

The impact of monitoring on attendance

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To monitor or not to monitor?

- ▶ Attendance often indicates legislators' commitment
Dal Bó & Rossi (2011)
- ▶ However, monitoring and access to information vary widely
Hug (2010)
- ▶ So do absence rates in parliament
 - Germany: 8% (Arnold et al., 2014)
 - UK: 31% (Besley & Larcinese, 2011)
 - Italy: 33% (Gagliarducci et al., 2013)

Monitoring allows voters to sanction absenteeism

Without perfect monitoring, legislators may opt for shirking

- ▶ Attendance cannot be checked
- ▶ Re-election is independent of attendance
- ▶ Politicians may lack incentives to be present

Absences are negatively perceived

**Sie schwänzen, sacken
aber Taggeld ein**

**Hohe Tiere, tiefe
Anwesenheitsquote**

“Shirking but getting allowances”

“Big guys, low attendance”

Source: 20 Minuten (2012)

Does enhanced monitoring increase attendance?

- ▶ Reform in the Swiss Upper House
 - Until end 2013: all votes by show of hands, video-recorded
 - Since 2014: electronic voting, disclosure of select votes
 - Exogenous variation in transparency depending on vote type
 - ▶ Difference-in-difference methodology
 - ▶ 49 legislators, 2,041 votes, 2011-2015
- Attendance rates increase with monitoring
- Outside options matter + accountability concerns

Enhanced monitoring of select votes in Swiss Upper House

Swiss Upper House

- ▶ Represents Switzerland's 26 cantons
- ▶ Consists of 46 members with 4-year terms
- ▶ Majoritarian elections (with 2 exceptions)
- ▶ Convenes 4 times a year (spring, summer, autumn, winter)

Transparency bill (voted spring 2013)

- ▶ Traditional vote by show of hands through 2013
- ▶ Electronic voting and publishing of select votes since 2014

Transparency bill enters into force Spring 2014



- ▶ 49th legislature, 16 sessions
- ▶ 2,041 votes, 49 legislators Legislators
- ▶ Control: show of hands, video-recorded, accessible online
- ▶ Treatment: electronic voting, video-recorded, accessible online
AND details of select votes published in PDF format

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Identification exploits exogenous variation in monitoring

- ▶ Vote types published online in PDF format are *public votes*
 - final passage; ensemble; urgent; debt brakes
- ▶ Vote types not published online in PDF format are *secret votes*
 - detail votes; procedural votes

	Secret votes	Public votes
Pre-reform	Not monitored	Not monitored
Post-reform	Not monitored	Monitored

- ▶ Votes happen independently or in blocks Voting

Measuring the impact of monitoring on attendance

Difference-in-differences methodology

$$Y_{ijs} = \alpha_i + \lambda_s + \delta_1 (P_{js} \cdot R_s) + \delta_2 P_{js} + Z_{ijs}\beta + \epsilon_{ijs}$$

- ▶ Y Attendance, coded from videos Snippet
- ▶ P Public votes
- ▶ R Post-reform indicator
- ▶ Z Control variables Controls

Identifying assumptions

- ▶ Trend in outcome equal in absence of treatment Common trends
- ▶ No unobservable shocks correlated with reform

Additional concerns for valid inference

- ▶ Exogenous allocation to treatment and control
- ▶ Manipulation of public votes around reform Timing
- ▶ Exogeneity of the reform
 - implemented due to scandals and public pressure
 - no diff between legislators accepting/rejecting reform Balance
 - diff in pre-reform attendance between subgroups insignificant
- ▶ *Electronic voting effect* equal for public and secret votes

Results

Attendance during public votes increases by 2.7 pp

	Attendance					
	Collapsed to blocks				Not collapsed	
	No mixed blocks					All
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Reform × Public	0.023** (0.009)	0.026*** (0.009)	0.027*** (0.009)	0.027*** (0.009)	0.036*** (0.012)	0.027** (0.010)
Public	-0.057*** (0.008)	-0.069*** (0.008)	-0.069*** (0.008)	-0.068*** (0.008)	-0.083*** (0.010)	-0.060*** (0.008)
Reform	0.050*** (0.009)	0.058*** (0.008)				
Controls	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Session FE	×	×	✓	✓	✓	✓
MP FE	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓
Observations	50732	50732	50732	50732	62839	77000

Independent vs Blocks

Outside options drive treatment effect

	Attendance						
	Education			Politics		Elections	
	< MSc	MSc	PhD	Fulltime	Moonlight	Rerunning	Retiring
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Reform x Public	0.032*** (0.011)	0.024 (0.018)	0.025 (0.020)	0.037** (0.015)	0.023* (0.012)	0.030** (0.012)	0.012 (0.014)
Public	-0.068*** (0.010)	-0.067*** (0.016)	-0.072*** (0.015)	-0.060*** (0.014)	-0.071*** (0.010)	-0.066*** (0.010)	-0.073*** (0.013)
Observations	18703	19248	12781	14669	36063	37206	12293

Alternatives: Electronic voting and election cycle

	Attendance				
	Seating			Election	
	Row 1	Row 2	Row 3	2011–2014	2013–2104
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Reform x Public	0.028* (0.014)	0.041** (0.017)	0.013 (0.019)	0.031*** (0.010)	0.038*** (0.014)
Public	-0.061*** (0.012)	-0.065*** (0.011)	-0.082*** (0.019)	-0.070*** (0.008)	-0.079*** (0.012)
Observations	19568	15703	15461	41109	23129

Seating chart

Monitoring increases attendance of legislators more dependent on political career

- ▶ Attendance increases 2.7 pp in public compared to secret votes
 - Reduction in absences by 14% from pre-reform level 18.9%
 - Attendance in public votes increases from 81.1% to 88.5%
- ▶ Results driven by
 - Legislators with fewer outside options
 - Legislators running for re-election
- ▶ Result not driven by electronic voting or election cycle
- ▶ Result robust to
 - quorum votes, inferred observations, anticipation effects, placebo reform, legislator time trends

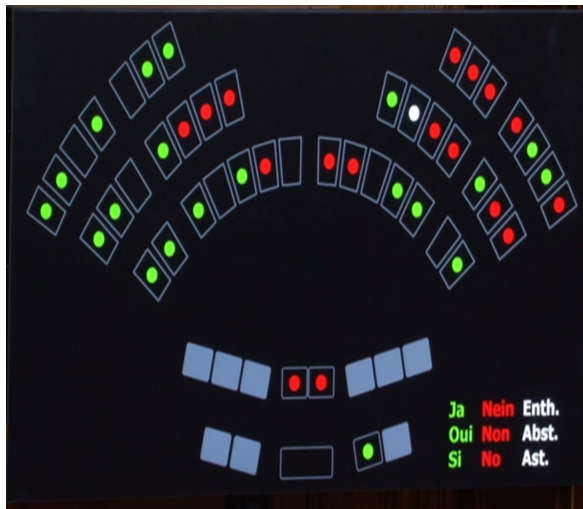
Robustness

Thank you!

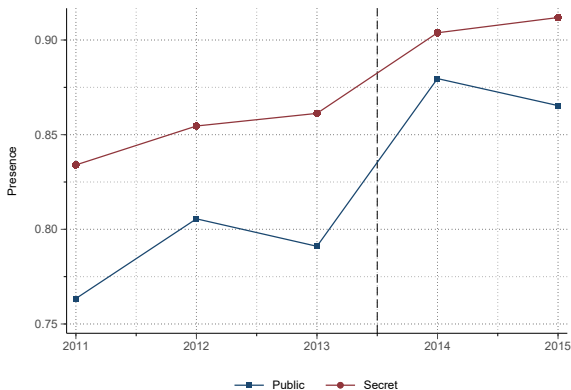
Pre-reform coding from videos



Post-reform coding from electronic board



Common trends assumption

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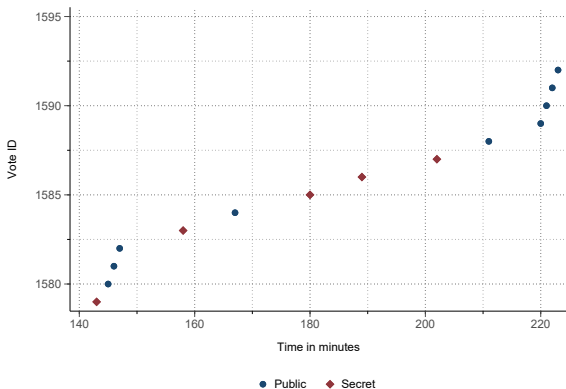
Manipulation of timing of public votes

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Electronic voting effect: seating chart



Votes occur independently or in blocks (May 29, 2012)



Descriptive stats on votes

Category	Vote type	Votes	Percentage
Secret		1137	56
	Public	904	44
	Final	302	33
	Total	438	49
	Debt	159	18
	Urgent	5	1
Independent		1040	51
	Secret	819	79
	Public	221	21
Blocks		1001	49
	Secret	318	32
	Public	683	68
	Only secret	183	18
	Only public	503	50
	Mixed	315	32

Descriptive stats on legislators

Variable	Mean	# Legislators	Std. Dev	Min.	Max.
Year of birth	1956		7.572	1945	1979
Female	0.184	9	0.391	0	1
German	0.735	36	0.446	0	1
Doctor	0.265	13	0.446	0	1
Officer	0.347	17	0.481	0	1
Married	0.735	36	0.446	0	1
Children	1.98		1.49	0	6
Full-time politician	0.286	14	0.456	0	1
Years in parliament	7.57		6.08	0	25.53
First term	0.184	9	0.391	0	1
Retiring	0.239	11	0.431	0	1

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Descriptive stats on control variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	Min.	Max.
Hour	2.259	1.276	0.017	6.392
Monday	0.215	0.411	0	1
Votes per block	1.477	2.283	1	29
President	0.022	0.146	0	1
Counter	0.024	0.154	0	1
Expert	0.233	0.420	0	1
Own bill	0.003	0.053	0	1
Own party	0.046	0.208	0	1

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Independent votes vs voting blocks

	Attendance			
	Independent votes	Voting blocks		
		All	Uniform	Mixed
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Reform x Public	0.024*** (0.008)	0.028** (0.011)	0.056*** (0.018)	0.005 (0.006)
Public	-0.058*** (0.008)	-0.070*** (0.010)	-0.135*** (0.018)	-0.011** (0.004)
Observations	44383	32617	18456	14161

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Balance test for legislators accepting/rejecting reform

	Rejected bill		Accepted bill		Difference		
	Mean	Std. error	Mean	Std. error	Mean	Std. error	P-value
Year of birth	1955.429	1.532	1956.679	1.604	-1.250	2.521	0.623
Female	0.143	0.097	0.214	0.079	-0.071	.0131	0.590
German	0.786	0.114	0.750	0.083	0.036	0.143	0.804
Doctor	0.286	0.125	0.179	0.074	0.107	0.137	0.437
Officer	0.286	0.125	0.357	0.092	-0.071	0.158	0.653
Married	0.786	0.114	0.714	0.087	0.071	0.147	0.630
Children	2.071	0.486	1.929	0.262	0.143	0.504	0.778
Full-time politician	0.143	0.097	0.357	0.092	-0.214	0.148	0.155
Years in parliament	4.310	1.217	9.206	1.165	-4.896	1863	0.012
First term	0.357	0.133	0.071	0.050	0.286	0.117	0.019
Retiring	0.214	0.114	0.269	0.089	-0.055	0.147	0.711

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Independent votes vs voting blocks

	Attendance				
	W/o quorum	W/o inferred	Anticipation effect	Placebo reform	MP time trends
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Reform x Public	0.031*** (0.010)	0.025*** (0.009)	0.024** (0.010)	-0.012 (0.013)	0.027*** (0.009)
2013, Ex-ante effect ($t + 1$)			-0.010 (0.013)		
Public	-0.075*** (0.009)	-0.067*** (0.008)	-0.065*** (0.009)	-0.064*** (0.009)	-0.069*** (0.008)
Observations	49742	50574	50732	27895	50732

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