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Brother votes for brother: The effects of Pentecostal political

influence in Brazil

RÉSUMÉ

Pentecostal Evangelicals play a growing role in Latin American politics, promoting conservative candidates. This paper finds a large causal effect of Pentecostal growth on support for Evangelical and far-right candidates in Brazil. To establish causality, I exploit the staggered translation of the Bible into different indigenous languages by SIL, a 20th-century US Evangelical organization. To further strengthen identification, I predict the timing of SIL translations using linguistic distance to foreign languages with prior Bible translations. As a first stage result, I find that exposure to SIL activities increased the share of Pentecostal affiliations. Leveraging this variation, I find that a 1 p.p. increase in the share of Pentecostals increased Evangelical and far-right candidates' vote share by 18% and 16%, respectively. These effects are larger in municipalities with less educated, poorer, and more rural populations. Furthermore, results suggest that 20% of the votes obtained by Bolsonaro in 2018 can be attributed to the increase in Pentecostal affiliations. Finally, I find that SIL activities generate spillover effects in municipalities where no indigenous language is spoken, allowing me to extend the analysis to the rest of Brazil. These results suggest that the Pentecostal church is an important driving force in the rise of the far-right in the recent history of Brazil.





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