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Does women's knowledge of voting rights affect their voting behavior in village elections? Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial in China

Journal Article

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Officials in China claim that voting rates in rural village elections are high. Unfortunately, these rates are assumptions, not facts. The true voting rate is lower, and much lower for women. We postulate that this could be due to insufficient knowledge about their rights.

The objective of this paper is to test whether women and village leaders' knowledge about women's voting rights affects women's voting behavior. We report on the results of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) involving 700 women in China's Fujian and Liaoning Provinces. Villages were randomly assigned to either a control group or one of three intervention groups. One intervention provided voting training to women only, another provided training to both women and village leaders and the third provided training to village leaders only.

The data show that after women received training, their scores on a test of voting knowledge increased and they more fully exercised their voting rights. When only village leaders were trained, test scores and voting behaviors were not statistically different from the control villages.

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Topics: Elections | Elections and electoral reform | China

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