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When heuristics go bad: Citizens' misevaluations of campaign pledge fulfilment

François Pétry, Dominic Duval

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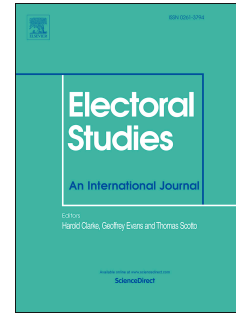
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**When Heuristics Go Bad: Citizens' Miscalculations
of Campaign Pledge Fulfilment**

Abstract: We use data from a large survey of Quebec citizens to clarify under what conditions the use of heuristic shortcuts increases or decreases the accuracy of citizens' evaluations of specific pledge fulfilment. In line with the rational public hypothesis, we find that citizens' evaluations often conform to the actual pledge fulfilment performance of the government. However, consistent with the "bad heuristics" and "motivated reasoning" hypotheses, we find that many citizens' evaluations are biased. Some stereotypes induce citizens to evaluate pledges positively irrespective of actual performance, misleading them into making inaccurate evaluations of pledges that are actually unfulfilled. Other stereotypes prompt citizens to evaluate pledges negatively irrespective of actual performance, misleading them into making inaccurate evaluations of pledges that are actually fulfilled. Although political knowledge increases the accuracy of evaluation of fulfilled pledges, it fails to increase the accuracy of evaluations of unfulfilled pledges.

Keywords: citizens' evaluations of campaign promises; heuristics and biases; motivated reasoning; political knowledge.

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