

# Voters expect much more from political parties who run decisive election victories

September 19 2019



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Voters expect much more from politicians when the media describes them as having won a decisive electoral victory, research shows.

The public have higher expectations of a Government formed following an election [victory](#) with a big majority, according to a new study.

The research shows media coverage of election results has a vital impact in shaping voters' expectations of the [government](#) delivering on its promises—and meeting these expectations can play an important role in determining who they vote for in future elections.

Swansea University and University of Exeter academics have found voters who read newspaper articles describing a narrow electoral victory are more sceptical about the incoming government's ability to deliver on its promises. People are more likely to trust the new government when the same result was presented in the media as decisive.

Dr. Ekaterina Kolpinskaya, who led the study, said: "Our findings indicate that media coverage can have a big impact in the mandate a government is perceived to have. Voters who read about a clear victory are more likely to think governments could and should have implemented their full manifesto, and are more likely to be critical of that party in the next election if it fails to do so. Those influenced by media coverage describing a narrow victory are more likely to think the government was less likely to be able to keep all its promises, and are more forgiving at election time."

Academics ran an experiment three weeks after the 2015 election, when the Conservative Party ran a narrow victory. Participants were divided into four treatment groups. Two groups were given a [news articles](#) portraying the Tory victory as either 'decisive' or 'narrow' using two real-life news stories from *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian*. Two other groups were given two articles describing the victory as 'decisive' or 'narrow' too—but were not told the source of the publication. A control group received a 'placebo' story unrelated to the election or politics at all.

After reading the articles, all participants were asked the following question: "To what extent do you agree/disagree that the Conservative government will be able to fulfil all of its campaign promises?"

Responses were coded on a five-point ascending scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.'

Reading *The Telegraph* ('decisive victory') story increased the average probability of agreeing or strongly agreeing by more than 4.5 percentage points, from 25.5 percent for participants who read the 'placebo' story to 30.1 percent for subjects given this article.

Labour supporters who read the article from *The Guardian* framing the victory as 'narrow' were 3.4 percentage points less likely to agree/strongly agree that the Tory Government would be able to deliver on their promises than those in the control group.

In addition to party partisanship, interest in politics determined how sensitive participants were to media framing of the [election](#) outcome. Less politically knowledgeable participants were significantly more prone to believe or doubt that the Tories would honour their commitments when exposed to 'decisive' or 'narrow' victory stories, respectively.

Participants who read the unattributed 'narrow' victory story and who usually paid little or no attention to politics were half as likely to believe that the government would deliver on its promises as more politically interested participants. At the other extreme, those who did not regularly follow the news and who read the unattributed 'decisive' victory story were three times more likely to believe that the Conservatives would implement their policy programme than participants more interested in politics who received the same message.

**More information:** For more information, see

[mediaeffectsresearch.wordpress ... -effects-research-2/](https://mediaeffectsresearch.wordpress.com/2019/09/19/voters-expect-much-more-from-political-parties-who-run-decisive-election-victories/)

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: Voters expect much more from political parties who run decisive election victories (2019, September 19) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-09-voters-political-parties-decisive-election.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.