

The Association between Forms of Media Consumption and Party Voting in 2020 National Election

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Introduction

- In the 2020 presidential election, 66% of all eligible voters in the United States participated in the voting process, marking the highest percentage of voter turnout ever seen in a US election (Pew Research Center, 2023). The outcomes of the US elections profoundly affect the daily lives of American citizens.
- Previous research demonstrates that the tone and content of a president's messaging can significantly alter the bias reflected in television and radio news coverage (Eshbaugh-Soha, & McGauvran, 2018).
- In the past century, media consumption has drastically evolved with the rise of major television news networks and social media platforms. Globally, over 3.5 billion people use social media worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2024). How people interact with forms of media can alter opinions about many topics, including politics.
- Media consumption can also provide insight into voting behavior. Levels of media consumption may not be a factor in party voting, types of media and content of media are. Specific social media platforms can indicate a higher likelihood of certain ideologies (Lee, & Xenos, 2019)

Research Questions

- Which forms of media are significantly associated with party vote after controlling for sex?
- Does the relationship between media consumption and political party differ for individuals living in rural or urban communities?

Methodology

- Sample
 - American Adults (18+) who voted in the 2020 national election (n = 4,783) were drawn in the 2020 American National Election Studies (ANES)
 - ANES is a representative sample of voter-eligible adults in the US
- Measures
 - Party vote was assessed through interview pre and post-election surveys of the presidential candidate voted for.
 - Media usage was evaluated through the question "Media Sources R Used to Follow Presidential Campaign: Internet Sites", and other media sources following the same terminology.

Results

- Univariate
 - 57% of US adults who participated in the survey voted Democratic in the 2020 Presidential Election.
 - 70% of survey respondents demonstrated using Internet sites for media consumption in the presidential election.
- Bivariate
 - The Chi-Square analysis showed that voters who used internet media to follow presidential campaigns were significantly more likely to vote Democratic than those who did not use internet sites for presidential media consumption (figure 1)

- The Chi-Square analysis showed that voters who used newspaper media to follow presidential campaigns were significantly more likely to vote Democratic than those who did not mention newspaper consumption for presidential media consumption, $X^2 = 151.62$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.0001$.
- When looking at other media usage, newspaper use and no mention of media use was associated with a democratic presidential vote. TV usage showed a weak association with a democratic vote.
- Multivariate
 - Presidential party votes, democratic or republican were shown to be significantly associated with internet site media when controlling for sex. Those who use internet sites for media use are more likely to vote Democratic (figure 2).
 - The interaction between party vote and TV use was no longer significant once controlled for sex.
 - Controlling the relationship between Party vote and internet for rural and city residents along with sex, a statistically significant relationship was still evident
 - No media usage showed to still be statistically significant- when controlling for sex and whether R is a rural or city resident. Those who report no media consumption are more likely to vote Republican.
 - Newspapers still significantly when controlling for sex and whether R is a rural or city resident. Those who do not read newspapers as a media source are more likely to vote Republican.

Discussion

- Individuals who read newspapers or use internet sites for information regarding elections are more likely to vote democratic.
- Accounting for place of residence and sex individuals who read newspapers as an information source for elections are less likely to vote Republican in the Presidential election.
- The present findings are based on time-series data and do not reflect the different amounts of media, nor the crossover of forms of media an individual uses in order to cast a presidential vote.
- The findings also only indicate the party voted for in the 2020 National election, other elections are not counted for or examined.
- Further research is needed to determine whether specific news media consumption (e.g., TV channels, radio shows, etc.) are further related to party votes.

References

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