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## **Local News Media and Voter Turnout**

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## **Abstract**

A reasonable high turnout is a quality of a local democracy. In this article, we investigate whether media coverage of politics leads to increased or decreased voter turnout. We offer an empirical approach that provides three contributions to the existing literature. First, we investigate how the perceived *content* of local news media coverage matters to voter turnout. Second, we test whether local media coverage not only influences turnout for local elections but also affects turnout for elections beyond the local community. Third, we provide population wide turnout data to test the effect of media coverage. Our analysis shows that local news media coverage has a positive effect on voter turnout, but only if the news media provide politically relevant information to the voters and only at local elections. Both findings are in accordance with the Information Model of voter turnout developed by Matsusaka (1995) and Feddersen & Pesendorfer (1996; 1997).

In modern democracies inequality in turnout is an important cause of inequality in political representation and influence (Lijphart 1997). Understanding the sources behind variation in turnout across political systems has consequently been one of the most belabored fields of study within political science for the past many decades (Dowding 2005; Geys 2006). The need for a solid understanding of the phenomenon is highlighted by the secular drop in turnout in many Western nations (Gray & Gaul 2000; Franklin 2004), which spells further societal polarization as the group of relatively marginalized non-voters continues to expand.

Much of the discussion on voter turnout has focused on the role of the media. In the American research on turnout the emergence of national television and corresponding decline in local news has been pinpointed as a major culprit (Ranney 1983; Maarek 1995). Until recently empirical evidence was rather inconclusive (see, e.g., Simon & Stern 1955; Ranney 1983), but today several studies indicate that television has a detrimental effect on turnout because it crowds out local news media that produce more relevant political information (Gentzkow 2006; Althaus & Trautman 2008; Oberholzer-Gee & Waldfogel 2009). This finding matches the theoretical expectations of the Information Model of turnout developed by Matsusaka (1995) and Feddersen & Pesendorfer (1996; 1997), which states that rising levels of political relevant information increases the probability of voting.

The literature on media and turnout has a number of merits, but we lack studies of the effect of local media on local and national turnout. The existing literature does not distinguish clearly between turnout for local election and national elections, which means that we do not know whether information only raises turnout for the most proximate election (i.e., within the polity that the local news media specifically reports on), or whether it also increases turnout for elections beyond the local community. If the latter is the case it may be concluded that turnout is raised not so

much because of the information *per se*, but just as much because the general level of interest is heightened when politics is discussed in a sober and relevant way.

We also lack knowledge of the type of relevant information that makes the electorate turn out in bigger numbers than normally. Most basically, is it enough for the local news media to simply report on politics (providing neutral facts), or does it have to take a sensational and / or scrutinizing form? The last type is engaging, but may also fail to provide the information needed for voters to make their choices, and might in the long run lead to a certain fatigue with politics. Neutral facts may be less engaging at first, but facilitates voters' own judgments on political developments.

In response, this paper presents results from a unique study of turnout in Danish local and national elections. Denmark is in general characterized by high levels of turnout, though with a slightly decreasing trend and with a substantial amount of variation between individual municipalities (Frandsen 2003: 110). Since there also is a lot of variation in the presence of local news coverage (Mortensen & Serritzlew 2006), we are able to assess directly whether there is a relationship between having an active local news media and turnout at municipality elections. We are also able to study if the impact of local news coverage only pertains to turnout at local elections, or if it influences turnout for national elections as well. Finally, based on a large scale survey about local news media content our data allow for a distinction to be made between whether the local news media provide neutral facts or engages in more sensational stories.

### **Mass media, political information, and the decline in turnout**

The emergence of national television and other electronic mass media is arguably among the most significant societal developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With it has followed a weakening of civic participation, some authors posit (Wattenberg 1984; Putnam 2000). From early on it was believed that voter turnout might be negatively affected either due to fatigue from political advertising, because the format is less suitable for reminding the public to vote, or because elections become less exciting since television often presents early predictions of the winners (Glaser 1965; Ranney 1983).

The negative effect initially proved hard to verify empirically, however (Simon & Stern 1955; Ranney 1983). Presumably the difficulty of finding any relationship was caused at least in part by data quality. Certainly, newer studies using better data and more advanced techniques have actually been able to locate an association, although it has turned out a little more complex than initially expected. Gentzkow (2006) studies the introduction of television in the US. He thereby utilizes the historical coincidence that television was introduced in different cities in two waves during the 1940s and early 1950s. Television was initially marketed in 1941, but less than a year after the government issued a ban on the construction of new television stations on account of the escalating war effort. The ban was lifted in 1946, but became effective again in 1948 and until 1952 for technical reasons. For a while this created a lot of variation across American cities in their exposure to television, and Gentzkow uses this to estimate the effect of television on turnout, finding a clear-cut negative relationship.

Oberholzer-Gee & Waldfogel (2009) present another study that finds a strong positive effect of local news media. Using data from US metropolitan areas, the authors show that turnout is significantly higher among Hispanics where local news is offered in Spanish. The interpretation provided in the article is that local news in Spanish increases the level of relevant political infor-

mation among the Hispanic voters. Conversely, where only national news (in English) is available, the level of relevant political information is lower, which in turn leads to a lower level of turnout.

In a similar vein, Althaus & Trautman (2008) have analyzed the effect of the size of the local television market on turnout. They show that there is a negative relationship between the two: the bigger the market of a local television station, the lower turnout one is likely to find in the geographical area covered by the station. In other words, the more congruence there is between the local area of the station and the local area of the voter (i.e., the electoral district), the greater the probability that the voter will turn up on Election Day.

This interpretation of the empirical results fits well with the Information Model developed independently by Matsusaka (1995) and Feddersen & Pesendorfer (1996; 1997). Both versions of the model stress the key role played by information for making the choice of going to the polls, but does so in somewhat different ways. Matsusaka argues that the motivation of individuals to vote decline when they are unable to assess the impact of voting on the candidates. Feddersen & Pesendorfer relies on a game-theoretical approach to reach a similar conclusion, arguing that the chance of voting for the 'wrong' candidate becomes unacceptably high when the voter is uninformed.

These arguments are corroborated by survey research indicating that political knowledge leads to higher turnout. Lassen (2005) shows that people being informed about certain policies (in this case, decentralization of municipality authority) is much more likely to turn out and vote in a referendum on the issue. Larcinese (2007) measures knowledge as name recollection of party candidates, and shows that this variable is positively associated with turnout in the UK. Finally, based on a panel survey, de Vreese & Boomgaarden (2006) find that using information-dense news media increases information as well as the *intention* to vote.

It would seem, in short, that the Information Model may constitute the theoretical backbone of the relationship between mass media and turnout. News media that present information on political issues of relevance to the voters are likely to increase the level of information among the electorate and, hence, lead to a rising turnout. On the other hand, national television cannot cover all those local political events that may be experienced as important by citizens for their daily life, and might also have a tendency to popularize news reporting, making it less informative (Cook 1998). This may explain why we see the general rise in national television and decline in turnout. Conversely, as shown by Althaus & Trautman (2008) and Oberholzer-Gee & Waldfogel (2009), local news media have the ability to present news of particular relevance to individuals within specific areas, thereby raising turnout.

However, we do now know much about possible spill-over effects from local news media. That is, do the availability of political relevant information only increase turnout in local elections, or does it carry over into elections on more aggregated levels as well, notably at the national level? This is important to know in order to assess how powerful an explanation we are dealing with and also because it allows a glimpse of the underlining mechanisms at work. If there is a spill-over effect, this would indicate that exposure to political relevant information at the local level raises the interest in politics more broadly beyond what the information is specifically on.

Furthermore, it is important to take the nature of information provided by the local news media into account. National news are, as noted, sometimes seen as detrimental to turnout because the content of, especially commercial, outlets tend to be more entertainment-oriented than local news. Obviously, however, one cannot conclude that local news media are more sober in their content than national news media by definition. That must be an empirical question in as much as local news media, too, may choose to focus on more sensational news. Ideally, then, we need data



that allow to assess the independent effects of having neutral fact providing news and more sensational news at the local level.

### **Danish municipalities and local news media**

Our data allows for a test of the Information Model which takes into account the three limitations of the literature listed in the previous section. Denmark is home to a large number of municipalities with a sizeable amount of variation in terms of local news coverage as well as its content. Our data is from 2004 and at that time there were 272 municipalities (for reasons discussed below we only have data for 267). A few hosted several news papers specializing in and competing for local news from a single municipality; many hosted a single local news paper; and many hosted none at all. Across all municipalities, of course, citizens in 2004 had equal access to national television, printed national news papers, and the internet. This means that we are able to isolate the effect on turnout of having a local news paper in a municipality. Furthermore, the fact that a national election for seats in the Danish parliament as well as local elections for seats in municipal city councils were held in all municipalities in 2005 entails that we are able to assess whether the information presented in local news media is only important to turnout in local elections or whether there is also a spill-over effect to national elections. Finally, the literature on news media and voter turnout is overwhelmingly focused on the US, which to some extent represents a 'most likely' test case because of the low turnout in the US (see Franklin 2004). If we can locate a media effect in Denmark which is charac-

terized by high levels of turnout in general (Frandsen 2003), we have indication that the findings may be relevant to many advanced democracies.

As highlighted, getting good data on media coverage is highly challenging. One cannot simply estimate news media coverage by recording whether or not a local news media is distributed in a municipality. The reason is that this tells us nothing about the quality of the coverage. In Denmark many local news papers are little more than printed advertisements for the local businesses with limited, if any, serious political journalism. Others, however, devote considerable resources to producing critical news stories, interviewing both local and national politicians, and occasionally uncovering malpractices.

Our solution is to rely on a survey administrated to local city councilors that asks the councilors to evaluate the importance of the local news media. The councilors were asked to evaluate eight statements about the local news media.<sup>1</sup> The questions were framed in such a way that they allow us to generate three indices. An *Information* index that captures the degree to which the local news media provides relevant political information. An index labeled *Sensation* that captures the degree to which the local news media focus on stories beyond their substantive merit, and an *Impact* index reflecting the degree to which the local news media has an impact on the political behavior of

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<sup>1</sup> In total there were 4459 city councilors in 2004. A sample consisting of 2669 individuals was drawn from this population. 1787 respondents answered the survey questions, corresponding to a response rate on approximately 67 per cent. The responses were checked against political affiliation of the politicians, showing no deviation between the distribution in the population, the sample, and among the politicians who answered the survey. In each municipality the mean value of the city councilor responses was calculated in order to get a proxy for the importance of the local news media. Four municipalities were not included in the survey because they differed from the remaining municipalities with regard to their tasks and form of government. For more information on the survey, see Blom-Hansen, Serritzlew and Skjæveland (2004).

the politicians. We include the latter dimension because this might be seen as an extreme version of the second dimension; if the politicians and the media are much intertwined this might also lead to fatigue among the voters. Alternatively, in polities where the news media are able to impact politicians, politics may be seen as more interesting and volatile, which might increase turnout.

Table 1 reports both the exact wordings of the eight questions as well as the results of a confirmatory factor analysis. As can be seen in Table 1, the global measures of model fit are not impressive, but the three-factor model with inter-correlated factors offers some support for the expectation of three dimensions of local media coverage. Furthermore, the three dimensions also materialize in an exploratory factor analysis (results not shown but available from the authors upon request). Thus, we decide to move on with the three factors and create an index for each factor. The Cronbach's alpha of the Information index is .81; .73 for the Sensation index; and .56 for the Impact index.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 displays the distribution of the three indices with the Normal distribution superimposed. It is evident that the indices are actually characterized by a great deal of variation, indicating the validity of the measures. One could, for instance, imagine that some answers were considered more appropriate than others, which would lead to a skewed distribution, but this is not the case.

TABLE 1 AND FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

## Other methodological issues

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<sup>2</sup> The low alpha value for the Impact index is partly attributable to the fact that it only contains two items. Applying the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula (see Rubio 2005) shows that if the number of items in the index was increased to three, the resulting reliability score would probably increase to .66.

As noted by Geys (2006: 638f) a number of slightly different turnout measures are used in the literature. Three points should be made about Danish elections: The election is manual and with secret votes. Moreover, voters are not obliged to vote and they are automatically registered as voters if they are part of the population entitled to vote.<sup>3</sup> In this study we therefore define turnout as the ratio of the number of voters to the population that is eligible to vote. Turnout levels at local elections vary a lot across municipalities. At the municipal elections in 2005, turnout levels ranged between 61.1 and 85.2 per cent. At national elections turnout is higher and varies less, though the levels still show considerable variation with a span of more than 13 percentage points between the municipalities with the lowest and highest levels of turnout. As can be seen in Figure 2, data on turnout at local as well as on national elections are approximately normally distributed. Turnout data are gathered by Statistics Denmark and are generally considered to be extremely valid as all votes are cross-checked before they occur in the final election result and the official statistics.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

We include a number of standard controls often mentioned in the literature on the determinants of turnout. The controls serve a dual purpose. First, they are necessary in order to account for a possible spurious relationship between media coverage and turnout. Second, they are used to create a baseline to which the effects of media coverage can be compared. Numerous studies have shown

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<sup>3</sup> At local elections the vote-eligible population consists of people above 18 years who hold a citizenship in an EU-country, Norway, or Iceland, and people with citizenships in other countries who have had an address in Denmark at least the previous three years. At national elections only people above 18 years who are Danish citizens and who have a permanent address in Denmark are eligible to vote.

that district size is an important predictor of turnout (Geys 2006: 642). There is good explanations of this effect. According to the pivotal model of voting (Palfrey & Rosenthal, 1983; Duffy & Tavits, 2008), the chance of an individual's vote to be pivotal, which partly depends the size of the electorate, increases the likelihood of voting. Moreover, people generally feel less qualified to participate in politics, the larger the population size (Lassen & Serritzlew 2011). Both ideas leads to expecting a negative relationship between population size and turnout. Generally, studies have indeed found a negative relationship between municipal size and citizen participation, regardless of whether the type of participation in question is electoral or non-electoral (Verba & Nie 1972; Dahl & Tufte 1973; Rose 2002; Geys 2006: 642f; Kaniowski & Mueller 2006; Sørberg & Tangerås 2007). Clearly, municipal size may be correlated with media coverage as well and hence we include the population size in order to account for the possibility that the relationship between media coverage and turnout is spurious. Following the advice of Blais & Dobrzynska (1998), we choose to log-transform the population size variable. Moreover, population density may also affect turnout. This proposition is based on the argument that urbanization leads to a weakening of social and interpersonal bonds and thereby to a weakening of turnout as well (Geys 2006: 643).

Furthermore, turnout is often thought to depend on the socioeconomic status and demographic characteristics of the district in which the election is held. We add controls for the proportion of people who has moved out of or toward the municipality in 2005 in order to account for the effect that stable populations generally are associated with higher turnout rates (Geys 642ff; Hoffmann-Martinot 1994). We also add a number of socioeconomic controls that in a Danish context have proven to affect turnout on the individual level (Mouritzen 2001: 274; Frandsen 2003). This is the proportion of young people (18-25 years), elderly (+65 years), married, educated, unemployed, and immigrants.

Geys (2006: 646f) also argues that people may be more inclined to vote if they feel that much is at stake at the election. People may feel that more is at stake if the party in office often changes and if the elected city councilors hold very different political attitudes. We therefore add a variable measuring to what extent the same party has held the important position as mayor in the city council for a prolonged period of time. The variable takes values between 1 and 9 where 9 means that the same party has been in office for the last nine periods including the present. We also include an index measuring the degree of polarization between parties. The party polarization index is measured as the mean deviation of the parties from the mean party position. Calculating the mean party position, we account for the size of the parties (that is their share of the city council seats). Like the media indices, the party position index is based on the survey sent to city councilors. In the survey, the councilors were asked to indicate the position of all parties in the city council. The index takes values between 0 (no ideological differences) and 10 (maximum ideological differences).<sup>4</sup>

Finally, a majority of the Danish municipalities merged into new units in January 2007. The formal decisions about which municipalities were to merge and who they were to merge with, however, were already taken before the election in 2005. In many municipalities facing merger there were a widespread fear that their influence would decline severely in the new and much larger municipalities. As the election result in 2005 basically decided who would be in charge of the necessary political preparations for the new municipalities and also who was going to sit on the city council in the first three years from 2007-2009, people may have been more inclined to vote in municipalities facing merger. We add a dummy in order to capture such differences between merging

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<sup>4</sup> On additional political variable we cannot include due to data availability is campaign spending. In the context of Danish municipalities, though, it is worth stressing that campaign spending probably matters much less than in most National elections.

and continuing municipalities. Table 2 reports summary statistics on all variables used in the analysis. Finally, a Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test reveals problem of heteroskedasticity so we estimate all regressions with robust standard errors.<sup>5</sup>

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

## Findings

Table 3 reports the results from the regression estimations on turnout in the 2005 local election. Looking first at the controls in Model I we see very much the picture emerging that one would expect from the literature. The size of the population is negatively correlated with turnout, presumably as the feeling of efficacy declines as the size of the polity increases. A relatively young population also increases turnout as does the proportion of elderly. Likewise, both the proportion of married (i.e., individuals that are comparably settled within a geographical domain) and highly educated (i.e., individuals who tend to be more engaged with politics in general) raises turnout. On the other hand, social groups with few resources – notably immigrants – entails lower turnout. All of these findings are well established and means that we can have confidence in the models we have estimated.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

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<sup>5</sup> We do not include a lagged dependent variable because want to understand differences in the levels of turnout, not the election-to-election changes. Partly, this focus is also decided by the available data. We only have media data at one time point and therefore cannot estimate changes – and there is not logical (or statistical) reason to expect that a constant (the media variable) should be able to explain a variable (changes in turnout from one election to the next).

Model II looks at the effect of the Information index, which measures the degree to which the local news media provide (neutral) relevant political information. It is evident that the index has the expected effect: The more politically relevant information provided, the higher the level of turnout (p-value = .027). Model III introduces the Sensation index, which measures the degree to which the local mass media is (perceived as) being overly critical and focusing on high-profile news. We find no effect. Model IV introduces the Impact index, again with no significant effect. Model V, finally, includes all three indices simultaneously. The Information index remains statistically significant (p-value = .019). Hence, the amount of relevant political information in local news media has a systematic effect on turnout. In order to gauge the substantive significance of the effects, we compare with the effects of the most important and best known determinants of turnout.

According to model V, a one standard deviation increase in population change leads to a 1.8 percent drop in turnout. This is about five times larger than the effect of local media. Here, a one standard deviation change in the Information index leads to a 0.4 percent change in turnout. Unsurprisingly, the information in local media is not as important as population size. The same picture emerges when comparing with other empirical studies. In a meta-analysis of 83 studies of the determinants of turnout, Geys (2006) estimates an approximate average effect of socio-economic, political and institutional variables. He finds that population size is one of the most important among the socio-economic variables. The average effect of a one standard deviation increase in population size is between a 0.48 and 0.65 standard deviation decrease in turnout. This is again about five times the effect of political information: A one standard deviation change in the Information index leads to a 0.11 standard deviation increase in turnout. Again, to compare, this is clearly less than the most important among political and institutional explanations of turnout. According



to Geys (2006), campaign spending, the most important political variable, has an effect of 0.69-0.79, and compulsory voting, which is the most important institutional variable, has an effect of 0.86-0.89. However, the effect of information is similar to population homogeneity (Geys, 2006: 642) and political fragmentation (2006: 646). Put this way local news media coverage is obviously a variable of lesser importance than the main socio-demographic drivers of turnout. Yet it is just as important as some of the other explanations of turnout mentioned in the literature.

Another way to gauge the effect is to look at the adjusted  $R^2$  when moving from Model I to Model II. Here we see that introducing the Information index allows us to explain 4 percent more of the variation in turnout than we would otherwise be able to. In conclusion, information in local news media has a limited effect compared to some of the other socio-demographic and political factors mentioned in the literature. One may, however, argue that it is actually rather surprising that rather stable predispositions for political participation can be altered at all.

The bottom rows of table 3 reports some statistical tests of interest when evaluating the models' performance. Firstly, all F-tests are statistically significant. Secondly, the mean variance-inflation factor is well below the conventional cut-off point of 4, indicating that there is no serious problem of multicollinearity in the models. This is unsurprising given that additional analyses show that none of the independent variables have a bivariate correlation above .70. Finally, the Ramsey RESET test informs us that the functional forms of our independent variables is appropriate. This is valuable information because one in principle could hypothesize that the effect of Information only kicks in after a certain threshold. This, however, does not appear to be the case.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Table 4 re-runs the estimations and tests of table 3 on turnout at the national election held in the same year as the local election (2005). The findings allow us to unambiguously reject the idea of a spill-over effect from the local to national level. In none of the models are any of the indices close to significance and the adjusted  $R^2$  does not inch a bit when we move from Model I to the last four models. Clearly this is not because national election turnout cannot be accounted for; judging from the adjusted  $R^2$ , the conventional explanatory factors are even better when it comes to national elections than to local ones. The main difference seems to be that unemployment now also has a significant (negative) effect; that young individuals are no more prone to vote at national elections than the rest of population apart from the elderly who votes less than the rest; and that population density now is a better predictor than population size.

## Conclusion

The information available to citizens matters for turnout, our results suggest. When the local mass media provides politically relevant information turnout increases. As such, we can corroborate the Information Model of turnout using different and on several counts better data compared to previous research. Yet the results also suggest that there is no spill-over from the local to the national level. Voters turn out in greater numbers when they have more information of relevance to the specific election at hand; they do not in a more general sense become attuned and engaged in politics above and beyond that. Yet, while there may be no spill-over to the national level there might be spill-over from one municipality to the next. Such geographical diffusion of media effects have been left to a side in the paper, but future research ought to investigate if this is the case.

Second, the effects of relevant political information appear to be limited compared to some of the socio-demographic factors that are traditionally highlighted as drivers of turnout. Obviously, this may in part be due to our measurement choices, although it is difficult to tell if alternative measurements would have led to a stronger or weaker effect. Yet, essentially, it should not be surprising that information is of marginal importance compared to determinants that reflect social resources and norms, and which are rooted at a deeper cognitive and emotional level than day-to-day political developments. One might just as well turn the point upside-down, arguing that it is impressive that there in fact is any room at all for changing rather stable predispositions for political participation. In addition, it should be borne in mind that our results concern the situation in Denmark, a country with one of the highest turnout rates in the world. As mentioned above, there is some reason to believe that the effect of relevant political information should be smaller in polities where most people vote anyway.

In a similar positive vein, it is also comforting to note that it truly is politically relevant information that does the trick of raising turnout, not other aspects of news reporting. We cannot say if voters actually become more informed from living in polities with news media reporting this kind of information, but it is hard to come up with more likely explanations of the findings. This, finally, points to the need for taking the secular drop in local news media producing politically relevant information seriously. As national mass media organizations gradually crowd-out local ones, the inclination of the electorate to vote erodes. For politicians and activists interested in citizens' participation in the democratic process this is bad news. Yet exactly because the cause of the decline is easier to address than social resources and norms it ought also to be a motive for action as well as future research.



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*Table 1. Standardized Factor Loadings, Explained Variances and Measures of Global Fit for CFA*

Dimension	Items	Factor Load- ing	R <sup>2</sup>
Information	Coverage of local politics takes up a lot of space in the local news papers	.80	.64
	The local news papers provides a good impression of what the voters think about local politics	.78	.61
	The local news papers provide important information on what issue the citizens are interested in	.76	.58
Sensation	If there are any problems with the local service provision the local news papers will report on it quickly	.99	.99
	The local news media often keeps an issue alive, which otherwise would have been closed a long time ago	.51	.26
	The local news papers are often opposed to the decisions made by the city council	.37	.14
Impact	When I decide on my position on local politics, I often look at the debate in the local news papers	.72	.52
	It happens that stories in the local media influences the decisions of the city council	.56	.31
$\chi^2$			123.44
Degrees of Freedom			27
CFI			.84
SRMR			.09
RMSEA			.15

Note: All loadings are significant at  $P < 0.001$ .  $N = 267$ . Correlation between "Information" and "Sensation" is .59, correlation between "Sensation" and "Impact" is .21, and correlation between "Information" and "Impact" is .49.

Figure 1. The distribution of Information, Sensation, and Impact (with Normal distribution)

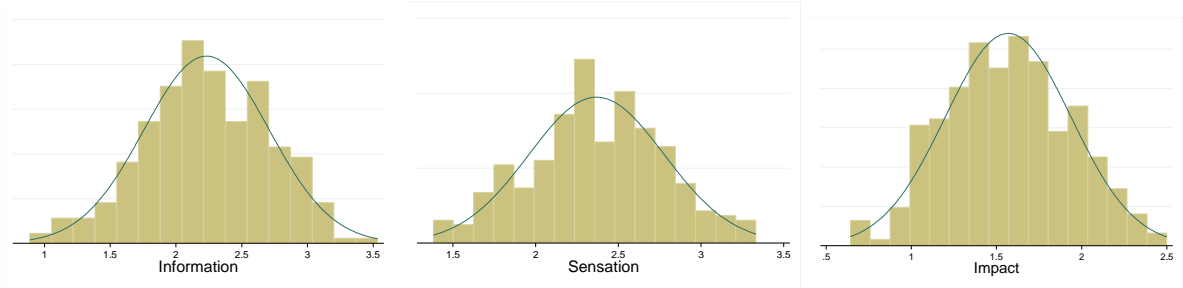
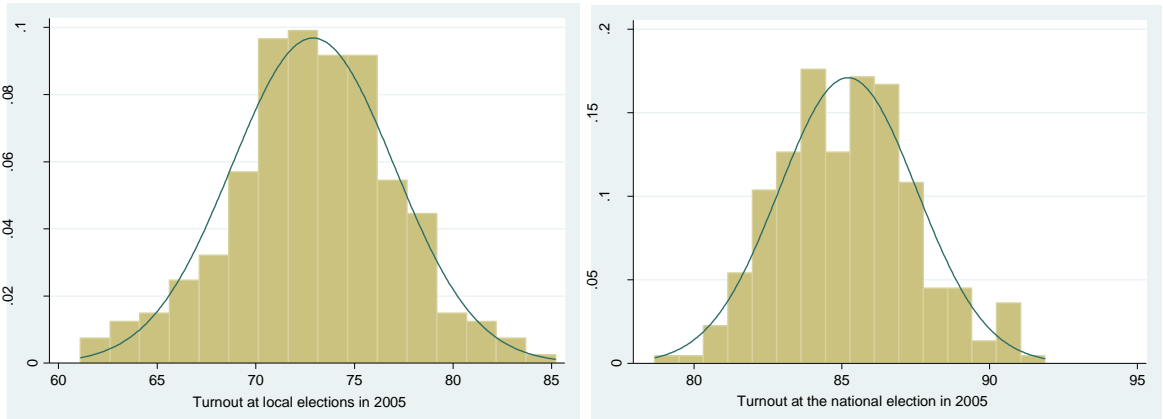


Figure 2. The distribution of turnout across municipalities (with Normal distribution)



*Table 2. Summary statistics*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max</b>
Turnout (local elections)	72.91	4.13	61.10	85.20
Turnout (national election)	85.21	2.34	78.67	91.89
Information	2.23	.47	.88	3.53
Sensation	2.36	.40	1.38	3.33
Impact	1.56	.36	.64	2.50
Party polarization	1.70	0.59	0.34	3.69
Incumbency continuity	4.47	3.21	1	9
Municipality facing merger	0.89	0.31	0	1
Population size (ten thousands)	1.67	1.95	0.22	18.52
Population density	206.40	410.08	19	3,003
Proportion moves (percent)	3.69	2.98	0	13.51
Proportion young (percent)	6.85	1.42	3.40	12.86
Proportion old (percent)	13.93	2.69	7.05	26.06
Proportion married (percent)	43.77	2.66	36.37	51.01
Proportion educated (percent)	13.44	3.84	7.06	30.60
Proportion immigrants (percent)	4.16	2.16	1.01	16.02
Proportion unemployed (percent)	17.06	3.13	11.18	28.82

*Note:*  $N = 267$ . Sources: Blom-Hansen, Serritzlew and Skjæveland (2004); Statistics Denmark.



*Table 3. Local news coverage and turnout in local elections (OLS regression with robust standard errors)*

		Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V
<i>Explanatory variable</i>	Information		.81*			.94 *
	Sensation			.05		-.23
	Impact				.01	-.31
<i>Institutional controls</i>	Party polarization	.18	.32	.38	.36	.32
	Incumbency continuity	-.02	-.00	-.01	-.01	-.00
	Municipality facing merger	-.58	.36	.19	.19	.41
<i>Socio-demographic controls</i>	Population size (log)	-2.34 **	-2.50**	-2.44**	-2.44**	-2.41**
	Population density	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.00
	Proportion moves	-13.89	-9.52	-6.54	-6.40	-10.16
	Proportion young	74.55 **	65.60**	61.78*	61.73*	63.23*
	Proportion old	32.33 **	34.21**	34.31**	34.40**	34.79**
	Proportion married	67.70 **	69.73**	68.52**	68.46**	68.71**
	Proportion educated	46.07 **	40.62**	41.68**	41.64**	40.58**
	Proportion immigrants	-33.74 **	-31.91*	-30.04*	-30.17*	-32.16*
	Proportion unemployed	-6.02	-9.37	-9.97	-9.94	-9.18
	Constant	52.90 **	55.10**	53.97**	53.88**	52.30**
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.57	.61	.58	.58	.59
	F-test	30.74 **	30.90 **	29.93 **	29.93 **	26.69 **
	Mean VIF	2.91	2.77	2.76	2.79	2.63
	Ramsey RESET	.67	.95	.63	.66	1.18

*Note:* \* = p-value < 0.05; \*\* p-value < .01. Two-tailed t-tests. N = 267. Sources: Blom-Hansen, Serritzlew and Skjæveland (2004); Statistics Denmark.

*Table 4. Local news coverage and turnout in national elections (OLS regression with robust standard errors)*

		<b>Model I</b>	<b>Model II</b>	<b>Model III</b>	<b>Model IV</b>	<b>Model V</b>
<i>Explanatory variable</i>	Information		.10			.11
	Sensation			-.06		.04
	Impact				-.06	-.11
<i>Institutional controls</i>	Party polarization	-.07	-.03	-.02	-.02	-.03
	Incumbency continuity	-.01	-.01	-.00	-.00	-.00
	Municipality facing merger	-.17	.04	.02	.02	.05
<i>Socio-demographic controls</i>	Population size (log)	-.03	-.06	-.06	-.04	-.04
	Population density	.01 *	.01**	.01**	.01**	.01**
	Proportion moves	-.59	.94	1.16	1.16	.54
	Proportion young	-4.18	-6.98	-7.28	-7.91	-7.63
	Proportion old	-15.20 **	-14.71**	-14.81**	-14.65**	-14.73**
	Proportion married	30.98 **	31.32**	31.28**	31.01**	31.13**
	Proportion educated	27.47 **	26.23**	26.40**	26.41**	26.35**
	Proportion immigrants	-25.81 **	-25.11**	-24.77**	-24.80**	-24.87**
	Proportion unemployed	-15.43 **	-16.36**	-16.45**	-16.43**	-16.37**
	Constant	74.52 **	75.02**	74.94**	74.50**	74.70**
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.72	.73	.72	.72	.72
	F-test	58.32 **	54.29 **	54.23 **	54.23 **	46.74 **
	Mean VIF	2.91	2.77	2.76	2.79	2.63
	Ramsey RESET	.86	.76	.83	.89	.82

*Note:* \* = p-value < 0.05; \*\* p-value < .001. Two-tailed t-tests. N = 267. Sources: Blom-Hansen, Serritzlew and Skjæveland (2004); Statistics Denmark.