

Abstract

Existing research suggests that rainfall on election days has, at least under some circumstances, a significant negative effect on voter turnout. The purpose of this thesis is to assess whether this is also the case in the Czech Republic. The results support the hypothesis, with the preferred specification suggesting that one additional millimeter (mm) of precipitation on election day is associated with a drop in turnout rates of around 0.26 to 0.38 percentage points. We find that election type plays a key role in determining the effect of rainfall on voter's participation. For the elections to the Chamber of Deputies, we find evidence of an inverted U-shape relationship, consistent with the notion that small amounts of rain do not play a significant role in an important election, while heavy rain (around 6mm and more) decreases turnout with every additional mm of rain. For the elections to the European Parliament, which are generally perceived as less important, we find turnout to be negatively associated with even smaller amounts of rain: one additional mm of rain is associated with a 0.82 percentage point decrease in the turnout rate. Finally, we study the link between the closeness of the election results, precipitation, and turnout, and we find that for important elections, a close fight between two candidates enhances people to go to the polls even when it is raining. For unimportant elections, the effect is opposite: when the result is expected to be tight, precipitation is associated with lower turnout rates.

JEL Classification C21, C23, D72, E10, E70

Keywords rainfall, turnout, election, voting, Czechia

Title The Effect of rainfall on voter turnout: Evidence from the Czech Republic