

Forgetting and Heterogeneity in Task Completion: Evidence from New York City Parking-Ticket Recipients*

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Abstract

We study response behavior of New York City parking-ticket recipients by analyzing administrative data on 6.6m tickets, issued to 2m individuals over two years. Exploiting variation in letters sent from the city to recipients, we report evidence that forgetting plays a role in delay—letters seem to act merely as reminders, with little evidence that their content matters. In addition, studying an individual’s behavior across multiple tickets, the data show clear indication of significant unobserved heterogeneity in underlying types, with different types reacting differently to deadlines and reminders. Failing to control for the resulting selection could lead to misleading conclusions. [100 words]

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