Response to Irfan Nooruddin’s “Comment on the 2019 Bolivia Presidential Election and OAS Statistical Analysis,” August 19, 2020

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August 20, 2020

1. On June 6, 2020, we posted a working paper called “Do Shifts in Late-Counted Votes Signal Fraud? Evidence From Bolivia.”

2. Our paper makes two claims about Irfan Nooruddin’s analysis of Bolivian election returns, which he conducted as a consultant for the Organization of American States, and which were published in OAS (2019). His response, as well as his replication code, published on August 19, confirm both of our claims.

(a) We claim that Nooruddin excluded 1,511 observations (4.4%) in creating the figures published on p. 88 of OAS (2019). Nooruddin’s code confirms this:

This contradicts the OAS audit report, which states, “All the analysis conducted below include these additional polling stations. Since they were not included in the TREP, they are treated as being late reporters” (OAS, 2019, p. 86).

(b) We claim that Nooruddin used local constant regression rather than local linear regression in creating this same figure, thus artificially generating the appearance of a discontinuous jump at 95% of the count. His response (p. 5) and his code (lines 182–194) confirm that he did use local constant regression. But Nooruddin also says that switching to local linear regression does not (as we claimed) eliminate the appearance of a discontinuous jump. As evidence, he presents a graph in which he uses local linear regression with handpicked, very large bandwidths:

Simply using a rule-of-thumb bandwidth rather than arbitrary bandwidths eliminates the appearance of a jump, as we show in Figure 3 of our paper, and as the reader may confirm by deleting the \texttt{bwidth} options highlighted above. Regardless, as we discuss in our paper, neither estimator is an appropriate tool for regression discontinuity analysis.

Reference