

# Government Spending and Voting Behaviour

## Evidence from Subsidized Graduation Trips <sup>\*</sup>

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### Abstract

Ruling parties around the world oftentimes make active use of public funds during electoral campaigns to sway votes in their favor, with widely varying degrees of success. I study the effectiveness of a one-time targeted cash transfer on the voting behavior of young people. I focus on the Province of Buenos Aires (PBA), Argentina, which is well-suited to examine these issues. First, the spending program was announced between primary and general elections. Second, the percentage of beneficiaries varies across voting booths. Third, between the two elections, the ruling party "Frente de Todos" increased the vote share substantially. I leverage province- and group-specific variation along with individual and voting-booth level administrative data and find that the youth increased their support to the incumbent government following the trip subsidy.

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# 1 Introduction

Governments around the world adopt public policies with numerous objectives in mind such as improving the income distribution, reducing poverty, stimulating consumption and growth, and improving education, among others. It is widely believed, however, that ruling parties around the world oftentimes make active use of public funds during electoral campaigns to sway votes in their favor. For instance, by implementing targeted programs, making direct cash transfers, or through tax cuts driven by electoral motives, governments are able to target different types of beneficiaries along the income distribution with the goal of overturning voters' choice in relatively little time. Yet the empirical evidence supporting this claim is still scarce and inconclusive.

There are empirical challenges to estimating the effects of government policies on voting behaviour. First, voting decisions are confidential and, therefore, it has been impossible to estimate the impact of these policies at the individual level thus far. The most granular unit of election results to which researchers can obtain access is at the voting booth level, which typically contain a couple of hundred voters. Second, electoral registers containing the universe of people who are eligible to vote, their tax identifier, demographic characteristics, and corresponding voting booth are sensitive and often unavailable to researchers. Third, it is challenging to find plausibly exogenous sources of variation, as governments usually conduct across-the-board tax cuts and spending increases which makes it hard to approximate the counterfactual electoral results convincingly. Because of these challenges, we know little about the effectiveness of government policies on voting behaviour.

This paper studies the effect of government policies on voting behaviour by bringing novel evidence to the discussion. We focus on the case of Argentina, which is particularly well suited to examine this topic. First, the Argentine electoral system features primary and general elections that are only two months apart, leaving room for campaigns to try to overturn results in a short time. Indeed, a common practice for left- and right-wing ruling parties is to conduct unlegislated and unexpected policy changes in between, especially when performing poorly. Key to the identification of causal effects, the policy changes implemented between primary and general elections usually target specific subgroups of the population (e.g., the working class, the elderly, the rich) for which the government perceives there is space to sway voters. Moreover, while sometimes such changes are conducted by the national government (e.g., presidential elections), other times they are unilaterally run by one or more provinces (e.g., legislative elections). Second, electoral re-

sults at the voting booth level are public information and readily available for researchers to use. Third, electoral registers of individuals with demographic characteristics and corresponding voting booth numbers coincide between primary and general elections and can be linked with pre- and post-policy electoral results using the unique voting booth number.

I leverage province- and age-specific variation from a one-time public spending program implemented in the middle of the 2021 legislative elections in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, along with individual and voting-booth level administrative data. The policy consisted of a one-time cash transfer—equivalent to 1.5 monthly minimum wages—for about 200,000 students graduating from high-school in 2021 to fund their end-of-school trip—a tradition for every high-school graduate in Argentina. The program was announced by the Governor of Buenos Aires in October 2021, after losing primary elections in September 2021 and before the general elections to be held in November 2021. Importantly, the remaining 23 provinces of Argentina did not implement a youth-targeted program like this. The variation generated by this policy and the timing between primary and general legislative elections thus provide a unique opportunity to study the short-run effect of cash transfers on the voting behavior of young people, a group that typically displays the lowest turnout rates worldwide.

I use an exposure difference-in-differences approach and voting booth-level data to estimate the change in the share of votes going to the incumbent Governor's party between primary and general elections based on the percentage of beneficiaries. The latter is measured using the individual electoral register from 2021 which is then linked with the electoral results from both elections. Intuitively, the hypothesis is that voting booths with a higher percentage of beneficiaries are more likely to increase their support to the ruling candidate following the subsidized graduation trips. To validate my strategy, I also compare the Province of Buenos Aires relative to other provinces that did not benefit from the youth-targeted policy but who might have been affected by some other federal policies.

There are three key results. First, the distribution of votes for the ruling party shifted to the right between Primary and General elections but remained practically unchanged for the opposition. This presumably reflects an increase in the support to the incumbent party from people that initially voted less popular parties. Second, the difference-in-differences results suggest that part of the previous finding is causally driven by the youth who increased their support to the incumbent government following the trip subsidy. I find a positive and statistically significant relationship between the change in the incumbent's vote share and the share of beneficiaries. In particular, a 1 percentage point increase in

the share of beneficiaries across voting booth leads to a 0.3 percentage points increase in the vote share in the General Elections. Third, this main result is robust to two placebo exercises. On the one hand, the effect is smaller and not significant for a group of “control” provinces who did not benefit from subsidized trips and thus the voting behavior of high-school graduates is not expected to change between elections. On the other hand, I show a precise and null effect on the 2019 legislative elections, which is reassuring as this program had not been launched yet.

**Comparison with existing literature.** A large body of evidence has found that governments that implement public policies that affect positively the electorate are rewarded by them. This positive effect on pro-incumbent voting has been observed in different Latin American countries, for instance. Manacorda et al. (2011) using self-reported data on political support looked at the effect of the conditional cash transfer PANES, an anti-poverty program, on the recipients behaviour in Uruguay. They show that the ruling party gained electoral support from the recipients of the targeted public transfers. De La O (2013) exploits the exogenous variation in exposure to the conditional cash transfer PROGRESA across eligible villages in Mexico and finds an increase in voter turnout and incumbent’s vote share in the 2000 presidential elections driven by beneficiaries. Rodríguez Chamussy (2015) focuses on the same program and exploits the staggered introduction of the cash transfer across municipalities to examine the effect on mayors’ elections. The author found an increase in the share of votes for the mayor’s party in cases where the coverage increases during the year before the election. Galiani et al. (2019) leverage a field experiment in Honduras and find that cash transfers to poor households increase the turnout and the vote share to the incumbent party in the 2013 presidential elections. A larger support to the ruling party was found on those receiving the transfer closer to the election day. The authors showed that both, the amount and the timing of the payments are relevant. Conover et al. (2020) analyze the 2010 presidential election in Colombia with an instrumental variables strategy and voting-booth level data to study the effects of the “*Familias en Acción*” transfer (an anti-poverty program) on political participation and support for the ruling party candidate. In Brazil, Lehmann and Matarazzo (2019) use a regression discontinuity design and find that an in-kind program increases pro-incumbent mayors’ vote shares in eligible cities.

The evidence of voters rewarding politicians who have favored them extends beyond Latin America. For the U.S. Levitt and Snyder (1997) examined the effect of federal spending on House election performances and found that congressional incumbents benefit from higher federal spending. Pop-Eleches and Pop-Eleches (2012) find evidence of po-

litical support to incumbents from poor families who benefit from a money coupon in Romania. For the Philippines, Labonne (2013) using a randomized roll-out of a conditional cash transfer program (Pantawid Familyang Pilipino) show that higher electoral returns are obtained in municipalities that had a better program coverage. Also looking at a conditional cash transfer program that disburses transfers to communities instead of households and making use of a randomized experiment on Indonesia, Julia et al. (2014) estimate an increase in the vote share for legislative candidates of the incumbent president's party.

However the results from empirical research papers remains mixed. For the US, in the same paper mentioned before, Levitt and Snyder (1997) showed that *voters do not reward politicians when the federal spending is through direct transfers, such as, social security, Medicare, low-income housing payments, and veterans' retirement benefits*. In an Indonesian study, Julia et al. (2014) did not find an increase in turnout neither an increment on votes for the incumbent president. Imai et al. (2020) showed that PROGRESA beneficiaries' support to incumbents documented by De La O (2013) disappears after some corrections of the data. Blattman et al. (2018) stated that recipients of antipoverty program in Uganda were not more likely of a pro-incumbent voting behavior.

My paper builds on this literature by studying how a targeted cash transfer affected the voting behavior of young people. I believe my setting offers a compelling case and improves on identification and data limitations. Perhaps the most attractive part is the timing of the policy that happens between elections that were only two months apart. In addition, the policy was implemented by only one province and, thus, my identification strategy hinges not only on the share of beneficiaries per voting booth but also on the comparison of Buenos Aires vis-a-vis the remaining (unaffected) provinces. Furthermore, I am able to study a more granular setting by linking electoral registers with electoral results at the voting booth level. Lastly, this study extends the scarce literature on young voting decisions.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides details about the Electoral System in Argentina, makes a brief summary about the tradition of graduation trips, and explains the targeted policy exploited in this study. Sections 3 and 4 describe the data sources and the identification strategy. Section 5 presents the effect of the policy on young voters behaviour, while Section 6 concludes.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Argentinian Electoral System

Argentina is a Federal Republic with a multi party system where all representatives are elected directly by the people. Elections are held for government officials at the federal, provincial, and legislative levels. The President and the Provincial Governors, are elected every four years for a four-year term. The Argentine Congress consist of two houses, the Upper House (The *Honorable Senado de la Nación Argentina*)<sup>1</sup> and the Lower House or House of Representatives (*Camara de Diputados de La Nación*). The House of Representatives has 257 members, elected for a four-year term in each electoral "districto" by proportional representation. Lower House terms are staggered. In all the "districtos" half of the Lower House is up for reelection every two years.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1 shows which representatives were elected on the last two elections held in Argentina. In 2019 the Argentinians elected their current President. At the same time, most of the provinces chose their Governors, with the exception of Corrientes and Santiago del Estero, provinces that had elected their governors in 2017. In the same election, all the provinces renewed half of their seats at the Lower House, renewing those representatives whose term had started in 2015. In 2021 the Argentinian electorate faced a new legislative election, in this case, all the provinces chose new representatives for the other half seats of the House of Representatives, renewing the seats that had been filled in 2017.

Figure 1: Timeline



Note: \*Most of the provinces had Gubernatorial elections in 2019, with the exception of Corrientes and Santiago del Estero, provinces that elected their governors in 2021.

Since 2009, in each election (presidential, gubernatorial and legislative) the Argen-

<sup>1</sup>The composition of the Upper House, and the election of its representatives exceeds the purposes of this work.

<sup>2</sup>A detail explanations regarding the Legislative Argentinian System and how the Lower House seats are assigned can be found in Appendix A.

tinian electorate participate in two consecutive elections in a two or three months period. The Primary Elections, called PASO (Primarias, Abiertas, Simultaneas y Obligatorias), have two objectives. On the one hand, they will determine which parties are entitled to stand for General Elections, which according to the law are those parties that obtain at least 1.5% of the valid votes cast in each *distrito* for the respective category. On the other hand, in the primary elections it will be determined which candidate of each party will stand in the general elections. During the Primaries, a political party can present more than one candidate, but after this election only one candidate will be presented in the General ballots.

Regarding to the first objective, in 2021 in the province of Buenos Aires, voters were able to choose between 24 parties in the Primary Elections, but only 6 political parties of those 24 were able to compete in the general elections. Figure B.2 shows the vote share distribution, at the voting booth level, to parties that didn't reach the threshold of 1.5%.

In addition, the primary elections serves as an informal referendum regarding the electoral support faced by the different political parties. Given that voting in the primary elections is mandatory, it acts as a big opinion poll ahead of the general ballots. Despite an array of parties running in the primaries, Argentines in general, and Bonaerense (from province of Buenos Aires) in particular, are largely split between the center-left populist coalition Frente de Todos, and the center-right coalition Juntos por el Cambio (Bloomberg (2021)).

## 2.2 Argentinian Electoral Divisions

For electoral purposes, Argentina is divided into 24 *distritos*, 23 provinces and the Ciudad Autonoma de Buenos Aires. Each *distrito* is divided into *secciones*, which are also divided into *circuitos*. Each *circuito* counts with *poling stations* which holds several *voting booths*.

Figure 3 shows the geographical division for electoral purpose in the Province of Buenos Aires. Panel 3a shows that the province is divided into 8 “*secciones electorales*” which are also divided into a group of *secciones*. As mentioned before, each *seccion* is divided into *circuitos*. Panel 3b displays the *circuitos* for one specific *seccion*: “Partido de 3 de Febreo”.

The province of Buenos Aires is the *distrito* that has the largest number of voters. It has 8 *secciones electorales* divided into a total of 135 *secciones*. In 2021 the province

of Buenos Aires has **1,044 circuitos** and a total of **36,917 voting booths**. The number of registered voters in Buenos Aires was 12,704,518, representing 37% of the country's total in 2021. 68.41% of the registered voters in Buenos Aires casted a ballot in the primary election, proportion that increased to 72.33% for the general ballots.

In each election, voters are assigned to a **polling station** based on the proximity of their homes. Each polling station is divided into '**voting booths**' of up to 350 registered voters. Assignment to a voting booth is done in alphabetical order based on the surname of the individuals.

Suffrage for people aged 18 to 70 is mandatory in Argentina, with a few exceptions, meaning that the individuals do not need to register to vote. All the Argentinians aging 18 years old and older who hold a national ID (known as "Documento Nacional de Identidad") will be listed in the Padrón Electoral and they will have the obligation to vote. Since 2012, Argentina extended the right to vote in national elections to 16- and 17-year-old teenagers. Unlike the population between 18 and 70 years old, suffrage for this group of teenagers is not mandatory. Likewise, for individuals 71 years old and older, the right to vote is granted for them, even though they don't have the obligation to do it.

As mentioned in 2.1 Argentina had presidential elections in 2019, when with 48.10% Alberto Fernandez from Frente de Todos was elected as the President. In the same election, 22 districtos elected their Governors. In Buenos Aires, Kicillof, belonging to the same political party as the president-elect (Frente de Todos), was elected as Governor with 52.40% of the support from the Buenos Aires electorate.

## 2.3 Graduation Trips in Argentina

The end-of-school trip is a tradition that has been carried out for more than 40 years. In Argentina, every year, all the students' graduating from High School go on trip to the City of San Carlos de Bariloche, province of Rio Negro. The trip usually takes place during the winter break, in the months of July and August.

The duration of the trip is 7 nights, and the packages bought by the students generally include all-inclusive food, shared rooms with private bathrooms, one or two excursions per day, and tickets to a disco for every night. Depending on the chosen package, students travel to San Carlos de Bariloche by bus or plane. The bus is the most preferred alternative, although it is a long trip. The distance between, for example, Ciudad Autonoma de Buenos Aires and San Carlos de Bariloche is 1,570 kilometers.



The planning of the trip begins usually one year before the trip takes place, making it possible for the parents to finance it. In 2021 the cost of the end-of-school trip was about 100,000 argentinian pesos (5 minimum wages).

The peculiarity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions to travel during a couple of months of 2020, the uncertainty about whether it would be possible to travel during 2021, together with the economic crisis faced by lots of families made it impossible for students graduating from high school in 2021 the planning of the end-of-school trip.

### 2.3.1 Programa Bonaerense de Turismo Estudiantil

In October 2021, the Governor of Buenos Aires province announced a "free" end-of-school trip for all the students attending the last year of high school in any public or private school in the province of Buenos Aires (Decree 973/2021). The "free" end-of-school trip would cover up to 30,000 Argentinian pesos (representing about 1.5 monthly minimum wage) for trips spanning 4 days and 3 nights in different places of the province of Buenos Aires to be held in February, March, and April of 2022. In order to be a beneficiary of this program, at least 10 classmates had to register for the benefit. The policy was announced for more than 200,000 students; however, only a little more than 30,000 signed up for it.

The goal of the program, as announced in the Decree, was *"to boost the tourism activity in the province of Buenos Aires, an activity that was extremely affected during the COVID pandemic, as a result of the movement restrictions and the impossibility of carrying out social, tourist and cultural activities that involve crowds. The promotion and incentive of student tourism would also impulse the reactivation of the different productive activities that comprise the tourism"*. The opposition, however, considered it *"an electoral and undignified policy for all the country's citizens"* in words of Patricia Bullrich, the chairwoman of PRO, the major component of the opposition party *Juntos por el Cambio*.<sup>3</sup> The program was announced after the ruling party *Frente de Todos* lost in the legislative primary elections against *Juntos por el Cambio*, and just before the general ballots.

#### Was the Policy Salient?

The program was publicly announced by the Governor of the province of Buenos Aires in the framework of a provincial tourism reactivation program. Figure 4 shows the salience of the policy by showing the impact that the policy had in the main newspapers of Argentina. Panel 4a shows the moment of the announcement. The governor of Buenos Aires, the one making the announcement, is accompanied by the candidate for the

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<sup>3</sup>Source: [Infobae.com](https://www.infobae.com)

House of Representatives from *Frente de Todos*, Victoria Tolosa-Paz (the one seated on the right end). Panels 4b and 4c correspond to *Diario Clarín* and *Diario La Nación*, two of the main newspapers in Argentina. Both panels correspond to the day after the subsidized graduation trip was announced. Panel 4b reads: “Kicillof [the governor] on electoral campaign with students: gives away graduate trips”. Likewise, panel 4c reads “On electoral campaign, Kicillof announced free graduate trips for 220,000 students”. Finally, the governor of Buenos Aires announced the program on his personal Twitter account - panel 4d - the same day that the announcement was made. It reads “the second announcement is intended for the girls and boys of the province. We are going to implement a program so that high school graduates can have their end-of-school trip.”

### **The Total Cost of the Program**

The expected cost of the program under complete take-up was about 6,600 million argentinian pesos, which represents a relatively small share of the budget of the province of Buenos Aires, only 2%. In practice, only 15% of the students used the free graduation trips, making the real cost of the program even less substantial. At the end, the program represented 0.03% of the budget of PBA. Table 1 shows how important is the overall expenditure of this program compared to the budget of the province of Buenos Aires.

Regardless of the objective for which the government of Buenos Aires launched the free graduation trip program; to promote tourism in the province (the official objective) or to obtain political support (what the opposition believes) it seems that the result was satisfactory. The Governor renewed the program to students graduating from High School in 2022. Once again, the salience was notorious. For this new version of the trip, the province of Buenos Aires sent emails announcing the second edition of the trip and inviting the students graduating from High School to register in order to obtain the benefit. Figure 5 shows the email sent by the provincial Government. The “subject” of the email reads “Free graduation trips for students graduating from High School”. The body of the email reads “Registration for the second edition of the End of Course Trip financed by the Province was opened. Students who in 2022 are in their last year of High School in any Buenos Aires schools, state-run or private, will be able to travel for free to a destination in the Province for 4 days and 3 nights between September and November. Hotel, bus, food and excursions, all included. On the coast, in the river or in the mountains. You don’t have to pay anything!”. This new version of the trip was more successful than the previous one, where the number of registrants rose to 100 thousand.

### **The Timeline of Events**

Argentina had legislative elections in 2021, with primary Elections held in September and General Elections held in November. Between these two elections, the Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires announced a spending program aimed to finance the graduation trip for all the students graduating from high school, normally aged between 17 and 18 years old.

Figure 2: Legislative Elections timeline



Figure 6 shows the incumbent party and second most prominent party performance in the Primary Legislative Elections. Panel 6a plots the distribution, at voting booth level, of the total number of votes (left panel) and share of total votes (right panel) for **the two main coalitions**. The figures provides evidence of a worst performance for the ruling party than for the opposition. Panel 6b shows the official results for the same two parties, in both, Primary and General Elections. At the province level, the ruling party got less votes than the opposition in the Primary Elections. The official results shows that Frente de Todos, got 33.64% of the total votes in the Primary Elections, PASO, while the share of total votes for the opposition, Juntos por el Cambio, was 37.99%.

As mentioned by the opposition, the announcement, just after losing in the primary elections, seems to indicate that it was made, among other things, for electoral purposes. If that's the case, it should be expected that incumbents gain electoral support after the policy was announced. Figure 7 seems to give indications that said assertion is true. The figure shows the unconditional relationship between the vote share change to Frente de Todos between the Primary and the General Elections (vertical axis) and the share of beneficiaries (horizontal axis). It is observe a positive and statistically significant relationship; voting booth with a higher share of beneficiaries experienced a higher change in the vote share in favor of Frente de Todos.

### 3 Administrative Data

This paper uses six sets of administrative data at the voting booth level to identify the effects of the youth-targeted policy on voting behavior. The 2021 Argentinian electoral

census, the 2021 electoral results for the primary and the general elections, the 2019 Argentinian electoral census, and the 2019 electoral results, also for the primary and general elections.

The first data set, called *Padron Electoral*, is a population-wide database for the universe of voters in Argentina. This is an electoral register that contains individual identifiers, year of birth, and a very detailed geographical location where each person votes, including the voting booth.

The second and third sources contain the 2021 electoral results from primary and general elections defined at the voting booth level. I will focus on the Lower House elections, which, as mentioned before, were held in every "distrito" of the country, and renewed half of the members for the period 2021–2025.

The 2019 Padron electoral has the same kind of data that the 2021 Padron Electoral has. Finally, the two last sets of data come from the 2019 electoral results, from the primary and general elections for the province of Buenos Aires. As it will be explained in Section 4, this data will help me to test the parallel trend assumption in a difference in difference design. I should not expect any change in the vote share to Frente de Todos in voting booths with a higher proportion of beneficiaries in the pre-event elections.

Figure 8 shows how the data is collected by paper and pencil after each election in each voting booth. In orange, 02 - distrito Buenos Aaires makes references to the **distrito**, in this case the Province of Buenos Aires. 63 - La Plata and 461, in light blue boxes, makes reference to the **seccion** and **circuito**, respectively, while *mesa*, in purple, identifies the **voting booth**. In 2021, 3 categories of representatives were elected, for the purposes of this investigation I'll look at the House of representatives, whose votes are summarized in the column: *diputados nacionales*, in green. The row highlighted in yellow shows the number of votes received by the ruling party Frente de Todos.

The vote share for the incumbent party is computed as the ratio between the votes received by *Frente de Todos*, 61 with respect to the total number of valid votes, that is, *votos a agrupaciones politicas*, 227 (positive votes to political parties) plus *votos en blanco*, 2 (blank votes).

In future work, I plan to use two additional sources of administrative data to enhance this study. First, information regarding the percentage of (formal) wage earners and some measure of socioeconomic status, in order to control for heterogeneities, both kinds of information at the voting booth level.

Second, the use of an additional administrative database, the Family relationships

database (ADP) that links family members in the same household, will allow me to test for the presence of spillover voting effects within households. As mentioned before, the rule of assignment of individuals to a polling station and a voting booth depends on the proximity of the individuals' homes and the alphabetical order of individuals' surnames. This form of assignment, together with the norm that in Argentina children usually have the same surname as their father, imply that students who benefit from free end-of-school trip, as well as any sibling and father who live in the same house, are assigned to the same voting booth. Using this information, I could increase the treated group as an "extended beneficiary group" comprised of direct beneficiaries plus family members. This will allow me to test the presence of spillovers of the public spending within the household. That is, the setting and data allow me to analyze if the program not only persuaded beneficiaries to cast ballots but also made the whole household more supportive of the ruling party, increasing the share of votes that went to the candidate of the incumbent party.

## 4 Empirical Strategy

With the policy mentioned in subsection 2.3.1 and the the Padron Electoral together with the electoral results from 2021, I plan to use an **exposure difference-in-differences approach** to analyze the effect on the support for the incumbent party between Primary and General Legislative Elections. The hypothesis I want to test is whether, after the free graduating trip was announced, voting booths with a higher percentage of beneficiaries were more likely to support the ruling party candidate in the General Elections, relative to the Primary Elections. My identification strategy hinges on comparing voting booths with a similar age structure in Buenos Aires vis-a-vis the remaining provinces that didn't benefit from this youth-targeted policy but who might have been affected by some other federal policies. Intuitively, these additional campaign policies affecting other age groups will be offset in the regression. This strategy will technically capture an Intention-to-treat effect. Although the program was universal for high-school graduates from the province of Buenos Aires, I do not have data of the take-up yet.

A key feature for **identification** is that the remaining 23 provinces of Argentina did not issue a targeted program like this. Hence, voting behavior of high-school graduates is not expected to change between Primary and General Elections in those provinces. The variation generated by this policy and the timing between primary and general legislative elections thus provide a unique opportunity to study the very short-run effect of cash transfers on the voting behavior of young people, a group that typically displays the low-

est turnout rates around the world.

In a nutshell, the **research design** is the following. I will first compute the share of students graduating from high school for each voting booth in the province of Buenos Aires (treated) and the remaining provinces (untreated). This will be the main independent variable, and is depicted in Figure 9. The figure shows promising identifying variation in the number of beneficiaries across voting booths in the Province of Buenos Aires (panel 9a). A similar distribution emerges for the provinces using as the control group (panel 9b).<sup>4</sup>

My goal then is to estimate the change in the support to the ruling party, Frente de Todos, measured as the change in the vote share that went to the candidate of the incumbent party between the midterm and the general legislative election.

The paper will, as next steps, also analyze the change in turnout. Although the electoral system in Argentina establishes that voting is mandatory (with a few exceptions) for all those who are between 18 and 70 years of age, increments in turnover are experienced in practice. Subsection B delve into this aspect.

My baseline specification estimates the short-run effect of the free end-of-school trip announced by the incumbent party vote share, as follows:

$$\Delta shFdT_{m,G-P,2021} = \alpha Benef_m + \gamma_s + \varepsilon_m \quad (1)$$

$$\Delta shFdT_{m,G-P,2021} = \alpha Benef_m + X'_m \zeta + \gamma_s + \varepsilon_m \quad (2)$$

where  $\Delta shFdT_{m,G-P,2021}$  is the outcome of interested and denotes the change in the share of votes for the Frente de Todos in each voting booth (m), between the General elections (G) and the Primary elections (P) in 2021.  $Benef_m$  is the main treatment variable, measuring the share of beneficiaries over the voting population. The coefficient of interest is  $\alpha$ , capturing the impact of policy' treatment intensity on incumbent's vote share. "Section" fixed-effects,  $\gamma_s$ , control for time-invariant distrito-seccion heterogeneity. Standard errors cluster at seccion level.

Subsequently, a matrix of controls  $X_m$  will be included, namely, the proportion of women, the proportion of (formal) wage eamers, some kind of economic status. - specification 2.

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<sup>4</sup>Subsection 4.1 discusses which provinces are used as control group.

The identification of difference-in-difference estimation relies on the presence of counterfactual parallel trends. To test this assumption I plan to use data from previous years elections and run the following specification:

$$\Delta shFdT_{m,G,P,X} = \alpha Benef_m + \epsilon_m \quad (3)$$

where  $\Delta shFdT_{m,G,P,X}$  denotes the change in the share of votes for Frente de Todos in each voting booth ( $m$ ), between the General elections (G) and the Primary elections (P) in  $X = 2019$  in the province of Buenos Aires. Robustness about this could be tested using others pre-event elections, for example,  $X = 2015, 2017$ .

After carrying out this analysis in a separately way for each sample: the treated province (Buenos Aires 2021), the control group provinces in 2021, and the placebo pre-event analysis (Buenos Aires 2019) an additional analysis will be done where I plan to estimate the causal effect by running a unique regression fro 2021 that include both the treated and the control provinces.

#### 4.1 Provinces without Graduation Trips as a Control Group

As mentioned before, the fact that the free graduation trip was only announced for the province of Buenos Aires allows me to have a control group composed of provinces that did not issue a similar program. For the control group I will use provinces with the same political cycle as Buenos Aires, that is, provinces electing governors the same year that Buenos Aires does, but also, provinces in which the governor belongs to or is aligned with, the same political party than Buenos Aires.

As mentioned in Section 2.1, 22 distritos chose governors in 2019. Buenos Aires and another 13 provinces (*Catamarca, Chaco, Entre Rios, Formosa, La Pampa, La Rioja, Misiones, San Juan, San Luis, Santa Cruz, Santa Fe, Tierra del Fuego, y Tucuman*) chose Governors who belongs to, or are aligned with, Frente de Todos.

Figure 10 displays all the provinces (distritos) of Argentina. In blue are those provinces whose Governors belong to or are aligned with Frente de Todos, while in grey are painted the rest of the provinces, those that elected a Governor in 2019 who belongs to a political party different than Frente de Todos, and the two provinces that did not elect Governor in 2019.

The support of the electorate to Frente de Todos in the provinces painted in blues was notorious, although some heterogeneities can be observed. The vote share that Frente

de Todos received varied from 42% in San Luis to more than 70% of the total votes in Misiones. In Buenos Aires, Kicillof was elected with 52.4% of the votes.

The map summarizes the information in three brackets. One for the provinces where Frente de Todos won with a vote share varying from 42% to 50%: Chaco, Entre Rios, La Rioja, San Luis y Santa Fe. A second bracket for those governors that received a vote share between 50% and 60%: Buenos Aires, San Juan, Santa Cruz, Tucuman, y Tierra del Fuego. Finally, the last bracket includes the provinces where the support for Frente de Todos was incredibly high, obtaining more than 60% of the total votes: Catamarca, Formosa, La Pampa, and Misiones.

Similar information is displayed in figure 11. This figure shows the 2019 Governors' results for provinces where Frente de Todos was elected. Panel 11a plots the vote shares for Frente de Todos and the opposition. Panel 11b displays the vote share difference, in percentage points, between Frente de Todos and the second most prominent party. This difference went from about 8 percentage points in San Luis, increased to around 18-22 percentage points for most of the provinces (18.2 in Buenos Aires), and reached until a difference of 55 percentage points in Misiones.

The potential control group provinces also varied in the support received in the legislative 2021 election. Table 2 summarises the percentage of votes received by Frente de Todos and by the opposition in the Primary Elections of 2021. The table listed all the provinces with a Governor who belongs to or is aligned with Frente de Todos as well as the vote share received by them and by the opposition during the primary legislative elections.

In 5 of the 14 provinces, the electorate supported the ruling party. In Catamarca, Formosa, La Rioja, and Tucuman, the support were notorious, while in San Juan, although the incumbent party received more votes, the difference was only 5 percentage points. In the rest of the provinces, the opposition won the Primary Elections. In the case of the province of Buenos Aires, the ruling party lost by 5 percentage points; however, in other provinces, the lack of support for the incumbent party was significantly high, as in the case of Misiones.

Figure 10 and Table 2 gave evidence about the need to refine the control group. It is not enough to consider provinces with the same political cycle and governors belonging to the same political party. Some provinces, although they meet these conditions, differ significantly from Buenos Aires. Catamarca, Formosa, Chaco, La Rioja y Tucuman are provinces radically different from our treated province. These are provinces where Frente de Todos won by a wide margin in the Gubernatorial election of 2019 (Catamarca y For-



mosa)<sup>5</sup> and/or won the Legislative Primary Elections of 2021 (Catamarca, Formosa, La Rioja y Tucuman). Chaco is not part of any of these groups, however, this is due to an exceptional fact; its background is more similar to the provinces listed above than to Buenos Aires.

To sum up, for the identification I will use as control group the following provinces: Entre Rios, La Pampa, Misiones, San Juan, San Luis, Santa Fe, Santa Cruz, and Tierra del Fuego, all provinces that have the same political cycle than Buenos Aires, whose Governor belongs to or is aligned to Frente de Todos, and that share similar characteristics with Buenos Aires. I plan to validate this selection by doing a synthetic control analysis in future work.

## 4.2 The Importance of Buenos Aires

As mentioned in Section 2.1 the number of seats in the House of Representative assigned to each Distrito follows a proportional rule given by the population. Following that rule, Buenos Aires is the province with, by a wide difference, the highest number of representatives. Of a total of 257 legislators, 70 representatives belong to the Province of Buenos Aires. After Buenos Aires, the distritos with more legislators are: Ciudad Autonoma de Buenos Aires, 25; Santa Fe, 19; Cordoba, 18; and the rest of the provinces with 10 or less. The stagger system of the Lower House implied that in 2021 all the provinces renewed about half of their House of Representatives legislators: 35 seats were renewed in Buenos Aires, the province under study, while the rest of the provinces renewed 9 or less seats. In particular, the provinces in the aforementioned control province group renewed the following number of representatives: Entre Rios, 5; La Pampa, 3; Misiones, 3; San Juan, 3; San Luis, 3; Santa Fe, 9; Santa Cruz 3; and Tierra del Fuego, 2.

Buenos Aires was not only the province which renewed more representatives, but also where the results in the primary legislative elections of 2021 were tightened (table 2).

The importance of the relative weight of the province Buenos Aires in the number of seats in the House of Representatives, together with the disputed result between Frente de Todos and Juntos por el Cambio in the Primary Legislative Elections makes it reasonable to think that the governor to try to cast a ballot by the announcement of public policies before the General elections.

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<sup>5</sup>Misiones was the other province where Frente de Todos won easily this election, however the performance during the Primary Elections of 2021 was unfortunate putting this province closer than Buenos Aires than Catamarca or Formosa

At the end, after the 2021 General Elections, the incumbent party lost representation in the Lower House. Its seats went down from 120 to 117. Moreover, the opposition Juntos por el Cambio increased its representation getting to extra seats and equaling Frente de Todos with 117 seats.

## 5 Results

This section summarises the results of the paper. First, I present some descriptive evidence in subsection 5.1 to motivate the regression analysis. Next, subsection 5.2 analyzes the incumbent's electoral performance by looking at the impact that the end-of-school trip had into a higher vote share to Frente de Todos in the General Elections.

The data available until now allowed me to run the regression without controls (but with granular fixed effects) and controlling by the proportion of women at each voting booth. The electoral censuses have also information about the age of the voters but any variable that could capture the average age or median age at the voting booth is correlated with the main treatment variable; therefore, such controls were not included.

In future work, I plan to include additional controls, such as the proportion of formal wage earners at each voting booth and some measurement of economic status, also at the voting booth level. It is reasonable to think that students coming from a more unfavorable background are those more likely to benefit from or make use of the free trips. An imperfect way to control for this is including some kind of economic status control.

In addition, another relevant variable to be included is the proportion of "treated" students at the voting booth level. Unfortunately, this information is not available. Although the variation I am exploiting is at the voting booth level, knowing the share of treated at a bigger geographical unit would be informative (e.g., at the "circuito" level). I have already sent a formal request of this data but I have not heard back so far. Notwithstanding, I do have anecdotal evidence. For example, Diario "El 1 Digital" announced on February 13th that "the largest number of registered beneficiaries was 3,288 in the municipality of La Matanza, followed by Lomas De Zamora with 1,735, and Moreno with 1,639".

### 5.1 Descriptive Evidence

Figure 12 compares the change in votes between the Primary and the General Elections in the province of Buenos Aires in 2021 for the ruling party and the opposition. Panels 12a

and 12b display the densities, at the voting booth level, of the number of votes received by both political parties in the two consecutive elections. From panel 12a it can be seen that the distribution of votes for Frente de Todos shifted to the right, reflecting an increase in the number of votes received by the incumbent party in the general legislative elections with respect to the primary legislative elections, while such distribution remained practically invariant between the two elections for the opposition (panel 12b). Panels 12c and 12d show also the densities at the voting booth level, but in this case correspond to the vote shares. Once again, the ruling party experienced a shifted to the right (panel 12c) while the distribution of Juntos por el Cambio remained almost invariant between the two elections (panel 12d).<sup>6</sup>

## 5.2 The Effect of Targeted Spending on Incumbent's Vote Share

This subsection presents the results of the estimation from equations 1 and 2 for the treated province (Buenos Aires), the control provinces, and a placebo using data from the presidential elections of 2019 for the province of Buenos Aires. The key results of the paper are summarized in Figure 17. The numerical results are reported in Table 3, while Figures 13, 14, and 15 provide a non-parametric way of visualizing the relationship between the share of beneficiaries and the change in vote shares. *The latter grouped the x-axis variable into equal-sized bins, computed the mean of the x-axis and y-axis variables within each bin, and then created a scatterplot of these data points. The result is a non-parametric visualization of the conditional expectation function*<sup>7</sup>.

### 5.2.1 Subsidized Graduation Trips and Elections in Buenos Aires in 2021

Figure 13 shows the relationship between the change in the vote share to Frente de Todos between the primary and the general legislative elections (Y axis) and the share of beneficiaries (X axis) in the Province of Buenos Aires in 2021. Panel 13a displays that relationship without controls, while panel 13b controls for the percentage of women at the voting booth level. Both panels include fixed effect at the "sección" level to control for sección-specific attributes.

The figures show a positive and statistically significant relationship, capturing the differential impact of policy' treatment intensity on incumbent's vote share. A 1 percentage

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<sup>6</sup>The increase on the number of votes comes from 2 mechanisms operating simultaneously. Appendix B explains these channels in detail.

<sup>7</sup>Stata help.

point increase in the share of beneficiaries at each voting booth leads to a 0.298 percentage points increase in the incumbent party's vote share in the General Elections (panel 13a). The effect barely changes in magnitude after controlling for the percentage of women at the voting booth level. In this case, an increase of 1 percentage points in the proportion of free graduation trips beneficiaries translates into a 0.275 percentage points increase in the incumbent party's vote share in the General Elections (panel 13b).

### 5.2.2 Control Provinces in 2021

In order to establish the causal effect, a control group should be considered. In this case, the voting behavior of high-school graduates is not expected to change between Primary and General Elections in the provinces that did not benefit from such kind of policy.

Figure 14 shows the same relationship than before but in this case for the control group provinces in 2021. Once again, panel 14a display that relationship without controls, while panel 14b controls for the percentage of women at voting booth level. Both panels include fixed effect at the *sección* level.

The figures show a positive relationship between the two variables of interest, coefficient  $\alpha$  in equations 1 and 2. However, for the group of provinces that make up the control group, the relationship is not statistically significant. Moreover, the estimated coefficients in these cases are smaller in magnitude than in the case of the province of Buenos Aires.

### 5.2.3 Using the 2019 Presidential Elections as a Placebo

Using 2019 legislative electoral results for the province of Buenos Aires, I run a pre-event placebo analysis to study the relationship between the share of possible beneficiaries and the vote share change for Frente de Todos between the primary and general elections. For elections prior to the announcement of the policy it should not be expected any change in the vote share to Frente de Todos in voting booths with a higher proportion of students graduating from high school.

As before, figure 15 plots the relationship between the change in vote share to the incumbent party between the Primary and General ballots and the proportion of beneficiaries. Panel 15a shows that relationship without controls while panel 15b controls for the percentage of women at voting booth level. Both panels include fixed effect at "sección" level.

In none of the cases I can detect a significant effect. Furthermore, the regression esti-

mates are significantly smaller than in ones estimated for the province of Buenos Aires in 2021. The robustness of this exercise could be check by doing the same analysis in previous elections, for example, 2017 and 2015. I plan to add this robustness checks in the near future.

As mentioned before, the key results of paper are summarized in figure 17. This figure shows an alternative easy way of visualizing the results. The graph summarizes the estimated coefficient and the confidence interval for the 3 cases mentioned before: the treated province, Buenos Aires 2021, the control group provinces in 2021, and the placebo exercise, Buenos Aires 2019. Each coefficient represents the vote share change in the legislative elections for Frente de Todos when the share of beneficiaries increase in 1 percentage point, that is, the coefficient  $\alpha$  from equations 1 and 2. The vertical spikes correspond to the 95% confidence interval. Both, the estimations without controls (specification 1) and controlling by the percentage of women at the voting booth level (specification 2) are included. All regressions contain fixed effect at the "sección" level to control for sección-specific attributes.

From this figure it is easy to observe and compare the magnitude of the estimated coefficients and the 95% confidence interval. In all the cases the figure shows a positive impact of the share of beneficiaries on the political support for the incumbent party measured as the change in vote share between the two consecutive legislative elections, even though the magnitude and statistical significance varies. It is easy to visualised that the dispersion for the control provinces is higher than any other case. Regarding the number of voting booth considered in the analysis, the smaller number of voting booth in the placebo analysis it is because some data is randomly missing for that years.

## 6 Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I studied how a targeted public policy affected the voting behavior of young people. I analyzed how a one-time public spending program (the free graduation trip) announced by the governor of Buenos Aires in the middle of legislative elections of 2021 impacted on the support faced by the ruling party candidate in the General elections relatives to the primary ones. The setting allowed us me to compare voting booths with a similar age structure in Buenos Aires vis-a-vis the a control group of provinces that didn't benefit from this youth-targeted policy and capture an Intention-to-treat effect.

The preliminary results show that voting booth with a higher proportion of potential

beneficiaries were more likely to support the Buenos Aires' ruling party candidate. A 1 percentage point increase in the share of beneficiaries at each voting booth leads to a 0.275 - 0.298 percentage points increase in the incumbent party's vote share in the General Elections. Even though promising, this result must be analyzed in further detail. Section 7 listed some improvements that I plan to do in future work.

## **7 Next Steps and Improvements**

### **7.1 The Effect on Voting Turnout**

All the analysis carried out until now focused on the effect of the young targeted policy on the vote share change experienced by the incumbent party during the legislative elections in 2021. In addition, the context provides the opportunity of studying whether after the program was announced, voting booths with a higher percentage of beneficiaries were more likely to experience an increase in turnout in the general elections, relative to the primary elections. As it is discussed in appendix B, even though casting a ballot is mandatory for those individual between 18 years old and 70 years old, in practice, the participation oscillates around 70%.

### **7.2 Spillover Effects of the Policy on Family Members**

As mentioned in section 3, I plan to use an additional administrative data that links family members within the household. With this data at hand and exploiting the rule of assignment of individuals to a polling station and voting booth, I will be able to define an "extended beneficiaries group" which comprises direct beneficiaries plus family members, which will allow me to test the presence of spillovers of public spending within the household.

### **7.3 Robustness Checks**

#### **7.3.1 Additional Control Variables**

In specification 2 a matrix of controls is included. Until now the available data allow me to control for the proportion of women at the voting booth level. I plan to add additional

controls at the voting booth level, the proportion of formal wage earners and some measure of socioeconomic status to control for the fact that more unfavorable households are more likely to signed up for the benefit.

Other controls of interest to potentially be included are educational level, the unemployment rate, and the proportion of "treated" students. The availability of these data at the voting booth level is practically nil, so if possible, it will be controlled for this at a lower level of geographical disaggregation, for example, "circuito".

### **7.3.2 Placebo and Control Group Robustness Analysis**

To test the pre-event parallel trend data from 2019 was used. Other pre-policy elections, such as, the Legislative Elections of 2015 and 2017 could be used to add more evidence. In a similar way, in future work I plan to validate the selection of the control group provinces by running a synthetic control analysis.

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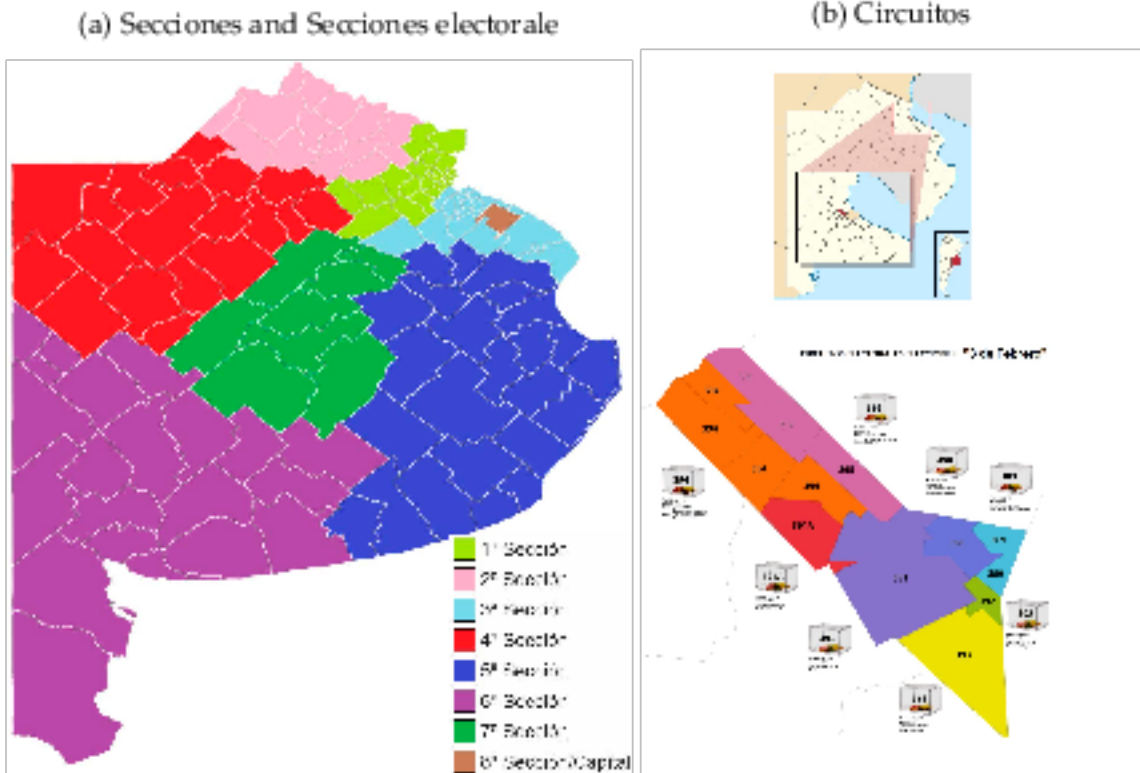
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# Figures

Figure 3: Geographical units for electoral purpose



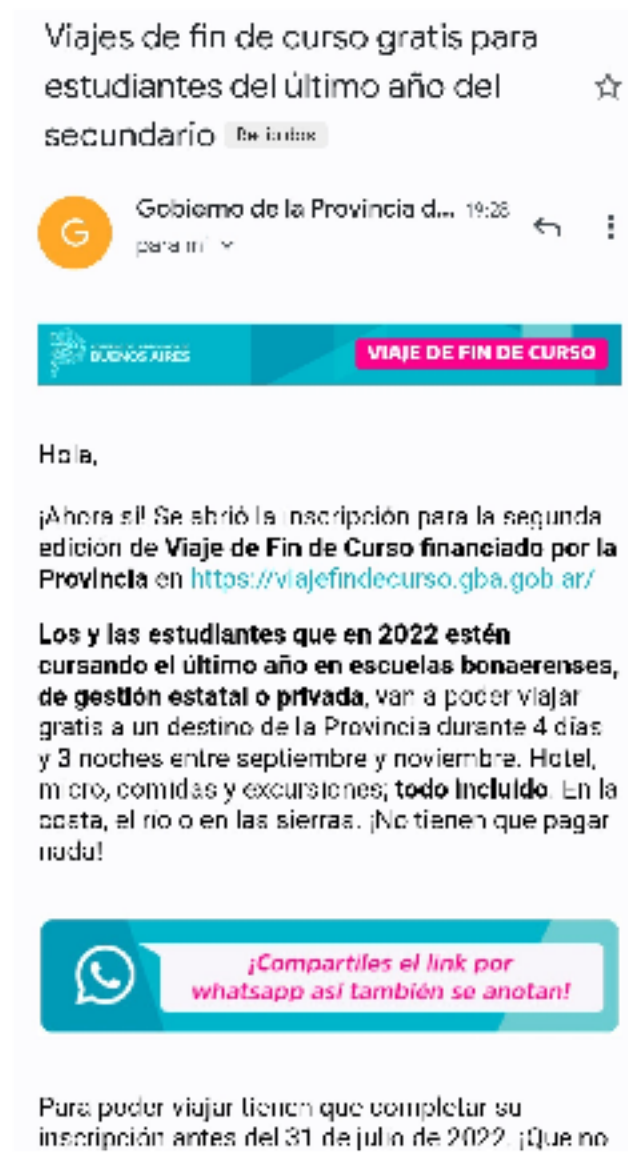
Notes: This figure shows the geographical division for electoral purpose in the Province of Buenos, one of the 24 distritos. Panel (a) shows us that the province is divided into 8 “secciones electorales” which are also divided into a group of *secciones*, with the exception of “Sección 8va/Capital” which only has one *seccion*. As mentioned before, each *seccion* is divided into *circuitos*. Panel (b) displays the *circuitos* for the *seccion* of “3 de Febrero”.

Figure 4: Saliency of the policy



Note: These images show the saliency of the policy and the the impact that it had in the main newspapers of Argentina. Panel 4a shows the moment of the announcement. The governor of Buenos Aires, the one making the announcement, is accompanied, among others, by the candidate (Victoria Tolosa-Paz) for the Lower House from Frente de Todos. Panel 4b correspond to Diario Clarín and panels 4c to Diario La Nación. Both panels correspond to the day after the free graduation trip was announced. The governor posted about the policy on his personal Twitter account -panel 4d- the same day that the announcement was made. Panel 4b reads: "Kicillof [the governor] on electoral campaign with students: gives away graduate trips". Similarly, panel 4c reads "On electoral campaign, Kicillof announced free graduate trips for 220,000 students". Panel 4d reads "The second announcement is intended for the girls and boys of the province. We are going to implement a program so that high school graduates can have their end-of-school trip".

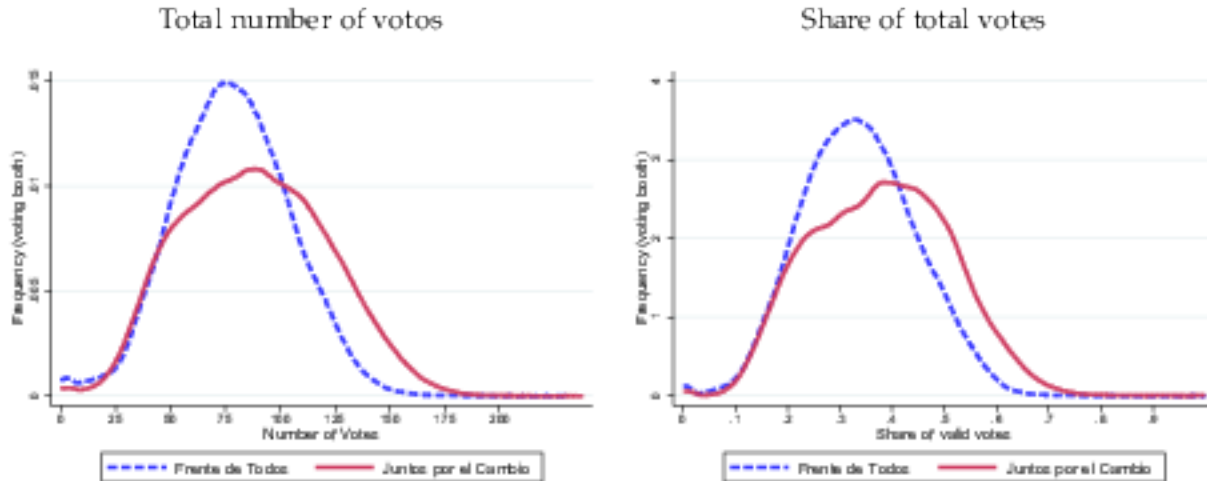
Figure 5: Continuation of the program in 2022



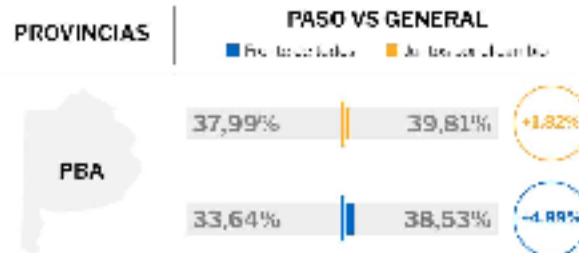
*Notes:* This image shows an email sent by the provincial Government. The "subject" of the email reads "Free graduation trips for students graduating from High School". The body of the email reads "Registration for the second edition of the End of Course Trip financed by the Province was opened. Students who in 2022 are in their last year of High School in any Buenos Aires schools, state-run or private, will be able to travel for free to a destination in the Province for 4 days and 3 nights between September and November. Hotel, bus, food and excursions, all included. On the coast, in the river or in the mountains. You don't have to pay anything!".

Figure 6: Performance in the Primary Elections

(a) Results at voting booth level

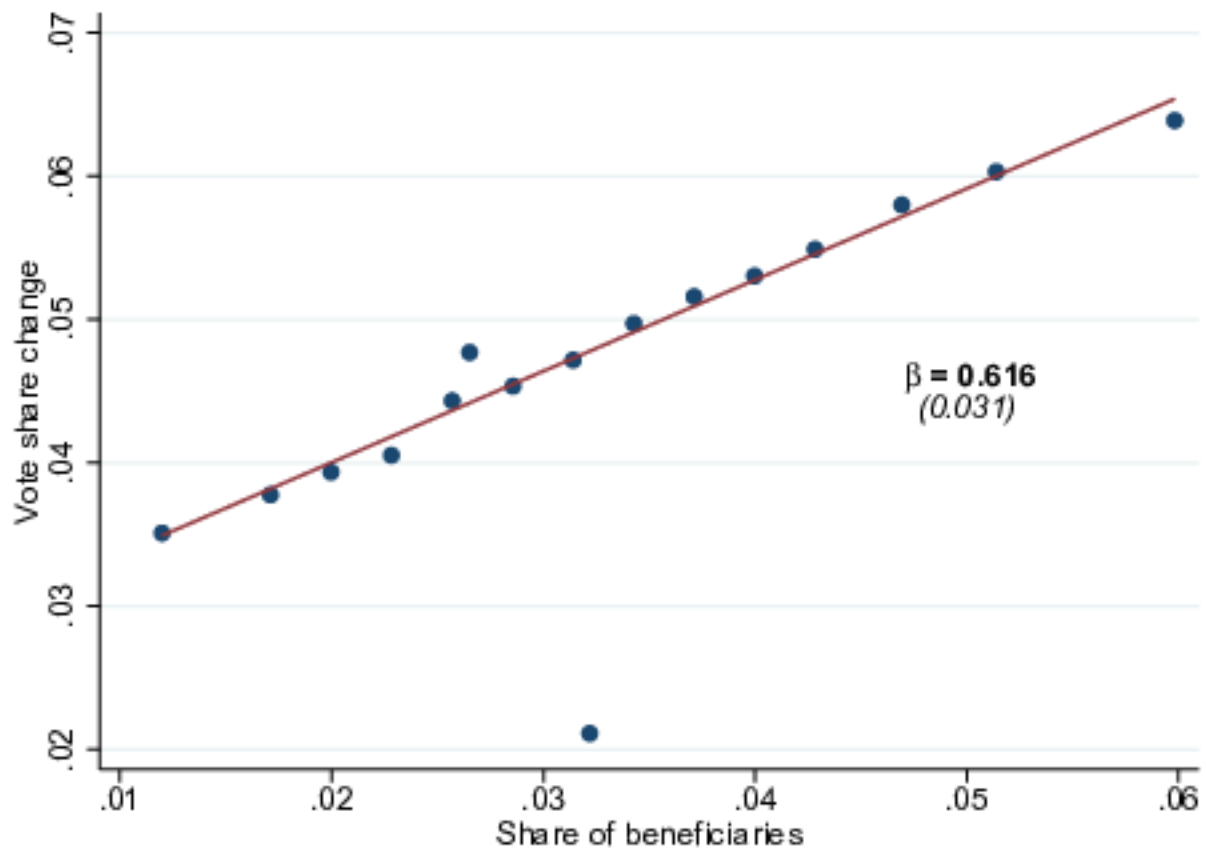


(b) Official results in PBA




Notes: The figures show the performance of the incumbent party during the Primary Legislative Elections, PASO, in Buenos Aires in 2021. Panel 6a shows the distribution, at the voting booth level, of the **Number of votes** (left panel) and the **Share of votes** (right panel) gotten by the incumbent party, Frente de Todos and the opposition Juntos por el Cambio in the primary elections. Panel 6b shows the official results in the primary and general elections. During the primary elections Juntos por el Cambio received 37.99% of the valid votes while the ruling party, Frente de Todos, got 33.64%.

Figure 7: Incumbent's Electoral Performance



Notes: The figure shows descriptive evidence about the positive (unconditional) relationship between the change in votes (%) to Frente de Todos between the primary and the general elections (Y axis) and the share of beneficiaries (X axis).

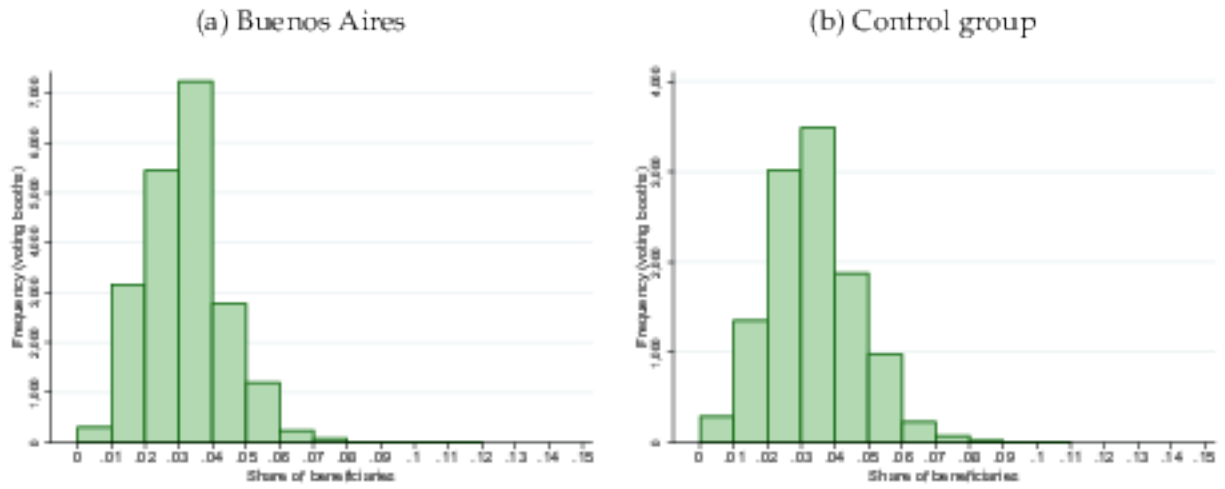
Figure 8: Raw data

02 - DISTRITO BUENOS AIRES		PROCESADOR		
 <b>República Argentina</b> GOBIERNO NACIONAL DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE ELECCIONES Despliegue: JUNTA ELECTORAL NACIONAL Centro de Cuentas: DIRECCIÓN NACIONAL ELECTORAL		SECCION ELECTORAL <b>63 - LA PLATA</b> CIRCUITO <b>461</b> MESA <b>0000077</b>		
NO INTRODUCIR EN LA URNA SEÑAL PRESENTANDO NI INTRODUCIENDO LA URNA EL MATERIAL EMPLEADO DEL COMIENZO		Nº de mesa 236	Nº de mesa 236	Nº de mesa 236
Nº	POSICIONES POLITICAS	DIPUTADOS NACIONALES	PROTECTOR	PROTECTOR
500	ADL. VOTOS	4		
501	ADL. ADHESAL PERIODO	14	13	12
502	PTA. DE SOLIDARIA Y DE UNIDAD	15	15	16
503	FORO JUNTA	129	124	128
507	FRENTE DE TODOS	61	65	63
508	RENTISTAS CON VOTO	3	2	2
TOTAL VOTOS AGREGACIONES POLITICAS		222	224	223
VOTOS NULOS				
VOTOS RECURRIDOS		3	8	4
VOTOS DE OBTENCION IMPUGNADA		1	1	1
VOTOS DE OBTENCION IMPUGNADA				
VOTOS DEL COMANDO ELECTORAL				
VOTOS EN BLANCO		2	5	6
TOTAL POR COLUMNAS (*)		228	238	239

\* LA SUMA DE LOS TOTALES POR COLUMNA DEBE CONCORDAR CON LA CANTIDAD DE VOTOS UTILIZADOS EN LA URNA.  
 INFORMACION INDISPENSABLE PARA EL COMIENZO DE LA COMPENSACION - ART 72 - CODIGO DE REGIONAL NACIONAL  
 SECRETARIA NACIONAL DE ELECCIONES Y FORMACION DE LAS COMISIONES DE PASO - VOTOS CON VOTO CON VOTO

Notes: The figure reports how the data is collected by paper and pencil after each election in each voting booth. In orange, 02 - DISTRITO BUENOS AIRES makes references to which distrito it correspond, in this case: Province of Buenos Aires. 63 - LA PLATA and 461, in light blue boxes, makes reference to the seccion and circuito, respectively, while MESA, in purple, refers to the "voting booth". In 2021, 3 categories of representatives were elected, for the purposes of this investigation the effect on the House of representatives will be analyzed, whose votes are summarized in the column: DIPUTADOS NACIONALES, in green. The row highlighted in yellow shows the number of votes received by the ruling party Frente de Todos.

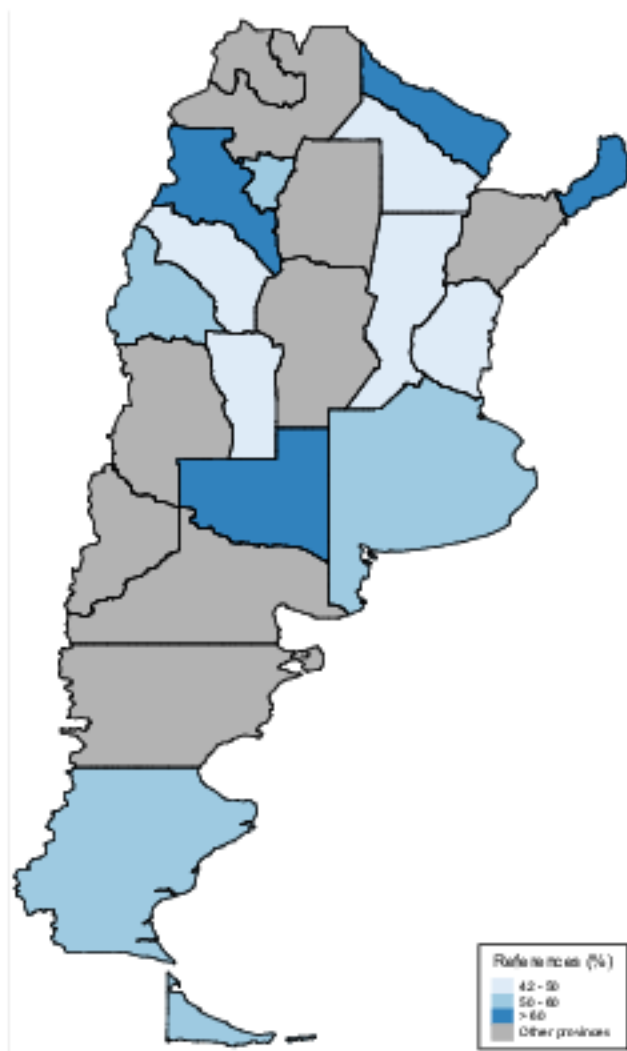
Figure 9: Exposure in the treatment (Buenos Aires) and control group



Notes: These figures show the share of beneficiaries, at the voting booth level, for the province of Buenos Aires and the provinces conforming the control group. The figures show promising identifying variation in the share of beneficiaries across voting booths in the Province of Buenos Aires (panel 9a). Moreover, as a benchmark, from panel 9b it can be seen a similar distribution for the provinces used in the control group.

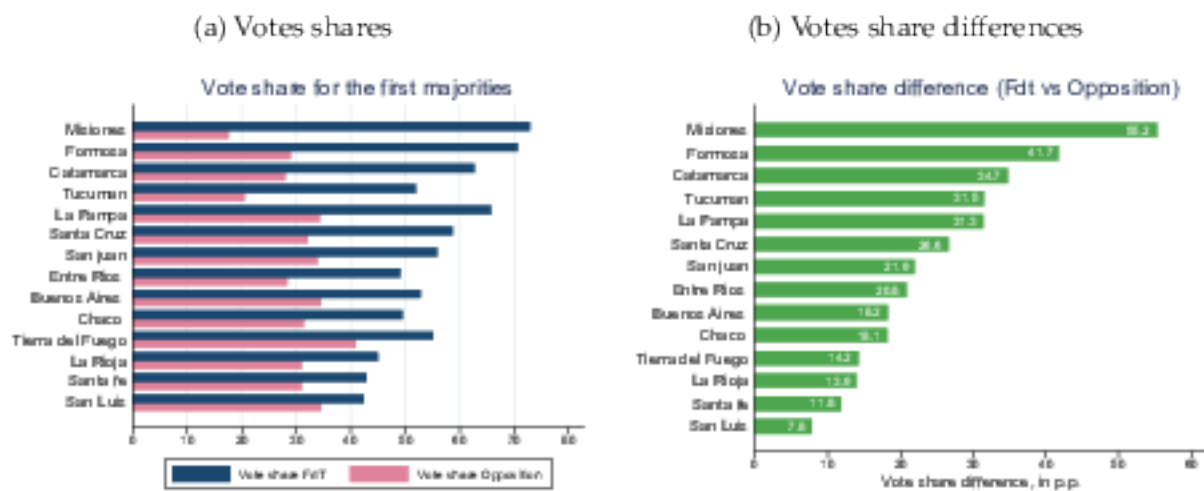


Figure 10: Provinces where a governor from Frente de Todos was elected in 2019



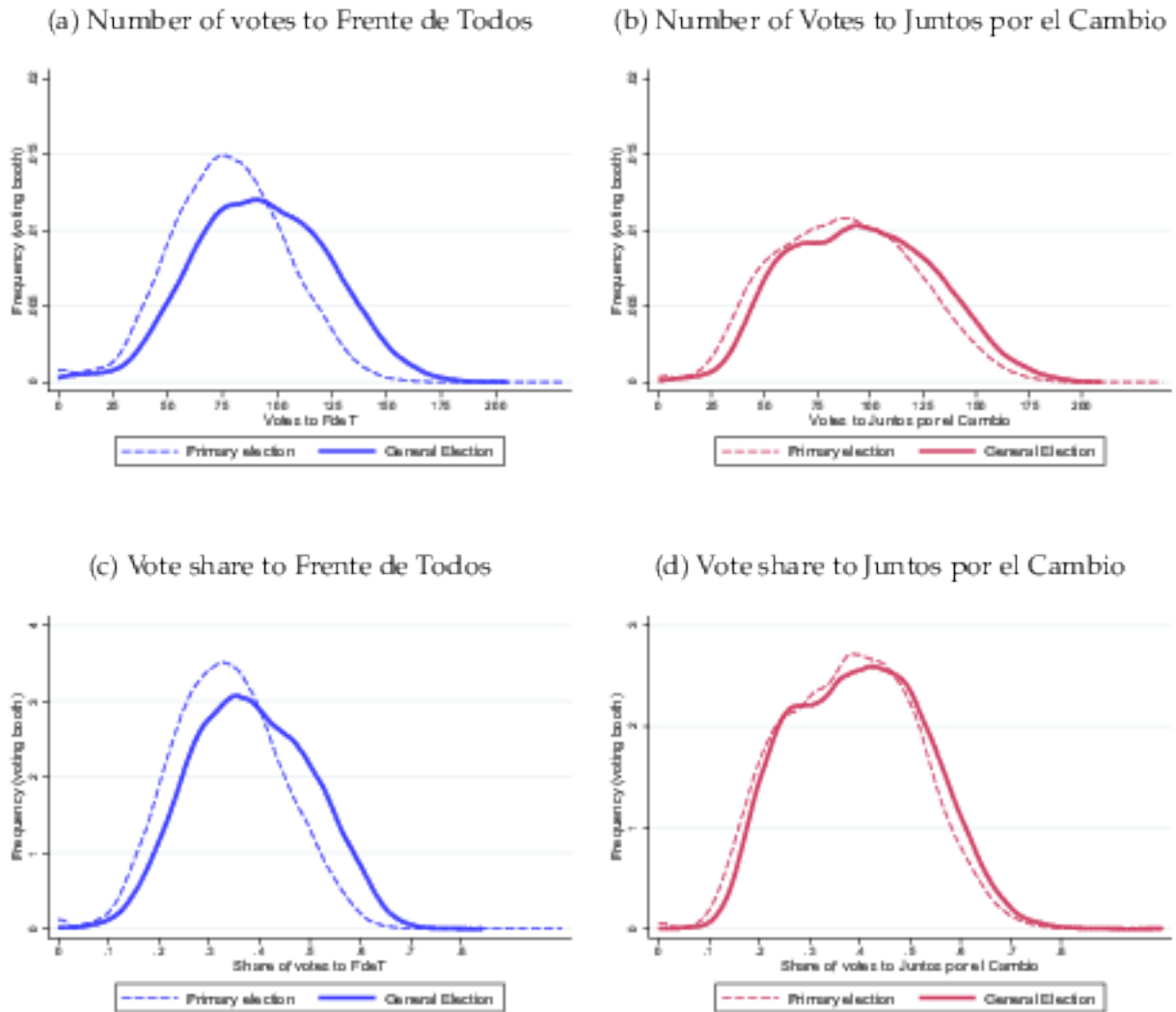
*Note:* This map displays all the provinces (distritos) of Argentina. In blues are those provinces whose Governors belongs to, or aligned with, Frente de Todos; while in grey are the provinces that elected in 2019 a Governor that belongs to a political party different than Frente de Todos and the two provinces that didn't elect Governor in 2019.

Figure 11: 2019 Governors' results for provinces where Frente de Todos was elected



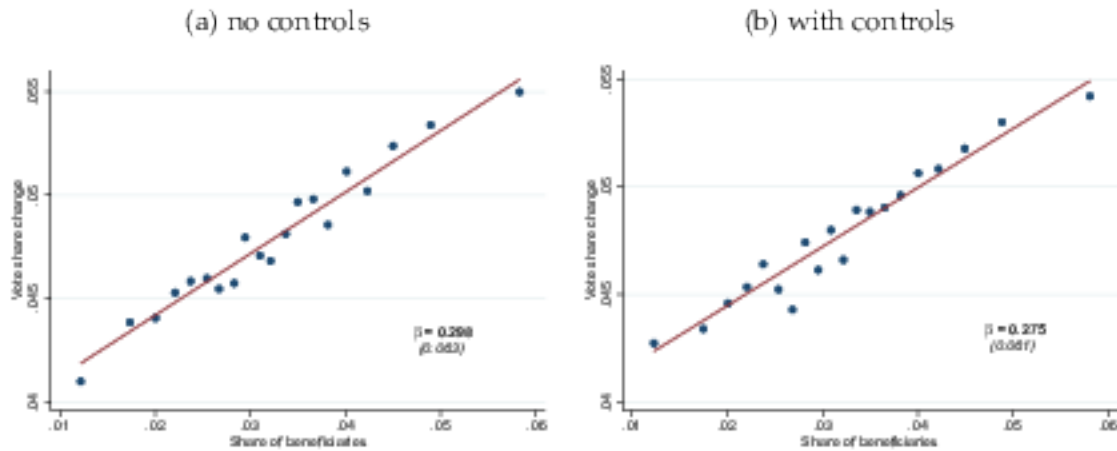
Notes: These figures show the 2019 gubernatorial results for provinces where a Governor belonging to the coalition Frente de Todos was elected. Panel 11a plots the votes shares for Frente de Todos and the opposition, while panel 11b displays the vote share difference, in percentage points.

Figure 12: Votes to Frente de Todos and Juntos por el Cambio in Buenos Aires



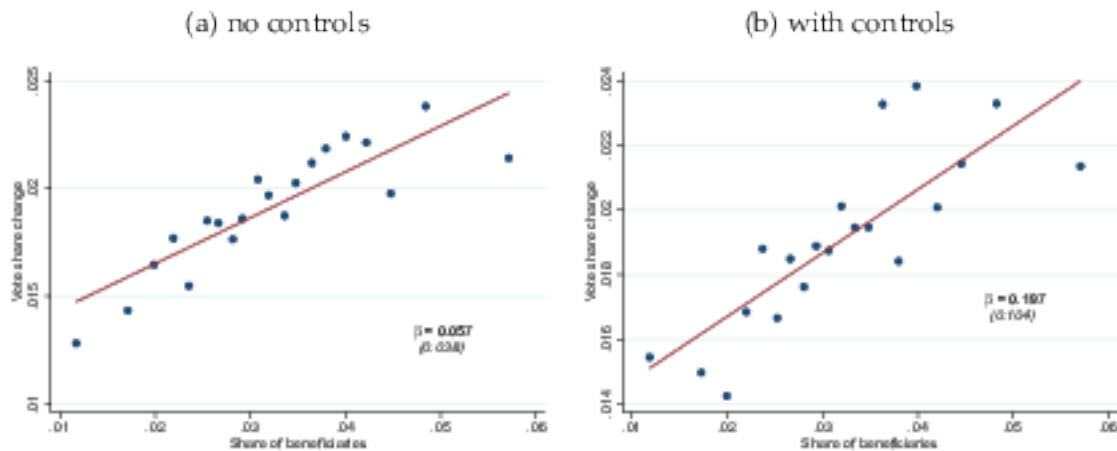
Notes: These figures compare the change in votes between the primary and the general legislative elections in the province of Buenos Aires in 2021 for the ruling party and the opposition. Panels 12a and 12b display the densities, at the voting booth level, of the number of votes received by both political parties in the two consecutive elections. Panels 12c and 12d show the densities, at the voting booth level, of the vote share received by both political parties in the two consecutive elections.

Figure 13: Incumbent's Electoral Performance - 2021



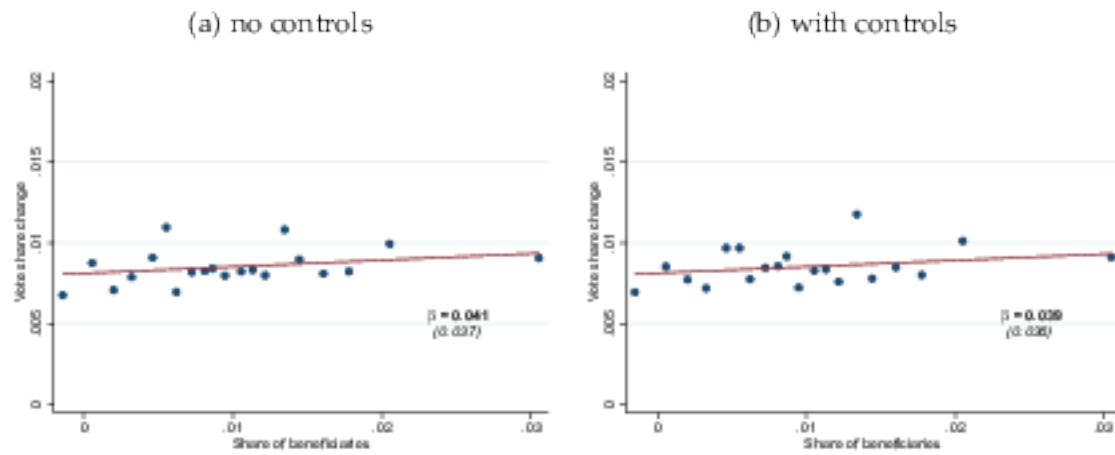
Notes: These figures show the relationship between the change in vote share to Frente de Todos between the two legislative elections (Y axis) and the share of beneficiaries (X axis) in the Province of Buenos Aires. Panel 13a displays that relationship without controls while panel 13b controls for the percentage of women at voting booth level. Both panels include fixed effect at the "seccion" level.

Figure 14: Incumbent's Electoral Performance - Control Provinces - 2021



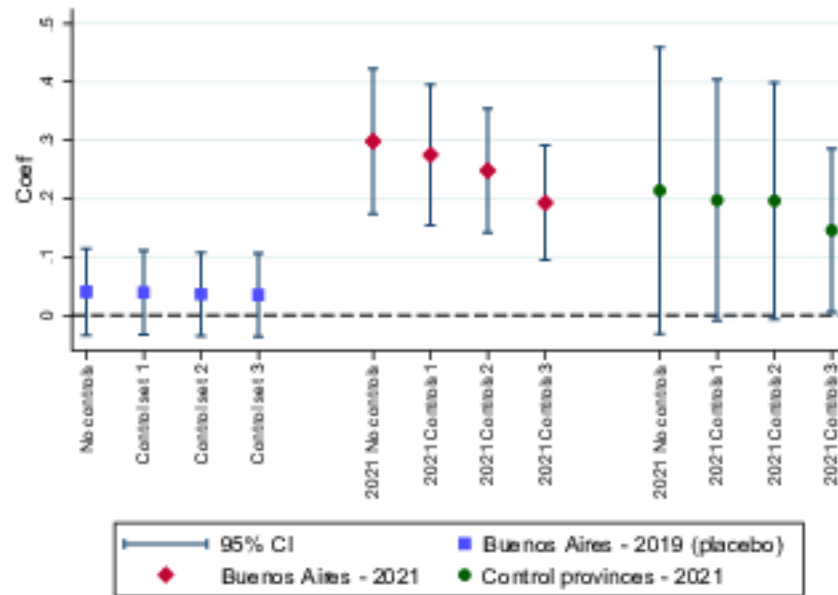
Notes: These figures show the relationship between the change in vote share to Frente de Todos between the two legislative elections of 2021 (Y axis) and the share of beneficiaries (X axis) in the control group provinces. Panel 13a displays that relationship without controls while panel 13b controls for the percentage of women at voting booth level. Both panels include fixed effect at the "seccion" level.

Figure 15: Incumbent's Electoral Performance - Buenos Aires 2019: placebo



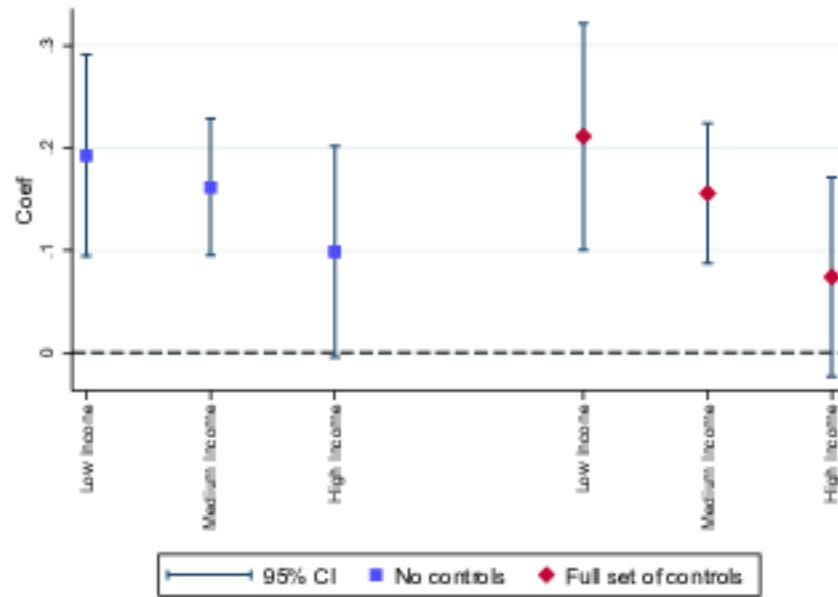
Notes: These figures plot the pre-event (2019) placebo relationship between the change in vote share to Frente de Todos between the primary and general legislative elections of 2019 (Y axis) and the share of beneficiaries (X axis). Panel 15a shows that relationship without controls while panel 15b controls for the percentage of women at voting booth level. Both panels include fixed effect at the "seccion" level.

Figure 16: Results



*Notes:* This figure summarizes the estimated coefficient and the confidence interval for the 3 cases mentioned before: the treated province, Buenos Aires 2021, the control group provinces for 2021, and the placebo exercise, Buenos Aires 2019. Each coefficient represents the vote share change for Frente de Todos when the share of beneficiaries increase in 1 percentage point, the coefficient  $\alpha$  from equations 1 and 2. The vertical spikes correspond to the 95% confidence interval. Both, the estimations without controls (specification 1) and controlling by the percentage of women at the voting booth level (specification 2) are included. All regressions contain fixed effect at the "sección" level to control for sección-specific attributes.

Figure 17: Results



Notes:

## Tables

Table 1: The relative importance of the policy in the budget of Buenos Aires, 2021

<b>Budget 2022 - Province of Buenos Aires</b>	<b>3,100,00</b>
Investment priorities for 2022	
Infrastructure and housing	266,000
Transportation	40,982
Urbanism	21,421
Sewage	41,845
Ecology	9,861
Energy	7,599
Soil, Irrigation	6,842
Educaion	915,174
Security	47,233
Health	135,282
Gender gaps	74,731
Production, Employment and social inclusion	123,079
Security Fund	7,000
<b>Programa Bonaerense de Turismo Estudiantil (estimated cost)</b>	<b>66,000</b>
<b>Programa Bonaerense de Turismo Estudiantil (real cost)</b>	<b>1,000</b>

*Note:* This table gives information about the total budget of the province of Buenos Aires as well as the Investment priorities for 2021 and the relative weight of the Programa Bonaerense the Turismo Infantil related to the priorities. All the values are expressed in millions of argentinian pesos. Regarding to the program under study two lines are includes, one for the *expected cost* when the program was announcement. It correspond to the cost that the province should have faced if all the possible beneficiaries had made use of the policy. A second line gives information about the *real cost* of the program the one that corresponds to the number of students who used the free graduation trip.



Table 2: Legislative results in the Primary Elections

Provinces	Results (%)	
	Frente de Todos	Opposition
Catamarca	50.97	30.91
Formosa	48.11	28.43
La Rioja	52.42	23.23
Tucuman	49.73	35.02
San Juan	30.17	29.75
Buenos Aires	33.64	37.99
Chaco	35.86	43.59
Entre Rios	29.51	51.78
La Pampa	38.28	48.76
Misiones	17.73	40.24
San Luis	36.94	47.26
Santa Cruz	26.48	38.62
Santa Fe	29.13	40.11
Tierra del Fuego	33.46	35.82

*Note:* This table summarizes the primary results for the legislative elections of 2021 for the provinces that chose a governor belonging to Frente para Todos in 2019. For each province it is possible to see the vote share obtained by the ruling party and by the opposition.

Table 3: Preliminary Results

	Buenos Aires 2021			Control provinces 2021				Placebo - Buenos Aires 2019				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Benef (%)	0.298*** (0.063)	0.275*** (0.061)	0.248*** (0.054)	0.193*** (0.050)	0.214* (0.124)	0.197* (0.104)	0.196* (0.102)	0.146** (0.071)	0.041 (0.037)	0.039 (0.036)	0.037 (0.036)	0.035 (0.036)
Female (%)		-0.070*** (0.013)	-0.078*** (0.014)	-0.035*** (0.010)		-0.044 (0.044)	-0.045 (0.045)	-0.014 (0.028)		-0.005 (0.006)	-0.006 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.005)
Wage Ear(%)			-0.133*** (0.032)	-0.070*** (0.020)			-0.010 (0.033)	0.039 (0.026)			-0.016** (0.007)	-0.011 (0.007)
Log income				-0.000*** (0.000)				-0.000* (0.000)				-0.000*** (0.000)
Constant	0.038*** (0.002)	0.075*** (0.006)	0.098*** (0.010)	0.128*** (0.013)	0.012*** (0.004)	0.035* (0.020)	0.037 (0.023)	0.057* (0.031)	0.008*** (0.000)	0.011*** (0.003)	0.013*** (0.003)	0.022*** (0.006)
Observations	34,437	34,437	34,437	34,437	17,820	17,820	17,820	17,820	20,462	20,462	20,462	20,461
R-squared	0.254	0.256	0.259	0.282	0.283	0.283	0.283	0.291	0.163	0.163	0.163	0.166

Notes: The table presents the estimated coefficient for the 3 cases mentioned before: the treated province, Buenos Aires 2021, the control group provinces for 2021, and the placebo exercise, Buenos Aires 2019. Each coefficient represents the vote share change for Frente de Todos when the share of beneficiaries increase in 1 percentage point, the coefficient. The variables Beneficiaries (%), Female (%) and Wage Earners (%) are at the voting booth level, while Log Income is at circuit level. All the specifications include fixed effect at section level. Clustered standard errors, at the section level, in parentheses.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

Table 4: Heterogeneities - Buenos Aires 2021

	Low Income	Medium Income	High Income	Low Income	Medium Income	High Income
Beneficiaries (%)	0.225*** (0.056)	0.162*** (0.034)	0.099* (0.051)	0.211*** (0.056)	0.156*** (0.034)	0.074 (0.048)
Female (%)				-0.021 (0.019)	-0.021 (0.016)	-0.053*** (0.011)
Wage Earners (%)				-0.067* (0.037)	-0.016 (0.018)	-0.066*** (0.018)
Constant	0.054*** (0.002)	0.041*** (0.001)	0.032*** (0.002)	0.073*** (0.013)	0.054*** (0.009)	0.070*** (0.007)
Observations	11,491	11,577	11,369	11,491	11,577	11,369
R-squared	0.324	0.190	0.253	0.325	0.190	0.255

*Notes:* The table presents the estimated coefficient for the treated province, Buenos Aires 2021, dividing the circuitos in three groups by income level. Each coefficient represents the vote share change for Frente de Todos when the share of beneficiaries increase in 1 percentage point, the coefficient. All the specifications include fixed effect at seccion level. Clustered standard errors, at the seccion level, in parentheses.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

# Appendix

## A The Legislative Argentinian System

*How the Lower House seats are assigned.*

Elections in the Legislative level in Argentina are held every 2 years following a stagger system. That means, every 2 years, the Argentinian electorate choose representatives for the Lower House for a 4-year terms, which are renewed by halves. The representatives of the Lower House are elected directly by the people and seats are allocated using the *D'Hondt method*.

In 1983 the *Ley 22847* determined the number of legislative representatives that each "distrito" should have according to three rules:

- 1 legislative representative for every 161000 inhabitants or a fraction greater than 80500 -*proportionality*- (for this, it was used the 1980 Census)
- Add to that number 3 more legislative representatives for all the "distritos"
- Establish a "floor" that ensures at least 5 legislative representatives for all "distritos"; and ensures that no one has a lower number than it had in 1976.

Following the aforementioned rule, Buenos Aires is the province with, by a wide difference, the highest number of Diputados. Of a total of 257 legislators, 70 represent the Province of Buenos Aires. Followed by CABA, 25; Santa Fe, 19; Cordoba, 18; and the rest of the provinces with 10 or less.

The number of members should be adjusted to the results of each census, carried out every ten years. However, it has never happened. The province affected by wide by the lack of updating is the Province of Buenos Aires, which, according to the population growth between 1980 and 2010 (the last census with available data<sup>1</sup>), should have 30 more deputies than it currently has.

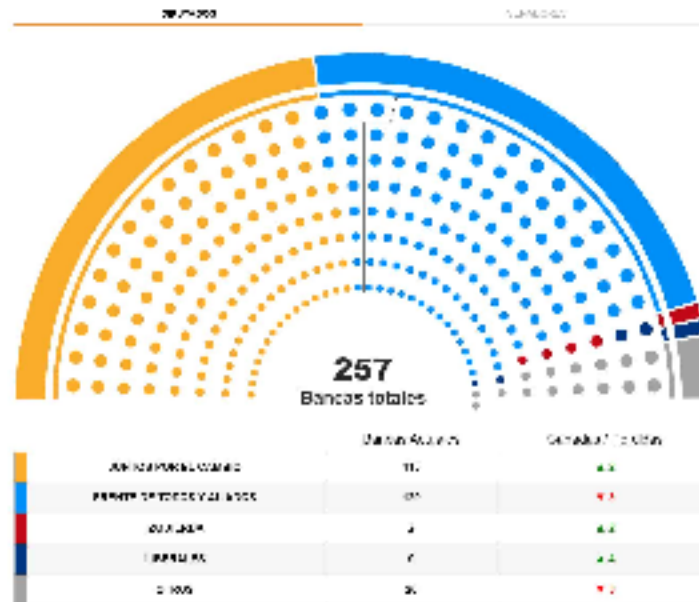
Given the aforementioned rule and the electoral results in the General Election of 2021, the composition of the House of Representatives is summarized in figure A.1. Before the Legislative Elections of 2021, Frente de Todos had a total of 120 seats, followed by Juntos por el Cambio with 115. Once the Legislative Elections were over, the incumbent party

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<sup>1</sup>The last census was carried out in May 2022, but the data by province is not yet available

lost representation in the Lower House. Its seats went down to 117, while the opposition increased its representation getting to extra seats and equaling Frente de Todos with 117 seats.

Figure A.1: Composition of the Lower House



Notes:

## **B Increase in votes to Frente de Todos**

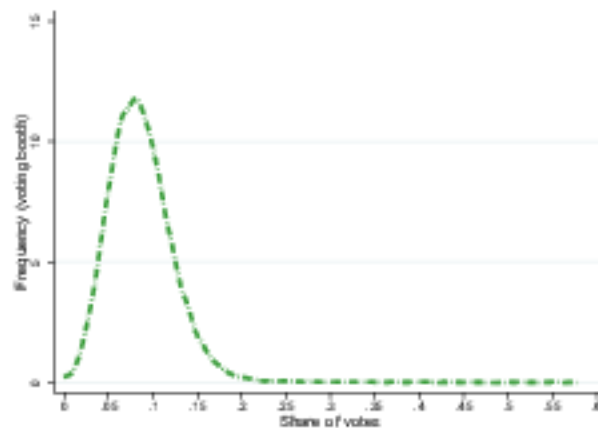
There are two channels that explain the increase in the number of votes that a party can experience in the general elections relative to the primary ones: on the one hand the disappearance of parties that did not reach the minimum share of votes required in the primary elections, and on the other hand, the increase in the turnout.

### **A The 1.5% threshold**

Lots of political parties that compete in the primary election do not reach the threshold of 1.5% of valid votes and therefore they are not allowed to compete in the general election. Positive votes to political parties that didn't make it to the general elections will eventually be assigned to the political parties that did exceed the 1.5% threshold. The exception is given by those voters who decide not to vote in the general election, although given the compulsory nature of voting in Argentina, these cases are few; or voters who decide to cast a blank vote or invalid vote if their preferred political party didn't make it to the Generals.

As mentioned before, in 2021 in Buenos Aires, voters chose between 24 parties in the primary elections, but only between 6 in the General ones. Figure B.2 plots the distribution of votes (shares), at the voting booth level, in the primary elections to parties that didn't get the minimum threshold to be allowed to compete in the general election.

Figure B.2: Votes to political parties that didnt reach the threshold



Notes: This figure shows the distribution, at the voting booth level, of vote shares in the primary elections to parties that didn't get the minimum threshold to be allowed to compete in the general ballots.

## B Increase in turnout

Additionally, there is a second channel that explains part of the increase of votes received by the parties during the general elections and it is the increase in the turnout. Even though casting a ballot is mandatory for those individuals between 18 years old and 70 years old, in practice, there are certain reasons that excuse the individuals from casting a vote, for example, if on the day of the elections the individuals find themselves more than 500 kilometers away from the place where you have to vote. In the case of unjustified reasons, after paying a monetary sanction the voter will be able to vote in the next election.

Whether the cause of not casting a ballot is justified or not, in practice, about 70% of the electorate cast their vote in each election; being the participation in the general elections somewhat greater than that in the primaries. In 2021, for the total country, the participation in the primary elections was 67.78%, while in the generals the percentage of participation rose to 71.39%. In the province of Buenos Aires, out of a total of 12,704,518 individuals, 8,434,037 voted in the primary elections while the turnout increased to 9,133,379 for the general ballots.

The increase in the turnout is the other cause explaining part of the increase in the votes received by the parties that made it to the general elections.