Political Participation of Convicted Felons

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Background and Purpose
Voter data from convicted felons in Akron, Ohio was used to study political participation, as well as the effects of electoral rules on the outcomes of elections. Systematic inequality, such that persists in prisons and after release, can alter a person’s incentive and motivation to vote. Felon voting rights vary by state.

Research Design
The CITI certification modules educate researchers on the proper ways to interact with subjects or sensitive subject data, and how to maintain confidentiality. The file from Akron, Ohio is not confidential, so it is accessible for research purposes.

Methods
- Selection of felons obtained from Akron, Ohio
- The felons were treated either with a control or a voter mobilization treatment
  - Control: information about how to recycle
  - Voter Mobilization Treatment: information about how to register or about felon voting rights
- The graph to the right reflects the baselines in the two groups of participants registered to vote, and participants that had actually voted in recent elections
  - We validated voting by consulting county voting records
- The register of convicted felons participating in the study were matched with county voting records in a Microsoft excel spreadsheet. Felon voters were matched with voting data based on matching name, address, and date of birth
- To ensure accuracy, the validation of the voter files was completed by multiple individuals
- Validation of the voter data files then provided the necessary results for analysis

Results
The effects on voting activity prove that the Get Out the Vote treatments were successful in increasing democratic involvement in the felon population.