

# Guilt Aversion and Accountability in the Lab

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**Abstract:** Mimicking standard features of electoral accountability and selection models, we conduct a computerized laboratory experiment in order to identify the influence of behavioral motivations on democratic outcomes. We find that elected candidates act more in line with the public interest, the more favorable their approval rates are. By contrast, this systematic positive relationship is not observed if the appointment is unintentionally determined by computer. These results suggest that a substantial fraction of candidates is motivated by guilt aversion; the results consequently provide a behavioural rationale for elections fostering political representation in indirect democracies. We discuss the implications of these findings for the design of democratic institutions