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Research seminar. Media Coverage of Immigration and the Polarization of Attitudes

Media Coverage of Immigration and the Polarization of Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the extent to which media impact immigration attitudes by modifying the salience of this topic. We measure the salience of immigration using original data including all the news covered on the main French national television evening news programs between 2013 and 2017. We combine this information with individual panel data that enable us to link each respondent to his/her preferred TV channel for political information. This allows us to address ideological self-selection into channels with individual-channel fixed effects. In contrast to prior evidence in the literature, we do not find that an increase in the salience of immigration necessarily drives natives' attitudes in a specific direction. Instead, our results suggest that it increases the polarization of natives by pushing individuals with moderate beliefs toward the two extremes of the distribution of attitudes. We show that these results are robust to controlling for differences in the framing of immigration-related subjects across TV channels. Conversely to priming, framing is found to drive natives' attitudes in very specific directions.

[Read the paper\(https://www.dropbox.com/s/gqi24zkez1xfm6f/Valette.pdf?dl=0\)](https://www.dropbox.com/s/gqi24zkez1xfm6f/Valette.pdf?dl=0)



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