

Drought Declarations and Voting Outcomes: Evidence from Tunisia

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Abstract:

Drought is a growing concern in developing countries, where citizens bear the consequences while governments either fail to cater for the consequences or overlook the issue. As a result, an important question arises: could drought neglect manifested in the removal of drought declarations influence citizens' voting preferences? I attempt to answer this question by exploiting Tunisia's 2016 official drought declarations removal as a shock in a diff-in-diff framework. I use a novel dataset on drought declarations and election results for the years 2014 and 2019 in Tunisia. The results show that there is a decline in incumbent's vote share at the presidential elections level by 11 percentage points following a 1 standard deviation increase in drought damage caused at the district level and no significant impact on voter turnout. The removal of the drought declarations has no significant impact on parliamentary voting outcomes. Additional results highlight that neither closeness to political parties nor trust in the parliament are significantly affected by the drought policy removal shock.