

Publication

Overstrained Citizens?

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We study how the number of ballot propositions affects the quality of decision making in direct democracy, as reflected in citizens' knowledge, voting behavior, and attitudes toward democracy. Using three comprehensive data sets from Switzerland with over 3,500 propositions, we exploit variation in the number of federal propositions and plausibly exogenous variation in the number of cantonal propositions. Only with a relatively high number of propositions on the ballot do voters have less knowledge about federal propositions. Otherwise, we find no indication that the number of ballot propositions impedes the quality of decision making in direct democracy. For instance, a higher number of propositions does not lead more voters to support proposals endorsed by pole parties. If anything, having more federal propositions on the ballot relates to higher perceived political influence and satisfaction with democracy.

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