

# **Accountability and Selection into Politics: Evidence from Peruvian Municipalities**

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This paper estimates the effects of political accountability on the selection of politicians. Using a comprehensive dataset that records characteristics of candidates for mayor in the last three local elections in Perú and a sharp regression discontinuity design, we compare candidates that decide to run for mayors in districts where a recall referendum took place in the previous electoral term – increasing the salience of the accountability institution – with those who run in districts that didn't have a recall. Candidates running for office in districts where the risk of recall is perceived to be higher are less educated and have less experience working in the public sector and in public office. The negative selection happens because recall referenda are easily captured by political interest groups, distorting the main objectives of improving the quality of government. Despite the negative selection, voters still select the most qualified politicians among the available options.