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Abstract

The quality of outcomes in democratic elections hinges on the quality of information that voters have access to and the quality of public deliberation prior to elections. Democracy – understood as collective self-rule – demands more than voter participation in the ballot box. 1 Voters ideally seek and acquire information on policies under consideration, deliberate collectively, and vote thoughtfully. Yet, this ideal is hard to attain in modern societies given their scale, diversity, and the complexity of policy issues they face. In the last two decades, minipublics have been proposed as a way out of this conundrum (Dahl (1989), Warren and Gastil (2015)). A minipublic is a committee composed of ordinary citizens sampled from a relevant constituency in a representative manner, tasked with collecting information and reaching an informed decision on a particular proposal. This paper builds a novel theoretical framework for studying the optimal composition of such committees.