

Information and Democracy

Public Policy in the News

STUART N. SOROKA

University of California, Los Angeles

CHRISTOPHER WLEZIEN

University of Texas at Austin



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108491341

DOI: 10.1017/9781108868242

© Stuart Soroka and Christopher Wlezien 2022

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2022

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-49134-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-81189-7 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of Tables</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
1 Media in Representative Democracy	1
1.1 Public Responsiveness	9
1.2 Media Content	14
1.3 Theoretical Expectations	20
1.4 Synopsis and Prognosis	20
2 Public Responsiveness to Media	22
2.1 Public Policy and the Public	24
2.2 A Media-Centered Account of Public Responsiveness	28
2.2.1 Public Responsiveness Is Not that Hard	28
2.2.2 Media Report on Policy, and People Get It	30
2.2.3 Media, Public Opinion, and Policy	33
2.2.4 Media, Public Opinion, and Policy, Over Time	37
3 Measuring the “Media Signal”	39
3.1 The Media Corpora	40
3.1.1 The Newspaper Corpus	40
3.1.2 The Television Corpus	42
3.1.3 The Facebook Corpus	43
3.2 Extracting Policy-Relevant Sentences	45
3.3 A Preliminary Media Policy Signal	54
3.4 The Validity of the Dictionary-Based Approach	57
3.5 The Media Policy Signal	61
4 Alternative Measures of the Media Policy Signal	62
4.1 The Quality of Crowdsourced Content-Analytic Data	63

4.2	The Time Horizons of Spending Sentences in News Content	66
4.3	Dictionaries versus Machine Learning	68
4.4	Adding Newspapers Over Time	80
4.5	On Measuring Media Coverage of Spending	81
4.6	Appendix to Chapter 4: Alternative Specifications of the Media “Policy Signal”	83
5	The Accuracy of Media Coverage	88
5.1	Measuring Media Coverage and Budgetary Policy	89
5.2	Correlating Media Coverage and Budgetary Policy	91
5.3	Modeling Media Coverage and Budgetary Policy	95
5.3.1	The Newspaper Signal and Change in Appropriations	95
5.3.2	Appropriations versus Outlays	99
5.3.3	Domain-Specific Results	100
5.3.4	Source-Specific Results	101
5.4	On Spending and Media Coverage	107
5.5	Appendix to Chapter 5: Policy Change and Media Coverage – Do Measures Matter?	108
6	Policy, the Media, and the Public	111
6.1	Measures of Relative Public Preferences	112
6.2	Does the Public Notice Spending (and Media Coverage)?	117
6.3	Does the Public Respond?	123
6.3.1	Spending and Public Preferences	124
6.4	Does Media Coverage Matter?	130
6.5	On Media Coverage and the Public	138
6.6	Appendix to Chapter 6: Party of the President and Public Responsiveness	139
7	Diagnosing and Exploring Dynamics	142
7.1	Media Consumption and the Impact of the Media Signal	143
7.2	Heterogeneity in Public Responsiveness to the News	147
7.3	On the Causal Connections between Policy and the News	155
7.4	Interpreting Connections between the News and Public Preferences	160
7.4.1	Health Care	161
7.4.2	Welfare	162
7.4.3	Defense	164
7.5	The Many Ways that the Media Matter	166

Contents

vii

8 Policy and the Media: Past, Present, and Future

167

References

179

Index

193