

NONE OF THE ABOVE: PROTEST VOTING IN THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

Who are “protest voters” and do they affect elections? We study this question using the introduction of a pure protest option (“None Of The Above”) on Indian ballots. Using structural estimation, we find that in elections without NOTA, most protest voters simply abstain. Protest voters who turn out scatter their votes among many candidates and consequently have little impact on election results. From a policy perspective, NOTA may be an effective tool to increase political participation, and can attenuate the electoral impact of compulsory voting. (JEL: D72, O12, D12, K16)

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