

# New research reveals impact of rioting at the ballot box

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Using the London riots of 2011 as a case study, researchers discovered

that a significant number of those living in close proximity to where the riots took place or to the location of someone charged for rioting changed their vote at the following election.

This shift in behavior translated to a 1.5 percentage point fall in the vote share for incumbent Conservative mayor, Boris Johnson, which, the researchers suggest, came primarily from white constituents shifting their vote.

The researchers also found an increased voter turnout in electoral wards closest to areas affected by the rioting.

The results were revealed in a new study, "How urban [riots](#) influence political behavior: Vote choices after the 2011 London riots," published in *Political Science Research and Methods* and co-authored by Dr. Gabriel Leon-Ablan and Professor Peter John, from the Department of Political Economy at King's College London.

The researchers said, "We hypothesized that riots could raise voters' awareness of the problems and challenges faced by the groups that riot, and that this translates into electoral support for candidates that have more progressive objectives.

"This [case study](#) of the 2011 London riots confirmed our expectations. We also showed that it is not just proximity to the riots that matters, but closeness to where rioters lived, behavior that is best explained by an awareness of the rioters and the underlying politics of the event."

The researchers added that the results of the study could be partly explained due to a change in the behavior of white voters, both in terms of increased turnout and changed [vote](#) choice.

"In a period of increasing minority protest and violence, these dynamics

may point out the nature of the electoral politics that may follow," the researchers added. "In the era of Black Lives Matter, there may be long-term consequences for voting behavior, mobilizing white voters through empathy to support progressive parties."

**More information:** Leon, G., & John, P. (Accepted/In press). How urban riots influence political behaviour: Vote choices after the 2011 London riots. *Political Science Research and Methods*  
[kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files ... /London Riots 2 .pdf](https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/10111111/London_Riots_2.pdf)

Provided by King's College London

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