

Electoral Reform & Strategic Voting in Chilean Legislative Elections ^{*}

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Abstract

In this paper I seek to leverage Chile’s 2015 electoral reform, which increased the district magnitude of districts in Chile’s lower legislative chamber from two to between three and eight. This increase in district magnitude (in combination with Chile’s proportional seat allocation formula) should decrease the incentives for strategic voting. Chile’s reform allows for a convenient “natural experiment.” If they behave in line with theoretical expectations, post-reform voters should strategically vote at lower levels than pre-reform voters. Furthermore, given the variation in district magnitude post-reform, we should expect disparities in the prevalence of strategic voting in post-reform districts, with voters in higher magnitude, more proportional, districts strategically voting at lower rates. I find strong evidence that voters have responded to Chile’s electoral reform by engaging in less party-level strategic voting. However, I surprisingly find no evidence that the reform has decreased strategic voting for Chile’s pre-electoral pacts (perhaps because the electorate is still adjusting to electoral reform). This study demonstrates that Chile’s electoral reform is already affecting voter behavior and is doing so in line with theoretical expectations.

Keywords: electoral systems, Chile, electoral reform, strategic voting, tactical voting

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