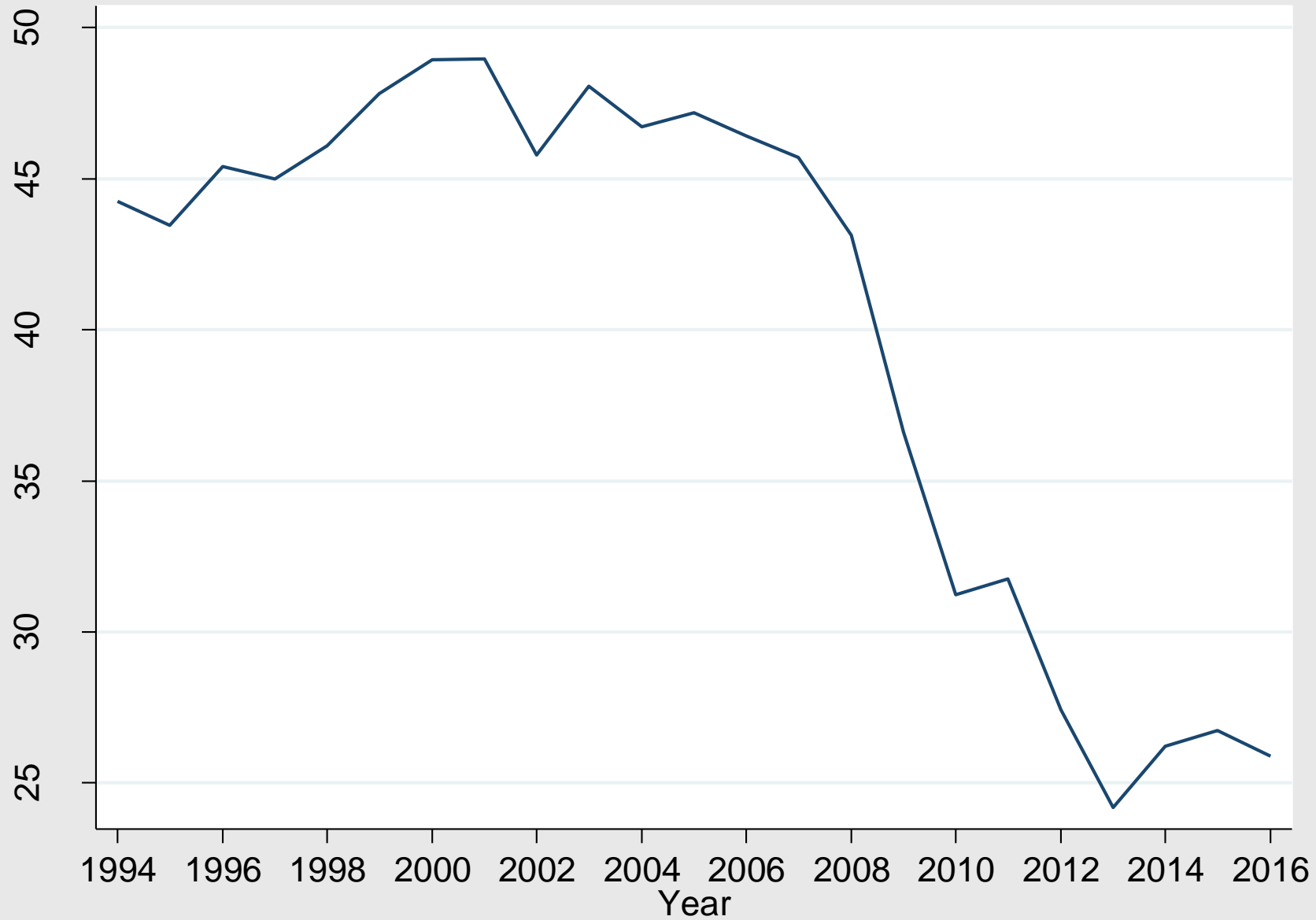
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Local newspapers are important

- Provide coverage and oversight of local governments
- Cover elections and provide information on candidates
- Tend to have smaller coverage areas
- More in depth than local TV coverage
- More attention than other media to local government & local elections
- Employ beat reporters who know local issues and officials

American Society of News Editors (ASNE) – Mean Staffing Totals by Year

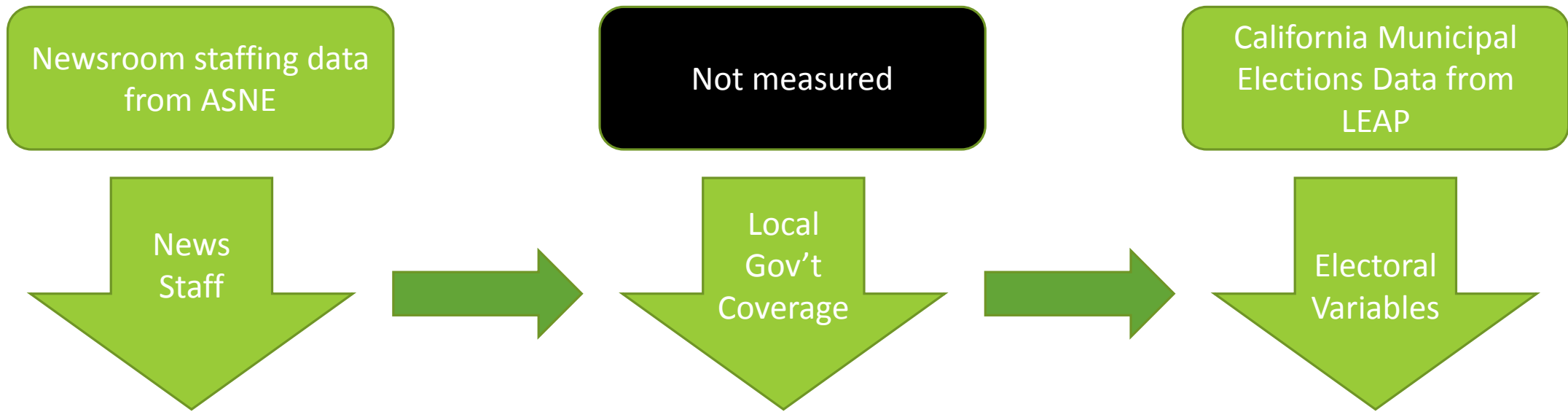


Research Question & Hypotheses

At the city level, what are the political consequences of these shrinking newsrooms?

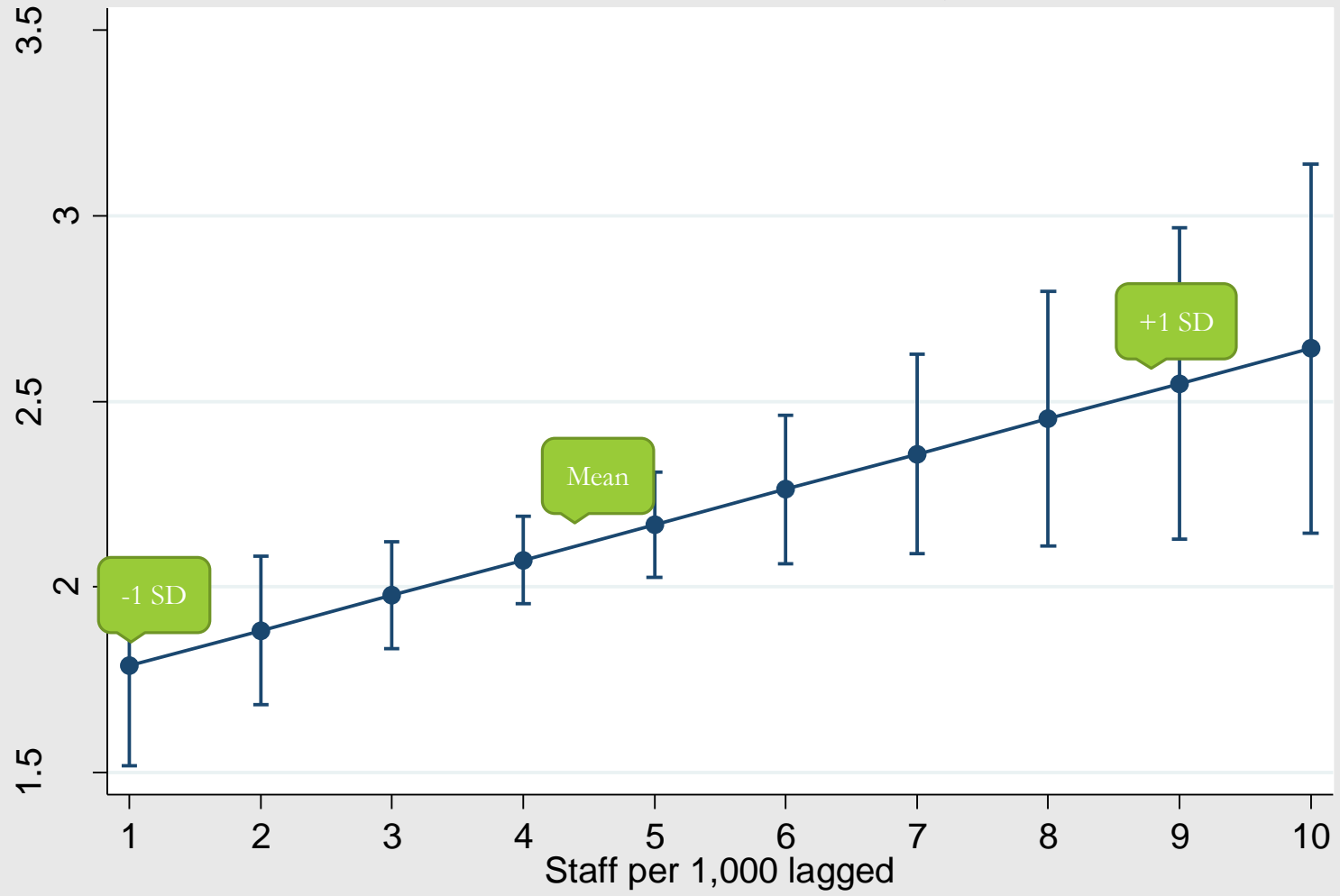
Declining newsroom staff will lead to less coverage of local news and therefore we will see:

- Less competition in terms of less candidates running for local offices
- Less competition in terms of larger victory margins for local races
- Lower turnout, specifically in off year/month local elections

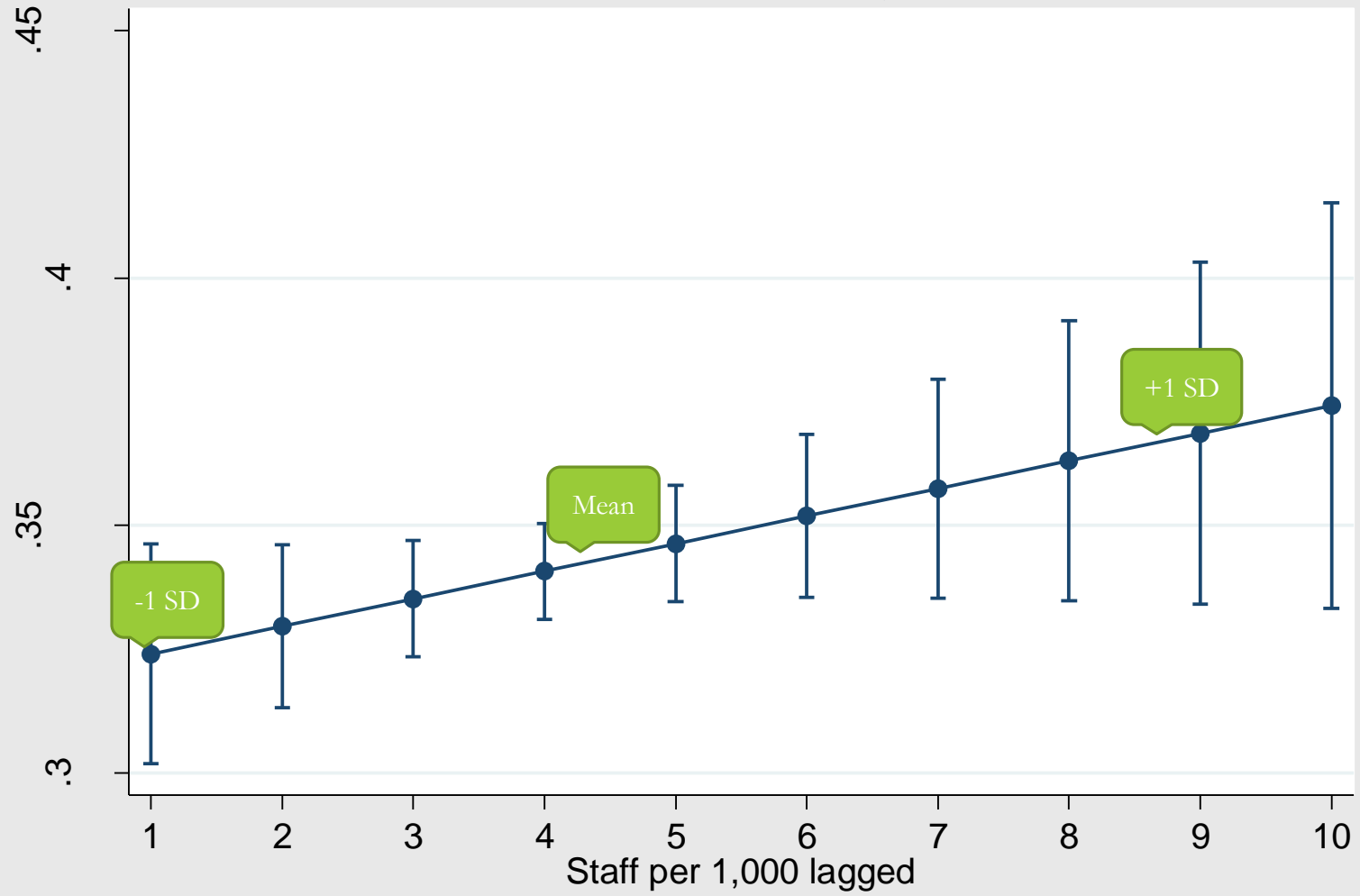


1994-2014
Time Series Cross-Sectional Data from
10 small-midsize papers/48 cities
290 Mayoral Elections

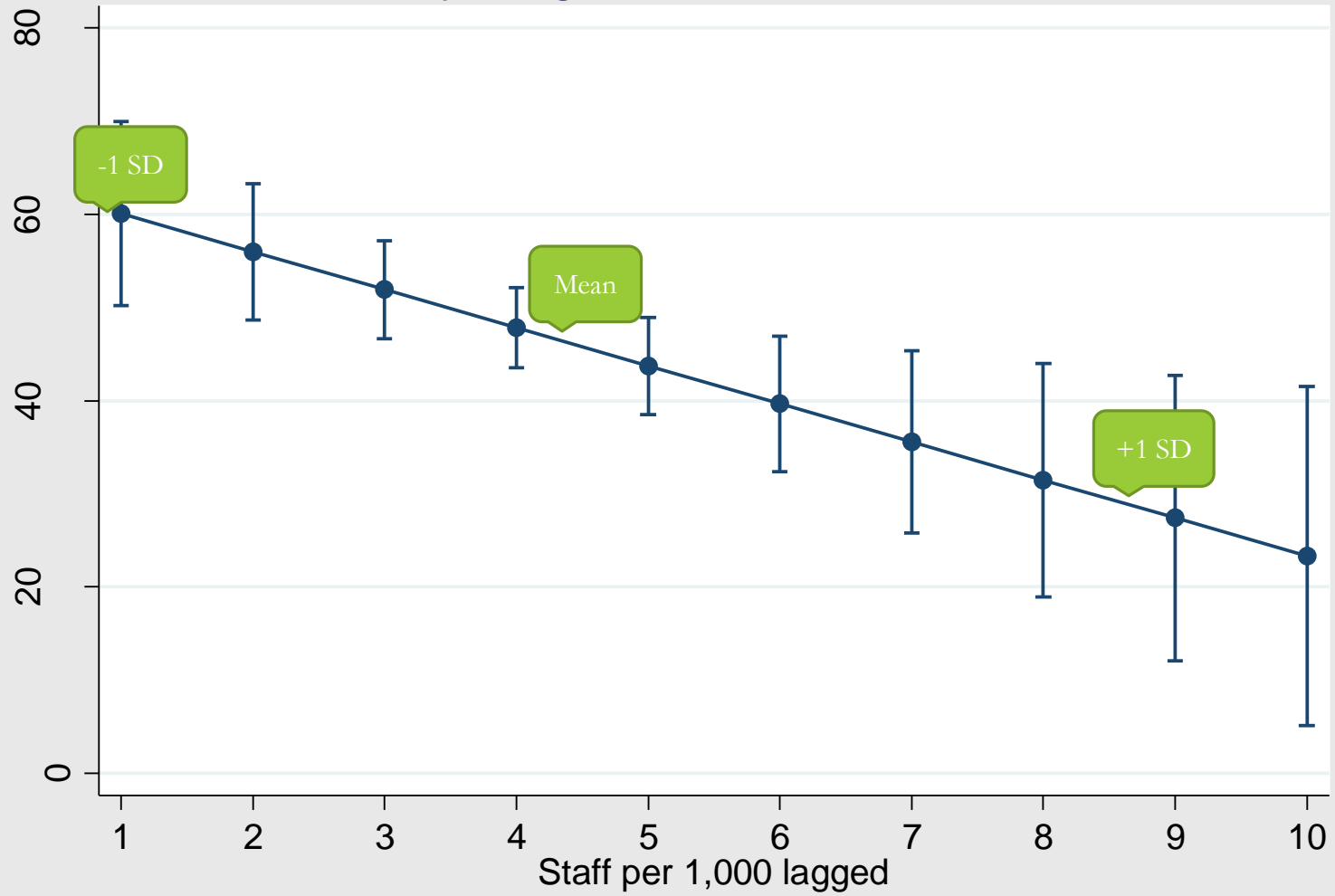
Candidate Ratio and Staff Per 1,000



Turnout and Staff Per 1,000



Victory Margin and Staff Per 1,000



Conclusions

- Newsrooms have deeply cut staff numbers across the country
- The cuts in newsrooms in California newspapers are associated with negative political consequences over 48 cities.

Specifically staffing cuts correlate with:

- Fewer candidates running for mayor
- Larger victory margins for winning mayoral candidates
- Lower turnout in mayoral races, specifically in off-year races

Political Consequences of Newsroom Staffing

	Candidate Ratio		Turnout		Victory Margin	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Staffing per 1000 Lagged	0.095**	0.041	0.0056*	0.0033	-4.083**	1.504
% with Bachelor's Degree	0.023	0.072	-0.0058	0.3260	-0.029	2.620
% White	0.010	0.023	-0.0007	0.0019	0.432	0.856
Median Household Income	0.002	0.002	0.0071**	0.0175	0.001	0.007
Off Year Election	1.613**	0.301	-0.1657**	0.0248	3.960	10.996
Constant	-0.267	2.246	0.0996	0.1848	39.649	82.075
Overall R ²	0.460		0.6910		0.319	

1995-2014

N = 260

City-level Fixed Effects

* = P > .1 | ** P > .05

Other Ongoing Projects

Same questions but applied to City Councils? Do these effects hold for less visible electoral politics?

Institutional Design and Service Provision

- How do different institutions for fire service provision compare in terms of quality of service?

Intergovernmental Collaboration/Relations:

- What makes city leaders more likely to view other cities as potential collaborators? What makes them more likely to see cities as competitors?
- Collaboration for climate change resilience/adaptation & other enviro goals