

The Time-Dynamic Relationship between the Internet and U.S. Presidential Elections

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Abstract: The internet has been shown to affect election outcomes and political behavior. We examine how broadband and mobile access influenced U.S. presidential elections in 2012 and 2016, when internet adoption, especially mobile internet was rising. Using county-level data from Dave Leip's Atlas, the Federal Communications Commission, and the American Community Survey, we find differential returns across urban density and election year by type of internet connection. Our findings suggest that accounting for both mobile and broadband access—and the timing of their diffusion—is essential for accurately assessing how the internet shapes electoral participation and outcomes.

Keywords: internet; broadband; elections; voting; turnout; United States

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