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Experimental Evidence from Peru

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Abstract

I combine a field experiment with a change in voting laws reducing the fine for abstention to assess the effects of monetary incentives to encourage voter participation. In a real world election, using experimental variation in the perceived reduction of the fine for abstention I estimate that receiving information about a reduction in the fine by 50 (75) percent causes a decrease in turnout of 2.6 (5.3) percentage points. These estimates imply a cost elasticity of voting of -0.22. The reduction in turnout is driven by voters who are in the center of the political spectrum, hold less political information and have lower subjective value of voting. The increase in abstention does not change aggregate preferences for specific policies. Further, involvement in politics, as measured by the decision to acquire political information, is independent of the level of the fine. Additional results indicate that the reduction in the fine reduces the incidence of vote buying and increases the price paid for a vote.

Keywords: Voting Behavior; Incentives to Vote, Electoral Politics, Public Choice, Peru

JEL Classification Codes: O10, D72 , O53, D71

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