



Deep Voice Gives Politicians Electoral Boost

Two new studies find that a deeper voice gives a politician an edge over a higher-pitched opponent

By [Diana Kwon](#) | August 24, 2015

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What makes a successful politician? [Experience?](#) [Skill?](#) [Charisma?](#) Perhaps you were searching for these traits while watching the recent Republican presidential debate. But what you might not have thought about was how your perception of the candidates could be [influenced by their voices](#). [Chris Christie audio]

In two recently published studies, researchers looked at how the pitch of a candidate's voice affected their chances in an election. The first study found that in the 2012 U.S. House elections candidates with lower voices were more likely than a higher-pitched opponent to win. With one exception: when running against a female opponent, candidates with higher voices were more popular, especially if they were men. That study is in the journal *Political Psychology* [Casey Klofstad, [Candidate Voice Pitch Influences Election Outcomes](#)].

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In the second study, researchers wanted to know why a deep voice was a potent political tool. They recorded men and women speaking the sentence “I urge you to vote for me this November.” They then altered the recordings to create higher and lower pitched versions of each sentence.

More than 800 volunteers listened to the audio. Their preference for lower-pitched voices correlated with their preconception that these individuals were older, stronger and more competent. This study is in the journal *PLoS ONE* [Casey Klofstad, Rindy Anderson and Stephen Nowicki, [Perceptions of Competence, Strength, and Age Influence Voters to Select Leaders with Lower-Pitched Voices](#)].

The researchers note that a preference for leaders with deeper voices may be the result of so-called “cavemen instincts.” A deep voice is associated with high testosterone, physical strength and aggression. And way back when, those qualities were probably attractive in a leader. High-pitched voices also are thought to convey negative emotions, such as stress and fear.

We like to think that we consider our electoral options carefully, and base our decisions on conscious, rational judgments. But it may be a candidate’s height, attractiveness or voice that play outsized roles when we go to the polls.

—Diana Kwon

[The above text is a transcript of this podcast.]

[Study audio via Casey Klofstad, University of Miami]

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gs_chandy

August 24, 2015, 8:38 PM

"Deep Voice Gives Politicians Electoral Boost"

Interesting, if not entirely convincing. It's even a bit confusing.

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Are we to infer that D. Trump is significantly advantaged over Hilary Clinton because he has a deeper (male) voice than her higher-pitched (female) voice? Must Ms Clinton ingest doses of testosterone in order to compete on level terms with D. Trump?

Ah, I notice that, when competing against females, a higher-pitched voice may be useful.

As earlier stated, it's somewhat focusing.

GSC

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gs_chandy

August 24, 2015, 8:40 PM

It really is fascinating to learn what 'science' and 'scientific' researchers are often up to these days!

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ThomasB

August 25, 2015, 12:23 AM

Interesting results, but there seems to be an obvious next question: does voice pitch correlate to competence or confidence? As we get older our voices usually deepen and we (hopefully) get more competent and confident about some things. Perhaps we also talk differently when we talk about something we have experience in and knowledge about. Of course, there are always those who pretend expertise, but the correlation with voice pitch is certainly not 100%, so there are plenty of other indications as to whether a person is trustworthy or not.

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