

# Newspaper Closures are not linked to local democratic participation in Canada

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## Introduction

## Motivation

## Theory and Literature Review

## Evidence from other countries

There is significant evidence from other jurisdictions that access to local news is related to measures of democratic participation. For example, Gentzkow et al. (2011) find evidence from US newspapers newspaper entrances (and exits) in a county are related (positively) to presidential and congressional turnout. Similarly, Schuhlhofer-wohl and Garrido found that the closure of the Cincinnati *Post* reduced voter turnout, the number of candidates, campaign spending and increased the incumbency advantage in those counties where the *Post* had its highest coverage (2013). Beyond participation, Darr et al. (2018) find that newspaper closures are linked with increasingly polarized voting in presidential elections, suggesting that local newspapers provide citizens with information about the relationship between national level candidates and local conditions. In the absence of that information, citizens are left relying on national level media and partisan cues, both of which contribute to greater rates of polarized or party-line voting.

However, although this topic has been studied at reasonably great length in the United States, it has not been tackled in Canada. This, despite increasing public concern about the viability of local newspapers in Canada. The Public Policy Forum issued a report on the viability of the news media in Canada and identified the way that digital conglomerates like Facebook and Google were capturing a growing share of advertisers' expenditures away from news media (Public Policy Forum 2017). In 2018, the federal government announced a plan to support non-profit and for-profit journalism with C\$ 600 million over five years.

Despite the public policy attention directed to the viability of local media scholars have not tested the relationship between availability of local media and municipal

turnout. Breux et al. (**BREUXTURNOUTLOCALELECTIONS2017?**)  
examination of municipal electoral participation in Canada

- Delta pop, increase in turnout
- Log pop, increase in turnout (so bigger cities of greater rates of turnout)
- log of density, turnout goes down, so the more dense, the lower the turnout.
- log number of mayoral candidates turnout goes up!
- mayor victory margin in the last election, turnout goes down.
- of councillors by acclamation

## Data Collection

To test the hypotheses generated above, we gathered data on newspaper closures from the Loca News Project (2012) at Ryerson University.<sup>1</sup> This project has collected information on Canadian newspaper closures and changes in newspaper services (e.g. reductions in publication frequency or mergers) since 2008. The database of newspaper service changes was built through crowd-sourced participation to document and monitoring of news and social media discussion of local newspaper changes. To increase validity, its findings are periodically compared with information held by Newspapers Canada, the lobby group that represents the interests of Canadian interests.

In order to measure political participation in local election, we matched each newspaper in with a primary municipality that the newspaper served. We supplemented these municipalities with a dataset of election results from the 100 largest Canadian municipalities

## Results

In the

## Conclusion

## References

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<sup>1</sup>[\[https://localnewsresearchproject.ca/\]](https://localnewsresearchproject.ca/)(<https://localnewsresearchproject.ca/>)

Schulhofer-Wohl, Sam, and Miguel Garrido. 2013. "Do Newspapers Matter? Short-run and Long-Run Evidence from the Closure of The Cincinnati Post." *Journal of Media Economics* 26 (2): 60–81.

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