1 Electoral Crimes under Democratic Rule: Evidence from Brazil

1.1 Summary

Office-seeking politicians employ various tactics to get elected, including actions banned by electoral oversight agencies. Using a unique dataset on candidate eligibility constructed from judicial decisions of the Brazilian Electoral Court (TSE), I estimate the impact of electoral code violations on performance at municipal elections between 2004-2016. I recover causal effects of violations using a unique feature from Brazil's electoral system in which candidates run for office, and can be voted on election day, even if the Electoral Court has not issued a final ruling on whether their candidacies met all code requirements.

1.2 Main Research Question

Do politicians who violate electoral code perform better at the ballot than those who do not?

1.3 Hypotheses

1. Candidates who are cleared of electoral violations will perform better at municipal elections than candidates who are found guilty.

2. Conviction-free candidates will performance proportionately better when there are more convicted politicians in the same race.

3. The electoral punishment for electoral infractions is increasing in their severity (e.g. corruption, abuse of power, vote buying, unauthorized marketing, etc).

1.4 Outcomes

1. Whether candidate was the most voted for in mayor elections (majoritarian system) or voted in for elected city council seats (proportional system) – equivalent to being elected had they all been cleared of accusations.

2. Vote share.

3. Vote distance to elected candidates.

1.5 Identification Strategy

IV where the instrumented (explanatory) variable is the candidacy ruling issued by the Electoral Court before the elections (trial stage) and the instrument is the decision issued after the elections (appeals stage) for all politicians whose candidacy authorization had been appealed but had not yet been tried by the appellate panel on election day.

1.6 Data

Election results, candidate, judge, and municipal controls for municipal elections in Brazil between 2004-2016. All available at various Electoral Court (TSE) websites and the National Statistics Office (IBGE).

1.7 Contribution to Literature

It is the first paper to measure the electoral punishment for electoral crimes under democratic regimes; it implements a new identification strategy using different stages of the judicial process; it uses a novel database of primary data on judicial rulings from electoral oversight authorities.