

Does a change in electoral system lead to an increase in voting?

Evidence from Italy, 1970–2024

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Proportional Representation

All seats divided equally between parties based on vote share gained nationally

Mixed-Member-Majoritarian

Some seats elected by a PR system, some in First-Past-The-Post style Constituencies



All Votes therefore matter the same amount nationally

All Votes matter, some votes matter more.



I expected to find that PR would have higher voting rates, as most saw their vote as vital

However I found a 4.5% increase in voting under the MMM system, once certain effects such as time had been accounted for.

Method: Simple

Multivariate Regression

%BI =

In lay terms, I model that the voting rate can be estimated by a combination of the year, what type of election it is, and some small error term. Because my analysis remained entirely within Italy, and my deeper analysis remained within regions, factors such as GDP, unemployment and others used in similar research correlated with time very well.

$$\beta_1 \text{Year} + \beta_2 \text{CD} + \beta_3 \text{Senato} + \beta_4 \text{European} + \beta_5 \text{Local} + \epsilon$$

My results found that nationally, there was a 4.5% increase in voting rate once the change to MMM had been made, with a p value below 0.001. Within each of the 5 smaller regions, a positive value was found and p value below 0.05 was present. When breaking Italy into its 20 regions, significance was not common, but a small number of data points can be blamed for this.

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