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Title: Social Connectedness and Voter Participation: Evidence from the 1991 NES Pilot Study

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Dataset(s): 1991 Pilot Study

Abstract

The 1991 Pilot Study contained several items designed to test the theory that social pressures induce individuals to vote in elections. Specifically, the study contained questions gauging the strength and number of a respondent's social ties. The study also included a "social sanction" indicator, which gauged whether a respondent's associates would be disappointed if he or she did not vote. Knack finds that the "social ties" items are significant predictors of the social sanctions measure. More importantly, the presence of social ties increases a respondent's probability of voting. In particular, a respondent who knows more of their neighbors and/or has resided at their current address for more than two years is more likely to vote than respondents who do not meet these conditions. The social sanction indicator, on the other hand, fails to strongly predict voter participation.