Misperceptions and Demand for Democracy under Authoritarianism*

Daron Acemoglu† Cevat Giray Aksoy‡ Ceren Baysan§
Carlos Molina¶ Gamze Zeki‖

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether enduring authoritarian regimes are in part rooted in the population's misperceptions about their social and economic costs—as opposed to a general preference for authoritarianism. We explore this question using online and field experiments in the context of Türkiye's May 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections. We confirm that voters, especially those supporting an authoritarian leader, President Erdoğan, systematically underestimate the extent to which democracy and media freedom have been eroded in Türkiye and their usefulness in dealing with natural disasters and corruption (two salient issues in Türkiye). We find that providing (accurate) information about the state and implications of democracy and media freedom have significant effects on beliefs and increase the likelihood of voting for the opposition by about 3.7 percentage points (6.2 percent) in the online experiment. In the field experiment, we estimate similarly-sized impacts on the ballot-box level vote share—with the information treatment leading to a 2.4 percentage point (4.4 percent) increase in the opposition's vote share. Interestingly, both in the field and online, the results are driven not by further mobilizing opposition supporters, but by influencing those likely to vote for the governing coalition and those holding more misperceived beliefs about democracy and media freedom in Türkiye. The evidence suggests that at least part of the support for authoritarian regimes may be coming from misperceptions about their institutions and policies, and may be more malleable than typically presumed.

Keywords: democracy, misperceptions, elections, institutions
JEL Classification: P16

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†Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Economics. E-mail: daron@mit.edu
‡EBRD and King's College London. E-mail: aksoyc@ebrd.com
§University of Toronto and Bahçeşehir University, Department of Economics. E-mail: ceren.baysan@utoronto.ca
¶University of South Carolina, Department of Economics. E-mail: carlosmolina@sc.edu
‖Stockholm University, Department of Economics. E-mail: gamze.zeki@su.se

1 Introduction

A view pithily summarized by the French conservative philosopher Joseph de Maistre's 1857 statement, "Toute nation a le gouvernement qu'elle mérite" [Nations get the government they deserve], explains enduring authoritarian governments in many countries around the world by lack of true demand for democracy within their populations. This perspective is often invoked in explaining why democracy will not take root in China or Russia (e.g., Huntington [1997], Gessen [2017], Mitter and Johnson [2021]). Yet, many authoritarian regimes also control the media, repress dissent and use rigged elections and propaganda in order to convince their populations that they are more democratic than they truly are (as in Russia, Hungary or India today) or often argue that democracy would bring gridlock or even chaos (as in China or Türkiye). This raises the possibility that the population may hold misperceived beliefs about the state and the utility of democracy in their country.

We investigate these issues in the context of Türkiye's May 2023 parliamentary and (two rounds of) presidential elections, which *The Economist Magazine* described as the "most important election of 2023" and crucial for "the future of democracy."[1] The election came after more than 20 years of rule by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his AKP (Justice and Development) party, during which time the country experienced one of the largest declines in its democracy score anywhere in the world (e.g., Freedom House [2024]). Consistent with the possibility that there may be systematic misperceptions in the population, our baseline surveys reveal that Turkish voters, especially those supporting the governing coalition, hold more optimistic views about how democracy and media freedom/independence in the country have evolved since Erdoğan came to power in 2003 and more pessimistic beliefs about whether democracy can be more successful in dealing with natural disasters and whether media freedom will be good for controlling corruption.[2]

We use an online experiment and a large-scale field experiment, involving 880,000 voters. In both, we provide (accurate) information on the state and implications of democracy and media freedom. This information reflects the actual evolution of Turkish institutions from V-DEM data and findings in the literature on the relationship between democracy and natural disasters on the one hand (e.g., Cao [2024], Kahn [2005]) and media freedom and corruption on the other (e.g., Stanig [2015], Di Tella and Franceschelli [2011], Ferraz and Finan [2008]). These two issues were top of mind for Turkish voters due to the massive February 2023 earthquake, which led to the deaths of more than 50,000 and the displacement of more than one million people, significantly exacerbated because of unsafe building practices enabled by

[1] See here and here [accessed 31/8/2024]

[2] Throughout, we use media freedom and media independence interchangeably.

local and national corruption.

Online, we additionally provided a placebo treatment, designed as in Acemoglu et al. [2020], that contained encouragement but no actual information as a way of controlling for experimenter demand effects. We then investigated the effects of the information and placebo treatments on self-reported individual beliefs and voting intentions. For ease of exposition, for our main results in the online experiment, we bundle the democracy and media treatments together.

Importantly, in our field experiment, we adopted a non-partisan approach, and we initially contacted all major parties and invited them to partner with us in a study about perceptions of democracy and media independence. We emphasized that our objective was to understand how each party defines and approaches democracy. Even though the two leading parties from the governing coalitions did not accept to take part in our study, we tried to focus our treatments on factual information as much as possible. Specifically, we provided two versions of our informational treatment by using door-to-door canvassing randomized at the level of neighborhoods and the first of these, our high-credibility treatment, is purely factual and based on consensus views in current research.[3] We then used administrative electoral data across ballot boxes to track actual voting outcomes. We also conducted additional cross-randomizations in order to study how the affiliation of canvassers affected the credibility of the informational treatments.

The key questions of interest in our experiments concern whether the information we provide will be disregarded by Turkish voters—which would be evidence that they do not care much about democratic institutions or have been firmly convinced by propaganda that either Turkish institutions are sufficiently democratic and/or there is not much to gain from greater democracy or media freedom. Alternatively, if participants' beliefs and voting intentions (in the online experiment) and voters' actual choices (in the field experiment) respond to our informational treatments, this would be evidence in favor of the hypothesis that various types of misperceptions and inaccurate information are influencing the demand for democracy and possible support for authoritarian leaders.

Our results in the two experiments consistently support the latter hypothesis and show significant effects from the informational treatments. Online, we find that the bundled informational treatment increases the subjects' beliefs in the value of the institutions (democracy or free media) and aligns their perceptions of the evolution of institutions with reality. It also increases their likelihood of voting for the opposition by about 3.7 percentage points

[3]The second, which we call the basic informational treatment, includes more partisan language. However, note that this is a version of what our partners were planning to implement without our study, and thus our study did not add further partisan language or canvassing strategies. We are simply able to evaluate the effects of this basic informational treatment as well as the high-credibility treatment.

(equivalent to a 6.2 percent increase relative to the mean). In contrast, the effects of the placebo treatment are much smaller (about 0.5 percentage points) and far from statistical significance.

In the field experiment, the bundled treatment—combining the high-credibility and basic informational treatments—led to a 2.4 percentage point increase in the opposition's vote share (corresponding to a 4.4 percent rise relative to the mean) in the first round of the presidential election and similar effects in the parliamentary elections and in the second round presidential election.

A natural conjecture is that informational treatments would have little effect on the views and voting intentions of those who are supporting the government and/or believe that the state of democracy is healthy in Türkiye; they may instead impact averages by mobilizing and further motivating those already sympathetic to the opposition. Interestingly, we find exactly the opposite pattern. There is no turnout effect from the treatment in the field, and both online and in the field, our estimates are larger for those who are typically supportive of the government and who have greater misperceptions about the state and/or the utility of democracy and free media. These results thus suggest that even simple informational treatments have the potential capacity to change misperceptions about democracy and its relevance to people's lives. Consistent with this interpretation, we also find that information provided by non-affiliated canvassers, rather than affiliates of the two main opposition parties, appear more credible, which supports the notion that those leaning towards the incumbent coalition can respond to new and relevant information, provided that they view it as credible.

Our study contributes to three separate literatures. First, we build on research exploring the determinants of voters' preferences for democratic institutions (e.g., Finkel et al. [2024], Dahlum et al. [2024], Svolik [2023], Graham and Svolik [2020], Besley and Persson [2019], Fuchs-Schündeln and Schündeln [2015], Persson and Tabellini [2009]). Our paper contributes to this literature by first documenting systematic misperceptions about the state and value of democratic institutions and free media, and then showing that simple information campaigns can have significant effects by correcting these misconceptions. Our result that voter misperceptions and their assessment of the value of democracy and media freedom is at least partly malleable and can be impacted by accurate information has no equivalent in this, or any other, literature, to the best of our knowledge. Combined with the finding that successful performance by democratic governments builds support for democracy in (Acemoglu et al. [2024]), our findings additionally suggest that misperceptions about democracy can become partly self-fulfilling as long-ruling authoritarian regimes cement misperceptions which then increase their support and reduce the demand for democracy and media freedom. But our results also show that this cycle can be broken by accurate and impartially-presented

information.

Second, our paper contributes to the literature on the impact of corruption scandals on voter preferences (e.g., Rivera et al. [2024], Arias et al. [2022], Chong et al. [2015], Banerjee et al. [2011], Ferraz and Finan [2008]). For example, Rivera et al. [2024] analyze over 170 high-profile corruption scandals involving leading politicians across 17 Latin American countries, complemented by a field experiment in Mexico. Relative to this literature, our study focuses on misperceptions about democracy and free media and explores whether accurate and relevant information can rebuild support for more pro-democracy candidates in elections, even in the shadow of intensifying authoritarianism. We also leverage our online experiment and our work in the field combined with high-quality administrative data both to establish these results and explore the mechanisms via which they transpire; this, too, has no equivalent in this literature, to the best of our knowledge.

Third, our study relates to the literature on the political economy of persuasion, especially in the context of weak democracies or authoritarian regimes (Adena et al. [2015], Enikolopov et al. [2011], Peisakhin and Rozenas [2018], Knight and Tribin [2022], Enikolopov et al. [2023]). The closely related study by Baysan [2022] also uses administrative data to evaluate the impact of a randomized door-to-door information campaign on voter behavior in Türkiye, but finds that this information has a polarizing effect, convincing mainly those that were already predisposed to believe this information. A few other studies also find that information provided by the traditional media can increase voter polarization (Peisakhin and Rozenas [2018], Adena et al. [2015], Enikolopov et al. [2023]). Also related is Cruz et al. [2024] who find that door-to-door campaigns with policy information reduced self-reported support for a populist leader in the Philippines, and Ahmed et al. [2023] who examine the effects of neutral information and a get-out-the-vote campaign during the 2018 Bangladeshi general election and find that these interventions increased turnout in government strongholds, while decreasing it in areas leaning towards the opposition, thus further raising the electoral advantage of the incumbent government. Additionally, Afrouzi et al. [2024] estimate that leaders can influence individuals with their messages, while Imtiaz et al. [2024] explores the effects of information on air quality provided by the government and by private citizens groups on their willingness to pay for air quality in Lahore, Pakistan. Our study is distinguished relative to this literature both by its focus on the support for democracy vs. authoritarianism and because it combines this with high-quality administrative data to evaluate experimental effects. It also pinpoints how relatively simple, accurate information can partially correct misperceptions about democracy and how this can be effective among voters most affected by such misperceptions. We suspect that the exact context and presentation of the information matters for whether it will have polarizing effects (see also Enikolopov et al. [2023],

Baysan [2022] and Peisakhin and Rozenas [2018]). The fact that our treatments were based on factual and research-based information and were, to the extent possible, presented in a non–partisan manner was important in communicating with government supporters and with people with different baseline beliefs.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. We start in the next section with some basic context on the evolution of Turkish institutions over the last two decades and the 2023 election. Section 3 describes our experiments. Section 4 discusses the results from our online experiment, while Section 5 turns to our main results, which are from the large-scale field experiment. Section 6 discusses the potential mechanisms for our main findings, while Section 7 concludes. The Appendix presents additional data descriptions and robustness checks. The Online Supplementary File, available here, contains detailed information about the online and field experiments, including our survey instrument and figures.

2 Background

In this section, we provide a brief summary of the Turkish context before the 2023 elections.

2.1 Institutional and Social Changes in Türkiye under AKP Rule

Since coming to power in 2002, the AKP, and its founding leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who became prime minister in 2003, have emerged as the dominant force in Turkish politics, gaining more votes than any other party in all parliamentary elections over the last 22 years. The AKP initially supported economic and political reforms that had started before its accession to power and enthusiastically worked to curb the influence of the secular Turkish military. It even pursued various reforms expanding religious and minority rights, anti-corruption efforts, and membership of the European Union. By the mid-2000s, however, the AKP's enthusiasm for economic opening and political reform waned (Acemoglu and Üçer [2019]). This coincided both with the party gaining supremacy over the center-right, with the collapse of all other center-right parties in Türkiye, and its survival from an attempt by the military and secular elements of the bureaucracy to close it down and imprison its leaders, including Erdoğan. Around this time, Erdoğan intensified his control over the party and adopted a more authoritarian agenda, launching a gradually intensifying crackdown on the opposition and independent media.

Figure 1 illustrates these trends using democracy scores from the V-DEM dataset. In Panel A, we show the evolution of the overall democracy index, ranging from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating more democratic institutions. An increase that predates AKP's

accession to power is clearly visible, but this is reversed sometime in the mid-2000s, and democracy in Türkiye starts a precipitous decline thereafter. Panel B shows that the same pattern can be seen in all subcomponents of the democracy score, with the sharpest fall being in the liberal and the deliberative aspects, which partly reflects the erosion of the freedom of expression, media and dissent in Türkiye.

2.2 The 2023 Elections

The 2023 Parliamentary and presidential elections were seen as historic in Türkiye, in part because discontent with AKP rule in some segments of the population was intensifying and even some of Erdoğan's erstwhile allies had now turned against him. The economic situation was indeed dire, with official inflation exceeding 70% (and the unofficial rate perhaps being higher), in part because of unorthodox economic policies centered on low interest rates favored and imposed on the central bank by President Erdoğan himself. Concurrently, the Turkish lira plummeted, losing 80% of its value between 2018 and 2023.[4] Low interest rates and government spending initially stimulated the economy, but there were also signs that economic growth was flailing and the official unemployment rate reached about 10% in January, 2023, even though many working-age Turks had already withdrawn from the labor market.[5]

In the midst of intensifying poverty and economic hardship, southern Türkiye suffered a massive (7.8 magnitude) earthquake in February 2023, killing more than 50,000 people and displacing more than a million. Although the earthquake itself was one of the largest seen in the region, with several powerful and disruptive aftershocks, the expert opinion blamed the death toll and the destruction on tens of thousands of buildings that did not follow the building code, even in high earthquake-risk areas. It was also recognized that this was a result of endemic local and national corruption, as well as a "building code violation amnesty" that President Erdoğan himself promulgated, allowing unsafe buildings to remain in place. Even before the earthquake AKP censorship efforts had expanded, with a 2022 law enabling the government to shut down all kinds of media outlets. The law was used to stop social media communications after the earthquake.

In the midst of deepening economic problems, intensifying reactions against corrupt practices of the governing party, growing unpopularity of Erdoğan among some segments of the Turkish population, and the tragedy of the earthquake, many in civil society and within the opposition started viewing the 2023 election as an opportunity to unseat Erdoğan. This was one of the factors leading to the formation of a broad coalition of opposition parties

[4]CNBC article on Turkish Lira's record low against the dollar [accessed 31/8/2024]
[5]Unemployment rate data from the World Bank [accessed 31/8/2024]

against the governing coalition. Consequently, the 2023 elections was fought between three electoral blocks:

1. **The People's Alliance:** This alliance comprised the ruling AKP and its partner, the far right the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). The alliance, which initially formed in 2018, also included support from smaller right-wing and religious parties, such as the Great Unity Party (BBP), the Islamist New Welfare Party (YRP) and the Kurdish Islamist Free Cause Party (HÜDA-PAR). The presidential candidate of the People's Alliance was President Erdoğan. The MHP contested the parliamentary elections independently, but supported Erdoğan in the presidential race.

2. **The National Alliance:** This alliance was led by the main opposition, center-left Republican People's Party (CHP), which had been the main opposition party for most of the AKP period and the ruler of Türkiye during the early Republican years. The alliance included the nationalist/center-right Good (İYİ) Party, which had split off from the far-right MHP, the Islamist Felicity Party (SP), and the centre-right Democrat Party (DP), and two recent parties established by former AKP leaders, the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA) and the Future Party (GP). The presidential candidate of the National Alliance was Kemal Kılıçdarõglu.

3. **The Labor and Freedom Alliance:** This alliance was made up of the Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) and various other Kurdish and left-wing parties. As the election approached and its likelihood of being disbanded by the authorities, the HDP decided to participate in the elections under the umbrella of the Green Left Party, which was declared eligible by the Supreme Election Council (YSK). This alliance was not the main contender for the presidency and declared their support for the National Alliance candidate Kılıçdarõglu before the election.

Two other candidates were Muharrem İnce, a former leading figure in the CHP and then the leader of the Homeland Party, who withdrew from the race three days prior to the election, and and Sinan Oğan, from the anti-immigration, nationalist Ancestral Alliance. Parliamentary elections and the first-round of the presidential elections were on May 14.

Despite some pre-election polls favoring the opposition, the People's Alliance managed to secure a majority in parliament, while President Erdoğan came very close to securing a majority in the first-round of the presidential election, with 49.5% of the vote, against Kılıçdarõglu's vote share of 44.9%. In the parliamentary elections, the People's Alliance obtained 49.5% of the vote and gained 323 of the 600 seats in the legislature, while the National Alliance secured 212 seats with 35% of the vote. Because no candidate received

more than 50% of the vote, there was a second-round presidential election in two weeks time, which President Erdoğan won handily, with 52.5% of the vote.

3 Experimental Design and Data

Our study is centered on informational treatments providing accurate information on the state and implications of democracy and media freedom, and were carried out online and in the field during April-May 2023 in the run-up to the presidential and parliamentary elections of May 2023. In this section, we describe the design of the two experiments. Appendix Table A-1 provides definitions for all the variables used in the two experiments.

3.1 Online Experiment

Recruitment and Sample The design of the online experiment is outlined in Appendix Figure A-1. Between April 11 and May 28, 2023, we invited Turkish adults to participate in an online study about Turkish institutions via Facebook ads. A total of 19,151 individuals clicked on the ads and were redirected to the survey landing page, where they were offered a consent form. Of these, 8,429 proceeded to start the survey. Participants were offered a chance to earn 2,000 Turkish Liras (equivalent to 100 USD at the time) upon completing the survey.

The survey comprised three parts: baseline questions, an (informational) intervention, and endline questions. The baseline questions gathered information on socio-demographic characteristics, political and social views and baseline perceptions of Turkish institutions.[6] Participants who completed the baseline survey much faster or slower than the rest (in particular, those three standard deviations above or below the median) were excluded from the sample. A total of 5,161 respondents completed the baseline survey and were then randomly assigned to two treatment groups, two placebo groups, and a control group, which we describe in greater detail below. Following the informational treatment, participants completed the endline survey, comprising the outcomes of interest and final questions on perceptions of institutions and views towards political parties, as well as questions on voting intentions. In total, 4,405 participants completed the endline survey, making up our final sample for analysis. Appendix Figure A-2 shows that there is no evidence of differential attrition in our online experiment.

[6]The English version of the survey and additional details are available here.

Informational Treatments As explained above, the main question of interest is whether high-credibility, accurate information can alter misperceived beliefs about the state and substantive implications of institutions and, in this way, strengthen support for democratic institutions in environments where support for democracy is eroding under authoritarian governments. Given the salient issues in Türkiye, we focused on two dimensions of national institutions, democracy and media, and their effects on two metrics for success, dealing with natural disasters and controlling corruption. These institutional features and metrics were validated in focus groups, qualitative fieldwork, and online experimental pilots, where we found that they were easily understandable for and resonated with Turkish voters (and did so more than other metrics, such as GDP growth rates and rule of law related outcomes). It was also important for our purposes that we have high-credibility evidence on the relationship between the chosen dimension of institutions and the relevant metric, and in this case, we drew on evidence from Kahn [2005], Cao [2024] on the relationships between institutional quality and mitigating the impact of natural disasters and from Rivera et al. [2024], Arias et al. [2022], Chong et al. [2015], Banerjee et al. [2011] and Ferraz and Finan [2008] on the relationship between media independence and corruption. Based on this evidence, our two informational treatments were:

- **Media informational treatment:** "According to research, as media independence in a country worsens, corruption increases. At the same time, according to research, data shows that independent media has worsened and corruption has increased in Türkiye in the last 30 years."
- **Democracy informational treatment:** "According to research, as democracy strengthens the impact of natural disaster on human life will decrease. At the same time, according to research, data shows that democracy has worsened in Türkiye in the last 30 years."

Participants in the treatment groups could click a button to view supplementary supporting evidence showing the evolution of the relevant institution (media or democracy) across the years 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2022. We also presented the evolution of one of our outcome metrics, corruption, over the same years in Türkiye, but could not do so for the relevant outcome in the democracy informational treatment, since we do not have time-series data on the effects of natural disasters.[7]

In our experiments, 42.8% of the treated sample opted to click the button and view the supplementary information.

[7] Additional details are available here.

In addition to the two informational treatments, we had a **control group** which did not receive any informational treatment, and two **placebo groups**, which received placebo treatments. Specifically, this approach is motivated by possible "experimenter demand effects" whereby subjects may feel encouraged to provide answers that they think the experimenters would like to hear. In the case of our media and democracy informational treatments, the concern is that they may be responding not to the information in the treatments, but to their own perception that we would like them to say that media freedom and democracy have become worse in Türkiye. To deal with this issue, we follow Acemoglu et al. [2020] and construct two placebo treatments that do not contain any actual information and instead contain the views of the experimenters as a subjective opinion. These placebo treatments should then be expected to create the same experimenter demand effects, but no true information effects. If so, whether they are significant or not will provide evidence on the extent of experimenter demand effects and the difference between the informational and the placebo treatments can be used to net out such experimenter demand effects. In our study, these were worded as:

- **Media placebo treatment:** "We talked to voters in Türkiye recently and a few people said: Although I am not sure, I think that as media independence in a country gets worse, corruption increases. Also, some people said that in the last 30 years, media independence in Türkiye has worsened and corruption has increased."
- **Democracy placebo treatment:** "We talked to voters in Türkiye recently and a few people said: Although I am not sure, I think that as democracy strengthens the impact of natural disaster on human life will decrease. Also, some people said that in the last 30 years, democracy in Türkiye has worsened."

After the treatments, all participants, including those in the control group, were invited to continue with the survey and complete the endline questions.

Our design also included variations in how the information was presented, with cross-randomization between formulations that differed on whether they mentioned media independence or democracy improvements leading to better outcomes or deteriorations leading to worse outcomes. At the end, we do not find major differences between these different framings for our main outcomes of interest (see Appendix Table A-2), motivating us to describe the details and the results from different cross randomizations only in the Appendix.

Outcome Variables We collected our main outcome variables for our online experiment in the baseline and endline surveys. These are:

(1) beliefs about the state of institutions (in particular, individual perceptions on changes in democracy or media freedom since 2000) and the effectiveness of these institutions (the impact of freedom of media on the control of corruption and the impact of democracy on effective responses to natural disasters). Specifically, we constructed two key perception variables. The first is *Valuation of Institutions*, which measures the extent to which individuals believe that democratic institutions are important for achieving better outcomes. This variable is constructed by averaging two seven-point scales, assessing the respondents' level of agreement with the following statements: "Increasing media independence in a country will reduce corruption in the future" and "Strengthening democracy in a country will reduce the number of people affected by natural disasters in the future." The second belief variable is *State of Institutions*, which measures perceptions about how the relevant institution has evolved in Türkiye. This variable is constructed by taking the average of two five-point scales that assess the extent to which both media and democracy are perceived to be better today (April-May, 2023) than they were in 2000. Throughout the rest of the paper we standardized these two perception variables, so magnitudes refer to standard deviation units.

(2) turnout intentions.

(3) intentions of voting for the opposition.

We also collected a battery of individual-level demographic variables, as detailed in Appendix Table A-3.

3.2 Field Experiment

Recruitment and Sample In December 2022, we extended invitations to the five parties represented in parliament, AKP, CHP, HDP, İYİ Party, and MHP, to participate in our study. We directed our communications—an initial invitation email and two subsequent follow-ups—to both the general secretary of each party and the principal local contacts in Türkiye's three largest provinces, Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir. Our communications briefly introduced our research team, outlined the study's objectives, and requested a meeting to further discuss the study's nature.[8] CHP and the İYİ Party responded to our invitation and the door-to-door information campaigns were administered in Izmir, Türkiye's third-largest province, in collaboration with these two parties, between April 14 and May 12 of 2023.

To ensure uniformity in the campaign across different neighborhoods, all canvassers underwent training organized by their own party and received uniform instructions on basic techniques for engaging with voters and relevant information on the campaign. Some canvassers were asked to work with a civic, non-partisan organization, SahadaBiriz, and we refer

[8] Additional details are available here.

to these as non-affiliated canvassers.

All canvassers were instructed to knock on each door and deliver the information to an adult member of the household. After introducing themselves, the canvassers initiated a brief conversation during which the relevant informational treatment was delivered. They were told to politely present the information, not be persuasive, and to end the conversation immediately if the voter wanted them to. In addition, they were told to listen carefully and not rush to the next door if the voter wanted to continue the conversation. This protocol was provided by the campaign managers and role-played during the training. The conversation content was guided by pamphlets that varied according to the treatment assignment, which we describe below. Canvassers were instructed to leave a pamphlet behind the door even when conversations were not completed (e.g., when no one was at home). Canvassers logged their interactions with each household, noting completed conversations, pamphlet distributions, instances where doors were not opened, or rejections after the door was opened. To facilitate more efficient canvassing, we also geocoded each street within the neighborhoods and provided canvassers with an optimized route to follow.

Randomization between different informational treatments and the control group, as well as other cross-randomization, were at the neighborhood level, and we used data from the June 24, 2018 parliamentary election to exclude from our sample neighborhoods that were too remote or that would require more time that our canvassers had for visiting a sufficient number of voters. We ended up with a final experimental sample of 554 neighborhoods, out of which 252 were randomly selected as treatment neighborhoods. These treatment neighborhoods contained 404,862 voters according to our 2018 parliamentary election rolls. See Appendix Table A-4 for details.

Treatments To simplify the field experiment, we only focused on media freedom and corruption. The key dimension of our randomization was between two informational treatments and a control group. The first informational treatment, which we call *high-credability informational treatment*, aimed at providing in an impartial manner the most credible information we had on the basis of research articles. We also implemented a *basic information treatment*, which used less impartial and more concrete/evocative language about media freedom and corruption. It contained a call to action, consistent with the opposition parties' agenda. These two treatments had their own separate pamphlets that were shared with households.

In addition, we also cross-randomized according to the identity of the canvassers—from either the CHP, or the İYİ Party, or non-affiliated canvassers. This second dimension of randomization will feature in our interpretations and discussions, but is not central to our main results.

The exact texts for these two treatments were:

- **High-credibility informational treatment:**

  Impartial and independent media play a vital role in democracies. Researchers state that unbiased and independent media are critical in providing accurate information to the public.

  Researchers state that as media independence worsens, corruption increases.

  When the media does not report on corruption, real and accurate information is hidden from the public, making it easier to hide corruption.

  Official data show that media neutrality and independence have declined rapidly in Türkiye in the last 30 years.

The pamphlet also depicted the decline of media independence and the rise of corruption in Türkiye over a 30-year period and showed a figure illustrating the indices of media and corruption for 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2022 from V-DEM. The pamphlets for this treatment, separately for non-affiliated, CHP and İYİ Party canvassers, are presented in the left column of Appendix Figure A-3

- **Basic informational treatment:**

  One of Türkiye's biggest problems is corruption.

  Transparency and accountability are the foundation for a better future.

  Say no to corruption, look to the future with hope.

  To fight corruption, today is the time for change.

  Become a partner in our demand for transparency in Türkiye.

  Let's protect democracy together.

The pamphlet for this treatment, again separately for non-affiliated, CHP and İYİ Party canvassers, are presented on the right of Appendix Figure A-3, which corresponds, from top to bottom, non-affiliated, CHP, and İYİ, respectively.

The basic informational treatment is included in part because our partners were intending to carry out a similar door-to-door campaign and did not agree to replace this fully with our high-credibility informational treatment. Although we worked with them in the exact wording of this basic informational treatment, our interpretation is that this would have been implemented more or less at the same scale without our involvement, and hence, we

believe that its effects on voters and actual vote shares would have occurred without our study as well.

Ex ante, we were unsure about which of the two treatments would be more effective. The first contains higher-quality, more impartial information, while the second may be easier for voters to understand and can also motivate them to turn out, which was a priority for our local partners.

Outcome Variables In the field experiment, our outcome variables come from administrative data on ballot box level vote shares and turnout, which we obtained from the website of the Turkish Supreme Election Council.[9]

4 Results from the Online Experiment

In this section, we discuss our empirical strategy and present the headline results from the online experiment. In the next section, we turn to the field experiment, and then discuss mechanisms combining data from both online and field experiments in Section 6.

4.1 Empirical Strategy for Online Experiment

To simplify the exposition and maximize statistical power, we start with *bundled treatments*, whereby the media and democracy informational treatments are combined together, and the media and democracy placebo treatments are also bundled. We later study the effects of each treatment separately.

Throughout, we present average treatment effects by different types of treatments. Rather than a comparison of means, we do this by running ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions, because there are some minor imbalances in pre-treatment covariates between treatment and control groups, as we describe in the next section.

Throughout the online experiment, all comparisons are between individuals, and reported effects are from the following OLS model:

$$Y_i = \pi + \beta T_i + \theta P_i + X_i'\gamma + \varepsilon_i, \tag{1}$$

where Y_i represents one of our outcomes of interest for individual i—self-reported beliefs about state of institutions, valuation of institutions, voting intentions and turnout intentions. The key treatment variables, by T_i and P_i, are dummies for informational and placebo

[9]Although we have data at the ballot-box level, we cannot track ballot boxes over time, which explain our choice of conducting the randomization at the neighborhood level.

treatments. In our main specification, because the media and democracy treatments are combined, the variables T_i and P_i are dummies for (bundled) informational and placebo treatments. In addition, X_i is a vector of pre-treatment characteristics, which we include as covariates. The error term ε_i proxies for all omitted characteristics, and we allow it to be heteroscedastic and report robust standard errors in regressions using online data. Because the control group is always omitted, the coefficients β and θ give us the average treatment effects relative to the control group. We also report p-values for the treatment and the placebo effects being different.

4.2 Summary Statistics and Balance

Appendix Table A-3 presents summary statistics and balance tests for the online experiment. We have 4,405 participants, separated between 869 participants for the democracy informational treatment, 877 for the media informational treatment, 904 for the democracy placebo treatment, 848 for the media placebo treatment, and 907 in the control group. Given the limited number of participants in this online experiment, some imbalance in pre-treatment characteristics is expected. On the whole, however, our groups appear relatively well balanced. Out of the 56 tests for balance, only two (perceived level of institutions in 2023 and inflation as a top government priority) show statistical differences at the 5% level between treatment and control groups, and only five show differences at the 10% level, which is consistent with sampling variation.

We emphasize, however, that despite the lack of major imbalances given our sample size, whether we control for some of these statistically insignificant pre-treatment characteristics may still matter for our estimates and we explore this issue in our robustness analysis.

4.3 Voters' Baseline Views

Our online experiment also enables us to measure the baseline views of supporters of different parties on the state and valuation of institutions, which will be helpful in interpreting our experimental results. In this subsection, we summarize these results, focusing on voters supporting the three blocks with representation in parliament: the People's Alliance (AKP and MHP), shown consistently in yellow; the National Alliance (CHP and İYİ Party), shown in dark blue; and HDP, shown in grey.[10]

Panel A of Figure 2 shows, on the left, that participants who voted for the governing coalition in 2018 are much more likely to report that autocracy is sometimes preferable

[10]Appendix Figure A-4 compares vote shares from the 2018 general election with the self-reported, pre-treatment voting intentions in our sample, and shows that they are closely aligned.

to democracy than are those who supported the other two coalitions or those who did not vote in 2018 (this is the question we use in the baseline survey for measuring their attitudes towards democracy). On the right, government supporters in the control group also have significantly different valuation of institutions (using the index described in Section 3, which is measured at the endline). Relatedly, Appendix Figure A-5 shows that opposition supporters are also more likely to support a democratic government over an authoritarian one relative to government coalition supporters.

Panel B of Figure 2 shows summary statistics on voters' perceptions of how media freedom and democracy have evolved in Türkiye. The left panel depicts perceived changes in media independence, while the right panel is for perceived changes in democracy between 2000 and 2022 (see also Appendix Figure A-6 for the levels in 2000 and 2022 separately). We represent the actual change in the V-DEM dataset by the dashed line. The pattern that emerges is quite clear: supporters of the governing coalition have a much more favorable opinion of how media freedom and democracy have evolved, and if we take V-DEM data as ground truth, they are holding significantly more misperceived opinions, while the views of opposition supporters are broadly in line with the actual decline in media freedom and democracy scores.[11]

4.4 Experimental Results: Voter Beliefs

We now report the experimental estimates of the informational treatments on voter beliefs. The main results are presented in Panel A of Figure 3. The left part of Panel A is for the *valuation of institutions*, while the right part is for the *state of institutions* (Appendix Figure A-8 additionally reports treatment effects on the two components that comprises each of these outcomes). In both panels, we first show the average for the control group, then we present the bundled treatment effects for the placebo (in green) and the informational treatment (in blue), and subsequently we separate the placebo and informational treatment effects between media and democracy treatments. In each case, we provide the two standard deviation confidence intervals and p-values for these estimates being statistically different than the control group's beliefs, and at the top we also report the p-value for the placebo and the informational treatment effects being statistically distinguishable from each other. The point estimates are also reported in Tables 1 and A-5. In this subsection we focus on

[11] We also conducted a baseline survey of a randomly-selected subset of voters in the field experiment. However, after the elections, nearly all of those who had agreed in the baseline to be surveyed again no longer wanted to take part and newly sampled voters also rejected to participate. Although we are consequently not able to use these data for studying the effects of informational treatments, Appendix Figure A-7 shows that differences between the views of government and opposition supporters on the evolution of democracy and media freedom in the field are very similar to those we report from our online experiment.

Figure 3, which presents the main takeaways in a transparent manner.

We see clearly that informational treatments have led to a significant change in the beliefs of the respondents. In the bundled treatment, there is a difference of 6.5% of a standard deviation in the valuation of institutions between the informational treatment and the control groups, which is statistically significant at 4%. There is no difference between the control group and the placebo treatment. Moreover, we can comfortably reject that the informational and the placebo treatments are equal. When we separate the media and the democracy treatments the pattern is similar, though the results are slightly less precise, since the gain in statistical power obtained by combining the two experiments is lost.

In terms of quantitative magnitudes, the difference between the informational treatment group and the control group is sizable—approximately half (58%) of the difference in the valuation of institutions between individuals in our control group who reached tertiary education and those who did not.

On the right, we see a very similar pattern. The informational treatment leads to a 6.8% of one standard deviation decline in perceived beliefs about how the state of institutions have changed since 2000, which is statistically different from the control mean at less than 1%, and statistically distinguishable from the placebo effect at about 1%. The results are also similar when we separate the media and democracy treatments. Specifically, with the media treatments, the results and their statistical significance are very similar to the bundled treatment, and they are a little less precise for the democracy treatment. Likewise, in terms of quantitative magnitudes, we also find that our treatment effect is half (exactly 50%) of the difference in how individuals with and without tertiary education perceive the state of institutions.

Overall, the high-credibility (and accurate) information we provide online appears to have changed voters' self-reported beliefs about both the valuation (effectiveness) of institutions and about how institutions have evolved in Türkiye since 2000. The direction of change is towards what we interpret as ground truth from the V-DEM data, and thus we can interpret these results as informational treatments correcting voter misperceptions about how beneficial democratic institutions are and how much they have been eroded under an authoritarian leader. Notably, we do not find the same pattern with the placebo treatments which did not include high-credibility information, bolstering our interpretation that these experimental results are driven by the informational content of the treatment.

4.5 Experimental Results: Voting

Panel B of Figure 3 shows the impact of the informational and placebo treatments on the self-reported voting intentions, using exactly the same structure as in Panel A. The same results and variations are also shown in Panel C of Table 1 and Appendix Table A-5.

The bundled treatment is found to increase the probability of voting for the opposition by 3.7 percentage points relative to the control group. The placebo treatment has a very small and statistically insignificant coefficient, and the gap between the informational and the placebo treatments is quite substantial—3.2 percentage points. The informational treatment effects are statistically significant at less than 1%, and so is the difference between the informational and placebo treatments, as shown in Panel B of Figure 3. When we separate the media and democracy treatments, we find very similar patterns, and in this case, we have enough statistical power to statistically distinguish informational treatments from both the control group and the placebo treatments as well.

The quantitative magnitudes are again substantial. The difference between the informational treatment and control groups is approximately 10% of the opposition vote share difference between İzmir (the city where our field experiment takes place and an opposition stronghold) and cities such as Konya and Kayseri, which are government strongholds.

The right-hand side of Panel B of Figure 3 also shows the results for self-reported turnout intentions, and in this case, we do not find statistically significant effects from the informational treatment. We return to the interpretation of this finding in Section 6.

Overall, we estimate that the informational treatment not only changes people's self-reported beliefs about the state and valuation of institutions, but also makes them more willing to vote for opposition parties, and the results are quantitatively and statistically quite significant.

4.6 Robustness

The results reported so far are quite robust. One important dimension of robustness pertains to the set of controls, since, as already noted, there are a few variables that show imbalances between the treatment and control groups in our online experiment and, given the limited size of our online sample, even insignificant differences could have effects on estimates. In Table 1, we see that varying the control set does not have a major impact on the results, though the magnitudes of the informational treatment become somewhat smaller when we control for the pre-treatment values of the outcome/dependent variables in the regression. When we additionally include pre-treatment characteristics which show imbalances between the treatment and control groups and/or when we control for all pre-treatment character-

istics, this makes no further difference relative to the specification that controls just for pre-treatment outcome variables. In all cases, the informational treatment remains in the same direction as in Figure 3 and statistically different from both the control group and the placebo treatment effects.

In summary, the online experiment shows powerful effects from the informational treatments on beliefs and self-reported voting intentions. Our results are suggestive that these reflect people's response to new information—rather than their responses to experimenter demand effects—since we do not see similar impacts from the placebo treatments. The weakness of the online experiment, of course, is that all of the outcome variables are self-reported. We next turn to our main results, which are from a large-scale field experiment and thus rectify this concern.

5 Main Results: Field Experiment

In this section we discuss our main results from the field experiment. We start with our empirical strategy, which is different from the one in the online experiment, since treatment is now at the neighborhood level. We then turn to descriptive statistics and balance tests, before proceeding to our main results.

5.1 Empirical Strategy

In our field experiment, we estimate the causal effects at the ballot-box level. We interpret the treatment as completed conversations with canvassers, which is at the neighborhood level and varies between neighborhoods. Consequently, different neighborhoods have varying proportions of treated households. This leads to the following estimation equation

$$Y_{bn} = \alpha + \gamma C_n + X_n' \kappa + u_{bn} \tag{1}$$

where Y_{bn} is the outcome of interest at the level of ballot box b in neighborhood n, for example, the vote share of different parties or presidential candidates. The key right-hand side variable, C_n, measures the fraction of households in neighborhood n that have received completed informational treatments (and in practice, we sometimes distinguish between the high-credibility and basic informational treatments, as described above and discussed again later in this section).

The vector X_n represents neighborhood characteristics we control for in our specifications. In the baseline specification, we follow our pre-analysis plan and include the following variables in the vector of controls: the number of registered voters, opposition vote share

and turnout from the most recent, 2018, election and dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects, which are based on the sextiles of the 2018 vote share for the opposition alliance.[12]

Robustness checks with different sets of controls are reported in Table 2 below. Finally, u_{bn} denotes an error term capturing all omitted factors influencing voting outcomes at ballot box b in neighborhood n. Because randomization was at the neighborhood level, throughout we report standard errors robust against heteroscedasticity clustered at the level of neighborhoods. Because ballots boxes contain in essence the same number of registered voters, we report unweighted regressions.

We estimate equation (1) with two-stage least squares (2SLS), instrumenting for C_n with dummies for different types of treatments at the neighborhood level. In our simpler specification, the high-credibility and basic informational treatments are combined together, thus giving us an analogue of the bundled treatment in the previous section, but in later specifications, we also separate these two different types of treatments. In the field experiment we do not have a placebo treatment.

5.2 Summary Statistics, Balance and Compliance

Panel B of Appendix Table A-6 provides summary statistics and Appendix Table A-7 presents balance tests for the field experiment based on the baseline covariates. There is no evidence of any statistically significant imbalances in any of our variables.

First stages for completion rates are reported in Appendix Table A-8. On average, 35 percent of visits resulted in canvassers successfully completing the conversations and distributing the pamphlets to households. There is also no evidence that completion rates differed systematically between the high-credibility informational treatment and the basic information treatment, but they do appear to be significantly different by canvasser affiliation, with non-affiliated canvassers having the highest completion rate. This difference is largely driven by the capacity constraints faced by İYİ Party, which had a smaller number of canvassers. Our 2SLS estimates take care of these differences in completion rates.

5.3 Main Results from the Field Experiment: Vote Shares

Our main results are reported in Figure 4. Panel A displays the effects of the bundled treatments on the opposition vote shares in the first-round and second-round presidential

[12]We constructed these fixed effects by dividing the full range of opposition vote shares into six equal-sized groups and stratifying the randomization by sextile. For each treatment group, we chose a well-balanced sample from 100,000 possible re-randomizations to minimize random imbalances, following the approach outlined by Banerjee et al. [2017].

elections and the parliamentary elections. Panel B shows turnout effects, while Panel C looks at longer-term effects by estimating the impact on the 2024 municipal elections. The same results are also shown in Table 2.

The patterns from our field experiment are very clear. Analogously with our online experiment results, the informational treatment has a statistically significant and quantitatively substantive effect on opposition vote shares. The bundled treatment increases the opposition's vote share in the first-round presidential election by 2.4 percentage points (equivalent to a 4.4 percent increase relative to the control mean). A standard Wald test comfortably rejects the hypothesis that the bundled treatment effects are zero. The results, both quantitatively and statistically, are very similar in the second-round presidential election and in the parliamentary election. In particular, using the same benchmark as in our online experiment results, the 2.4 percentage point impact is about 6% of the average difference between the opposition vote share in the opposition stronghold Izmir and the government strongholds, Konya and Kayseri.

Panel B, on the other hand, shows no impact on turnout, which is consistent with the online voting intention results. This means, in particular, that the vote share results in Panel A are not driven by differential increases in turnouts in some neighborhoods.

Interestingly, in Panel C, we see a marginally significant positive effect from the bundled informational treatment on the opposition's vote share in the 2024 municipal elections, about a year after our experiment. Though the estimated effect is only marginally significant, it is a surprising and noteworthy result as it suggests that accurate information may have swayed some voters sufficiently to alter their long-term allegiances or voting patterns.

5.4 Robustness and Further Results

Table 2 presents the same results as in Figure 4 with different controls. It shows that, in the field experiment, varying the set of covariates has essentially no effect on the estimates—which is to be expected, since there were no imbalances by any of the covariates we have access to and we have a very large sample size.

Figure 5 further probes our results by separating the effects between the high-credibility and basic informational treatments and depicting heterogeneous effects by the affiliation of canvassers. The main takeaways are as follows. First, voters are slightly more responsive to the high-credibility informational treatment, but the estimate is not statistically distinguishable from the impact of the basic informational treatment. One possible interpretation, which we find *ex ante* plausible but are not able to further verify, is that some voters respond more to high-quality information, but, on the other hand, a larger fraction of voters may

understand and respond to basic information, which also has some sloganeering element. When averaged out across different types of voters, the two treatments then give relatively comparable average effects.

The second important finding in Figure 5 is that voters respond more to non-affiliated canvassers than to those affiliated with the opposition parties, though the differences are statistically significant only in a few cases. This is quite plausible, since some voters will attach greater credibility to non-affiliated canvassers and the information they provide. We return to an interpretation of this dimension of heterogeneity in the next section. Appendix Table A-9 presents detailed point estimates, differentiated by information type and sender.

In sum, our field experiment provides strong support for the hypothesis that, when confronted with accurate information, voters can change their actual votes, and to the extent that this information corrects misperceptions about the valuation/effectiveness of democratic institutions as well as about the state of institutions under authoritarian leaders, it can bolster support for more pro-democratic parties (or reduce support for authoritarian incumbents).

6 Mechanisms

In this section, we argue that the results presented so far are driven in large part because our accurate informational treatments convinced voters who had greater misperceptions about the state of institutions in Türkiye and who were previously more likely to support the governing coalition.

To start with, recall that we find no turnout effects either in the online or the field experiments. Hence, a simple story based on mobilizing opposition voters already looks less likely on the basis of this finding.

More directly, Figure 6 presents the heterogeneous treatment effects based on whether respondents in the online experiment overestimated or underestimated the deterioration of institutional quality from 2000 to today (April-May, 2023). The top panel displays the results for those who underestimated the deterioration of institutional quality at baseline, while the bottom panel presents the results for those who overestimated or accurately estimated the deterioration of institutional quality. The figure demonstrates that our results are driven by participants in the top panel. These are the participants who, after the informational treatment, changed their valuation of institutions and their assessment of the state of institutions, and then became more likely to vote for the opposition. The interpretation that this is a consequence of the accurate, high-credibility information is also bolstered by the fact that we do not see a quantitatively important or statistically significant effect from the

placebo treatment in this top panel.

In contrast to this pattern, we do not see any positive effects on either one of our three outcome variables from the informational treatment in the bottom panel (the exact point estimates are presented in Appendix Table A-10).[13]

More importantly, in Figure 7 we find the same general pattern as in our main results. In this case, we look at heterogeneous effects by the vote share of the opposition in the 2018 parliamentary election at the neighborhood level. The top panel is for neighborhoods where the vote share of the opposition was below median—which can broadly be thought of as neighborhoods supporting the governing coalition. The bottom panel is for neighborhoods where the opposition's vote share was above the median in 2018 (the exact point estimates are presented in Appendix Table A-11). The pattern is quite clear: our field experiment results are driven by the neighborhoods in the top panel, where the informational treatment effects in all three 2023 elections are much larger than in the bottom panel. The effects for the two rounds of the presidential election are also statistically significant at 5% and the one for the parliamentary election is significant at 10%. In contrast, the impact of the informational treatment is much smaller and far from statistical significance in the bottom panel.[14] For example, while the informational treatment increases the opposition's vote share in the first-round and second-round presidential elections by 3.8 and 4.2 percentage points, respectively, in Panel A, it raises it only by 1.2 and 0.7 percentage points in Panel B.

These results therefore suggest two noteworthy conclusions. First, our informational treatments were viewed as credible, even by a significant fraction of government supporters. Second, and partially as a result of the first observation, the informational treatments had a bigger impact on those that had misperceived baseline beliefs about either the state of democratic institutions in Türkiye or their effectiveness in delivering policies and outcomes desired by the population (in particular, controlling corruption or dealing effectively with natural disasters).

If this is indeed the correct mechanism, it points to a hopeful interpretation—accurate and high-quality information can bridge gaps between ideologically divided communities of voters. It also contrasts with other settings in which new information about the performance of a party further polarizes voters because supporters of the party disfavored by the new information do not believe it. In our case, this seems not to have happened either online or in the field. It is worth noting, however, that this does not mean that the credibility of the

[13]Appendix Figures A-9 and A-10 shows similar patterns by separating participants between those who were neutral or favorable towards authoritarianism vs. those who were unfavorable, and also between those who self-reported voting for or against the governing coalition in 2018.

[14]Appendix Figure A-12 show the heterogeneous effects for the high credibility and basic informational treatments separately.

information and how and by whom it was delivered are unimportant. On the contrary, the fact that non-affiliated, independent canvassers had bigger impacts suggests that credibility still matters, and our interpretation of this heterogeneous effect is that government supporters were less likely to be swayed when the information about the state of institutions came from canvassers affiliated with the opposition parties.

7 Conclusion

The last two decades have witnessed increasing resilience and durability of several authoritarian regimes around the world, in stark contrast to perspectives rooted in the "end of history" predicting the "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government"—or more simply, the victory of liberal capitalism (e.g., Fukuyama [1989], Sen [1999]). According to the Freedom House, every year since 2006 the number of countries moving away from democracy around the world has exceeded the number of those improving their democratic institutions (Freedom House [2023]). Social science is still at a loss in explaining these sweeping trends.

Two sets of ideas have emerged as popular bookends in these debates. The first claims that many cultures around the world do not value democracy and hence their people do not demand, or at the very least do not fight for, democratic institutions (e.g., Huntington [1997], Gessen [2017], Mitter and Johnson [2021]). The second instead sees the durability of authoritarian regimes in their ability to use propaganda, misinformation and social control (e.g., McMillan and Zoido [2002], Egorov et al. [2009], King et al. [2013], Lorentzen [2014], Esberg [2021], Guriev and Treisman [2022]). Related to this second perspective, citizens under authoritarian regimes may simply lose interest in politics ([Chen and Yang, 2019]). Despite growing interest and a blossoming literature in this area, we are far from a comprehensive understanding of these issues.

In this paper, we study these questions in the context of the historic May 2023 election in Türkiye, taking place under the shadow of growing authoritarianism of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and his AKP Party. We designed an online experiment and a large-scale field experiment, where Turkish voters were presented with accurate information on how democracy and media freedom have evolved in the country and their role in dealing with natural resource disasters and corruption—two issues that were top of mind for Turkish citizens in 2023. We document that, before experiment, the majority of the supporters of the governing coalition had major misperceptions about these issues—they considered Türkiye to be more democratic and to have a more free and independent media than it did in practice (compared to V-DEM scores), and they systematically underestimated the value

of democracy and free media in combating natural disasters and corruption (compared to the general consensus in the research literature).

Against this background, if the information we provided turned out to be disregarded by Turkish voters, this would be evidence that they do not care about democratic institutions or have been firmly convinced by propaganda that either Turkish institutions are sufficiently democratic or there is not much to gain from greater democracy or media freedom. In the event, we found the opposite. Online, the informational treatment had a large effect on beliefs about the state of democracy and media freedom in Türkiye and their utility, as well as an equally large impact on voting intentions—increasing the likelihood of individuals in our treatment group voting for the more pro-democracy opposition coalition by 3.7 percentage points (6.2 percent relative to the control mean). In our field experiment, which included about 50 percent of 885,000 registered voters in the third-largest city of Türkiye, the informational treatment at the neighborhood level increased the fraction of the electorate voting for the opposition by a 2.4 percentage points (4.4 percent relative to the control mean). Our online experiment also enabled us to show that voters responded to actual information rather than two experimenter demand effects or simple moral suasion.

Equally remarkable are our results on mechanisms. One may be worried that this type of information may further polarize the electorate and any benefits may come from mobilizing voters that were already leaning towards the opposition—or were for other reasons critical of the government. We found the opposite. There are no turnout effects, and more importantly, our results are mostly explained by the responses of voters that have more misperceived beliefs and by votes in neighborhoods leaning towards the governing coalition. Our results are consistent with the notion that the credibility of the information matters, since we find that the same information provided by non-affiliated (independent) canvassers is more effective. This suggests that accurate information that is impartially presented can have an impact on voters that have lived under an intensifying authoritarian regime for over two decades, and can even influence those that are broadly supportive of the authoritarian government.

Our results raise several additional questions that are ripe for future research. Here we list a few of them.

- Future work can investigate more systematically when new information will have a polarizing impact and when it will be accepted by even those who are generally supportive of the party that is disfavored by this information.

- It would also be interesting to investigate what types of misperceptions can be influenced by accurate information and whether there are dimensions of ideology and

beliefs that are immune to new information. In this context, it may be particularly interesting to distinguish between information from one's own social network, from social media, from traditional media, and from parties and politicians. For each source, one could investigate whether it has typically contributed disproportionately to misperceptions and whether it can effectively correct misperceptions when it provides accurate information.

- Another interesting area is to explore whether information-political support feedbacks can lead to self-fulfilling traps—for example, authoritarian governments convincing their voters that democracy is not for them and this in turn making authoritarian governments more stable and democracy less likely to take root—and what types of interventions and shocks can break such traps.

- It would also be very useful to develop theoretical models that can help us understand the patterns we are seeing in our study and more generally help us integrate this type of evidence with existing and new theoretical frameworks in the literature.

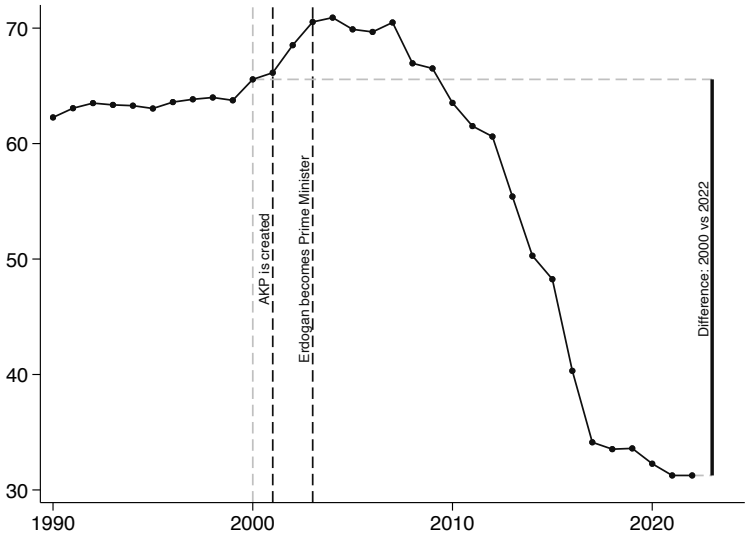
- Another set of interesting questions is whether new and credible information can have durable effects (which our results suggest may be the case based on voting patterns in the municipal elections one year after our experiment) and whether they may build realistic or overoptimistic aspirations about what democracy can deliver.

- Several other directions on why democracy has been in retreat around the world and the role of better information and different political strategies in reversing this trend are also interesting areas for research.

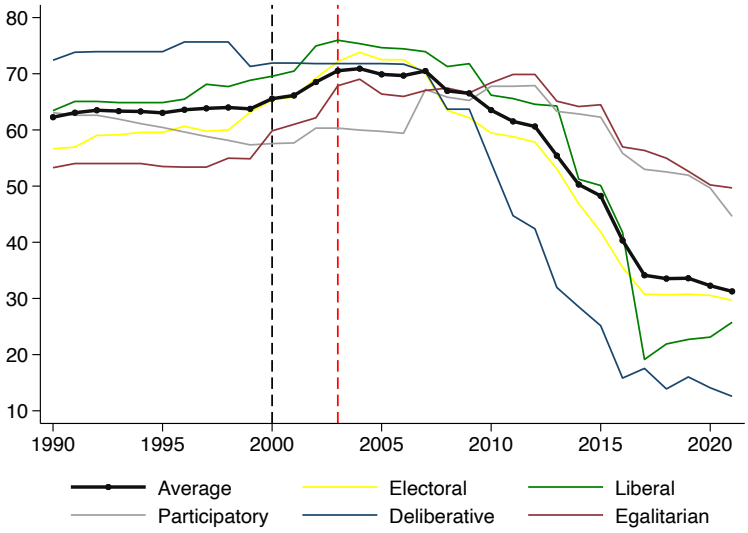
8 Main Results

Figure 1: Evolution of Democracy in Türkiye

A. Evolution of V-DEM Democratic Score



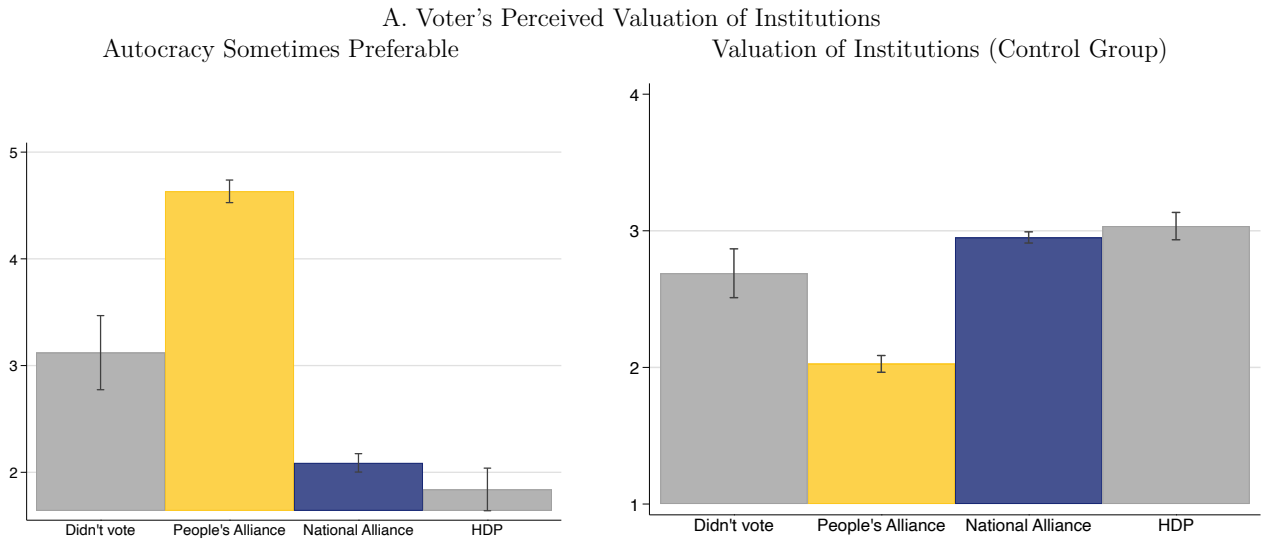
B. Evolution of V-DEM Subcomponents



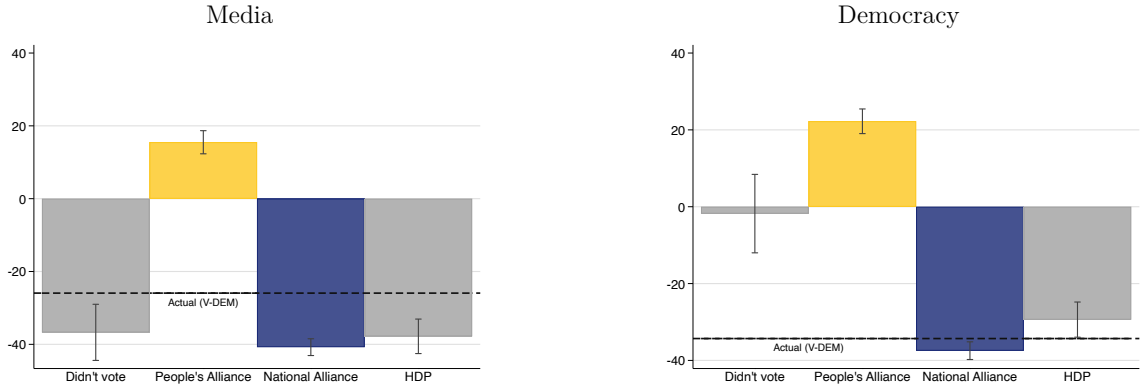
Notes: This figure illustrates the evolution of democracy in Türkiye from 1990 onwards, using a 0 to 100 scale based on the V-DEM data, where higher values represent more democratic institutions. Panel A displays the overall composite democracy index, while Panel B breaks it down into its sub-components: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian dimensions.

Figure 2: Baseline Institutional Preferences and Beliefs of Voters

A. Voter's Perceived Valuation of Institutions

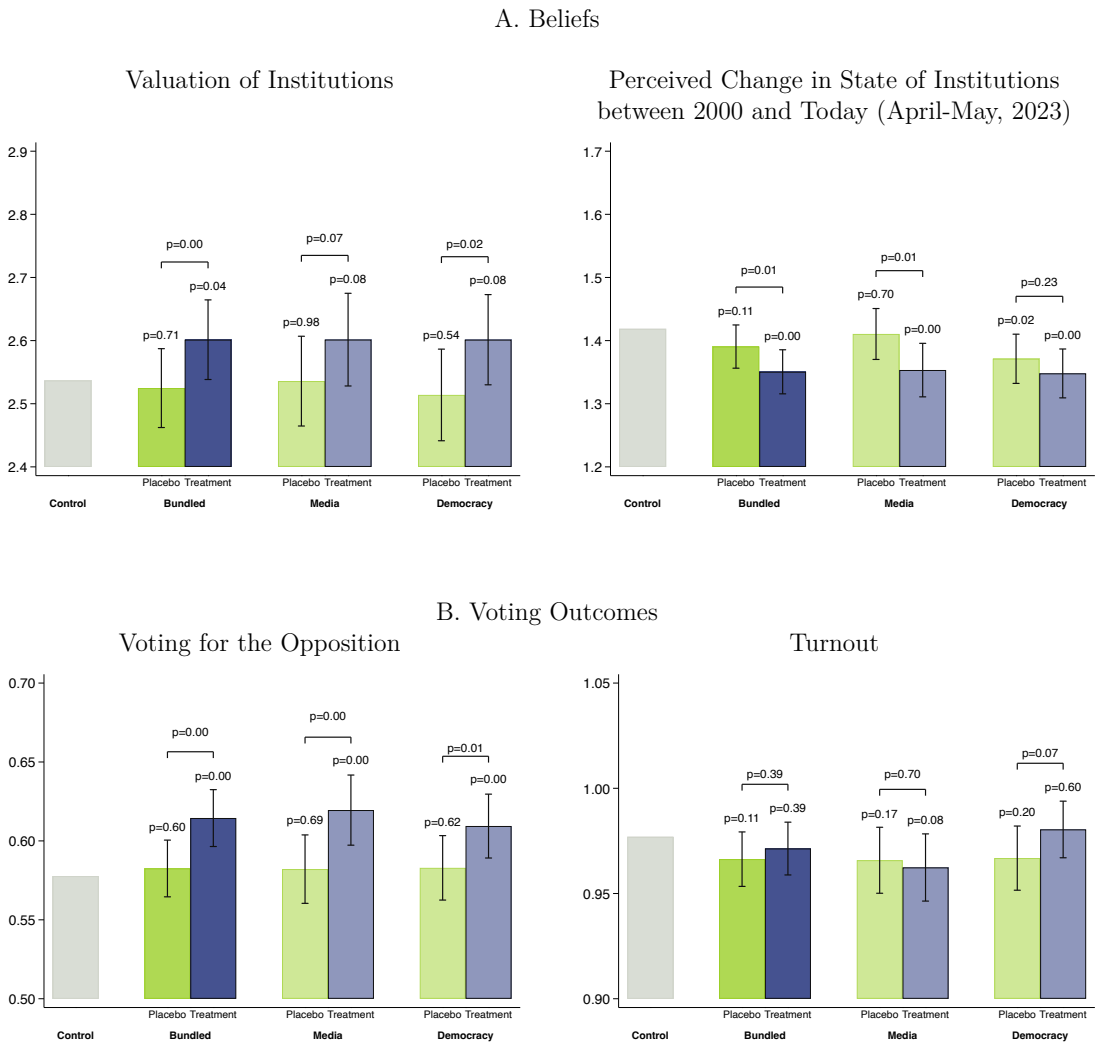


B. Voter's Perceived and Real Change in State of Institutions between 2000 and Today (April-May, 2023)



Notes: Panel A of this figure shows, in the left, the average support for autocracy, categorized by political affiliation (People's Alliance, National Alliance, HDP supporters, and non-voters) based on the pre-treatment survey in the online experiment, and, in the right, the average value of *valuation of institutions* for the sample assigned to the control group. Political affiliation is determined by self-reported voting behavior in the 2018 election. Support for autocracy is measured by respondents' agreement with the statement, "I support having an authoritarian government in some cases," on a scale from 1 to 7, where higher scores indicate stronger support for an authoritarian government. Panel B of this figure presents voters' perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April–May 2023) at baseline, also categorized by political affiliation. The perceived change is based on baseline questions asking respondents to rate the level of media independence and democracy in Türkiye today and in 2000, on a scale from 0 (very low) to 100 (very high). The bars represent the difference in these scores between today (April–May 2023) and 2000. The left and right sections of Panel B show the results for media independence and democracy, respectively. The dashed horizontal black line indicates the actual change in media independence and democracy based on V-DEM data. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals.

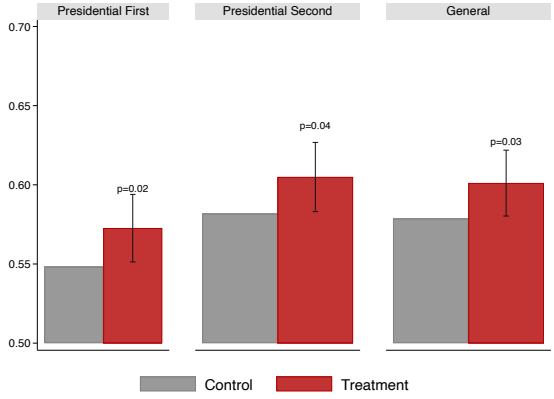
Figure 3: Treatment Effects on Beliefs and Voting Outcomes in Online Experiment



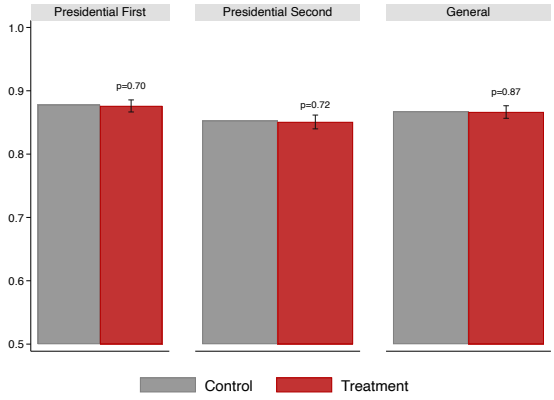
Notes: Panel A of this figure presents the ATE on voters' valuation of institutions and their perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April–May, 2023). Panel B of this figure presents the ATE on voters' intention to vote for the opposition and whether to vote. *Valuation of Institutions* is the average of two seven-point scales (with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree") measuring the respondent's level of agreement with the statements, "Increasing media independence in a country will reduce corruption in the future," and "Strengthening democracy in a country will reduce the number of people affected by natural disasters in the future." See equation 1. *Perceived Change in State of Institutions between 2000 and today (April–May, 2023)* is the average of two five-point scales measuring the extent to which institutions are better today (April–May, 2023) relative to 2000, based on the question where respondents are asked to complete the statements "In Türkiye, today's level of media independence is _____ its level in 2000," and "In Türkiye, today's level of democracy is _____ its level in 2000" (1 being "much lower than" and 5 "much higher than"). *Voting for the opposition* is a dummy that takes the value of one if the respondent would vote for an alliance different from "People's Alliance" ("AKP", "MHP", "BBP", and "New Welfare Party") when asked "If there were a presidential election tomorrow, which Alliance's candidate would you vote for?". *Voter Turnout* takes a value of one if the respondent selected an alliance rather than choosing the option, "I will not vote." Treatment groups include the control, the bundled placebo (those assigned to the media or democracy placebo), the media placebo, the democracy placebo, the bundled treatment (respondents assigned to the democracy or media treatment), the media treatment, and the democracy treatment (see Section 3). Each bar displays the mean of the outcome for each of these groups as indicated on the horizontal axis. In Panel A, the outcomes are rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome. P-values values of the difference between the control and the treatment group are reported above the bars. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. Estimates are calculated conditional on our full set of controls (all variables listed in Table A-3).

Figure 4: Treatment Effects on Voting Outcomes in Field Experiment

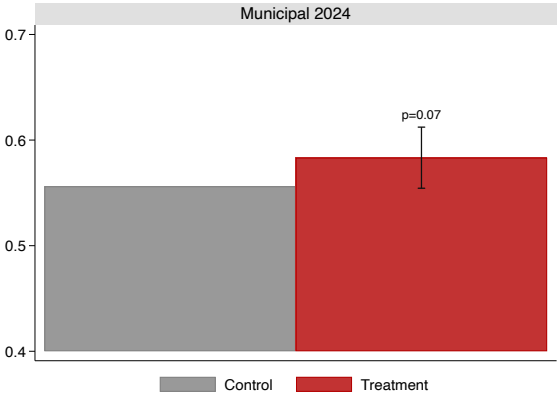
A. Voting for the Opposition (2023 Election)



B. Voter Turnout (2023 Election)

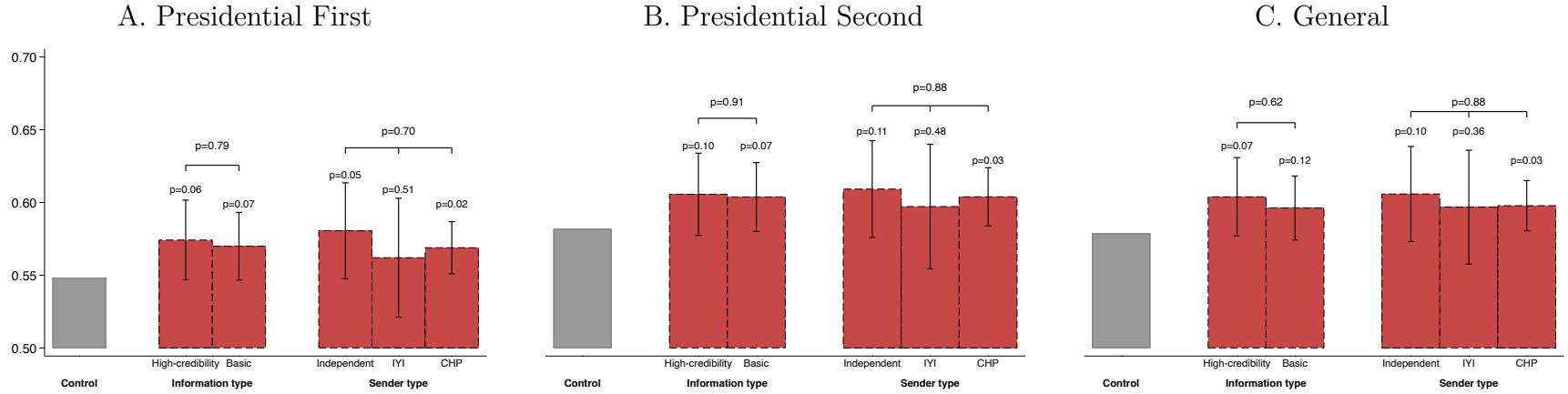


C. Voting for the Opposition (2024 Election)



Notes: Panel A of this figure plots the LATE of the bundled treatments in equation 1 on the opposition's vote share for the presidential May 14, the presidential run-off May 28, the general May 14 elections of 2023, and the local March 31 elections of 2024, based on the field experiment. The unit of analysis is a ballot box. Our experiment cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (independent media and basic corruption) and treatment sources (non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP), see more details in Section 3. The bundled treatment is a dummy variable taking the value of one if a ballot box is within a neighborhood assigned to any of these treatment group. In each panel, the bar on the left represents the mean outcome for the control group. P-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group are reported above the bars. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. All regressions include strata fixed effects, the opposition's vote share in the 2018 general election, voter turnout in 2018, the number of registered voters in 2018, and region dummies. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. See Appendix Table A-1 for a definition of the outcomes.

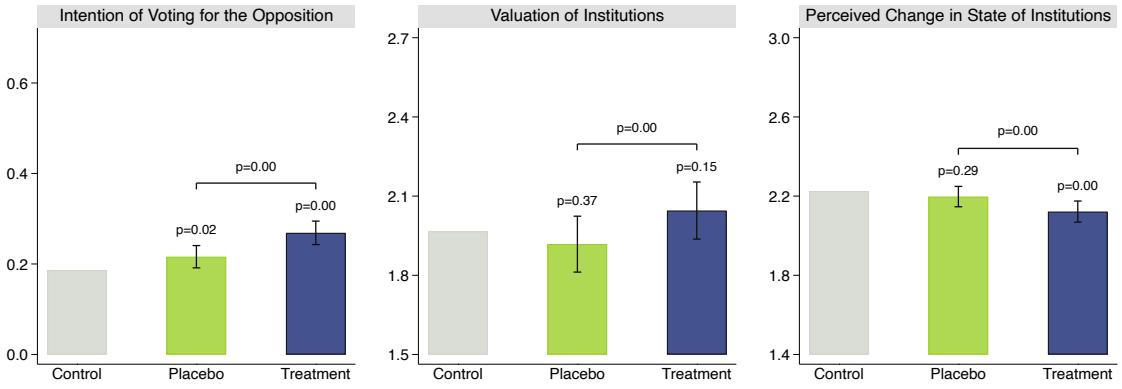
Figure 5: Unbundled Treatment Effects on the May 2023 Presidential and General Election Opposition's Vote Share



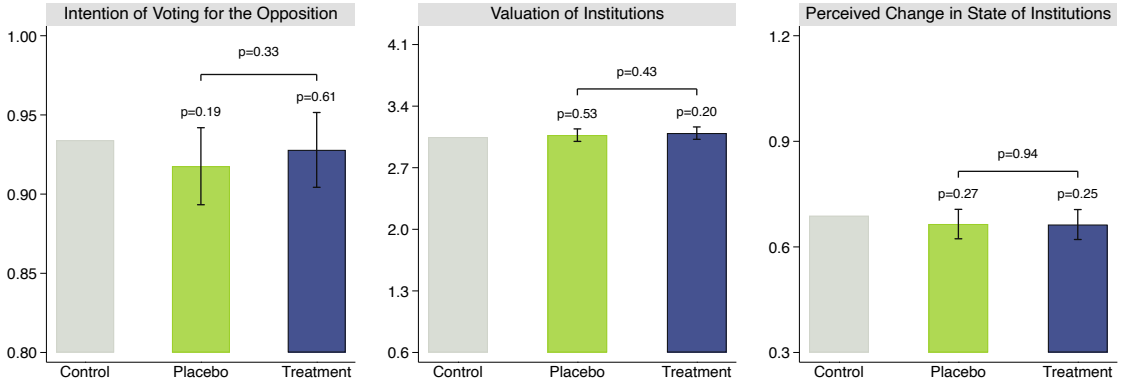
Notes: This figure plots LATE of the unbundled treatments in equation 1 on the opposition's vote share for the presidential May 14, the presidential run-off May 28, and the general May 14 elections of 2023 in panels A, B, and C, respectively based on the field experiment. The unit of analysis is a ballot box. Our experiment cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (independent media and basic corruption) and treatment sources (non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP), see more details in Section 3. In each panel, the bar on the left represents the mean outcome for the control group. P-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group and between different treatment groups in each dimension are reported above the bars as indicated by the lines. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. All regressions include strata fixed effects, the opposition's vote share in the 2018 general election, voter turnout in 2018, the number of registered voters in 2018, and region dummies. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. See Appendix Table A-1 for a definition of the outcomes.

Figure 6: Online Experiment Results Driven by Individuals Who Do Not Believe Institutions Worsened between 2000 and Today (April-May, 2023) at Baseline

A. Underestimate Deterioration in State of Institutions at Baseline



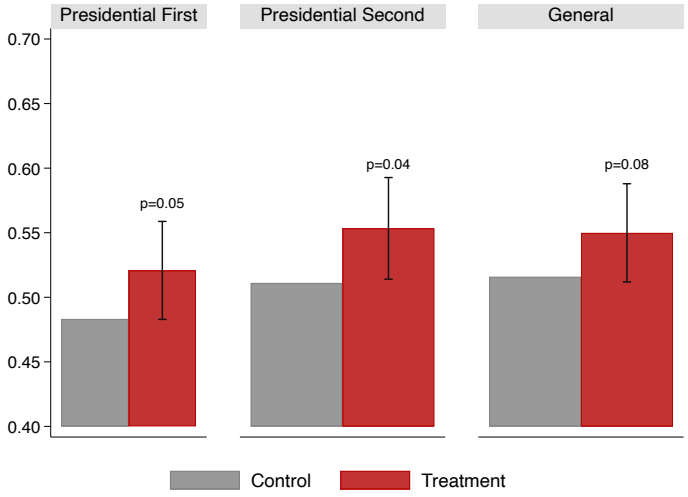
B. Overestimate Deterioration in State of Institutions at Baseline



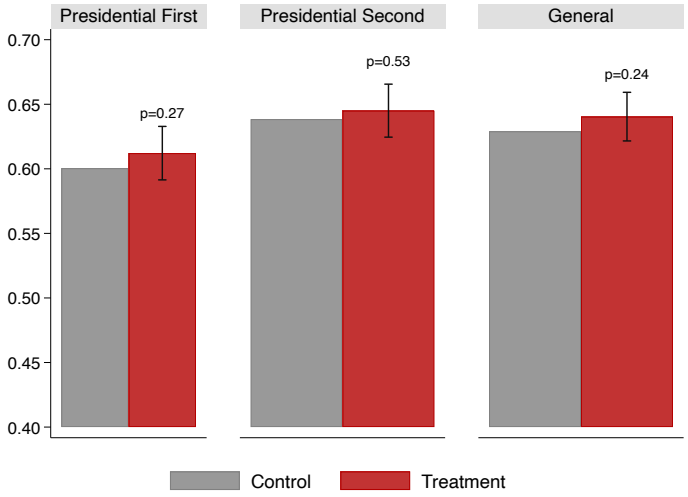
Notes: This figure plots heterogeneous treatment effects by respondents' perception of the change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April-May, 2023) at baseline. In Panel A we show estimates for those who underestimate the deterioration in institutions at baseline. In Panel B we show estimates for those who overestimate the same value. This figure displays effects on voting for the opposition, voters' valuation of institutions, and their perceived change in the state of institutions. See equation 1. Our online experiment cross-randomized respondents into a control, two placebos (media placebo and democracy placebo), and two treatments (media treatment and democracy treatment), see more details in Section 3. Each bar displays the mean of the standardized outcome for the control, the bundled placebo (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media placebo or the democracy placebo), and the bundled treatment (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media treatment or the democracy treatment) as indicated on the horizontal axis. *Valuation of Institutions* and *Perceived Change in State of Institutions* are rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome. p-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group and between the placebo and the treatment are reported over the bars as indicated by the lines. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. Estimates are calculated conditional on our full set of controls (all variables listed in Table A-3).

Figure 7: Field Experiment Results Driven by Neighborhoods Previously Against the Opposition

A. Neighborhoods with Below Median Opposition's Vote Share in 2018



B. Neighborhoods with Above Median Opposition's Vote Share in 2018



Notes: This figure plots heterogeneous treatment effects for ballot boxes that had below-median and above-median opposition's vote shares in 2018 in Panels A and B, respectively based on the field experiment. The three outcomes are the opposition's vote share for the presidential election on May 14 (presidential first), the presidential run-off on May 28 (presidential second), and the general election on May 14, 2023 (general). The field experiment cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (independent media and basic corruption) and treatment sources (non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP), see more details in Section 3. The bundled treatment is a dummy variable taking the value of one if a ballot box is within a neighborhood assigned to any of these treatment group. In each panel, the bar on the left represents the mean outcome for the control group. p-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group are reported over the bars. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. All regressions include strata fixed effects, the opposition's vote share in the 2018 general election, voter turnout in 2018, the number of registered voters in 2018, and region dummies. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. See Appendix Table A-1 for a definition of the outcomes.

Table 1: Bundled Treatment Effects in the Online Experiment – Robustness to Different Control Sets

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	A. Valuation of Institutions				
Placebo	0.024	0.000	-0.010	-0.016	-0.012
	(0.042)	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.032)
Treatment	0.097	0.073	0.060	0.055	0.065
	(0.041)	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.032)
Observations	4,232	3,966	3,892	3,614	3,614
Mean	2.556	2.556	2.556	2.556	2.556
p-value: Placebo=Treatment	0.032	0.019	0.006	0.007	0.003
	B. Perceived Change in State of Institutions				
Placebo	-0.060	-0.030	-0.030	-0.023	-0.028
	(0.041)	(0.032)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.017)
Treatment	-0.116	-0.069	-0.060	-0.058	-0.068
	(0.041)	(0.032)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.018)
Observations	4,343	4,070	3,986	3,678	3,678
Mean	1.377	1.377	1.377	1.377	1.377
p-value: Placebo=Treatment	0.092	0.139	0.070	0.039	0.006
	C. Intention to Vote for the Opposition				
Placebo	0.025	0.009	0.005	0.006	0.005
	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Treatment	0.054	0.037	0.032	0.036	0.037
	(0.020)	(0.016)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Observations	4,275	4,034	3,950	3,636	3,636
Mean	0.593	0.593	0.593	0.593	0.593
p-value: Placebo=Treatment	0.077	0.032	0.002	0.001	0.000
No controls	Yes				
Outcome_{t-1}		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Imbalanced controls			Yes	Yes	Yes
Full set of controls					Yes

Notes: This table presents ATE of the bundled treatments on voters' valuation of institutions, their perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April-May, 2023), and their intention to vote for the opposition in Panels A, B, and C, respectively, based on the online experiment. See equation 1. Mean refers to the control group's mean of the outcomes. See Appendix Table A-1 for a detailed definition of the outcomes. Our online experiment cross-randomized respondents into a control, two placebos (media placebo and democracy placebo), and two treatments (media treatment and democracy treatment), see more details in Section 3. We run regressions of these outcomes on the bundled placebo (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media placebo or the democracy placebo), the bundled treatment (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media treatment or the democracy treatment) an different set of controls as follows. Column (1) has no addition controls, Column (2) has the outcome in pre-treatment period, Column (3) and (4) control for the outcome in pre-treatment survey and the five baseline variables for which we observe imbalance in Table A-3 at the 10% level (Closeness People's Alliance, Top government priority Inflation, Better institutions improve economy, Level institutions: 2023 and Current support for party voted), and Column (5) controls for the full set of controls (all variables listed in Table A-3). Column (4) differs from Column (3), as regressions in Column (4) is restricted to the sample in Column (5). *Valuation of Institutions* and *Change in the State of Institutions* are rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome.

Table 2: Bundled Treatment Effects in the Field Experiment – Robustness to Different Control Sets

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Presidential First			Presidential Second			General			2024 Local Election		
A. Dependent Variable is Opposition's Vote Share												
Treatment	0.023	0.023	0.024	0.021	0.021	0.023	0.022	0.021	0.022	0.028	0.027	0.027
	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Observations	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,840	2,840	2,840
Mean	0.548	0.548	0.548	0.582	0.582	0.582	0.579	0.579	0.579	0.556	0.556	0.556
B. Dependent Variable is Turnout												
Treatment	-0.003	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.000	-0.002	-0.003	-0.001	-0.001	-0.013	-0.010	-0.012
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Observations	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,840	2,840	2,840
Mean	0.878	0.878	0.878	0.853	0.853	0.853	0.867	0.867	0.867	0.781	0.781	0.781
Strata fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outcome$_{t-1}$		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Full set of controls			Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes

Notes: This table presents robustness to different control sets of the LATE on the opposition's vote share and turnout for the 2023 elections in Panels A and B, respectively based on the field experiment. Mean refers to the control group's mean of the outcomes. The unit of analysis is a ballot box. Our experiment cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (independent media and basic corruption) and treatment sources (non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP), see more details in Section 3. The bundled treatment is a dummy variable taking the value of one if a ballot box is within a neighborhood assigned to any of these treatment group. Columns (1), (4) and (7) includes only strata fixed effects. Columns (2), (5), and (8) include strata fixed effects and the outcome in the pre-treatment period. Columns (3), (6), and (9) include strata fixed effects, 2018 vote share for the opposition and turnout, region fixed effects, and the number of registered voters in 2018. All outcome variables are measured at the ballot box level. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity.

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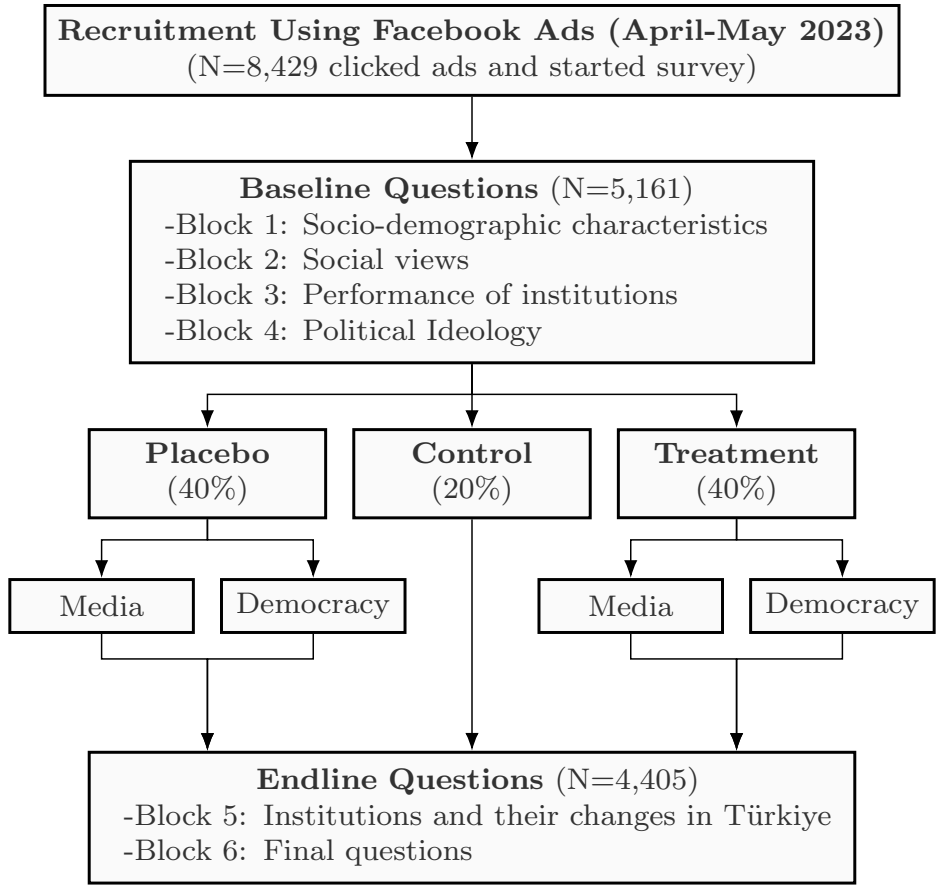
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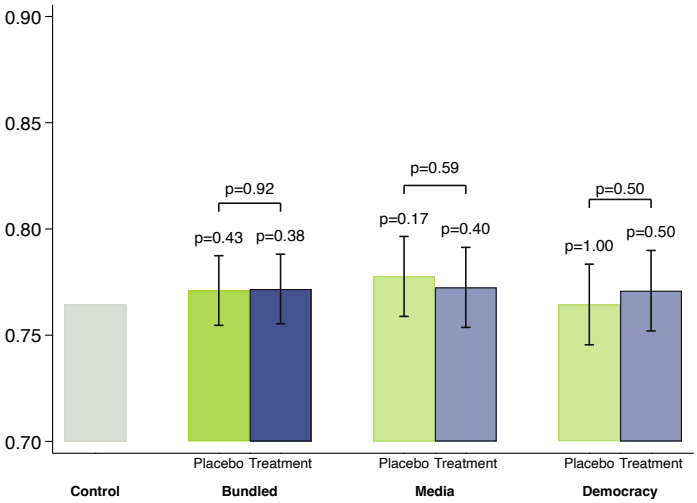
A Appendix

Figure A-1: Experimental Design Online Experiment



Notes: This figure shows the experimental design of the study. A total of 19,151 individuals clicked on the ads and were redirected to the survey landing page, where they reviewed the consent form. Of these, 8,429 proceeded to start the survey. A total of 5,161 respondents completed the baseline survey and were then randomly assigned to two treatment groups, two placebo groups, and a control group. In total, 4,405 participants completed the survey, comprising our final sample for analysis.

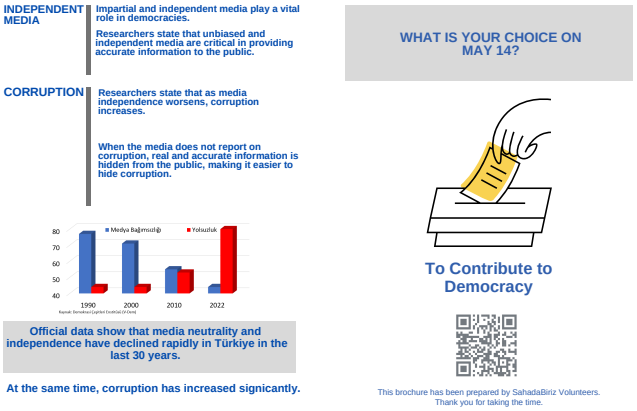
Figure A-2: Differential Attrition by Treatment Arms – Online Experiment



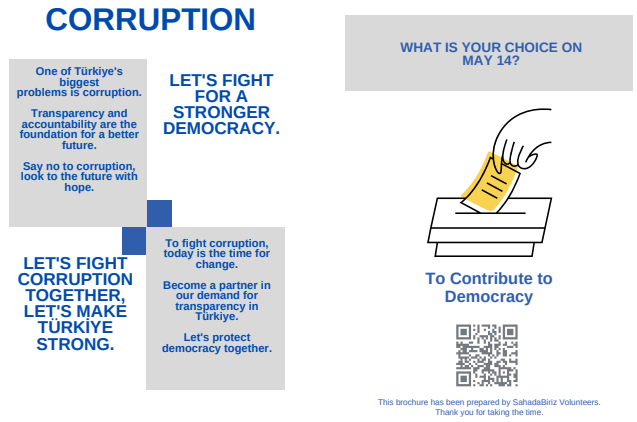
Notes: This figure shows the differences in the completion of the survey between individuals that were assigned to different treatment arms. See equation 1. Our online experiment cross-randomized respondents into a control, two placebos (media placebo and democracy placebo), and two treatments (media treatment and democracy treatment), see more details in Section 3. The outcome is a dummy that takes the value of one if the participant did not complete the survey. Treatment groups include the control, the bundled placebo (those assigned to the media or democracy placebo), the media placebo, the democracy placebo, the bundled treatment (respondents assigned to the democracy or media treatment), the media treatment, and the democracy treatment. Each bar displays the mean of the outcome for each of these groups as indicated on the horizontal axis. p-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group and between the placebo and the treatment are reported over the bars as indicated by the lines. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control.

Figure A-3: Pamphlets in the Field Experiment

A. High-credibility Pamphlet for Non-partisan



B. Basic Pamphlet for Non-partisan



C. High-credibility Pamphlet for CHP



D. Basic Pamphlet for CHP



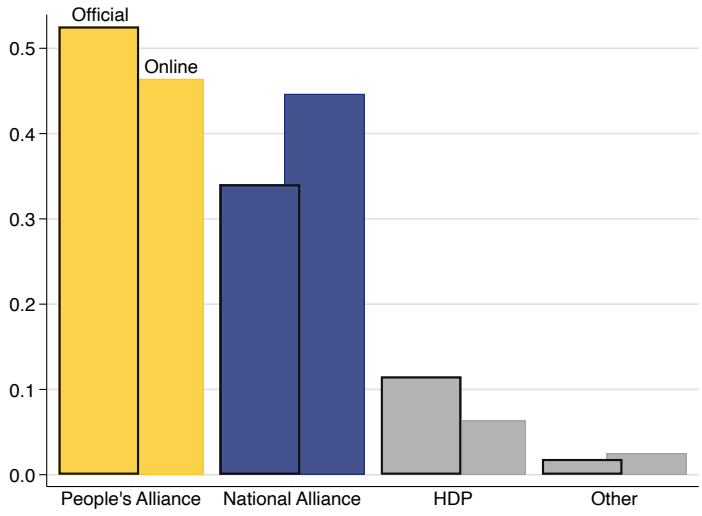
E. High-credibility Pamphlet for İYİ Party



F. Basic Pamphlet for İYİ Parti

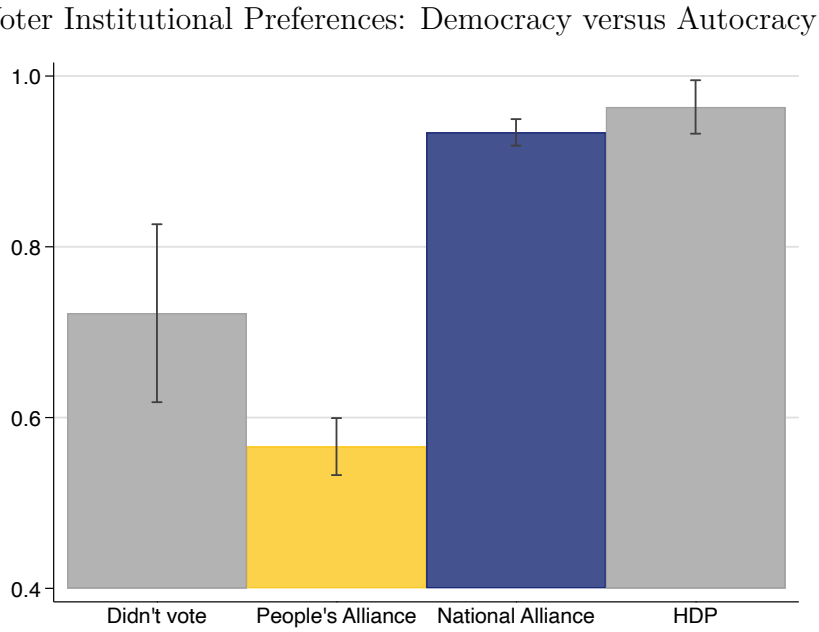


Figure A-4: Alliance Vote Shares from Official Records and Self-Reported Voting Data from the Online Experiment for the 2018 Election



Notes: This figure compares the official alliance vote shares from the 2018 general election with the self-reported voting choices from our baseline survey. The figure uses a color-coded bar chart: yellow bars represent the People's Alliance vote share, navy bars show the National Alliance vote share, and grey bars indicate the vote shares for HDP and other parties. For each alliance, the bar on the left represents the official 2018 election result, while the bar on the right shows the self-reported vote shares from the online experiment.

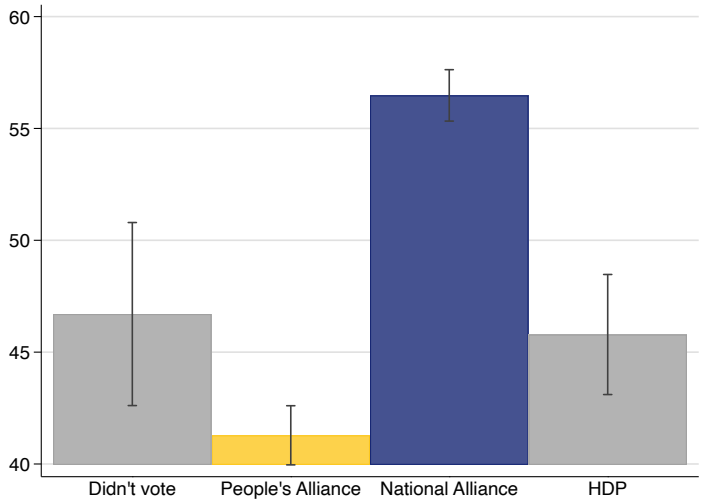
Figure A-5: Additional Summary Statistics on Institutional Preferences by Alliance Affiliation



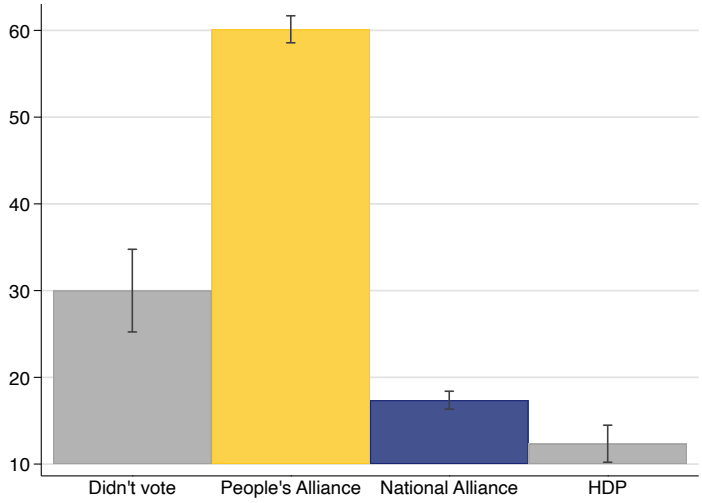
Notes: This figure shows alternative measures of institution value, categorized by political affiliation (People's Alliance, National Alliance, HDP supporters, and non-voters). It plots the fraction of individuals that answer "I would prefer democracy among all forms of government." The other answer options are, "In some cases, I may prefer an authoritarian government," and "For someone like me, it doesn't matter whether the government is democratic or authoritarian." The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure A-6: Perception of the State of Institutions in 2000 and Today (April-May, 2023) by Political Affiliation

A. Perception of the State of Institutions in 2000



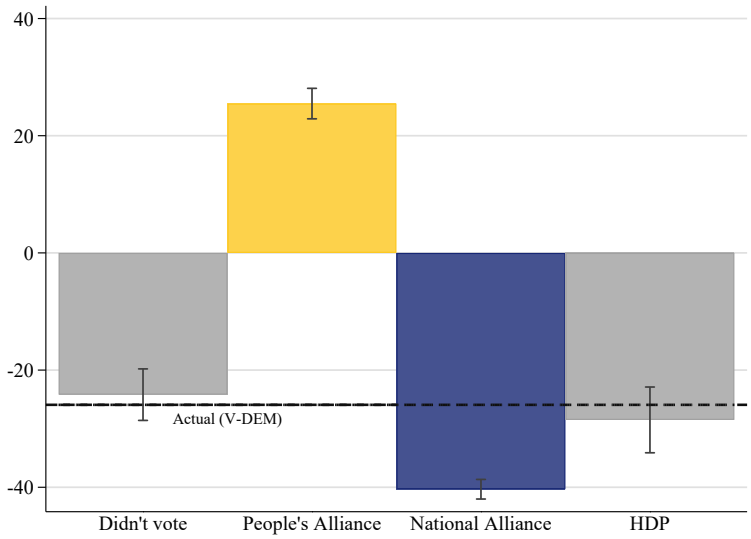
B. Perception of the State of Institutions Today (April-May, 2023)



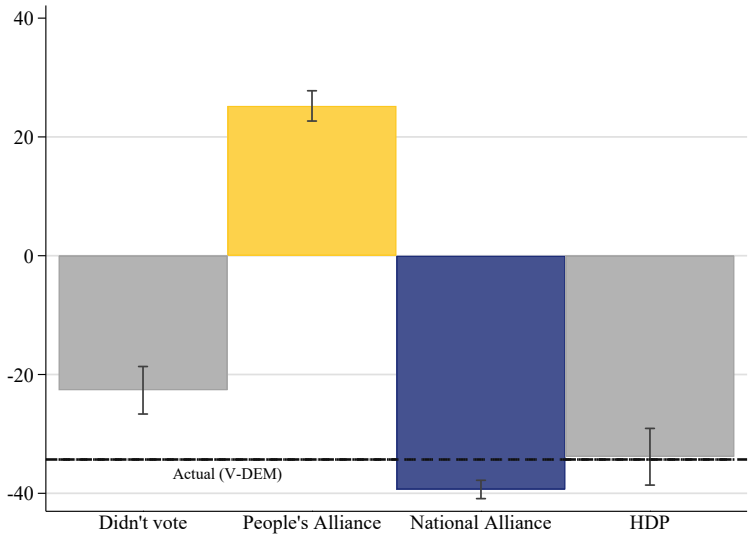
Notes: This figure compares voters' perceptions of democratic institutions in Türkiye between 2000 and the present (April-May 2023), categorized by political affiliation (People's Alliance, National Alliance, HDP supporters, and non-voters). Panel A shows average responses to the question: 'On a scale of 0 (very low) to 100 (very high), please rate the level of media independence (democracy) in Türkiye in 2000,' while Panel B displays responses to the same question about the present day (April-May, 2023). The bars represent mean scores for each political group based on self-reported voting behavior in the 2018 election. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure A-7: Voters' Beliefs at Baseline (In-person Survey)

A. Media



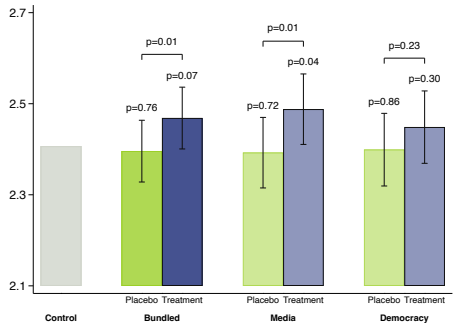
B. Democracy



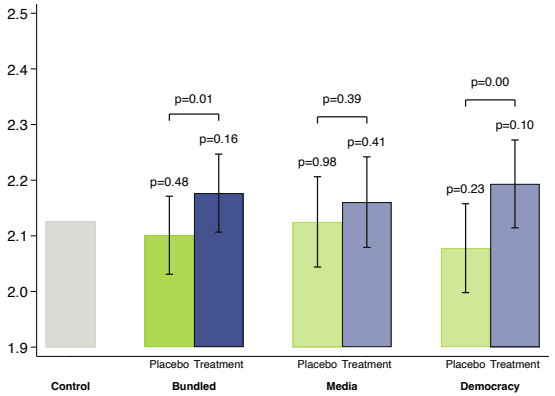
Notes: Using the baseline in-person survey, this figure shows voters' perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April–May, 2023) at baseline, categorized by political affiliation (People's Alliance, National Alliance, HDP supporters, and non-voters). The perceived change in the state of institutions is based on the following baseline questions: "On a scale of 0 (very low) to 100 (very high), please rate today's level of media independence (democracy) in Türkiye and its level in 2000". The bars report the difference in these responses for today (April–May, 2023) and 2000. Panel A and Panel B report the results for media independence and democracy, respectively. The dashed horizontal black line indicates the actual change in media independence and democracy based on V-DEM data. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure A-8: Treatment Effects on Voters' Beliefs – Separately for Media and Democracy Outcomes

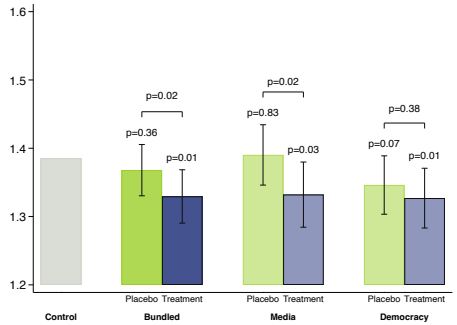
A. Valuation of Institutions–Media



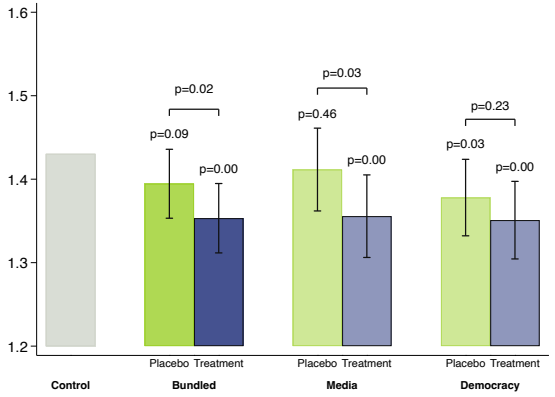
B. Valuation of Institutions–Democracy



C. Perceived Change in State of Institutions–Media

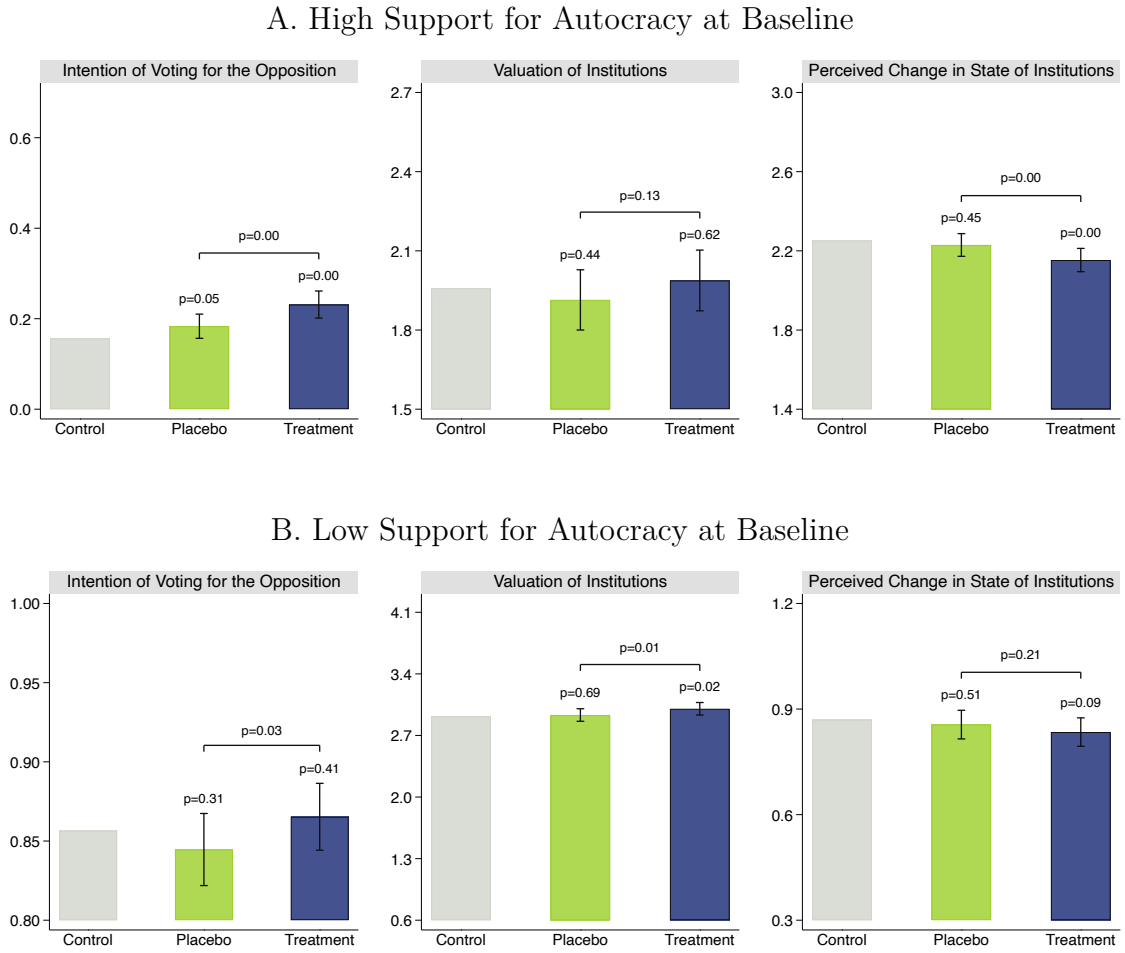


D. Perceived Change in State of Institutions–Democracy



Notes: This figure plots the means of voters' valuation of institutions and their perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April - May, 2023) in Panels A and B, and C and D, respectively, for different treatment groups based on the online experiment. See equation 1. *Valuation of Institutions–Media* and *Valuation of Institutions–Democracy* are a seven-point scale (with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree") measuring the respondent's level of agreement with the statements "Increasing media independence in a country will reduce corruption in the future," and "Strengthening democracy in a country will reduce the number of people affected by natural disasters in the future", respectively. *Perceived Change in State of Institutions–Media* and *Perceived Change in State of Institutions–Democracy* are a five-point scale measuring the extent to which institutions are better today (April - May, 2023) relative to 2000, based on the question where respondents are asked to complete the statements "In Türkiye, today's level of media independence is _____ its level in 2000," and "In Türkiye, today's level of democracy is _____ its level in 2000" (1 being "much lower than" and 5 "much higher than"). Treatment groups include the control, the bundled placebo (those assigned to the media or democracy placebo), the media placebo, the democracy placebo, the bundled treatment (respondents assigned to the democracy or media treatment), the media treatment, and the democracy treatment (see more details in Section 3). Each bar displays the mean of the outcome for each of these groups as indicated on the horizontal axis. The outcomes in each panel are rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome.p-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group and between the placebo and the treatment are reported over the bars as indicated by the lines. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. Estimates are calculated conditional on our full set of controls (all variables listed in Appendix Table A-3).

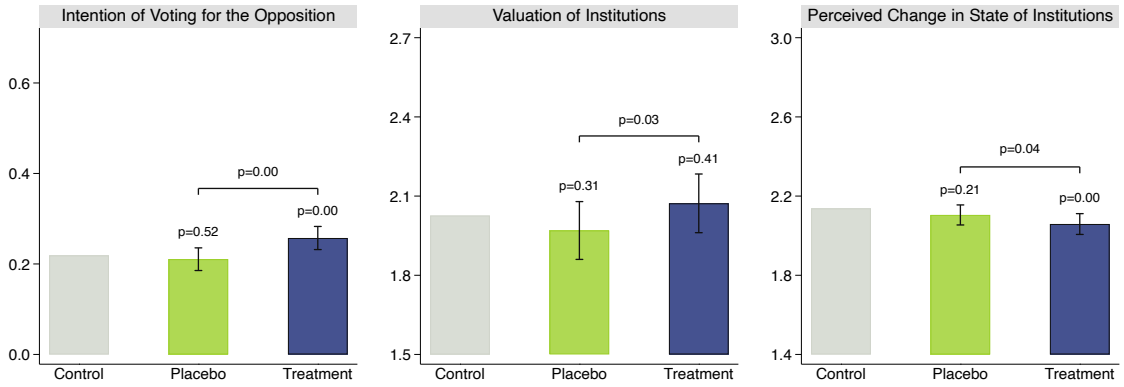
Figure A-9: Online Experiment Results Driven by Individuals More Favorable to Authoritarianism at Baseline



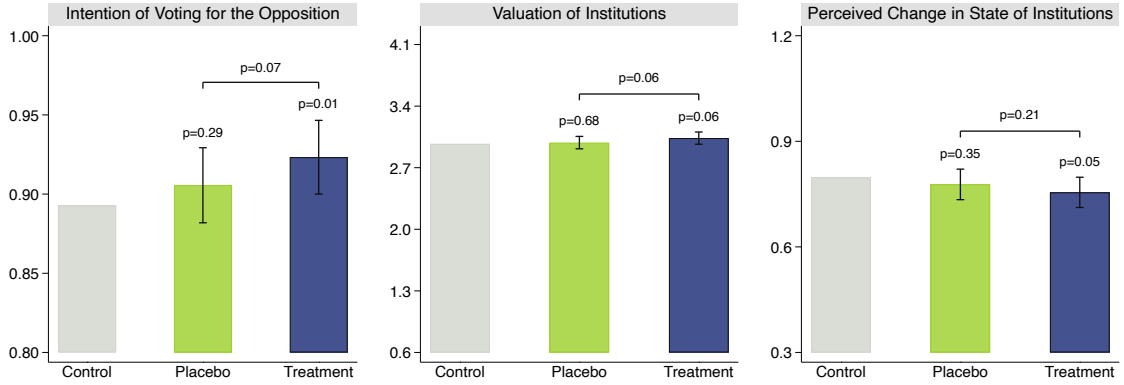
Notes: This figure plots heterogeneous treatment effects by baseline attitudes towards authoritarianism at baseline in the online experiment. In Panel A we show estimates for those who are neutral or agree with the statement that authoritarianism is sometimes preferable. In Panel B we show estimates for those who disagree with this same statement. See equation 1. This figure displays effects on voting for the opposition, voters' valuation of institutions, and their perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April - May, 2023). Our online experiment cross-randomized respondents into a control, two placebos (media placebo and democracy placebo), and two treatments (media treatment and democracy treatment), see more details in Section 3. Each bar displays the mean of the outcome for the control, the bundled placebo (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media placebo or the democracy placebo), and the bundled treatment (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media treatment or the democracy treatment) as indicated on the horizontal axis. *Valuation of Institutions* and *Perceived Change in State of Institutions* are rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome. p-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group and between the placebo and the treatment are reported over the bars as indicated by the lines. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. Estimates are calculated conditional on our full set of controls (all variables listed in Appendix Table A-3).

Figure A-10: Online Experiment Results Driven by Individuals Against the Opposition in 2018

A. Self-reported Not Voting for the Opposition at Baseline



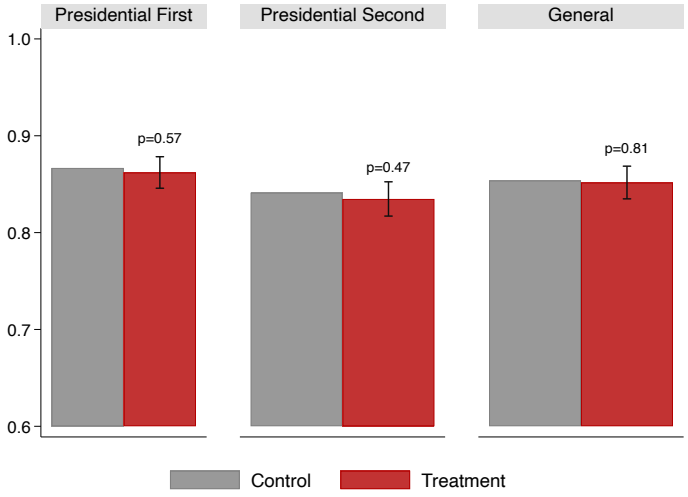
B. Self-reported Voting for the Opposition at Baseline



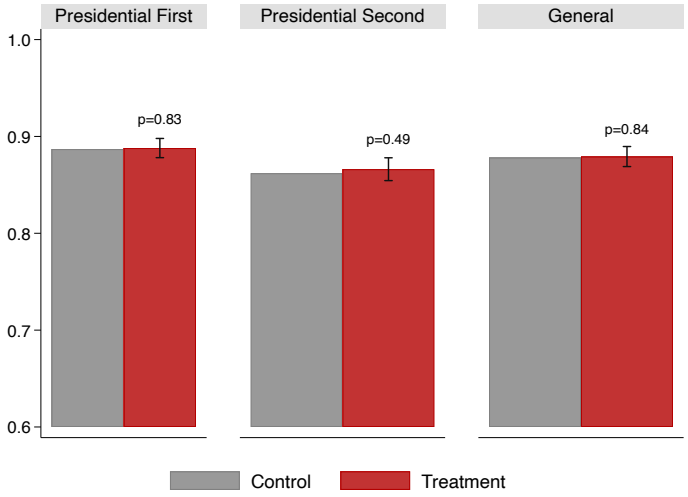
Notes: This figure plots heterogeneous treatment effects for individuals that self-report voting against and for the opposition in the 2018 election based on the online experiment in Panels A and B respectively. See equation 1. See Appendix Table A-1 for a detailed definition of the outcomes. Our online experiment cross-randomized respondents into a control, two placebos (media placebo and democracy placebo), and two treatments (media treatment and democracy treatment), see more details in Section 3. Each bar displays the mean of the standardized outcome for the control, the bundled placebo (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media placebo or the democracy placebo), and the bundled treatment (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media treatment or the democracy treatment) as indicated on the horizontal axis. *Valuation of Institutions* and *Improvement of the State of Institutions* are rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome. p-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group and between the placebo and the treatment are reported over the bars as indicated by the lines. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. Estimates are calculated conditional on our full set of controls (all variables listed in Appendix Table A-3).

Figure A-11: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Turnout in the Field Experiment

A. Neighborhoods with Below Median Opposition's Vote Share in 2018

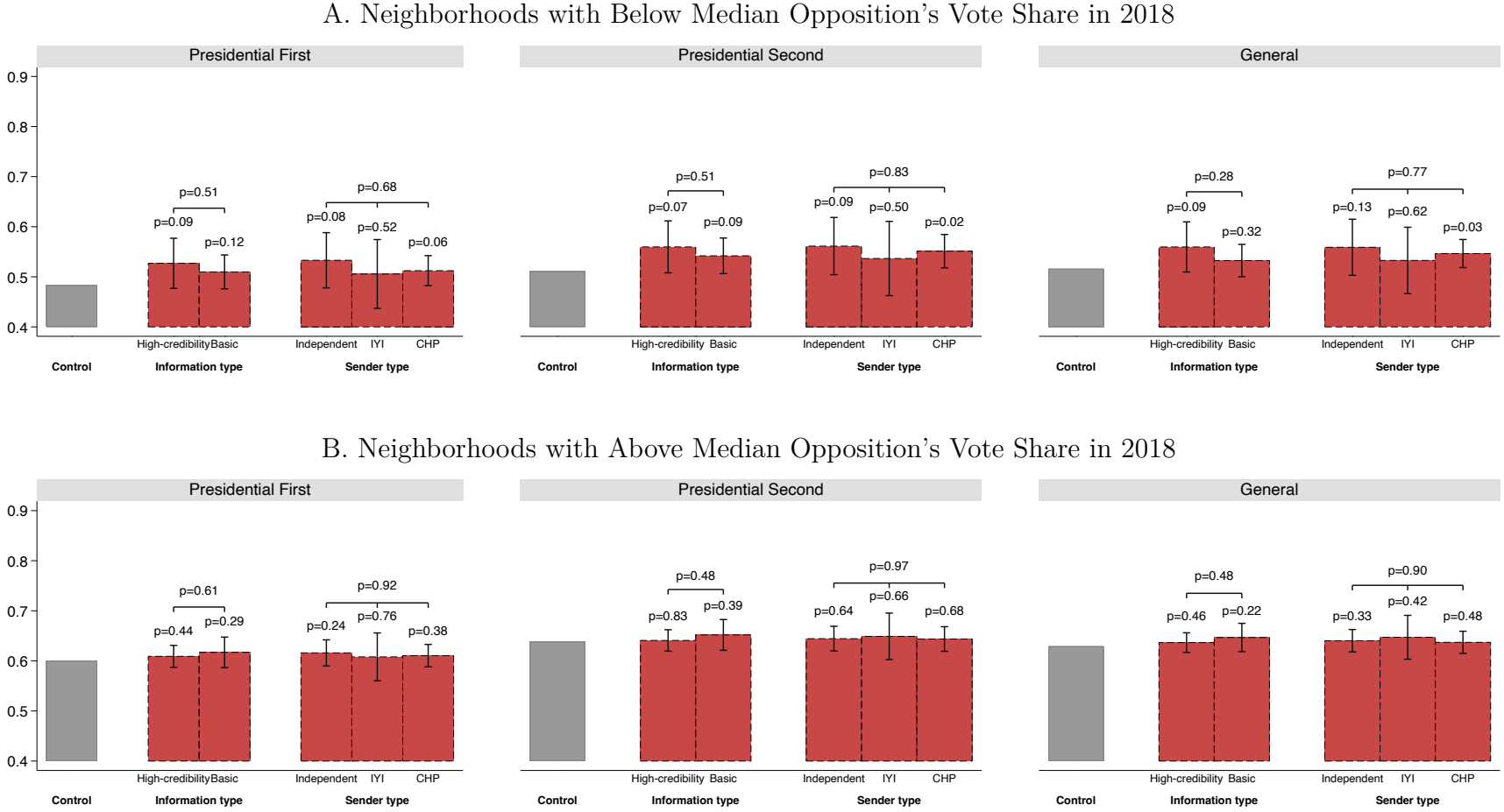


B. Neighborhoods with Above Median Opposition's Vote Share in 2018



Notes: This figure plots the LATE of the bundled treatments in equation 1 on turnout for the presidential election on May 14 (presidential first), the presidential run-off on May 28 (presidential second), and the general election on May 14, 2023 (general), for neighborhoods that had below-median and above-median opposition's vote shares in 2018 in Panels A and B, respectively based on the field experiment. The field experiment cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (independent media and basic corruption) and treatment sources (non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP), see more details in Section 3. The bundled treatment is a dummy variable taking the value of one if a ballot box is within a neighborhood assigned to any of these treatment group. In each panel, the bar on the left represents the mean outcome for the control group. p-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group are reported over the bars. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. All regressions include strata fixed effects, the opposition's vote share in the 2018 general election, voter turnout in 2018, the number of registered voters in 2018, and region dummies. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. See Appendix Table A-1 for a definition of the outcomes.

Figure A-12: Field Experiment Results Driven by Neighborhoods Previously Against the Opposition – Unbundled Treatment



Notes: This figure plots the LATE of the unbundled treatments in equation 1 on the opposition's vote share for the presidential election on May 14 (presidential first), the presidential run-off on May 28 (presidential second), and the general election on May 14, 2023 (general), for neighborhoods that had below-median and above-median opposition's vote shares in 2018 in Panels A and B, respectively based on the field experiment. The field experiment cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (independent media and basic corruption) and treatment sources (non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP), see more details in Section 3. In each panel, the bar on the left represents the mean outcome for the control group. p-values of the difference between the control and the treatment group and between different treatment groups in each dimension are reported over the bars as indicated by the lines. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals for the difference between the treatment and the control. All regressions include strata fixed effects, the opposition's vote share in the 2018 general election, voter turnout in 2018, the number of registered voters in 2018, and region dummies. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. See Appendix Table A-1 for a definition of the outcomes.

Table A-1: Variable Definitions

Variable	Description
	Panel A. Online Experiment
Baseline Variables	
Autocracy sometimes preferable	Respondents' level of agreement with the statement, "I support preferring for an authoritarian government in some cases," on a 1 to 7-point scale (with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree").
Better institutions improve economy	Respondents' level of agreement with one of two statements about the relationship between institutions and economy, "Strengthening (weakening) democracy in a country improves (worsens) the economy" and "Increasing (decreasing) media independence increases (reduces) voters' knowledge of whether the government manages the economy well" on a 1 to 7-point scale.
Closeness: Nation Alliance	Equals 0 if "Very difficult',' 1 if "Difficult',' 2 if "Neutral," 3 "Not difficult," and 4 "Not difficult at all" to the question "How do you feel about the following statement: "I find it difficult to see things from the point of view of supporters of "National Alliance"" .
Closeness: People's Alliance	Equals 0 if "Very difficult", 1 if "Difficult", 2 if "Neutral", 3 "Not difficult" and 4 "Not difficult at all" to the question "How do you feel about the following statement: "I find it difficult to see things from the point of view of supporters of "People's Alliance"".
Current support for party voted	Equals 0 if "Very low," 1 if "Low," 2 if "Neither high nor low," 3 "High," and 4 "Very high" to the question "How strongly do you feel about your support for the party you voted for in 2018?" .
Democracy as preferred form of government	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose "I would prefer democracy among all forms of government" when asked, "Which of the three statements is closest to your view?".
Ideology left	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose "Left" or "Central left" when asked, "Where do you see yourself on the ideological spectrum?".
Ideology right	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose "Right" or "Central right" when asked, "Where do you see yourself on the ideological spectrum?".
Institutions improve economy: Response certainty	Respondents' certainty about their responses on the level of agreement with one of two statements about the relationship between institutions and economy.
Level institutions: 2000	Respondents' rating for the institutions in 2000 based on the question, "On a scale of 0 (very low) to 100 (very high), please rate today's (2023) level of media independence (democracy) in Türkiye and its level in 2000".
Level institutions: 2023	Respondents' rating for the institutions in 2023 based on the question, "On a scale of 0 (very low) to 100 (very high), please rate today's (2023) level of media independence (democracy) in Türkiye and its level in 2000".
Level institutions: Response certainty	Respondents' certainty about their responses to the institutions' rating.
Most responsible for devaluation: Global crisis	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose "A global economic crisis" when asked, "Who or what is most responsible for the devaluation of the Turkish Lira in the last year?".
Most responsible for devaluation: President	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose "The president" when asked, "Who or what is most responsible for the devaluation of the Turkish Lira in the last year?".
Perceived change in state of institutions between 2000 and 2023 at baseline	The difference in the respondents' rating for institutions in 2023 and 2000 based on the question at baseline, "On a scale of 0 (very low) to 100 (very high), please rate today's (2023) level of media independence (democracy) in Türkiye and its level in 2000".
Regime does not affects the economy	Respondents' level of agreement with the statement, "Some think that political regimes (authoritarian, democratic, etc.) will not affect the economy," on a 1 to 7-point scale.

Continued on next page

Table A-1 – Variable Definition and Sources (Continues from Previous Page)

Self-reported (not) voting for the opposition at baseline	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose either (neither) "AKP" or (nor) "MHP" when asked, "Which political party did you vote for in the 2018 general election?".
Supports president deciding without consulting the parliament	Respondents' level of agreement with the statement, "I support that in some cases the president does not consult parliament when making decisions," on a 1 to 7-point scale.
Top government priority: Inflation	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose "Inflation rate" when asked, "Which of the following issues do you think the government should attach most importance to?".
Top government priority: National security	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose "National security" when asked, "Which of the following issues do you think the government should attach most importance to?".
Underestimate (Overestimate) the change in state of institutions at baseline	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the difference in the respondents' rating for institutions in 2023 and 2000 at baseline is lower (higher) than the difference in V-DEM's reported institutions' scores of Türkiye in 2021 and 2000.
Voted in 2018 election	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose a party when asked, "Which political party did you vote for in the 2018 general election?".
Voted in 2018 election for AKP	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose "AKP" when asked, "Which political party did you vote for in the 2018 general election?".
Voted in 2018 election for CHP	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose "CHP" when asked, "Which political party did you vote for in the 2018 general election?".
Voted in 2018 election for opposition	A dummy variable that takes the value of one if the respondent chose a party different from "AKP" or "MHP" when asked, "Which political party did you vote for in the 2018 general election?".
Outcome Variables	
Perceived change in state of institutions	The average of two 5-point scales measuring the extent to which institutions are better today (2023) relative to 2000, based on the questions where respondents are asked to complete the statements, "In Türkiye, today's level of media independence is _____ its level in 2000," and "In Türkiye, today's level of democracy is _____ its level in 2000". The variable is rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome.
Perceived change in state of institutions: Democracy	. The average of 5-point scale measuring the extent to which institutions are better today (2023) relative to 2000, based on the question where respondents are asked to complete the statement, "In Türkiye, today's level of democracy is _____ its level in 2000" (1 being "much lower than" and 5 being "much higher than"). The variable is rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome.
Perceived change in state of institutions: Media	The average of 5-point scale measuring the extent to which institutions are better today (2023) relative to 2000, based on the question where respondents are asked to complete the statement, "In Türkiye, today's level of media independence is _____ its level in 2000". The variable is rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome.
Intention of voting for the opposition	A dummy that takes the value of one if the respondent would vote for a candidate different from the candidate of "People's Alliance" when asked, "If there were a presidential election tomorrow, which Alliance's candidate would you vote for?". People's Alliance includes AKP, MHP, BBP and New Welfare Party.
Valuation of institutions	The average of two 7-point scales measuring the respondent's level of agreement with the statements, "Increasing media independence in a country will reduce corruption in the future," and "Strengthening democracy in a country will reduce the number of people affected by natural disasters in the future". The variable is rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome.

Continued on next page

Table A-1 – Variable Definition and Sources (Continues from Previous Page)

Valuation of institutions: Democracy	The average of 7-point scale measuring the respondent's level of agreement with the statement, "Strengthening democracy in a country will reduce the number of people affected by natural disasters in the future". The variable is rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome.
Valuation of institutions: Media	The average of 7-point scale measuring the respondent's level of agreement with the statement, "Increasing media independence in a country will reduce corruption in the future". The variable is rescaled so that the effects are measured in standard deviation units of the outcome.

Panel B. Field Experiment

Baseline Variables

General Election 2018

Vote share alliance: Nation Alliance	Total vote share of the members of Nation Alliance (CHP, IYI party, and Saadet Party) and Nation Alliance close list. Democrat Party, the member of Nation Alliance, did not run the election in Izmir.
Vote share alliance: No Alliance	Total vote share of Hür Dava, Vatan Party, HDP and independent candidates.
Vote share alliance: People's Alliance	Total vote share of the members of People's Alliance (AKP and MHP) and People's Alliance close list.
Vote share each party: Nation Alliance close list	The share of votes that were casted for only Nation Alliance (CHP, IYI Party, and Saadet Party). In general elections, voters have the option to vote for a specific party or for an alliance itself. Votes for an alliance are shared among its member parties, rather than going to one particular party.
Vote share each party: People's Alliance close list	The share of votes that were casted for only People's Alliance (AKP and MHP). In general elections, voters have the option to vote for a specific party or for an alliance itself. Votes for an alliance are shared among its member parties, rather than going to one particular party.
Vote share opposition	Total vote share of parties other than the member parties of People's Alliance (AKP and MHP).

Presidential Election 2018

Vote share alliance: Nation Alliance	Total vote share of Meral Aksener, Muharrem Ince, and Temel Karamollaoglu.
Vote share alliance: No Alliance	Total vote share of Selahattin Demirtas and Dogu Perincek.
Vote share alliance: People's Alliance	Total vote share of Recep Tayyip Erdogan.
Vote share opposition	Total vote share of Meral Aksener, Selahattin Demirtas, Muharrem Ince, Temel Karamollaoglu, and Dogu Perincek in the presidential election held in June, 2018. This constitutes the vote share for all candidates except the incumbent Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Outcome Variables

Vote share opposition: General election 2023	Total vote share of parties other than the member parties of People's Alliance (AKP, MHP, BBP and New Welfare Party). HUDA-PAR and DSP, the supporters of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's candidacy, did not run the election in Izmir.
Vote share opposition: Local election 2024	Total vote share of parties other than the member parties of People's Alliance (AKP, MHP, BBP and New Welfare Party) in 2023 election, HUDA-PAR, and DSP.
Vote share opposition: Presidential election 2023	Total vote share of Kemal Kilicdaroglu and Muharrem Ince in the presidential election held in May, 2023. This constitutes the vote share for all candidates except the incumbent Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ata Alliance's candidate, Sinan Ogan.

Table A-2: Attrition and Differential Effects on Main Outcomes According to Framing of the Treatment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Dependent Variable Is			
	Attrition	Value of Institutions	State of Institutions	Intention to Vote for the Opposition
Placebo positive	0.000	0.007	-0.034	0.008
	(0.016)	(0.036)	(0.020)	(0.011)
Placebo negative	-0.003	-0.032	-0.021	0.001
	(0.016)	(0.037)	(0.021)	(0.011)
Treatment positive	0.008	0.044	-0.071	0.029
	(0.017)	(0.038)	(0.021)	(0.011)
Treatment negative	0.016	0.085	-0.065	0.045
	(0.017)	(0.036)	(0.020)	(0.011)
Observations	4,330	3,614	3,678	3,636
Mean	0.141	2.537	1.418	0.578
p-value Placebo: Positive=Negative	0.821	0.290	0.505	0.529
p-value Treatment: Positive=Negative	0.656	0.266	0.790	0.158

Notes: This table presents treatment effects based on the variations in how the information was presented in our online experiment. See equation 1. In particular, we cross-randomized the framing of the text, alternating between positive and negative framing concerning institutional quality and outcomes such as corruption or the mitigation of natural disaster impacts. For instance, in the negative framing, participants in the media treatment group were shown the following text: "According to research, as media independence in a country worsens, corruption increases. At the same time, according to research, data show that independent media has worsened and corruption has increased over the last 30 years." Conversely, in the positive framing, participants were presented with: "According to research, as media independence in a country improves, corruption decreases. At the same time, according to research, data show that independent media has worsened and corruption has increased over the last 30 years." Column 1 presents effects on attrition. Columns 2, 3 and 4 present effects on our main outcomes of interest as indicated in the top row. All estimates are based on our baseline specification that includes strata fixed effects, region fixed effects, the opposition's vote share and turnout in the 2018 general election, and the number of registered voters in 2018. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity.

Table A-3: Balance Across Treatment Groups in Online Experiment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
		Bundled Treatment			Unbundled Treatment				
	Control	Placebo	Treatment	p-value difference	Placebo media	Placebo democracy	Treatment media	Treatment democracy	p-value difference
Panel A. Demographics									
Age	46.37	47.03	46.64	0.39	47.20	46.86	46.94	46.34	0.51
Education: High school	0.88	0.87	0.86	0.35	0.87	0.86	0.87	0.86	0.64
Education: Tertiary	0.54	0.55	0.53	0.70	0.54	0.55	0.53	0.54	0.91
Female	0.20	0.21	0.21	0.72	0.21	0.22	0.22	0.21	0.85
Occupation: Employed other	0.37	0.37	0.37	1.00	0.36	0.38	0.39	0.35	0.59
Occupation: Self-employed	0.31	0.33	0.31	0.43	0.33	0.33	0.30	0.32	0.66
Occupation: Unemployed	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.79	0.06	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.43
Panel B. Views on institutions and government									
Autocracy sometimes preferable	3.18	3.23	3.18	0.82	3.23	3.24	3.15	3.21	0.95
Better institutions improve economy	5.35	5.51	5.49	0.23	5.41	5.60	5.41	5.57	0.07*
Institutions improve economy: Response certainty	0.94	0.93	0.94	0.54	0.93	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.67
Level institutions: 2000	49.14	49.40	49.11	0.95	50.34	48.52	49.76	48.45	0.63
Level institutions: 2023	36.11	36.51	35.22	0.59	34.43	38.45	32.63	37.83	0.01***
Level institutions: Response certainty	0.94	0.94	0.94	1.00	0.93	0.95	0.93	0.95	0.16
Most responsible for devaluation: Global crisis	0.32	0.29	0.29	0.35	0.29	0.30	0.29	0.30	0.66
Most responsible for devaluation: President	0.45	0.46	0.47	0.66	0.46	0.46	0.47	0.47	0.93
Regime does not affects the economy	2.53	2.57	2.46	0.39	2.49	2.64	2.46	2.46	0.46
Supports president deciding without consulting the parliament	3.64	3.54	3.55	0.66	3.52	3.56	3.57	3.52	0.89
Top government priority: Inflation	0.43	0.43	0.41	0.50	0.41	0.44	0.38	0.44	0.02**
Top government priority: National security	0.40	0.40	0.41	0.96	0.42	0.39	0.41	0.40	0.78
Panel C. Ideology									
Closeness: Nation Alliance	2.22	2.31	2.37	0.10*	2.34	2.28	2.39	2.35	0.24
Closeness: People's Alliance	1.75	1.72	1.70	0.75	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.68	0.94
Current support for party voted	2.88	2.86	2.81	0.50	2.77	2.95	2.86	2.76	0.07*
Ideology left	0.36	0.38	0.38	0.35	0.38	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.60
Ideology right	0.50	0.47	0.48	0.38	0.48	0.46	0.48	0.48	0.64
Voted in 2018 election	0.96	0.96	0.97	0.44	0.97	0.95	0.97	0.96	0.20
Voted in 2018 election for National Alliance	0.43	0.44	0.45	0.80	0.44	0.44	0.45	0.44	0.98
Voted in 2018 election for People's Alliance	0.44	0.42	0.42	0.53	0.44	0.40	0.41	0.42	0.57
Voted in 2018 election for opposition	0.53	0.55	0.56	0.58	0.54	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.74

Notes: This table presents balance tests for the online experiment (N: 4,405) where we cross-randomized respondents into a control (N: 907), two placebos (media placebo and democracy placebo, N: 848 and N: 904, respectively), and two treatments (media treatment and democracy treatment, N: 877 and N: 869), see more details in Section 3. Column (1) reports the mean of the variable listed in each row for the control group. Columns (2) and (3) report the means of the variable listed in each row for the bundled placebo and bundled treatment respectively. Column (4) reports the p-value for the test of no difference between columns (1), (2) and (3). Columns (6)-(8) report the means of the variables listed in each raw for the unbundled treatments: media placebo, democracy placebo, media treatment, and democracy treatment. Column (10) reports the p-value for the test of no difference between columns (1), (5), (6), (7), and (8). Panel A includes demographic variables, Panel B includes variables on views on institutions and government, and Panel C includes ideology variables. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels. See Appendix Table A-1 for a definition of the outcomes.

Table A-4: Treatment Group Assignments at Neighborhood Level for Field Experiment

		Sender Type			Total	Registered
		Non-affiliated	IYI	CHP	neighborhoods	voters
Information Type	Control				302	480,812
	High-credibility	50	50	50	150	245,751
	Basic	34	34	34	102	159,111
Total neighborhoods		84	84	84	554	
Registered voters		139,905	138,209	126,748		885,674

Notes: This table presents the number of neighborhoods and registered voters for each dimension of our cross-randomized design in the field experiment: information type (High-credibility and Basic) and sender type (non-affiliated, IYI Party, CHP).

Table A-5: Unbundled Treatment Effects in the Online Experiment – Robustness to Different Control Sets

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	A. Valuation of Institutions				
Placebo Media	0.020	0.012	0.004	-0.015	-0.001
	(0.048)	(0.044)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.036)
Placebo Democracy	0.029	-0.011	-0.024	-0.017	-0.023
	(0.048)	(0.044)	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Treatment Media	0.088	0.061	0.057	0.050	0.065
	(0.048)	(0.044)	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Treatment Democracy	0.106	0.085	0.063	0.059	0.065
	(0.047)	(0.044)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.036)
Observations	4,232	3,966	3,892	3,614	3,614
Mean	2.556	2.556	2.556	2.556	2.556
p-value Media: Placebo=Treatment	0.156	0.269	0.145	0.079	0.071
p-value Democracy: Placebo=Treatment	0.103	0.028	0.017	0.041	0.015
	B. Perceived Change in State of Institutions				
Placebo Media	-0.064	-0.037	-0.004	0.008	-0.008
	(0.047)	(0.038)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.021)
Placebo Democracy	-0.057	-0.022	-0.055	-0.053	-0.047
	(0.047)	(0.036)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.020)
Treatment Media	-0.131	-0.082	-0.054	-0.049	-0.065
	(0.047)	(0.036)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Treatment Democracy	-0.101	-0.055	-0.066	-0.068	-0.070
	(0.047)	(0.038)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.020)
Observations	4,343	4,070	3,986	3,678	3,678
Mean	1.377	1.377	1.377	1.377	1.377
p-value Media: Placebo=Treatment	0.156	0.225	0.037	0.023	0.009
p-value Democracy: Placebo=Treatment	0.337	0.383	0.626	0.522	0.230
	C. Intention to Vote for the Opposition				
Placebo Media	0.031	0.019	0.004	0.000	0.004
	(0.024)	(0.018)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.011)
Placebo Democracy	0.018	-0.001	0.007	0.012	0.005
	(0.023)	(0.017)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.010)
Treatment Media	0.063	0.042	0.036	0.038	0.042
	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.011)
Treatment Democracy	0.045	0.031	0.029	0.034	0.032
	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.010)
Observations	4,275	4,034	3,950	3,636	3,636
Mean	0.593	0.593	0.593	0.593	0.593
p-value Media: Placebo=Treatment	0.182	0.213	0.014	0.005	0.002
p-value Democracy: Placebo=Treatment	0.249	0.075	0.054	0.058	0.011
No controls	Yes				
Outcome_{t-1}		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Imbalanced controls			Yes	Yes	Yes
Full set of controls					Yes

Notes: This table presents ATE of the bundled treatments on voters' valuation of institutions, their perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April-May, 2023), and their intention to vote for the opposition in Panels A, B, and C, respectively, based on the online experiment. See equation 1. Mean refers to the control group's mean of the outcomes. Our online experiment cross-randomized respondents into a control, two placebos (media placebo and democracy placebo), and two treatments (media treatment and democracy treatment), see more details in Section 3. We run regressions of these outcomes on the bundled placebo (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media placebo or the democracy placebo), the bundled treatment (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media treatment or the democracy treatment) an different set of controls as follows. Column (1) has no addition controls, Column (2) has the outcome in pre-treatment period, Column (3) and (4) control for the outcome in the pre-treatment survey and the five baseline variables for which we observe imbalance in Table A-3 at the 10% level (Closeness People's Alliance, Top government priority Inflation, Better institutions improve economy, Level institutions: today (April-May, 2023) and Current support for party voted), and Column (5) controls for the full set of controls (all variables listed in Appendix Table A-3). Column (4) differs from Column (3), as regressions in Column (4) is restricted to the sample in Column (5).

Table A-6: Summary Statistics

	Descriptive Statistics					
	Observations	**Mean**	**Median**	**SD**	**Min**	**Max**
A. Online Experiment						
Intention of voting for opposition	4,279	0.61	1.00	0.49	0.00	1.00
Valuation of institutions	4,532	2.57	3.15	0.99	0.48	3.39
Preceived change in state of institutions	4,649	1.35	0.55	0.98	0.55	2.77
Value of institutions: Media	4,643	2.43	3.10	1.00	0.44	3.10
Value of institutions: Democracy	4,576	2.15	2.53	1.00	0.42	2.95
Preceived change in state of institutions: Media	4,669	1.32	0.56	1.00	0.56	2.78
Preceived change in state of institutions: Democracy	4,666	1.36	0.54	1.00	0.54	2.71
B. Field Experiment						
B1. Presidential First Round Election (May 14, 2023)						
Vote share opposition	2,614	0.55	0.56	0.11	0.08	0.86
Turnout	2,614	0.88	0.89	0.05	0.53	1.16
Nation Alliance	2,614	0.55	0.56	0.11	0.08	0.86
People's Alliance	2,614	0.45	0.44	0.11	0.14	0.92
B2. Presidential Second Round Election (May 28, 2023)						
Vote share opposition	2,614	0.58	0.59	0.11	0.10	0.89
Turnout	2,614	0.85	0.86	0.05	0.52	1.09
People's Alliance	2,614	0.40	0.39	0.11	0.13	0.88
Nation Alliance	2,614	0.60	0.61	0.11	0.12	0.87
B3. General First Round Election (May 14, 2023)						
Vote share opposition	2,614	0.58	0.59	0.11	0.09	0.87
Turnout	2,614	0.87	0.88	0.05	0.53	1.07
People's Alliance	2,614	0.37	0.36	0.10	0.11	0.79
Nation Alliance	2,614	0.63	0.64	0.10	0.21	0.89
B4: Share of Completed Visits, Sample of Treated Neighborhoods						
Treatment	1,190	0.37	0.39	0.17	0.00	0.78
Independent	408	0.45	0.50	0.13	0.00	0.78
IYI/Right	406	0.20	0.23	0.13	0.00	0.70
CHP/Left	376	0.43	0.46	0.13	0.01	0.66
High-credibility	728	0.37	0.44	0.18	0.00	0.78
Basic	462	0.34	0.35	0.16	0.00	0.68

Notes: This table presents summary statistics. Panel A and B report results for the online and field experiments, respectively. The table includes the number of observations, mean, median, standard deviation (SD), minimum (Min), and maximum (Max) values for each variable. Panel A shows the outcomes of the online experiment. Panels B1, B2, and B3 report vote share for the opposition as well as for individual candidates and parties in each of the three elections in 2023. Panel B4 reports the completed visits in the sample of treated neighborhoods.

Table A-7: Balance Across Treatment Groups in Field Experiment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
		Bundled Treatment		Information Type			Sender Type			
	Control	Treatment	p-value difference	High-credibility information	Basic corruption	p-value difference	Treatment Non-affiliated	Treatment IYI	Treatment CHP	p-value difference
Panel A. Presidential Election in 2018										
Main variables										
Registered Voters	3,066.256	2,983.481	0.75	3,045.286	2,886.091	0.88	3,132.689	3,042.076	2,758.303	0.85
Turnout	0.864	0.863	0.69	0.864	0.862	0.88	0.859	0.865	0.865	0.73
Vote Share Opposition	0.586	0.585	0.90	0.575	0.600	0.28	0.583	0.588	0.582	0.99
Vote Share Alliances										
Nation Alliance	0.517	0.514	0.84	0.505	0.528	0.55	0.508	0.510	0.524	0.93
No Alliance	0.077	0.079	0.89	0.077	0.080	0.97	0.083	0.085	0.066	0.60
People's Alliance	0.406	0.408	0.89	0.418	0.392	0.27	0.409	0.405	0.410	0.99
Panel B. General Election in 2018										
Main variables										
Registered Voters	3,066.256	2,983.481	0.75	3,045.286	2,886.091	0.88	3,132.689	3,042.076	2,758.303	0.85
Turnout	0.864	0.863	0.78	0.864	0.862	0.92	0.859	0.865	0.865	0.75
Vote Share Opposition	0.587	0.585	0.89	0.575	0.602	0.23	0.585	0.587	0.584	1.00
Vote Share Alliances										
Nation Alliance	0.464	0.460	0.74	0.449	0.476	0.42	0.450	0.459	0.471	0.83
No Alliance	0.115	0.118	0.77	0.118	0.119	0.95	0.127	0.121	0.105	0.66
People's Alliance	0.421	0.422	0.90	0.433	0.406	0.24	0.423	0.420	0.424	1.00
Panel C. Strata dummies										
Opposition sixtile 1	0.154	0.159	0.91	0.185	0.117	0.45	0.169	0.153	0.154	1.00
Opposition sixtile 2	0.117	0.149	0.39	0.152	0.143	0.69	0.142	0.163	0.141	0.85
Opposition sixtile 3	0.174	0.152	0.62	0.132	0.184	0.63	0.164	0.140	0.152	0.95
Opposition sixtile 4	0.155	0.119	0.34	0.141	0.084	0.17	0.137	0.116	0.104	0.73
Opposition sixtile 5	0.190	0.225	0.49	0.187	0.286	0.44	0.225	0.234	0.215	0.92
Opposition sixtile 6	0.209	0.196	0.79	0.202	0.186	0.93	0.162	0.195	0.234	0.84
Panel D. Region dummies										
Region 1	0.235	0.228	0.88	0.268	0.165	0.33	0.206	0.278	0.197	0.80
Region 2	0.200	0.182	0.70	0.172	0.197	0.87	0.230	0.170	0.141	0.68
Region 3	0.126	0.114	0.74	0.136	0.080	0.37	0.125	0.084	0.136	0.71
Region 4	0.096	0.134	0.24	0.139	0.128	0.49	0.142	0.096	0.168	0.58
Region 5	0.164	0.112	0.16	0.089	0.147	0.12	0.091	0.155	0.088	0.18
Region 6	0.180	0.230	0.34	0.196	0.284	0.39	0.206	0.217	0.271	0.73

Notes: This table presents balance tests for the field experiment where we cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (full information and basic corruption) and treatment sources (non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP), see more details in Section 3. Column (1) reports the mean of the variable listed in each row for the control group. Column (2) reports the mean of the variable listed in each row for the bundled treatment. Column (3) reports the p-value for the test of no difference between columns (1) and (2). Columns (4) and (5) report the means of the variables listed in each raw for each treatment campaign: full information and basic corruption. Column (6) reports the p-value for the test of no difference between columns (1), (4), and (5). Columns (7), (8), and (9) report the means of the variables listed in each raw for each treatment source: non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP. Column (10) reports the p-value for the test of no difference between columns (1), (8), (9), and (10). Panel A and B present balance tests on variables from the 2018 presidential and general elections, respectively, while Panels C and D do so for strata and region dummies, respectively. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table A-8: First Stage in the Field Experiment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Dependent variable is the share of completed conversations					
	overall	by information type		by sender type		
	Bundled	High-credibility	Basic	Non-affiliated	CHP	IYI
Treatment Bundled	0.352					
	(0.013)					
Treatment Information High-credibility		0.363	-0.002			
		(0.017)	(0.002)			
Treatment Information Basic		0.000	0.338			
		(0.003)	(0.017)			
Treatment Sender Independent				0.445	0.002	-0.000
				(0.014)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Treatment Sender CHP				-0.002	0.426	-0.001
				(0.003)	(0.015)	(0.003)
Treatment Sender IYI				0.001	-0.000	0.194
				(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.015)
Observations	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614
F-Stat	786.5	241.6	206.1	318.4	264.3	60.5

Notes: This table presents the first-stage estimates and corresponding F-statistics for the bundled treatment (Column 1) and the unbundled treatment across each dimension of our cross-randomized design: information type (high-credibility and basic information, in Columns 2 and 3, respectively) and sender type (non-affiliated, CHP, and IYI, in Columns 4, 5, and 6, respectively). See equation 1. See more details in Section 3. Estimates are based on our baseline specification, which includes strata fixed effects, region fixed effects, the 2018 vote share for the opposition, turnout, and the number of registered voters in 2018. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and robust to heteroskedasticity.

Table A-9: Unbundled Treatment Effects in the Field Experiment – Robustness to Different Control Sets

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Presidential First			Presidential Second			General			2024 Local Election		
A. Treatment information type												
High-credibility	0.007	0.027	0.026	0.005	0.024	0.024	0.007	0.026	0.025	0.003	0.016	0.019
	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.008)
Basic	0.051	0.017	0.022	0.048	0.015	0.022	0.047	0.014	0.018	0.071	0.046	0.041
	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Observations	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,840	2,840	2,840
Mean	0.548	0.548	0.548	0.582	0.582	0.582	0.579	0.579	0.579	0.556	0.556	0.556
p-value: High-credibility=Basic	0.003	0.328	0.640	0.004	0.331	0.841	0.006	0.184	0.396	0.000	0.005	0.030
B. Treatment information sender												
Independent	0.041	0.032	0.032	0.036	0.027	0.028	0.036	0.027	0.027	0.046	0.040	0.042
	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)
IYI	0.020	0.012	0.014	0.022	0.013	0.015	0.024	0.016	0.018	0.038	0.031	0.032
	(0.025)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.024)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.024)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.017)
CHP	0.005	0.019	0.021	0.003	0.017	0.022	0.004	0.017	0.019	0.004	0.012	0.008
	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Observations	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,840	2,840	2,840
Mean	0.548	0.548	0.548	0.582	0.582	0.582	0.579	0.579	0.579	0.556	0.556	0.556
p-value: Independent=IYI=CHP	0.046	0.266	0.292	0.079	0.480	0.673	0.069	0.485	0.618	0.005	0.024	0.003
Strata fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outcome$_{t-1}$		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Full set of controls			Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes

Notes: This table presents robustness to different control sets of the LATE of the unbundled treatments on the opposition's vote share for the 2023 elections based on the field experiment. See equation 1. Mean refers to the control group's mean of the outcomes. The unit of analysis is a ballot box. Our experiment cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (independent media and basic corruption) and treatment sources (non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP), see more details in Section 3. Panel A report the results for the two treatment campaigns and Panel B for the three treatment sources. Columns (1), (4) and (7) includes only strata fixed effects. Columns (2), (5), and (8) include strata fixed effects and the outcome in the pre-treatment period. Columns (3), (6), and (9) include strata fixed effects, 2018 vote share for the opposition and turnout, region fixed effects, and the number of registered voters in 2018. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity.

Table A-10: Bundled Treatment Effects in the Online Experiment – Robustness to Different Control Sets – Heterogeneity for Individuals Who Do Not Believe Institutions Worsened between 2000 – today (April-May, 2023) at Baseline

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Sample of Individuals Who *Underestimate* the Deterioration in State of Institutions at Baseline					Sample of Individuals Who *Overestimate* the Deterioration in State of Institutions at Baseline				
	A. The Dependent Variable is the Valuation of Institutions									
Treatment	0.161	0.117	0.088	0.079	0.079	0.025	0.034	0.038	0.036	0.046
	(0.063)	(0.060)	(0.055)	(0.057)	(0.055)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Placebo	0.047	0.010	-0.051	-0.057	-0.049	0.007	0.015	0.030	0.022	0.023
	(0.063)	(0.060)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Observations	2,017	1,907	1,870	1,716	1,716	2,215	2,059	2,022	1,898	1,898
Mean	2.017	2.017	2.017	2.017	2.017	3.053	3.053	3.053	3.053	3.053
p-value: Placebo=Treatment	0.030	0.029	0.001	0.002	0.004	0.536	0.529	0.783	0.633	0.427
	B. The Dependent Variable is the Perceived Change in the State of Institutions									
Treatment	-0.182	-0.125	-0.111	-0.108	-0.104	-0.016	-0.010	-0.014	-0.013	-0.025
	(0.052)	(0.040)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.027)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Placebo	-0.111	-0.086	-0.039	-0.025	-0.028	-0.013	-0.007	-0.024	-0.022	-0.023
	(0.051)	(0.039)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.021)
Observations	2,089	1,972	1,929	1,758	1,758	2,254	2,098	2,057	1,920	1,920
Mean	2.114	2.114	2.114	2.114	2.114	0.678	0.678	0.678	0.678	0.678
p-value: Placebo=Treatment	0.112	0.256	0.006	0.003	0.001	0.893	0.848	0.563	0.643	0.935
	C. The Dependent Variable is the Intention to Vote for the Opposition									
Treatment	0.121	0.094	0.083	0.088	0.082	-0.024	-0.017	-0.013	-0.010	-0.006
	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Placebo	0.071	0.056	0.033	0.031	0.029	-0.021	-0.022	-0.017	-0.014	-0.016
	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Observations	2,071	1,972	1,925	1,744	1,744	2,204	2,062	2,025	1,892	1,892
Mean	0.251	0.251	0.251	0.251	0.251	0.920	0.920	0.920	0.920	0.920
p-value: Placebo=Treatment	0.027	0.023	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.852	0.693	0.726	0.705	0.334
No controls	Yes					Yes				
Outcome$_{t-1}$		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Imbalanced controls			Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes
Full set of controls					Yes					Yes

Notes: This table presents heterogeneous treatment effects by respondents' perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April-May, 2023) at baseline. See equation 1. It shows the effect of the bundled treatments on voters' valuation of institutions, their perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and today (April-May, 2023), and their intention to vote for the opposition in Panels A, B, and C, respectively, based on the online experiment. Mean refers to the control group's mean of the outcomes. This table closely follows Figure 6 which shows results separately for individuals who underestimate and overestimate the deterioration in state of institutions at Baseline. See Appendix Table A-1 for a detailed definition of the outcomes. Our online experiment cross-randomized respondents into a control, two placebos (media placebo and democracy placebo), and two treatments (media treatment and democracy treatment), see more details in Section 3. We run regressions of these outcomes on the bundled placebo (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media placebo or the democracy placebo), the bundled treatment (a dummy that takes the value of one for respondents assigned to the media treatment or the democracy treatment) an different set of controls as follows: Columns (1) and (6) have no addition controls, Column (2) and (7) have the outcome in pre-treatment period, Column (3), (4), (8) and (9) control for the outcome in pre-treatment survey and the five baseline variables for which we observe imbalance in Table A-3 at the 10% level (Closeness People's Alliance, Top government priority Inflation, Better institutions improve economy, Level institutions: 2023 and Current support for party voted), and Columns (5) and (10) controls for the full set of controls (all variables listed in Appendix Table A-3). The regressions in Column (4) and Column (9) are restricted to the samples in Column (5) and Column (10), respectively.

Table A-11: Field Experiment Results Driven by Individuals Against the Opposition in 2018 – Robustness to Different Control Sets

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Presidential First			Presidential Second			General			2024 Local Election		
A. Neighborhoods with Below Median Opposition's Vote Share in 2018												
Treatment	0.042	0.037	0.038	0.045	0.040	0.042	0.038	0.033	0.034	0.037	0.033	0.030
	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.011)
Observations	1,182	1,182	1,182	1,182	1,182	1,182	1,182	1,182	1,182	1,284	1,284	1,284
Mean	0.505	0.505	0.505	0.535	0.535	0.535	0.537	0.537	0.537	0.504	0.504	0.504
B. Neighborhoods with Above Median Opposition's Vote Share in 2018												
Treatment	0.007	0.011	0.012	0.001	0.004	0.007	0.008	0.012	0.011	0.021	0.023	0.025
	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Observations	1,432	1,432	1,432	1,432	1,432	1,432	1,432	1,432	1,432	1,556	1,556	1,556
Mean	0.615	0.615	0.615	0.655	0.655	0.655	0.642	0.642	0.642	0.601	0.601	0.601
Strata fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outcome$_{t-1}$		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Full set of controls			Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes

Notes: This table presents robustness to different control sets of the LATE of the bundled treatments on the opposition's vote share for the 2023 elections based on the field experiment. The unit of analysis is a ballot box. See equation 1. The table reports the results for neighborhoods that had below-median and above-median opposition's vote shares in 2018 in Panels A and B, respectively. Mean refers to the control group's mean of the outcomes. Our experiment cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (independent media and basic corruption) and treatment sources (non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP), see more details in Section 3. The bundled treatment is a dummy variable taking the value of one if a ballot box is within a neighborhood assigned to any of these treatment group. Columns (1), (4) and (7) includes only strata fixed effects. Columns (2), (5), and (8) include strata fixed effects and the outcome in the pre-treatment period. Columns (3), (6), and (9) include strata fixed effects, 2018 vote share for the opposition and turnout, region fixed effects, and the number of registered voters in 2018. All outcome variables are measured at the ballot box level. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity.