

Discussion of 'Sick of Politics?'

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Short Summary

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- ▶ The paper uncovers the causal effect of political office on (i) income, (ii) general health, and (iii) mental health
 - ▶ Political office: being appointed (!) as a mayor, or being elected into the national Norwegian parliament
- ▶ Study uses administrative data on public health service usage

Discussion Plan

Discussion Points

- ▶ Is the treatment the right treatment?
 - ▶ More refined ways of gauging the mental-health related impact of politics?
- ▶ Is the control group the right control group?
- ▶ Reasons for a null effect?
 - ▶ Mitigating effect of income?

More Refined Ways of Gauging Mental-Health Impact

- ▶ Naively, we might assume that political sentiment is random and orthogonal to the actions and potential outcomes of politicians
- ▶ In that case, start with the media hits for candidate i
 - ▶ Naively, perform sentiment analysis on each article associated with the candidate
 - ▶ Two potential treatment effects: one of the campaign (pre-election period) against (in favor of) the candidate
 - ▶ And one of the ex-post media attention
- ▶ Counterfactual: media attention of non-appointed candidates

More Refined Ways

- ▶ NLP-based approach:
 - ▶ Manually classify articles as “good” or “bad”
- ▶ Use e.g. random forest to classify the remaining articles on the basis of:
 - ▶ e.g. a document-term matrix
 - ▶ Embeddings of the text in a language model (Ash & Hansen, 2023)
- ▶ Use the relationship between media sentiment and mental health in the control group to assess what would have happened to the treatment group if they hadn't received the treatment