

Women leaving the playpen: The emancipating role of female suffrage

Abstract

We study how political empowerment affected women's emancipation as reflected in their life choices. The staggered introduction of female suffrage in Swiss states allows us to exploit the variation in the age since which women were exposed to suffrage to estimate the differences in life choices between women who were socialized in a world where women had a say in politics and those who were socialized before. Our empirical findings document that exposure to female suffrage increased female labor force participation, weakened marital bonds and motivated human capital investment. Our evidence suggests that this effect is mainly driven by an independent effect of suffrage which is reinforced through its impact on men's attitudes to women's roles in society.

This paper is joint work with Alois Stutzer (University of Basel, Faculty of Business and Economics)

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