

## **Does the Media Mediate the Economic Vote?**

### Abstract:

That the economy influences support for the government is a cornerstone of electoral research, but the impact of media coverage of the economy on election outcomes is less understood. In this article, we attempt to determine the media's role in the economic vote -- specifically, whether voters punish incumbent governments when the economy performs poorly, or when the media report that the economy is performing poorly. Using the first cross-national text dataset of news reporting on the economy---approximately 2 million articles related to the economy in six languages in 32 newspapers in 16 developed countries---we demonstrate that the effect of economic growth on vote choice is partially mediated by news coverage (that does not always accurately reflect economic growth), with about 30\% of the effect of growth mediated through news coverage. In contrast, voters experience unemployment directly and rely on the media less. These results imply a degree of leeway for political influence of voter perceptions via the media, though perhaps less than might be expected.