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Who Is to Blame (or Praise)? Information, Responsibility Attribution, and Service Quality in Multilevel Government

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In multilevel systems, decentralization can improve accountability only if citizens can identify which level of government is responsible for public services. We conduct a survey experiment with a nationally representative sample of 5,000 Italian citizens to study responsibility attribution and service quality perceptions. We find widespread misattribution of responsibility across local, regional, and central government, especially where responsibilities overlap. We then randomly provide a subset of respondents with correct information about the responsible level of government. When this feedback shifts perceived responsibility toward a politically aligned government, respondents report higher service quality. Providing feedback to respondents who answered correctly also increases reported service quality, especially for the non-aligned, suggesting a confirmation effect. Additional evidence from the order manipulation suggests that selective quality evaluation may represent the stronger bias. These findings highlight the importance of institutional clarity and the politically motivated quality assessments that can arise when responsibility is poorly understood.

Keywords: Survey experiment | Multilevel governance | Responsibility attribution | Public service quality | Motivated reasoning | Information provision | Institutional trust

JEL codes: D72 | D83 | H77 | C93

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I. Introduction

A core premise of democratic accountability is that voters can size up government performance to reward or punish incumbents at the ballot box (Healy and Malhotra, 2013). This assumption, fundamental to theories of retrospective voting, hinges on the ability to observe relevant policy outcomes, identify the level of government responsible, and translate this information into voting decisions. Figuring out which politicians are responsible for which public goods or services is easier said than done, however, especially in more complex institutional arrangements such as multi-level systems of government, which is our focus here.

Following the theory of fiscal federalism, one reason countries spread political and fiscal authority across central, regional, and local levels is to bring certain policies closer to local preferences and needs, thereby boosting accountability (Lockwood, 2006). In practice, however, the intricate sharing of often overlapping responsibilities can blur the accountability lines. In this paper, we investigate this problem of identifying responsibility in a large online survey experiment in Italy, assessing the extent to which complex federal systems may weaken the link between policy outcomes and perceptions. In this context, we examine how citizens assign responsibility for the provision of public services, how often these attributions diverge from actual institutional responsibilities, how they shape evaluations of service quality, and whether correct information about the institutionally responsible level of government changes those evaluations.

In institutionally complex systems, such as multilevel governance arrangements, voters often fail to correctly attribute responsibility (León and Orriols, 2019). They may punish the wrong tier for policy outcomes and misdirect blame for local conditions or policy failures (Cutler, 2002, 2008; Harmel and Yeh, 2020; Arceneaux and Stein, 2006). Political actors can exploit this ambiguity by shifting blame or credit across levels of government (Cassette and Farvaque, 2016; James et al., 2016), while limited fiscal transparency further reduces voters' ability to identify the responsible authority and distorts incentives (Bordignon, Grembi and Piazza, 2017).

But responsibility misattribution is only part of the problem. In complex institutional settings, citizens may rely on cognitive shortcuts when assigning responsibility and evaluating public services. They may engage in politically motivated reasoning and interpret political information in ways that are consistent with their prior beliefs and partisan identities (Bisgaard, 2015; Graham and Singh, 2024; León and Orriols, 2019; Tilley and Hobolt, 2011; Uttermark et al., 2024). Responsibility

assessments, in this case, reflect political preferences rather than institutional realities, biasing perceptions of accountability.

As a consequence, politically motivated reasoning may lead individuals to attribute blame or credit to politically aligned or opposing governments irrespective of actual responsibility (selective responsibility attribution). They may also adjust service quality evaluations to match their partisan preferences (selective quality evaluation).[1] Related evidence shows selective evaluation of public performance in different settings, including public services, health policy, and local government (James and Van Ryzin, 2017; Jilke and Baekgaard, 2020; Alon-Barkat, Cavari and Shvarts, 2025). Similar partisan distortions also emerge in macroeconomic perceptions and expectations (Bachmann et al., 2021; Mian, Sufi and Khoshkhou, 2023). Both patterns reflect a broader group-serving bias, whereby individuals attribute favorable outcomes to aligned actors and unfavorable ones to opponents. When responsibility and quality assessments are driven by political allegiance rather than objective evaluation, democratic accountability is weakened, reducing both voter scrutiny and political incentives to respond.

We examine these mechanisms in the Italian multilevel governance system, focusing on how citizens navigate the complex task of holding politicians accountable for public services. Italy provides a particularly suitable setting because its system of multilevel government combines substantial decentralization with overlapping responsibilities across policy domains, creating broad scope for both confusion and selective attribution. We exploit this context through a large-scale survey experiment. Respondents are asked to evaluate the quality of a set of public services and identify which level of government is primarily responsible for each. We randomly vary the order of these tasks. In addition, for half of the respondents who misattribute responsibility, we randomly provide corrective information about the institutionally responsible level of government before they evaluate service quality. We use randomised feedback to study how individuals engage in motivated reasoning when reacting to information updates, based on their prior beliefs. Moreover, by comparing respondents who were presented with a different question order, we can measure the relative strength of *selective responsibility attribution* versus *selective quality evaluation*.

Our analysis makes three contributions. First, we document widespread misattribution of respon-

[1]These mechanisms correspond to the two ways in which citizens reconcile predispositions and outcomes when holding governments to account—either by adjusting responsibility attributions or by adjusting performance evaluations (Tilley and Hobolt, 2011).

sibility across levels of government[2]. Respondents often fail to identify the responsible authority, and these misattributions are more common where responsibilities overlap across tiers. Misattribution is systematically related to information and engagement: it is less frequent among individuals who use services more, participate more in politics, and display greater knowledge of the fiscal system. Second, we show that providing information about the institutionally responsible level of government affects quality assessments, but in a way consistent with politically motivated reasoning. When respondents receive feedback on the true level of government responsibility, quality assessment goes up for those who are politically aligned with the actual government in charge, as well as for those who expressed higher levels of trust in that level, pointing to *selective quality evaluation*. This latter effect coincides with the general correlation we find between misattribution and non-alignment, suggesting that feedback on the correct level of government is what activates partisan bias. In addition, respondents who were proven right (and received feedback confirming this) rate their quality evaluations higher than those who were not corrected, suggesting a (potentially short-term) "confirmation" effect. Lastly, by changing the order of the questions, our findings also suggest that *selective quality evaluation* represents a potentially larger bias.

These findings also speak to a broader literature on partisan bias and responsibility attribution. To our knowledge, the effect of in-group bias on the way individuals update their beliefs about political responsibility remains under-researched in devolved contexts. Our paper is related to work showing that partisan loyalties shape responsibility attribution and performance judgments (Tilley and Hobolt, 2011), and to evidence that these biases may be attenuated when citizens rely on trusted and accountable information sources (Hobolt, Tilley and Wittrock, 2013). These findings suggest that institutional complexity may create greater scope for subjective blaming or crediting.[3] It is also closely connected to León and Orriols (2019), showing that partisanship and national identity shape selective responsibility attribution in a devolved setting. Relative to that literature, our main innovation is to study not only selective responsibility attribution but also

[2]We define misattribution as divergence from the institutional assignment of responsibility for each public service used in the experiment.

[3]Focusing on public service execution and less on institutional complexity, Healy, Kuo and Malhotra (2015) find that partisan bias in blame attribution is strongest when officials have domain expertise. James et al. (2016) show that outsourcing public services reduces the tendency of citizens to hold politicians accountable. Leland, Mohr and Piatak (2021) further reveal that contracting lowers government blame, especially at the local level.

selective quality evaluation in a setting with more than two layers of government, and to examine how respondents update their assessments after first expressing their own attribution and then receiving the information feedback. This is where our main innovation lies: by asking respondents directly, without providing any upfront information on quality or responsibility, we exploit the existing complexity of the Italian case. Our design, therefore, allows us to assess the relative importance of informational misattribution and politically motivated responsibility attribution.

Taken together, our findings point to a central limitation of accountability in multilevel systems. When responsibilities overlap across levels of government, citizens may struggle to identify who is responsible, and their evaluations of public services may become filtered through prior political attachments. This suggests that the effectiveness of decentralization depends not only on how responsibilities are assigned, but also on whether they are communicated clearly enough, and early enough, for citizens to form less distorted evaluations of public services.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section II describes the Italian institutional and political context. Section III presents the experimental design, the hypotheses and the empirical strategy. Section IV and Section V present the main results and the robustness checks, respectively. Section VI concludes.

II. Background: Italian Federalism

Understanding how voters navigate complex institutional arrangements is particularly important in contexts where decentralization has been both recent and politically consequential. Italy offers a compelling case for such an investigation. The country has undergone significant institutional transformation following the 2001 constitutional reform (Law No. 3/2001), which substantially revised Title V of the Italian Constitution. This reform redefined the relationship between the central state and sub-national governments—Regions, Provinces, and Municipalities—by expanding the legislative and administrative authority of the Regions and formally recognizing Municipalities as autonomous entities endowed with their own statutes, powers, and functions. The reform also introduced the principle of subsidiarity, stipulating that decisions should be made as closely as possible to citizens, with higher levels of government intervening only when necessary. On the fiscal side, the implementation of "federalismo fiscale" (fiscal federalism), particularly through Law No.

42/2009, further enhanced the role of sub-national governments in the collection and allocation of public resources, thereby increasing the complexity of understanding "who pays for what". Despite these developments, Italy has received limited attention in the experimental literature on responsibility attribution and democratic accountability in multilevel systems. This study seeks to address that gap by presenting the first nationally representative survey experiment focused on how Italian citizens assign responsibility for public services and evaluate service quality in a decentralized setting. Our research design allows us to study the role of information, political alignment, and service salience on both attribution accuracy and perceptions of performance.

Italy's system of government is currently characterized by a complex, multilayered institutional framework where central, regional, and local authorities share responsibility for the provision of public services. The 2001 constitutional reform mentioned above significantly deepened the decentralization process, granting regions increased autonomy over a range of public policies, including health care, transportation, and education. However, the vertical fragmentation of authority has made it more difficult for citizens to discern which level of government is responsible for which public services. In practice, this institutional complexity leads to considerable overlap in service responsibilities. For instance, the central government is solely responsible for services such as the justice and pension systems. These services are highly centralized, leaving little room for confusion regarding responsibilities. While regions and municipalities may provide supporting services (e.g., administrative support for the justice system or management of complementary pension schemes), their roles are marginal. Healthcare is primarily the responsibility of regional governments; however, the central government determines the national benefits package, ensuring uniformity across all regions. Municipalities, in turn, provide supporting services to the health system. Daycare and waste management, instead, are typically provided by municipalities, with limited involvement from other levels of government. For both services, regions set regional service standards while the central government defines national guidelines. For police, public transport, and roads, responsibilities are more fragmented. In the case of police services, municipalities manage the local police, while the central government oversees state police forces. Regions are rarely involved. When it comes to public transportation, the central government oversees national transportation (such as railways, maritime, and air travel). Regions manage regional buses and design regional transport plans. However, municipalities are generally responsible for local public transport, unless they are

very small and lack such services. Roads, instead, are divided into highways, state roads, provincial roads, and local roads. The central government manages highways and state roads, while provincial roads fall under provincial jurisdiction. Municipalities are responsible for local roads. Regions have very limited responsibilities[4].

Our study aims to replicate how politicians and the media typically refer to public services—that is, in broad, generic terms. As a consequence, some services in our survey (healthcare, justice, pensions, daycare, and waste management) have a clearly identifiable responsible institution, while others (public transport, roads, and especially policing) involve more complex or shared governance structures. For these latter services, the main responsible government layer is not easily identifiable, and variation in respondents' attributions is therefore more likely[5]. In these cases, divergence between respondents' perceptions and the institutional allocation of responsibilities may reflect both informational gaps and genuine institutional ambiguity arising from overlapping competencies across government levels. To ensure that our results are not driven solely by these more ambiguous cases, we also conduct robustness checks that exclude these services.

This ambiguity often hinders the public's ability to assign credit or blame to the appropriate institution, potentially weakening democratic accountability mechanisms. Moreover, political dynamics further complicate the attribution of responsibility. Regional governments are frequently led by parties that differ from those in power at the national level, and this partisan divide introduces biases into how citizens evaluate institutional performance. The risk is that perceptions of service quality and institutional responsibility shift from focusing on actual outcomes to prioritizing political alignment and individual trust in institutions. Against this background, we examine responsibility attribution and evaluations of public service quality in a setting characterized by overlapping and sometimes unclear institutional responsibilities.

[4]For the survey experiment, we consider municipalities to be responsible for the last three services.

[5]For some services, responsibilities are to some degree shared across levels of government, where we have chosen the level with the highest institutional 'weight' as the 'correct' one.

III. Methods and data

A. The experimental design

The survey experiment consists of three steps:

a) We randomly ask $\frac{1}{4}$ of the respondents first to assess the quality of each of eight public services and then indicate which layer of government they believe is responsible for each service. While reporting responsibility, respondents can view their previous answers on the service quality evaluation.

b) The remaining respondents first report their beliefs about which layer of government is responsible for each of eight public services and then assess their quality. While evaluating quality, they can view their previous answers on responsibility attribution.

c) Among respondents in b) whose attribution of responsibility differs from the institutional allocation used in the study for at least one service, a random subset is shown the institutionally responsible level of government before assessing service quality.

We hence treat respondents in two ways: 1) by randomly reversing the order of the questions related to the service responsibility and quality, and 2) by allowing them to view their answers to the first battery of questions while answering the second.

More specifically, the following experimental conditions are applied:

One-quarter of the respondents are randomly assigned to Group A. Respondents in this group are first asked to assess the quality of different public services by answering the question:

"How satisfied are you with the overall quality of the following goods/services in the area where you live?".

They are then asked to assign responsibility for the same services to different layers of government through the question:

"In your opinion, in the area where you live, which political authorities would you say are mainly responsible for each of these public goods/services?".

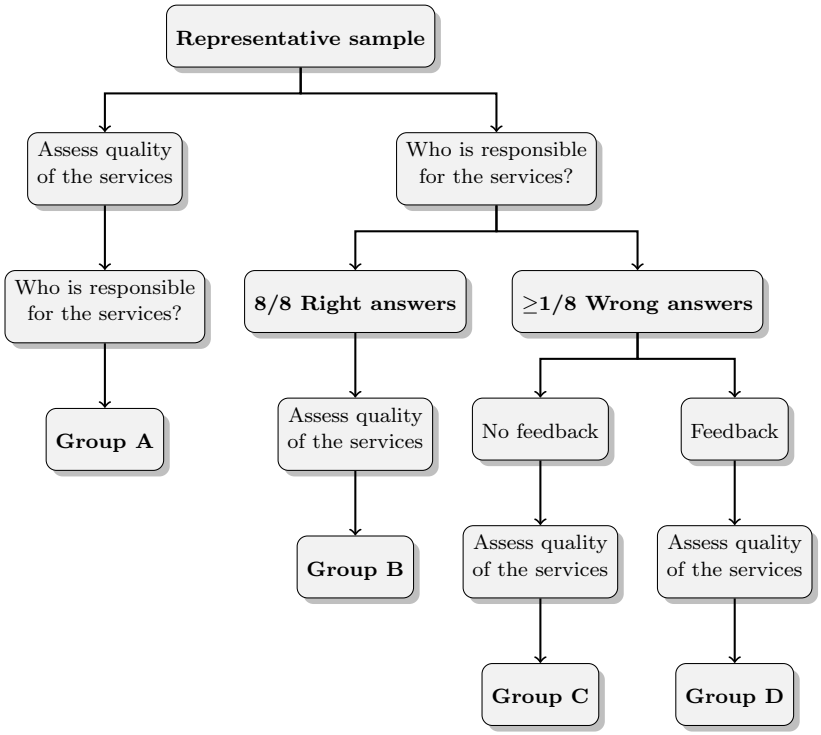
The possible answers are: i) central government, ii) regional government, iii) local council (municipality).

The remaining three-quarters of respondents follow the reverse order: they first answer the responsibility attribution question. Based on the accuracy of their answers, they are further divided into three groups. Respondents whose responsibility attribution corresponds to the institutional

allocation for all services (Group B) are asked to assess service quality while observing their previous answers on responsibility. Among those who make at least one misattribution, half receive no feedback (Group C) and proceed to assess service quality as in Group B, while the other half receive feedback on the institutionally responsible level of government (Group D). When these respondents reach the service quality question, they are shown both their original responses and the information about which level of government is institutionally responsible.

Figure 1 presents the experimental design.

Figure (1) Experimental design



B. *Pre-registered Hypotheses*

This study explores how citizens navigate the uncertainty surrounding the allocation of responsibilities across different government levels within the multi-tier government framework. We want to explore how individuals rely on heuristics, such as motivated reasoning, to attribute responsibility and evaluate public services.

Consistently, we pre-registered the following set of hypotheses, starting with the issue of misattribution in general and its correlated relations.

H1a. Respondents more frequently misattribute responsibility for specific services when there is an overlap in roles between different levels of government (such as police and roads), with respect to services where there is one level of governance involved (such as pensions).

H1b. Respondents are less likely to make misattribution of responsibility for services they use and/or care about, and when they have high political participation and general knowledge of the fiscal structure.

Second, we investigate the effect of providing respondents with information about the institutional allocation of responsibility when their attribution differs from it, thereby potentially uncovering selective quality evaluation.

H2a. Providing citizens with information about which level of government is institutionally responsible for a service affects their quality assessments of public goods and services.

H2b. Specifically, respondents adjust their perceived quality of the service downward when they:

a) Attribute responsibility to a congenial governmental layer rather than the institutionally responsible one, i.e. the layer of government (i) controlled by a party aligned with their political orientation, (ii) they trust, or (iii) closer to their stance on federalism.

b) Are subsequently provided with feedback on the institutionally responsible level of government

c) Learn that the uncongenial governmental layer is actually responsible, which is (i) controlled by a party with a different political orientation, (ii) not trusted, or (iii) further from their stance on federalism.

Conversely, respondents adjust their perceived service quality upward when they initially misattribute responsibility to a government controlled by an uncongenial party, i.e., a party not aligned with their political orientation, untrusted, or more distant from their stance on federalism. They later receive feedback on the institutionally responsible level of government and learn that the responsible layer is congenial to them. Moreover, this bias correction is moderated by service use, electoral importance of the service, political participation, and general knowledge of the fiscal structure.

Building on the observed correlation between responsibility attribution and quality evaluation driven by politically motivated reasoning, we examine potential order effects to assess whether such bias primarily takes the form of *selective responsibility attribution* or *selective quality evaluation*, and whether it intensifies when one dimension is made salient prior to the other—that is, when respondents are asked to evaluate service quality before identifying the responsible level of government, or vice versa.

Specifically, we formulate two sets of hypotheses corresponding to the two possible task-orderings. The first concerns how prior consideration of responsibility affects subsequent quality assessments (H3, *selective quality evaluation*), while the second examines how prior evaluation of service quality influences responsibility attribution (H4, *selective responsibility attribution*).

H3a. Asking respondents about service responsibility first alters their quality assessments of different services.

H3b. When asked about service responsibility first, respondents are more likely to give higher evaluations to services they believe are provided by a congenial layer of government, i.e. (i) a government controlled by a politically aligned party, (ii) a government they trust, and (iii) a government closer to their stance on federalism, and lower evaluations to services they believe are provided by (i) a government controlled by a politically misaligned party, (ii) a government they distrust, and (iii) a government further from their stance on federalism.

H4a. Asking respondents about service quality first alters their attribution of responsibility across services.

H4b. When asked about service quality first, respondents are more likely to attribute responsibility for perceived high-quality services to (i) a government controlled by a politically aligned party, (ii) a government they trust, and (iii) a government closer to their stance on federalism, and responsibility for perceived low-quality services to (i) a government controlled by a politically misaligned party, (ii) a government they distrust, and (iii) a government further from their stance on federalism.

Finally, we explore whether these biases are moderated by service use, the electoral importance of the service, political participation, and general knowledge of the fiscal structure.

C. *Empirical strategy*

This study examines eight public services: healthcare, police, public transport, roads, justice, pensions, waste management, and daycare. Each of these services might be managed by one or more layers of government. These services were intentionally selected to reflect different degrees of potential confusion among Italian citizens regarding which level of government is responsible. Three of these services (public transport, police and roads) are found to be especially confusing for respondents, as all layers of government are somewhat involved. Therefore, as a robustness check, we replicate the analysis in Section V excluding these services to be sure that the results are not driven by these particularly blurred responsibilities.

To test H1a, we compare respondents' beliefs about responsibility attribution to the level of government that is institutionally responsible for each service.

We test H1b through the following linear regression:

$$(1)\quad mis_{ij} = \alpha + \beta use_{ij} + \gamma care_{ij} + \delta part_i + \zeta vote_i + \eta Itaxmis_i + \theta Wtaxmis_i + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

where mis_{ij} is a dummy variable indicating if respondent i assigned responsibility for service j to a level of government that differs from the institutional attribution used in our study[6], use_{ij} captures how much respondent i uses service j, $care_{ij}$ points out how much respondent i cares about service j, $part_i$ is respondent i's political participation, $vote_i$ indicates whether respondent i voted in the last elections or not, $itaxmis_i$ is respondent i's knowledge of who collects income tax[7]; while $wtaxmis_i$ refers to the wealth tax[8], X_i is a set of controls[9], μ_j is the service j fixed

[6]Throughout the paper, we refer to misattribution when respondents assign responsibility to a level of government that differs from the formal institutional allocation. This does not necessarily imply objective "errors," as responsibilities may be shared or communicated ambiguously in political discourse. Our measure, therefore, captures divergence between respondents' perceptions and the institutional formal benchmark used in the experiment, rather than purely factual mistakes.

[7]In the survey we asked to specify what percentage of income tax revenues is collected by the municipality, region and government taking. We measured how far off the respondent was from the correct answer reported by Sole24Ore. More information on the calculation of the variable is in the Appendix.

[8]We asked to specify what percentage of wealth tax revenues is collected by the municipality, region and government taking. We measured how far the respondent was from the correct answer. More information on the calculation of the variable is in the Appendix.

[9]Controls include trust in institutions, political orientation, attitudes towards federalism, age, age^2, gender, education, marital status, geographic area, income, number of children and duration

effect, U_i represents the individual random effect, ε_{ij} is the error term clustered at the individual level. Given the data structure, we estimate a random-effects regression model. This specification allows us to calculate the effect of individual-invariant characteristics, which would be absorbed by a fixed effects estimator. Under the assumption that unobserved individual-specific effects are uncorrelated with the variable of interest, the random effects model provides efficient estimates of the parameters of interest. This assumption is stronger for Equation 1. However, it is likely to be satisfied in the subsequent specifications, as the variable of interest is a randomized experimental treatment.

To causally test the impact of providing service responsibility feedback (H2a), we compare the reported service quality of respondents in group D to that of those in group C:

$$sq_{ij} = \alpha + \beta groupD_i + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{2}$$

Since the effect of feedback could be different depending on whether respondents receive a positive feedback (confirmation) or negative feedback (correction), we also test the following specification:

$$sq_{ij} = \alpha + \beta groupD_i + \gamma mis_{ij} + \lambda(groupD_i * mis_{ij}) + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{3}$$

In these regressions, sq_{ij} is the quality that respondent i reported for service j, while $groupD_i$ is a dummy equal to one if respondent i is in group D and 0 if (s)he is in group C; use_{ij} identifies if service j is among respondent i three most used services, and the set of individual controls includes also the total number of misattributed services.

By informing respondents about which level of government is institutionally responsible for a given public service, we reduce uncertainty in responsibility attribution. We also exogenously alter their perception of which institution is in charge. Following H2b, such a change in perception can have a different impact on public services evaluation, particularly if the feedback shifts the respondent's political or federalist alignment with the responsible layer, or their trust in that layer. To explore this, we first check whether the effect of feedback depends on whether it is confirmation feedback, correction feedback that does not shift political alignment, trust, or federalist alignment, or cor-

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of the survey

rection feedback that does lead to that shift. As a control group, we use respondents in group C, who would have received the same feedback if they had been in group D. We then estimate the following model:

$$sq_{ij} = \alpha + \beta groupD_i + \gamma_1 corr_{ij} + \gamma_2 corrali_{ij} + \lambda_1(groupD_i * corr_{ij}) + \\ + \lambda_2(groupD_i * corrali_{ij}) + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{4}$$

where $corr_{ij}$ is a dummy equal to 1 if the feedback was a confirmation feedback that did not alter alignment, trust, or federalist views; $corrali_{ij}$ is a dummy equal to 1 if the feedback was alignment-shifting feedback, i.e. the correction led to a change in alignment, trust, or federalist views; the omitted category corresponds to respondents who would have received confirmation feedback; $groupD_i$ is a dummy equal to 1 for respondents in Group D (who received corrective feedback). This model is estimated three times, once for each alignment dimension—political alignment, trust, and federalist alignment—by redefining $corr_{ij}$ and $corrali_{ij}$ accordingly in each specification. In other words, this model compares service quality evaluations between Group D (who received corrective feedback) and Group C (who did not), distinguishing whether the feedback changed respondents' alignment with the responsible government layer.

To test H2b more directly, we further classify respondents by the alignment between their personal views and the institution they think is responsible for a given service, as well as the institution they are told is responsible. This allows us to examine whether changes in perceived responsibility affect service evaluations differently depending on whether the correction (exogenously) strengthens or weakens respondents' alignment with the responsible institution. As before, the comparison group consists of respondents in Group C, who would have received the same feedback if they had been assigned to Group D. We estimate the following model:

$$sq_{ij} = \alpha + \beta groupD_i + \gamma truealign_{ij} + \lambda(groupD_i * truealign_{ij}) + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{5}$$

where $truealign_{ij}$ measures whether respondent i is aligned (in political orientation, trust, or federalist preference) with the institution that is actually responsible for service j. We estimate six models: three based on the alignment dimension considered—political alignment, trust, or federalist alignment—and, within each dimension, two specifications restricting the sample to respondents

who received either (a) confirmation feedback or (b) corrective feedback (with or without an alignment shift).

To examine the impact of priming respondents with service responsibility on their evaluation of service quality (H3a), we compare the reported quality assessments of respondents who were asked about responsibility first (Groups B, C, and D) with those who were asked about quality first (Group A). We estimate the causal effect of this priming through the following regression:

$$sq_{ij} = \alpha + \beta respfirst_i + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{6}$$

where $respfirst_i$ identifies respondents in group B, C, and D vs group A.

Similarly, to estimate how priming respondents with service quality alters responsibility attribution (H4a), we compare respondents in Group A—who evaluate service quality before assigning responsibility—with those in Groups B, C and D, who assign responsibility first. Specifically, we test whether prior exposure to service quality considerations affects the likelihood of attributing responsibility to the government, the region, or the municipality. The following model is estimated:

$$resp_{ij} = \alpha + \beta qualfirst_i + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{7}$$

where $qualfirst_i = 1 - respfirst_i$ identifies respondents in group A, while respondents in group B, C, and D serve as the control group. The dependent variable $resp_{ij}$ is a binary indicator equal to 1 if respondent i attributes service j to a specific governmental layer. We estimate three versions of the model, where the dependent variable captures attribution of responsibility to (i) the central government, (ii) the regional government, and (iii) the municipality.

When testing H3b—whether alignment with the institution perceived as responsible influences service quality evaluations among respondents primed to perceive service responsibility—we lack a pure control group. Ideally, we would compare respondents in group C (who report responsibility before assessing service quality) with individuals who answer the two sets of questions independently, without potential cross-contamination between judgments. However, such a group does not exist in our design. Respondents in group A, for example, report responsibility after evaluating service quality. Their attributions may therefore be affected by their prior quality judgments, introducing the possibility of reverse causality: higher (lower) perceived quality could increase (decrease)

the likelihood of assigning responsibility to a politically aligned institution. This effect corresponds precisely to what we test in H4a and H4b, but it prevents using Group A as a valid control for Group C.[10]

A similar identification issue arises when testing H4b. Here, we would like to observe whether respondents in Group A who report higher (lower) perceived service quality are more (less) likely to attribute responsibility to an institution they are aligned with. Yet Group C cannot serve as a control because responsibility attribution precedes quality evaluation, meaning that quality assessments may be influenced by prior attribution, confounding the causal direction of interest in H4b.

However, the comparison between Group A and Group C offers a credible test of the sensitivity of motivated reasoning bias—measured as the positive association between selective attribution and selective evaluation—to the order in which these judgments are made. This allows us to assess which direction of the bias is stronger: from responsibility assignment to service quality, or from service quality to responsibility assignment.

One possible test is provided by Equation 8:

$$(8) \quad sq_{ij} = \alpha + \beta groupC_i + \gamma aligned_{ij} + \lambda_1(groupC_i * aligned_{ij}) + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

where $aligned_{ij}$ indicates if respondent i believes that service j is under the responsibility of a (i) politically aligned, (ii) trusted, or (iii) federalist-aligned institution.

In this case λ_1 measures the difference in the alignment effect on perceived service quality between Groups C and A; formally: $\lambda_1 = (E[sq|groupC = 1, aligned = 1] - E[sq|groupC = 1, aligned = 0]) - (E[sq|groupC = 0, aligned = 1] - E[sq|groupC = 0, aligned = 0])$.

Since both service quality and responsibility attribution are elicited in Groups A and C, we expect a positive correlation between sq and $aligned$ in both groups, indicating a bias in both judgments consistent with politically motivated reasoning. A positive value of λ_1 would suggest that this

[10]To illustrate, consider a respondent in Group C who attributes responsibility for daycare services to the regional government. If she is politically aligned with the region, we expect her to report higher satisfaction with daycare quality. Ideally, we would compare her to a Group A respondent with a similar alignment. However, because Group A respondents assign responsibility after evaluating quality, their attributions may reflect their prior satisfaction—for instance, a positive evaluation of daycare could make them more likely to credit an aligned institution.

correlation is stronger in Group C, implying that motivated reasoning *from responsibility attribution to service quality* is stronger than the reverse effect. Conversely, a value of $\lambda_1 = 0$ would suggest an absence of order effects—meaning that making one dimension salient before the other does not significantly alter respondents' subsequent judgments.

To test H3b and H4b separately, we perform the following regressions. We focus only on respondents in Group D. These respondents receive feedback indicating the institutionally responsible level of government for each service and are therefore assumed to believe that the responsible institution is the one indicated in the feedback (or to have updated their beliefs accordingly). Therefore, to test H3b, we examine whether alignment with this layer of government influences reported service quality:

$$sq_{ij} = \alpha + \gamma treualign_{ij} + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{9}$$

Then, we focus on Group C respondents. In order to provide descriptive evidence to H3b, we check whether respondents reporting that an aligned institution is responsible for a specific service are also more likely to give a high evaluation to such service:

$$sq_{ij} = \alpha + \gamma aligned_{ij} + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{10}$$

We focus on respondents in Group A to check whether those reporting higher quality are more likely to attribute responsibility to an aligned institution. We use the following regression model, which provides descriptive evidence for H4b:

$$aligned_{ij} = \alpha + \gamma highq_{ij} + \theta use_{ij} + X_i\pi + \mu_j + U_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{11}$$

where $highq_{ij}$ is a dummy indicating whether the respondent reported a quality for service j higher than the sample median.

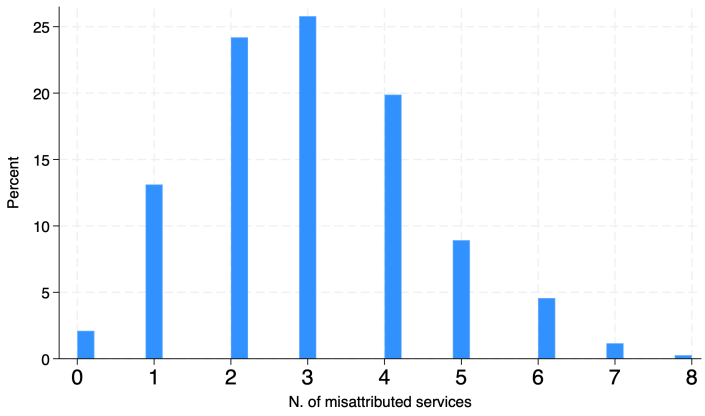
Table A1 in the Appendix summarizes the descriptive statistics. Variable definitions and survey measures are provided in Table A24a and Table A24b.

IV. Main results

A. *Correlates of misattributed responsibility*

One of the central findings of this study is that Italian citizens differ in their attribution of responsibility for public services across different layers of government. Table 1 illustrates this clearly by reporting answers for the eight public services evaluated in the survey. Results reveal substantial variation in attribution across different services. For instance, services with clear institutional ownership, such as pensions, show a high rate of attribution consistent with the institutional allocation (90%), likely because the central government's role in pension provision is widely understood and not contested. In contrast, services like policing, which involve overlapping responsibilities between national and local authorities, yield much lower attribution accuracy (only 17%). This suggests that ambiguity in service governance leads to confusion among the public. Services such as roads and waste management fall in between, reflecting their mixed administrative structures. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the number of services for which respondents misattributed responsibility.

Figure (2) Misattribution of responsibility



Notes: Distribution of respondents by the number of services for which the respondent gave responsibility misattribution.

Beyond this aggregate analysis, Figure 3 delves into the individual-level correlates of misattribution (regression coefficients for the main variables of interest are shown in Table A2 in the Appendix). The regression analysis highlights several significant predictors. Political participation, measured through behaviors such as volunteering or political discussions on social media, is positively correlated with misattribution. This somewhat counterintuitive result may indicate that politically

Table (1) Attribution of responsibility by service

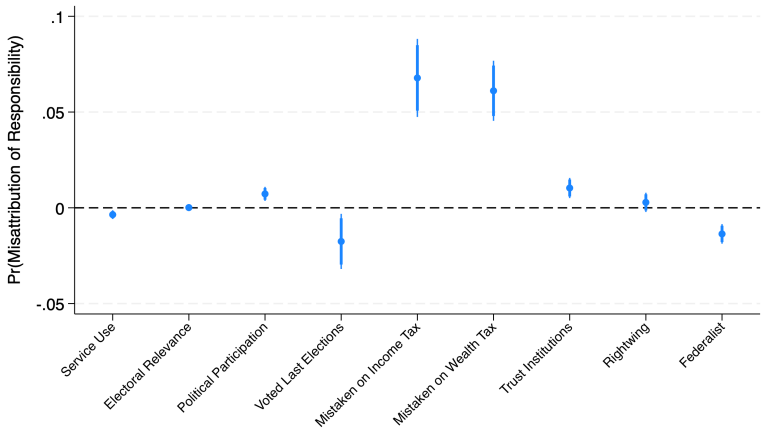
	Answer Percentage
Healthcare	
Municipality	3.6
Region	**58.9**
Government	37.5
Police	
Municipality	**17.1**
Region	11.8
Government	71.1
Public Transport	
Municipality	**41.1**
Region	51.1
Government	7.8
Roads	
Municipality	**54.9**
Region	36.5
Government	8.7
Justice	
Municipality	3.8
Region	9.0
Government	**87.2**
Pension	
Municipality	2.8
Region	6.9
Government	**90.4**
Waste	
Municipality	**80.6**
Region	15.9
Government	3.5
Daycare	
Municipality	**69.1**
Region	21.3
Government	9.5
Observations	4909

Note: Distribution of responsibility attribution by service. The layer of government we considered responsible is highlighted in bold.

engaged individuals bring stronger partisan priors to bear, thereby clouding their objective as-

sessment of institutional responsibilities. Misunderstanding fiscal structures—specifically, being mistaken about which institution collects income and wealth taxes—is also positively associated with misattribution, suggesting that broader gaps in institutional knowledge are reflected in difficulties assigning responsibility. On the other hand, having voted in the last elections is negatively associated with misattribution, suggesting that more civically engaged citizens who participate in the electoral process are also more informed about government roles. Service usage is another predictive factor. Individuals who frequently use a public service are more likely to identify the responsible institution accurately, possibly because repeated interactions improve familiarity with institutional roles. Additionally, the analysis indicates that institutional trust improves accuracy, whereas political ideology does not.

Figure (3) Determinants of misattributed responsibility



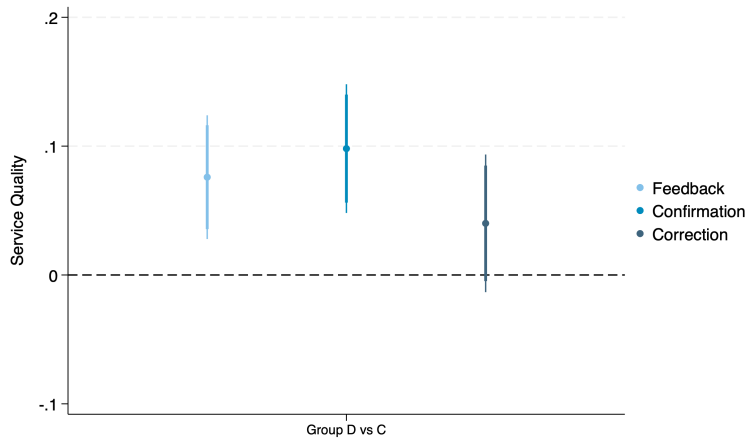
Notes: Coefficients from a linear probability model regressing misattribution of service responsibility on service use, electoral relevance, political participation (given by donation to party, signing petition, participated to a rally, posted about politics, volunteered), voting in last general elections, mistakes in attributing revenues from income and wealth tax, trust in institutions (pca), political orientation and federalist preferences. Regression controls for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, and duration of the survey.

B. Information feedback and confirmatory effects

A central component of this study investigates whether providing feedback—that is, informing respondents about the institutional responsibility for specific public services—alters their perception of service quality. This directly tests Hypotheses H2a and H2b, which suggest that providing information about the institutionally responsible level of government should influence citizens' evaluations, especially when this information clashes with or aligns with their political preferences.

Figure 4 provides compelling evidence in support of H2a (regression coefficients for the main variables of interest are shown in Table A3 in the Appendix). It shows results from Equation 2 and Equation 3, specifically coefficients β from Equation 2, β and $\beta + \lambda$ from Equation 3. On average, respondents who received feedback indicating the institutionally responsible level of government (Group D) reported higher perceived quality for a specific public service than respondents in Group C, who did not receive such feedback. This suggests that when citizens get confirmation or learn that a certain government institution actually manages a service, they are likely to revise their assessment upward. This average increase in perceived service quality is stronger for confirmation than correction. It highlights the importance of information clarity in shaping citizen judgments. Simply put, being informed matters—and it changes evaluations, especially in environments where attribution is unclear.

Figure (4) Effect of giving feedback

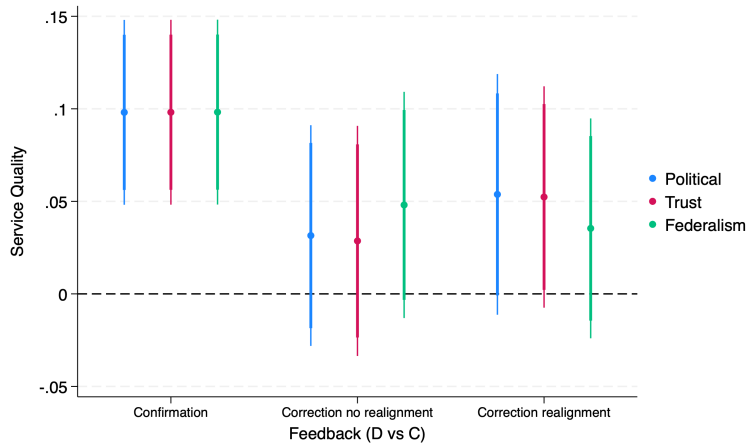


Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback (being in group D) on reported service quality using group C as a control. This effect is broken down for respondents in group D who received either confirmation feedback or correction feedback. Their control group, drawn from group C, consists of individuals who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

We break this effect down in Figure 5, which reports results of Equation 4, by showing how the effect differs for people who receive a confirmation feedback, a correction feedback that does not change their political alignment/trust/federalist opinion on the responsible institution, and a correction feedback such that the correction changes their political alignment/trust/federalist opinion on the responsible institution (regression coefficients for the main variables of interest are shown in

Table A4 in the Appendix). Figure 5 shows coefficients β, $\beta+\lambda_1$, and $\beta+\lambda_2$ for political, trust, and federalist alignment. The analysis shows that only confirmation feedback produces a statistically significant positive effect on perceived service quality. In contrast, neutral or disconfirming corrections—i.e., those that don't reinforce prior alignment—do not yield meaningful changes in service evaluation. This finding emphasizes the role of motivated reasoning: people are more receptive to feedback when it matches their political alignment or confirms their prior beliefs.

Figure (5) Confirmation and correction effects

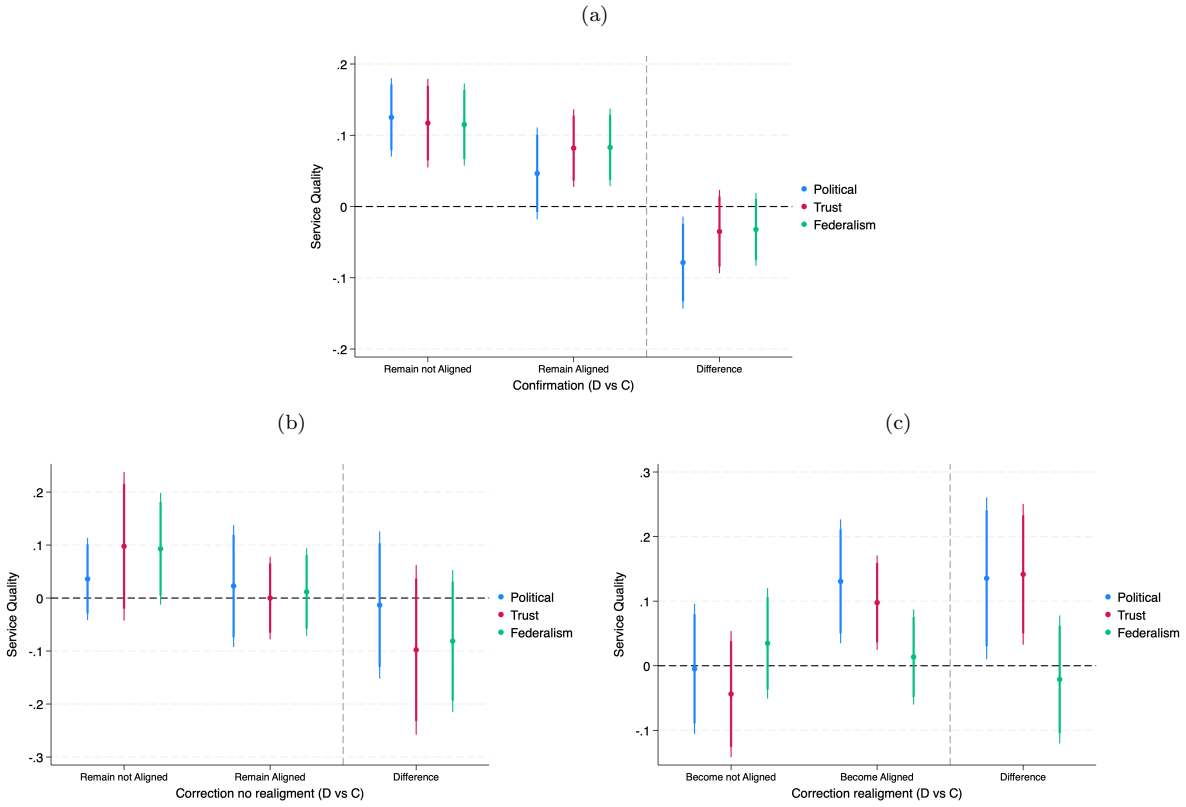


Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback (group D) on reported service quality by type of feedback (confirmation, correction towards an institution for which the respondent remains aligned/not aligned, correction towards an institution for which the respondent becomes aligned/not aligned) and type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference). Their control group, drawn from group C, consists of individuals who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, N. of corrections, number of children, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

We further break these effects down by examining the specific degrees of alignment, trust, and federalism stance in Figure 6 (regression coefficients for the main variables of interest are shown in Table A5a, Table A5b and Table A5c in the Appendix). It shows coefficients β, $\beta+\lambda$, and λ from Equation 5 for confirmation feedback (top panel), correction feedback without shifting alignment (bottom-left panel), and confirmation feedback with shifting alignment (bottom-right panel). The strongest correction effects emerge in the third panel, where corrective feedback realigns the institution with the respondent's political orientation—i.e., when a respondent previously thought a service was managed by a misaligned institution, but learns it is in fact managed by one aligned with his/her own views. This "realignment surprise" leads to a significant boost in perceived quality. In

other words, when citizens who initially misattributed responsibility to a politically misaligned institution are informed that the actual responsible institution is politically aligned with them, their evaluation of service quality improves significantly. The same pattern holds for trust, providing strong support for H2b.

Figure (6) Confirmation and correction effects, by party, trust and federalism alignment



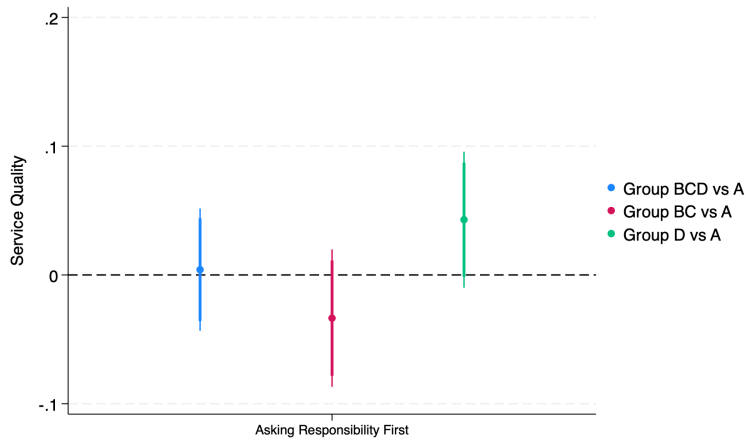
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback (group D) on reported service quality by type of feedback (confirmation, correction towards an institution for which the respondent remains aligned/not aligned, correction towards an institution for which the respondent becomes aligned/not aligned) and type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference). Their control group, drawn from group C, consists of individuals who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

C. Order effects

This section investigates whether the sequencing of questions—specifically, whether respondents are asked to identify the responsible level of government before or after evaluating the quality of a public service—affects their responses. In particular, we first examine whether prompting

individuals to consider responsibility attribution prior to assessing service quality influences their subsequent evaluations of that service. This approach tests the hypothesis that priming respondents with a responsibility attribution task activates political and cognitive filters, thereby shaping how they perceive and evaluate the quality of public services. Figure 7 shows β coefficients from the regression Equation 6 using three alternative control groups. Regression coefficients are reported in Table A6 in the Appendix. We first consider all groups in which responsibility was first asked (B, C, and D). Then, we distinguish between participants who do not receive feedback (group BC) and those who do (group D). Looking at group BC vs A captures the sole effect of asking responsibility first, whereas comparing group D and A also accounts for the impact of feedback. In all cases, asking for responsibility first seems to have no statistically significant impact on reported service quality.

Figure (7) Effect of asking service responsibility first

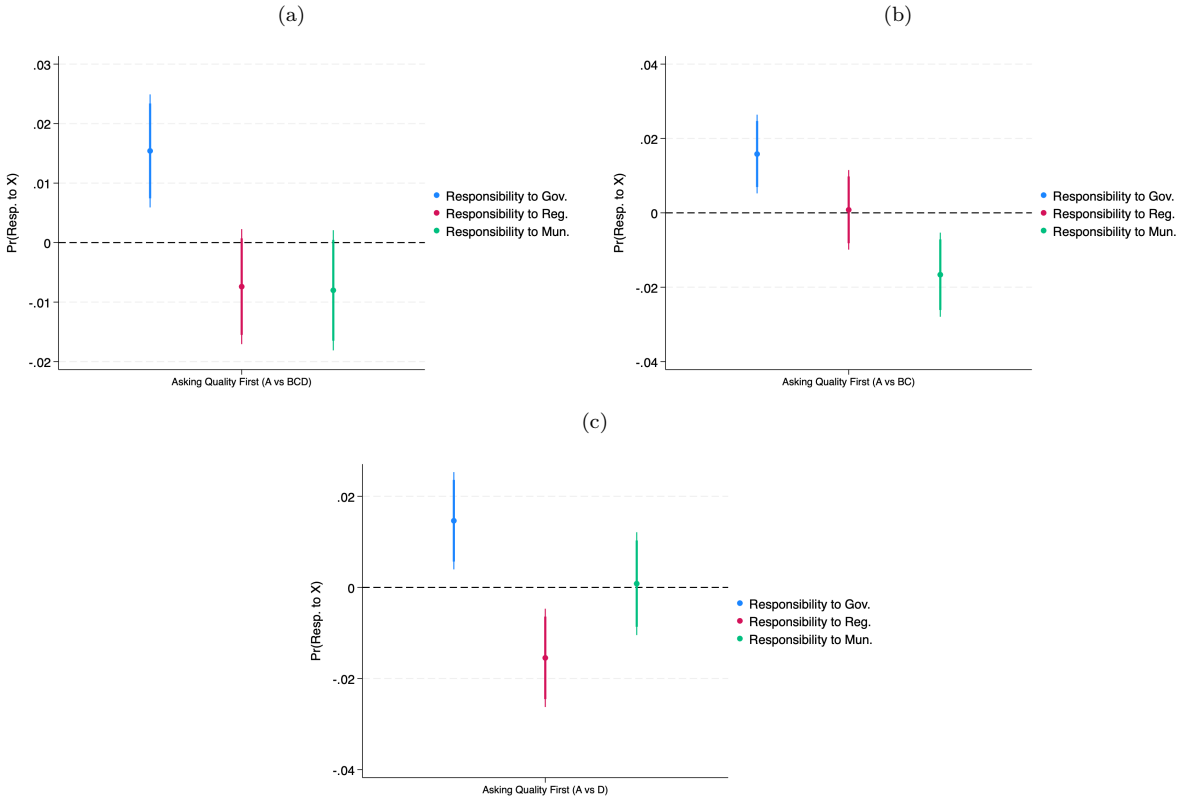


Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback and asking responsibility first (being in group B, C, D vs A) on reported service quality. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

Second, we investigate whether asking respondents about service quality first alters their attribution of responsibility for the different services. Figure 8 explores the impact of priming respondents with service quality (H4a) showing β coefficients from Equation 7. Regression coefficients are shown in Table A7a, Table A7b and Table A7c in the Appendix. On average, eliciting service quality first increases the likelihood that respondents attribute responsibility to the government and less to the other two layers of government. In the next section, we will explore whether differential effects in

responsibility attribution are driven by quality evaluations.

Figure (8) Effect of asking service quality first



Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of asking quality first (group A) on attributing responsibility to a specific institution in a linear probability model. Results differentiate the effect by type of institution (government, region and municipality). Group B, C and D are used as a control. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey.

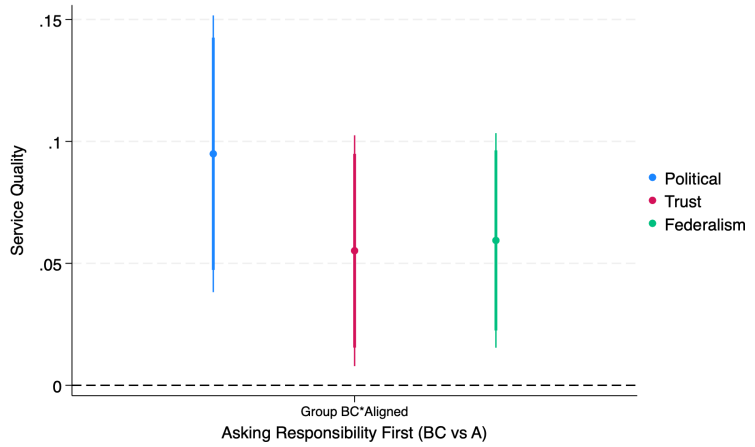
D. Motivated reasoning in the order effect

This section explores whether the effect of responsibility-first priming varies across different identity-moderators, in line with Hypothesis H3b. Specifically, it explores whether that effect differs for people who think that the responsible institution is an institution they (i) are politically aligned with, (ii) they trust, or (iii) is close to them in terms of their federalist preferences. We also explore whether the impact of priming respondents with service quality on responsibility attribution differs for people who judged the service as low quality vs high quality, to answer H4b.

We first show λ_1 coefficients from Equation 8 for different definitions of alignment. Results in Figure 9 indicate that the motivated reasoning channel from responsibility to perceived quality is

stronger. The positive association between alignment with the responsible institution and reported service quality is larger in group C than in group A. It compares the quality gap between aligned and non-aligned respondents in group C using group A as the comparison arm; coefficients are positive and significant for all three alignment definitions, implying a stronger quality-alignment association in group C. Regression coefficients are shown in Table A8 in the Appendix.

Figure (9) Comparison of motivated reasoning channels

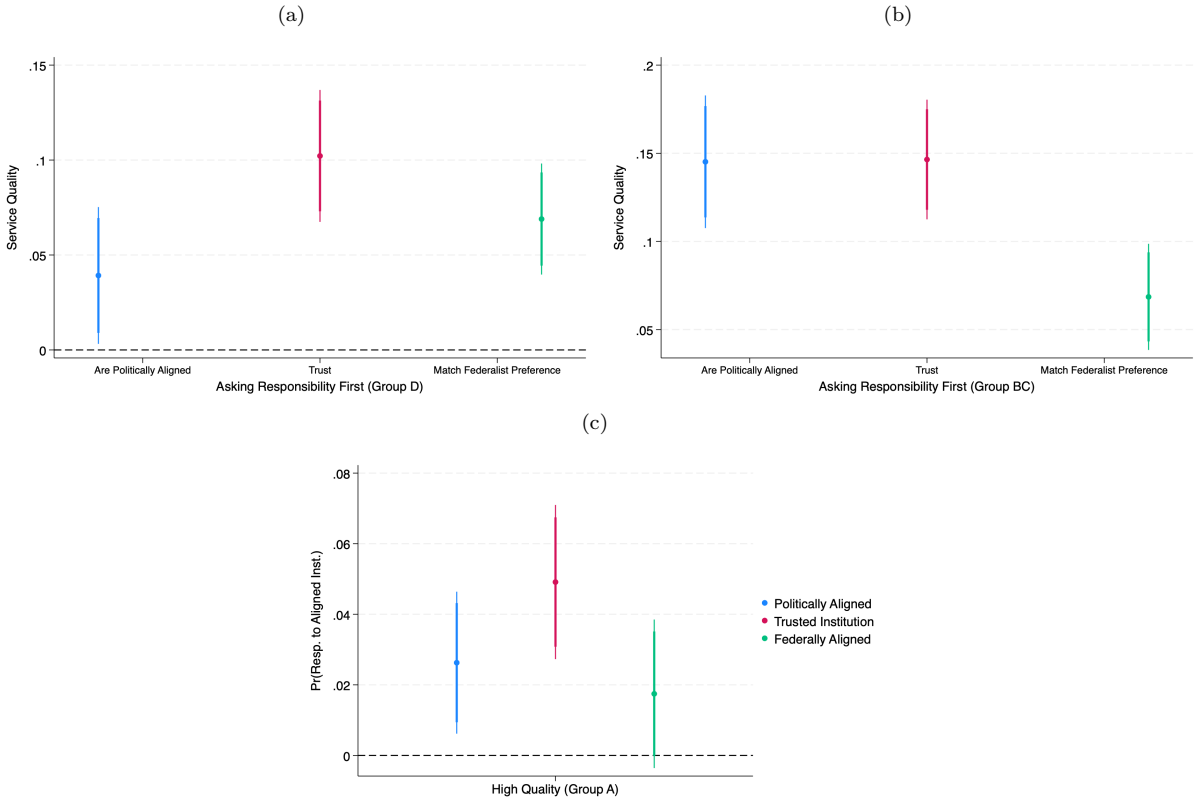


Notes: Figure shows coefficients λ_1 from Equation 8. Regression controls for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized

Figure 10 shows alternative tests for H3b and H4b provided by Equation 9, Equation 10 and Equation 11. Regression coefficients are shown in Table A9a, Table A9b and Table A9c in the Appendix. Panel (a) illustrates γ coefficients from Equation 9. This finding supports H3b: within group D, respondents aligned with the exogenously assigned layer of government report higher perceived service quality than those who are not. Whereas panel (b) confirms these results providing γ coefficients from Equation 10. Finally, panel (c) shows γ coefficients from Equation 11. The results suggest motivated reasoning as predicted by H4b as respondents giving high quality evaluations, in group A, are more likely to assign responsibility to an aligned layer of government later in the survey. However, these results do not provide causal identification for H3b and H4b.

Taken together, our results provide evidence supporting H3b: assigning responsibility to a congenial (vs uncongenial) institution systematically increases (decreases) perceived service quality. This motivated-reasoning channel is consistently stronger than the H4b mechanism, which would run

Figure (10) Effect of asking service responsibility or service quality first



Notes: Panel (a) shows coefficients γ from Equation 9. It represents the effect of asking responsibility first (group D) on reported service quality by type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching the respondent's federalist preference). Panel (b) shows coefficients γ from Equation 10. It shows the effect of asking responsibility first (group BC) on reported service quality by alignment type. Panel (c) shows coefficients γ from Equation 11. It shows the effect of asking quality first (group A) on attributing responsibility to an aligned institution, estimated using a linear probability model. Results differentiate the effect by type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference) and by reported service quality (below and above the median). Regression controls for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized in panel (a) and (b).

from reported quality to responsibility attribution. Although we find evidence in favor of H4b, we cannot interpret this result as causal. We conclude that motivated reasoning is primarily driven by responsibility attribution.

V. Robustness checks

A. Service-specific determinants of responsibility misattribution

Figure A1 and Figure A2 in the Appendix present the results regarding the determinants of responsibility misattribution separately for each public service. This allows us to assess whether the drivers

of attribution errors—such as political participation, tax knowledge, and service use—operate uniformly across services or if some deviations emerge. Overall, the patterns broadly confirm the findings of the aggregate model in Figure 3. In particular, misunderstanding the fiscal system, especially which institution collects income or property taxes, is a strong and consistent predictor of misattribution across most services, highlighting the importance of basic institutional knowledge (with the exception of police and roads). Service use appears to consistently reduce misattribution, especially for services like waste, roads and police, suggesting that familiarity through direct experience can mitigate confusion, an effect less visible in services with lower direct citizen engagement, such as justice or pension. Trust in institutions can play a more prominent role in driving misattribution for services like pensions, while federalist preferences decrease misattribution across roads, pensions, waste and daycare. These service-level results reinforce the broader conclusion that institutional complexity and personal engagement interact to shape perceptions of responsibility. They also note that while the mechanisms identified in the main text are generalizable, their magnitudes and interactions with individual-level characteristics can vary significantly depending on the nature of the service in question.

B. Robustness to exclusion of high-ambiguity services

To ensure that our main results are not driven by services with particularly ambiguous institutional responsibilities, we conduct a robustness check by re-estimating our main results excluding police, public transport, and roads from the analysis. These services are particularly prone to attribution errors due to the complex and overlapping responsibilities shared across different levels of government. For instance, policing involves both national and municipal forces, while transportation and road responsibilities are often subject to shared or unclear mandates and frequently split between regional and local authorities. Such institutional ambiguity increases the likelihood that respondents misunderstood the survey questions related to these services or misattributed responsibility, not because of informational deficits but because of structural confusion. By excluding these services, we aim to assess whether our findings are driven by potential misinterpretation or low clarity in governance. The results of this exercise confirm the robustness of our main findings. Specifically, the effects of providing corrective feedback (Figure A3 in the Appendix), and the heterogeneity of those effects by political alignment, trust, and federalist preferences (Figure A4 and Figure A5 in

the Appendix), remain consistent in direction and magnitude with the original full-sample analysis. Figure A3 shows that respondents who receive corrective or confirmatory information about institutional responsibility still report significantly higher service quality. This supports our interpretation that providing information about institutional responsibility enhances evaluations and that this effect is not driven by the inclusion of noisy, high-misattribution services. Figure A4 explores heterogeneous treatment effects by feedback type—distinguishing between confirmation and correction—and by political alignment, trust, and federalist preferences. As in the main specification, only confirmatory feedback leads to a significant positive shift in perceived quality. This finding remains robust even after removing the high-confusion services, further highlighting the role of motivated reasoning: feedback is only effective when it reinforces preexisting beliefs. Finally, Figure A5 breaks down the correction effects by dimension of alignment—political orientation, trust, and federalism. Again, the strongest effect arises when feedback causes a realignment surprise (bottom-right panel): learning that a service is actually provided by a politically aligned or trusted institution leads to a marked increase in perceived quality. The consistency of these patterns without police, transport, and roads confirms that our theoretical mechanism—bias confirmation and identity-based updating—is not contingent on service-specific characteristics. This reinforces our interpretation that the observed patterns are not solely driven by high-noise services but reflect more general mechanisms of motivated reasoning and partisan evaluation in responsibility attribution.

We also replicate the analysis that investigates whether the order of the questions matters for reporting service quality and responsibility attribution. Results are consistent with the exclusion of a subset of particularly ambiguous services; when respondents are asked to attribute responsibility before evaluating service quality, their perceptions of service quality are not influenced (Figure A6 in the Appendix). Similarly, when excluding police, transport and roads from the analysis, asking quality first still reduces the probability of government attribution (Figure A7 in the Appendix). Finally, even when looking at the role of motivated reasoning in shaping the order effect (Figure A8 and Figure A9 in the Appendix), the only difference that we find is in lower support for H3b in Figure A9.

C. *Robustness to population threshold*

As a final robustness check, we replicate the main analysis, excluding respondents living in municipalities with a population below 5,000 inhabitants. The rationale for this restriction is that in smaller municipalities, the distinction between responsibilities assigned to central, regional, and local governments is less clear-cut. Due to limited administrative capacity, local authorities in these areas often operate under more centralized oversight or blurred institutional boundaries, which could potentially affect the implementation and impact of fiscal rules. By focusing on municipalities with at least 5,000 residents, we aim to ensure a more consistent attribution of policy responsibilities across government levels and to verify that our main results are not driven by institutional heterogeneity in smaller jurisdictions. The main results remain similar (Figure A10 to Figure A14 in the Appendix), reinforcing the robustness of our findings that clarifying who is responsible for policy outcomes may shape citizens' evaluations, particularly when this clarification either aligns with or challenges their political preferences. However, Figure A15 shows lower support for the hypothesis that motivated reasoning, for trust, is stronger when priming service responsibility. In addition, we do not find support for H3b, in political orientation, in Figure A16.

D. *Multiple Hypothesis Testing*

We replicated the analysis of H2-H4 with the Romano and Wolf correction for multiple hypothesis testing (Clarke, 2021; Romano and Wolf, 2005*a*; Romano and Wolf, 2005*b*; Romano and Wolf, 2016). Results are presented in Table A10-Table A15 in the Appendix. All of the hypotheses considered are robust to multiple hypothesis testing.

E. *Treatment impact on political orientation, trust and federalist preferences*

In Equation 5 we interact the treatment variable with $truealign_{ij}$. Our estimation strategy assumes that this variable is not influenced by the treatment (providing feedback). However, depending on the specification, that variable depends on political orientation, trust or federalist preferences, which are all asked after feedback is provided. To understand why this could be a problem, consider the case of a negative feedback (correction), which provides a decrease in reported service quality and a lower likelihood of trusting institutions (for disappointment). This could result in a negative estimate for $\beta + \lambda$, not due to the respondent being informed that she does not trust the responsible institution, but simply due to a general disappointment effect. We test this assumption

in Table A16 in the Appendix. Estimates reveal that assignment to group D does not significantly influence alignment to the institution we identify as responsible for each service.

F. Balance Tests

Testing H4b we restrict the sample to respondents that have at least one service for which they were not corrected (Panel (a) - Figure 5), at least one service for which they received a correction feedback without realignment (Panel (b) - Figure 5), and at least one service for which they received a correction feedback with realignment (Panel (c) - Figure 5). While in Panel (a) this results in the exclusion of only 10 participants, sub-samples in Panels (b) and (c) are smaller. Therefore, we perform a balance test to see whether respondents in groups C and D within these two sub-samples differ in their observable characteristics. Results are shown in Table A18-Table A23, whereas Table A17 shows balance tests for the full sample. Even restricting the analysis, the sample appears balanced.

VI. Conclusions

This study sheds light on how citizens in a multi-tiered governance system like Italy's assign responsibility for public services and assess their quality. Through a survey experiment, we find that citizens frequently misattribute responsibility, particularly for services where governance overlaps. These misattributions are systematically related to political and institutional factors, including trust, political alignment, and preferences over federalism. We also show that providing information about the institutionally responsible level of government affects evaluations of service quality, but not uniformly. The effect of that information depends on respondents' prior political attachments: evaluations become more favorable when feedback confirms, or shifts responsibility toward, a politically aligned or trusted government. The order effects in our experiment further suggest that politically motivated reasoning may extend to responsibility attribution as well, while indicating that the channel running from responsibility attribution to service quality evaluation is stronger than the reverse.

These findings raise important concerns about democratic accountability in multilevel systems. When responsibilities overlap in complex and unclear ways, citizens may find it harder to identify who is responsible, ending up misattributing blame or credit. Worse, even when accurate informa-

tion is later provided, its effect may be limited by partisan filters. At the same time, our results do not imply that information is unimportant. Rather, they suggest that accountability may depend not only on how responsibilities are assigned, but also on whether they are communicated clearly and early enough for citizens to form less distorted evaluations of public services. Public messaging strategies that account for partisan identities may therefore be more effective in correcting misperceptions than one-size-fits-all informational campaigns.

There is considerable scope to enhance transparency by providing clear, accessible information that can improve public accountability and help reduce biased or distorted evaluations of government services. However, several important caveats must be acknowledged when interpreting such assessments.

The importance of motivated reasoning is such that individuals' evaluations of public services are often influenced by their pre-existing political sympathies and levels of trust in government institutions. People tend to process information in ways that support their prior beliefs and affiliations, leading to biased or selective assessments rather than objective evaluations.

Domain-specific priming is also an issue, as exposure to information or cues related to specific policy domains or political contexts can activate positive emotions or mood boosts, which in turn amplify favorable evaluations of government services. This means that seemingly neutral information can inadvertently prime respondents to respond more positively, independent of actual service quality.

Finally, self-perception and cognitive consistency may play a role as people derive part of their self-identity from their political beliefs and knowledge. If an individual believes they are well-informed and "right" about the role and effectiveness of government, they are psychologically motivated to maintain a consistent worldview. This often leads them to interpret information in a way that confirms their expertise and supports positive assessments of government services, rather than reconsidering or questioning their own judgments.

Together, these factors highlight that even with improved transparency, public evaluations of government services can remain shaped by complex psychological and social dynamics, limiting the extent to which information alone can ensure fully objective and unbiased assessments.

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Appendix

Tables

Table (A1) Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Age	4909	46.641	14.880	18	90
Male	4909	0.492	0.500	0	1
Female	4909	0.508	0.500	0	1
Middle School or Less	4909	0.149	0.356	0	1
High School	4909	0.485	0.500	0	1
University	4909	0.366	0.482	0	1
Less than 1999Eur/Month	4554	0.380	0.485	0	1
2000-3999Eur/Month	4554	0.435	0.496	0	1
More than 4000Eur/Month	4554	0.185	0.389	0	1
No Children	4909	0.447	0.497	0	1
1 Child	4909	0.249	0.432	0	1
2 Children	4909	0.240	0.427	0	1
3+ Children	4909	0.065	0.246	0	1
Right-wing	4909	4.007	1.478	1	7
Federalist	4909	4.841	1.807	1	7
Institutional Trust	4909	-0.000	2.212	-4	6
Observations	4909				

Note: Right-wing captures political orientation from 1 (Extreme Left) to 7 (Extreme Right). Federalism captures whether the respondents believe that public services should be administered by the government (1) or by region/municipalities (7). Institutional Trust is the first component of pca, capturing trust in the Italian government, parliament, judicial system, police, politicians, regions, municipalities, EU, and media.

Table (A2) Estimates for Figure 3

	(1) Pr(Misattributing Responsibility)
Service Use	-0.004***
	(0.001)
Electoral Importance	0.000
	(0.000)
Political Participation	0.007***
	(0.002)
Voted Last Elections	-0.018**
	(0.007)
Mistaken IRPEF Attribution	0.068***
	(0.010)
Mistaken IMU Attribution	0.061***
	(0.008)
Institutional Trust	0.010***
	(0.003)
Right-wing	0.003
	(0.003)
Federalist	-0.014***
	(0.003)
Socio-Demographics	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes
Observations	39,272
Number of respondents	4,909

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, and type of service. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A3) Estimates for Figure 4

	(1) Service Quality	(2) Service Quality
Feedback	0.076***	0.098***
	(0.024)	(0.025)
Feedback × Correction		-0.058***
		(0.019)
Correction		0.028**
		(0.014)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	28,728	28,728
Number of respondents	3,591	3,591

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. The control group is group C (participants asked about service responsibility first, who received no feedback). Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A4) Estimates for Figure 5

	(1) Service Quality	(2) Service Quality	(3) Service Quality
Feedback	0.098***	0.098***	0.098***
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Feedback × Correction/No Pol. Rial.	-0.067***		
	(0.023)		
Feedback × Correction/Pol. Rial.	-0.044		
	(0.027)		
Feedback × Correction/No Trust Rial.		-0.070***	
		(0.024)	
Feedback × Correction/Trust Rial.		-0.046*	
		(0.024)	
Feedback × Correction/No Fed. Rial.			-0.050**
			(0.024)
Feedback × Correction/Fed. Rial.			-0.063***
			(0.023)
Correction/No Pol. Rial.	0.028*		
	(0.016)		
Correction/Pol. Rial.	0.028		
	(0.020)		
Correction/No Trust Rial.		0.021	
		(0.018)	
Correction/Trust Rial.		0.036**	
		(0.018)	
Correction/No Fed. Rial.			-0.006
			(0.018)
Correction/Fed. Rial.			0.061***
			(0.018)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	28,728	28,728	28,728
Number of respondents	3,591	3,591	3,591

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. The control group is group C (participants asked about service responsibility first, who received no feedback). Receiving confirmation feedback is the omitted category. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A5a) Estimates for Figure 6 - Panel (a)

	(1) Service Quality	(2) Service Quality	(3) Service Quality
Confirmation	0.125***	0.117***	0.115***
	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.029)
Confirmation × Remain pol. aligned	-0.079**		
	(0.033)		
Confirmation × Remain trusting		-0.035	
		(0.030)	
Confirmation × Remain close on fed.			-0.032
			(0.026)
Remain pol. aligned	0.130***		
	(0.024)		
Remain trusting		0.165***	
		(0.022)	
Remain close on fed.			0.094***
			(0.019)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,738	17,738	17,738
Number of respondents	3,581	3,581	3,581

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. It includes respondents in group D who received a confirmation feedback (Confirmation=1). The control group are participants in group C (participants asked service responsibility first who received no feedback) who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Remaining not politically aligned/trusting/far on federalism are the omitted categories. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A5b) Estimates for Figure 6 - Panel (b)

	(1) Service Quality	(2) Service Quality	(3) Service Quality
Correction	0.036	0.098	0.093*
	(0.040)	(0.071)	(0.054)
Correction × Remain pol. aligned	-0.013		
	(0.071)		
Correction × Remain trusting		-0.098	
		(0.082)	
Correction × Remain close on fed.			-0.081
			(0.068)
Remain pol. aligned	0.193***		
	(0.050)		
Remain trusting		0.153***	
		(0.058)	
Remain close on fed.			0.187***
			(0.049)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	6,713	5,376	5,157
Number of respondents	2,891	2,794	2,928

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. It includes respondents in group D who received correction feedback without realignment (Correction=1). The control group are participants in group C (participants asked service responsibility first who received no feedback) who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Remaining not politically aligned/trusting/far on federalism are the omitted categories. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A5c) Estimates for Figure 6 - Panel (c)

	(1) Service Quality	(2) Service Quality	(3) Service Quality
Correction	-0.005	-0.044	0.035
	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.044)
Correction × Become pol. aligned	0.135**		
	(0.064)		
Correction × Become trusting		0.142**	
		(0.056)	
Correction × Become close on fed.			-0.021
			(0.051)
Become pol. aligned	-0.163***		
	(0.044)		
Become trusting		-0.122***	
		(0.038)	
Become close on fed.			0.107***
			(0.035)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,277	5,614	5,833
Number of respondents	1,939	2,740	3,311

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. It includes respondents in group D who received correction feedback with realignment (Correction=1). The control group are participants in group C (participants asked service responsibility first who received no feedback) who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Becoming not politically aligned/trusting/far on federalism are the omitted categories. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A6) Estimates for Figure 7

	Group BCD vs A	Group BC vs A	Group D vs A
	(1) Service Quality	(2) Service Quality	(3) Service Quality
Asking Responsibility First	0.004	-0.034	0.043
	(0.024)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	39,272	25,080	24,112
Number of respondents	4,909	3,135	3,014

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A7a) Estimates for Figure 8 - Panel (a)

	(1) Pr(Gov. Responsible)	(2) Pr(Reg. Responsible)	(3) Pr(Mun. Responsible)
Asking Quality First	0.015***	-0.007	-0.008
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	39,272	39,272	39,272
Number of respondents	4,909	4,909	4,909

Note: Results from a Random Effect linear probability model. Group BCD are used as a control group. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A7b) Estimates for Figure 8 - Panel (b)

	(1) Pr(Gov. Responsible)	(2) Pr(Reg. Responsible)	(3) Pr(Mun. Responsible)
Asking Quality First	0.016***	0.001	-0.017***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	25,080	25,080	25,080
Number of respondents	3,135	3,135	3,135

Note: Results from a Random Effect linear probability model. Groups B and C are used as a control group. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A7c) Estimates for Figure 8 - Panel (c)

	(1) Pr(Gov. Responsible)	(2) Pr(Reg. Responsible)	(3) Pr(Mun. Responsible)
Asking Quality First	0.015***	-0.015***	0.001
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	24,112	24,112	24,112
Number of respondents	3,014	3,014	3,014

Note: Results from a Random Effect linear probability model. Group D is used as a control group. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A8) Estimates for Figure 9

	(1) Service Quality	(2) Service Quality	(3) Service Quality
Asking Responsibility First × Are pol. aligned	0.095***		
	(0.029)		
Asking Responsibility First × Trust		0.055**	
		(0.024)	
Asking Responsibility First × Close on feder.			0.059***
			(0.022)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	25,080	25,080	25,080
Number of respondents	3,135	3,135	3,135

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. It includes only respondents in group B and C, group D is used as a control. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A9a) Estimates for Figure 10 - Panel (a)

	(1) Service Quality	(2) Service Quality	(3) Service Quality
Are pol. aligned	0.039**		
	(0.018)		
Trust		0.102***	
		(0.018)	
Close on feder.			0.069***
			(0.015)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	14,192	14,192	14,192
Number of respondents	1,774	1,774	1,774

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. These regressions consider only respondents in Group D. Not aligned/trusting/far on federalism are the omitted categories. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A9b) Estimates for Figure 10 - Panel (b)

	(1) Service Quality	(2) Service Quality	(3) Service Quality
Are pol. aligned	0.145***		
	(0.019)		
Trust		0.146***	
		(0.017)	
Close on feder.			0.069***
			(0.015)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	15,160	15,160	15,160
Number of respondents	1,895	1,895	1,895

Note: Results from a Random Effect model. These regressions consider only respondents in Group B and C. Not aligned/trusting/far on federalism are the omitted categories. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A9c) Estimates for Figure 10 - Panel (c)

	(1) Pr(Resp. to pol. aligned inst.)	(2) Pr(Resp. to trusted inst.)	(3) Pr(Resp. to fed. close inst.)
High quality	0.026**	0.049***	0.017
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,920	9,920	9,920
Number of respondents	1,240	1,240	1,240

Note: Results from a Random Effect linear probability model. These regressions consider only respondents in Group A. Reporting a low service quality is the omitted category. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A10) Multiple Hypothesis Testing Correction - H4a

Model	Variable	Coefficient	Model p-value	Resample p-value	RW p-value
Table A3 (1)	Feedback	0.076	0.002	0.000	0.000
Table A3 (2)	Feedback	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A3 (2)	Feed.*Corr.	-0.058	0.002	0.000	0.000
Table A4 (1)	Feed.	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A4 (1)	Feed.*Corr./No Pol. Rial.	-0.067	0.003	0.000	0.001
Table A4 (1)	Feed.*Corr./Pol. Rial.	-0.044	0.107	0.026	0.026
Table A4 (2)	Feed.	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A4 (2)	Feed.*Corr./No Trust Rial.	-0.070	0.005	0.000	0.001
Table A4 (2)	Feed.*Corr./Trust Rial.	-0.046	0.055	0.006	0.012
Table A4 (3)	Feed.	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A4 (3)	Feed.*Corr./No Fed. Rial.	-0.050	0.038	0.004	0.010
Table A4 (3)	Feed.*Corr./Fed. Rial.	-0.063	0.007	0.000	0.001

Note: Multiple Hypothesis testing for Regressions in Figure 4 and Figure 5

Table (A11) Multiple Hypothesis Testing Correction - H4b

Model	Variable	Coefficient	Model p-value	Resample p-value	RW p-value
Table A5a (1)	Confirmation	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A5a (1)	Confirmation*Remain pol. al.	-0.079	0.017	0.001	0.006
Table A5a (2)	Confirmation	0.117	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A5a (2)	Confirmation*Remain trusting	-0.035	0.239	0.094	0.459
Table A5a (3)	Confirmation	0.115	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A5a (3)	Confirmation*Remain close on fed.	-0.032	0.216	0.081	0.459
Table A5b (1)	Correction	0.036	0.363	0.148	0.625
Table A5b (1)	Correction*Remain pol. al.	-0.013	0.851	0.768	0.951
Table A5b (2)	Correction	0.098	0.172	0.024	0.330
Table A5b (2)	Correction*Remain trusting	-0.098	0.232	0.050	0.459
Table A5b (3)	Correction	0.093	0.084	0.005	0.103
Table A5b (3)	Correction*Remain close on fed.	-0.081	0.235	0.057	0.459
Table A5c (1)	Correction	-0.005	0.926	0.893	0.951
Table A5c (1)	Correction*Become pol. al.	0.135	0.034	0.003	0.018
Table A5c (2)	Correction	-0.044	0.379	0.194	0.625
Table A5c (2)	Correction*Become trusting	0.142	0.011	0.000	0.003
Table A5c (3)	Correction	0.035	0.425	0.247	0.625
Table A5c (3)	Correction*Become close on fed.	-0.021	0.675	0.564	0.901

Note: Multiple Hypothesis testing for Regressions in Figure 6

Table (A12) Multiple Hypothesis Testing Correction - H2a

Model	Variable	Coefficient	Model p-value	Resample p-value	RW p-value
Table A6 (1)	Asking Resp. First (BCD vs A)	0.004	0.865	0.787	0.787
Table A6 (2)	Asking Resp. First (BC vs A)	-0.034	0.218	0.045	0.064
Table A6 (3)	Asking Resp. First (D vs A)	0.043	0.111	0.011	0.019

Note: Multiple Hypothesis testing for Regressions in Figure 7

Table (A13) Multiple Hypothesis Testing Correction - H3a

Model	Variable	Coefficient	Model p-value	Resample p-value	RW p-value
Table A7a (1)	Asking Quality First (A vs BCD)	0.015	0.001	0.000	0.000
Table A7a (2)	Asking Quality First (A vs BCD)	-0.007	0.134	0.019	0.041
Table A7a (3)	Asking Quality First (A vs BCD)	-0.008	0.120	0.015	0.039
Table A7b (1)	Asking Quality First (A vs BC)	0.016	0.003	0.000	0.000
Table A7b (2)	Asking Quality First (A vs BC)	0.001	0.882	0.814	0.959
Table A7b (3)	Asking Quality First (A vs BC)	-0.017	0.004	0.000	0.000
Table A7c (1)	Asking Quality First (A vs D)	0.015	0.007	0.000	0.001
Table A7c (2)	Asking Quality First (A vs D)	-0.015	0.005	0.000	0.000
Table A7c (3)	Asking Quality First (A vs D)	0.001	0.886	0.808	0.959

Note: Multiple Hypothesis testing for Regressions in Figure 8

Table (A14) Multiple Hypothesis Testing Correction - H2b and H3b

Model	Variable	Coefficient	Model p-value	Resample p-value	RW p-value
Table A8 (1)	sking Resp. First*Pol. Aligned	0.095	0.001	0.000	0.000
Table A8 (2)	Asking Resp. First*Trust	0.055	0.022	0.001	0.001
Table A8 (3)	Asking Resp. First*Close on feder.	0.059	0.008	0.000	0.000

Note: Multiple Hypothesis testing for Regressions in Figure 9

Table (A15) Multiple Hypothesis Testing Correction - H2b and H3b

Model	Variable	Coefficient	Model p-value	Resample p-value	RW p-value
Table A9a (1)	Are pol. aligned (Group D)	0.039	0.033	0.006	0.009
Table A9a (2)	Trust (Group D)	0.102	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A9a (3)	Close on fed. (Group D)	0.069	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A9b (1)	Are pol. aligned (Group BC)	0.145	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A9b (2)	Trust (Group BC)	0.146	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A9b (3)	Close on fed. (Group BC)	0.069	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A9c (1)	High Quality (Group A)	0.026	0.010	0.000	0.002
Table A9c (2)	High Quality (Group A)	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.000
Table A9c (3)	High Quality (Group A)	0.017	0.104	0.021	0.021

Note: Multiple Hypothesis testing for Regressions in Figure 10

Table (A16) Direct impact of feedback on alignment

	(1) Pol. aligned	(2) Trusting	(3) Close on fed.
Feedback (Group D)	0.010	0.016*	0.008
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.008)
Socio-Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	28,728	28,728	28,728
Number of respondents	3,591	3,591	3,591

Note: Results from a Random Effect linear probability model. Control group are participants in group C. Dependent variables are political alignment, trust, and federalism closeness with respect to institutions that we identify as responsible for each service. Socio-Demographic controls include age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income and N. of children. Additional controls include duration of the survey, N. of corrections, type of service and whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent. Standard Errors are clustered at the individual level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table (A17) Balance table full sample

	(1) Group A		(2) Group BC		(3) Group D		F-test for balance across all groups		(1)-(2)		(1)-(3) Pairwise t-test		(2)-(3)	
Variable	N	Mean/(SE)	N	Mean/(SE)	N	Mean/(SE)	N	F-stat/P-value	N	Mean difference	N	Mean difference	N	Mean difference
Age	1240	47.090	1895	46.881	1774	46.072	4909	2.110	3135	0.209	3014	1.018*	3669	0.809
		(0.420)		(0.343)		(0.354)		0.121						
Female	1240	0.521	1895	0.502	1774	0.505	4909	0.603	3135	0.019	3014	0.016	3669	-0.003
		(0.014)		(0.011)		(0.012)		0.547						
Education	1240	2.223	1895	2.212	1774	2.222	4909	0.135	3135	0.011	3014	0.001	3669	-0.010
		(0.020)		(0.016)		(0.016)		0.874						
Macro-Area	1240	3.178	1895	3.215	1774	3.262	4909	1.285	3135	-0.037	3014	-0.083	3669	-0.047
		(0.040)		(0.033)		(0.034)		0.277						
Marital Status	1240	3.609	1895	3.625	1774	3.585	4909	0.326	3135	-0.016	3014	0.024	3669	0.040
		(0.043)		(0.034)		(0.035)		0.722						
N. of Children	1240	0.948	1895	0.945	1774	0.939	4909	0.031	3135	0.003	3014	0.009	3669	0.006
		(0.029)		(0.024)		(0.025)		0.969						
Income	1240	3.674	1895	3.717	1774	3.656	4909	0.362	3135	-0.042	3014	0.018	3669	0.060
		(0.061)		(0.051)		(0.051)		0.696						
Institutional Trust	1240	0.005	1895	-0.005	1774	0.002	4909	0.011	3135	0.011	3014	0.004	3669	-0.007
		(0.058)		(0.048)		(0.049)		0.989						
Federalism	1240	4.819	1895	4.844	1774	4.854	4909	0.142	3135	-0.025	3014	-0.035	3669	-0.010
		(0.052)		(0.041)		(0.043)		0.868						
Political Orientation	1240	4.006	1895	4.005	1774	4.010	4909	0.005	3135	0.000	3014	-0.004	3669	-0.004
		(0.042)		(0.034)		(0.035)		0.995						
Survey Duration	1240	642.977	1895	653.454	1774	651.070	4909	0.679	3135	-10.477	3014	-8.093	3669	2.384
		(7.111)		(5.830)		(5.936)		0.507						

Note: Balance table for the full sample

Table (A18) Balance table for Figure 6 - Panel (b) - Column (1)

	(1) Group BC		(2) Group D		F-test for balance across all groups		(1)-(2) Pairwise t-test	
Variable	N	Mean/(SE)	N	Mean/(SE)	N	F-stat/P-value	N	Mean difference
Age	1471	46.203	1420	45.382	2891	2.164	2891	0.821
		(0.394)		(0.395)		0.141		
Female	1471	0.514	1420	0.513	2891	0.001	2891	0.001
		(0.013)		(0.013)		0.976		
Education	1471	2.185	1420	2.214	2891	1.323	2891	-0.029
		(0.018)		(0.018)		0.250		
Macro-Area	1471	3.233	1420	3.237	2891	0.006	2891	-0.004
		(0.038)		(0.039)		0.939		
Marital Status	1471	3.602	1420	3.541	2891	1.200	2891	0.061
		(0.039)		(0.040)		0.273		
N. of Children	1471	0.922	1420	0.918	2891	0.009	2891	0.004
		(0.026)		(0.027)		0.926		
Income	1471	3.666	1420	3.641	2891	0.096	2891	0.025
		(0.058)		(0.058)		0.757		
Institutional Trust	1471	-0.027	1420	-0.047	2891	0.069	2891	0.021
		(0.055)		(0.055)		0.792		
Federalism	1471	4.817	1420	4.853	2891	0.282	2891	-0.036
		(0.047)		(0.048)		0.595		
Political Orientation	1471	3.986	1420	4.022	2891	0.434	2891	-0.036
		(0.038)		(0.039)		0.510		
Survey Duration	1471	650.978	1420	642.084	2891	0.923	2891	8.894
		(6.622)		(6.468)		0.337		

Note: Balance table for the restricted sample in Figure 6(b)(1). The sample is restricted to participants in Group C and D who have been corrected without political realignment on at least one service.

Table (A19) Balance table for Figure 6 - Panel (b) - Column (2)

	(1) Group BC		(2) Group D		F-test for balance across all groups		(1)-(2) Pairwise t-test	
Variable	N	Mean/(SE)	N	Mean/(SE)	N	F-stat/P-value	N	Mean difference
Age	1412	46.208	1382	45.522	2794	1.436	2794	0.686
		(0.406)		(0.403)		0.231		
Female	1412	0.516	1382	0.512	2794	0.062	2794	0.005
		(0.013)		(0.013)		0.803		
Education	1412	2.194	1382	2.191	2794	0.014	2794	0.003
		(0.018)		(0.018)		0.907		
Macro-Area	1412	3.233	1382	3.279	2794	0.715	2794	-0.046
		(0.038)		(0.038)		0.398		
Marital Status	1412	3.613	1382	3.548	2794	1.308	2794	0.065
		(0.040)		(0.040)		0.253		
N. of Children	1412	0.969	1382	0.912	2794	2.033	2794	0.057
		(0.028)		(0.028)		0.154		
Income	1412	3.615	1382	3.628	2794	0.026	2794	-0.013
		(0.058)		(0.058)		0.871		
Institutional Trust	1412	0.016	1382	-0.007	2794	0.080	2794	0.023
		(0.057)		(0.057)		0.777		
Federalism	1412	4.827	1382	4.873	2794	0.452	2794	-0.045
		(0.048)		(0.048)		0.501		
Political Orientation	1412	4.042	1382	4.001	2794	0.533	2794	0.041
		(0.039)		(0.040)		0.465		
Survey Duration	1412	653.790	1382	647.602	2794	0.419	2794	6.188
		(6.793)		(6.724)		0.517		

Note: Balance table for the restricted sample in Figure 6(b)(2). The sample is restricted to participants in Group C and D who have been corrected without trust realignment on at least one service.

Table (A20) Balance table for Figure 6 - Panel (b) - Column (3)

	(1) Group BC		(2) Group D		F-test for balance across all groups		(1)-(2) Pairwise t-test	
Variable	N	Mean/(SE)	N	Mean/(SE)	N	F-stat/P-value	N	Mean difference
Age	1455	46.114	1473	45.650	2928	0.682	2928	0.464
		(0.400)		(0.394)		0.409		
Female	1455	0.513	1473	0.512	2928	0.007	2928	0.002
		(0.013)		(0.013)		0.934		
Education	1455	2.181	1473	2.199	2928	0.479	2928	-0.017
		(0.018)		(0.018)		0.489		
Macro-Area	1455	3.252	1473	3.282	2928	0.332	2928	-0.030
		(0.037)		(0.037)		0.565		
Marital Status	1455	3.618	1473	3.551	2928	1.484	2928	0.067
		(0.039)		(0.039)		0.223		
N. of Children	1455	0.958	1473	0.913	2928	1.348	2928	0.045
		(0.028)		(0.027)		0.246		
Income	1455	3.695	1473	3.597	2928	1.458	2928	0.097
		(0.059)		(0.056)		0.227		
Institutional Trust	1455	0.022	1473	0.038	2928	0.046	2928	-0.017
		(0.055)		(0.053)		0.830		
Federalism	1455	4.861	1473	4.867	2928	0.008	2928	-0.006
		(0.047)		(0.047)		0.931		
Political Orientation	1455	4.014	1473	3.985	2928	0.287	2928	0.029
		(0.039)		(0.039)		0.593		
Survey Duration	1455	651.671	1473	651.023	2928	0.005	2928	0.648
		(6.575)		(6.506)		0.944		

Note: Balance table for the restricted sample in Figure 6(b)(3). The sample is restricted to participants in Group C and D who have been corrected without federalist realignment on at least one service.

Table (A21) Balance table for Figure 6 - Panel (c) - Column (1)

	(1) Group BC		(2) Group D		F-test for balance across all groups		(1)-(2) Pairwise t-test	
Variable	N	Mean/(SE)	N	Mean/(SE)	N	F-stat/P-value	N	Mean difference
Age	989	47.490	950	46.981	1939	0.573	1939	0.509
		(0.470)		(0.481)		0.449		
Female	989	0.482	950	0.478	1939	0.038	1939	0.004
		(0.016)		(0.016)		0.846		
Education	989	2.242	950	2.239	1939	0.008	1939	0.003
		(0.021)		(0.022)		0.930		
Macro-Area	989	3.282	950	3.355	1939	1.234	1939	-0.073
		(0.046)		(0.046)		0.267		
Marital Status	989	3.637	950	3.627	1939	0.020	1939	0.010
		(0.048)		(0.049)		0.888		
N. of Children	989	0.996	950	0.985	1939	0.048	1939	0.011
		(0.034)		(0.035)		0.827		
Income	989	3.799	950	3.619	1939	3.426*	1939	0.180*
		(0.071)		(0.066)		0.064		
Institutional Trust	989	0.215	950	0.213	1939	0.001	1939	0.002
		(0.064)		(0.064)		0.981		
Federalism	989	4.906	950	4.882	1939	0.089	1939	0.024
		(0.056)		(0.057)		0.765		
Political Orientation	989	4.122	950	4.078	1939	0.399	1939	0.044
		(0.049)		(0.050)		0.528		
Survey Duration	989	662.973	950	658.943	1939	0.118	1939	4.030
		(8.325)		(8.233)		0.731		

Note: Balance table for the restricted sample in Figure 6(c)(1). The sample is restricted to participants in Group C and D who have been corrected with political realignment on at least one service.

Table (A22) Balance table for Figure 6 - Panel (c) - Column (2)

	(1) Group BC		(2) Group D		F-test for balance across all groups		(1)-(2) Pairwise t-test	
Variable	N	Mean/(SE)	N	Mean/(SE)	N	F-stat/P-value	N	Mean difference
Age	1416	46.780	1324	45.872	2740	2.481	2740	0.907
		(0.402)		(0.413)		0.115		
Female	1416	0.487	1324	0.503	2740	0.739	2740	-0.016
		(0.013)		(0.014)		0.390		
Education	1416	2.216	1324	2.227	2740	0.185	2740	-0.011
		(0.018)		(0.019)		0.667		
Macro-Area	1416	3.225	1324	3.246	2740	0.156	2740	-0.022
		(0.038)		(0.040)		0.693		
Marital Status	1416	3.605	1324	3.576	2740	0.256	2740	0.029
		(0.040)		(0.041)		0.613		
N. of Children	1416	0.948	1324	0.945	2740	0.005	2740	0.003
		(0.028)		(0.029)		0.943		
Income	1416	3.737	1324	3.674	2740	0.585	2740	0.064
		(0.059)		(0.059)		0.444		
Institutional Trust	1416	0.096	1324	0.123	2740	0.142	2740	-0.027
		(0.050)		(0.051)		0.707		
Federalism	1416	4.867	1324	4.871	2740	0.003	2740	-0.004
		(0.048)		(0.049)		0.958		
Political Orientation	1416	3.987	1324	3.989	2740	0.001	2740	-0.002
		(0.040)		(0.041)		0.970		
Survey Duration	1416	656.480	1324	657.692	2740	0.016	2740	-1.212
		(6.609)		(6.902)		0.899		

Note: Balance table for the restricted sample in Figure 6(c)(2). The sample is restricted to participants in Group C and D who have been corrected with trust realignment on at least one service.

Table (A23) Balance table for Figure 6 - Panel (c) - Column (3)

	(1) Group BC		(2) Group D		F-test for balance across all groups		(1)-(2) Pairwise t-test	
Variable	N	Mean/(SE)	N	Mean/(SE)	N	F-stat/P-value	N	Mean difference
Age	1686	46.831	1625	46.226	3311	1.355	3311	0.604
		(0.366)		(0.368)		0.245		
Female	1686	0.496	1625	0.500	3311	0.049	3311	-0.004
		(0.012)		(0.012)		0.824		
Education	1686	2.206	1625	2.221	3311	0.407	3311	-0.015
		(0.017)		(0.017)		0.524		
Macro-Area	1686	3.233	1625	3.271	3311	0.602	3311	-0.039
		(0.035)		(0.036)		0.438		
Marital Status	1686	3.631	1625	3.610	3311	0.158	3311	0.021
		(0.036)		(0.037)		0.691		
N. of Children	1686	0.951	1625	0.951	3311	0.000	3311	-0.000
		(0.026)		(0.026)		1.000		
Income	1686	3.714	1625	3.647	3311	0.781	3311	0.067
		(0.054)		(0.053)		0.377		
Institutional Trust	1686	0.014	1625	0.024	3311	0.021	3311	-0.010
		(0.051)		(0.051)		0.885		
Federalism	1686	4.824	1625	4.826	3311	0.002	3311	-0.003
		(0.044)		(0.045)		0.967		
Political Orientation	1686	4.007	1625	4.015	3311	0.022	3311	-0.008
		(0.036)		(0.037)		0.882		
Survey Duration	1686	655.510	1625	649.698	3311	0.439	3311	5.812
		(6.183)		(6.217)		0.508		

Note: Balance table for the restricted sample in Figure 6(c)(3). The sample is restricted to participants in Group C and D who have been corrected with federalist realignment on at least one service.

Table (A24a) Variables' Description - Survey Measures

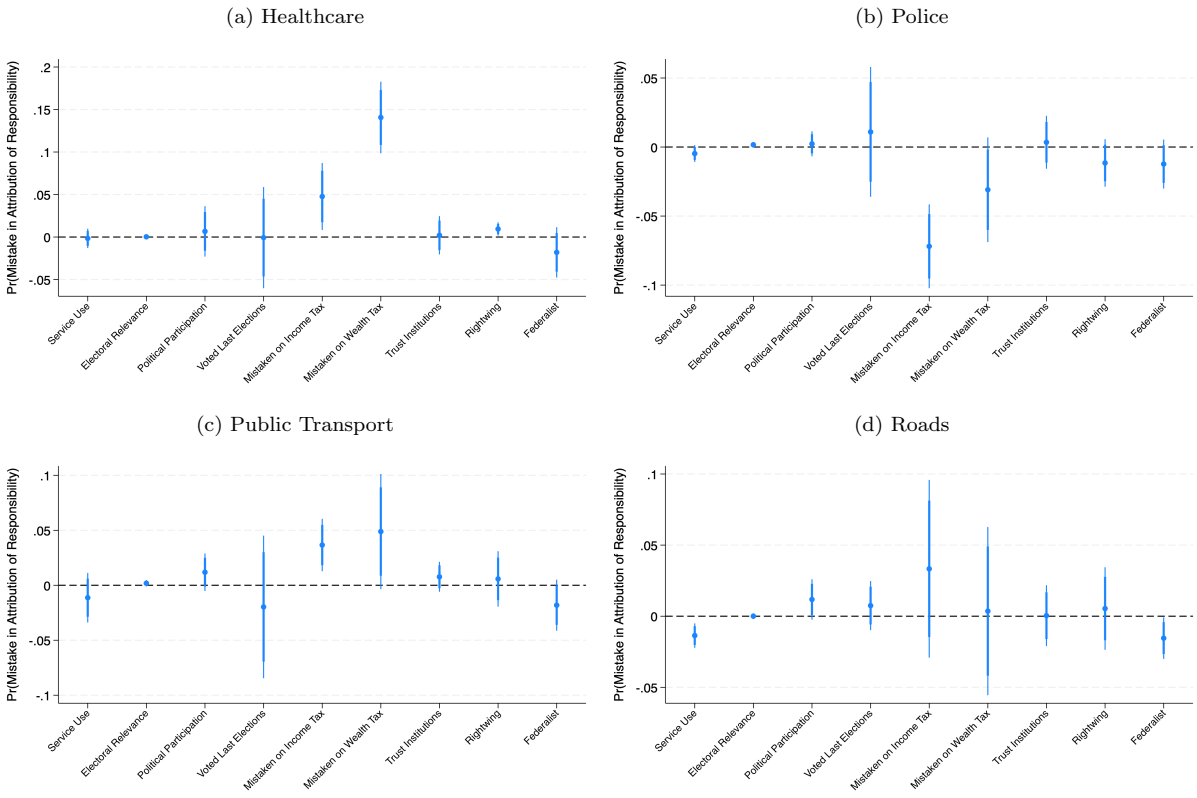
Variable	**Description**
Service Quality *(sq)*	Respondent's satisfaction with the quality of a given public service, rated on a scale from 1 to 10.
Service Responsibility *(resp)*	Level of government the respondent identified as responsible for a given public service, chosen among the national government, region, and municipality.
Voting Intentions	Respondents were asked which party they would vote for in parliamentary elections if held the following week, as well as whether they would vote for a party or civic list in upcoming regional and municipal elections. They were also asked about the political orientation of their vote.
Political Orientation	Respondents' self-placement on a left-to-right political scale (7-point Likert scale).
Trust in Institutions	Respondents' level of trust in a set of institutions, measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Institutions include: municipality, region, national government, parliament, judicial system, police, politicians, the EU, and the media.
Federalism	Respondents' preferences on the distribution of authority over public services between local governments (municipalities and regions) and the national government, measured on a 7-point Likert scale (higher values indicate a stronger preference for local management).
Service Use *(use)*	Respondent's relative use of a service compared to the other services considered in the study, ranked from 1 (least used) to 8 (most used).
Service Care *(care)*	Amount (in euros) the respondent would allocate to a given service out of a hypothetical budget of €100,000, capturing the importance the respondent attaches to the service.
Political Participation	Number of political activities the respondent engaged in during the previous 12 months. Activities include: donating to or participating in the activities of a political party, signing a petition, attending a rally, posting about politics online, and volunteering.
Voted in Last Elections *(vote)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent voted in the last parliamentary elections (September 2022).
Knowledge of Income Tax Distribution *(Itaxmis)*	Respondents were asked to estimate the share of income tax collected by the municipality, region, and national government respectively. Responses were compared to the actual distribution reported by *Sole24Ore* using the formula: $\lvert\%_{gov} - 90\rvert + \lvert\%_{reg} - 7\rvert + \lvert\%_{mun} - 3\rvert$.
Knowledge of Wealth Tax Distribution *(Wtaxmis)*	Respondents were asked to estimate the share of wealth tax collected by the municipality, region, and national government respectively. Responses were compared to a benchmark in which 100% is allocated to the municipality.

Table (A24b) Variables' Description - Constructed Measures

Variable	**Description**
Mistake *(mis)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent assigned responsibility for a service to a level of government that differs from the institutional attribution used in this study.
Confirmation	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent correctly identified the responsible institution for a given service (i.e., Mistake = 0).
Correction without Realignment *(corr)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent incorrectly identified the responsible institution, and their alignment status is the same with respect to both the institution they reported and the institution identified in this study.
Correction with Realignment *(corrali)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent incorrectly identified the responsible institution, and their alignment status differs between the institution they reported and the institution identified in this study.
Political Alignment with Reported Institution *(aligned)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if there is political alignment between the institution the respondent identified as responsible and their political preferences. For the national government, respondents are considered aligned if they would vote for a governing coalition party (Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia, Lega, Noi Moderati-UDC), or if they did not indicate a party but reported a right-wing political orientation. For regions and municipalities, respondents are considered aligned if they would vote for a party or civic list of the same political orientation as the relevant Regional President or Mayor, if their political orientation matches that of the Regional President or Mayor, if they would vote for a civic list and the Regional President or Mayor belongs to a civic list, or if they did not indicate a vote and the Regional President or Mayor belongs to a civic list. Respondents placing themselves at the center of the political spectrum are not considered aligned.
Political Alignment with Responsible Institution *(truealign)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if there is political alignment between the institution identified in this study as responsible for a service and the respondent's political preferences. Constructed following the same criteria as the *aligned* variable above.
Trust in Reported Responsible Institution *(trust_rep)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent's trust in the institution they identified as responsible for a service exceeds their average trust in the municipality, region, and national government.
Trust in Responsible Institution *(truetrust)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent's trust in the institution identified in this study as responsible for a service exceeds their average trust in the municipality, region, and national government.
Federalism Alignment with Reported Institution *(fedalign)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent believes public services should be managed by local institutions more than the sample median and the institution they identified as responsible is the region or municipality; or if the respondent believes public services should be managed by the national government more than the sample median and the institution they identified as responsible is the national government.
Federalism Alignment with Responsible Institution *(truefed)*	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent believes public services should be managed by local institutions more than the sample median and the institution identified in this study as responsible is the region or municipality; or if the respondent believes public services should be managed by the national government more than the sample median and the institution identified in this study as responsible is the national government.

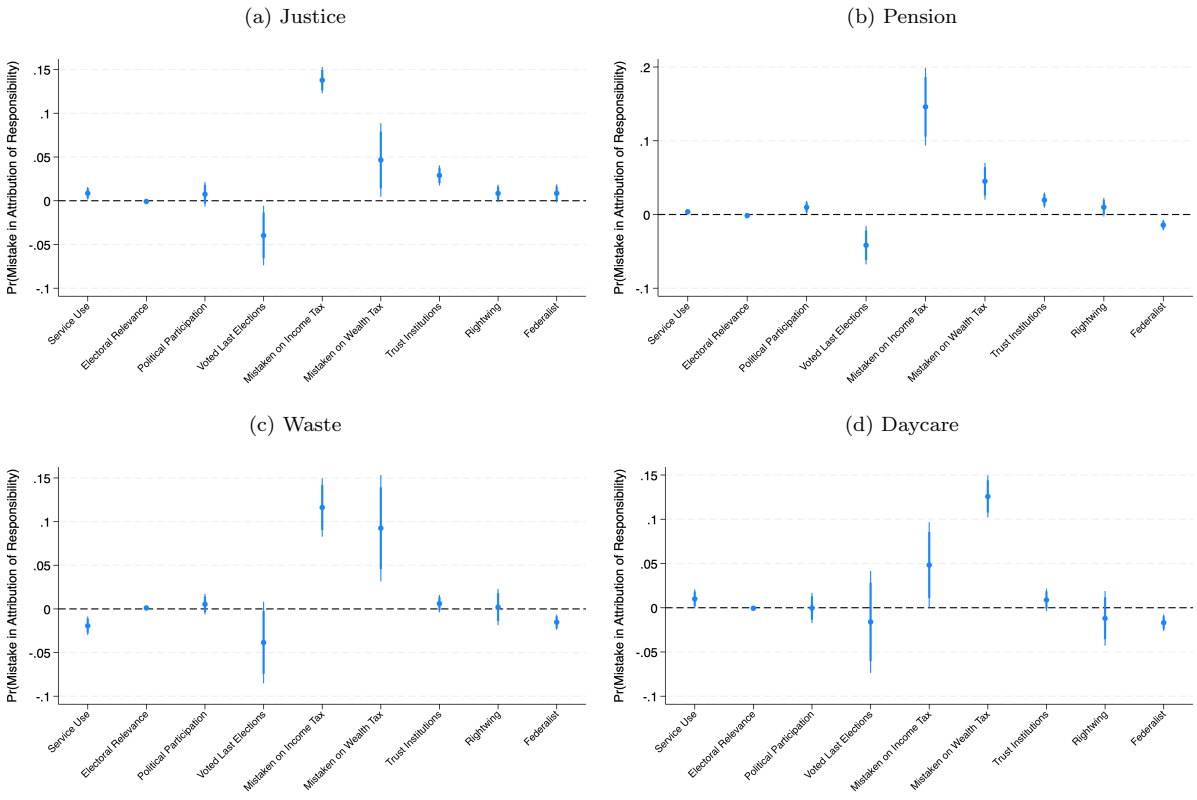
Figures

Figure (A1) Determinants of misattributed responsibility, by service



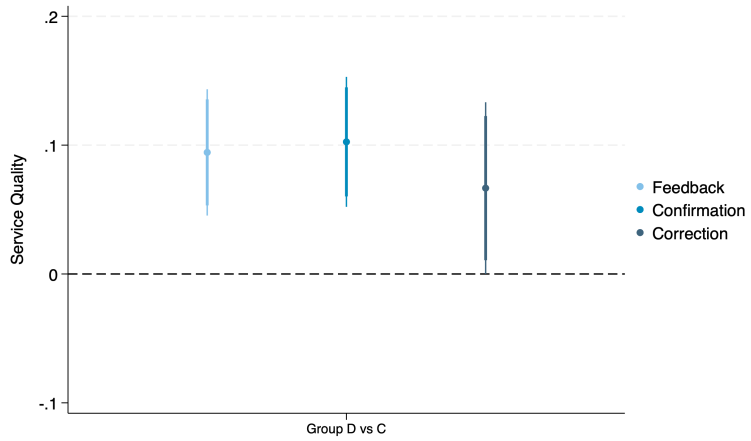
Notes: Coefficients from a linear probability model regressing misattribution of service responsibility on service use, electoral relevance, political participation (given by donation to party, signing petition, participated to a rally, posted about politics, volunteered), voting in last general elections, mistakes in attributing revenues from income and wealth tax, trust in institutions (pca), political orientation and federalist preferences. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, and duration of the survey.

Figure (A2) Determinants of misattributed responsibility, by service



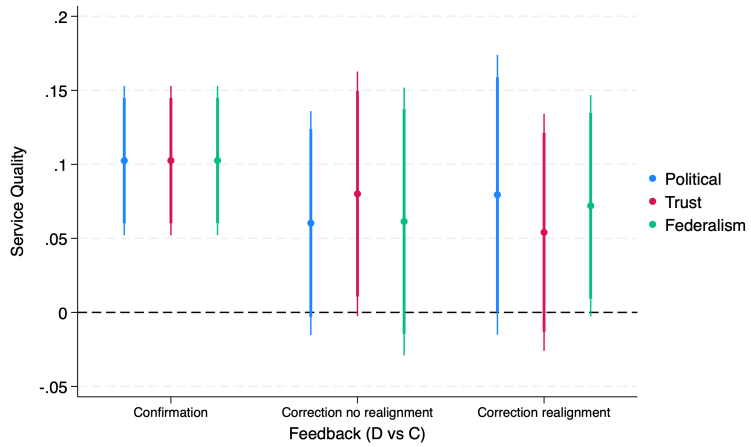
Notes: Coefficients from a linear probability model regressing misattribution of service responsibility on service use, electoral relevance, political participation (given by donation to party, signing petition, participated to a rally, posted about politics, volunteered), voting in last general elections, mistakes in attributing revenues from income and wealth tax, trust in institutions (pca), political orientation and federalist preferences. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, and duration of the survey.

Figure (A3) Effect of giving feedback - Excluding Police, Public Transport and Roads



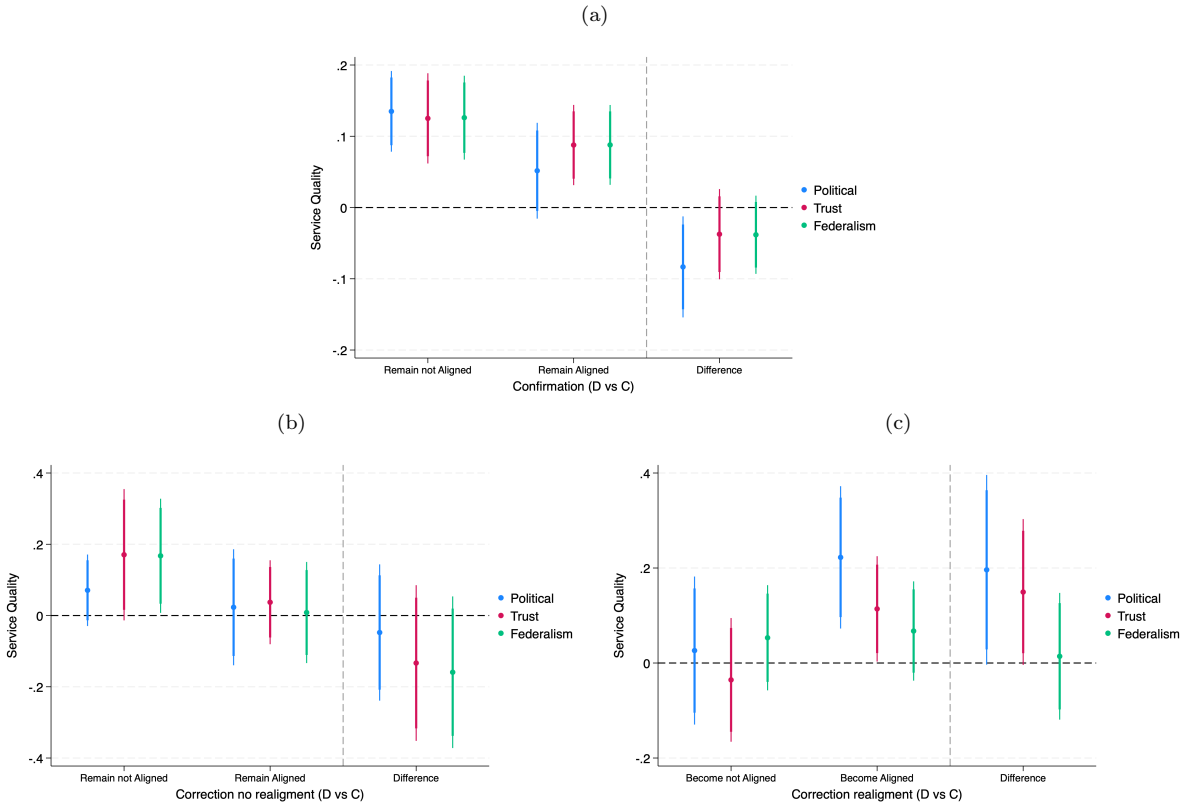
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback (being in group D) on reported service quality using group C as a control. This effect is broken down for respondents in group D who received either confirmation feedback or correction feedback. Their control group, drawn from group C, consists of individuals who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

Figure (A4) Confirmation and correction effects - Excluding Police, Public Transport and Roads



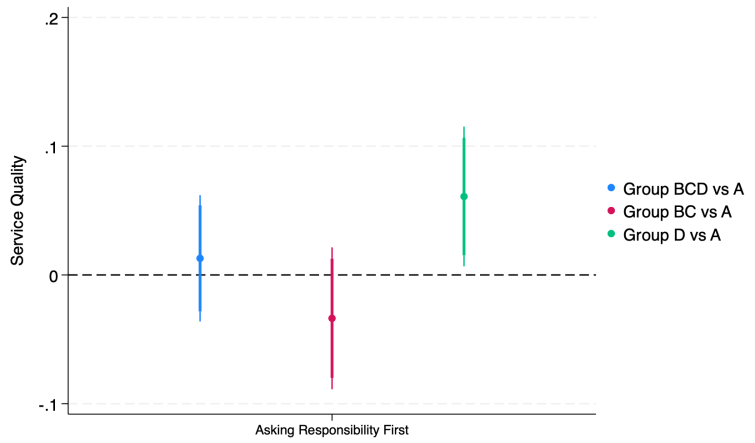
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback (group D) on reported service quality by type of feedback (confirmation, correction towards an institution for which the respondent remains aligned/not aligned, correction towards an institution for which the respondent becomes aligned/not aligned) and type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference). Their control group, drawn from group C, consists of individuals who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

Figure (A5) Confirmation and correction effects, by party, trust and federalism alignment - Excluding Police, Public Transport and Roads



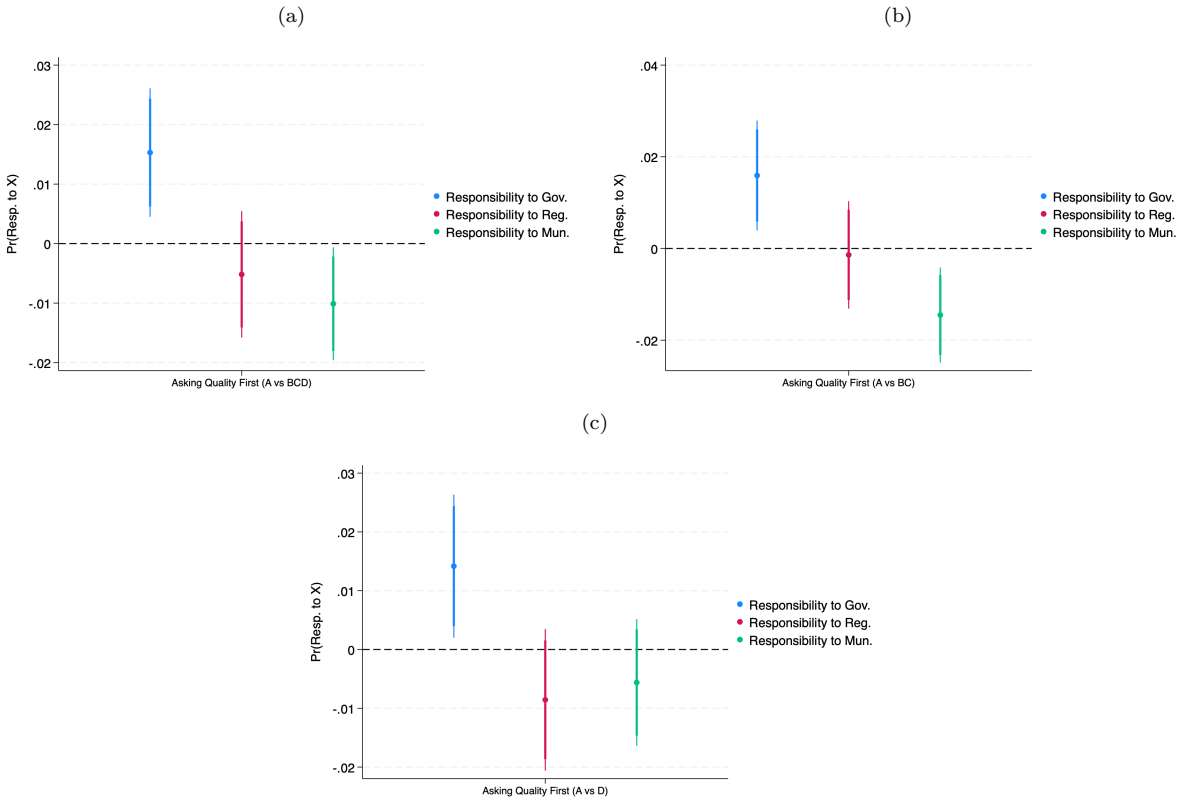
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback (group D) on reported service quality by type of feedback (confirmation, correction towards an institution for which the respondent remains aligned/not aligned, correction towards an institution for which the respondent becomes aligned/not aligned) and type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference). Their control group, drawn from group C, consists of individuals who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

Figure (A6) Effect of asking service responsibility first - Excluding Police, Public Transport and Roads



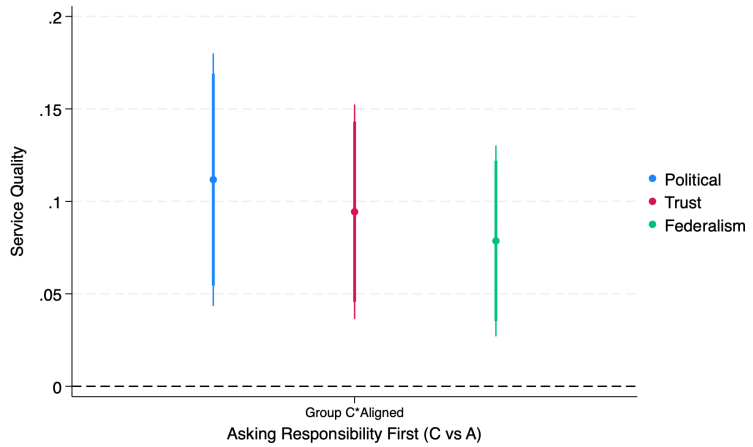
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback and asking responsibility first (being in group B, C, D vs A) on reported service quality. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

Figure (A7) Effect of asking service quality first - Excluding Police, Public Transport and Roads



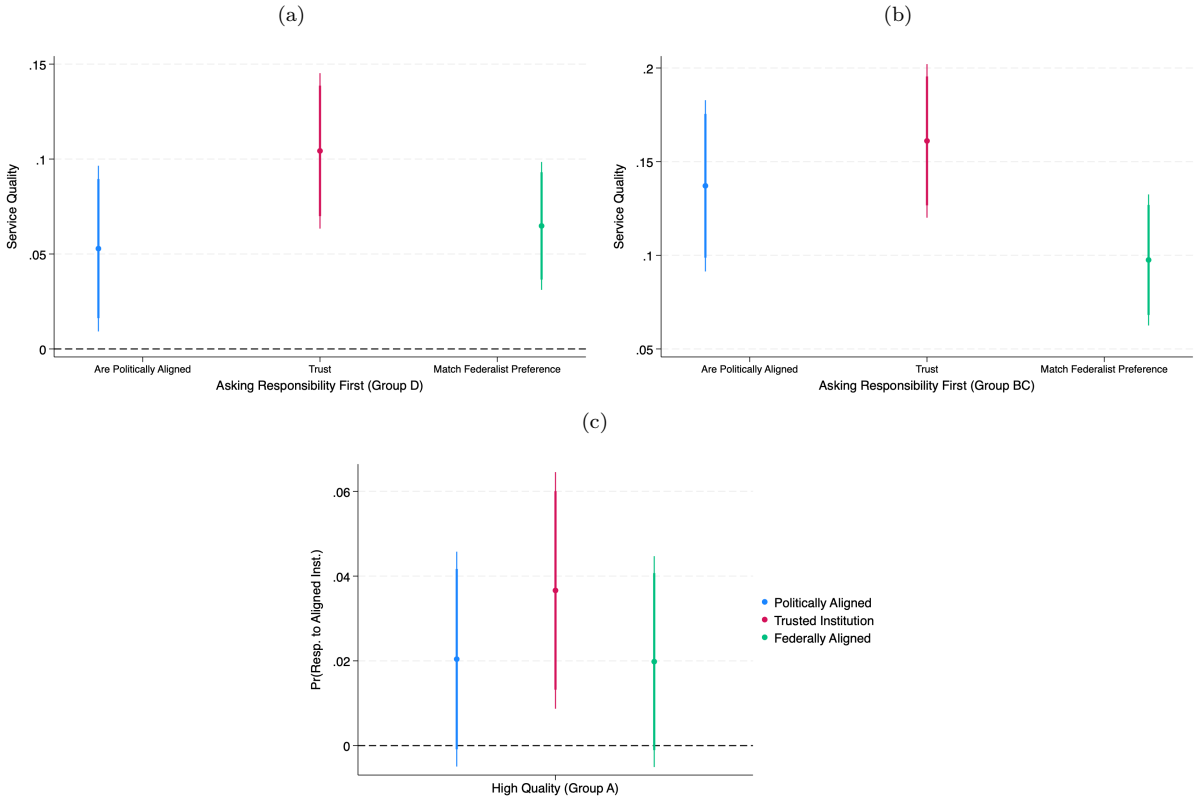
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of asking quality first (group A) on attributing responsibility to a specific institution in a linear probability model. Results differentiate the effect by type of institution (government, region and municipality). Group B, C and D are used as a control. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey.

Figure (A8) Comparison of motivated reasoning channels - Excluding Police, Public Transport and Roads



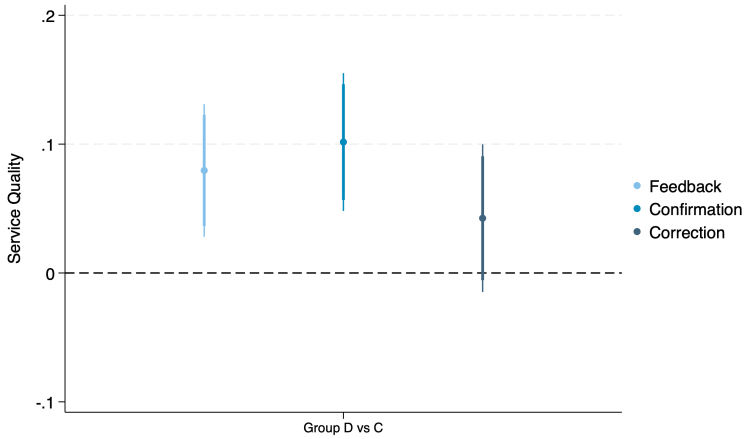
Notes: Figure shows coefficients λ_1 from Equation 8. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized

Figure (A9) Effect of asking service responsibility or service quality first - Excluding Police, Public Transport and Roads



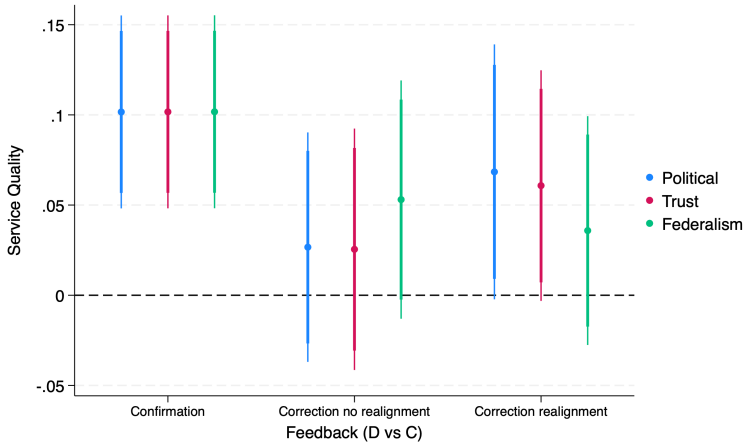
Notes: Panel (a) shows coefficients γ from Equation 9. It represents the effect of asking responsibility first (group D) on reported service quality by type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference). Panel (b) shows coefficients γ from Equation 10. It shows the effect of asking responsibility first (group BC) on reported service quality by type of alignment. Panel (c) shows coefficients γ from Equation 11. It represents the effect of asking quality first (group A) on attributing responsibility to an aligned institution in a linear probability model. Results differentiate the effect by type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference) and by reported service quality (below and above the median). Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized in panel (a) and (b).

Figure (A10) Effect of giving feedback - Municipalities with population > 5,000



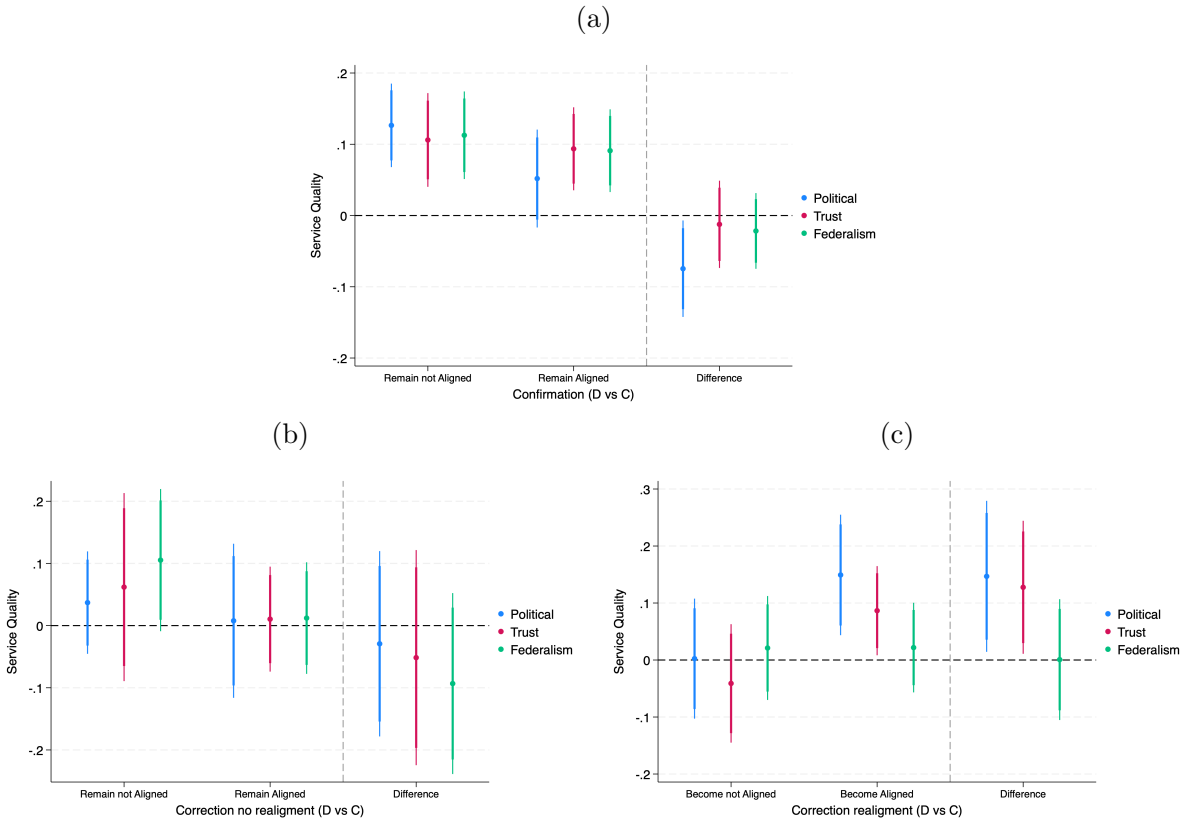
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback (being in group D) on reported service quality using group C as a control. This effect is broken down for respondents in group D who received either confirmation feedback or correction feedback. Their control group, drawn from group C, consists of individuals who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

Figure (A11) Confirmation and correction effects - Municipalities with population > 5,000



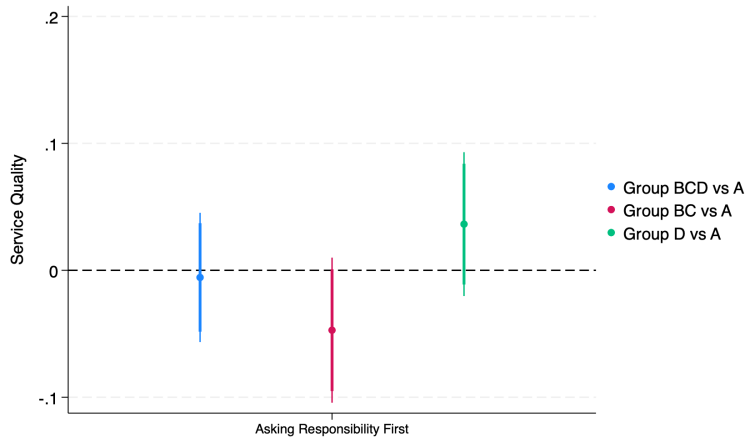
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback (group D) on reported service quality by type of feedback (confirmation, correction towards an institution for which the respondent remains aligned/not aligned, correction towards an institution for which the respondent becomes aligned/not aligned) and type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference). Their control group, drawn from group C, consists of individuals who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

Figure (A12) Confirmation and correction effects, by party, trust and federalism alignment - Municipalities with population > 5,000



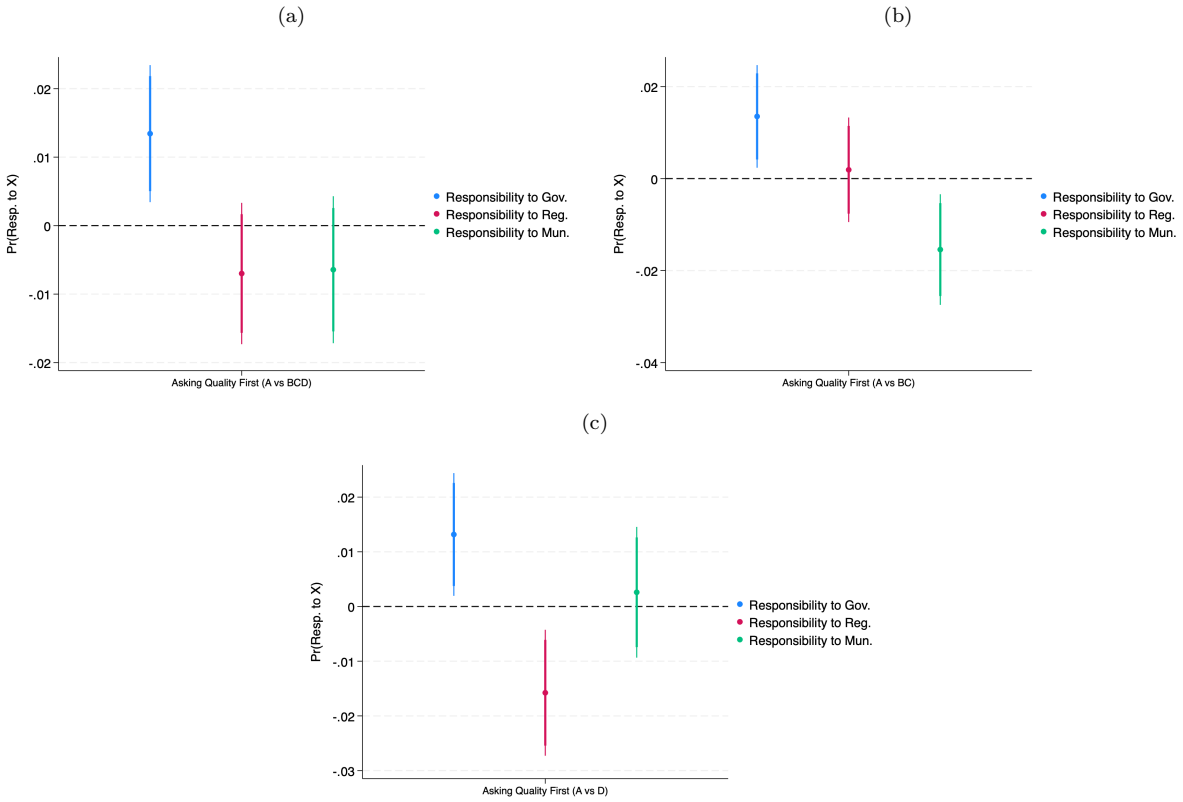
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback (group D) on reported service quality by type of feedback (confirmation, correction towards an institution for which the respondent remains aligned/not aligned, correction towards an institution for which the respondent becomes aligned/not aligned) and type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference). Their control group, drawn from group C, consists of individuals who would have received the same type of feedback had they been in group D. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

Figure (A13) Effect of asking service responsibility first - Municipalities with population > 5,000



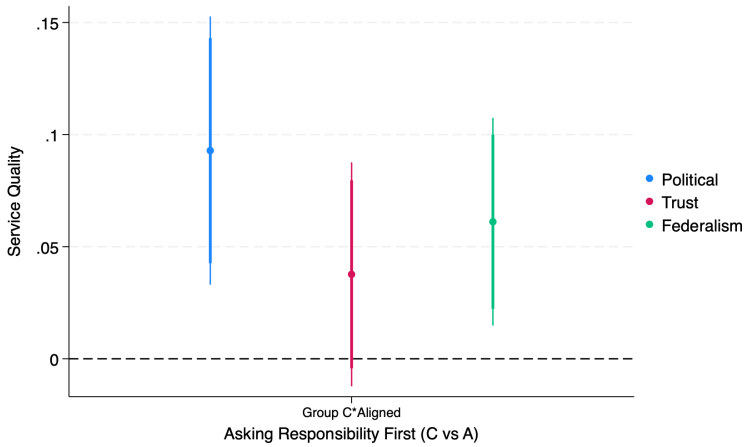
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of giving feedback and asking responsibility first (being in group B, C, D vs A) on reported service quality. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized.

Figure (A14) Effect of asking service quality first - Municipalities with population > 5,000



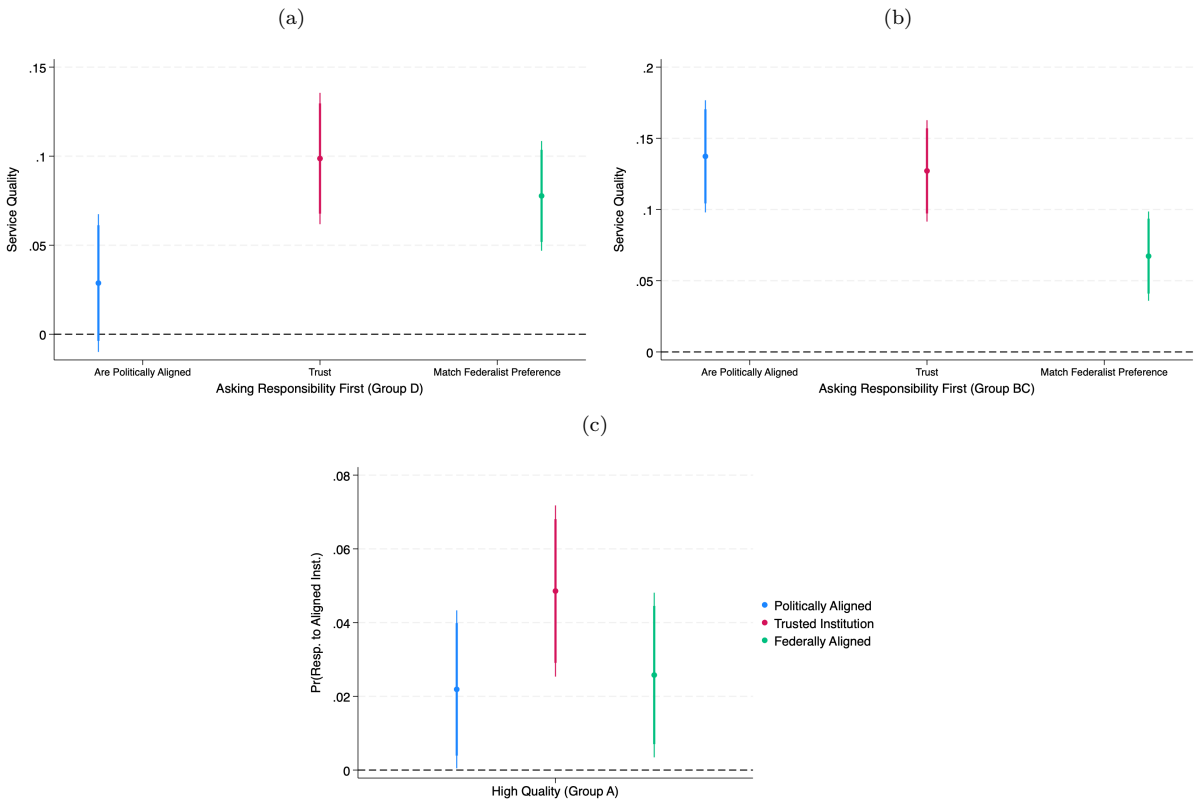
Notes: Coefficients showing the effect of asking quality first (group A) on attributing responsibility to a specific institution in a linear probability model. Results differentiate the effect by type of institution (government, region and municipality). Group B, C and D are used as a control. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey.

Figure (A15) Comparison of motivated reasoning channels - Municipalities with population > 5,000



Notes: Figure shows coefficients λ_1 from Equation 8. Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized

Figure (A16) Effect of asking service responsibility or service quality first - Excluding Police, Public Transport and Roads



Notes: Panel (a) shows coefficients γ from Equation 9. It represents the effect of asking responsibility first (group D) on reported service quality by type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference). Panel (b) shows coefficients γ from Equation 10. It shows the effect of asking responsibility first (group BC) on reported service quality by type of alignment. Panel (c) shows coefficients γ from Equation 11. It represents the effect of asking quality first (group A) on attributing responsibility to an aligned institution in a linear probability model. Results differentiate the effect by type of alignment (political orientation of the institution with respect to the respondent's, respondent's trust/mistrust towards the institution, matching respondent's federalist preference) and by reported service quality (below and above the median). Regressions control for age, age^2, gender, education, macro-area, marital status, income, number of children, N. of corrections, whether the service is among the three most used by the respondent, and duration of the survey. Outcome variable is standardized in panel (a) and (b).