Discussion of:
“Information technologies and provision of national identification cards by the Bolivian Police: Evidence from two randomized natural field experiments”
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Research question and design

- Does switching from manual to digital identification card (ID) renewal process increase the probability of completing the process, and decrease time to completion?

- Bolivian police digitalized ID renewal system, but lack of equipment initially allowed only 18 out of 41 “tables” to use the new system.
  - Police officers were randomly assigned to tables
  - Applicants were randomly assigned to tables
  - Technical failures led digital tables to use manual system at random times
Main findings

- Completion rate increases from 72% through manual process to about 84% through digital process
- Time to completion drops from 129 minutes through manual process to about 90 minutes through digital process
- Effects are larger for disadvantaged applicants
  - Rural
  - Did not finish high school
  - Indigenous
  - Attended public school
- Results are similar when using cross-table and within-table variation
Why is this relevant for development?

- Having an ID is a prerequisite for access to social transfers, bank transactions, property registration, formal jobs, etc.

- Suggestion: Add statistics on what percentage of the population does not have a valid ID
  - Duryea, Olgiati, and Stone (2006), cited in the paper, gives statistics on births that are not registered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bolivia</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Colombia</th>
<th>Dom. Rep.</th>
<th>Nicaragua</th>
<th>Peru</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Births not registered</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
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- Are numbers similar for not having an ID?
Comments on study setting

- Why study only renewals?
  - Applicants who did not previously have an ID are not included in the study sample
  - Is the process different/done at a different office?

- What happens when an applicant does not complete the process at the time of the visit?
  - Can you track whether they come back later and still complete the process?
  - Do they go to a different office?
What is the mechanism behind the effects?

- Easier access to vital records reduces search time and increases probability of finding records
- One-stop-shop reduces application time and eliminates opportunities for drop-out
- Digital system reduces opportunity for bribes
  - How do bribes work in the table setting – isn’t the location very public and easily observed by others?
  - Can officers induce technical failures to be able to collect bribes?
- Do you have data on the main reasons for not completing the process?
Why are the effects heterogeneous?

- Paper argues that effects are larger for disadvantaged applicants since officers provide different quality of service.

- Potential alternative explanations: digitalization allows officers to find vital records from other locations.
  - Perhaps these individuals came to La Paz from other regions.
    - Effects are particularly large for rural applicants.
  - Does the digital database include records from other regions?

- Also, drop out rates caused by delays may be larger for disadvantaged individuals due to time constraints.
Broader development impacts

- As a next step, would be interesting to measure the impact of having an ID on access to services and income
  - Could try to survey a group of applicants for whom the impact was particularly large, e.g. applicants from rural areas
  - Compare use of financial services, property registration, income etc. of applicants who were assigned to digital process to those who went through the manual process
    - Use digital process assignment as an instrument for having an ID

- Findings on the impact of digitalization are relevant for other registration processes
  - Business registration
  - Property registration