

# Ideology and Information in Policymaking

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## **Abstract**

We consider how the incentives for politicians to pander to public opinion depend on preference heterogeneity and information. As there is greater opportunity for voters to update their beliefs about the politician's type on a more divisive issue, politicians are more likely to pander on divisive issues than on issues with only a small minority. As pandering involves ignoring socially valuable information which goes against the ex-ante preferred policy of the majority, increasing the size of the minority can then lead to policy outcomes more biased towards the action ex-ante preferred by the majority. In addition, because updating about the politician's type is dampened when the voters are uncertain about the state of the world, politicians are more likely to pander when voters are more informed about which action is in their interest. It is then possible that increasing the information available to the voters, by increasing the likelihood of pandering by politicians, can make all voters worse off.