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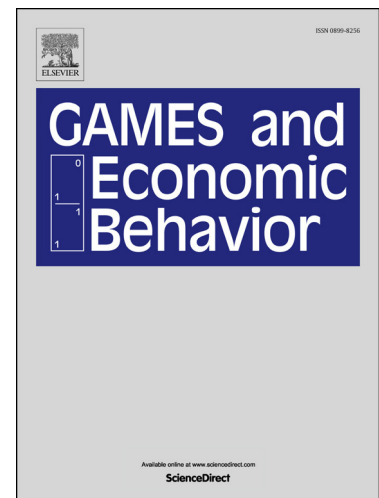
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# The curse of uninformed voting: An experimental study<sup>✧</sup>

Jens Großer <sup>a,\*</sup>, Michael Seebauer <sup>b</sup>

## ABSTRACT

We study majority voting over two alternatives in small groups. Individuals have identical preferences but are uncertain about which alternative can better achieve their common interest. Before voting, each individual can obtain information by buying a valuable but imperfect signal about the better alternative. Voting is either voluntary or compulsory. In the compulsory mode, each individual must vote between the two alternatives, while in the voluntary mode they can also abstain. An uninformed, random vote generates a negative externality since it may override an informative group decision in pivotal events. In our experiments, participants in randomly re-matched groups obtain information more often with compulsory than voluntary voting, and the average number of signals is greater in larger than smaller groups. Surprisingly, uninformed voting is common even in the voluntary mode! Finally, group performance is poor in all treatments, indicating the need to reconsider current practice of jury and committee voting.

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*Keywords:* Voting behavior, Voluntary and compulsory voting, Information search and aggregation, Condorcet Jury model, Laboratory experiments

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