

Abstract

Spatial proximity within the congress is an important source of peer effects, as it influences the patterns of social interactions of legislators and their decision-making. I take advantage of a randomized office lottery in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies to estimate the effects of spatial proximity on legislative decision-making. I find that office proximity increases agreement between neighboring legislators in contested votes; they show a significant 2 percentage points increase in voting convergence, about eight times the average effect observed across all voting decisions. Furthermore, the presence of experts, such as committee members, amplifies this effect to 4.5 p.p. in closely contested votes. These findings indicate that office proximity enhances other sources of influence in contested decisions, with its effects primarily driven by expertise. This aligns with cue-taking theories, suggesting that legislators rely on perceived experts – often standing committee members responsible for reporting the measure – to guide their voting behavior, particularly in closely contested scenarios.

Keywords: Peer effects, legislative decision-making, spatial proximity, expertise, cue-taking