

Topic 1: Voter Turnout

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Key takeaways:

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1.1 Empirical Studies

1.1.1 Get-out-the-vote campaigns

Gerber and Green (2000)

Main hypothesis Personal canvassing mobilizes voters more effectively, decline in voter turn-out is related to decline in personal means of campaign.

Literature Some related works are

- collective action and prosocial behavior (blood donations, recycling, good deeds): Christensen et al. (1998), Wang and Katzev (1990), Spaccarelli et al. (1989), Reams and Ray (1993)
- voter turn-out and contact with political organizations/candidates:
 - Kramer (1970), Rosenstone and Hansen (1993). **Endogeneity issue:** political contact is not exogenous: it could be that those most likely to vote are also most likely to receive contact.
 - Adams and Smith (1980), Miller et al. (1981). **Small sample:** results are not statistically reliable

Empirical details This paper designed an experiment as in table 1.1, and

- $N = 29380$ (within 22077 households): randomize at HH level, analyze at individual level, NO clustering
- the baseline control group (no mail, no phone call, no in-person contact) is large ($N = 10800$), due to budget limit
- specification: intent-to-treat, use the treatment assignment as an instrument

Results personal canvassing is very effective, while telephone and mail canvassing is limited. Face-to-face political activity is suggested to be very important. Decline in voter turnout might be attributed to the decrease of in-person campaigns. A competing hypothesis proposed by Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) where decline in voter turn-out is related to decline in the volume of mobilization was ruled out since ANES data shows no trend of decline in total mobilization.

Table 1.1: Experiment Design of **Gerber and Green (2000)**

		No. direct mailings sent				Total
		0	1	2	3	
No phone call	without in-person	10800	2406	2588	2375	18169
	with in-person	2686	519	625	627	4457
Phone call	without in-person	958	1451	1486	1522	5417
	with in-person	217	385	352	383	1337
Total		14661	4761	5051	4907	29380

Comments Some of the comments I have for this study are

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Gerber, Green, and Larimer (2008)

Washington (2006)

1.2 Related Theories

References

- Alan S Gerber and Donald P Green. The effects of canvassing, telephone calls, and direct mail on voter turnout: A field experiment. *American political science review*, 94(3):653–663, 2000.
- Alan S Gerber, Donald P Green, and Christopher W Larimer. Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment. *American political Science review*, 102(1):33–48, 2008.
- Ebonya Washington. How black candidates affect voter turnout. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 121(3): 973–998, 2006.