

**The politics of news media and persuasion:
The Case of Fox and Not-Fox Television News' Impact on Opinions on Global**

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Abstract

Decades of research have found evidence of “minimal effects” of the news media on people’s attitudes and beliefs, thereby reinforcing notions of selective exposure and motivated cognition. This paper explores the possibility that, because in today’s news environment, different news media outlets convey distinctly different messages, people with different ideological predilections may be especially motivated to seek exposure to and to accept messages from specific sources. If so, media-induced changes in opinions in opposite directions might cancel out in the aggregate, creating the illusion of no impact of news media exposure on political attitudes. We tested these hypotheses with regard to global warming using two national probability-sample surveys of American adults, yielding three findings. First, replicating past research, we found no effect of total exposure of television news on attitudes and beliefs on the issue. Second, when distinguishing between media outlets, exposure to Fox television news reduced public trust in scientists, reduced concern about the issue, and reduced support for government action on the issue, whereas exposure to not-Fox television news yielded the opposite effects. Both sorts of impact manifested a dose-response relation, increasing with greater exposure and thereby casting doubt on the widely-endorsed “minimal effects” claim. Third, we found no evidence of more persuasion of Republicans by Fox television news or of more persuasion of Democrats by not-Fox television news, challenging the notion of motivated cognition.