



NEW REPORT: Good-looking political candidates win more votes around the world

A timely new [IZA World of Labor](https://wol.iza.org) report publishing next Thursday (1 June) shows that good-looking candidates have an electoral advantage around the world. Furthermore, politicians on the right are found to be more attractive. Therefore, the importance of beauty in politics favors conservative parties.

Panu Poutvaara of the University of Munich summarizes a number of recent studies undertaken in Europe, the US, and Australia showing good-looking political candidates win more votes around the world. This holds for both male and female candidates. Furthermore, beautiful people are perceived more favorably in terms of character: Beauty and perceptions of competence, trustworthiness, likability, and intelligence are all positively correlated. Therefore, Poutvaara suggests, candidate appearance can play an important role in elections, especially when candidates are close to the margin of being elected.

Furthermore, studies find politicians on the right to be more beautiful, while both voters on the right and on the left tend to favor better-looking candidates. This suggests that the role of beauty tilts political outcomes toward the right. The advantage for parties on the right arises among politically mobile voters who are willing to consider voting for a candidate representing either the political left or the political right.

Poutvaara suggests that looks could matter even more in politics than in the labor market, where there is strong evidence of a beauty premium. An employer may interview several job applicants, and is certain that he or she can make the final choice about whom to hire. By contrast, only a small minority of voters has the chance to talk with political candidates during an electoral campaign, and it is very unlikely that an individual voter will be pivotal in any political election of a reasonable size. As a result, voters may rely on easily accessible criteria when making their choice by voting for the better-looking candidate.

According to Poutvaara beauty is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for electoral success. However, the economist suggests: “Beauty can make a difference in a tight race, particularly for those running near the electoral margin. Therefore, a political party intent on maximizing its electoral success would be well advised to pay attention to how its candidates look. For voters, the main advice is caution: To pause for a moment to reflect to what extent one’s voting decision is influenced by candidate looks.”

Please credit IZA World of Labor (<https://wol.iza.org>) should you refer to or cite from this report.

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