

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Student:	Ing. Kristina Kubíková
Advisor:	PhDr. Miroslav Palanský, Ph.D.
Title of the thesis:	The Effect of rainfall on voter turnout: Evidence from the Czech Republic

OVERALL ASSESSMENT (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

Short summary

This thesis analyzes how rainfall affects voter turnout in Czech elections. This is part of an active field of broader research on external factors that influence voting behavior, and is highly relevant for policy around voting systems. Specifically, a significant role of external factors is generally seen as undesirable, and there are ways to mitigate the role of these factors (in the particular case of rainfall, this could be for example the introduction of online voting). Kristina indeed finds evidence of a statistically and economically significant effect of rainfall on voter turnout. She carries out here analysis on several levels and for several types of elections, including the municipal level at which she employs an event study with matching on municipality characteristics.

I find the results convincing, methods appropriate, and the empirical implementation careful, and as a result, the contribution high. Overall, I believe that Kristina has written a strong empirical Master thesis which uses suitable methods, has included a lot of data-intensive work and has a clear contribution. She has consulted her thesis with me extensively and I am happy to report that I very much enjoyed supervising this effort. While there are limitations of the available data, I believe that given the challenging research question that she chose for her thesis, Kristina has done a great job.

Contribution

The thesis makes a valuable contribution to the literature on the drivers of voting behavior, which remains an active area of research. Czechia is an appropriate case study – as a small, relatively homogenous country with a multi-party parliamentary representative democracy which has multiple levels of government and the elections to these levels of government are perceived as having various levels of importance. The study can thus benefit from this heterogeneity and study the effects of rainfall on voter turnout in relation to the varied perceived importance of individual elections. The contribution of the thesis could have been even larger if more granular data were available – unfortunately, in parts of the analysis, Kristina had to resort to district-level rather than municipal level. Similarly, the study could have been enhanced by using data from election polls, which would improve the analysis of the effect of tightness of election results (which is now carried out using ex-post results of elections and that brings obvious endogeneity issues). Overall, I view the contribution of this thesis as above average for a Master's thesis.

Methods

I find the used methods to be adequate and well-implemented. Kristina describes well the limitations of the methodology and carefully interprets the results in light of these limitations. I would have welcomed to see more effort to provide robustness checks for the part that is, in my opinion, the closest to a convincing causal interpretation, which is the event study/diff-in-diff approach to match similar municipalities with varying levels of treatment (in the form of rainfall).

Literature

I believe that Kristina has done a good job reviewing the available literature on the topic. I think the results of the thesis could have been better compared to estimates from other countries (which are mentioned in Section 3.3), and it would have been good to see some discussion of the possible drivers of the differences between these.

Manuscript form

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The thesis is relatively well-written and I enjoyed reading it. The structure is clear and serves nicely the purpose of the thesis. The text would have benefited from further proofreading and editing for clarity.

Overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

Overall, I am happy to report that the thesis fulfills the requirements for a Master thesis at IES, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, I recommend it for the defense and, in case of a successful defense in front of the committee, I suggest the grade B.

The results of the Urkund analysis do not indicate significant text similarity with other available sources.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	29
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	26
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	17
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	16
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	88
GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)	B

NAME OF THE REFEREE: PhDr. Miroslav Palanský, Ph.D.

DATE OF EVALUATION: September 7, 2022

Referee Signature

EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:

CONTRIBUTION: *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

METHODS: *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

LITERATURE REVIEW: *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

MANUSCRIPT FORM: *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

Overall grading:

TOTAL	GRADE
91 – 100	A
81 - 90	B
71 - 80	C
61 – 70	D
51 – 60	E
0 – 50	F