

How Do Public Officials Evaluate Conflicting Performance Data? Results from a survey experiment

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Ideological biases can influence how public officials interpret performance information (Baekgaard et al. 2017), but little is known about how ideological biases affect public officials' processing of conflicting performance data (Christensen et al. 2018). This study therefore examines whether public officials' prior attitudes influence the way they prioritize goals when they evaluate conflicting performance information. Drawing on Christensen et al. (2018), we claim that public managers have both goal and governance preferences and that, when a conflict emerges between the two, public officials tend to reprioritize their goals according to their governance preferences. Yet, compared to public managers, politicians might be more prone to ideological biases, this study therefore investigates whether behavioral differences exist between politicians and public managers. This study examines governance preferences as the degree of public officials' preferences for the private or public provision of public services and goal preferences as performance information (citizens' satisfaction and price) about a contracted service. We conducted a randomized survey experiment among the entire population of Belgian locally elected politicians as well as all local public managers with a managerial position. The answers of the 4000 participants are analyzed through a logistic regression.

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References

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