

## Authors

Miriam Bruhn  
World Bank

Gabriel Lara Ibarra  
World Bank

David McKenzie  
World Bank

### The minimal impact of a large-scale financial education program in Mexico City<sup>a</sup>

Miriam Bruhn, World Bank  
Gabriel Lara Ibarra, World Bank  
David McKenzie, World Bank

#### Abstract

We conduct randomized experiments around a large-scale financial literacy course in Mexico City to understand the reasons for low take-up among a general population, and to measure the impact of this financial education course. Our results suggest that reputational, logistical, and specific forms of behavioral constraints are not the main reasons for limited participation, and that people do respond to higher benefits from attending in the form of monetary incentives. Attending training results in a 9 percentage point increase in financial knowledge, and a 5 percentage point increase in some self-reported measures of saving, but in no impact on borrowing behavior. Administrative data suggests that any savings impact may be short-lived. Our findings indicate that this course which has served over 300,000 people and has expanded throughout Latin America has minimal impact on marginal participants, and that people are likely making optimal choices not to attend this financial education course.

**Keywords:** Financial literacy; financial capability; encouragement design; low take-up.

**JEL codes:** O34, O52, O26.

<sup>a</sup> The World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20433, U.S.A. Email: mbruhn@worldbank.org, glaralbarra@worldbank.org and dmckenzie@worldbank.org. We thank the editor and three referees for helpful comments; the Russian Trust Fund for Financial Literacy for financing this work; Pablo Antón Díaz, Eder González Ramos and the staff at Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) for their assistance in implementing the surveys and impact evaluation; and the staff at our partnering financial institution for their support for this project. All opinions expressed in this work are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily represent those of the World Bank, IPA, or the partnering financial institution.

# The Minimal Impact of a Large-Scale Financial Education Program in Mexico City

We conduct randomized experiments around a large-scale financial literacy course in Mexico City to understand the reasons for low take-up among a general population, and to measure the impact of this financial education course. Our results suggest that reputational, logistical, and specific forms of behavioral constraints are not the main reasons for limited participation, and that people do respond to higher benefits from attending in the form of

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