

From the Networks to the Net

Internet and Personal Influence during the Campaign for the 2006 General Elections in Italy



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Focus on...

The role of the Internet users in the
diffusion of online political
information

From “users” to “users 2.0”

- Who are “Internet users”? Problems in operational definition
- Internet users → 32% of Italians (>6 years)
heavy users → 11% of Italians (>6 years)
Source: Istat (National Institute of Statistics)
- Users 2.0

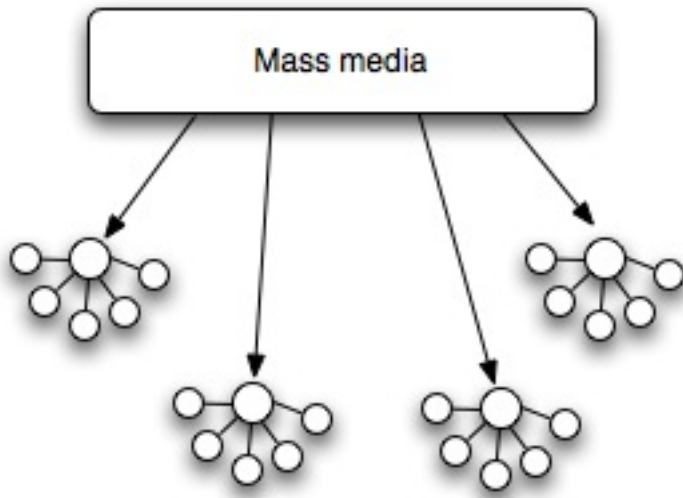
Re-mediation

“[...] the individual person who reads something and talks about it with other people cannot be taken simply as a simile for social entities like newspapers and magazines. He himself needs to be studied in his two-fold capacity as a communicator and as a relay point in the network of mass communication”

(Lazarsfeld, Katz 1955, 1)

From Lazarsfeld to the multi-step flow of communication model

Two step flow model



○ Opinion leaders
○ Individual in social contact with an opinion leader

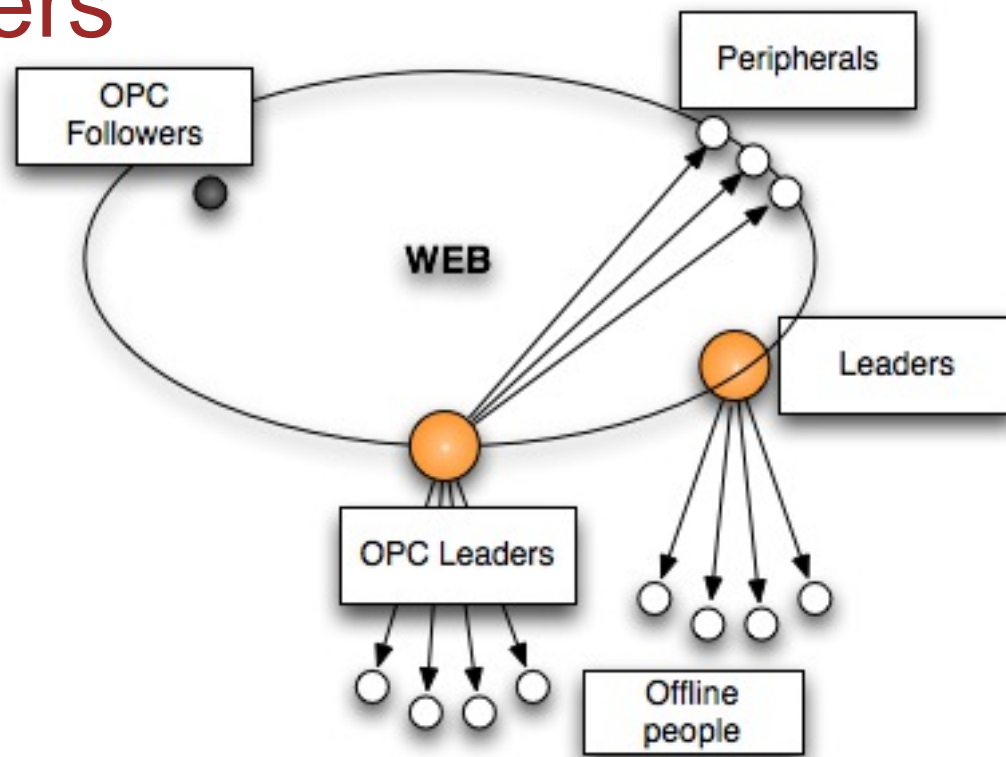
Lazarsfeld, Berelson e Gaudet (1944)
Lazarsfeld Katz (1955)

Widespread
mediatization
(Thompson, 1998)



Lazarsfeld, Menzel (1963)
Robinson (1976)
IPDI (2004)

Typology of users



The relation between Online Political Citizenship and Political influence

	OPC	No OPC
Influentials	OPC leaders (16%)	Leaders (8%)
No influentials	OPC followers (23%)	Peripherals (53%)

Political Online Citizenship: indicators

Gladiators:

- registered at a website to receive political emails from a party or a candidate (33%);
- visited a political discussion group or chat room online (37%);
- donated money using the Internet to a candidate or political organization (2,5%).

Apathetics:

- visited or posted comments on a political Web log, participated in a political chat room (60%);
- received political e-mail (63%);
- forwarded or sent to someone else emails about politics (52%).

Spectators:

- answered to online polls about political or civil issues (80%);
- visited a Web site for news about politics and campaigns (87%).

Political influence: indicators

Political activism:

Gladiators:

- Served as an officer for some club or organization (23%);
- Been an active member of any group that tries to influence public policy or government (21%);
- Written an article for a magazine or newspaper (20%);
- Worked for a political party (17%);
- Held or run for political office (6%).

Apathetics:

- Written or called any politician at the state, local or national level; (39%);
- Written a letter to a newspaper or magazine or called a live radio or TV show to express an opinion (34%);
- Served on a committee for some local organization (29%);
- Made a speech (28%).

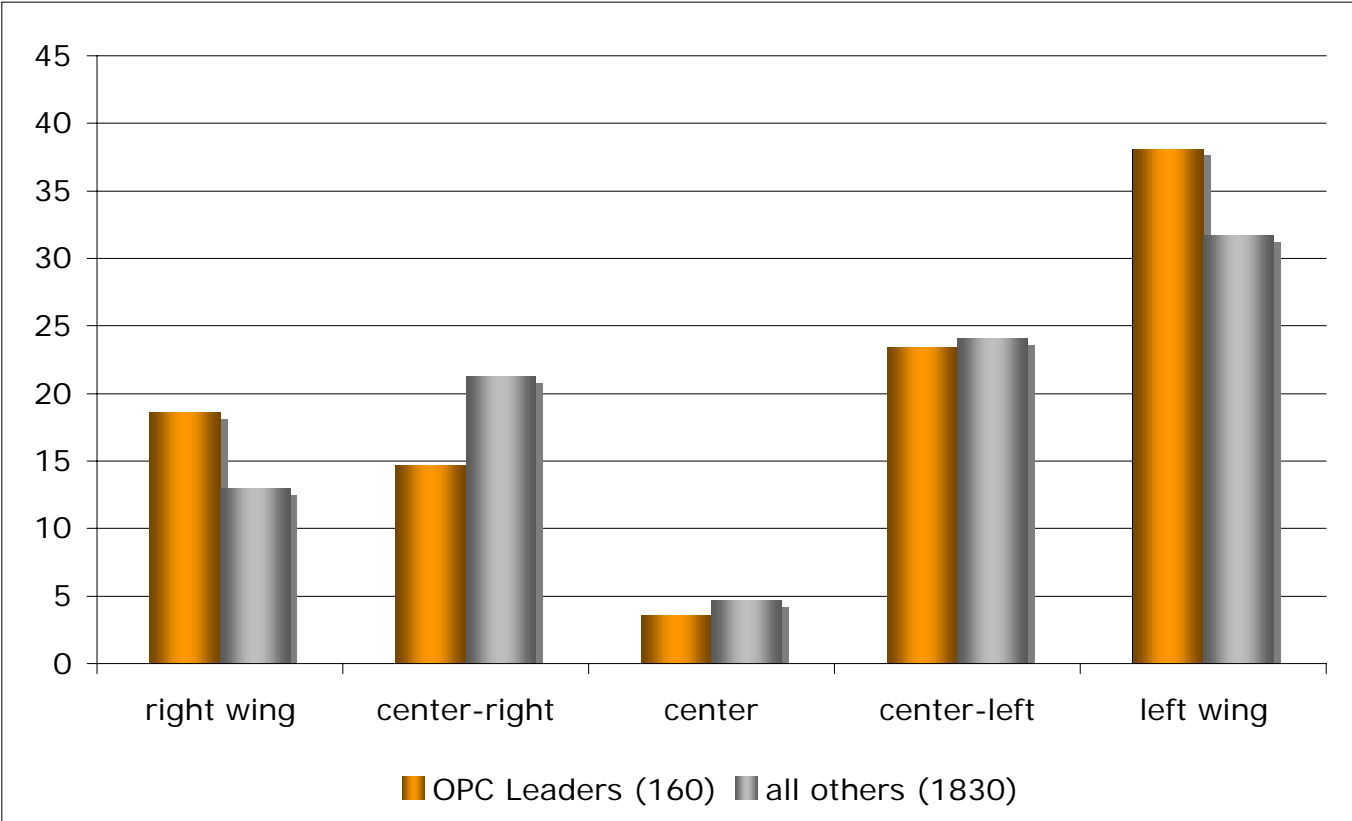
Spectators:

- Start a political discussion (78%);
- Attended a political rally, speech, or organized protest of any kind (63%);
- Signed a petition (54,5%);
- Attended a public meeting (45%).

Relational relevance:

- Tried to persuade someone to vote for a candidate or party
- At least 2 of 3 groups (flatmates, friends, colleagues) asked advice about vote

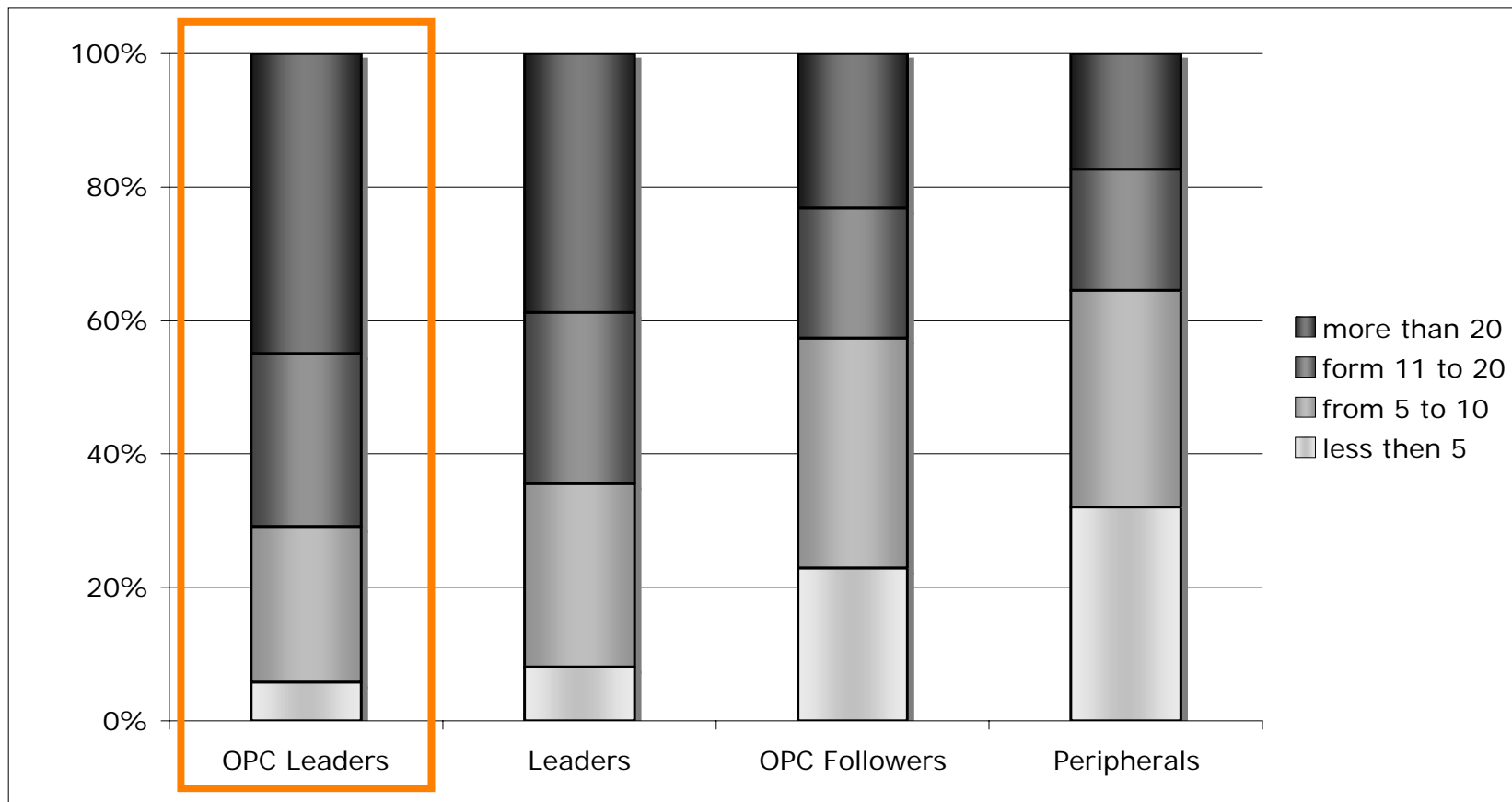
Political placement



OPC Leaders place themselves at the end of the political spectrum

Relational density

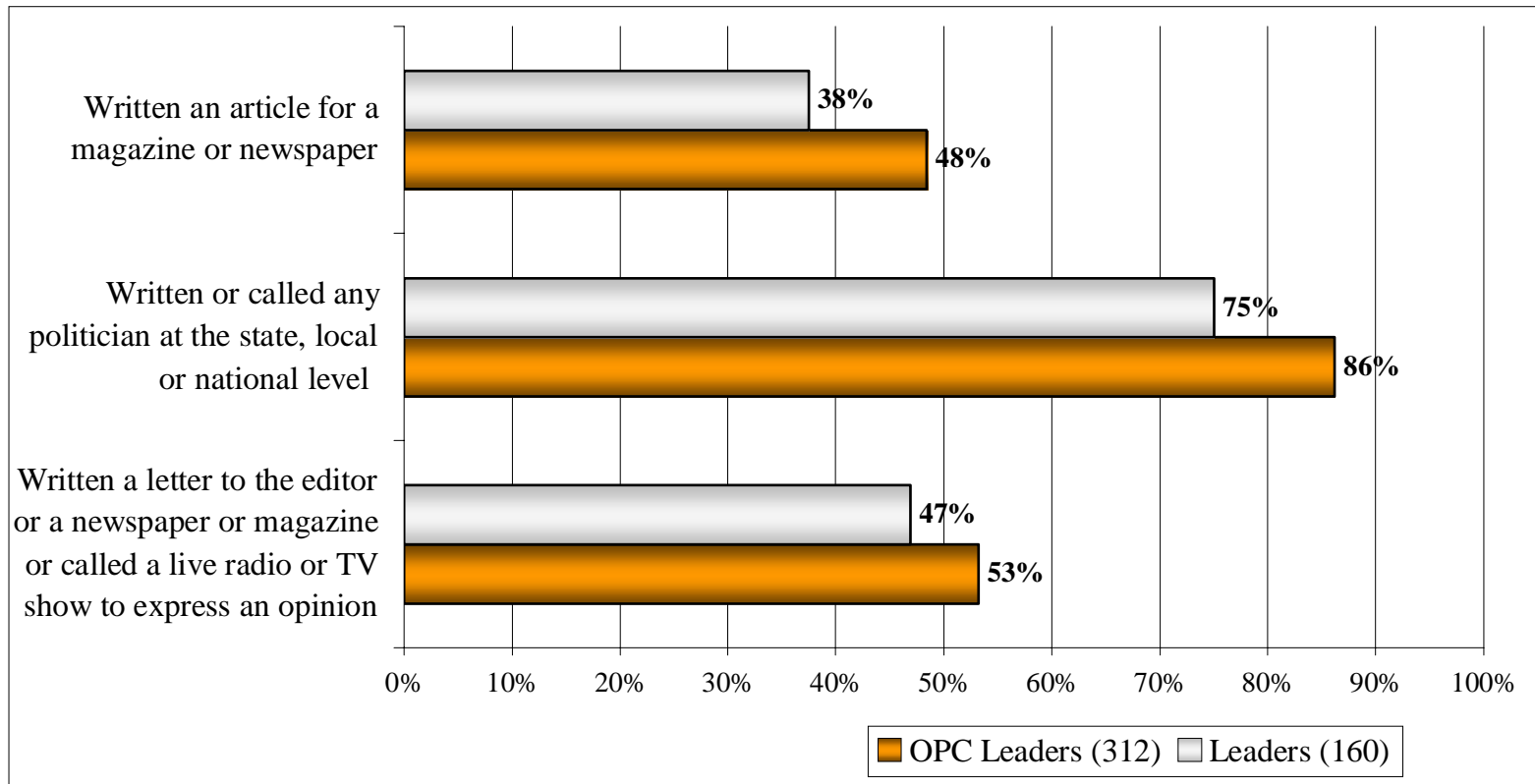
Beyond your family and your work environment, can you indicate the number of friends and/or acquaintances you are related to (people whose opinion is important for you and/or people who consider important your opinion)?



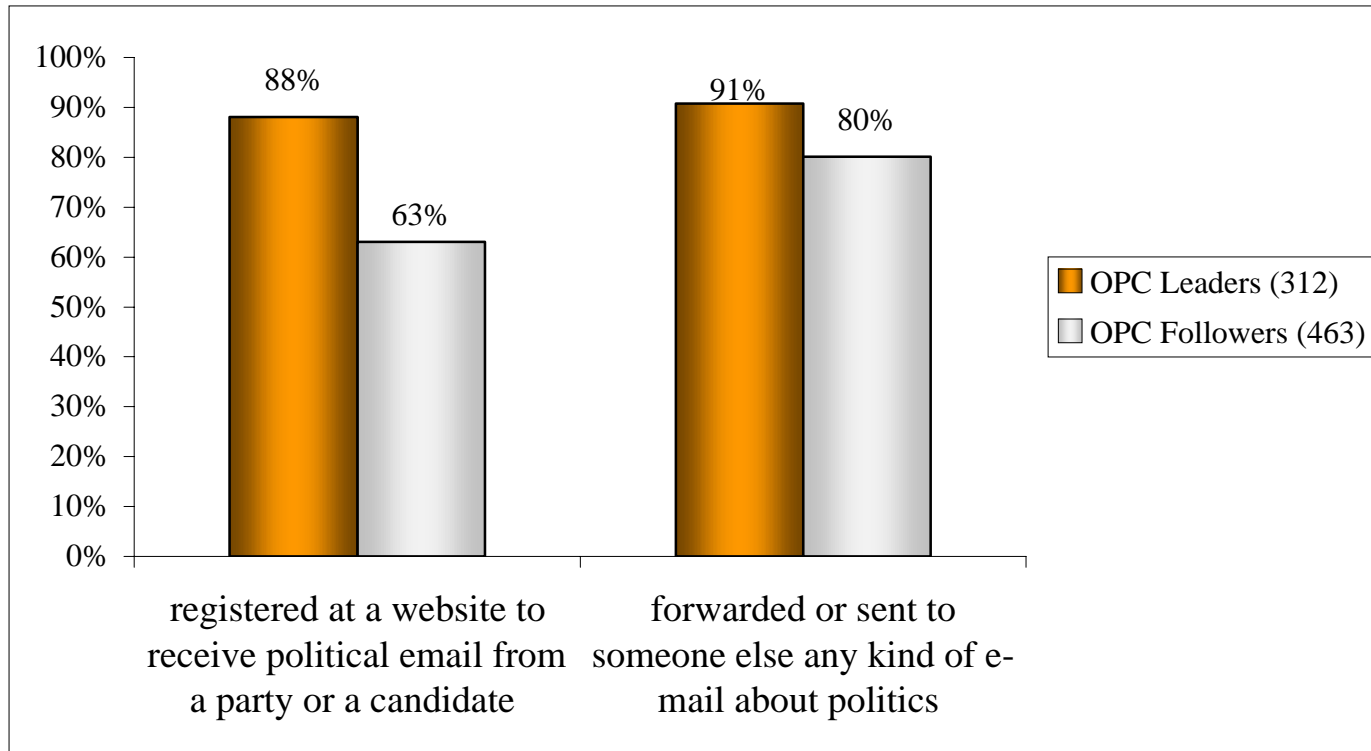
Communication activities

OPC leaders take all communicative chances, both online and offline.

- Heavy newspapers readers
- Light television viewers

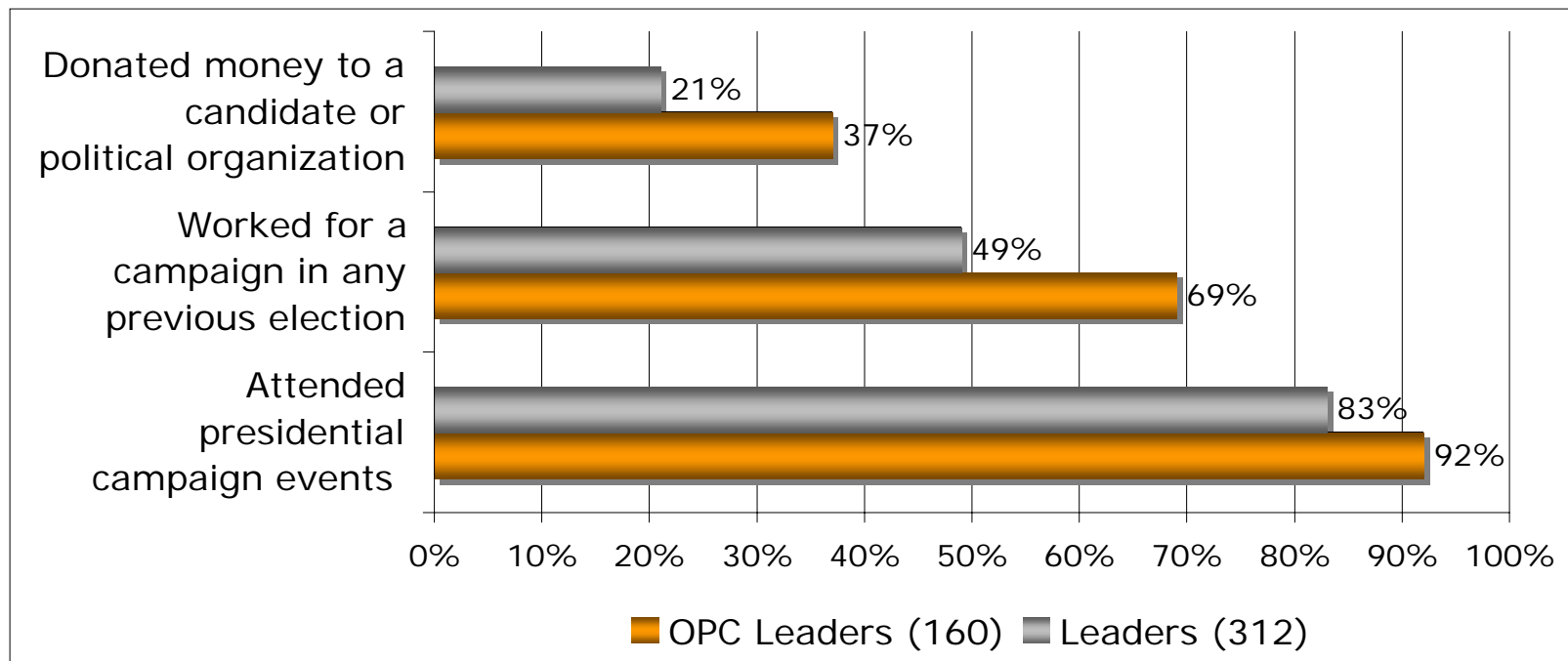


How OPC leaders use the web



OPC leaders look for more direct and deeper information; on the web they find news unavailable elsewhere.

Out of the web: political activities



The web is a connecting space where OPC leaders organize offline events.



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