Closing the Gap: Information and Mass Support in a Dominant Party Regime

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Abstract

What role does information play in shaping mass support in dominant party settings? We conduct a field experiment during the 2016 Ugandan parliamentary elections that provides voters with information about candidates from all competing political parties. Specifically, we produce and screen video-recorded candidate interviews in randomly selected villages just prior to the election. Voters have lower baseline knowledge about opposition candidates compared to ruling party candidates. We find that the video screening reduced this knowledge gap and caused voters to update more positively about the opposition. Further, those who watched the videos were less likely to vote for ruling party candidates, and those initially leaning toward ruling party candidates were more likely to vote for the opposition. These findings suggest that information asymmetries play a role in sustaining mass support for ruling parties in dominant party settings, and that reducing them may strengthen electoral competition.

Keywords: Elections, Africa, Field experiment, Dominant party regime, Voter behavior

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Dominant party regimes—which allow opposition parties to contest in multiparty elections but in which elections do not result in an alternation of power—have been the most common form of non-democratic regime since the mid-1990s (Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010).[1] This type of political organization has proven quite durable, with ruling parties controlling politics for decades in countries across such varied contexts as Mexico, Singapore, Tanzania, Egypt, and Malaysia (Brownlee, 2007). Much of the existing research on dominant party regimes examines how these regimes employ institutions, such as parties, legislatures, and elections, to maintain political power (Magaloni, 2006; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009). Though much of this work has examined how dominant parties manage the threat posed by rival *elites*, these regimes must also win electoral victories, which relies on the support of the *masses*.

In this paper, we focus on the role that information plays in shaping mass support for ruling versus opposition parties (Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya, 2011; Guriev and Treisman, 2015, 2016; Hobbs and Roberts, 2018). In dominant party regimes, information about the quality of the opposition is often sparse relative to the ruling party. This information asymmetry can be due to a variety of factors, including differential access to media platforms, campaign resources, restrictions placed on opposition candidates and parties, and manipulating information through the use of propaganda (Levitsky and Way, 2010). However it is produced, it can result in greater uncertainty about the relative quality of opposition candidates as well as biased information about ruling party and opposition candidates, the former portrayed more positively and the latter more negatively.

We conduct a field experiment to investigate how an intervention that reduces this information asymmetry affects voters' evaluation of candidates and ultimately, their vote choice. To do so, we produce video-recorded interviews with parliamentary candidates and conduct public screenings of the interviews in randomly selected villages across eleven parliamentary constituencies in Uganda, a country governed by a dominant party regime.[2] The candidate interviews were designed to

[1] Other names for this regime type include "competitive authoritarian" (Levitsky and Way, 2002), "hybrid regime" (Diamond, 2002), "electoral authoritarian" (Linz, 2000; Schedler, 2002), and "hegemonic party" (Sartori, 1976).

[2] Throughout the text we employ the term "information" as short-hand for the specific type and method of information provided, recognizing that different types of information and information dissemination may produce different results.

increase the information available about the quality of candidates from all parties. They closely mimic candidate debates, which have become increasingly common around the world. Since 1990, 18 countries in Africa and 17 countries in Latin America have held debates among candidates for head of state (SI, Section A).

In each constituency, we invited all candidates to a television studio to record their timed responses to a set of six standardized questions about policy preferences and qualifications. We compiled a single video for each constituency featuring all the interviews of candidates contesting in that constituency. The candidate videos were publicly screened in 120 randomly selected villages, with another 120 villages serving as control. This activity was conducted in collaboration with civil society organizations, a local university, and Innovations for Poverty Action, and with approval from the Electoral Commission of Uganda, the President's Office, and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology.

Increasing access to information about candidates from both the ruling party and the opposition should have the effect of *reducing uncertainty* about candidate quality, particularly for opposition candidates, about whom there was less information to begin with. Information should also serve to *correct biases* in priors about the quality of candidates. Due to the baseline information asymmetry, we expect greater and more positive updating about opposition relative to ruling party candidates. All else equal, voters who receive information about candidates should be more likely to vote for candidates about whom they update positively, compared to voters who do not receive information.

A panel survey with over 4,000 registered voters, with the second survey wave conducted on and immediately after election day, enables us to estimate the effects of the video screenings on voters' knowledge about candidates, their assessments of candidate likability, and their vote choice. We find that at baseline, voters have significantly less information about candidates from the opposition than about those from the ruling party—they are significantly less likely to have even heard of these candidates. We further find that watching candidate videos has the effect of, first, increasing voters' knowledge about opposition candidates and, second, increasing the likability of

opposition candidates. While voters update their beliefs about candidates from all parties, we find significant asymmetries in updating, with larger shifts for opposition candidates. This asymmetric updating results in a decreased likelihood of voting for the ruling party and an increased likelihood of voting for the opposition, as measured in our endline survey. The effects of information on voting behavior are driven by those who initially supported ruling party candidates.

Why did the candidate videos cause voters, especially those who intended to vote for ruling party candidates, to move toward opposition candidates? We show that asymmetric updating translated into changes in voting behavior, especially among voters with high baseline levels of uncertainty about the opposition. Those least informed about opposition candidates relative to ruling party candidates were most likely to move away from the ruling party in response to information. However, the treatment effect on voting for the opposition was muted by fear of repercussions. Those who, at baseline, reported that they expected their area to receive fewer resources if not supporting the ruling party were significantly less likely to respond to the information treatment by voting for the opposition. These results suggest both the promise of strengthening the information environment to support electoral competition, as well as the limitations of such efforts in contexts where some voters fear punishment for supporting the opposition.

A growing body of work investigates how access to information and governments' control of information affect mass support and voter behavior (Boas and Hidalgo, 2011; Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya, 2011; Kronick and Marshall, 2019; Larreguy, Marshall and Snyder, 2018). To our knowledge, this is the first field experiment on this topic that takes place in a dominant party regime, where information asymmetries are likely to be more severe than in democratic contexts. Panel data allows us to examine voters' prior beliefs about candidates and parties, how and when voters update in the face of new information, and how information shapes their choice over a set of candidates on election day.

Our study is also distinct from a number of studies on information and accountability in that we provide information on *all* candidates rather than on incumbents alone (Bhandari, Larreguy and

Marshall, 2019; Chong et al., 2014; Malesky, Schuler and Tran, 2012; Pande, 2011). In the most coordinated set of studies to date, a meta-analysis found no effect of information about incumbent quality on turnout or vote choice (Dunning et al., 2019). We argue and show empirically that voters have relatively high levels of baseline information about incumbents—it is the challengers, and especially challengers from opposition parties, about whom voters are most uncertain. In such a context, providing more information about the incumbent is unlikely to move voters, but providing information about challengers can have important effects on vote choice.

We add to recent work on candidate debates by investigating different outcomes in a substantively different context. Specifically, we focus on vote choice rather than preferences (Brierley, Kramon and Ofosu, 2020), and voter reaction rather than candidates' response to the opportunity to participate in debates (Bowles and Larreguy, 2019). Further, and as above, to our knowledge this type of intervention has not been studied in the context of a dominant party regime. The study most closely related to ours was conducted in Sierra Leone (Casey, Glennerster and Bidwell, Forthcoming), which has seen alternations of power between political parties and is considered a democracy by Polity IV. Focusing on a dominant party regime enables us to study the effect of information in the context of an informational playing field slanted in favor of the ruling party.

Our findings suggest that information asymmetries between opposition and ruling party candidates can play an important role in sustaining mass support for dominant parties. At the same time, they show that relatively simple interventions increasing access to information about all candidates can significantly decrease voting for the dominant party and may increase the competitiveness of elections. We believe our findings are most likely to apply to dominant party regimes, but may extend to other types of non-democratic regimes with more limited political competition as well. For example, Malesky and Schuler (2020) find that mass support in a single-party regime, Vietnam, is also supported by voters' certainty about the policy positions and access to resources of party candidates. Our findings may also shed light on the effect of information on voter updating and behavior in democratic settings with locally dominant parties, although we expect information asymmetries to be less severe in such contexts.

Voting Behavior in Dominant Party Settings

Our theoretical framework builds on spatial voting models, which assume that voters prefer candidates whose policy preferences are closer to their own ideal points (Downs, 1957). Similarly, we assume that voters prefer candidates who will perform best in office if elected, in expectation. However, in addition to policy preferences, we allow for a broader set of candidate characteristics to factor into expected performance, including perceived competence and access to state resources. Following a literature in American and comparative politics, we also assume that at least some voters are risk averse and prefer candidates about whose expected performance in office they have lower uncertainty (Shepsle, 1972; Bartels, 1986). Uncertainty is typically higher for challengers as compared to incumbents (Eckles et al., 2014; Enelow and Hinich, 1981; Jacobson, 1981).

Voters infer candidates' expected performance in office both by consuming information, for example through traditional media and candidate campaigns, as well as by using heuristics. Candidates' party affiliation is a particularly important heuristic in the context of voting decisions (Downs, 1957; Rahn, 1993). In developed democracies, party affiliation is often closely related to ideology. In sub-Saharan Africa, political parties tend not to be organized on an ideological spectrum (Van de Walle, 2003) but can still provide meaningful information about candidates on the party ticket – for example, their likelihood of being able to access state resources (in the context of a dominant party regime) or their ethnic affiliation (in contexts where there are ethnic parties). Moreover, party cues can be especially important in low-information environments and among voters who are less politically aware (Kam, 2005).

Increasing the amount of information voters have about all the candidates on the ballot should allow them to better assess expected performance in office and should reduce the need to rely on (party) heuristics. The extent to which voters update when provided with accurate information about candidates will depend on voters' priors about the set of candidates they are evaluating. We should expect little updating about candidates whom voters have accurate prior beliefs, and more updating about candidates whom voters have inaccurate prior beliefs. Further, we expect

more updating for those candidates about whom voters have greater uncertainty due to a lack of information. A central tenet of Bayesian theory is that, ceteris paribus, information results in more updating when the uncertainty around the prior belief is high. All else equal, voters should be more likely to vote for candidates about whom they update positively.

While the above describes a logic of voting in a generalized context, we focus specifically on how this calculus plays out in dominant party regimes. We expect that in these regimes, one of the main differences affecting voters' decision-making, as compared to consolidated democracies, is that there exist significant asymmetries in the amount and quality of information voters have about candidates representing the ruling party as compared to those representing opposition parties (Levitsky and Way, 2010). Specifically, we expect that voters have less information and thus greater uncertainty about opposition relative to ruling party candidates (Morgenstern and Zechmeister, 2001), and that the information they do have about these candidates is negatively biased.

This imbalance in the quantity and the accuracy of information about the ruling party versus the opposition can be a result of several factors. First, ruling parties may strategically seek to control the information environment and use information to their own electoral advantage (Levitsky and Way, 2002). This can include the use of propaganda to convince the public of their competence, which can stabilize even incompetent regimes (Guriev and Treisman, 2015). It can also involve limiting access to information – for example, via internet censorship, blocking access to social media, and aggressive regulation of the media (Knight and Tribin, 2019; Kronick and Marshall, 2019; Hobbs and Roberts, 2018). In the case of non-democracies, such limits have been associated with higher support for governments (Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya, 2011; Guriev and Treisman, 2016). Ruling parties can actively restrict the access of opposition parties and candidates to the public and vice versa, for example by preventing them from appearing in the media or holding campaign rallies.

Second, opposition parties in dominant party contexts are often institutionally weak and have few resources relative to ruling parties, the latter of whom may use state resources on behalf of the

party, especially in non-democratic settings (Schedler, 2002). The weakness of opposition parties limits their ability to campaign, participate in traditional media, access voters, and otherwise share information about the quality of their candidates. Further, in the context of a dominant party regime, affiliation to the ruling party is a particularly salient heuristic, as it is associated with access to resources and the ability to govern (Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010) – even in the absence of concrete information about specific candidates. Meanwhile, voters may assume opposition parties and their candidates are weak, non-viable, or simply unable to effectively represent voters due to their limited influence in governance decision-making.

Together, these factors lead to an asymmetric information environment where there is more positive and more substantial information about ruling party candidates compared to opposition candidates. We find, for example, that Ugandan voters in our sample were twice as likely to be able to name non-incumbent ruling party candidates as non-incumbent opposition candidates, suggesting a large gap in basic information about candidates across parties. Further, voters' priors are likely to be biased positively in the case of ruling party candidates and negatively in the case of opposition candidates.

Under these conditions, increasing access to credible and accurate information about all candidates should, first, cause voters to learn relatively more about opposition as compared to ruling party candidates, since they had less information about these candidates to begin with, thereby reducing uncertainty about opposition candidates; and, second, cause voters to update more positively about opposition candidates as compared to ruling party candidates.

We thus begin with two assumptions: 1) Voters are better informed about ruling party than opposition candidates; 2) voters have more negative priors about opposition as compared to ruling party candidates. We then derive the following hypotheses about how information will affect uncertainty and updating about ruling party compared to opposition candidates:

> **H1:** Uncertainty reduction. Providing information will increase knowledge about opposition candidates to a greater extent than about ruling party candidates.

H2: Positive updating. Providing information will increase favorability assessments of opposition candidates to a greater extent than of ruling party candidates.

Then, if voters learn more about opposition candidates and update positively about them, they should also be more likely to vote for these candidates than they would have been in the absence of the provision of information.

H3: Voters who receive information about candidates will be more likely to vote for the opposition than those who do not.

Since the hypothesized effect is a shift towards the opposition in terms of favorability ratings and vote choice, the most relevant sample are voters who intend to vote for the ruling party at baseline.

Several factors may moderate these effects. First, following from the discussion above, treatments should be strongest for voters with the greatest asymmetry in their knowledge about ruling party and opposition candidates. We expect the effect on vote choice to be most pronounced among voters who have the greatest gap in knowledge between the ruling party and the opposition at baseline (M1).

However, reduced uncertainty and positive updating about opposition candidates may not result in changed votes if voters perceive voting for the opposition as sufficiently costly. We consider two reasons why crossing party lines may pose a cost to voters, loyalty and fear. First, voters may feel loyal to the party or its ideology (Stokes, 1962), such that they derive disutility from voting for a different party's candidate. In such cases, the treatment effect of information should be stronger for voters with weaker party loyalty.

Second, in the context of a dominant party regime, voters may support ruling party candidates to avoid punishment by the regime (Magaloni, 2006; Schedler, 2015). In particular, they may expect that a low vote share for the ruling party in their area will translate into a lower allocation of government resources. Indeed, 49% of our sample reported believing that politicians and/or political parties monitor how their area voted and made decisions about the allocation of resources

depending on where they had received electoral support. Voters who expect resource allocations to be a direct consequence of their vote choice may be less likely to change their voting behavior, even if their opinions about opposition candidates improve. If the perceived cost of voting for the opposition is sufficiently high, some voters whose preferences change in favor of the opposition may stay home on election day rather than vote for their preferred candidate. Thus, we expect the effect of information on voting for the opposition will be stronger among voters with weaker loyalty to the ruling party (M2); and that the effect of information on voting for the opposition will be weaker among voters who believe their vote is monitored by the ruling party (M3).

Finally, by screening videos about candidates publicly, our treatment bundles the provision of information with an opportunity for deliberation. While deliberation could moderate the effect of information on vote choice, the direction of this effect is ambiguous in the context we study. Party representatives may try to counter negative information about their candidates (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2012), thereby offsetting effects, but deliberation could also make the information provided more salient. We leave this important question to future research.

We test our theoretical expectations in the context of a dominant party regime, though it is possible our theoretical expectations may also hold in other types of non-democracies. We expect similar effects in cases of democracies with locally dominant parties. In these cases, information asymmetries of the type we describe above may exist but—since the active restriction of information about opposition candidates is less prevalent—are likely to be less severe. Next we describe the political context in which our intervention takes place and the factors contributing to information asymmetries between ruling party and opposition candidates.

Political Context in Uganda

Uganda is an East African country that has been governed by President Yoweri Museveni and his party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), for more than thirty years. Between 1986, when Museveni and the National Resistance Army overthrew the previous government, and 2005,

Uganda was governed by a single-party system. A referendum in 2005 saw the return of multiparty politics, and three multiparty elections have been held since, in 2006, 2011, and 2016. Nevertheless, Uganda is considered a dominant party regime as the ruling party dominates all levels of electoral politics, from local councils to the national legislature. Despite the presence of multiparty elections, there has not been a turnover of power at the executive level since 1986. At the time of the study, the ruling party controlled 72 percent of seats in the legislature and 77 percent of the elected heads of second-tier governments, the districts.

Voters elect members of parliament to a unicameral legislature in a single-member, first-past-the-post system. The share of seats opposition candidates hold in parliament has fallen in the three elections held since the reinstatement of multiparty elections in 2005—from 18 percent in 2006 to 13 percent in 2016. The number of parties represented in parliament has also declined in this period, from five in 2006 to three in 2016. The three opposition parties represented in the current parliament are the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the Democratic Party (DP), and the Uganda People's Congress (UPC). All three opposition parties had candidates competing in the constituencies in which our study took place.

Uganda is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, with more than sixty officially recognized ethnic groups. The ethnic composition of the population sub-nationally, however, is fairly homogeneous, as ethnic groups tend to be organized spatially. For this reason, the ethnic identity of candidates standing for member of parliament within a given constituency varies little; co-ethnicity with candidates thus generally plays a limited role in voters' decision-making. In seven of our eleven constituencies, there was no variation in candidates' ethnicity, in three, candidates with an ethnicity different from the modal one received less than ten percent of the vote, and in one constituency, the minority candidate won (SI, Table E4).

Ruling-party candidates at all levels have electoral advantages over their challengers, including their ability to reach voters through the media and during campaigns. Radio stations serve as most Ugandans' primary news sources. Sometimes the stations are owned by ruling-party politicians,

and opposition candidates at both the parliamentary (Bindhe, 2010) and presidential level (ACME 2010) have reportedly been blocked from participating on radio shows during campaigns (Paul, 2016), limiting their reach to voters. In 2015, the parliament passed the Public Order Management Act stipulating that all public meetings require advance approval by the police. Opposition parties have complained that this law has been used to prevent them from organizing and campaigning, a concern shared by international observers (Freedom House, 2016). Organizations such as Human Rights Watch have also reported more pernicious ways of tipping the playing field against opposition candidates, including violence toward and physical intimidation of voters and candidates (HRW 2001; 2009). In addition, ruling party politicians are perceived as having more direct access to state resources. The president has repeatedly blamed poor services in specific constituencies on voters having elected opposition politicians, likening opposition legislators to "blocked straws" who cannot access development programs and funding (for example, see NRM 2015).

This is not to say Uganda's ruling party and president do not also enjoy genuine support. The government has presided over relatively steady economic growth over the past several decades and is credited with bringing security, albeit after a protracted civil conflict in the north of the country (Izama and Wilkerson, 2011). Public opinion surveys find relatively high levels of satisfaction with politicians' performance[3] and there have been improvements in health outcomes such as child mortality and in access to basic education.

In a nationally representative survey from December 2016, about 1.5 months before the election when our study took place, about 70 percent of respondents said they felt close to a political party. Of those, nearly 70 percent reported feeling close to the ruling party, followed by the Forum for Democratic Change at 17 percent. A third of respondents reported trusting the ruling party "a lot" and a quarter "somewhat." Only 11 percent of respondents reported trusting opposition parties a lot and less than a quarter "somewhat." A third reported not trusting opposition parties at all (Afrobarometer Round 7.) The gap in trust between the ruling party and the opposition is substantial, even comparatively. Comparing thirty-three countries in the Afrobarometer survey, Uganda has

[3]E.g., in the 2015 Afrobarometer survey, the president had an approval rating of over 80 percent.

the fifth largest gap in reported trust between the ruling party and opposition, just behind countries like Tanzania and Zimbabwe, which are also dominant party systems (SI, Figure E3).

When asked whether the opposition presented a "viable alternative vision and plan for the country," more than 40 percent disagreed while nearly 20 percent said they did not know (Afrobarometer Round 6). Again, in comparative perspective Ugandan respondents report some of the highest rates of uncertainty about the viability of the opposition, with the fourth highest percentage of respondents answering "don't know" out of thirty four countries with data on this question (SI, Figure E4). Meanwhile, only 52 percent of Ugandan respondents felt that the media offered fair coverage of all candidates (Afrobarometer Round 6). In combination with our survey results presented below, this suggests that relatively weak support for opposition parties and candidates may be in part due to a lack of information about the candidates representing these parties.

"Meet the Candidates" videos

The intervention we evaluate aimed to provide voters with standardized, comparable, accurate, and credible information about all candidates in their constituency in the run-up to the 2016 Ugandan parliamentary elections. We produced and screened videos in which parliamentary candidates answered a set of questions about their policy preferences, qualifications for office, personal characteristics, and relevant experience.

The objective in designing the intervention was to provide balanced information about all candidates in a constituency such that voters have a) more information overall and b) equal amounts and comparable information about the different candidates available. The goal was to provide more credible information than often provided at rallies: first, since promises are on tape and the same message is provided to all constituents. Second, voters can judge candidates' qualifications—such as eloquence, grasp of policy issues, and knowledge of problems affecting the constituency—from directly observing the candidates side by side. The intervention focused on programmatic information. In the terms of our theoretical discussion, the goal was to reduce uncertainty about candidates

and to shift priors closer to reality. In practice, our treatment was publicly provided and thus also provided a venue for deliberation.

We selected questions to elicit answers that would provide voters with information about candidate characteristics with respect to policy positions and qualifications. To help voters evaluate which candidates held policy preferences similar to their own, we asked candidates about their position on three salient issues at the time of the election: 1) constituency policy priorities, 2) the creation of new administrative units (districts), and 3) the legal consequences for those convicted of vote buying (script in SI, Section K). The question about constituency priorities asked candidates which specific sector–such as health or education–they deemed the top priority for their constituency, why, and how they would ensure improvements in their priority sector. The creation of new districts is a highly salient topic in Uganda where, since 2000, the number of districts has increased from 56 to 127. Finally, we selected a policy proposal for electoral reform being debated at the time, banning candidates convicted of vote-buying from contesting for five years. In addition, to help voters assess candidates' competence, we asked candidates about their qualifications, past achievements, and reasons for their policy positions.

To create the videos, we invited all parliamentary candidates in sampled constituencies into a professional TV studio in Kampala several weeks prior to the election. Trained moderators conducted the interviews in local languages and ensured each candidate answered every question and received equal time. Recordings of candidates' responses were professionally edited, producing one video per constituency. Each resulting video purposely resembled a debate to facilitate comparisons across candidates, the final videos showcased the candidates' responses to each question consecutively. Candidates' names and party logos were included in the video to increase voter recognition of name and party affiliation. Ninety-one percent of all candidates in the eleven constituencies participated in the videos. Figure 1 shows a screenshot from one video.

We implemented the intervention in collaboration with a consortium of partners, including Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), the Department of Political Science at Makerere University,

the Agency for Transformation, a Ugandan civil society group, and Leo Africa Forum, a Ugandan civil society group organizing policy debates. The project was designed in consultation with the Electoral Commission of Uganda, the NRM Electoral Commission, and the main political parties.

The videos were shown publicly in a "village road show" in a randomly selected set of villages in the weeks leading up to the elections. More than 100 people on average attended each screening; in total across the eleven constituencies, approximately 12,000 people saw the videos.

Figure 1: Screenshot of candidate video

Research teams mobilized voters to attend the screenings and incentivized a randomly selected subset of voters to attend and participate in surveys before and after the screening. Thus, our treatment consists of the opportunity to watch the candidate videos as a group and the answering of a set of follow-up questions. As such, the intervention combines the gathering of voters and the provision of information. We therefore cannot rule out that the gathering itself contributed to the effect—for example, because it allowed voters to deliberate and/or to coordinate on their vote choice. However, our results on updating suggest that the information provided played a critical role. This is consistent with the finding by Casey, Glennerster and Bidwell (Forthcoming) that both information in the form of candidate videos and deliberation were necessary to influence voter behavior in Sierra Leone.

Research Design

The study took place in eleven parliamentary constituencies, spread across all four regions of the country (for details on constituency and village selection see SI, Section B). Sample constituencies look very similar to the average constituency in Uganda in terms of the vote share the ruling party received in both the Parliamentary and the Presidential elections in 2016, and with regard to vote margins. In our sample, the ruling party received 61% in the Presidential elections, compared to

62% in the remainder of the country; and 51% compared to 49% in the rest of Uganda in elections for Member of Parliament. The vote margin is slightly lower in the Presidential election (27% compared to 35%), while the reverse is true for MP elections (24% compared to 21%). None of the differences between our sample and the national sample are statistically significant at conventional levels (SI, Table B1).

The primary unit of randomization was the village. We selected villages to maximize overlap with polling-station catchment areas. Within each rural parish in the sampled constituencies, we randomly selected one polling station with high overlap between the polling station catchment area and the primary village it served. We define this primary village as the one contributing the highest number of voters to a polling station according to the updated voter register of the National Electoral Commission (2015).

We randomly assigned these villages to a treatment condition, which involved holding a video screening in the village, or to a control condition. In each sampled village, we randomly selected twenty voters to participate in a survey, drawing them from the official voter register compiled by the National Electoral Commission. Since endline data collection was conducted by phone, we restricted our sample to those who could be reached via cell phone, whether their own or that of a family member, friend, or neighbor, a condition met by 98 percent of those at the listing stage.

Data

We conducted a baseline and endline survey to collect our primary outcomes of interest, which are knowledge about candidates, candidate likability, and vote choice. In the baseline survey, conducted in January 2016, we collected data on respondent characteristics and prior beliefs about candidates in the respondent's constituency. At the end of the baseline survey, respondents in the treatment group were given an invitation card to attend the debate screening in the second half of January. Respondents were told that if they attended the screening and were willing to conduct a brief interview afterwards, they would receive a small compensation in the form of cell phone credit (about USD 0.50), redeemable by presenting the invitation at the follow-up interview. Within

24 hours of the video screening, those in the treatment group also received a post-screening survey, collecting data on respondents' perception of candidate performance in the videos.

We contacted all respondents by phone on the evening of the election (February 18, 2016) to ask about their individual voting behavior and witnessed vote-buying. Due to time constraints, we randomly selected one-half of respondents to complete an additional survey module that elicited their political knowledge and perceptions of the candidates' likability. Respondents who could not be reached on election day were tracked over the course of several days. We were able to reach 92 percent of enrolled respondents at endline. Attrition is balanced across treatment and control groups for the full sample. However, we find a slight imbalance in attrition for the restricted sample of NRM-leaning voters (SI, Section E). To ensure this imbalance is not driving our findings, we show that our results are robust to using inverse probability weights (SI, Tables G10 and G15) and Manski bounds (SI, Tables G11, G12 and G16).

Our primary measures of interest are as follows:

Heard of: a binary variable indicating whether a voter can independently name a candidate (measured at baseline and endline).

Knowledge: an index consisting of the following indicators, each taking the value 1 if a respondent correctly answers a question about a candidate, and 0 otherwise: candidate's education level, religion, tribe, occupation, and whether the candidate's policy preferences align with those of the respondent, with respect to the priority sector for the constituency, district creation, and a ban on candidates convicted of engaging in vote buying (baseline only).

Informed: voters' self-assessment of how informed they feel about a given candidate, measured on a 4-point scale, where 1 indicates "not informed at all" and 4 indicates "very well informed" (baseline only).

Priority: a binary variable indicating whether a voter correctly identifies a candidate's sector priority for the constituency, information which is verified in the candidate interview (baseline and endline).

Likability: a 10-point scale where voters indicate how much they like a given candidate, where 0 = don't like them at all, 5 = neither like them nor dislike them, and 10 = like them very much (endline only)

Vote choice: a set of binary variables indicating whether or not a voter voted for an ruling party candidate, an opposition candidate, and an independent candidate (endline only).

We use the measures *heard of*, *knowledge*, and *informed* to assess our assumption that there exist information asymmetries between ruling party candidates and opposition candidates. We use the two knowledge measures collected at endline, *heard of* and *priority* to examine the effect of our information treatment on voters' knowledge of candidates. We use *likability* to assess shifts in voters' assessment of candidates, and examine treatment effects on the likelihood of voting for three types of candidates, ruling party, opposition, and independent (*vote choice*).

We took two measures to minimize social-response bias involved in reporting that a voter had turned out to vote at all (a question we asked before asking vote choice). First, we signaled that it may have been beyond the person's control if they were unable to vote, and then asked, "While talking to people about today's elections, we find that some people were able to vote, while others were not. How about you—were you able to vote or not?" Second, we asked verification questions that were far more likely to be answered correctly by those who had voted. We took advantage of the fact that biometric machines for voter verification were used for the first time in the 2016 elections by asking voters which of their fingers was used to verify their identity.

In the analysis, we only consider people who correctly answered verification questions (79 percent of respondents who reported having voted) as having voted in actuality (robustness checks with responses taken at face-value yield similar results, see SI, Table G14). Similarity with official election records gives us further confidence in our data: self-reported, verified turnout in our sample was 75 percent, compared to 70 percent in the official election records for the polling stations serving our sampled villages. The 5 percent difference can be explained by our removal of those voters who were registered but deceased or no longer living in a village from our sampling frame

as well as those too sick or too old to survey.

We are less concerned about differential social response bias in favor of certain candidates, since the videos and survey treated all candidates equally and did not suggest a desirable response. Social response bias would pose a particular threat to internal validity if it were affected by treatment. As we report in the section on alternative explanations, we do not find any evidence for differential response bias between the treatment and control group.

Among our 4,357 respondents, the average respondent is 40 years old (SD 15 years) with six years of education (SD 4 years); 44 percent are female; 74 percent reported voting in the last election; 62 percent reported intending to vote for the ruling party candidate; and 17 percent of our sample did not have a coethnic candidate in the race (SI, Table E3). Summary statistics for the subset of the sample who intended to vote for the ruling party candidate at baseline is almost identical to that of the full sample. It is difficult to compare our sample to all registered voters because there is little demographic information available on registered voters. However, only a handful of registered voters were excluded from our sample, such that registered voters should be similar to the full sample of voters in our eleven constituencies, across all regions of the country.

Estimation

For the candidate-specific outcomes, knowledge and likability, the relevant unit of analysis is the voter-candidate dyad. To examine how treatment effects vary by candidate party, we interact the treatment dummy with an indicator for the candidates' party affiliation: [4]

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 T_i * Opp_j + \beta_3 T_i * Ind_j + \beta_4 Opp_j + \beta_5 Ind_j + \sum_{n=1}^{k} (\nu_k Z_{ij}^k + \psi_k Z_{ij}^k T_i) + \delta_{ij} + u_{ij} \quad (1)$$

where Y_{ij} refers to the outcome measure for voter i and candidate j, T_i to the treatment assignment of voter i, Opp_j and Ind_j are indicators for whether candidate j is a member of the opposition or an independent, respectively, and where $Z_1, Z_2, ..., Z_k$ is a vector of covariates: re-

[4]For dyad-level analyses, dyads involving candidates who were not filmed are not included in the sample for the main specifications. SI Section G shows that results are robust to their inclusion.

spondent's age, gender, education, assets (index), identification with the ruling party, past turnout, whether a respondent expects the ballot to be secret (four-point scale) and fair (four-point scale), respondents' access to political information, whether a respondent considers the information provided in the video as salient, and the extent to which a candidate video is the preferred source of information of a respondent (with the final two questions asked before respondents were informed of the video screening). Here, we also include the following candidate and dyad-specific variables: whether the candidate is the incumbent, an index measuring the respondent's knowledge about the candidate at baseline, and indicators for whether the respondent voted for the candidate in the 2015 primaries, is of the same gender, and is of the same ethnicity as the candidate. All covariates are measured at baseline and standardized. The model includes constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by the unit of randomization, the village.

To examine treatment effects on vote choice, where the unit of analysis is the individual voter rather than the voter-candidate dyad, we estimate the following equation:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \sum_{n=1}^{k} (\nu_k Z_i^k + \psi_k Z_i^k T_i) + \delta_i + u_i \tag{2}$$

where Y_i refers to the outcome measure for voter i, T_i to the treatment assignment of voter i, and where $Z_1, Z_2, ..., Z_k$ is the vector of covariates noted above. The model includes constituency fixed effects, and standard errors are clustered by village. Since we are particularly interested in understanding the behavior of voters who state an intention at baseline to vote for the ruling party candidate, we subset the data to this sample in a number of analyses. Average treatment effects for the full sample were pre-specified in the preanalysis plan, though the subset analyses were not. A discussion of deviations from the preanalysis plan is included in SI, Section H.

Results

Voters know less about opposition candidates

We begin by providing evidence for our assumption that voters know less about opposition candidates than about ruling party candidates at baseline. We focus on our three variables of candidate-specific knowledge that were measured at baseline: *heard of*, *knowledge*, and *informed*. In Table 1, we report the results from regressing knowledge about candidates on indicators for candidate partisanship. Odd columns show the results for the full sample, even columns show the results for the subset of respondents who stated at baseline that they intended to vote for the ruling party candidate (henceforth referred to as "lean NRM").

Since we are interested in assessing the extent to which knowledge about specific candidates varies by candidates' partisanship, the unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. We regress the outcomes on indicators for whether the candidate is a member of the opposition or an independent. In the Ugandan context, independent candidates may either be truly independent or ruling party candidates who lost the party's primary. To avoid a lopsided comparison between the ruling party and other candidates, the sample is restricted to *viable* candidates, defined as those with a vote share of ten percent or more (as prespecified). Sample constituencies have between two and four viable candidates each, one of which is always the NRM flagbearer (SI Table E4 for summary statistics of candidate characteristics by constituency). We include covariates for whether a candidate is a co-ethnic with the respondent and whether they are the incumbent candidate, as well as fixed effects for respondent ID and village. The estimating equation is included in SI Section F.

Compared to ruling party candidates (omitted category), respondents are significantly less likely to have heard of opposition candidates (21 percentage points, or 23 percent), have lower baseline knowledge (by 0.22 points on the 7-point knowledge index, or 12 percent), and to feel informed about them (by 0.21 points on a 4-point Likert scale, or 8 percent). These differences are larger among the subset of respondents who intended to vote for the ruling party, suggesting information asymmetries by candidate party are particularly acute among this sample. In descriptive

Table 1: Respondents know less about opposition candidates at baseline

	Heard of		Knowledge		Informed	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Opposition	-0.208***	-0.293***	-0.222***	-0.551***	-0.213***	-0.548***
	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.059)	(0.065)	(0.034)	(0.038)
Independent	-0.001	-0.045**	-0.189***	-0.533***	-0.264***	-0.567***
	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.066)	(0.074)	(0.036)	(0.035)
Coethnic	-0.020	-0.065***	1.161***	1.068***	0.060	0.062
	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.151)	(0.251)	(0.095)	(0.095)
Incumbent	0.159***	0.149***	1.200***	1.278***	0.420***	0.427***
	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.056)	(0.063)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Constant	0.922***	1.013***	1.900***	2.251***	2.516***	2.768***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.101)	(0.178)	(0.064)	(0.067)
N	9,384	4,830	7,831	4,107	7,831	4,107
R^2	0.501	0.568	0.711	0.714	0.666	0.734

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. Candidates are restricted to viable candidates, i.e., those obtaining at least 10 percent of the vote share. The dependent variables are whether a respondent has heard of a candidate (0-1), a knowledge index (0-7), and how informed a respondent feels about a candidate (measured on a 4-point Likert scale). Columns (3)-(6) restrict the sample to candidates voters have heard about. Columns (2), (4), and (6) restrict the sample to respondents intending to vote for the ruling party ("lean NRM"). All models include respondent and village fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

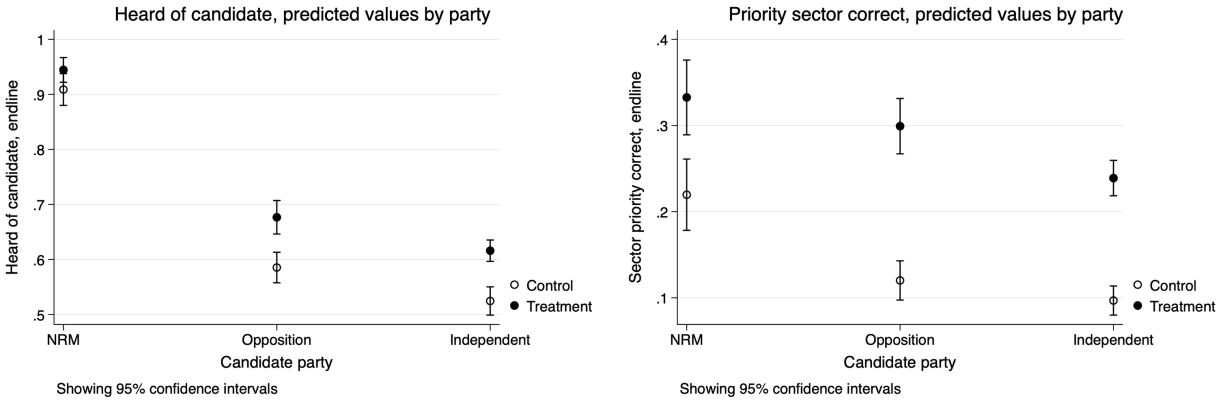
terms, in the full sample, 95 percent of all respondents were able to name the NRM candidate in their constituency at baseline, compared to 58 percent of opposition candidates. Among candidates who were not incumbents, the gap was even larger—93 percent among NRM candidates and 44 percent among opposition candidates. We also find suggestive evidence for our second assumption, that voters' priors about opposition candidates are negatively biased—a point we return to below.

Voters learn more about opposition candidates

Having verified our assumption that information asymmetries exist in the amount of knowledge and the degree of uncertainty voters have about ruling party as compared to opposition candidates, we now examine whether our information treatment caused voters to learn about candidates, and, in particular, about opposition candidates (H1). We examine the two measures of candidate-specific knowledge measured during the endline survey, *heard of* and *priority*. We find that overall, the treatment increased the share of candidates the respondents could name by 8.1 percentage points (a 10 percent increase), and the share of candidates for whom respondents could name the pri-

ority sector by 14.6 percentage points (an 83 percent increase, see Table F1). Figure 2 shows the predicted probabilities for candidate knowledge by candidate partisanship and treatment status of the respondent, estimated using equation 1. We find that both treatment effects were weakly significantly larger for opposition candidates (p-value = 0.066 and p-value = 0.098, respectively, Table F2), suggesting that the videos allowed respondents to learn more about opposition than ruling party candidates. Among voters who intended to vote for the ruling party, we find a larger and strongly significant effect on being able to name opposition candidates, suggesting greater learning among those who were initially inclined to support the ruling party (SI, Table F2, column (2)).

Figure 2: Candidate knowledge, predicted probabilities by treatment status and candidate party



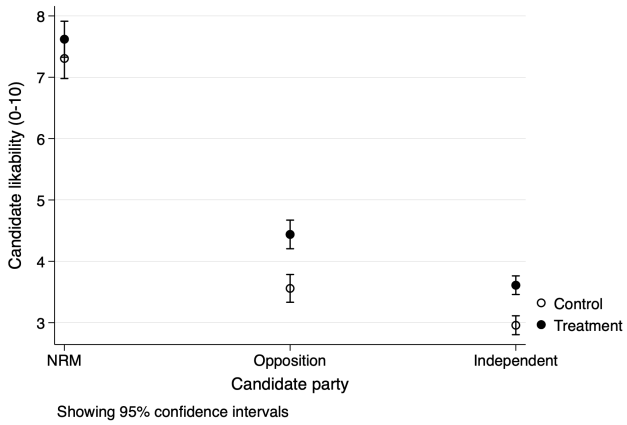
Voters update more positively about opposition candidates

We have assumed that voters not only know less about opposition candidates, but also have more negatively biased priors about them. Exposure to balanced information should therefore lead to more positive updating about these candidates (H2). To test this hypothesis, we assess the heterogeneous treatment effect of the video screenings on candidate likability by candidate partisanship.

We find that voters in the control group indeed had less favorable assessments of opposition candidates, compared to ruling party candidates. Figure 3 shows the predicted probabilities of candidate likability by candidate party and treatment status of the respondent, estimated using equation 1. Voters' assessment of the likability of opposition candidates was 3.5 on a ten-point scale in the control group, compared to 6.5 of ruling party candidates (p = 0.000, SI Table F3).

The intervention led voters to improve their assessment of candidates in general (by 10 percent, SI Table F3, column (1)), but the positive treatment effect on likability is driven by opposition candidates. The difference is relatively large and weakly significant (coefficient = 0.566 , p-value = 0.088, SI Table F3, column (2)). The treatment effect on likability of opposition candidates among those who had intended to vote for the ruling party is even larger and highly significant (coefficient = 0.944, p-value = 0.002, SI Table F3, column (4)), again suggesting greater updating among the group of voters who initially supported the ruling party. Exposure to the information thus resulted in a partial narrowing of the likability gap between ruling party and opposition candidates.

Figure 3: Candidate likability, predicted probabilities by treatment status and candidate party



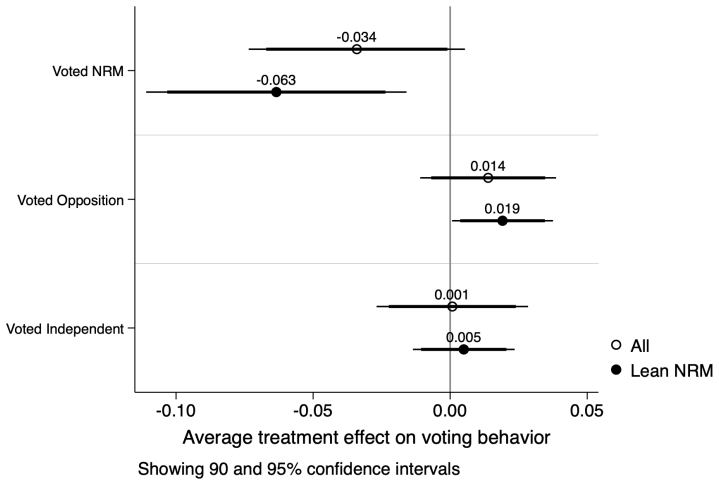
Voters move toward opposition candidates and away from the ruling party

Next, we test the hypothesis that disproportionately large increases in knowledge about and likability of opposition candidates results in voters being more likely to cast their vote for these candidates (H3). Figure 4 shows panels for three outcomes: voting for a ruling party candidate (top), voting for an opposition candidate (middle), and voting for an independent candidate (bottom). Dependent variables are coded 1 if a voter cast a vote for a candidate of the respective partisanship, and 0 otherwise (regardless of turnout). We show results for two samples: the full sample and the ruling party-leaning sample.

As shown in the top panel, we find that watching the videos had a negative effect on voting

for ruling party candidates. This effect is observed in the full sample, where the effect is -3.4 percentage points (p-value = 0.090). Among those who intend to vote for the ruling party, the effect is even larger: -6.3 percentage points (p-value = 0.009). We also find that the treatment had a positive effect on voting for opposition candidates among voters who leaned towards the ruling party (middle panel). The magnitude of the effect is about 1.9 percentage points among the sample of those who intended to vote for the ruling party (p-value = 0.042). In the full sample, the magnitude of the effect is 1.4 percentage points (insignificant). The treatment effect on voting for the opposition is significantly different from the treatment effect on voting for the ruling party in both subsamples (see SI Table F5). We do not observe any treatment effects on voting for independent candidates. We do not detect treatment effects on vote choice using the official polling station results (see SI, Section F.7), which may be due to the fact that the mapping between polling stations and villages is far from straightforward. Polling stations typically serve multiple villages, and voters from the same village are often assigned to different polling stations.

Figure 4: Treatment effect on vote choice



We also do not observe significant treatment effects on turnout (coefficient = -0.021, p-value = 0.287 for the full sample, coefficient = -0.037, p-value = 0.110 for NRM-leaning voters, SI Table F8). Although insignificant, the negative coefficient on turnout may raise questions about the normative implications of the intervention. We do not view a reduction in turnout as nec-

essarily a normatively undesirable outcome in this context. Existing research has shown that in non-democratic contexts, more educated voters deliberately opt out of electoral processes that they deem illegitimate (Croke et al., 2016), that high turnout may provide an impression of popular support, thereby extending the longevity of the regime (Isiksel and Pepinsky, 2019), and that voters may turn out to vote not out of civic obligation but due to social norms arising from beliefs about clientelistic relationships between communities and the state (Rosenzweig, 2019). While in general, political participation is seen as a democratic ideal (Lijphart, 1997), it could be that the information we provided reduced social pressure to vote for the ruling party. Thus, even if the treatment had reduced turnout, the normative implications for democratization processes would be ambiguous.

Who responds to information and why?

We investigate three factors that may moderate the effect of information on voter behavior: reduced uncertainty, party loyalty, and fear of repercussions. First, we examine whether those with the largest gaps in their knowledge about ruling party versus opposition candidates are particularly responsive to new information, because it reduces their uncertainty about these candidates (M1).

To test whether reduced uncertainty about the opposition is the mechanism underlying the shift away from the ruling party, we construct a variable measuring the baseline gap between knowledge about the ruling party candidate and the average knowledge about viable opposition candidates.[5] We then test whether ruling party-leaning voters with knowledge gaps above the median were more likely to switch away from the ruling party. As shown in column (1) in Table 2, we find that this group of respondents was significantly less likely to vote for the ruling party; this group is almost entirely driving the effect. We conclude that reducing uncertainty about opposition candidates played a critical role.

Second, voters with weaker party allegiance, or loyalty, may be more likely to switch away

[5]We construct the knowledge gap measure by subtracting a respondent's average knowledge about all viable opposition candidates from their knowledge about the ruling party candidate. As before, knowledge is measured on a 0-7 scale where a respondent gets one point for each factual question they answer correctly about a given candidate.

Table 2: Determinants of voting for the ruling party

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Treatment	-0.002	-0.045	-0.036
	(0.042)	(0.031)	(0.058)
Treat x High knowledge gap	-0.140**		
	(0.065)		
High knowledge gap	0.103**		
	(0.049)		
Treat x Primary candidate dropped		-0.117**	
		(0.051)	
Primary candidate dropped		0.023	
		(0.038)	
Treat x Open other parties			-0.046
			(0.088)
Open other parties			0.039
			(0.056)
Constant	0.574***	0.671***	0.631***
	(0.030)	(0.021)	(0.038)
N	1,410	2,029	2,433
R^2	0.060	0.049	0.046

Notes: The dependent variable is whether a respondent reported voting for the ruling party. The sample is restricted to those intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. The unit of observation is the voter. All models include constituency fixed effects and covariates. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.)

from the ruling party when given more equal access to information (M2). We use two measures to investigate whether ruling party voters who switch have weaker party attachments, in other words, less party loyalty. The first measure is whether the voter's preferred candidate in the primary election race lost and is therefore not the ruling party flagbearer in the general election (*Primary candidate*). If a voter's preferred candidate lost the primary elections of the ruling party, we expect the voter will be more open to hearing and responding to information about alternative candidates, including members of the opposition.

The second measure of attachment is self-reported relative openness (*Open other parties*). At baseline, we asked respondents how close they feel to each major party, on a scale of 1 to 7 (weak to strong). We operationalize relative openness as the difference between the score of closeness to the ruling party minus the highest score of closeness to any other party. Respondents with a difference below the median are coded as being relatively open to voting for other parties. As shown in columns (2)-(3) of Table 2, respondents with lower values of either measure of party attachment

are more likely to switch away from the ruling party in response to the treatment (i.e., they are less likely to vote for the ruling party). The heterogeneous treatment effect is only significant for the first measure of lower party allegiance, the dropping out of one's preferred candidate.

Third, we examine whether fear of repercussions for voting for the opposition may have muted the treatment effect on voting behavior (M3). While it can be difficult for parties and their brokers to monitor the voting behavior of individual voters, vote shares by polling station are readily available. To investigate whether such fear of repercussions may have muted the effect of updating on vote choice in our setting, we test for heterogeneous treatment effects among respondents who indicated at baseline that they believed politicians and/or parties monitored how different localities had voted and would—if elected—allocate fewer resources to areas that did not support them. Forty-nine percent of our sample answered this question affirmatively.[6]

Table 3: Voting behavior by feeling monitored

	(1) Voted NRM	(2) Voted opposition	(3) Turnout
Treatment	-0.013	0.038*	0.007
	(0.049)	(0.020)	(0.043)
Treatment * Feel monitored	-0.033	-0.044*	-0.041
	(0.063)	(0.027)	(0.055)
Feeling monitored	-0.005	0.008	-0.007
	(0.043)	(0.018)	(0.039)
Constant	0.640***	0.042***	0.750***
	(0.032)	(0.012)	(0.028)
Observations	1,095	1,085	1,095
R^2	0.045	0.146	0.049

Notes: The dependent variables are whether a respondent: (1) reported voting for the ruling party or (2) the opposition party, and (3) turned out (verified self-report). The sample is restricted to those intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. The unit of observation is the voter. All models include constituency fixed effects and covariates. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.)

As shown in Table 3, we do not find significantly different treatment effects on voting for the ruling party among people who felt monitored (column 1). However, this group of voters is

[6]Fear of being monitored is orthogonal to demographic variables and measures of partisanship (SI, Section E). The only significant correlates are doubt of the secrecy of the ballot and naming candidate videos as a preferred hypothetical news source (both positive). Both variables are included in our vector of covariates, thereby allaying concerns about omitted variable bias.

significantly less likely to respond to the intervention by voting for the opposition (column 2). The effect of feeling monitored more than offsets the treatment effect. Voters who do not feel monitored are on average 3.8 percentage points more likely to vote for the opposition due to the intervention. Voters who feel monitored are more likely to respond to the intervention by abstaining from the election, but this effect is not significant (column 3).

Assessing alternative explanations

We test four alternative explanations for switching away from the ruling party and toward the opposition, and find no evidence supporting any of them. First, it could be the case that the ruling party candidates simply performed poorly in the videos relative to other candidates. To investigate this possibility, we created a variable that indicates whether or a not a given candidate is above or below the median in terms of popularly assessed performance, derived from a question asking respondents to rank candidates' performance in the video. In fact, ten of the eleven ruling party candidates scored above the median in terms of performance in the video, with seven deemed the best performer by the plurality of respondents (SI, Table F9). This suggests relatively low perceptions of candidate quality did not drive voters away from ruling party candidates.

A second possibility is that voters were afraid to report having voted for candidates outside the ruling party, especially opposition candidates. Respondents may be wary that enumerators were sent by the government—whether the ruling party, the president, or a related institution—and may therefore be reluctant to report supporting the opposition. To assess this possibility, we re-estimated our main analyses differentiating between voters who did versus did not report a belief that the government sent the enumerators conducting the study (measured at endline). If response bias was driving our results, we would expect the treatment to have a weaker effect on respondents who believed that the government sent the research team. In fact, we find the opposite: albeit insignificant, treatment respondents who thought the government sent our enumerators were, if anything, *more* likely to report switching away from the ruling party (SI, Table F10).

Third, candidates' campaigns may have responded strategically to the intervention, altering

voters' calculations. To assess this possibility, we collected information during the endline survey on candidates' behavior in the villages where voters live. We do not find any evidence that such candidate behaviors as the number of visits or likelihood of distributing patronage goods (for example, soap, sugar, or money) were systematically affected by the treatment (SI, Section F.6).

Fourth, the mere existence of the videos, which showcased all candidates, may have signaled to voters that the "rules of the game" had changed (Ahlquist et al., 2018) and that it was "okay" to vote for other candidates. This is an intriguing possibility and we cannot completely rule it out, but we do not find that those in the treatment groups were more likely to assess the elections as free and fair (SI, Section F.6). Thus, while watching the videos may have led some voters to conclude that they had freedom to choose among candidates, we find no direct evidence that voters assessed the political environment as having fundamentally changed.

Conclusion

Much of the recent scholarly literature on dominant party regimes has focused on elite-level strategies and behavior, and in particular repression and the use of authoritarian institutions to facilitate powersharing among the elite (Gandhi, 2008). In this paper, we have focused on the role of information – operationalized as public screenings of candidate interviews – in shaping mass support, and how reducing information asymmetries between the ruling party and opposition candidates affects voter behavior.

We find that in Uganda, where a dominant party has governed for over 30 years, voters are significantly less informed about opposition candidates compared to those representing the ruling party, and also hold more negative views of these candidates. When voters are provided with balanced and credible information about both ruling party and opposition candidates via filmed candidate interviews, they learn more and update more positively about opposition candidates relative to ruling party candidates. Among voters who had intended to vote for the ruling party, voters who receive information are also more likely to vote for opposition candidates instead than those who did not receive information.

We identify two factors that moderate the effect of the video screenings on vote choice among voters leaning towards the ruling party: party loyalty and fear of distributional repercussions. Voters whose preferred candidate had lost the party primaries and, as a result, may have felt less wed to the ruling party, were more likely to respond to the information by switching away from the ruling party. Further, voters who reported at baseline that politicians were monitoring vote shares and allocating resources away from areas that did not support them were significantly less likely to switch to the opposition.

These results reflect the electoral implications of information asymmetries between ruling party and opposition candidates in dominant party regimes. Low levels of information about opposition candidates relative to ruling party candidates can help sustain mass support for ruling parties and can be an impediment to the competitiveness of elections. At the same time, our findings suggest that even minor improvements to the information environment can meaningfully affect voter behavior. Our relatively modest, one-off intervention which marginally reduced information asymmetries had a substantive effect on voting behavior, resulting in increased electoral support for opposition candidates. These results, in conjunction with related studies by Casey, Glennerster and Bidwell (Forthcoming) and Bowles and Larreguy (2019), suggest that interventions providing information about *all* candidates, rather than the incumbent alone, may be particularly useful in strengthening competition by providing information about relative candidate quality and allowing voters to consider—and support—high quality but lesser known candidates.

Recently, similar efforts have been undertaken to introduce information of this type on a wider scale. For example, the social media platform Facebook introduced a new tool called "Candidate info" that includes candidates' answers to questions very similar to those asked of candidates in the study presented here, including, "What is your top policy priority, and why are you the right person to work on it?" and "What makes you most qualified to represent your district?" These types of interventions may be particularly effective in dominant party regimes where the playing field is skewed in favor of the ruling party.

While strengthening the information environment appears to be a boon for the competitiveness of elections, it is also easy to see why dominant parties may resist such efforts. In this study, there was backing by ruling party and government officials to provide voters with information about all candidates, and even discussions among government officials and members of civil society about how to make parliamentary candidate debates more commonplace in future elections. Indeed, 11 of the 18 African countries which held debates among candidates for head of state since 1990 were considered anocracies or autocracies at the time of the first debate (SI, Section A). While this speaks to the willingness of at least some officials to support more transparent electoral processes, there are surely other dominant party contexts where governments would be less willing or actively resistant to efforts aimed at strengthening the information environment. As such, the general equilibrium effects of information interventions such as candidate debates may be regime-specific and difficult to predict. The existence of information asymmetries, whether inadvertent or as an intentional strategy, can sustain mass support for ruling parties and thus these parties may have incentives to maintain or exacerbate asymmetries.

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Supplementary Information

A Prevalence of Debates

Table A1: Debates in Africa and Latin America

Region	Country	Polity2 $t=-1$	Polity2 $t=0$	Election years with debates
Africa	Benin	7	7	2016
	Burkina Faso	0	0	2005
	Cape Verde	10	10	2011, 2016
	Central African Republic	0	0	2015
	Cote d'Ivoire	0	0	2010, 2015
	Egypt	-2	-3	2012
	Ghana	2	2	2000, 2004, 2008, 2012
	Guinea Bissau	0	3	1999, 2005, 2014
	Kenya	8	9	2013, 2017
	Liberia	3	5	2005, 2017
	Madagascar	9	9	1996, 2013, 2018
	Malawi	6	6	2014, 2019
	Mali	0	7	1992
	Mauritania	-3	4	2007
	Nigeria	-5	-7	1993, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019
	Sierra Leone	5	7	2007, 2012, 2018
	Tanzania	-1	3	2015
	Uganda	-1	-1	2016
Latin America	Argentina	8	9	2015, 2019
	Bolivia	9	9	1993, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2014
	Brazil	8	8	2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018
	Chile	8	8	1993, 1999, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017
	Colombia	7	7	2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018
	Costa Rica	10	10	2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018
	Dominican Republic	8	8	2004, 2016
	Ecuador	6	7	2006, 2013, 2017
	El Salvador	8	8	2014, 2019
	Guatemala	8	8	2007, 2011, 2015, 2019
	Honduras	6	6	1993, 2013, 2017
	Mexico	6	8	2000, 2006, 2012, 2018
	Nicaragua	8	8	2006
	Panama	8	9	1994, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
	Paraguay	8	8	2008, 2013, 2018
	Peru	8	8	1990, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016
	Uruguay	10	10	2009, 2014

Notes: Debates among candidates for head of state. Data on debate occurrence is based on online searches for all elections of heads of state in Africa and Latin America since 1990 (Source: Bowles, J., Larreguy, H., and Raffler, P. (2020). The return to debate abstention. Evidence from presidential debates across the developing world). Polity2 scores are shown for the year of the first coded debate ($t = 0$) and the year prior ($t = -1$). Polity2 scores below -5 are considered as indicative of autocracies, between -5 and 5 of anocracies, and above 5 of democracies (Marshall, Gurr and Jaggers, 2019).

B Constituency Selection and Assignment

The study was conducted in eleven constituencies. The pool of eligible constituencies was determined by assessing the competitiveness, likelihood of violence, and other factors affecting the ability of project consortium to screen the film. First, a set of 58 rural constituencies were selected using the following criteria: (a) having different winning parties in the past two elections (2006 and 2011) (b) not having the same Member of Parliament serve for two different parties, and (c) having average vote margins across the past two elections of 20 percent or lower. Urban constituencies, i.e. constituencies located within city or municipal boundaries at the time of the sampling, were excluded from the sample.

Then, the research team conducted interviews with a set of key informants, including journalists, members of political parties, political analysts, and staff at Innovations for Poverty Action to gather information on past violence and the likelihood of violence, whether a constituency was located in a difficult to reach area, and whether the presence of multiple languages would prohibit the screening of the film in a single language (thereby preventing a subset of constituents from being able to understand the information being provided). After excluding constituencies for the aforementioned reasons, a total of twenty-seven constituencies remained eligible for inclusion. The eleven sample constituencies were randomly drawn from this set of 27 constituencies.

Albeit not randomly selected, the study constituencies are remarkably representative of Uganda with regard to the share the ruling party received in both the Parliamentary and the Presidential elections in 2016, and with regard to vote margins. Table B1 shows summary statistics for the sample in comparison to the remainder of Uganda, as well as p-values from two-sided t-tests.

Table B1: Sample constituencies in comparison

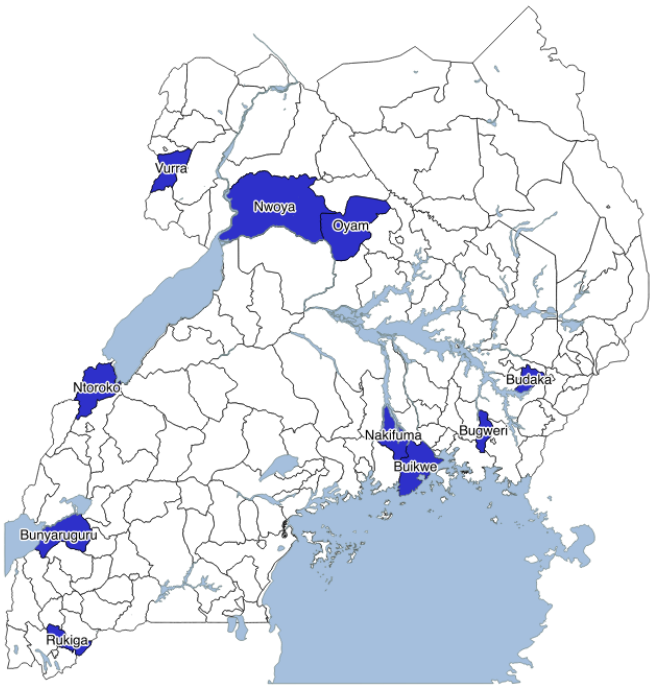
		Mean	Mean	n	p-value
		Sampled constituencies	Remainder of Uganda		
NRM vote share:	Presidential elections	0.606	0.619	290	0.789
	MP elections	0.507	0.487	277	0.645
Vote margin:	Presidential elections	0.272	0.353	290	0.264
	MP elections	0.241	0.212	277	0.558

Notes: Data from the Electoral Commission. MP vote shares were not available for 13 constituencies.

Figure B1 maps the constituencies in our sample. Constituencies are relatively evenly split between having an incumbent from the ruling party (four), an opposition party (four) or an Independent (three). The incumbent was running in either the general elections and/or the primary elections of the ruling party in nine of the constituencies. In the eleven constituencies we worked

in, the number of candidates running ranged from two to eleven candidates, with a median of five candidates and a mean of 5.8.

Figure B1: Map of constituencies in sample



Each of the 24,000 polling stations serves several villages, with an average of 550 voters per polling station, and 110 polling stations per constituency in the 2016 general elections.

C Ethical Considerations

The study protocols were approved by the Internal Review Boards of our respective universities, Innovations for Poverty Action, and the Ugandan National Council for Science and Technology. The project was conducted in consultation with the Uganda Electoral Commission, the electoral commission of the ruling party, and political parties; and implemented in collaboration with Ugandan civil society and research organizations. The Office of the President and the Uganda Police approved the project. In order to ensure that the intervention would not affect electoral outcomes we only treated a relatively small share of voters in each constituency. Study results were shared with national legislators, journalists, resident district commissioners, academic researchers, and members of civil society organizations through a dissemination event in Kampala, among other channels.

D Description of Covariates

1. *Age*: Age of the respondent in years.
2. *Female*: Takes a value of 1 if the respondent is female, and 0 otherwise.
3. *Education*: Formal education in years.
4. *Asset index*: The first component of a principal factor analysis of a battery of relatively common household assets.
5. *Identification with the ruling party*: We ask respondents how close they feel to each major party, on a scale of 1-7 (weak to strong). We define attachment to the ruling party as the difference between the score of party closeness for the ruling party minus the second highest score of party closeness to any other party.
6. *Past turnout*: Takes a value of 1 if the respondent reported voting in the previous parliamentary elections (general or primary, depending on the election studied), and 0 otherwise.
7. *Secret ballot*: Takes a value of 1 if the respondent is confident in the secret ballot, 0 otherwise.
8. *Free & fair*: Respondent reports thinking that the counting of votes during the upcoming elections will be fair.
9. *Salience*: Takes value 1 if the respondent considers "Whether the candidate shares my political views", "Whether the candidate is effective at delivering services and bringing benefits to this community", or "The personal characteristics of a candidate" , i.e. topics the videos provide information about, as the most salient information in response to the question "I am going to read you a list of possible information you could learn about a candidate running for area MP for this constituency. Suppose you could receive information about ONE of these things. I'd like to ask you to tell me about which of these you would most like to receive information." Other response options are "How well a candidate performs his/her duties in Parliament, for example, attendance in plenary sessions and council or committee meetings", "Whether the candidate has been accused of committing a crime", and "Whether the politician has been engaged in corruption".
10. *Preferred source*: Respondent's ranking of candidate videos ("a video program in which all candidates answer questions about their policy positions and background") as preferred source of information about a politician, relative to other sources listed (flyer by an NGO, local politician, influential community member, or a performance score in a newspaper).

E Descriptive Statistics

Table E1: Balance

	(1) All	(2) Lean NRM
Age	0.005*	0.006*
	(0.002)	(0.003)
Female	0.061	-0.004
	(0.071)	(0.094)
Education (years)	0.008	-0.007
	(0.011)	(0.013)
Wealth index	-0.069	-0.038
	(0.046)	(0.057)
Closeness to NRM	0.020	0.002
	(0.015)	(0.021)
Turnout in 2011 election	-0.023	-0.020
	(0.081)	(0.116)
Ballot not secret	0.003	-0.012
	(0.027)	(0.033)
Elections free and fair	0.018	-0.009
	(0.028)	(0.036)
Video salience	-0.019	0.045
	(0.085)	(0.105)
Videos preferred source	0.046	0.029
	(0.032)	(0.035)
News consumption	0.038	0.072
	(0.035)	(0.046)
Constant	-0.586	-0.115
	(0.515)	(0.604)
N	4,357	2,433
Pseudo R^2	0.004	0.005
Prob > Chi^2	0.889	0.972

Notes: Logit regression of the treatment indicator on the vector of non-demeaned covariates. Closeness to NRM refers to the self-reported closeness to the ruling party relative to the next preferred party. All models include constituency fixed effects and covariates. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

As shown in Table E1, treatment is mostly balanced when regressing the treatment dummy on all baseline covariates. The p-value for the joint hypothesis tests are 0.889 for the full sample and 0.972 for respondents intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline, respectively. Age is slightly imbalanced and included in the vector of controls.

Table E2: Attrition

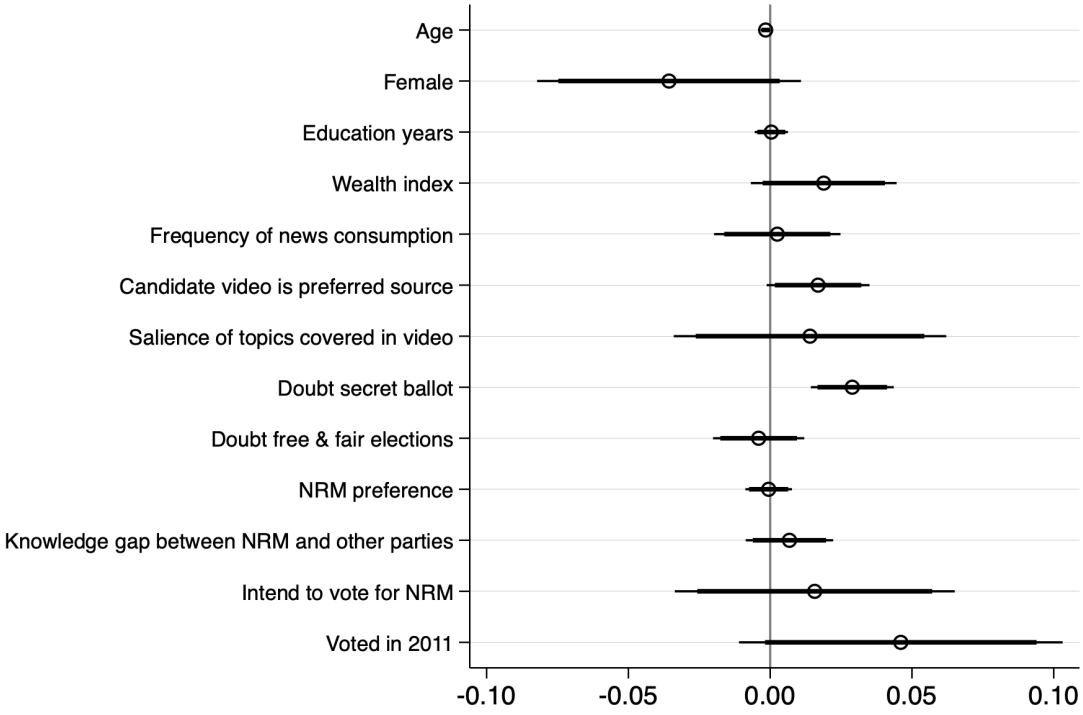
	(All)		(Lean NRM)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	-0.006	-0.006	-0.030**	-0.030**
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Constant	0.084***	0.109***	0.091***	0.158***
	(0.008)	(0.028)	(0.011)	(0.037)
Covariates	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	4,739	4,739	2,633	2,633
R^2	0.009	0.018	0.015	0.024

Notes: OLS regression of attrition on the treatment indicator. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table E3: Respondent characteristics

	All		Lean NRM	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age	40.13	14.80	40.02	14.76
Education (years)	5.89	4.16	5.98	4.11
Female	43.72%	49.61%	44.47%	49.70%
Voted in last election	73.52%	44.10%	75.07%	43.25%
Intend to vote NRM	61.55%	48.65%	100%	0%
NRM preference	1.94	2.89	2.80	2.75
No coethnic candidate	16.71%	37.31%	17.80%	38.26%
No viable coethnic candidate	30.71%	46.13%	27.33%	44.58%
N	4,357		2,433	

Figure E2: Correlates of feeling monitored



Notes: n=1,978. The dependent variable takes value 1 if a respondent answered yes (49%) or maybe (3%) to the following question asked during the baseline survey: "Some people believe that politicians and political parties monitor how certain areas vote, and on this basis decide whether to reward or punish voters in that area. What about you—do you think that politicians and/or political parties monitor how your area votes, and make decisions about whether or not to spend resources on your area depending on whether or not the received support during the election from voters here?", 0 if they responded no (48%). The question was posed to a random half of the baseline sample. The specification includes fixed effects.

Table E4: Summary statistics for candidates

(1) Candidate	(2) Party	(3) Incumbent	(4) Winner	(5) % vote	(6) Ethnicity	(7) Qualified (expert)	(8) Qualified (prior)	(9) Policy (expert)	(10) Policy (prior)	(11) Eloquence (expert)	(12) Eloquence (prior)
Budaka											
Mbogo	NRM	1	1	44.6%	Mugwere	0.42	0.48	0.25	0.50	0.44	0.54
Kasibbo	IND	0	0	24.8%	Mugwere	0.17	0.12	-0.50	0.15	-0.00	0.41
Musede	IND	0	0	12.3%	Mugwere	0.67	0.26	0.50	0.28	-0.25	0.47
Mukamba	IND	0	0	5.9%	Mugwere	0.83	0.14	0.50	0.21	0.50	0.41
Mununa	DP	0	0	2.7%	Mugwere	-0.08	-0.08	-0.50	0.04	0.67	0.37
Mwesi	IND	0	0	2.3%	Mugwere	0.08	-0.06	-0.25	-0.03	0.25	0.25
Bugweri											
Katuntu	FDC	1	1	49.8%	Musoga	0.83	0.42	1.00	0.37	0.67	0.61
Ibaale	NRM	0	0	49.0%	Musoga	0.75	0.48	0.42	0.41	0.50	0.55
Mukisa ◇	IND	0	0	0.9%	Musoga	-	-0.03	-	0.08	-	0.33
Musembya	IND	0	0	0.2%	Musoga	0.25	-0.13	-0.17	-0.16	0.67	0.13
Menya	IND	0	0	0.1%	Musoga	0.33	-0.06	0.25	-0.06	-0.08	0.20
Buikwe South											
Mutebi	NRM	0	1	51.4%	Muganda	0.33	0.40	0.07	0.28	-	0.34
Bayigga	DP	1	0	38.6%	Muganda	0.80	0.28	0.87	0.27	0.60	0.46
Sembuya	IND	0	0	5.6%	Muganda	0.27	-0.01	0.27	0.07	-0.13	0.16
Ssekyema	IND	0	0	2.5%	Muganda	0.13	-0.18	0.40	-0.01	0.33	0.15
Kanaabi	FDC	0	0	1.1%	Muganda	0.00	-0.25	-0.07	-0.11	-0.13	0.06
Mukasa ◇	IND	0	0	0.8%	Muganda	-	0.08	-	0.22	-	0.24
Bunyarurugu											
Twesigye	NRM	0	1	64.9%	Munyaruguru	0.92	0.69	0.75	0.72	0.58	0.77
Cadet	IND	1	0	31.3%	Munyaruguru	0.92	-0.23	0.92	0.00	0.67	0.21
Owomugisha	FDC	0	0	2.7%	Munyankole	-0.50	-0.58	-0.17	-0.37	-	-0.15
Twarebiriho	IND	0	0	1.1%	Munyankole	0.67	-0.27	0.75	-0.04	0.33	0.06
Lugazi											
Mulindwa	NRM	0	1	38.4%	Munyarwanda	0.33	0.26	0.33	0.29	0.33	0.46
Sserubul	DP	0	0	25.2%	Muganda	0.25	0.17	0.42	0.23	0.50	0.48
Bogere	SDP	0	0	14.2%	Muganda	0.33	-0.00	0.67	0.15	0.42	0.27
Ssali Baker	IND	1	0	12.7%	Muganda	0.08	0.12	0.25	0.25	0.44	0.34
Musoke	IND	0	0	2.9%	Muganda	0.25	-0.11	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.20
Bashal	IND	0	0	2.5%	Muganda	0.08	-0.39	0.50	-0.21	0.17	0.05
Lule	IND	0	0	2.2%	Muganda	0.08	-0.39	0.50	-0.21	0.17	0.05
Sendi	FDC	0	0	2.1%	Muganda	0.22	-0.33	0.25	-0.09	0.08	-0.02
Lugude (F)	IND	0	0	1.1%	Muganda	-0.11	-0.21	-	-0.07	0.22	0.09
Mukasa	IND	0	0	1.0%	Muganda	0.08	-0.27	0.42	-0.09	0.33	0.04
Nakifuma											
Kafeero	NRM	1	1	55.5%	Muganda	0.33	0.55	0.17	0.69	0.89	0.77
Basiima ◇	IND	0	0	19.4%	Muganda	-	0.05	-	0.22	-	0.52
Lukooya	IND	0	0	7.4%	Muganda	0.44	0.01	0.25	0.21	0.44	0.37
Luzinda	FDC	0	0	4.5%	Muganda	-0.22	-0.17	-	-0.24	-	-0.08
Mugambe	IND	0	0	4.2%	Muganda	-0.17	-0.01	-0.08	0.19	0.11	0.27
Matovu (F)	DP	0	0	3.1%	Muganda	-0.33	-0.13	-0.08	-0.00	-	0.15
Batte	IND	0	0	2.2%	Muganda	0.22	-0.15	0.08	-0.10	0.44	0.07
Mulondo	IND	0	0	1.9%	Muganda	-0.33	-0.17	0.08	-0.11	0.33	0.10
Nanyunja (F) ◇	IND	0	0	0.7%	Muganda	-	-0.15	-	-0.09	-	0.02
Miiro	IND	0	0	0.6%	Muganda	-0.11	-0.08	-0.25	-0.06	0.11	0.11
Kawombe	IND	0	0	0.4%	Muganda	-	-0.15	-	-0.03	0.44	0.05
Ntoroko											
Rwemulikya	NRM	0	1	54.4%	Mutuku	0.42	0.27	0.25	0.32	0.75	0.56
Bahinduka	IND	1	0	36.7%	Mutuku	0.50	0.16	0.58	0.27	0.42	0.45
Isande	FDC	0	0	8.8%	Mukhonzo	-0.08	-0.07	0.08	0.03	0.17	0.28
Nwoya											
Oyet	FDC	0	1	34.0%	Acholi	0.67	0.20	0.42	0.35	0.58	0.47
Opio	NRM	0	0	18.9%	Acholi	0.83	0.23	0.50	0.25	0.92	0.41
Awany	IND	0	0	18.3%	Acholi	0.58	0.25	0.83	0.39	0.33	0.48
Okello	DP	0	0	12.8%	Acholi	0.33	0.04	0.33	0.27	-0.33	0.41
Okumu	IND	0	0	6.1%	Acholi	0.33	-0.15	0.17	0.11	-0.08	0.17
Oola	IND	0	0	6.1%	Acholi	0.50	0.09	0.58	0.31	0.42	0.29
Abukha	IND	0	0	3.8%	Acholi	0.50	-0.05	0.75	0.14	0.42	0.22
Oyam South											
Amongi (F)	UPC	1	1	62.3%	Acholi	0.92	0.63	0.92	0.64	0.75	0.69
Ogwang	NRM	0	0	24.5%	Acholi	0.25	0.20	0.58	0.28	0.42	0.32
Odongo	IND	0	0	6.7%	Langi	0.67	0.06	0.58	0.21	0.42	0.23
Ongom	IND	0	0	5.6%	Acholi	0.42	-0.18	0.25	-0.03	0.67	0.10
Ogwara	IND	0	0	0.9%	Acholi	0.25	0.05	0.25	0.18	0.33	0.22
Rukiga											
Kabafonzaki	NRM	0	1	52.3%	Mukiga	0.44	0.57	0.89	0.63	0.89	0.72
Sabiiti Chrissy	FDC	1	0	36.4%	Mukiga	0.67	0.03	0.89	0.22	0.56	0.48
Kampikaho ◇	IND	0	0	10.0%	Mukiga	-	-0.07	-	0.08	-	0.19
Sabiiti Wilber	IND	0	0	0.7%	Mukiga	0.44	-0.48	0.78	-0.36	0.56	-0.09
Ndyamweha	IND	0	0	0.6%	Mukiga	0.11	-0.66	0.78	-0.40	0.22	-0.33
Yurra											
Ajedra	NRM	0	1	79.8%	Lugbara	0.83	0.59	0.83	0.63	0.58	0.65
Zedriga	DP	0	0	20.2%	Lugbara	0.83	0.11	0.92	0.21	0.83	0.29

Notes: Candidates indicated with ◇ chose not to participate in the filming and were thus not included in the candidate videos. (F) indicates that a candidate is female.

E.1 Afrobarometer cross-national comparison

Figure E3 uses data from Round 7 of the Afrobarometer to look at the difference in levels of trust between ruling parties and opposition parties across countries. The question respondents are asked are as follows: "How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?" followed by a set of actors and institutions, including "The ruling party" and "Opposition political parties." Answer choices are as follows: Not at all, just a little, somewhat, a lot, and don't know. The figure reports the difference in the percentage of respondents in each country who answer "somewhat" or "a lot" for ruling parties minus the percentage of respondents who answer "somewhat" or "a lot" for opposition parties. As can be seen from the figure, Uganda has one of the largest gaps in trust between the ruling party and opposition parties.

Figure E3: Difference in trust in ruling parties and opposition parties across countries

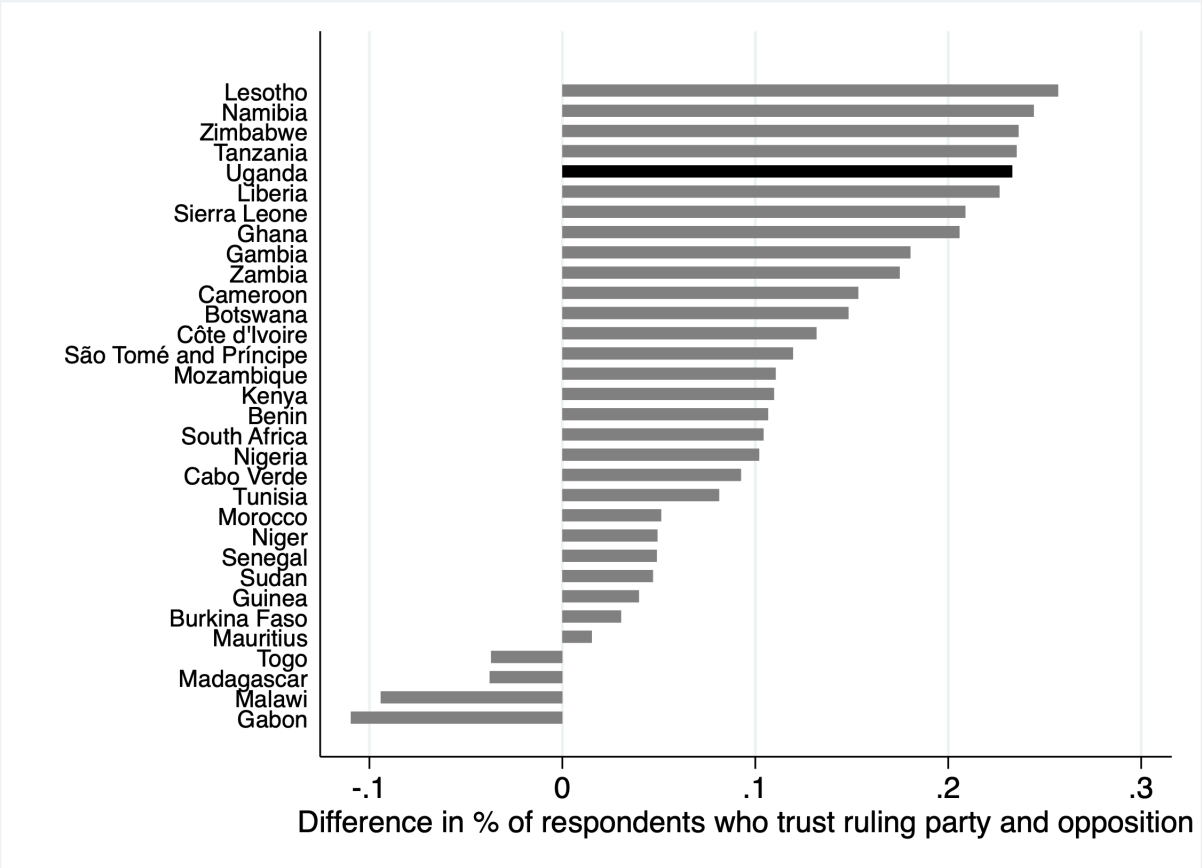
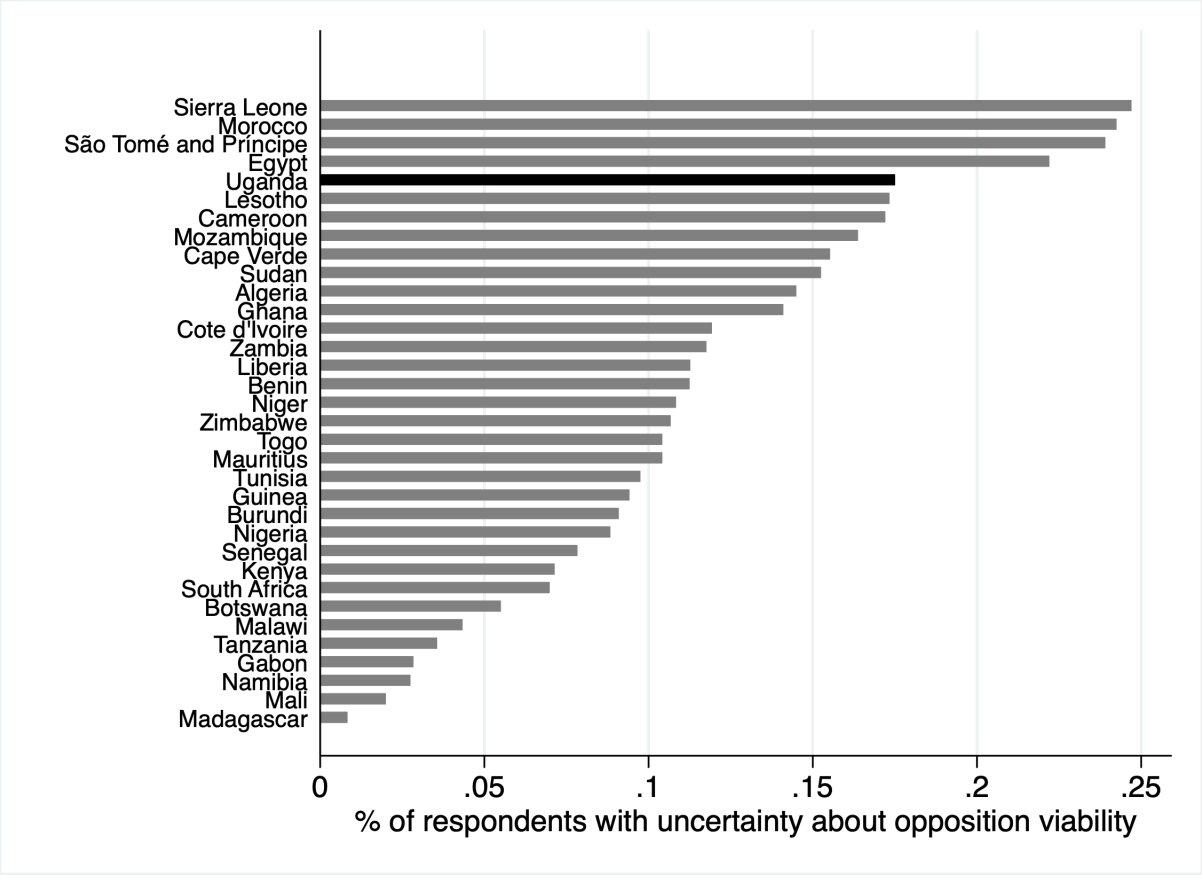


Figure E4 shows the percentage of respondents in each country (Afrobarometer Round 6) who answer "don't know" to the question "Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The political opposition in Uganda presents a viable alternative vision and plan for the country." Again, Uganda is among the countries with the largest percentage of respondents

answering don't know to this question, indicating the lack of information and degree of uncertainty about opposition candidates.

Figure E4: Uncertainty about viability of opposition



F Additional Results

F.1 Knowledge asymmetries at baseline

The estimating equation for Table 1: "Respondents know less about opposition candidates at baseline" is:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Opp_j + \beta_2 Ind_j + \sum_{n=1}^{k} (\nu_k Z_{ij}^k) + \delta_{ij} + u_{ij} \tag{3}$$

where Y_{ij} refers to the outcome measure for voter i and candidate j, Opp_j and Ind_j are indicators for whether candidate j is a member of the opposition or an independent, respectively, and

where $Z_1, ..., Z_k$ is a vector of covariates: whether a candidate is a co-ethnic with the respondent and whether they are the incumbent candidate. Covariates are measured at baseline and standardized. The model includes individual and village fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by the unit of randomization, the village.

F.2 Treatment effects on political knowledge

Table F1: Treatment effect on knowledge

	Heard of		Sector correct	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.081***	0.067***	0.146***	0.138***
	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.013)
Constant	0.783***	0.782***	0.175***	0.123***
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.018)
N	11,913	6,311	11,913	6,311
R^2	0.297	0.320	0.095	0.088

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. All models include constituency fixed effects and a vector of covariates, as well as the interaction with the treatment indicator. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table F2: Treatment effect on knowledge, by candidate party (Table corresponding to Figure 2)

	Heard of		Sector correct	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.036**	0.012	0.113***	0.134***
	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.030)	(0.033)
Treatment * Opposition	0.056*	0.076**	0.066*	0.039
	(0.029)	(0.037)	(0.040)	(0.045)
Treatment * Independent	0.056***	0.065**	0.029	-0.013
	(0.021)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.039)
Opposition	-0.217***	-0.222***	-0.070**	0.007
	(0.022)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.029)
Independent	-0.246***	-0.237***	-0.085***	-0.013
	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.026)
Constant	0.805***	0.811***	0.191***	0.125***
	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.021)	(0.021)
N	11,913	6,311	11,913	6,311
R^2	0.297	0.321	0.095	0.089

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. All models include constituency fixed effects and a vector of covariates, as well as the interaction with the treatment indicator. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

F.3 Treatment effects on likability

Videos had a depolarizing effect: NRM-leaning voters updated more positively on opposition candidates with regard to candidate likability, while opposition-leaning voters updated more positively on NRM candidates. Likability is measured on a ten-point scale at endline, after the election.

Table F3: Treatment effect on candidate likability, by candidate and voter type

	All		Lean NRM	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.647***	0.314	0.560***	0.043
	(0.073)	(0.235)	(0.099)	(0.200)
Treatment x Opposition candidate		0.566*		0.944***
		(0.330)		(0.296)
Treatment x Independent candidate		0.339		0.501*
		(0.280)		(0.256)
Opposition candidate	-2.731***	-3.012***	-4.359***	-4.859***
	(0.167)	(0.254)	(0.154)	(0.203)
Independent candidate	-3.211***	-3.378***	-4.738***	-5.006***
	(0.146)	(0.207)	(0.135)	(0.177)
Constant	6.377***	6.542***	7.627***	7.904***
	(0.129)	(0.181)	(0.116)	(0.137)
N	11,080	11,080	5,903	5,903
R^2	0.313	0.314	0.452	0.454

Notes: Column (2) corresponds to Figure 3. The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. The dependent variable is a ten-point likability index ("On 1-10 scale, how much do you like the candidate?"). All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table F4: Treatment effect on candidate likability by partisanship

	NRM-leaning voters		Opposition-leaning voters	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.482***	0.695***	0.915***	0.944***
	(0.115)	(0.123)	(0.211)	(0.179)
Treatment x Opposition candidate	0.501**		-0.165	
	(0.235)		(0.418)	
Opposition candidate	-1.213***		1.512***	
	(0.161)		(0.299)	
Treatment x NRM candidate		-0.665**		-0.256
		(0.254)		(0.445)
NRM candidate		4.932***		0.930***
		(0.176)		(0.309)
Constant	4.246***	2.953***	3.697***	3.908***
	(0.084)	(0.085)	(0.142)	(0.126)
N	5,903	5,903	1,638	1,638
R^2	0.256	0.451	0.274	0.256
Coeff (Treat + Treat x Opp)	0.983		0.750	
p-value (Treat + Treat x Opp)	0.000		0.018	
Coeff (Treat + Treat x NRM)		0.030		0.688
p-value (Treat + Treat x NRM)		0.882		0.085

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. The dependent variable is a ten-point likability index ("On 1-10 scale, how much do you like the candidate?"). All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

F.4 Treatment effects on voting behavior

Table F5: Treatment effects on vote choice (Table corresponding to Figure 4)

	Voted for NRM		Voted for opposition		Voted for independent	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treatment	-0.034*	-0.063***	0.014	0.019**	0.001	0.005
	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.014)	(0.009)
Constant	0.483***	0.655***	0.144***	0.053***	0.116***	0.044***
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.007)
Observations	4,354	2,433	4,258	2,393	4,258	2,393
R^2	0.095	0.046	0.267	0.135	0.107	0.060

Notes. The unit of observation is the voter. The dependent variable is voting for the ruling party (1-2), the opposition (3-4), or an independent (5-6). The sample in even columns is restricted to respondents who indicated they were intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. Performing a Wald test of the equality of coefficients on *Treatment* across models yields $Prob > \chi^2$ = 0.071 comparing columns (1) and (3) and $Prob > \chi^2$ = 0.003 comparing columns (2) and (4). All models include a vector of standardized covariates, their interaction with the treatment indicator, and constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Table F6: Treatment effects on vote choice, conditional on turnout

	Voted for NRM		Voted for opposition		Voted for independent	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treatment	-0.032	-0.043**	0.029*	0.031**	0.005	0.008
	(0.022)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.013)
Constant	0.637***	0.855***	0.189***	0.070***	0.155***	0.059***
	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.013)	(0.009)
Observations	3,260	1,816	3,164	1,776	3,164	1,776
R^2	0.198	0.112	0.346	0.178	0.134	0.074

Notes. Sample restricted to respondents who turned out to vote. The unit of observation is the voter. The dependent variable is voting for the ruling party (1-2), the opposition (3-4), or an independent (5-6). The sample in even columns is restricted to respondents who indicated they were intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. All models include a vector of standardized covariates, their interaction with the treatment indicator, and constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Table F7: Treatment effects on vote choice

	Voted for incumbent		Voted best performer (exp)		Voted best performer (pop)	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treatment	0.003	-0.006	0.002	-0.015	-0.020	-0.018
	(0.017)	(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.018)
Constant	0.273***	0.245***	0.317***	0.230***	0.656***	0.764***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.012)
Observations	4,258	2,393	3,164	1,776	3,164	1,776
R^2	0.264	0.465	0.224	0.447	0.150	0.346

Notes. The unit of observation is the voter. The dependent variable is whether a voter voted for the incumbent (1-2), the best performer in the video according to local experts (3-4), or the candidate deemed the best performer by the plurality of respondents (5-6). The sample in even columns is restricted to respondents who indicated they were intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. All models include a vector of standardized covariates, their interaction with the treatment indicator, and constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Table F8: Treatment effects on turnout

	All		Lean NRM	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	-0.021	-0.020	-0.037	-0.036
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Constant	0.759***	0.759***	0.766***	0.765***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Covariates	Yes	No	Yes	No
Observations	4,354	4,354	2,433	2,433
R^2	0.028	0.025	0.029	0.021

Notes. The unit of observation is the voter. The dependent variable is turnout. The sample in columns (3)-(4) is restricted to respondents who indicated they were intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. Models include a vector of standardized covariates and their interaction with the treatment indicator, as indicated, and constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

F.5 Correlates of vote choice

We leverage the panel structure of our data to investigate the correlates of vote choice. We regress the self-reported vote choice at endline on respondents' baseline perceptions of candidates. Since we are interested in assessing the characteristics of the candidates voters elect in the *absence* of the intervention, we limit the sample to the control group. Asking about perceived candidate characteristics several weeks before asking about voting behavior, somewhat alleviates concerns about post-hoc rationalizations and social-desirability bias.

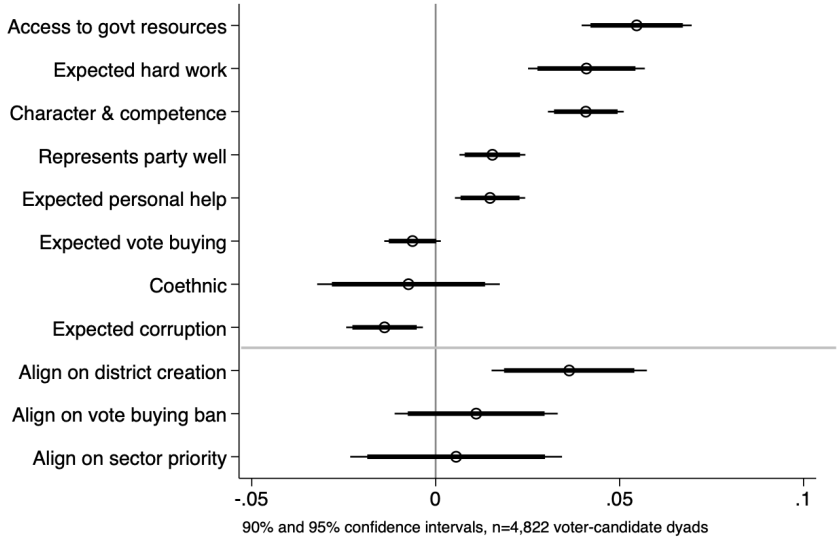
The baseline survey asked about respondents' perceptions of each candidate. One set related to a candidate's perceived characteristics—for example, whether, if elected, a candidate would be expected to do the following: gain access to government resources, work hard, represent their party well, engage in corruption, and whether a candidate is expected to offer a voter personal assistance in case of an emergency. We also include a measure of expected engagement in vote buying, a respondent's rating of a candidate's character and competence, and coethnicity. Another set of questions related to voters' policy preferences; we use these to construct a measure of alignment with a given candidate.

We then regress a binary indicator for whether a respondent voted for a given candidate on respondent priors. The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. Since vote choice is correlated within the voter (each voter can only vote for one candidate), we cluster standard errors at the voter level and include constituency fixed effects.

As shown in Figure F5, we find that the strongest correlates of vote-choice are expected ability

to access government resources once in office (or what we may think of as pork), expected effort, and the rating of a candidate's character and competence. Among the policy issues, only alignment on whether more districts should be created predicted vote choice. Contrary to the literature on the prevalence of ethnic voting in Africa, we do not find that coethnicity predicts vote choice—as we describe in the section on Uganda's political context, there is little variation in the ethnic identities of parliamentary candidates within constituencies.

Figure F5: Correlates of vote choice in the control group



F.6 Alternative explanations

We do not find any evidence that NRM incumbents performed worse in the videos.

Table F9: Candidate party, winners, video performance, and vote margin in the general election

Constituency	Best performance (Popular)	Best performance (Expert)	Winner (Election)	Vote Margin (2016)
Budaka	NRM	NRM	NRM	19.8
Bugweri	NRM	FDC	FDC	0.8
Buikwe South	DP	DP	NRM	12.8
Bunyaruguru	NRM	IND	NRM	33.5
Lugazi	NRM	IND	NRM	13.2
Nakifuma	NRM	IND	NRM	36.1
Ntoroko	IND	IND	NRM	17.7
Nwoya	FDC	NRM	FDC	15.1
Oyam South	UPC	UPC	UPC	37.8
Rukiga	NRM	FDC	NRM	15.9
Vurra	NRM	DP	NRM	59.6

We also do not find any evidence for differential response bias driving treatment effects on switching.

Table F10: Switching and enumerator perception

	(1) Switch All	(2) Switch Lean NRM	(3) Switch to Opp Lean NRM
Treatment	0.016	0.024	0.020
	(0.030)	(0.036)	(0.018)
Treat x Government sent	0.026	0.052	0.004
	(0.040)	(0.048)	(0.025)
Government sent	-0.024	-0.042	0.008
	(0.030)	(0.036)	(0.017)
Constant	0.457***	0.368***	0.058***
	(0.022)	(0.026)	(0.012)
N	2,585	1,592	1,569
R^2	0.054	0.061	0.136

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter. *Switch* is an indicator variable that takes value 1 if a voter did not vote for the candidate whom she was planning to vote for at baseline (self-reported), 0 otherwise. *Government sent* takes value 1 if a respondent said at endline that enumerators were sent by the government or an affiliated body. All models include constituency fixed effects and covariates. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Furthermore, we do not find evidence that candidates responded to the intervention strategically by increasing their number of campaign visits or the amount of vote buying in treatment villages.

Table F11: Candidate response

	Any candidate visit		Any offer	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	-0.024	-0.020	-0.008	-0.007
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Constant	0.877***	0.875***	0.129***	0.128***
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.011)
N	2,198	2,198	2,222	2,222
R^2	0.183	0.171	0.088	0.076
Controls	Yes	No	Yes	No

Notes: Any candidate visit is a binary variable that takes value 1 if any candidate visited the village during the campaign, according to the individual respondent; *any offer* is a binary variable that takes value 1 if a respondent reports having been offered sugar, salt, fuel, money, or similar from any of the candidates. Both variables are measured at endline, the unit of observation is the voter. The model includes constituency fixed effects and, as indicated, covariates and their interaction with the treatment indicator. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

We also do not find any evidence that respondents in treatment villages perceived the elections as more free and fair—the treatment effect is negative and insignificant.

Table F12: Treatment effects on perceived free and fairness of the election

Sample:	All		Lean NRM	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	-0.054	-0.053	-0.052	-0.051
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Constant	3.796***	3.795***	3.833***	3.833***
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.025)
N	4,309	4,309	2,412	2,412
R^2	0.050	0.044	0.084	0.077
Controls	Yes	No	Yes	No

Notes: The dependent variable is a 4-point Likert-scale indicating as how free and fair a respondent perceived the elections in their constituency, measured at endline. All models include constituency fixed effects and–as indicated–covariates. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

F.7 Polling station results

Table F13: Treatment effect on polling station outcomes

	Turnout	**Vote share**		
		NRM	Opposition	Independent
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.005	-0.015	-0.006	0.020
	(0.009)	(0.024)	(0.018)	(0.021)
Constant	0.702***	0.461***	0.295***	0.210***
	(0.006)	(0.017)	(0.012)	(0.015)
N	211	211	211	211
R^2	0.604	0.491	0.815	0.613

Notes: Dependent variables from official polling station results. The unit of observation is the polling station. All models include constituency fixed effects and covariates. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

G Robustness Checks

G.1 Political knowledge and likability

Table G1: Treatment effect on knowledge – No covariates

	Heard of		Sector correct	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.079***	0.058***	0.145***	0.133***
	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.010)	(0.012)
Constant	0.614***	0.629***	0.127***	0.121***
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.007)
N	11,913	6,311	11,913	6,311
R^2	0.132	0.157	0.067	0.060

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G2: Treatment effect on knowledge – Standard errors clustered by respondent

	Heard of		Sector correct	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.081***	0.067***	0.146***	0.138***
	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.011)
Constant	0.783***	0.782***	0.175***	0.123***
	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.013)
N	11,913	6,311	11,913	6,311
R^2	0.297	0.320	0.095	0.088

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G3: Treatment effect on knowledge – Including unfilmed candidates

	Heard of		Sector correct	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
Treatment	0.066***	0.051***	0.139***	0.129***
	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.012)
Constant	0.782***	0.781***	0.177***	0.126***
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.018)
N	13,389	7,220	12,621	6,755
R^2	0.284	0.301	0.097	0.091

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. The sample size is lower in columns (3) and (4) since we do not know the priority sector for some of the unfilmed candidates. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G4: Treatment effect on knowledge, by candidate party – No covariates

	Heard of		Sector correct	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.006	-0.017	0.125***	0.135***
	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.030)	(0.032)
Treatment * Opposition	0.078*	0.098**	0.052	0.034
	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.039)	(0.044)
Treatment * Independent	0.096***	0.092***	0.013	-0.021
	(0.026)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.037)
Opposition	-0.323***	-0.371***	-0.090***	-0.044
	(0.032)	(0.036)	(0.028)	(0.029)
Independent	-0.390***	-0.404***	-0.112***	-0.069***
	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.026)
Constant	0.913***	0.944***	0.212***	0.169***
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.022)
N	11,913	6,311	11,913	6,311
R^2	0.202	0.237	0.077	0.067

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G5: Treatment effect on knowledge, by candidate party – Standard errors clustered by respondent

	Heard of		Sector correct	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.036***	0.012	0.113***	0.134***
	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.019)	(0.025)
Treatment * Opposition	0.056***	0.076***	0.066***	0.039
	(0.018)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.032)
Treatment * Independent	0.056***	0.065***	0.029	-0.013
	(0.016)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.029)
Opposition	-0.217***	-0.222***	-0.070***	0.007
	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.021)
Independent	-0.246***	-0.237***	-0.085***	-0.013
	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.020)
Constant	0.805***	0.811***	0.191***	0.125***
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.016)
N	11,913	6,311	11,913	6,311
R^2	0.297	0.321	0.095	0.089

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G6: Treatment effect on knowledge, by candidate party – Including unfilmed candidates

	Heard of		Sector correct	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.039**	0.017	0.112***	0.132***
	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.030)	(0.033)
Treatment * Opposition	0.054*	0.071*	0.067*	0.042
	(0.029)	(0.036)	(0.040)	(0.045)
Treatment * Independent	0.025	0.030	0.017	-0.023
	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.033)	(0.038)
Opposition	-0.213***	-0.214***	-0.071**	0.006
	(0.022)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.029)
Independent	-0.231***	-0.221***	-0.092***	-0.023
	(0.015)	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.025)
Constant	0.796***	0.799***	0.190***	0.124***
	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.021)	(0.021)
N	13,389	7,220	12,621	6,755
R^2	0.284	0.302	0.098	0.092

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad, including those with unfilmed candidates. The sample size in columns (3) and (4) is lower since we do not know the priority sector of some unfilmed candidates. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G7: Treatment effect on candidate likability – No covariates

	NRM-leaning voters		Opposition-leaning voters	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.331***	0.669***	0.938***	0.783***
	(0.114)	(0.127)	(0.215)	(0.177)
Treatment x Opposition candidate	0.549**		-0.622	
	(0.260)		(0.459)	
Opposition candidate	-1.640***		2.963***	
	(0.181)		(0.351)	
Treatment x NRM candidate		-0.861***		-0.101
		(0.233)		(0.420)
NRM candidate		5.781***		1.061***
		(0.163)		(0.276)
Constant	4.499***	2.842***	3.377***	3.988***
	(0.082)	(0.089)	(0.152)	(0.118)
N	5,903	5,903	1,638	1,638
R^2	0.081	0.418	0.149	0.040
Coeff (Treat + Treat x Opp)	0.880		0.315	
p-value (Treat + Treat x Opp)	0.000		0.365	
Coeff (Treat + Treat x NRM)		-0.193		0.682
p-value (Treat + Treat x NRM)		0.257		0.068

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. The dependent variable is a ten-point likability index ("On 1-10 scale, how much do you like the candidate?") All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G8: Treatment effect on candidate likability – Standard errors clustered by respondent

	NRM-leaning voters		Opposition-leaning voters	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.482***	0.695***	0.915***	0.944***
	(0.104)	(0.110)	(0.200)	(0.182)
Treatment x Opposition candidate	0.501***		-0.165	
	(0.172)		(0.369)	
Opposition candidate	-1.213***		1.512***	
	(0.121)		(0.272)	
Treatment x NRM candidate				-0.256
				(0.427)
NRM candidate				0.930***
				(0.296)
Constant	4.246***	2.953***	3.697***	3.908***
	(0.076)	(0.078)	(0.144)	(0.122)
N	5,903	5,903	1,638	1,638
R^2	0.256	0.451	0.274	0.256
Coeff (Treat + Treat x Opp)	0.983		0.750	
p-value (Treat + Treat x Opp)	0.000		0.009	
Coeff (Treat + Treat x NRM)		0.030		0.688
p-value (Treat + Treat x NRM)		0.862		0.064

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. The dependent variable is a ten-point likability index ("On 1-10 scale, how much do you like the candidate?") All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G9: Treatment effect on candidate likability – Including unfilmed candidates

	NRM-leaning voters		Opposition-leaning voters	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.404***	0.585***	0.805***	0.843***
	(0.114)	(0.124)	(0.204)	(0.176)
Treatment x Opposition candidate	0.593***		-0.071	
	(0.221)		(0.406)	
Opposition candidate	-1.183***		1.570***	
	(0.150)		(0.295)	
Treatment x NRM candidate		-0.546**		-0.177
		(0.248)		(0.448)
NRM candidate		4.816***		0.972***
		(0.169)		(0.308)
Constant	4.203***	3.061***	3.663***	3.871***
	(0.076)	(0.081)	(0.134)	(0.118)
N	6,735	6,735	1,762	1,762
R^2	0.240	0.419	0.267	0.247
Coeff (Treat + Treat x Opp)	0.996		0.735	
p-value (Treat + Treat x Opp)	0.000	0.000	0.018	0.000
Coeff (Treat + Treat x NRM)		0.039		0.666
p-value (Treat + Treat x NRM)		0.845		0.096

Notes: The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad, including those with unfilmed candidates. The dependent variable is a ten-point likability index ("On 1-10 scale, how much do you like the candidate?") All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G10: Treatment effect on knowledge and likability – Inverse probability weights

	Heard of		Sector correct		Likability	
Treatment	0.066***	0.011	0.138***	0.134***	0.561***	0.033
	(0.014)	(0.021)	(0.013)	(0.033)	(0.099)	(0.202)
Treatment x Opposition candidate		0.077**		0.039		0.967***
		(0.037)		(0.045)		(0.298)
Treatment x Independent candidate		0.064**		-0.013		0.514**
		(0.027)		(0.038)		(0.259)
Opposition candidate	-0.186***	-0.226***	0.026	0.005	-4.369***	-4.869***
	(0.018)	(0.027)	(0.023)	(0.028)	(0.156)	(0.205)
Independent candidate	-0.204***	-0.237***	-0.019	-0.013	-4.742***	-5.014***
	(0.014)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.025)	(0.136)	(0.179)
Constant	0.782***	0.811***	0.122***	0.124***	7.625***	7.906***
	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.117)	(0.138)
N	6,311	6,311	6,311	6,311	5,903	5,903
R^2	0.323	0.323	0.088	0.089	0.453	0.455

Notes: Inverse probability weights. Observations with a higher predicted probability of attriting – estimated by running a logit regression of the attrition indicator on the vector of covariates and their interaction with the treatment indicator – are given more weight. The sample is restricted to NRM-leaning voters. The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G11: Treatment effect on knowledge and likability – Manski bounds

	Heard of		Sector correct		Likability	
	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treatment	0.046***	0.071***	0.104***	0.128***	0.270*	0.532***
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.012)	(0.153)	(0.109)
Opposition candidate	-0.295***	-0.304***	-0.018	-0.026	-4.271***	-4.852***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.145)	(0.147)
Independent candidate	-0.329***	-0.337***	-0.068***	-0.075***	-4.609***	-5.281***
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.121)	(0.127)
Constant	0.917***	0.836***	0.239***	0.158***	8.555***	7.590***
	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.016)	(0.114)	(0.129)
N	6,830	6,830	6,830	6,830	6,830	6,830
R^2	0.217	0.223	0.046	0.074	0.230	0.378

Notes: Manski bounds. The sample is restricted to NRM-leaning voters. The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. All models include constituency fixed effects. Missing values of the dependent variable are set equal to the highest possible value (columns indicated with *Upper* for upper bound) or the lowest possible value (columns indicated with *Lower* for lower bound). Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Table G12: Treatment effect on knowledge and likability, by candidate party – Manski bounds

	Heard of		Sector correct		Likability	
	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treatment	-0.015	0.007	0.109***	0.131***	-0.182	0.008
	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.151)	(0.210)
Treatment x Opposition candidate	0.080*	0.087*	0.024	0.030	0.737**	0.938***
	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.299)	(0.287)
Treatment x Independent candidate	0.075**	0.076**	-0.021	-0.020	0.476*	0.511**
	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.037)	(0.035)	(0.254)	(0.244)
Opposition candidate	-0.337***	-0.348***	-0.030	-0.042	-4.651***	-5.335***
	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.209)	(0.201)
Independent candidate	-0.368***	-0.376***	-0.057**	-0.065***	-4.855***	-5.545***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.179)	(0.175)
Constant	0.949***	0.869***	0.237***	0.157***	8.788***	7.861***
	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.108)	(0.158)
N	6,830	6,830	6,830	6,830	6,830	6,830
R^2	0.218	0.224	0.046	0.075	0.231	0.380

Notes: Manski bounds. The sample is restricted to NRM-leaning voters. The unit of observation is the voter-candidate dyad. All models include constituency fixed effects. Missing values of the dependent variable are set equal to the highest possible value (columns indicated with *Upper* for upper bound) or the lowest possible value (columns indicated with *Lower* for lower bound). Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

G.2 Voting behavior

Table G13: Treatment effects on vote choice – No covariates

	Voted for NRM		Voted for opposition		Voted for independent	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treatment	-0.030	-0.062**	0.011	0.019*	-0.000	0.004
	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.010)
Constant	0.481***	0.655***	0.144***	0.053***	0.117***	0.044***
	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.007)
Observations	4,354	2,433	4,258	2,393	4,258	2393
R^2	0.075	0.033	0.245	0.119	0.101	0.051

Notes. The unit of observation is the voter. The dependent variable is voting for the ruling party (1-2), the opposition (3-4), or an independent (5-6). The sample in even columns is restricted to respondents who indicated they were intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Table G14: Treatment effects on vote choice – Turnout at face value

	Voted for NRM		Voted for opposition		Voted for independent		Turnout	
	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM	All	Lean NRM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Treatment	-0.020	-0.033*	0.021	0.025**	0.004	0.005	0.002	-0.001
	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Constant	0.615***	0.826***	0.179***	0.069***	0.147***	0.058***	0.963***	0.969***
	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Observations	4,357	2,433	4,222	2,381	4,222	2,381	4,352	2,432
R^2	0.181	0.108	0.301	0.161	0.130	0.070	0.018	0.026

Notes. The unit of observation is the voter. The dependent variable is voting for the ruling party (1-2), the opposition (3-4), or an independent (5-6); and turnout (7-8); turnout is taken at face value (i.e. not verified through factual questions only respondents who actually voted can be expected to answer correctly). The sample in even columns is restricted to respondents who indicated they were intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. All models include a vector of standardized covariates, their interaction with the treatment indicator, and constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Table G15: Treatment effects on vote choice and turnout – Inverse probability weights

	Voted for			
	NRM	Opposition	Independent	Turnout
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	-0.062**	0.019**	0.005	-0.035
	(0.024)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.023)
Constant	0.655***	0.053***	0.044***	0.765***
	(0.015)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.014)
Observations	2,433	2,393	2,393	2,433
R^2	0.046	0.134	0.060	0.028

Notes. The unit of observation is the voter. Observations with a higher predicted probability of attriting – estimated by running a logit regression of the attrition indicator on the vector of covariates and their interaction with the treatment indicator – are given more weight. The dependent variable is voting for the ruling party (1), the opposition (2), or an independent (3); or turnout. The sample is restricted to respondents who indicated they were intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. All models include a vector of standardized covariates, their interaction with the treatment indicator, and constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Our results are remarkably robust to using the punitive Manski bound procedure, where missing values in the dependent variable are set equal to the highest possible value (upper bound) or the lowest possible value (lower bound), respectively. The only exception is the upper bound on the treatment effect on voting for the opposition. Here, the procedure requires that we assume that *every* respondent whom we could not reach for the follow-up survey voted for the opposition. Given that we are restricting the sample to the subset of respondents who intended to vote for the ruling party at baseline (only 6.3% of whom wound up voting for the opposition, according to our endline survey), this is an extreme assumption.

Table G16: Treatment effects on vote choice and turnout – Manski bounds

	Voted for NRM		Voted for opposition		Voted for independent		Turnout	
	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Treatment	-0.070***	-0.040*	-0.006	0.019**	-0.020	0.006	-0.041*	-0.011
	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.017)	(0.009)	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.021)	(0.023)
Constant	0.687***	0.596***	0.152***	0.048***	0.143***	0.039***	0.787***	0.696***
	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.015)
Observations	2,633	2,633	2,633	2,633	2,633	2,633	2,633	2,633
R^2	0.043	0.039	0.060	0.126	0.043	0.054	0.027	0.026

Notes. Manski bounds. The unit of observation is the voter. The dependent variable is voting for the ruling party (1-2), the opposition (3-4), or an independent (5-6); and turnout (7-8). Missing values of the dependent variable are set equal to the highest possible value (columns indicated with *Upper* for upper bound) or the lowest possible value (columns indicated with *Lower* for lower bound). The sample is restricted to respondents who indicated they were intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. All models include a vector of standardized covariates, their interaction with the treatment indicator, and constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Table G17: Treatment effects on switching

	(1) All	(2) Lean NRM	(3) Don't lean NRM
Treatment	0.035*	0.063***	0.008
	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.031)
Constant	0.448***	0.345***	0.600***
	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.022)
Observations	3,949	2,433	1,516
R^2	0.044	0.046	0.077

Notes. The unit of observation is the voter. The dependent variable takes value 0 if a respondent did not vote for their intended vote choice, as stated at baseline, and 1 otherwise. In column (2), the sample is subset to respondents intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline, in column (3) it is subset to the remainder of the sample. All models include constituency fixed effects and a vector of covariates and their interaction with the treatment indicator. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

G.3 Mechanisms

Table G18: Determinants of voting for the ruling party – No covariates

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Treat	-0.010	-0.037	-0.024
	(0.040)	(0.031)	(0.036)
Treat x High knowledge gap	-0.123**		
	(0.062)		
High knowledge gap	0.094**		
	(0.047)		
Treat x Primary candidate dropped		-0.124**	
		(0.051)	
Primary candidate dropped		0.019	
		(0.037)	
Treat x Open other parties			-0.063
			(0.039)
Open other parties			-0.009
			(0.028)
Constant	0.580***	0.673***	0.660***
	(0.029)	(0.020)	(0.024)
N	1,410	2,029	2,433
R^2	0.042	0.034	0.036

Notes: The dependent variable is whether a respondent self-reported voting for the ruling party. The sample is restricted to those intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. The unit of observation is the voter. *Knowledge gap high* implies that a respondent's knowledge gap at baseline was above the median, where the knowledge gap equals the share of factual questions answered correctly about the ruling party candidate minus the average share of factual questions answered correctly about all viable opposition candidates. *Primary candidate dropped* indicates that a respondents preferred primary candidate dropped out of the race. *Open to other parties* indicates the extent to which a respondent indicated being open to voting for other parties at baseline. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.)

Table G19: Determinants of voting for the ruling party – Standard errors clustered by respondent

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Treatment	-0.002	-0.045*	-0.036
	(0.035)	(0.026)	(0.055)
Treat x High knowledge gap	-0.140***		
	(0.054)		
High knowledge gap	0.103**		
	(0.046)		
Treat x Primary candidate dropped		-0.117**	
		(0.048)	
Primary candidate dropped		0.023	
		(0.038)	
Treat x Open other parties			-0.046
			(0.084)
Open other parties			0.039
			(0.061)
Constant	0.574***	0.671***	0.631***
	(0.029)	(0.019)	(0.040)
N	1,410	2,029	2,433
R^2	0.060	0.049	0.046

Notes: The dependent variable is whether a respondent self-reported voting for the ruling party. The sample is restricted to those intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. The unit of observation is the voter. *Knowledge gap high* implies that a respondent's knowledge gap at baseline was above the median, where the knowledge gap equals the share of factual questions answered correctly about the ruling party candidate minus the average share of factual questions answered correctly about all viable opposition candidates. *Primary candidate dropped* indicates that a respondents preferred primary candidate dropped out of the race. *Open to other parties* indicates the extent to which a respondent indicated being open to voting for other parties at baseline. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.)

Table G20: Voting behavior by feeling monitored – No covariates

	(1) Voted NRM	(2) Voted opposition	(3) Turnout
Treatment	-0.013	0.037*	0.002
	(0.049)	(0.020)	(0.042)
Treatment * Feel monitored	-0.031	-0.039	-0.031
	(0.063)	(0.027)	(0.053)
Feeling monitored	-0.009	0.008	-0.009
	(0.042)	(0.018)	(0.037)
Constant	0.641***	0.043***	0.752***
	(0.031)	(0.012)	(0.028)
Observations	1,095	1,085	1,095
R^2	0.025	0.110	0.031

Notes: The dependent variables are whether a respondent: (1) self-reported voting for the ruling party or (2) the opposition party, and (3) turned out (verified self-report). The sample is restricted to those intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. The unit of observation is the voter. *Feeling monitored* takes value 1 if a respondent answered yes to the question "Some people believe that politicians and political parties monitor how certain areas vote, and on this basis decide whether to reward or punish voters in that area. What about you—do you think that politicians and/or political parties monitor how your area votes, and make decisions about whether or not to spend resources on your area depending on whether or not the received support during the election from voters here?", the value is 0 otherwise. The question was posed to a random half of respondents at baseline. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by village. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.)

Table G21: Voting behavior by feeling monitored – Standard errors clustered by respondent

	(1) Voted NRM	(2) Voted opposition	(3) Turnout
Treatment	-0.013	0.038**	0.007
	(0.044)	(0.019)	(0.039)
Treatment * Feel monitored	-0.033	-0.044*	-0.041
	(0.060)	(0.026)	(0.055)
Feeling monitored	-0.005	0.008	-0.007
	(0.044)	(0.018)	(0.040)
Constant	0.640***	0.042***	0.750***
	(0.031)	(0.012)	(0.028)
Observations	1,095	1,085	1,095
R^2	0.045	0.146	0.049

Notes: The dependent variables are whether a respondent: (1) self-reported voting for the ruling party or (2) the opposition party, and (3) turned out (verified self-report). The sample is restricted to those intending to vote for the ruling party at baseline. The unit of observation is the voter. *Feeling monitored* takes value 1 if a respondent answered yes to the question "Some people believe that politicians and political parties monitor how certain areas vote, and on this basis decide whether to reward or punish voters in that area. What about you—do you think that politicians and/or political parties monitor how your area votes, and make decisions about whether or not to spend resources on your area depending on whether or not the received support during the election from voters here?", the value is 0 otherwise. The question was posed to a random half of respondents at baseline. All models include constituency fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.)

H Deviations from the Preanalysis Plan

This paper only shows the results for one of the study arms, and thus does not present the majority of the prespecified analyses (the study was designed to produce multiple distinct papers). A separate paper compares the treatment effects of the candidate videos in the general Parliamentary election studied here with treatment effects in the preceding primary elections of the ruling party, which took place in 2015. This paper thus reports average treatment effects, including the ones reported in this paper, but compares treatment effect sizes across the two election types – primary and general elections.

A separate book chapter examines a subset of four of the eleven constituencies in the general election round of the study. In this chapter, we examine the heterogeneous treatment effects of good and bad news, which was a major focus of the preanalysis plan as part of the Metaketa initiative. Good and bad news was conceptualized as the difference between respondents' prior beliefs about candidates' policy positions and quality and the "true" value of these as presented in the candidate interview videos. Thus, this chapter analyses a set of heterogeneous effects across voter-candidate

dyads that are not analyzed in this paper. The chapter also focuses on respondents who were assigned to the treatment and control condition at the individual level in different villages in four of the sampled constituencies. This treatment differs from that analyzed in the present paper as it is administered at the individual level, as private viewings on tablets, rather than in a group setting. Villages in the four constituencies in question were randomly assigned to the individual or group screening arms, but no village received multiple treatments and thus no treatment effects we report could be additive.

In this paper, we focus primarily on hypothesis 3, which concerns switching from one's intended vote choice. The analysis we present differs from that specified in two main respects. First, the main behavioral outcomes presented in this paper are vote choice (i.e. voted for the ruling party candidate, voted for the opposition candidate), rather than "switch". "Switch" is a dichotomous variable that takes the value of 1 if a voter does not report voting for the candidate for whom they stated an intention to vote at baseline (i.e. they have "switched" from their intended vote choice), and 0 if a voter reports voting for their intended vote choice.

The results of the prespecified analysis for switching can be seen in Table G17. We find a positive treatment effect on switching in the full sample, significant at the 10% level. As can be seen in column (2), however, the treatment effect is being driven by those who intended to vote for the ruling party candidate. We thought it theoretically important to investigate why voters were much more likely to move away from the opposition, while we saw no such switching behavior among those who intended at baseline to vote for the opposition, and therefore subset the sample by the party of the candidate the voter intended to vote at baseline. We did not prespecify subsetting the sample.

When subsetting the sample by intended vote choice, we consider vote choice rather than switching as the more transparent dependent variable. With this subsetting, the specification is functionally equivalent to the prespecified dependent variable "switch" but, based on feedback we received, easier to interpret. For example, when subsetting to voters who intended to vote for the NRM at baseline (or what we call "lean NRM"), voting for the NRM is the exact same as not switching.

We also note that while we list likability as a main outcome collected in the endline survey, we did not register a specific hypothesis regarding likability. We did not preregister the treatment moderators we investigate in this paper.

All covariates in use were prespecified, as was the restriction to "viable" candidates (defined as those receiving at least ten percent of the vote share) for all dyadic outcomes, and the use of the verified voting behavior as primary outcomes.

I Timeline

December 2015: Recording of videos

January 2016: Baseline survey

Late January 2016: Public screenings and posterior survey

February 2016: General elections

February 2016: Phone based endline survey of respondents

J Expert Panel

To get a more objective measure of candidates' performance in the videos, we asked a panel of Ugandan experts, consisting of journalists, researchers, and members of civil society, to code the quality of each candidate along five dimensions–eloquence, qualifications, grasp of policy issues, likelihood to follow through on promises, and genuine care for the interests of voters; as well as overall performance in the video. Both voter priors and expert assessments are measured using the same questions and scales. Each video was coded by four experts. Experts spoke the local language, but did not come from the constituencies for which they were coding the videos. Experts watched the videos on their own to minimize group think.

K Video Script

Introduction

MEET THE CANDIDATES

Welcome to this "Meet the Candidates" session! Today, parliamentary candidates in the elections for [insert constituency name] answer questions about their background, qualifications and positions on important policy issues.

These candidates are competing in the general elections, which are scheduled to take place in February. Before we hear from your candidates, there are a few things you should know about your Parliament.

WHAT DOES PARLIAMENT DO?

Your government is made up of three branches. These are: the Parliament, the Executive, and the Judiciary. These three branches all have different roles but they work together.

Parliament, which is made up of Members of Parliament, makes the laws that govern Uganda.

The Executive branch, which includes the President, the Vice President, the Prime Minister, and the Cabinet, implements and enforces the laws written by Parliament.

It is important to know Members of Parliament are not responsible for implementing laws or government programs, and do not control district budgets. This means that Members of Parliament are not directly responsible for engaging in development projects in their constituencies, such as the construction of roads, schools, or health facilities.

SO WHAT DO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT DO?

Your Member of Parliament represents your interests by participating in the making of laws that guide the government. He or she does this by . . .

1. Raising and debating issues of national importance
2. Following up on the implementation of government programs in your constituency
3. Attending Local Council meetings to observe implementation of government programs
4. Making petitions to Parliament on your behalf
5. Helping to decide how funding is allocated in the national budget

Anyone who wants to stand for member of Parliament must have a minimum set of qualifications. In order to stand for Member of Parliament, a person must:

1. Be a citizen of Uganda
2. Be a registered voter
3. Completed a minimum formal education of Advance Level standard or its equivalent

And now, we are excited to introduce—your candidates!

[SHOW: CANDIDATE PHOTOS AND NAMES]

[Note: in case any candidates do not appear, include the following: Candidate[s] X, Y , Z were offered the opportunity to participate in this session but did not]

[PRESENTED BY]

This event has been made possible by a group of civil society organizations and academic institutions, and is supported by the national Electoral Commission.

Now, let's get started!

BACKGROUND [30 seconds]

Thank you for participating in this "Meet the Candidates" session. Please begin by telling us a little bit about your **background** and **qualifications** for running as Member of Parliament for [insert constituency name].

CONSTITUENCY PRIORITIES [2 minutes]

Members of Parliament have the opportunity to influence which **policy issues** are prioritized. It is important to prioritize because there are limited resources available to tackle problems, and so some issues will receive more attention than others from government. Here is a list of key sectors.

- Education
- Infrastructure, like roads and bridges
- Security, like the police and military
- Healthcare
- Agricultural development
- Energy supply
- Creation of jobs
- Water and sanitation

In your opinion, what is the single most important issue for the people in your constituency?

If elected as Member of Parliament, what concrete actions will you take to address this issue?

DISTRICT CREATION [2 minutes]

In the last ten years, many **new districts** have been created in Uganda. The debate about district creation is ongoing. Some people support and others oppose the creation of more districts in the coming years. What about you? Do you support or oppose the creation of more districts in Uganda, and why?

MONEY AND POLITICS

Some people argue that **money plays too large a role** in politics in Uganda. For example, money is sometimes used to buy votes, which is illegal but common. Do you think that candidates convicted of vote buying should be banned from contesting any elections for five years? Why or why not?

PERFORMANCE [2 minutes]

Please tell us about any **achievements** that show that you will be a **good representative** for the people of this constituency.

CHARACTERISTICS [1 minute 30 seconds]

Individuals may have many characteristics that make them good candidates for elected office. What is the **most important characteristic** of yours that makes you the best person to represent this constituency?

CLOSING

Thank you to all of our candidates for participating in this Meet the Candidates session. We wish you the best with your campaigns.

Thank you to our viewers for watching this program. **Your vote matters!**