

Political Competition and Invalid Ballots in Mexico: evidence from subnational data

According to Power y Garand (2007), despite the large number of studies addressing the issue of voting, the most of the attention has been dedicated on voter turnout. Understanding the reasons that lead people to vote in large elections is of major interest both for political scientists and for economists. However, little attention has been given to invalid ballots, the casting of blank or spoiled ballots remains a gaping lacuna in the literature on comparative political behavior. Scholars interpret blank and spoiled ballots as resulting from some combination of voter incapacity, where citizens lack the requisite skills or information to cast a valid ballot, and political motivations, when voters deliberately signal their malcontent (Driscoll and Nelson, 2014).

Scholars claim that the percentage of spoiled ballots seem to be related to socio-economic and institutional factors, such as education, income and voting systems. For this reason, it is important to identify and evaluate the different factors that influence this electoral behavior. We will focus our analysis on municipal elections because of the higher variation in rates of spoiled ballots at the municipal level. In this context we ask what are the determinants of electoral behavior in Mexico? Even further, what factors influence differences in spoiled ballots in municipal elections?

Paola and Scopa (2012) explain that political competition may also affect this type of voter choices, but the relationship could be either positive or negative. In this paper, we propose an econometric model to study how the closeness relates to the fraction of spoiled ballots in Mexico. We examine electoral information in 2013 municipalities that took place between 2006- 2008. Few studies have tried to identify the factors that explain the fraction of spoiled ballots in Mexico. Most studies focus on describing individual electoral behavior through opinion surveys, or through historical, territorial and conceptual analysis. Even more, while there are a number of works analyzing the effect of electoral competition on turnout, only few empirical studies have looked at the spoiled ballots.