

# (Un)intended spillovers of green government policies: The case of plastic bag regulations

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## **Abstract**

Governments are enacting various regulations to decrease the use of single-use plastic bags. This raises the question of whether the effectiveness of such measures is restricted to the realm of plastic bags or in practice also ‘spills over’ onto other plastic products. In two studies that use scanner and survey data across 22 countries, we find that a ban or charge on plastic bags can curb the use of plastic in other domains. However, the spillover effects of regulation are not immediate, but take some time to manifest themselves. We therewith ascertain that the effect of regulation is discernible in actual purchase data, and can be found in different countries. Furthermore, we also identify a dark side of regulation when it involves charging consumers for plastic bags, whereby regulation can lower concerns about plastic pollution and make consumers less vigilant about their use of plastic in other domains.

**Subject Areas:** *Consumer Behaviour, Decision-Making, Public Policy*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour