Information and Demand for Democracy under Authoritarianism*

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether enduring authoritarian regimes are rooted, in part, in the population's lack of accurate information about their social and economic costs. We explore this question using field and online experiments in the context of Turkey's May 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections. We confirm that voters, especially those supporting the incumbent authoritarian government, systematically understate both the extent to which democracy and media freedom have been eroded in Turkey and their usefulness in dealing with natural disasters and corruption—two salient issues in Turkey. In the field, we find that providing (accurate) information about the state and implications of media freedom increases the ballot-box-level opposition vote share by about 0.8 percentage points (1.5 percent). Online, similar treatment messages have significant effects on beliefs and increase the likelihood of voting for the opposition by about 3.7 percentage points (6.2 percent). Both in the field and online, the results are driven by influencing those likely to vote for the governing coalition and those with inaccurate beliefs about institutional changes since the incumbent came to power—not by mobilizing opposition supporters. The evidence indicates that information provision about the state and effectiveness of democratic institutions can persuade voters in a weak democracy to vote against an authoritarian government.

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1 Introduction

A view pithily summarized by the dictum attributed to French conservative philosopher Joseph de Maistre, "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 a 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 to convince their populations that they are more democratic than they truly are (as in Russia, Hungary, or India today) or argue that democracy would bring gridlock or even chaos (as in China or Turkey). This raises the possibility that authoritarian governments may consolidate their control by convincing citizens about the state and effectiveness of democracy in their country.

We investigate these issues in the context of Turkey'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, according to V-DEM data, the country experienced the second-largest deterioration in democratic institutions worldwide, only after Nicaragua. Consistent with the possibility that voters' baseline beliefs differ systematically from external benchmarks and research evidence, our baseline surveys reveal that Turkish voters, especially those supporting the governing coalition, hold more optimistic ("inaccurate") views about how democracy and media freedom/independence in the country have evolved since Erdoğan came to power in 2003 (relative to external measures) and more pessimistic beliefs about whether democracy can deal more successfully with natural disasters and whether media freedom will be good for controlling corruption (relative to available evidence).[2]

We use a large-scale field experiment, involving about 886,000 voters, as well as an online experiment. In both, we provide (accurate) information on the state and implications of democracy and media freedom. This information reflects the evolution of Turkish institutions measured in V-DEM data and findings in the literature on the relationship between democracy and natural disasters on the one hand (e.g., Besley and Burgess [2002], Cao [2024], Kahn [2005]) and media freedom and corruption on the other (e.g., Besley and Burgess [2002], Brunetti and Weder [2003], Ferraz and Finan [2008], Larreguy et al. [2020]). These two issues were top of mind for Turkish voters due to the massive February 2023 earthquake, which led to the deaths

[1] Please see https://www.economist.com/special-report/2023/01/16/turkey-faces-a-crucial-election-this-summer and https://www.economist.com/leaders/2023/05/04/if-turkey-sacks-its-strongman-democrats-everywhere-should-take-heart [accessed 03/04/2025]

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

of more than 50,000 and the displacement of more than one million people. The effects of the earthquake were greatly exacerbated because of unsafe building practices, which were in turn enabled by corruption at both local and national levels.

Our key question is whether accurate information about the evolution and the potential benefits of democratic institutions can change voter beliefs and voting outcomes in an authoritarian setting. More explicitly, we will provide evidence about the following two sub-hypotheses: (i) (electoral) support for an authoritarian leader may be partly rooted in optimistic beliefs about the institutional evolution in the country and the role of these institutions; and (ii) accurate information about the state and effectiveness of democratic institutions can change beliefs and votes.

In our field experiment 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 coalition did not agree to participate, we tried to focus our treatments on factual information as much as possible. Specifically, we provided two versions of our informational treatment through door-to-door canvassing randomized at the neighborhood level and one of these, the *research-based treatment*, was based on consensus views in current research and external benchmark data.[3] We then used administrative data across ballot boxes to track actual voting outcomes. We also conducted additional cross-randomizations to study how the affiliation of canvassers affected the credibility of the informational treatments.

The online experiment also enables us to measure how beliefs change in response to informational treatments and to examine the extent of experimenter demand effects. To achieve the latter objective, we provided an additional placebo treatment, designed as in Acemoglu et al. [2020], that contained encouragement but no actual information. We then investigated the effects of the informational and placebo treatments on self-reported individual beliefs and voting intentions.

Our results support the hypothesis that (accurate) information can change beliefs and behavior. In the field experiment, the bundled treatment (combining the research-based and basic informational treatments) led to a 0.8 percentage point increase in the opposition's vote share at the ballot-box level (corresponding to a 1.5 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. Perhaps surprisingly, we find that these effects in the field persist and can be detected in the 2024 municipal elections, 10 months later. Online, the bundled informational treatment changed beliefs and increased the reported likelihood of voting

[3]The second, which we call the *basic informational treatment*, used simpler and more partisan language closer to the message our local partners were already planning to deliver. We evaluate the effects of both the research-based and the basic informational treatments.

for the opposition by about 3.7 percentage points (about a 6.2 percent increase relative to the mean). The placebo treatments had much smaller and statistically insignificant impacts on our main outcomes, providing evidence against sizable experimenter demand effects.[4]

A natural conjecture is that informational treatments would have little effect on the views and voting intentions of those who support the government and/or believe that the state of democracy is healthy in Turkey; they may instead impact averages by mobilizing and further motivating those already sympathetic to the opposition. Interestingly, we find exactly the opposite: in the field and online, there are no aggregate turnout effects, and our estimates are significantly larger among those who are initially more supportive of the government and who hold more optimistic baseline beliefs about past institutional change and the benefits of non-democratic regimes. These results suggest that even non-partisan informational treatments have the potential to change perceptions about democracy and its relevance to people's lives. We also find that information provided by non-affiliated canvassers, rather than affiliates of the two main opposition parties, is more influential, which is consistent with the notion that those leaning toward the incumbent coalition can respond to new information, provided that they view it as credible (though the differences by affiliation are typically not statistically significant).

Our paper is related to several literatures. First, we build on works that explore the determinants of support for democracy (e.g., Besley and Persson [2019], Dahlum et al. [2024], Finkel et al. [2024], Fuchs-Schündeln and Schündeln [2015], Graham and Svolik [2020], Persson and Tabellini [2009], Svolik [2023]). We contribute to this literature by documenting that information provision can persuade voters in a weak democracy to vote against an authoritarian leader. In particular, simple information campaigns can have significant effects by shifting individuals' views about the state and effectiveness of democratic institutions and free media. Our result that voter beliefs about democracy and media freedom are at least partially malleable and can be changed by the provision of accurate information has no equivalent in this (or, to the best of our knowledge, any other) literature.[5] We are also not aware of prior work that implements a large-scale field experiment to study preferences for authoritarianism and democracy. Com-

[4]The quantitative magnitude is smaller in the field in part because the number there corresponds to an intention-to-treat estimate—not all voters received the information in the field, while all online participants did. We also report two-stage least squares estimates using completed conversations with our canvassers as the endogenous variable, and these results are more similar to our online estimates, as we discuss below.

[5]Our focus on information about institutions also helps distinguish this channel from other mechanisms emphasized in the literature that can sustain support for authoritarianism even in the absence of inaccurate beliefs about institutions. These include partisan or policy tradeoffs, whereby voters tolerate democratic backsliding because the incumbent advances their political interests or because the alternative is too costly [Acemoglu et al., 2013, Graham and Svolik, 2020, Svolik, 2023]; group-based loyalties or fear of exclusion by the other side [Padró i Miquel, 2007]; electoral cooptation and clientelism under authoritarian rule [Gandhi and Lust Okar, 2009]; status quo bias and uncertainty about political change [Samuelson and Zeckhauser, 1988, Fernández and Rodrik, 1991]; and fear or preference falsification under repression [Kuran, 1991]. More broadly, this information-based perspective is connected to arguments that contemporary authoritarian regimes increasingly rely on narrative control rather than only on overt repression [Guriev and Treisman, 2019, 2022].

bined with the finding that successful performance by democratic governments builds support for democracy in Acemoglu et al. [2024], our findings raise the possibility that inaccurate beliefs about democracy can become partly self-fulfilling—as long-ruling authoritarian regimes shape these beliefs in ways that then 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, the themes explored in this paper are linked to the literature on the political economy of information and persuasion. Several papers examine the impact of corruption scandals on voter preferences (e.g., Arias et al. [2022], Chong et al. [2015], Enríquez et al. [2024], Ferraz and Finan [2008], Larreguy et al. [2020], Rivera et al. [2024]). 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. Enikolopov et al. [2011] and Knight and Tribin [2022], among others, study how traditional mass media affects voting outcomes in authoritarian regimes or weak democracies. Relative to this literature, our study focuses on beliefs about democracy and media freedom, and explores whether accurate and relevant information can rebuild support for more pro-democracy candidates in elections, even in the shadow of intensifying authoritarianism. In addition, belief distortions are especially relevant in our setting, because after approximately two decades of authoritarian rule, voters may have lost perspective on the state and effectiveness of democratic institutions, including their importance for reducing corruption. We also leverage our online and large-scale field experiment to explore the mechanisms through which these effects operate, which, to the best of our knowledge, has no equivalent in this literature either.

More broadly, our experiments are related to the literature on information provision, reviewed by Haaland et al. [2023]. This literature shows that such interventions can change beliefs, but effects on political preferences and behavior are more context-dependent (e.g., Kuziemko et al. [2015], Alesina et al. [2023], Cruces et al. [2013], Karadja et al. [2017]). In electoral settings, information can impact accountability and voting behavior, but these effects also depend on the credibility of new information, its dissemination, baseline voter beliefs, and the broader political environment (e.g., Ferraz and Finan [2008], Baysan [2022], Arias et al. [2022], Larreguy et al. [2020], Enríquez et al. [2024], Cruz et al. [2020, 2024a]). Our contribution is to bring this framework to a high-stakes election, where voters may distrust the source, discount new information, or react against messages that challenge pro-incumbent narratives. We address common concerns in information-provision experiments—including experimenter demand, issue salience, and reliance on self-reported outcomes—by combining placebo treatments in the online experiment with a large-scale field experiment leveraging administrative data.

Third, another group of studies employs field experiments to assess the effectiveness of

political canvassing on voting choices (e.g., Bailey et al. [2016], Arceneaux and Kolodny [2009], Cruz et al. [2020]). The majority of these studies are in the context of established democracies and, with the exception of Pons [2018] which covered 5.02 million registered voters during the 2012 French presidential election, involve relatively small sample sizes (typically ranging from 1,000 to 70,000 voters). In addition to implementing a large-scale field experiment in an authoritarian context, our focus on beliefs about the state and effectiveness of democratic institutions, rather than standard campaigns for a candidate, distinguishes our paper from this literature.[6]

Fourth, our work is related to but different from several studies that document polarizing effects of persuasion in authoritarian countries (Adena et al. [2015], Enikolopov et al. [2023], Peisakhin and Rozenas [2018]). The closest to ours, Baysan [2022], uses administrative data to evaluate the impact of a randomized door-to-door information campaign on voter behavior in the 2017 Turkish constitutional referendum (which proposed a transition to a strong presidential system and a relaxation of President Erdoğan's term limits). She finds that this information had a polarizing effect. We conjecture that the information was perceived differently by voters, both because the desirability of a strong executive was a highly polarized issue at the time and also because the informational treatments, which included a call to oppose the constitutional change, may have been interpreted as a partisan message against President Erdoğan and his regime. The contrast of our results with existing studies suggests that the exact content and presentation of the information matters for whether it will have a polarizing impact. 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 may have been important in communicating with government supporters and those with different baseline beliefs.

Finally, a long-running debate in political economy turns on whether informational treatments influence voting outcomes through learning or persuasion (see DellaVigna and Gentzkow [2010] for an overview). There is relatively little work in this literature that focuses on authoritarian regimes, though Cruz et al. [2024a,b] provide evidence of voter learning and persuasion in the context of 2019 Senate elections in the Philippines.[7] Several aspects of our work are also distinctive relative to these works: (i) we examine belief updating using data from the online experiment and show that our treatments shift beliefs about democratic institutions,

[6]The setting of our study, taking place at an arguably critical juncture for Turkish democracy [Callen et al., 2024], combined with administrative data that allows us to observe true voting decisions, rather than self-reports, is also distinctive. In particular, in such settings respondents may fear disclosing support for the opposition or expressing negative sentiments toward the ruling party. Several studies have highlighted additional benefits of large field experiments, especially when combined with administrative voting records. Notably, they help address concerns about low response rates and nonresponse bias, which can vary across treatment groups [Wright, 1993, Atkeson, 1999, Campbell, 2010, Cardy, 2005, Bailey et al., 2016, Gelman et al., 2016, Pons, 2018].

[7]Relatedly, Kendall et al. [2015] show the presence of voter learning in responses to information campaigns on local politician performance in Italy, and Dunning et al. [2019] find that non-partisan information campaigns do not affect voter preferences or beliefs on incumbent quality, including among the least informed voters.

which in turn influence support for authoritarian leaders; (ii) we show that, in the online experiment, learning effects are concentrated among respondents whose baseline beliefs were more inaccurate relative to external benchmarks and that, consistent with this pattern, in the field experiment, the effects are driven by changes in voting patterns in neighborhoods with lower baseline opposition support; (iii) these results from the field experiment and our online placebo checks assuage concerns that learning responses can be confounded by experimenter demand effects; (iv) we also document a persistent impact from the information we provide to voters in the field; and (v) to the best of our knowledge, our study is the first to randomize the *same* informational campaign across partisan and non-partisan sources to assess persuasion, which provides additional evidence that the credibility of the source matters.

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 presents our main results from the field experiment, and Section 5 reports evidence from the online experiment. Section 6 discusses the potential mechanisms for our main findings, and Section 7 concludes. The Appendix presents additional data descriptions and robustness checks. The Online Supplementary Material contains detailed information about the field and online experiments, including our survey instrument and figures.

2 Background

2.1 Institutional and Social Changes in Turkey under AKP Rule

Since coming to power in 2002, the AKP and its founding leader 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 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 Turkey, and its survival of 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. In Panel A, we show the evolution of the V-DEM democracy index as well as alternative indices, including those from IDEA, Freedom House, and Polity V. The V-DEM variable, which ranges from 0 to 100, will be our main measure of the state of

democratic institutions. V-DEM and the Freedom House indices show a trend toward higher democracy scores predating AKP's accession to power. More importantly, all four measures exhibit very sharp declines in the state of democracy in Turkey starting in the mid-2000s. Panel B shows that democratic backsliding is visible across the subcomponents of the V-DEM index, with the sharpest falls being in the liberal and deliberative aspects, which partly reflect the erosion of freedom of expression, media, and dissent in Turkey.

2.2 The 2023 Elections

The 2023 parliamentary and presidential elections were seen as historic in Turkey, 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 percent (with the unofficial rate most likely 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 percent of its value between 2018 and 2023. Low interest rates and government spending initially stimulated the economy, but there were also signs that economic growth was faltering and the official unemployment rate reached about 10 percent in January 2023, even though many working-age Turks had already withdrawn from the labor market.[8] In February 2023, the south of the country suffered a massive magnitude-7.8 earthquake, 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, expert assessments 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" which was promulgated by President Erdoğan himself, 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 against the government. Consequently, the 2023 elections were fought between three electoral blocs:

[8]See CNBC article on Turkish Lira's record low against the dollar: https://www.cnbc.com/2024/01/11/turkish-lira-hits-fresh-record-low-against-the-dollar.html [accessed 03/04/2025] and the Turkish Statistical Institute on the unemployment rate: https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Labour-Force-Statistics-January-2023-49386&dil=2 [accessed 03/04/2025]

1. **The People's Alliance:** This alliance comprised the ruling AKP and its partner, the far-right 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 (HUDA-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 Nation Alliance:** This alliance was led by the center-left Republican People's Party (CHP), which had been the main opposition party for most of the AKP period and the ruling party in Turkey during the early Republican years. The alliance included the nationalist/center-right Good (IYI) Party, which had split off from the far-right MHP, the Islamist Felicity Party (SP), and the center-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 Nation Alliance was Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

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 with the likelihood of being disbanded by the authorities, the HDP decided to participate in the elections under the umbrella of the Green Left Party, which had been ruled eligible by the Supreme Election Council (YSK). This alliance was not the main contender for the presidency and declared its support for the Nation Alliance candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu 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 before the election, and Sinan Oğan, from the anti-immigration, nationalist Ancestral Alliance. Parliamentary elections and the first round of the presidential election were held on May 14.

Despite some pre-election polls favoring the opposition, the People's Alliance gained a majority in parliament with 49.5 percent of the vote and 323 of the 600 seats, while the Nation Alliance got 212 seats with 35 percent of the vote. President Erdoğan came very close to securing a majority in the first round of the presidential election, with 49.5 percent of the vote, against Kılıçdaroğlu's vote share of 44.9 percent. Because no candidate received more than 50 percent of the vote, there was a second-round presidential election two weeks later, which President Erdoğan won handily, with 52.5 percent of the vote.

3 Experimental Design and Data

Our study is centered on informational treatments providing accurate information on the state and implications of media freedom and democracy, which we implemented in the field and online between April and May 2023. In this section, we describe the design of the two experiments. Appendix Table A-1 provides definitions for all the variables.

3.1 Field Experiment

Recruitment and Sample In December 2022, we extended invitations to the five parties represented in parliament, AKP, CHP, HDP, IYI Party, and MHP, to participate in our study.[9] We directed our communications (an initial invitation email and one subsequent follow-up) to both the general secretary of each party and the principal local contacts in Turkey'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. (Additional details are available in our Online Supplementary Material). CHP and the IYI Party responded to our invitation and, in collaboration with these two parties, we administered door-to-door information campaigns in Izmir, Turkey's third-largest province, between April 14 and May 12, 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 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 to attempt to 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,

[9]Party collaboration served two purposes. First, it made large-scale door-to-door canvassing feasible. Recruiting, training, routing, and deploying canvassers at scale shortly before the election required local knowledge, legal permission, volunteer networks, and some protection against possible pushback from local authorities or residents. Partnering with political parties was therefore the safest and most scalable way to implement the intervention. Second, including more than one party, together with non-affiliated canvassers, provides suggestive evidence on whether treatment effects vary with the partisan mantle and perceived credibility of the sender.

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-randomizations, 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 than 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.[10] These treatment neighborhoods contained 404,862 voters according to our 2018 parliamentary election rolls. Appendix Table A-2 provides further details.

Treatments As explained above, the main question of interest is whether information provision can persuade voters in a weak democracy to vote against an authoritarian leader further weakening democratic institutions.

Given the salience of these issues in Turkey, our informational treatment focuses on media freedom and its importance for reducing corruption. We validated these metrics in focus groups, qualitative fieldwork, and online experimental pilots, where we found that they were easy for Turkish voters to understand and resonated more than other metrics, such as GDP growth rates, inflation, and rule-of-law-related outcomes. It was also important for our purposes that we had research-based evidence on the relationship between media independence and corruption [Besley and Burgess, 2002, Brunetti and Weder, 2003, Ferraz and Finan, 2008, Larreguy et al., 2020].[11]

The key dimension of our randomization was between two informational treatments and a control group. The first informational treatment, which we call the *research-based informational treatment*, aimed to provide the most credible information we had from research articles. We also implemented a *basic informational treatment*, which used less impartial and simpler language about media freedom and corruption. This language was closer to the type of campaign message our local partners were already planning to deliver. 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.

[10] For the randomizations 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].

[11] As we show below, some of our treatments directly introduced the messages as information provided by researchers. Both our focus groups and external evidence suggest that references to researchers can be credible to voters in Turkey. For instance, Cologna et al. [2025] measure trust in scientists across 68 countries and report that Turkey has the eighth-highest trust-in-scientists score in their sample. The *Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index 2023* similarly reports that 66% of Turkish respondents rate scientists as trustworthy, above its 31-country average and higher than the corresponding share for any other profession, including doctors, teachers, judges, journalists, business leaders, and government employees. See https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-10/Ipsos-global-trustworthiness-index-2023.pdf

In addition, we also cross-randomized the identity of the canvassers—from either the CHP, or the IYI 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:

- **Research-based 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 Turkey in the last 30 years.

The pamphlet also depicted the decline of media independence and the rise of corruption in Turkey over a 30-year period and showed a figure illustrating the indices of media independence and corruption for 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2022 from V-DEM. The pamphlets for this treatment, separately for non-affiliated, CHP and IYI Party canvassers, are presented in the left column of Appendix Figure A-1.

- **Basic informational treatment:**

  One of Turkey'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 Turkey.

  Let's protect democracy together.

The pamphlets for this treatment, again separately for non-affiliated, CHP and IYI Party canvassers, are presented on the right of Appendix Figure A-1. The basic informational treatment is included in part because all parties were intending to carry out a similar door-to-door campaign. To convince both opposition and government coalition parties to participate, our invitation did not require them to discontinue their campaigns and the parties that agreed to our study chose to keep their pre-existing plans, but allowed us to add our research-based treatment. Although we worked with them on the exact wording of the 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.

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, given its call-to-action format, could also be more directly connected to appeals for turnout.[12]

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.[13]

3.2 Online Experiment

Recruitment and Sample The design of the online experiment is outlined in Appendix Figure A-2. Between April 11 and May 27, 2023, we invited Turkish adults to participate in an online study about Turkish institutions via Facebook ads.[14] 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 consists of 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. 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, final questions on perceptions of institutions and views toward political parties, and questions on voting intentions. In total, 4,405 participants completed the

[12] As noted in the footnote on the cover page, our study was pre-registered on May 24, 2023, between the first and second rounds of the presidential election. The administrative voting records for both elections were released on June 5, eight days after the second presidential election. We also pre-registered in the same pre-analysis plan an individual-level randomization in the field to evaluate the impact of our treatment on individual-level survey data. However, we were unable to collect endline data, as the overwhelming majority of the baseline respondents who had initially agreed to participate in the endline survey later refused to do so, perhaps because the environment became more politically charged closer to the election.

[13] Although we have data at the ballot-box level, we cannot track ballot boxes over time, because multiple ballot boxes were located at the same address and we can only observe their exact location in 2023. This explains our choice of conducting the randomization at the neighborhood level.

[14] We cannot determine whether any individual participated in both experiments as we did not collect information that would allow us to link participants across studies. Any overlap is likely to be very small: the field experiment was implemented in selected neighborhoods in Izmir, whereas the online experiment recruited respondents throughout Turkey, and Izmir accounts for only about 5% of Turkey's population.

endline survey, making up our sample for analysis. Appendix Figure A-3 shows that there is no evidence of differential attrition in our online experiment.

Informational Treatments The informational treatments in the online experiment are similar in content and structure to the research-based arm of the field experiment. We extend the focus on media freedom and corruption to include an additional message about the relationship between democracy and natural disasters, another central issue in Turkish politics that also resonated strongly with voters in our focus groups.[15] Our two informational treatments were:

- **Media informational treatment:** "According to research, as media independence in a country worsens, corruption increases. Also, according to research, official data show that media independence has worsened and corruption has increased in Turkey in the last 30 years."
- **Democracy informational treatment:** "According to research, as democracy strengthens in a country, the number of buildings damaged by natural disasters and the number of lives lost will decrease. Also, according to research, official data show that democracy has worsened in Turkey in the last 30 years."

Our goal is to estimate the effects of providing accurate information about institutions in Turkey on both beliefs and votes. A key challenge is that the impact of information about one dimension depends on voters' prior beliefs about the other: for example, learning that democratic institutions improve outcomes may increase or decrease support for the incumbent depending on whether a voter initially views the current institutions as democratic or authoritarian. Our informational treatment addresses this challenge by providing information both on the current state of institutions and on why those institutions matter for salient outcomes. We therefore interpret the estimates as the reduced-form impact of a bundled factual-information intervention that provides information about both the state and effectiveness of institutions, rather than as evidence on the relative importance of each component.

Participants in the treatment groups could click a button to view supplementary supporting evidence showing the evolution of the relevant institution (media or democracy) over the years 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2022. We also presented the evolution of one of our outcome metrics, corruption, over the same years in Turkey. We could not do the same for the relevant outcome in the democracy informational treatment because we do not have time-series data on the effects of natural disasters.[16] In our experiments, 65.9 percent of those who had the option clicked on

[15] For evidence on the relationship between institutional quality and the impact of natural disasters, see [Besley and Burgess, 2002, Cao, 2024, Kahn, 2005].

[16] To make the causal claim more accessible to voters, the media treatment includes data on the evolution of the relevant outcome itself, corruption. This information is not presented as a standalone claim, but rather as part of the causal argument linking media freedom to corruption. In principle, this presentation could contribute to the treatment effect. In practice, however, we continue to find sizable effects in the democracy treatment,

the button and viewed this supplementary information.[17]

In addition to the two informational treatments, a **control group** did not receive any informational treatment, and two **placebo groups** received placebo treatments. This approach was adopted in order to examine "experimenter demand effects" whereby subjects may feel encouraged to provide answers that align with what they think the experimenters would like to hear (e.g., they may feel compelled to say that media freedom and democracy have become worse in Turkey). Our placebo treatments are designed to induce the same or even stronger experimenter demand effects (because they make it clear what the experimenter's opinions are), but without providing credible new information, which builds on the strategy in Acemoglu et al. [2020]. Therefore, we expect the placebo treatments to be informative on the extent of experimenter demand effects and, under the hypothesis that they induce similar or even stronger experimenter demand effects, they can be used to net out these demand effects. The placebo treatments were worded as follows:

- **Media placebo treatment:** "We talked to voters in Turkey recently and a few people said: Although I am not sure, I think that, as media independence in a country worsens, corruption increases. Also, some people think that media independence has worsened and corruption has increased in Turkey in the last 30 years."

- **Democracy placebo treatment:** "We talked to voters in Turkey recently and a few people said: Although I am not sure, I think that, as democracy strengthens, the number of buildings damaged by natural disasters and the number of lives lost will decrease. Also, some people think that democracy has worsened in Turkey in the last 30 years."

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 framed media independence or democracy improvements leading to better outcomes or deteriorations leading to worse outcomes. Ultimately, we do not find major differences between these different framings for our main outcomes of interest, motivating us to describe the details and the results from different cross-randomizations only in the Appendix (see Appendix Table A-3).

Outcome Variables We collected the main outcome variables for the online experiment from the endline questionnaire. These are:

where no analogous information on the evolution of natural-disaster outcomes is presented, which is reassuring for our interpretation. Additional details are available in our Online Supplementary Material.

[17]Among treated respondents who clicked on the supplementary V-DEM figure, 42% reported trusting it, 12% were neutral, 27% distrusted it, 8% were unsure, and 11% did not respond. This suggests that many respondents viewed the source as credible, while others felt willing to express disagreement or uncertainty, which weighs against strong experimenter demand effects.

1. Beliefs about the state of institutions (in particular, individual perceptions of changes in democracy or media freedom since 2000) and the effectiveness of these institutions (the impact of media freedom 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, which we call *Effectiveness of Institutions*, 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 is *State of Institutions*, which measures perceptions about how the relevant institution has evolved in Turkey. 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, unless stated otherwise, we rescale these outcome variables by dividing them by their standard deviation, so magnitudes refer to standard-deviation units.

2. Turnout intentions.

3. Intentions to vote for the opposition.

We also collected a battery of individual-level demographic variables in the baseline questionnaire, as detailed in Appendix Table A-4.

4 Main Results: Field Experiment

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

4.1 Empirical Strategy

In our field experiment, we estimate causal effects at the ballot-box level. Our main results report intention-to-treat (ITT) estimates, which capture the impact of being assigned to different informational treatments. Formally, we estimate

$$Y_{bn} = \alpha + \gamma T_n + X'_{bn}\kappa + u_{bn}, \tag{1}$$

where Y_{bn} represents the outcome of interest—the opposition's vote share and turnout in the 2023 parliamentary and presidential elections and 2024 municipal elections—at the ballot-box level b in neighborhood n. T_n is the neighborhood-level treatment variable (either a dummy for

a bundled treatment or a vector when we separate the treatments). The vector X_{bn} represents various ballot-box and 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:[18] the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023, ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast), neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 election (opposition's vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters), as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects, which are based on the (equal-sized) sextiles of the 2018 vote share for the opposition alliance. Finally, u_{bn} denotes an error term capturing all omitted factors influencing voting outcomes at ballot box b in neighborhood n. The ITT estimates are given by the coefficients on the different treatment variables.

To streamline the exposition and maximize statistical power, we start with *bundled treatments*, combining the research-based and basic informational treatments. In later specifications, we separate these two types of treatments. In the field experiment, we do not have a placebo treatment, but since the outcome is actual voting behavior, experimenter demand effects are less likely to be important. As we show later, they are not very important in the online experiment either.

Randomization was conducted at the neighborhood level, and we report standard errors that are robust to heteroskedasticity and clustered at the neighborhood level throughout. Because the number of ballot boxes in a neighborhood is closely correlated with the number of voters, we focus on unweighted regression results. For robustness, we also provide results from regressions weighted by the number of actual voters at the ballot-box level in the Online Supplementary Material, which exhibit very similar patterns.

4.2 Summary Statistics, Balance and Compliance

Panel B of Appendix Table A-5 provides summary statistics for the main post-treatment variables in the field experiment, and Appendix Table A-6 presents summary statistics and 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, but the 2018 opposition vote share is two percentage points lower in the research-based treatment group than in the control group, and one percentage point higher in the basic treatment group than in the control group. Although far from statistical significance (p-value for joint significance is 0.28), these are nontrivial differences and we confirm later in this section that controlling for 2018 vote shares does not have a major impact on our results.

[18] Our pre-analysis plan specified that we would control for neighborhood-level variables because we were unsure whether ballot box-level data would be available. Since we have gained access to these data, we now include more granular controls on the right-hand side and present very similar results from alternative specifications with just neighborhood-level controls in the Online Supplementary Material.

Appendix Table A-7 shows that, 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 research-based and basic informational treatments, 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 the IYI Party, which had a smaller number of canvassers.

4.3 Main Results from the Field Experiment

Figure 2 presents our main results, with the point estimates reported in Table 1. Panel A displays the impacts of the bundled treatments on the opposition vote shares in the first-round and second-round presidential elections and the parliamentary elections. Panel B shows turnout effects, while Panel C looks at longer-term effects by focusing on the 2024 municipal elections.

The informational treatment has a statistically significant and quantitatively substantive effect on opposition vote shares. These (ITT) results indicate a precisely-estimated 0.8 percentage point increase in the opposition vote share in the first-round presidential election (equivalent to a 1.5 percent increase relative to the mean).[19] The point estimates are comparable and have similar statistical significance in the second-round presidential election and parliamentary election (Panel A).

The quantitative magnitudes are substantial. The ITT estimates correspond to an increase in the opposition vote share equivalent to 2.2 percent of the average difference between Izmir (the city where our field experiment takes place, which is an opposition stronghold) and cities such as Konya and Kayseri (which are government strongholds).

Panel B of Figure 2 shows that there is no impact on turnout. This means, in particular, that the vote share results in Panel A are not driven by higher aggregate turnout.

Additionally and quite strikingly, in Panel C of Figure 2, we see a significant positive effect on the opposition's vote share in the 2024 municipal elections, about a year after our experiment. This result suggests that accurate information may have swayed some voters sufficiently to alter not just their vote immediately after information provision, but also their long-term allegiances and/or voting patterns. Panel B of Table 1 shows that there are no turnout effects in the 2024 municipal elections either. Although voting can be habit-forming [Coppock and Green, 2016, Fujiwara et al., 2016], habit formation in support for one party rather than another is less plausible. We therefore interpret the persistent vote-share effects as consistent with a lasting

[19] The quantitative magnitude of our estimates is broadly similar to, but generally smaller than, those reported in other studies analyzing the effects of political campaigns on vote shares. Cruz et al. [2024b] show that their door-to-door campaign led to a 7 percentage point increase in self-reported support for opposition candidates, which is much larger than our estimates. Pons [2018] reports that precincts treated with a door-to-door intervention encouraging support for Hollande's candidacy in the 2012 French presidential elections increased his vote share by 0.8 percentage point, which is the same as our ITT estimate.

impact of the informational treatment.

Figure 3 presents the estimates of the research-based and basic informational treatments separately and also depicts heterogeneous effects by canvasser affiliation. The main takeaways are as follows. First, voters are slightly more responsive to the research-based informational treatment, but the difference with the basic informational treatment is not statistically significant. One possible interpretation, which we find *ex ante* plausible but are not able to confirm, is that some voters respond more to high-quality information, while others may understand and respond more to basic information, which also has a sloganeering element; when averaged out across different types of voters, the two treatments give relatively comparable average effects.

The second important finding in Figure 3 is that voters respond more to non-affiliated canvassers than to those affiliated with the opposition parties, though the differences are typically not statistically significant. This is quite plausible, since some voters will attach greater credibility to non-affiliated canvassers and the information they provide. We return to this dimension of heterogeneity in the next section.

4.4 Robustness

Table 1 presents the ITT estimates with different covariates, including vote shares in the 2018 parliamentary election. Varying the set of covariates has essentially no effect on the point estimates in the field experiment, though estimates that do not control for voting outcomes in 2018 are less precise and are not always statistically significant at 5%. This is because vote shares are very persistent between 2018 and 2023, and omitting them increases the noise in vote shares, which is what motivated our main specification including the opposition vote share in 2018, as indicated in our pre-analysis plan.

Appendix Table A-8 examines the robustness of our main results for the unbundled treatment, distinguishing between research-based and basic informational treatments, and by canvasser affiliation. The results are very similar to our baseline estimates, except that the magnitude of the research-based treatment effect is lower and that of the basic treatment is higher when we only include strata fixed effects (columns 1, 4, 7 and 10). This is due to the differences in the opposition vote share in 2018, noted above, and given this difference, we believe that the estimates that control for the opposition vote share in 2018 are more reliable. In any case, the informational treatments are always statistically significant and the overall picture is very similar across specifications.

In sum, our field experiment provides strong support for the hypothesis that, when confronted with accurate information, (some) voters change their votes, and to the extent that this information shifts beliefs about the state and effectiveness of democratic institutions under authoritarian leaders and state control over media, it can bolster support for more pro-democratic parties (or reduce support for authoritarian incumbents).

5 Results from the Online Experiment

The online experiment complements our main results as it enables us to exploit individual-level (rather than neighborhood-level) randomization, to examine experimenter demand effects, and most importantly to investigate how informational treatments impact (self-reported) beliefs.

5.1 Empirical Strategy

As in the previous section, we start with *bundled treatments*, whereby, now, the media and democracy informational treatments are combined, 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 subsection.

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

$$Y_i = \pi + \beta T_i + \theta P_i + X_i'\gamma + \varepsilon_i, \tag{2}$$

where Y_i represents one of our outcomes of interest for individual i—self-reported beliefs about the state of institutions, effectiveness of institutions, voting intentions and turnout intentions. The key right-hand side variables, T_i and P_i, are dummies for informational and placebo 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 captures all omitted characteristics, and we allow it to be heteroscedastic and report robust standard errors in all regressions. Because the control group is omitted, the coefficients β and θ correspond to the average treatment effects. We also report p-values from a test that the treatment and the placebo effects are equal.

5.2 Summary Statistics and Balance

Panel A of Appendix Table A-5 provides summary statistics for the main post-treatment variables and Appendix Table A-4 presents summary statistics and balance tests for baseline characteristics in the online experiment. We have 4,405 participants in total, distributed across 877 participants assigned to the media informational treatment, 869 to the democracy informational treatment, 848 to the media placebo treatment, 904 to the democracy placebo treatment, and 907 to the control group. Given the limited number of participants in this online experiment, some imbalance in pre-treatment characteristics is expected. Notwithstanding this expectation,

our groups appear relatively well balanced. Out of the 56 tests for balance, only two (perceived level of institutions in 2023 and fighting 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.

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. We explore this issue in our robustness analysis.

5.3 Baseline Beliefs

Our online experiment enables us to measure the baseline views of supporters of different parties on the state and effectiveness of institutions, which will be helpful in interpreting our experimental results. In this subsection, we summarize these results, focusing on voters supporting the three blocs with representation in parliament: the People's Alliance (AKP and MHP), displayed consistently in yellow; the Nation Alliance (CHP and IYI Party), in dark blue; and the Labor and Freedom Alliance, in gray. Appendix Figure A-4 shows that respondents' self-reported 2018 votes in our sample are closely aligned with official 2018 parliamentary vote shares.

Panel A of Figure 4 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 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 toward democracy). On the right, government supporters in the control group differ significantly in their perceived effectiveness of institutions as well (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 than government coalition supporters to prefer democracy over authoritarian government.

Panel B of Figure 4 shows summary statistics on voters' perceptions of how media independence and democracy have evolved in Turkey. The left panel depicts perceived changes in media independence, while the right panel is for perceived changes in democracy between 2000 and 2023 (see also Appendix Figure A-6 for the levels in 2000 and 2023 separately). We represent the corresponding change in the V-DEM dataset by the dashed line.

The pattern is quite clear: supporters of the governing coalition have much more optimistic baseline views on how media independence and democracy have evolved (see also Appendix Figure A-7 for similar baseline effects in the field). Notably, these views are much more optimistic than the deterioration implied by V-DEM, while the views of opposition supporters are broadly in line with the deterioration captured by V-DEM measures (and other indices).[20]

[20]These patterns are similar when the baseline scales are converted into discrete categories. On the autocracy question, 40% of respondents gave a response at or above the midpoint of the 1-to-7 scale, and 35% reported some agreement that an authoritarian government may sometimes be preferable. These shares were 67% and

Although this comparison should be interpreted cautiously, since respondents may have had different personal experiences or may focus on dimensions of democracy (such as electoral inclusion, participation, civil liberties, media freedom, or constraints on executive power), it does indicate that there is some misalignment between the beliefs of a significant portion of the electorate and external measures. Motivated by this, and when there is no risk of confusion, we refer to these misaligned beliefs as "inaccurate."

5.4 Effects on Voter Beliefs

We now report the experimental estimates of the informational treatments on voters' reported beliefs. The main results are presented in Panel A of Figure 5. We present beliefs about the *Effectiveness of institutions* on the left and the *State of institutions* on the right.In both, 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. We additionally provide 95 percent confidence intervals and p-values from tests of equality with the control group; at the top, we also report the p-value from a test of equality between the placebo and informational treatment effects. The point estimates are reported in Tables 2 and A-9 as well. In this subsection, we focus on Figure 5, which presents the main takeaways in the most transparent manner.

The informational treatments change respondents' views. In the bundled treatment, there is a difference of 6.5 percent of a standard deviation in the effectiveness of institutions between the informational treatment and the control group, and this difference is statistically significant at less than 5%. There is no difference between the control group and the placebo treatment. We can also comfortably reject the hypothesis that the informational and the placebo treatments are equal.[21] 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 treatment arms is lost.

In terms of quantitative magnitudes, the difference between the treatment and control groups is sizable (about 58 percent of the difference in the perceived effectiveness of institutions between individuals in our control group who reached tertiary education and those who did not).

61% among People's Alliance voters, compared with 19% and 16% among Nation Alliance voters. Similarly, 40% of respondents reported that media independence or democracy did not decline between 2000 and 2023, and 30% reported that the relevant institution improved. In sum, 52% reported a smaller deterioration than the V-DEM benchmark; this share was 77% among People's Alliance voters and 30% among Nation Alliance voters.

[21] Recall that the placebo messages offered a directional cue but framed it as uncertain and being expressed by unnamed others, whereas the main treatments were anchored in research, external benchmark data, and supplementary figures on institutional quality (65.9 percent of the respondents in the treatment arms chose to view these data). The much smaller placebo effects therefore suggest that belief updating was not driven by directional prompting alone, but by the credibility and factual content of the information provided.

The right-hand panel shows a very similar pattern. The informational treatment leads to a decline of 6.8 percent of one standard deviation in perceived beliefs about how the state of institutions has changed since 2000; this effect is statistically different from the control group at less than 1%, and statistically distinguishable from the placebo effect at about 1%. The results are again similar when we separate the media and democracy treatments. Specifically, with the media treatment, 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, our treatment effect is about half of the difference in how individuals with and without tertiary education perceive the state of institutions.

We remind the reader that our main belief outcomes closely mirror the informational content of the treatments. *Effectiveness of institutions*, for instance, is coded from responses on whether subjects agree that greater media independence reduces corruption and that stronger democracy reduces the harm from natural disasters. These estimates therefore serve primarily as a reality check or "zeroth-stage" evidence that respondents understood and accepted the information provided.[22]

5.5 Effects on Voting

Panel B of Figure 5 shows the impact of the informational and placebo treatments on 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 2 and Appendix Table A-9.

The bundled treatment increases the probability of voting for the opposition by 3.7 percentage points compared to the control group (equivalent to a 6.2 percent increase relative to the mean). The placebo treatment has a very small and statistically insignificant coefficient, and the gap between the informational and the placebo treatments is 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 5. When we separate the media and democracy treatments, we find very similar patterns, and in this case, we have enough statistical power to distinguish informational treatments from both the control and the placebo groups as well.

Using the same benchmark as in our field experiment results, the quantitative magnitudes are again substantial. The difference between the informational treatment and control groups is approximately 10 percent of the opposition vote share difference between the opposition stronghold Izmir and the government strongholds, Konya and Kayseri.

The quantitative magnitudes from our field experiment are smaller than the estimates in

[22] Appendix Figure A-8 presents suggestive cross-institution effects: respondents assigned to the media treatment also update their beliefs about the effectiveness of democracy, and respondents assigned to the democracy treatment also update their beliefs about the effectiveness of media independence. More directly, in the next subsection, we examine whether these reported belief changes translate into greater support for the opposition, our main electoral measure of support for democratic change.

the online experiment. This is in part because the former are ITT estimates—recall that, as Appendix Table A-7 indicates, only about 35 percent of households had completed conversations with canvassers in treated neighborhoods. In contrast, all participants in the online experiment received the intended information. If the 0.8 percentage point effect is scaled by 1/0.35, it becomes much more similar to the online estimates (2.2 percentage points compared to 3.7 percentage points online). A different way of comparing the quantitative effects of our field and online experiments is to look at two-stage least squares (2SLS) estimates, using the actual delivery of information (e.g., completed conversations with canvassers) as the endogenous regressor.[23] We do this in Appendix Table A-10, and the quantitative magnitudes are indeed more comparable to the online experiment in this case. For example, full compliance (a 100 percentage point increase in completed conversations) in the first-round presidential election would raise the opposition's vote share by 2.2 percentage points.

The right-hand side of Panel B of Figure 5 shows the results for self-reported turnout intentions, and in this case, we do not find statistically significant effects of the informational treatment. We return to the interpretation of this finding in Section 6.

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

5.6 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 2, we see that varying the covariates 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 dependent variables on the right-hand side of 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 characteristics, this makes no further difference relative to the specification that controls just for pre-treatment outcome variables. In all cases, the informational treatment effects remain in the same direction as in Figure 5, and the treatment group is statistically different from both the control and

[23]Formally, the 2SLS models can be written as $Y_{bn} = \alpha + \gamma C_n + X'_{bn}\kappa + u_{bn}$, where C_n is the fraction of households in neighborhood n with completed conversations, which is instrumented by the treatment dummies (with the estimates in Appendix Table A-7 corresponding to the first stage). One reason why we prefer the ITT estimates as our baseline is that, as Online Supplementary Material shows, in addition to completed conversations with canvassers, informational treatments led to initiated but not completed conversations and pamphlet deliveries, which may have also transmitted information to voters. This can be viewed as a violation of the exclusion restriction of the 2SLS results with completed conversations as the endogenous regressor. This problem does not arise in our ITT estimates.

placebo groups.

An additional robustness check concerns whether the results depend on respondents' ability to evaluate institutional change over a long period. Our state of institutions outcome asks respondents to compare democracy and media freedom today with their levels in 2000. Since Turkey has a relatively young population, some respondents may have been too young at the beginning of this period to have direct experience with Turkish politics before the AKP came to power. This concern is mitigated by the age distribution in our sample: the median respondent is 46 years old, and 78% of respondents were already adults by 2002, when the AKP first came to power. We assess this possibility more directly in Appendix Figure A-9, which reports treatment effects separately for respondents above and below the median age. We find that the treatment effects are present in both age groups, including for voting intentions. This suggests that our main findings are not driven only by older respondents with greater experience of the pre-AKP period.

In summary, the online experiment shows powerful effects from the informational treatments on beliefs and self-reported voting intentions. Our results suggest that these effects reflect people's response to new information—rather than experimenter demand effects—since we do not see similar impacts from the placebo treatments.

6 Mechanisms

Our results so far show that information provision can persuade voters to vote against an authoritarian government. In this section, we show that these effects are driven in large part by voters who were previously more likely to support the governing coalition and by individuals with more inaccurate (excessively optimistic) baseline beliefs about institutional change in Turkey.

We first remind the reader that we find no aggregate turnout effects in either the field or online experiments.[24] Hence, a simple story based on mobilizing opposition voters already looks less likely on the basis of this finding. We examine this pattern more directly in the field experiment. Figure 6 presents (ITT) estimates that are heterogeneous 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 the median, which can be thought of as neighborhoods with greater baseline support for the governing coalition. The bottom panel is for neighborhoods where the opposition's vote share was above the median in 2018; point estimates are reported in Appendix Table A-11.

The pattern is quite clear: our field experiment results are driven by the below-median

[24]One reason turnout may be less responsive in this setting is that electoral participation in Turkey is compulsory and already very high. In our control group, turnout was 87.8 percent in the first round of the 2023 presidential election, 85.3 percent in the second round, and 86.7 percent in the parliamentary election. This leaves relatively little room for an informational treatment to increase participation.

opposition vote share 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.

Figure 7 shows that this pattern is also visible when we separate the field-experiment estimates by treatment content and canvasser affiliation. The unbundled estimates are noisier, as expected, but they point in the same direction as Figure 6: the effects are concentrated in neighborhoods where baseline support for the opposition was lower. Within these neighborhoods, the estimated effects are slightly larger for the research-based campaign than for the basic campaign across the three 2023 elections. The estimates are also systematically larger for non-affiliated canvassers, followed by CHP, and least for IYI canvassers, suggesting that the source of the information matters. These comparisons should be interpreted cautiously, however, because the sample sizes in these groups are small and the differences across treatment content and canvasser affiliation are not statistically significant at conventional levels.[25]

Appendix Figure A-11 shows that the stronger effects in neighborhoods with below-median opposition vote share in 2018 are not present for turnout.

We next turn to the online experiment, where we can examine heterogeneity by baseline beliefs. Before doing so, we first confirm that the same heterogeneities as in the field experiment are present in the online experiment as well. Appendix Figure A-12 presents treatment effects separately for respondents who did and did not report voting for the opposition in the 2018 election. The pattern mirrors that in the field experiment. The informational treatment has clearer effects among respondents who did not report voting for the opposition; it shifts their beliefs about institutions and increases their self-reported likelihood of voting for the opposition. The effects are smaller and noisier among prior opposition voters.

We next examine heterogeneity by baseline beliefs about institutional change. Figure 8 presents the heterogeneous treatment effects based on whether respondents in the online experiment perceived above- or below-median institutional change from 2000 to today (April-May, 2023). The top panel displays the results for those with above-median perceived institutional change at baseline, while the bottom panel presents the results for those with below-median perceived institutional change. The figure demonstrates that our results are driven by participants in the top panel. These are the people who changed their perceived effectiveness of institutions and their assessment of the state of institutions and became more likely to vote for the opposition after the treatment. The interpretation that this is a consequence of the accurate information is further bolstered by the fact that, in the top panel, the placebo effects

[25]Appendix Figure A-10 pools CHP and IYI canvassers into a single party-affiliated category and compares them with non-affiliated canvassers. The point estimates are larger under non-affiliated delivery in all three 2023 elections, but the differences are not statistically significant at conventional levels.

are generally smaller and less consistent than the informational-treatment effects. In contrast, in the bottom panel for the below-median group, we do not detect any positive (informational) treatment effects on any of the three outcome variables (the exact point estimates are presented in Appendix Table A-12).[26]

Two suggestive patterns emerge from these results. First, the informational treatments appear to have been credible to at least some government supporters. Second, the point estimates are larger among respondents who were initially more open to authoritarian alternatives and among those with more optimistic baseline beliefs about institutional change. Because the differences across these subgroups are not always statistically significant, we interpret this heterogeneity cautiously.

If this is the correct mechanism, it points to a hopeful interpretation—accurate and high-quality information can bridge gaps between ideologically divided communities of voters. This pattern differs from evidence in some authoritarian or highly polarized settings where exposure to media or information campaigns has generated polarizing electoral responses [Adena et al., 2015, Peisakhin and Rozenas, 2018, Enikolopov et al., 2023, Baysan, 2022]. In contrast, we do not find any evidence that the information increased polarization either in the field or online. This pattern does not mean that the credibility of the information and how and by whom it was delivered are unimportant. On the contrary, the fact that non-affiliated canvassers had larger (even if not typically statistically significant) impacts suggests that credibility matters a great deal. Our interpretation of this heterogeneous effect is that government supporters were less likely to be swayed when information about the state of institutions came from canvassers affiliated with the opposition parties.

7 Conclusion

The last two decades have witnessed the emergence of several electorally-successful authoritarian leaders, in sharp contrast to perspectives rooted in the "end of history" predicting "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (e.g., Fukuyama [1989], Sen [1999]). According to Freedom House, every year since 2006 more countries have moved away from democracy than have improved their democratic institutions (Freedom House [2023]). Social science is still far from providing a comprehensive explanation for these trends.

Two broad perspectives frame much of the debate. One claims that many cultures around

[26] We define perceived institutional change as a respondent's 2023 rating minus their 2000 rating of the relevant institution, with both ratings elicited pre-treatment on a 0-to-100 scale. Appendix Figure A-13 depicts similar patterns when respondents are classified relative to the corresponding V-DEM benchmark, and Appendix Figure A-14 shows similar patterns when respondents are classified by whether they report institutional improvement. Appendix Figure A-15 provides a related split by baseline attitudes toward authoritarianism. Across these definitions, effects are concentrated among respondents with more inaccurate beliefs or greater openness to authoritarian alternatives.

the world do not value democracy and hence their peoples do not demand, or at the very least do not fight for, democratic institutions (e.g., Gessen [2017], Huntington [1997], Mitter and Johnson [2021]). The other attributes the durability of authoritarian regimes to their ability to use propaganda, misinformation and social control (e.g., Esberg [2021], Guriev and Treisman [2022], King et al. [2013], McMillan and Zoido [2002]). Related to this second perspective, citizens under authoritarian regimes may be discouraged from political participation or may simply lose interest in politics (e.g., Croke et al. [2016], Chen and Yang [2019]). We are also far from a convincing understanding of these issues.

We study these ideas in the context of the historic May 2023 election in Turkey, which took place amid the growing authoritarianism of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his AKP Party. We designed a large-scale field experiment and an online experiment in which Turkish voters received accurate, non-partisan information on how democracy and media freedom had evolved in the country and the role of these institutions in dealing with natural disasters and corruption—two key issues in 2023. We document that, before the experiments, many supporters of the governing coalition held inaccurate views about the state of democracy and media freedom (relative to external benchmarks), and were less likely to recognize the role of democracy and free media in addressing various social problems, including, most saliently in the Turkish context, natural disasters and corruption (relative to research evidence).

If voters disregarded this information, it would suggest that they either placed little weight on democratic institutions, had been firmly convinced by propaganda that Turkish institutions were already sufficiently democratic, and/or believed that there was not much to gain from greater democracy or media freedom. We found the opposite. In the field experiment, which covered about 50 percent of 886,000 registered voters in Turkey's third-largest city, the informational treatment increased the fraction of the electorate voting for the opposition by 0.8 percentage points (1.5 percent relative to the control mean). Online, the treatment shifted beliefs about the state and effectiveness of democracy and media freedom and increased the likelihood of voting for the more pro-democracy opposition coalition by 3.7 percentage points (6.2 percent relative to the control mean). The online experiment also showed that voters responded to actual information rather than to experimenter demand effects.

Information on the evolution of democratic institutions could have further polarized the electorate, increasing the vote share of the opposition mainly by mobilizing voters who were already hostile to or critical of the government. We found the opposite here, too. There are no aggregate turnout effects, and our results are mostly explained by responses among voters with inaccurate baseline beliefs about institutional change and by changes in vote shares in neighborhoods leaning toward the governing coalition. The results also hint at the importance of credibility: the same information appears more effective when delivered by non-affiliated canvassers. This suggests that accurate information, when presented impartially, can influence

voters who are broadly supportive of an authoritarian incumbent.

In sum, electoral support for authoritarian incumbents appears to depend in part on a controlled information environment, rather than solely on stable preferences for authoritarianism or other sources of authoritarian support, such as group-based loyalties or status quo bias.

Our results raise several additional questions that are ripe for future research. First, it would be useful to investigate when new information has a polarizing impact and when it will be accepted even by those who are generally supportive of the party that is disfavored by this information.

Second, future work could investigate which types of beliefs are more responsive to new information and which are more resistant to it. For instance, citizens may underestimate democratic erosion, especially when incumbents restrict independent media and obscure abuses of power and the extent of democratic backsliding. Alternately, citizens may recognize the erosion of democratic institutions but still support the incumbent because they perceive compensating benefits, such as greater stability, protection for their group, selective provision of certain public services, success in fighting crime, etc. Understanding the relative importance of these channels is an important direction for future work. Future work could also examine how the perceived credibility of different information sources shapes belief updating. This would require examining the effectiveness of information from friends in the community, social media, traditional media, parties, and politicians.

Third, another interesting area is to explore whether feedbacks between information and political support can lead to self-fulfilling traps—authoritarian governments convince their voters that democracy is not for them and this in turn makes authoritarian governments more stable and democracy less likely to take root—and how such traps can be broken.

Fourth, another set of interesting questions concerns when new and credible information can have durable effects, as our municipal-election results suggest, and whether it builds realistic or overly optimistic expectations about what democracy can deliver.

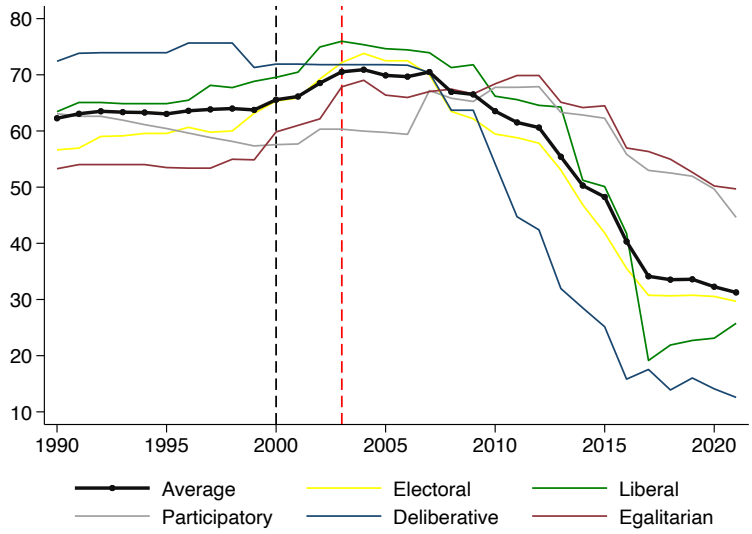
Fifth, future work should explore broader ("general") equilibrium effects. Our field experiment estimates the consequences of accurate information provision by comparing treated and control neighborhoods or individuals. In practice, larger campaigns generate informational spillovers in the community and can interact with party organization and capacity, local leadership, and incumbent responses. Additionally, incumbents may respond to a large campaign through counter-messaging, targeted mobilization, or explicit repression.

Finally, more research is needed to study why democratic institutions have been retreating and authoritarian leaders have been gaining popularity. Understanding how individual beliefs, preferences, information environments, and political incentives aggregate into attitudes toward democracy remains an important area for future research.

Figure 1: Evolution of Democracy in Turkey

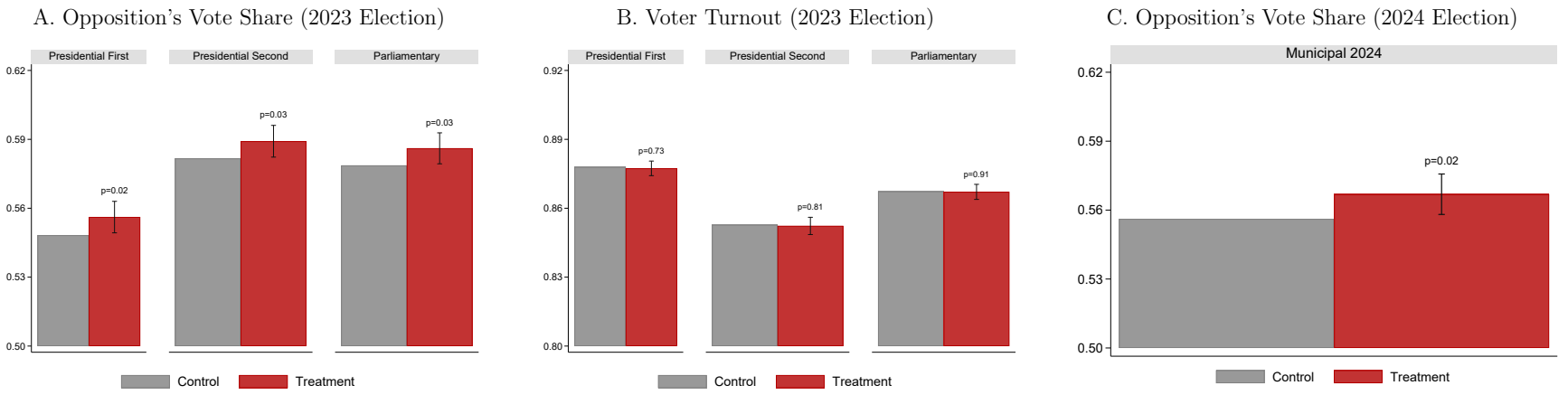
A. Evolution of V-DEM and Other Democracy Scores

B. Evolution of V-DEM Democratic Score Components



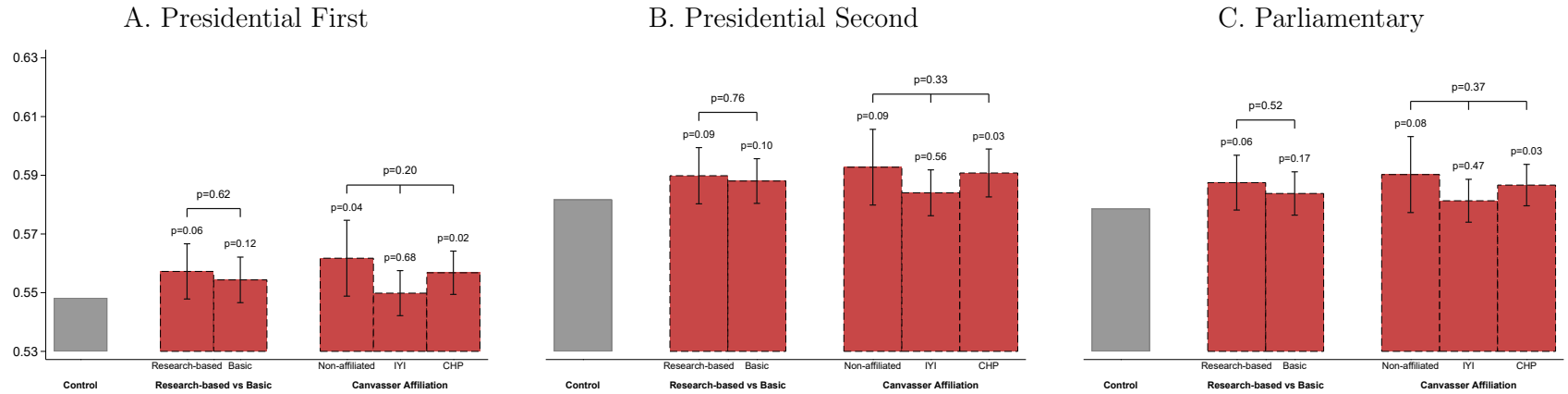
Notes: Panel A displays our composite V-DEM democracy index, defined as the average of five V-DEM indices measuring electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian democracy, and rescaled to range from 0 to 100. The panel also shows the evolution of three secondary measures of democratic change: an IDEA Global State of Democracy measure, the Freedom House freedom score, and Polity V. The IDEA measure is the average of the four top-level Global State of Democracy indices: Representation, Rights, Rule of Law, and Participation, expressed on a 0-to-100 scale. The Freedom House series is the 0-to-100 freedom score from Freedom in the World and is available starting in 2002. Polity V is plotted on the right axis using its original scale and is available through 2018 in the version used here. Panel B presents the evolution of the five V-DEM dimensions separately.

Figure 2: Treatment Effects on Voting Outcomes in the Field Experiment



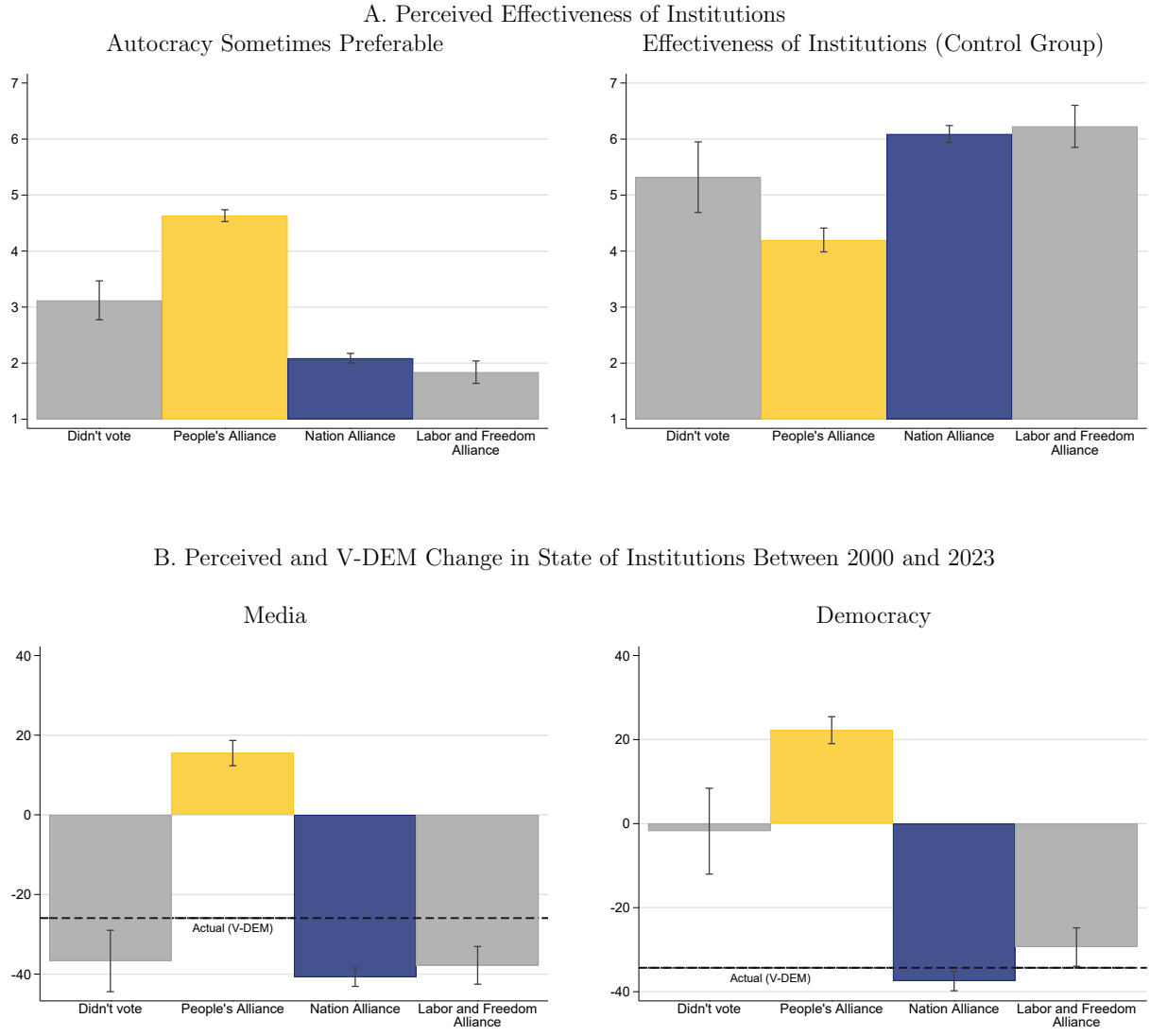
Notes: This figure summarizes the main results from the field experiment. It presents ballot box-level estimates of the treatment effects on the opposition's vote share and turnout in the 2023 first- and second-round presidential elections and the parliamentary election in Panels A and B, and the opposition's vote share in the 2024 municipal election in Panel C. In this figure, we focus on the bundled treatment, which is a dummy variable for assignment to either the research-based or the basic informational treatment at the neighborhood level. The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the informational treatments, corresponding to the ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition's vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure 3: Unbundled Treatment Effects on the Opposition's Vote Share (2023 Election) in the Field Experiment



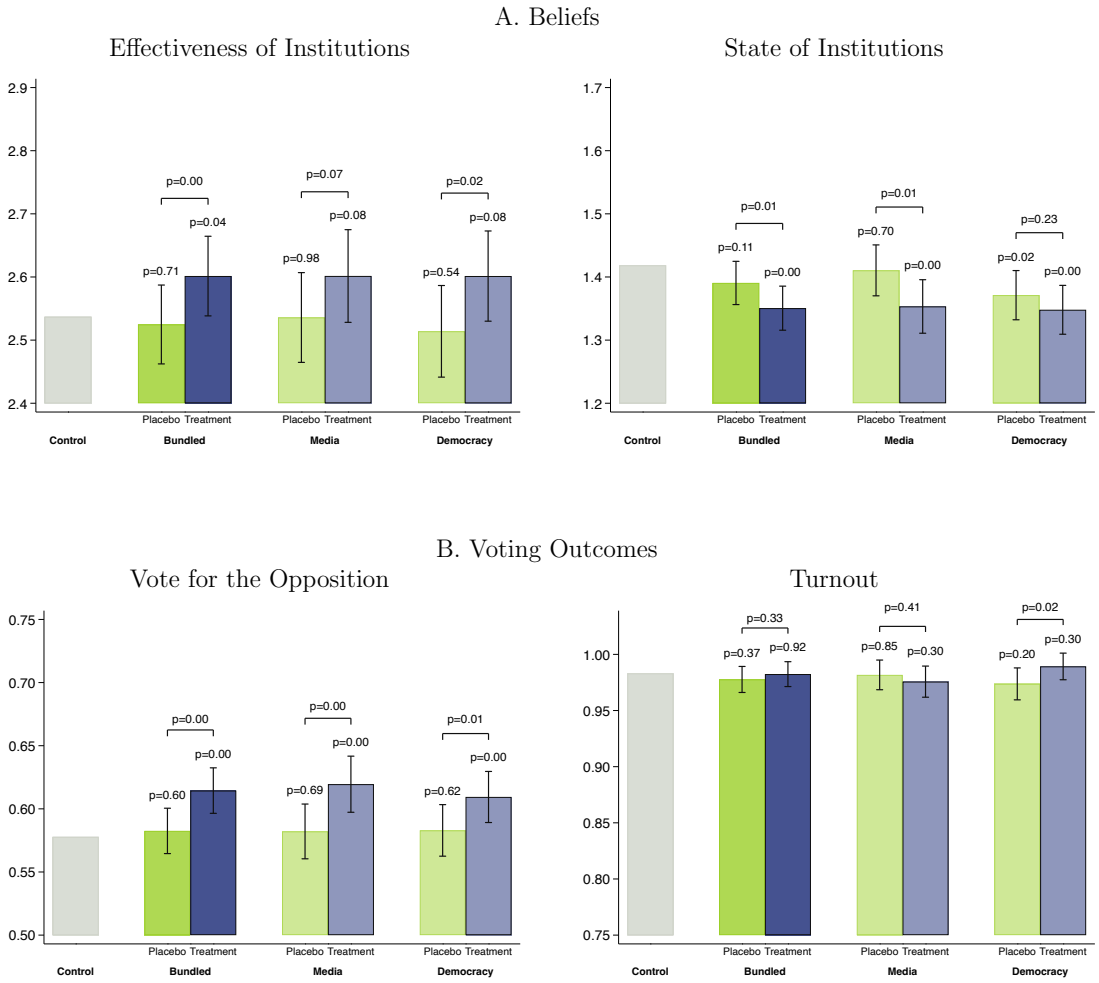
Notes: This figure shows results from the field experiment separately by treatment content and canvasser affiliation. It presents ballot box-level estimates of the treatment effects on the opposition's vote share in the 2023 first- and second-round presidential elections, as well as the 2023 parliamentary election, in Panels A, B, and C, respectively. The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the different informational treatments, corresponding to the ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition's vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. The p-values at the very top are from tests of equality between the research-based and basic informational treatments and between canvassers with different affiliations. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure 4: Baseline Views on the Effectiveness and Evolution of Democratic Institutions by Political Affiliation



Notes: This figure presents baseline views of participants in the online experiment by political affiliation (People's Alliance, Nation Alliance, Labor and Freedom Alliance supporters, and non-voters). Affiliations are based on self-reported votes in the 2018 election. Panel A shows, on the left, agreement with the statement that authoritarian government can sometimes be preferable, measured on a 1-to-7 scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree. On the right, Panel A shows the *Effectiveness of Institutions* outcome, also measured on its original 1-to-7 scale. This outcome measures agreement that increasing media independence reduces corruption and that strengthening democracy reduces the number of people affected by natural disasters. For the latter variable, which is the only one in this figure measured post-treatment, the sample is restricted to individuals in the control group to ensure that the patterns are not affected by our treatments. Panel B reports pre-treatment perceptions of how media independence (left) and democracy (right) evolved between 2000 and 2023. These perceptions are measured as the difference between respondents' 0-to-100 ratings of the level of each institution in 2023 and in 2000; positive values indicate perceived improvement, while negative values indicate perceived deterioration. The dashed line reports the corresponding change between 2023 and 2000 from the V-DEM data set. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

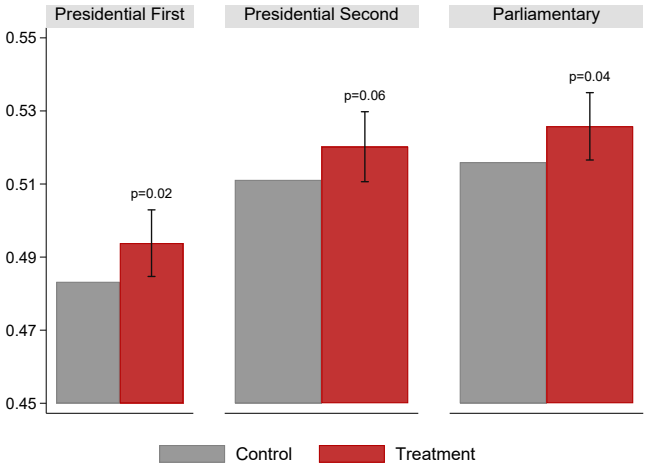
Figure 5: Treatment Effects on Beliefs and Voting Outcomes in the Online Experiment



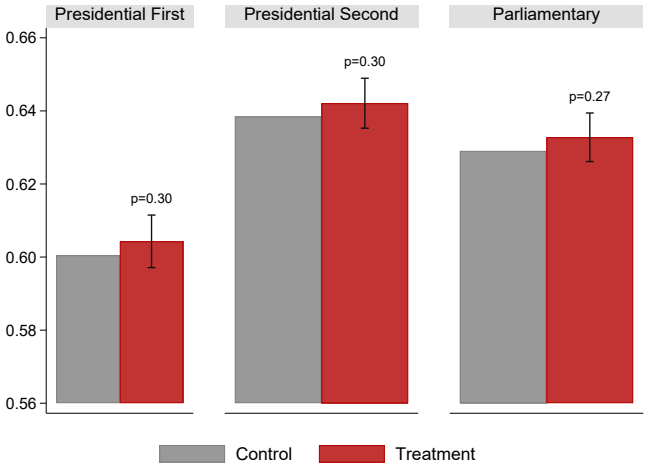
Notes: This figure summarizes the main results from the online experiment. It presents estimates of the informational treatments on voter beliefs in Panel A and self-reported voting intentions in Panel B. *Effectiveness of Institutions* measures agreement that increasing media independence reduces corruption and that strengthening democracy reduces the number of people affected by natural disasters, and *State of Institutions* measures perceptions of how democratic institutions have evolved between 2000 and 2023 in Turkey. Both variables are in standard deviation units. *Vote for the Opposition* and *Turnout* are dummy variables for voter intentions. The difference between the heights of the bars for the treatment and control groups provides our baseline estimates of the effect of the informational treatments, corresponding to the estimates of equation (2) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification that includes the full set of pre-treatment variables listed in Appendix Table A-4 as controls. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. The p-values at the very top are from tests of equality between the informational treatment and the placebo. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure 6: Field Experiment Results Are Driven by Neighborhoods with Lower Opposition Support in 2018

A. Neighborhoods with Below-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018



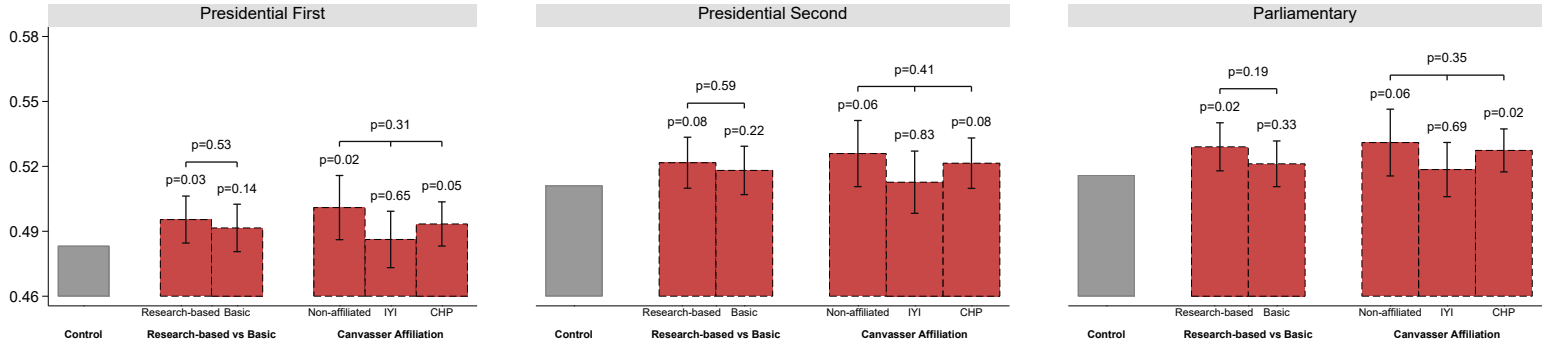
B. Neighborhoods with Above-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018



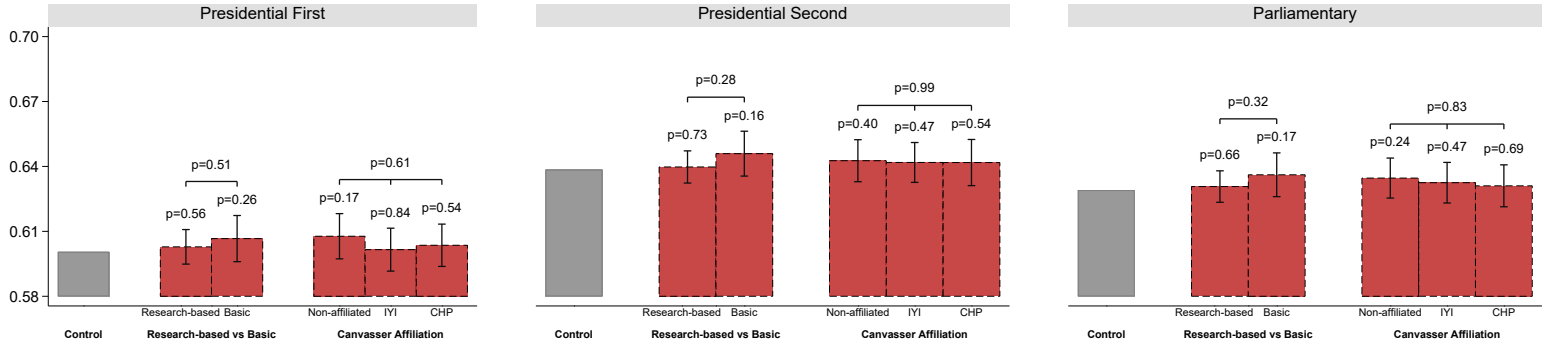
Notes: The figure plots treatment effects in the field experiment separately for neighborhoods below (Panel A) and above (Panel B) the median of the opposition's vote share in the 2018 parliamentary election. Each panel presents ballot box-level estimates of the treatment effects on the opposition's vote share in the 2023 first- and second-round presidential elections, as well as the 2023 parliamentary election. In this figure, we focus on the bundled treatment, which is a dummy variable for assignment to either the research-based or the basic informational treatment at the neighborhood level. The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the informational treatments, corresponding to the ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition's vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure 7: Field Experiment Results Are Driven by Neighborhoods with Lower Opposition Support in 2018 – Unbundled Treatment

A. Neighborhoods with Below-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018



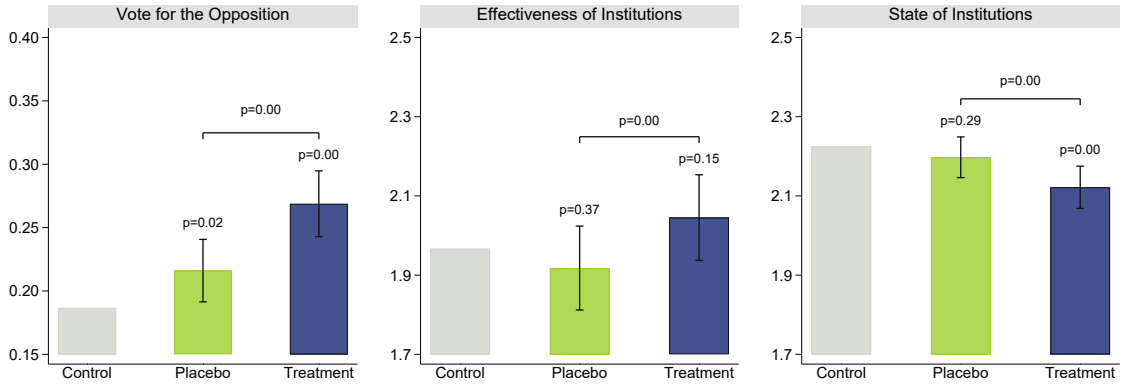
B. Neighborhoods with Above-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018



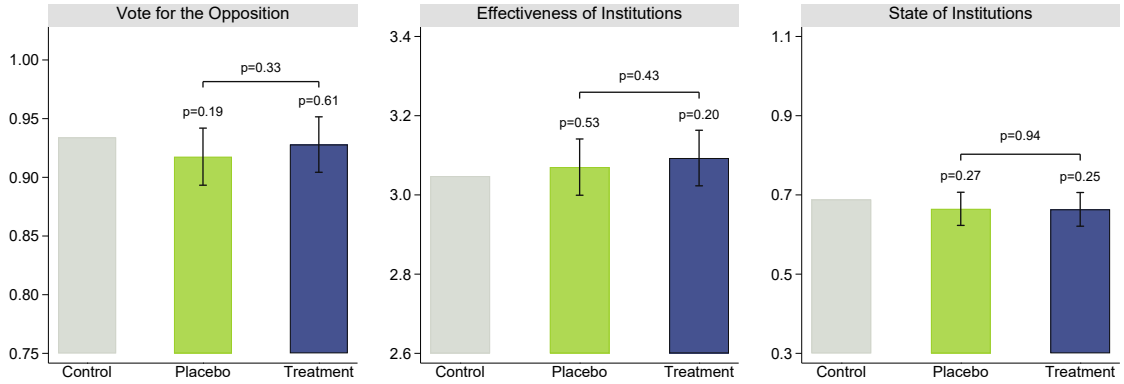
Notes: This figure shows results from the field experiment by treatment content and canvasser affiliation, separately for neighborhoods below (Panel A) and above (Panel B) the median of the opposition's vote share in the 2018 parliamentary election. Each panel presents ballot box-level estimates of the treatment effects on the opposition's vote share in the 2023 first-round presidential, second-round presidential, and parliamentary elections. The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the different informational treatments, corresponding to the ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition's vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. The p-values at the very top are from tests of equality between the research-based and basic informational treatments and between canvassers with different affiliations. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure 8: Online Experiment Results Are Driven by Individuals with Above-Median Perceived Institutional Change at Baseline

A. Above-Median Perceived Change in State of Institutions at Baseline



B. Below-Median Perceived Change in State of Institutions at Baseline



Notes: This figure shows results from the online experiment separately for respondents whose baseline beliefs imply above-median perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and 2023 (Panel A) and below-median perceived change (Panel B). Respondents are classified using the difference between their reported 2023 and 2000 ratings of media independence or democracy. The cutoff is -20, the median difference across respondents. We show separately the adjusted means for the control, placebo, and informational treatment groups for self-reported intention to vote for the opposition, effectiveness of institutions, and perceived change in the state of institutions. *Effectiveness of Institutions* measures agreement that increasing media independence reduces corruption and that strengthening democracy reduces the number of people affected by natural disasters, and *State of Institutions* measures perceptions of how democratic institutions have evolved in Turkey. These perception variables are in standard-deviation units. The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the informational treatments, corresponding to estimates of equation (2) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification that includes the full set of pre-treatment variables listed in Appendix Table A-4 as controls. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. The p-values at the very top are from tests of equality between the informational treatment and the placebo. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Table 1: Bundled Treatment Effects in the Field Experiment with Different Controls

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Presidential First			Presidential Second			Parliamentary			Municipal 2024		
A. Dependent Variable is Opposition's Vote Share												
Treatment	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.008	0.008	0.007	0.010	0.010	0.011
	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.004)
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	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.000	-0.000	-0.001	-0.000	-0.000	-0.005	-0.004	-0.003
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)
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 in 2018		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Full set of controls			Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes

Notes: This table examines the robustness of our field experiment results to different controls. Outcomes include the opposition's vote share and turnout, presented in Panels A and B, respectively. The results are shown for the 2023 first-round presidential election (Columns 1-3), the 2023 second-round presidential election (Columns 4-6), the 2023 parliamentary election (Columns 7-9), and the 2024 municipal election (Columns 10–12). The estimates are based on ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text. Columns 1, 4, 7, and 10 include only strata fixed effects as controls. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 include strata fixed effects and a pre-treatment outcome control at the neighborhood level: the 2018 opposition parliamentary vote share in Panel A and turnout in the 2018 presidential election in Panel B. Columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 are based on our baseline specification, which uses the common full set of field-experiment controls, including the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls; neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition's vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The table also reports the number of observations and the mean of the dependent variable for the control group. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Table 2: Bundled Treatment Effects in the Online Experiment with Different Controls

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	A. Effectiveness of Institutions				
Placebo	0.024	0.034	0.000	-0.009	-0.012
	(0.042)	(0.037)	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.032)
Treatment	0.097	0.106	0.080	0.062	0.065
	(0.041)	(0.037)	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.032)
Observations	4,232	4,182	4,007	3,614	3,614
Mean	2.540	2.540	2.540	2.540	2.540
p-value: Placebo=Treatment	0.032	0.014	0.002	0.007	0.003
	B. State of Institutions				
Placebo	-0.060	-0.074	-0.048	-0.034	-0.028
	(0.041)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.017)
Treatment	-0.116	-0.107	-0.079	-0.071	-0.068
	(0.041)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.018)
Observations	4,343	4,343	4,150	3,678	3,678
Mean	1.417	1.417	1.417	1.417	1.417
p-value: Placebo=Treatment	0.092	0.072	0.065	0.038	0.006
	C. 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	0.577	0.577	0.577	0.577	0.577
p-value: Placebo=Treatment	0.077	0.032	0.002	0.001	0.000
No controls	Yes				
Outcome at baseline		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Imbalanced controls			Yes	Yes	Yes
Full set of controls					Yes

Notes: This table explores the robustness of our results from the online experiment to different controls. Panels A, B and C present the treatment effects on Effectiveness of Institutions, State of Institutions and self-reported intention to vote for the opposition, respectively. Column 1 includes no controls. Column 2 includes the pre-treatment value of the dependent variable as a control. Columns 3 and 4 additionally include the baseline variables for which we observe imbalances in Table A-4 at the 5% and 10% levels, respectively, while Column 5 is based on our baseline specification that includes the full set of pre-treatment variables listed in Appendix Table A-4 as controls. The table also reports the number of observations, the mean of the dependent variable for the control group, and the p-value from a test of equality between the placebo and informational treatments. Standard errors are robust to heteroskedasticity. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

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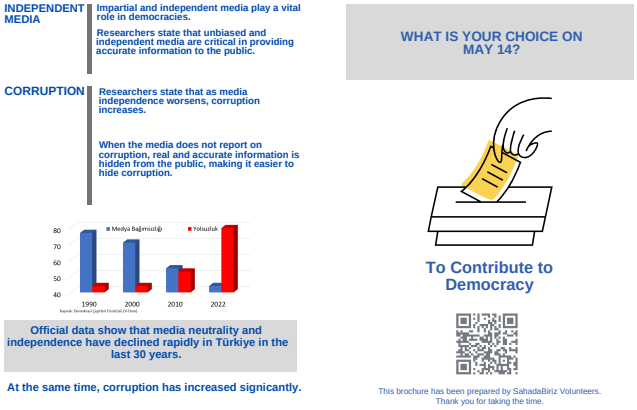
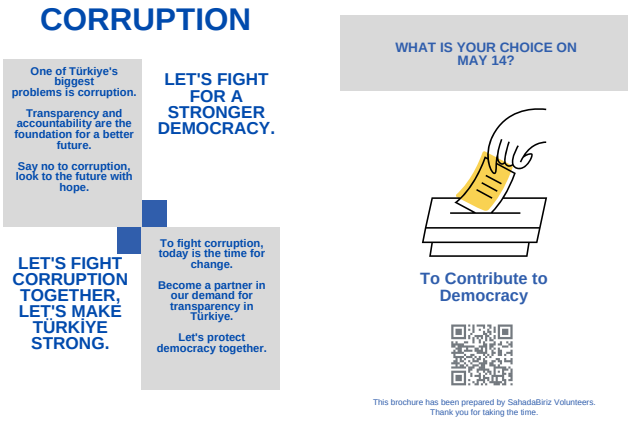
Figure A-1: Pamphlets in the Field Experiment

A Appendix

A. Research-based Pamphlet for Non-affiliated



B. Basic Pamphlet for Non-affiliated



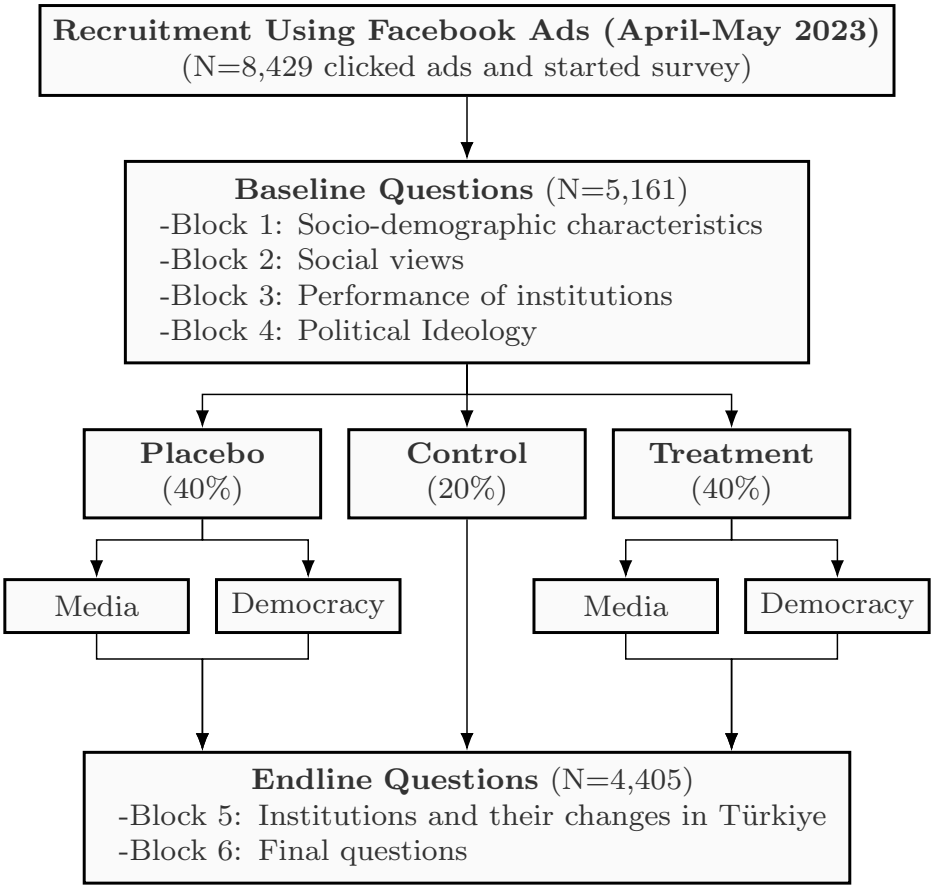
C. Research-based Pamphlet for CHP

D. Basic Pamphlet for CHP

E. Research-based Pamphlet for IYI Party

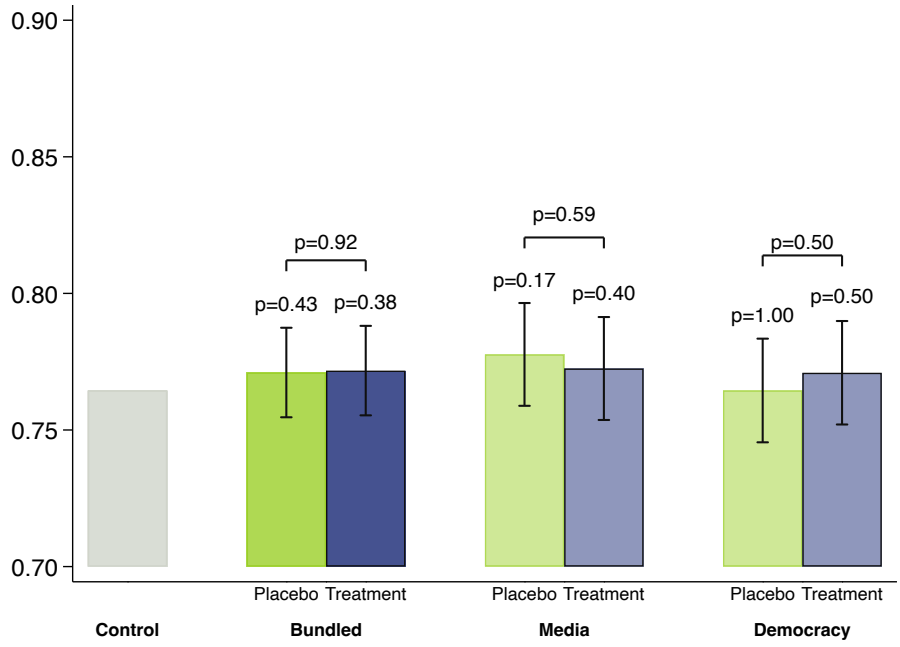
F. Basic Pamphlet for IYI Party

Figure A-2: Experimental Design of the Online Experiment



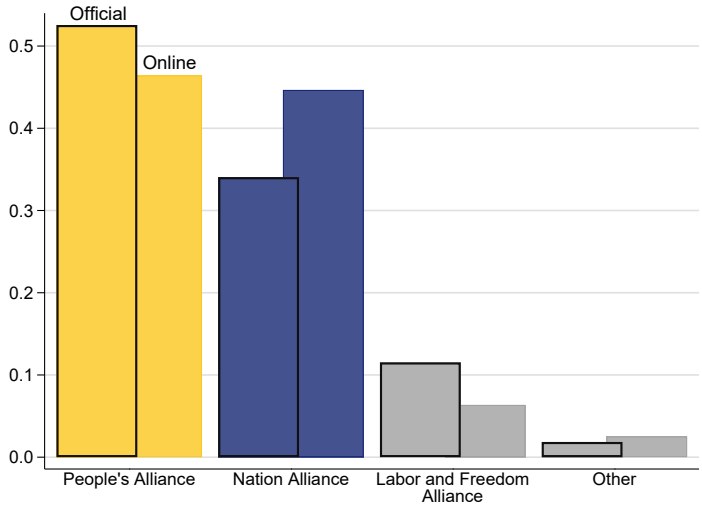
Notes: This figure shows the experimental design of the study. A total of 19,151 individuals clicked on the ads and were redirected to the survey landing page, where they reviewed the consent form. Of these, 8,429 proceeded to start the survey. A total of 5,161 respondents completed the baseline survey 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-3: Differential Attrition by Treatment Arms – Online Experiment



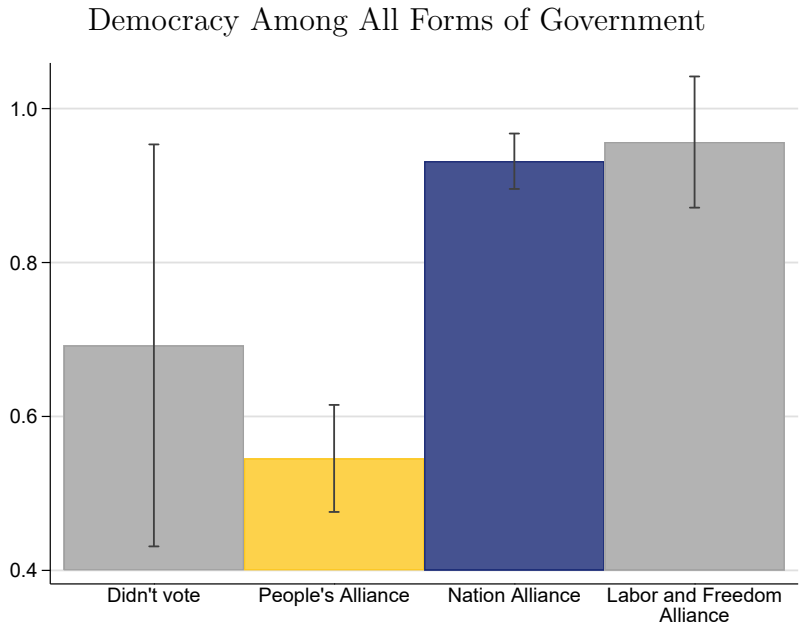
Notes: This figure shows the differences in survey completion among individuals assigned to different treatment arms. See equation (2). The outcome is a dummy that takes the value of one if the participant did not complete the survey. Each bar displays the mean of the outcome for each of these groups as indicated on the horizontal axis. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding differences equal zero. The p-values at the very top are from tests of equality between the informational treatment and the placebo. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure A-4: Alliance Vote Shares from Administrative 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 parliamentary election with self-reported voting choices from our baseline survey. The comparison is presented in a color-coded bar chart: yellow bars represent the People's Alliance vote share, navy bars show the Nation Alliance vote share, and gray bars indicate the vote shares for the Labor and Freedom Alliance and other parties. For each alliance, the left bar reflects the official 2018 election results, while the right bar shows the self-reported vote shares from the online experiment.

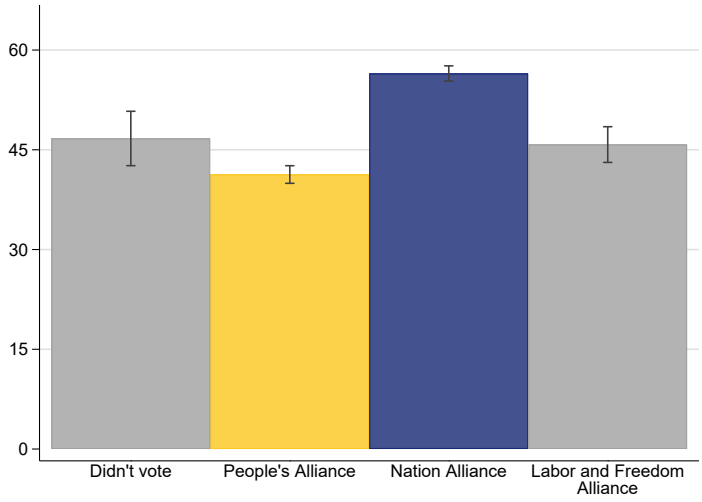
Figure A-5: Additional Summary Statistics on Institutional Preferences by Alliance Affiliation



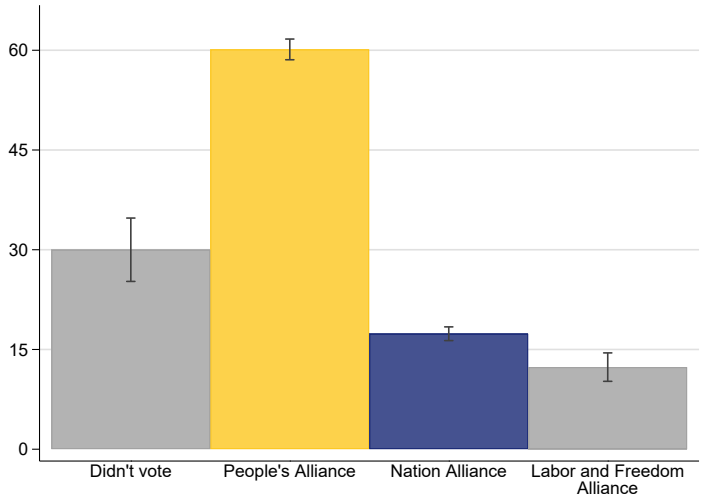
Notes: This figure shows an alternative measure of support for democracy, categorized by political affiliation (People's Alliance, Nation Alliance, Labor and Freedom Alliance supporters, and non-voters). The sample is restricted to respondents in the control group for whom this item was asked. The figure plots the share of individuals who responded "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 2023 by Political Affiliation

A. Perception of the State of Institutions in 2000

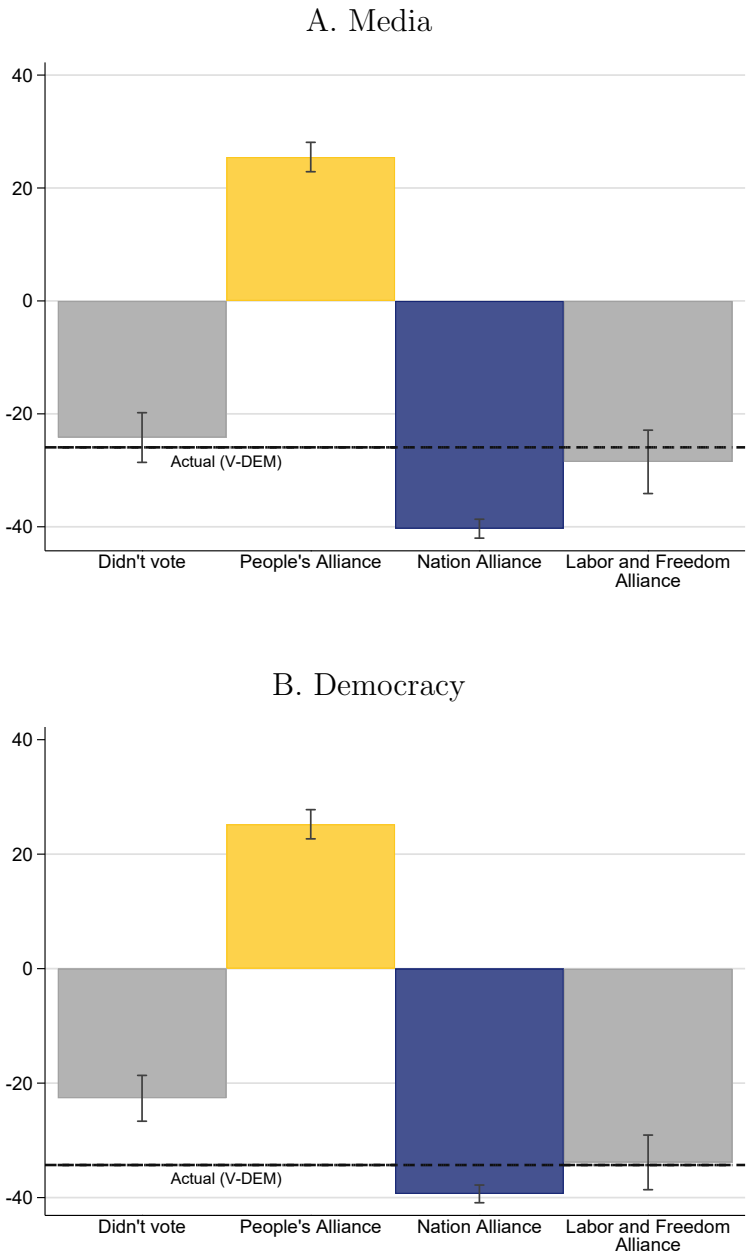


B. Perception of the State of Institutions in April-May 2023



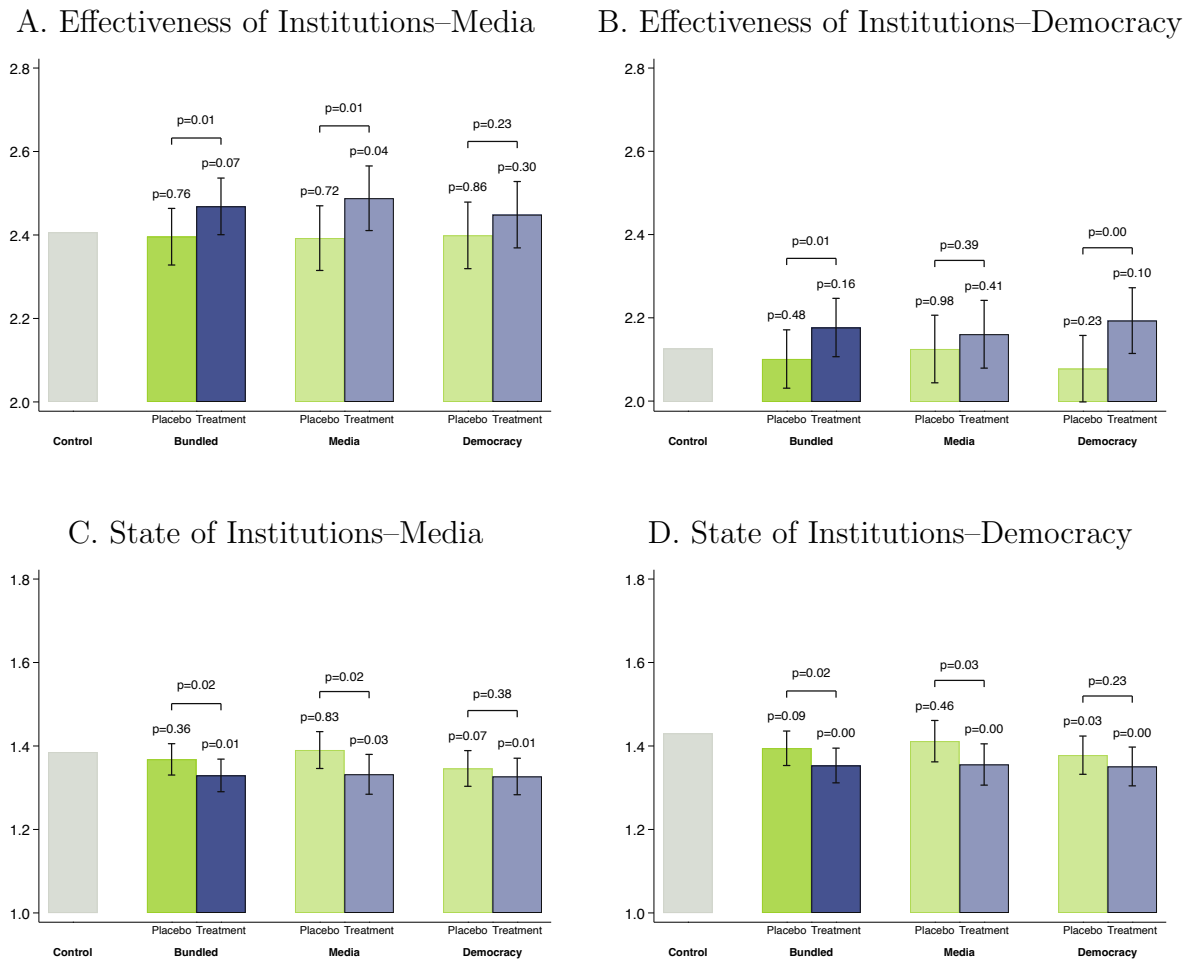
Notes: This figure compares baseline respondents' perceptions of the level of democratic institutions in Turkey in 2000 and 2023 by political affiliation (People's Alliance, Nation Alliance, Labor and Freedom Alliance supporters, and non-voters). Affiliations are based on self-reported votes in the 2018 election. Panels display average responses to the question asked about the state of institutions in 2000 (Panel A) and in April-May 2023 (Panel B) in Turkey. 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. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure A-7: Baseline Institutional Views in the Field Baseline Survey



Notes: This figure shows voters' perceived change in the state of institutions between 2000 and 2023 by political affiliation (People's Alliance, Nation Alliance, Labor and Freedom Alliance supporters, and non-voters) and institution (media or democracy) in the baseline field survey. Affiliations are based on self-reported votes in the 2018 election. Panel A shows perceptions of changes in media independence from 2000 to 2023, while Panel B presents perceptions of changes in democracy over the same period. The bars represent the mean scores for each political group based on self-reported voting behavior in 2018. The dashed line indicates the corresponding change from the V-DEM data set. The whiskers indicate the 95 percent confidence intervals. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

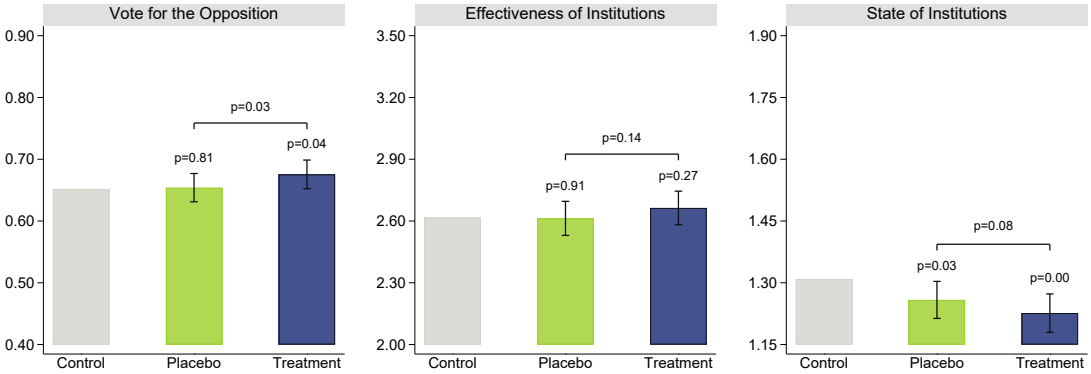
Figure A-8: Treatment Effects on Voters' Beliefs – Separately for Media and Democracy Outcomes



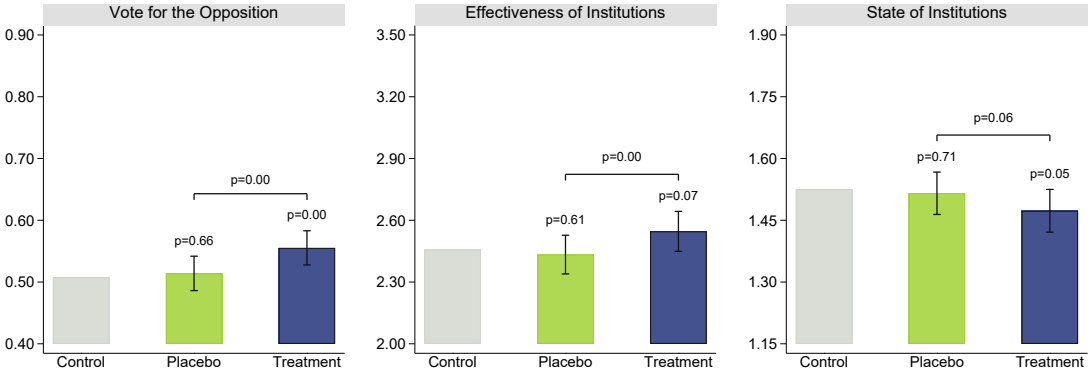
Notes: This figure presents estimates of the informational treatments on voters' beliefs about the effectiveness and state of institutions, separately for media and democracy. *Effectiveness of Institutions–Media* (Panel A) measures agreement that increasing media independence reduces corruption. *Effectiveness of Institutions–Democracy* (Panel B) measures agreement that strengthening democracy reduces the number of people affected by natural disasters. *State of Institutions–Media* (Panel C) and *State of Institutions–Democracy* (Panel D) measure perceptions of how media and democracy have evolved between 2000 and 2023 in Turkey, respectively. All four outcomes are expressed in standard-deviation units. The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the informational treatments, corresponding to estimates of equation (2) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification that includes the full set of pre-treatment variables listed in Appendix Table A-4 as controls. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. The p-values at the very top are from tests of equality between the informational treatment and the placebo. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure A-9: Online Experiment Results by Respondent Age

A. Respondents Above the Median Age



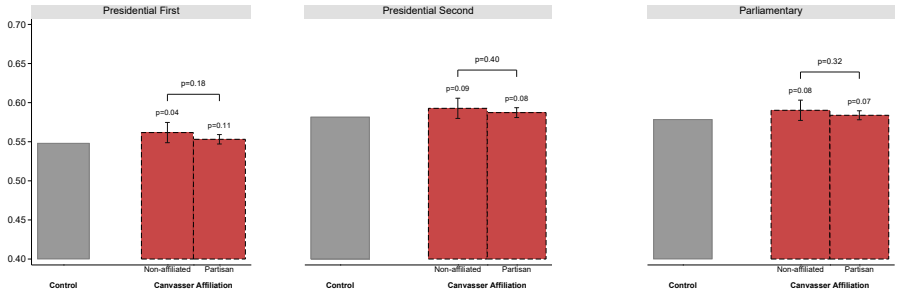
B. Respondents Below the Median Age



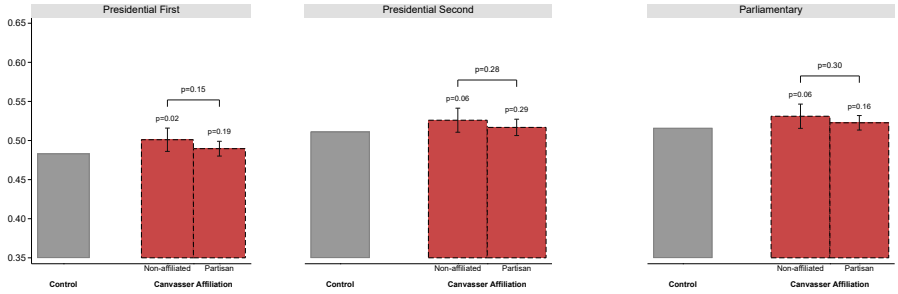
Notes: This figure shows results from the online experiment separately for respondents above the sample median age (Panel A) and below the sample median age (Panel B). Each panel shows adjusted means for the control, placebo, and informational treatment groups for intention to vote for the opposition, beliefs about the consequences of democratic institutions, and perceived change in the state of institutions. The last two outcomes are expressed in standard-deviation units. Estimates correspond to OLS specifications used in the paper and include the full set of pre-treatment controls. Whiskers denote 95 percent confidence intervals. The p-values above individual bars are for tests relative to the control group. The p-values above brackets are for tests of equality between the informational treatment and the placebo.

Figure A-10: Field Experiment Results by Canvasser Affiliation and Neighborhood-Level Opposition Support in 2018

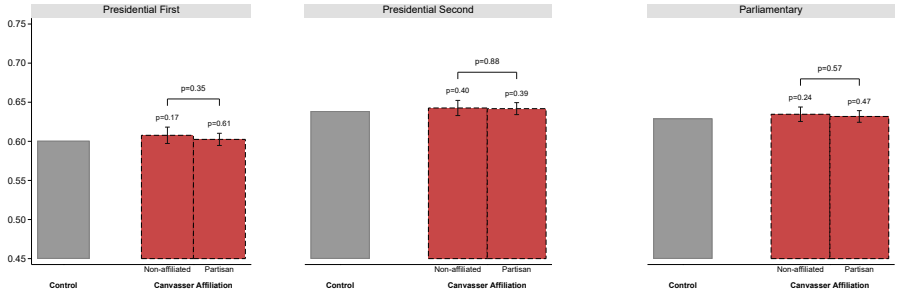
A. Full Sample



B. Neighborhoods with Below-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018



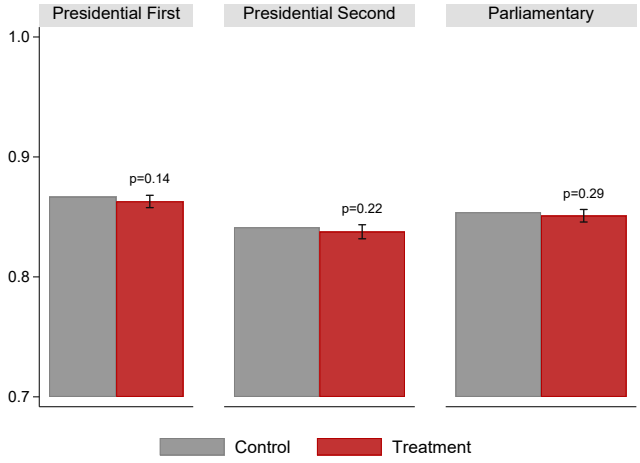
C. Neighborhoods with Above-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018



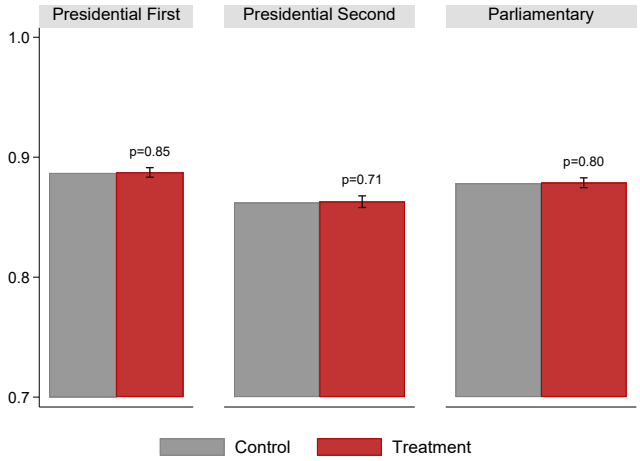
Notes: This figure shows results from the field experiment by canvasser affiliation, separately for the full sample (Panel A) and for neighborhoods below (Panel B) and above (Panel C) the median of the opposition's vote share in the 2018 parliamentary election. Each panel presents ballot box-level estimates of the treatment effects on the opposition's vote share in the 2023 first-round presidential, second-round presidential, and parliamentary elections. CHP and IYI canvassers are pooled into a single party-affiliated category (partisan). The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the different informational treatments, corresponding to the ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition's vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. The p-values at the very top are from tests of equality between the non-affiliated and partisan canvassers. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

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

A. Neighborhoods with Below-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018



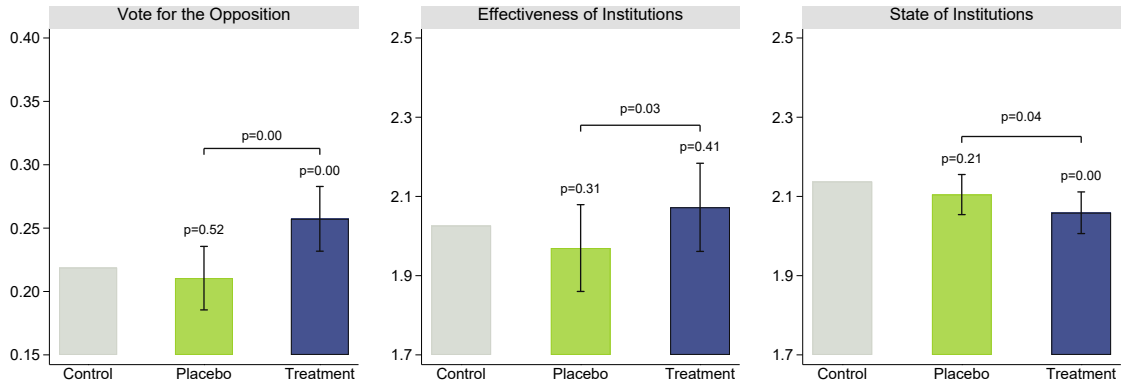
B. Neighborhoods with Above-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018



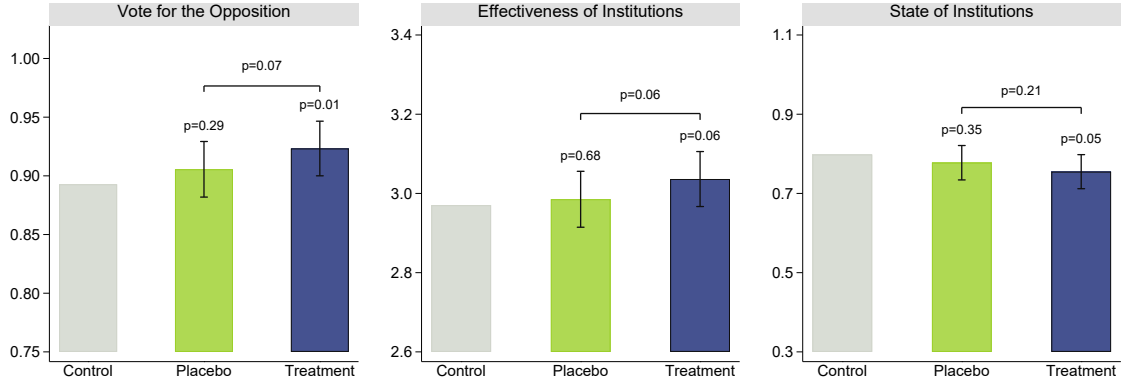
Notes: The figure plots treatment effects in the field experiment separately for neighborhoods below (Panel A) and above (Panel B) the median of the opposition's vote share in the 2018 parliamentary election. Each panel presents ballot box-level estimates of the treatment effects on turnout in the 2023 first- and second-round presidential elections, as well as the 2023 parliamentary election. In this figure, we focus on the bundled treatment, which is a dummy variable for assignment to either the research-based or the basic informational treatment at the neighborhood level. The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the informational treatments, corresponding to the ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition's vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure A-12: Online Experiment Results Are Driven by Respondents Who Did Not Vote for the Opposition in 2018

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



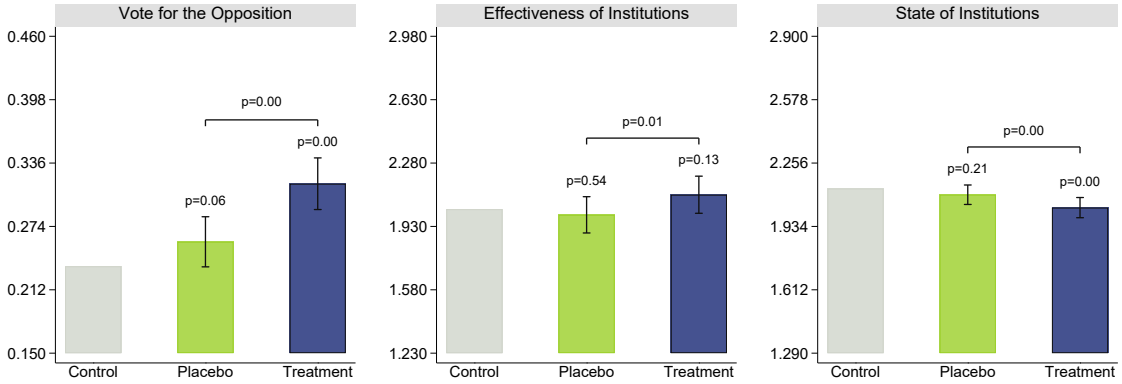
B. Self-reported Voting for the Opposition at Baseline



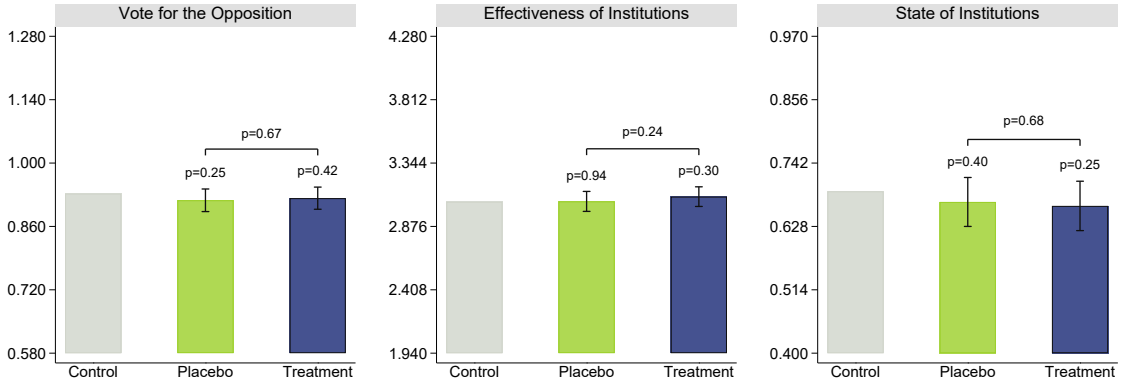
Notes: This figure shows results from the online experiment separately for respondents who report at baseline that they did not vote for the opposition in the 2018 election (Panel A) and respondents who report voting for the opposition (Panel B). We show separately the adjusted means for the control, placebo, and informational treatment groups for self-reported intention to vote for the opposition, effectiveness of institutions, and perceived change in the state of institutions. *Effectiveness of Institutions* measures agreement that increasing media independence reduces corruption and that strengthening democracy reduces the number of people affected by natural disasters, and *State of Institutions* measures perceptions of how democratic institutions have evolved in Turkey. These variables are in standard deviation units. The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the informational treatments, corresponding to estimates of equation (2) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification that includes the full set of pre-treatment variables listed in Appendix Table A-4 as controls. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. The p-values at the very top are from tests of equality between the informational treatment and the placebo. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Figure A-13: Online Experiment Results by Baseline Beliefs Relative to the V-DEM Benchmark

A. Perceived Deterioration Is Weaker than the V-DEM Benchmark

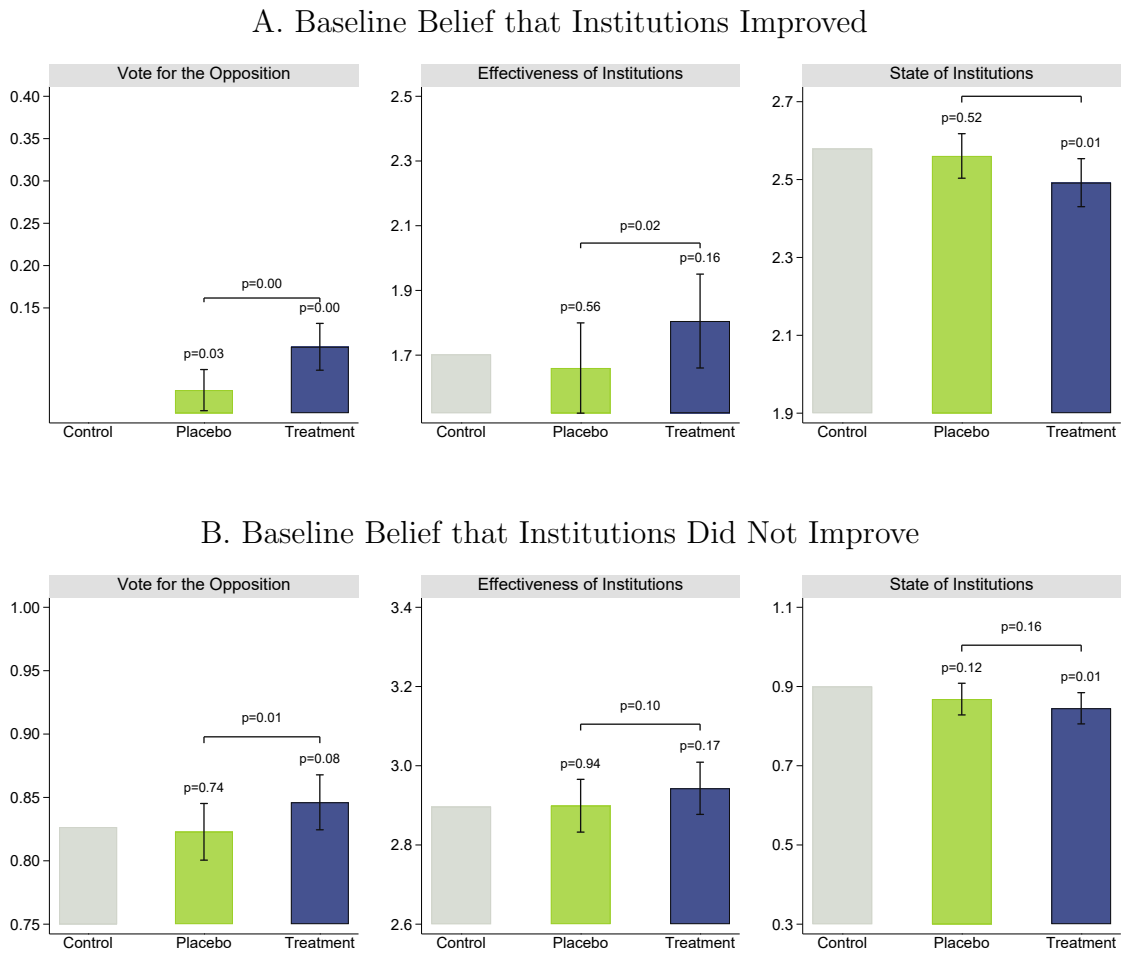


B. Perceived Deterioration Exceeds the V-DEM Benchmark



Notes: This figure shows results from the online experiment separately for respondents whose baseline belief implies a smaller deterioration in institutions than the deterioration implied by the V-DEM benchmark (Panel A) and respondents whose baseline belief implies a larger deterioration than the V-DEM benchmark (Panel B). Each panel shows adjusted means for the control, placebo, and informational treatment groups for intention to vote for the opposition, *Effectiveness of Institutions*, and *State of Institutions*. The last two outcomes are expressed in standard-deviation units. Estimates correspond to the OLS specifications used in the paper and include the full set of pre-treatment controls. Whiskers denote 95 percent confidence intervals. The p-values above individual bars are for tests relative to the control group. The p-values above brackets are for tests of equality between the informational treatment and the placebo.

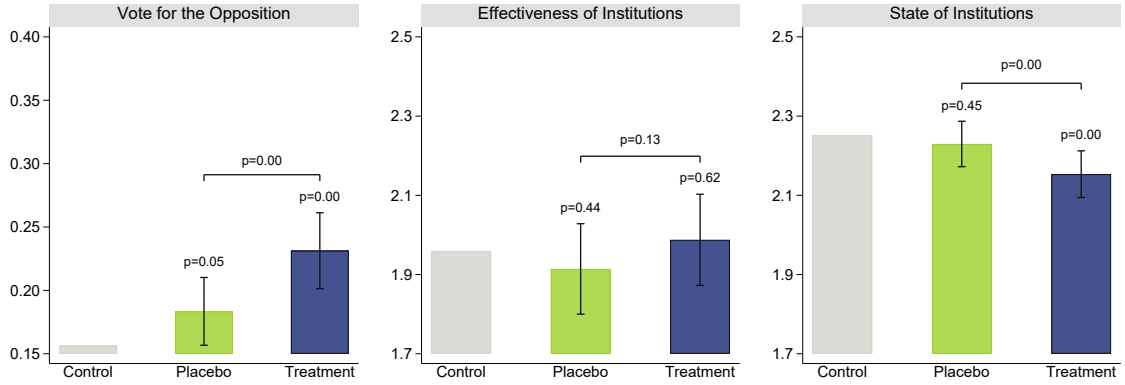
Figure A-14: Online Experiment Results by Whether Respondents Believe Democratic Institutions Improved between 2000 and 2023



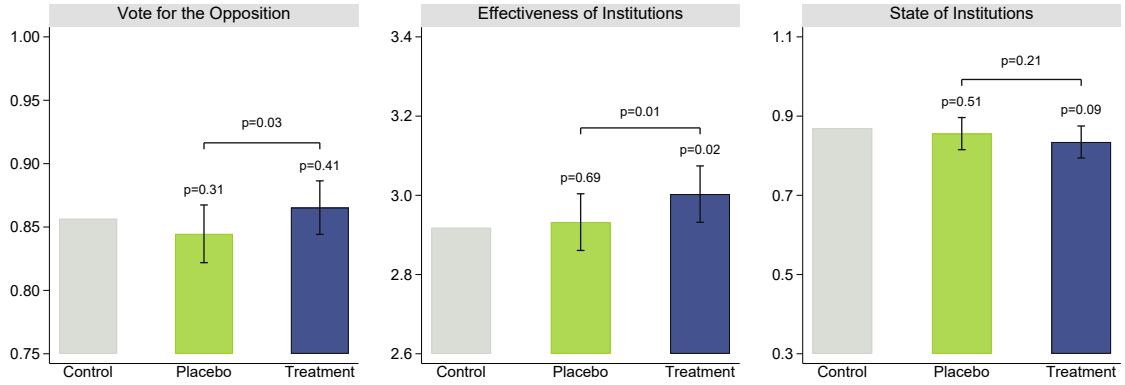
Notes: This figure shows results from the online experiment separately for respondents whose baseline belief implies a positive change in the state of institutions between 2000 and 2023 (Panel A) and respondents whose baseline belief implies a non-positive change (Panel B), where the split is defined by the sign of the respondent's answer to the institutional-change question. Each panel shows adjusted means for the control, placebo, and informational treatment groups for intention to vote for the opposition, *Effectiveness of Institutions*, and *State of Institutions*. The last two outcomes are expressed in standard-deviation units. Estimates correspond to the OLS specifications used in the paper and include the full set of pre-treatment controls. Whiskers denote 95 percent confidence intervals. The p-values above individual bars are for tests relative to the control group. The p-values above brackets are for tests of equality between the informational treatment and the placebo.

Figure A-15: Online Experiment Results Are Driven by Individuals More Favorable to Authoritarianism at Baseline

A. High Support for Autocracy at Baseline



B. Low Support for Autocracy at Baseline



Notes: This figure shows results from the online experiment separately for respondents who are neutral toward or agree with the statement that authoritarianism is sometimes preferable at baseline (Panel A) and those who disagree with this same statement (Panel B). We define these two groups as participants who report, respectively, a score between 4 and 7 and below 4 when asked to rank their level of agreement with the statement "I support having an authoritarian government in some cases" on a seven-point scale. We show separately the adjusted means for the control, placebo, and informational treatment groups for self-reported intention to vote for the opposition, effectiveness of institutions, and perceived change in the state of institutions. *Effectiveness of Institutions* measures agreement that increasing media independence reduces corruption and that strengthening democracy reduces the number of people affected by natural disasters, and *State of Institutions* measures perceptions of how democratic institutions have evolved in Turkey. These variables are in standard deviation units. The difference between the heights of the bars for treatment and control groups gives our baseline estimates of the effect of the informational treatments, corresponding to estimates of equation (2) in the text. Estimates are based on our baseline specification that includes the full set of pre-treatment variables listed in Appendix Table A-4 as controls. The whiskers show 95 percent confidence intervals, while the p-values on top of the bars are from tests that the corresponding treatment effects equal zero. The p-values at the very top are from tests of equality between the informational treatment and the placebo. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Table A-1: Variable Definitions

Variable	Description
Panel A. Online Experiment	
Post-Treatment Variables	
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 questions asking respondents to complete the statements, "In Turkey, today's level of media independence is ____ its level in 2000," and "In Turkey, 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.
State of institutions-Democracy	Democracy component of *State of institutions*, based on the corresponding 5-point comparison with 2000 (1 being "much lower than" and 5 being "much higher than"). The variable is rescaled so that effects are measured in standard-deviation units.
State of institutions-Media	Media-independence component of *State of institutions*, based on the corresponding 5-point comparison with 2000. The variable is rescaled so that effects are measured in standard-deviation units.
Turnout	Dummy equal to one if the respondent does not choose "I will not vote" when asked, "If there were a presidential election tomorrow, which Alliance's candidate would you vote for?"
Democracy among all forms of government	Dummy equal to one if the respondent chooses "I would prefer democracy among all forms of government" when asked, "Which of the three statements is closest to your view?"
Effectiveness 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.
Effectiveness of institutions-Democracy	Democracy component of *Effectiveness of institutions*, based on agreement with the statement that strengthening democracy reduces the number of people affected by natural disasters. The variable is rescaled so that effects are measured in standard-deviation units.
Effectiveness of institutions-Media	Media component of *Effectiveness of institutions*, based on agreement with the statement that increasing media independence reduces corruption. The variable is rescaled so that effects are measured in standard-deviation units.
Vote for the opposition	Dummy equal to one if the respondent would vote for a candidate other than the People's Alliance candidate 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.
Pre-Treatment Variables	
Autocracy sometimes preferable	Agreement with the statement, "I support having an authoritarian government in some cases," on a 1-to-7 scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).
Closeness: Nation Alliance	Response to "I find it difficult to see things from the point of view of supporters of Nation Alliance," recoded from 0 (very difficult) to 4 (not difficult at all).
Closeness: People's Alliance	Response to "I find it difficult to see things from the point of view of supporters of People's Alliance," recoded from 0 (very difficult) to 4 (not difficult at all).
Current support for 2018-voted party	Response to "How strongly do you feel about your support for the party you voted for in 2018?" recoded from 0 (very low) to 4 (very high).
Devaluation responsibility: global crisis	Dummy equal to one if the respondent chooses "A global economic crisis" when asked who or what is most responsible for the devaluation of the Turkish Lira in the last year.
Devaluation responsibility: president	Dummy equal to one if the respondent chooses "The president" when asked who or what is most responsible for the devaluation of the Turkish Lira in the last year.
Government priority: inflation	Dummy equal to one if the respondent chooses "Inflation rate" as the issue to which the government should attach most importance.

Continued on next page

Table A-1 – Variable Definition and Sources (Continues from Previous Page)	
Government priority: national security	Dummy equal to one if the respondent chooses "National security" as the issue to which the government should attach most importance.
Ideology: left	Dummy equal to one if the respondent chooses "Left" or "Central left" when asked, "Where do you see yourself on the ideological spectrum?"
Ideology: right	Dummy equal to one if the respondent chooses "Right" or "Central right" when asked, "Where do you see yourself on the ideological spectrum?"
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 scale.
Institutions improve economy: certainty	Respondents' certainty about their response to the institutions-improve-economy question.
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 Turkey 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 Turkey and its level in 2000."
Level institutions certainty	Respondents' certainty about their institutions rating.
President bypassing the parliament	Agreement with the statement, "I support that in some cases the president does not consult parliament when making decisions," on a 1-to-7 scale.
Regime does not affect the economy	Agreement with the statement, "Some think that political regimes (authoritarian, democratic, etc.) will not affect the economy," on a 1-to-7 scale.
Voted for opposition in 2018	Dummy equal to one if the respondent chooses any party except AKP or MHP when asked which party they voted for in the 2018 parliamentary election.
Voted in 2018	Dummy equal to one if the respondent chooses a party when asked which party they voted for in the 2018 parliamentary election.
Panel B. Field Experiment	
Outcome Variables	
Opposition vote share: Parliamentary election 2023	Total vote share of parties other than the member parties of People's Alliance (AKP, MHP, BBP and New Welfare Party). HUDA Party and DSP did not contest the election in Izmir.
Opposition vote share: Presidential first round election 2023	Total vote share of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Muharrem İnce in the May 2023 presidential first round. This is the vote share for all candidates except the incumbent Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Ata Alliance's candidate, Sinan Oğan.
Opposition vote share: Presidential second round election 2023	Vote share of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu in the May 2023 presidential second round, in which Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ran against each other.
Baseline Variables: Parliamentary Election 2018	
Vote share: Labor and Freedom Alliance	Vote share of HDP.
Vote share: Nation Alliance	Total vote share of the members of Nation Alliance (CHP, IYI Party, and Saadet Party) and Nation Alliance closed list. Democrat Party, a member of the Nation Alliance, did not contest the election in Izmir.
Vote share: People's Alliance	Total vote share of the members of People's Alliance (AKP and MHP) and People's Alliance closed list.
Opposition vote share	Total vote share of parties other than the member parties of People's Alliance (AKP and MHP).
Baseline Variables: Presidential Election 2018	
Vote share alliance: Labor and Freedom Alliance	Vote share of Selahattin Demirtaş.
Vote share alliance: Nation Alliance	Total vote share of Meral Akşener, Muharrem İnce, and Temel Karamollaoğlu.
Vote share alliance: People's Alliance	Total vote share of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.
Opposition vote share	Total vote share of Meral Akşener, Selahattin Demirtaş, Muharrem İnce, Temel Karamollaoğlu, and Doğu Perinçek in the June 2018 presidential election; this is the vote share for all candidates except the incumbent Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Table A-2: Treatment Group Assignments at Neighborhood Level for the Field Experiment

		Canvasser Affiliation			Total	Registered
		Non-affiliated	IYI	CHP	neighborhoods	voters
Research-based vs. Basic	Control				302	480,812
	Research-based	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 shows the number of neighborhoods and registered voters separately for the research-based and basic informational treatments and by canvasser affiliation.

Table A-3: Attrition and Differential Effects on Main Outcomes According to Framing of the Treatment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Dependent Variable Is			
	Attrition	Effectiveness of Institutions	State of Institutions	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. 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 media independence 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 media independence 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. Treatment effects are based on equation (2) in the text and follow our baseline specification that includes the full set of pre-treatment variables listed in Appendix Table A-4 as controls. Standard errors are robust to heteroskedasticity.

Table A-4: 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	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
Devaluation responsibility: global crisis	0.32	0.29	0.29	0.35	0.29	0.30	0.29	0.30	0.66
Devaluation responsibility: president	0.45	0.46	0.47	0.66	0.46	0.46	0.47	0.47	0.93
Government priority: fight inflation	0.43	0.43	0.41	0.50	0.41	0.44	0.38	0.44	0.02**
Government priority: national security	0.40	0.40	0.41	0.96	0.42	0.39	0.41	0.40	0.78
Institutions improve economy	5.35	5.51	5.49	0.23	5.41	5.60	5.41	5.57	0.07*
Institutions improve economy: 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: certainty	0.94	0.94	0.94	1.00	0.93	0.95	0.93	0.95	0.16
President bypassing parliament	3.64	3.54	3.55	0.66	3.52	3.56	3.57	3.52	0.89
Regime does not affect the economy	2.53	2.57	2.46	0.39	2.49	2.64	2.46	2.46	0.46
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 2018-voted party	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 for Nation Alliance in 2018	0.43	0.44	0.45	0.80	0.44	0.44	0.45	0.44	0.98
Voted for People's Alliance in 2018	0.44	0.42	0.42	0.53	0.44	0.40	0.41	0.42	0.57
Voted for opposition in 2018	0.53	0.55	0.56	0.58	0.54	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.74
Voted in 2018	0.96	0.96	0.97	0.44	0.97	0.95	0.97	0.96	0.20

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 (5)–(8) report the means of the variables listed in each row for the unbundled treatments: media placebo, democracy placebo, media treatment, and democracy treatment. Column (9) 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-5: Summary Statistics for Post-Treatment Variables

	Descriptive Statistics					
	Observations	**Mean**	**Median**	**SD**	**Min**	**Max**
A. Online Experiment						
Vote for the opposition	4,275	0.61	1.00	0.49	0.00	1.00
Turnout	4,405	0.97	1.00	0.17	0.00	1.00
Effectiveness of institutions	4,232	2.59	3.15	0.98	0.48	3.39
State of institutions	4,343	1.35	0.55	0.98	0.55	2.77
Effectiveness of institutions: Media	4,333	2.45	3.10	0.99	0.44	3.10
Effectiveness of institutions: Democracy	4,273	2.16	2.95	1.00	0.42	2.95
State of institutions: Media	4,361	1.32	0.56	1.00	0.56	2.78
State of institutions: Democracy	4,357	1.35	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. Parliamentary 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 Conversations in Ballot Boxes in Neighborhoods Assigned to:						
Treatment	1,190	0.37	0.39	0.17	0.00	0.78
Research-based	728	0.37	0.44	0.18	0.00	0.78
Basic	462	0.35	0.35	0.16	0.00	0.68
Non-affiliated	408	0.45	0.50	0.13	0.00	0.78
IYI	406	0.20	0.23	0.13	0.00	0.70
CHP	376	0.43	0.46	0.13	0.01	0.66

Notes: This table presents key summary statistics, including the number of observations, mean, median, standard deviation (SD), minimum (Min), and maximum (Max) values for different variables. Panel A shows the main outcomes of the online experiment. Panels B1, B2, and B3 report the 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 fraction of completed conversations in ballot boxes within neighborhoods assigned to different treatment groups.

Table A-6: Balance Across Treatment Groups in the Field Experiment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
		Bundled Treatment		Research-based vs Basic			Canvasser Affiliation			
	Control	Treatment	p-value difference	Research-based	Basic	p-value difference	Non-affiliated	IYI	CHP	p-value difference
Panel A. 2018 Presidential Election										
Main Variables										
Vote Share Opposition	0.59	0.58	0.90	0.57	0.60	0.28	0.58	0.59	0.58	0.99
Registered Voters	3,066.26	2,983.48	0.75	3,045.29	2,886.09	0.88	3,132.69	3,042.08	2,758.30	0.85
Turnout	0.86	0.86	0.69	0.86	0.86	0.88	0.86	0.87	0.86	0.73
Vote Share Alliances										
Nation Alliance	0.52	0.51	0.84	0.50	0.53	0.55	0.51	0.51	0.52	0.93
People's Alliance	0.41	0.41	0.89	0.42	0.39	0.27	0.41	0.40	0.41	0.99
Labor and Freedom Alliance	0.07	0.08	0.89	0.07	0.08	0.97	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.60
Panel B. 2018 Parliamentary Election										
Main Variables										
Vote Share Opposition	0.59	0.59	0.89	0.58	0.60	0.23	0.59	0.59	0.58	1.00
Registered Voters	3,066.26	2,983.48	0.75	3,045.29	2,886.09	0.88	3,132.69	3,042.08	2,758.30	0.85
Turnout	0.86	0.86	0.78	0.86	0.86	0.92	0.86	0.87	0.86	0.75
Vote Share Alliances										
Nation Alliance	0.46	0.46	0.74	0.45	0.48	0.42	0.45	0.46	0.47	0.83
People's Alliance	0.42	0.42	0.90	0.43	0.41	0.24	0.42	0.42	0.42	1.00
Labor and Freedom Alliance	0.11	0.11	0.72	0.11	0.11	0.94	0.12	0.12	0.10	0.65
Panel C. Strata Dummies										
Opposition sixtile 1	0.15	0.16	0.91	0.19	0.12	0.45	0.17	0.15	0.15	1.00
Opposition sixtile 2	0.12	0.15	0.39	0.15	0.14	0.69	0.14	0.16	0.14	0.85
Opposition sixtile 3	0.17	0.15	0.62	0.13	0.18	0.63	0.16	0.14	0.15	0.95
Opposition sixtile 4	0.16	0.12	0.34	0.14	0.08	0.17	0.14	0.12	0.10	0.73
Opposition sixtile 5	0.19	0.23	0.49	0.19	0.29	0.44	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.92
Opposition sixtile 6	0.21	0.20	0.79	0.20	0.19	0.93	0.16	0.19	0.23	0.84
Panel D. Region Dummies										
Region 1	0.24	0.23	0.88	0.27	0.16	0.33	0.21	0.28	0.20	0.80
Region 2	0.20	0.18	0.70	0.17	0.20	0.87	0.23	0.17	0.14	0.68
Region 3	0.13	0.11	0.74	0.14	0.08	0.37	0.12	0.08	0.14	0.71
Region 4	0.10	0.13	0.24	0.14	0.13	0.49	0.14	0.10	0.17	0.58
Region 5	0.16	0.11	0.16	0.09	0.15	0.12	0.09	0.16	0.09	0.18
Region 6	0.18	0.23	0.34	0.20	0.28	0.39	0.21	0.22	0.27	0.73

Notes: This table presents balance tests for the field experiment where we cross-randomized neighborhoods across two dimensions: two treatment campaigns (research-based and basic informational treatments) 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 row for each treatment campaign: research-based and basic informational treatments. 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 row for each treatment source: non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP. Column (10) reports the p-value for the test of no difference between columns (1), (7), (8), and (9). Panels A and B present balance tests on variables from the 2018 presidential and parliamentary 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-7: The Effects of Informational Treatments on Completed Conversations in the Field

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	The dependent variable is the fraction of households with completed conversations							
	Any			Research-based	Basic	Non-affiliated	IYI	CHP
Bundled	0.353							
	(0.013)							
Research-based		0.362		0.365	-0.003			
		(0.017)		(0.017)	(0.003)			
Basic		0.338		0.001	0.337			
		(0.017)		(0.004)	(0.017)			
Non-affiliated			0.447			0.445	-0.001	0.002
			(0.014)			(0.014)	(0.003)	(0.003)
IYI			0.195			0.002	0.194	-0.001
			(0.014)			(0.003)	(0.014)	(0.003)
CHP			0.423			-0.002	-0.001	0.427
			(0.015)			(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.015)
Observations	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614	2,614
F-Stat	773.4	398.5	602.6	247.6	209.5	333.2	61.0	275.9
p-value: Research-based=Basic		0.291						
p-value: Non-affiliated=IYI=CHP			0.000					

Notes: This table presents the first-stage estimates from our field experiment. Column 1 presents the treatment effects of our bundled treatment on the fraction of completed conversations, regardless of campaign type or canvasser affiliation. Columns 2 and 3 present the unbundled treatment effects on the same outcome, by campaign type and canvasser affiliation, respectively. Columns 4 and 5 present the treatment effects of the unbundled treatment by campaign type on the fraction of completed conversations containing the research-based and basic informational treatments, respectively. Columns 6, 7, and 8 present the treatment effects of the unbundled treatment by canvasser affiliation on the fraction of completed conversations conducted by non-affiliated, IYI, and CHP canvassers, respectively. The estimates are based on ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text and our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition's vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The table also reports the number of observations, the corresponding F-statistics, and the p-values for the test of equality of treatment effects across campaign types (Column 2) or canvasser affiliations (Column 3). Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Table A-8: Unbundled Treatment Effects in the Field Experiment with Different Controls

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Presidential First			Presidential Second			Parliamentary			Municipal 2024		
A. Research-based vs. Basic												
Research-based	0.003	0.010	0.009	0.002	0.009	0.008	0.003	0.009	0.009	0.001	0.006	0.010
	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Basic	0.017	0.006	0.006	0.016	0.005	0.006	0.016	0.005	0.005	0.024	0.016	0.013
	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.005)
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: Research-based=Basic	0.172	0.546	0.620	0.183	0.575	0.758	0.206	0.424	0.517	0.033	0.245	0.681
B. Canvasser Affiliation												
Non-affiliated	0.018	0.014	0.014	0.016	0.012	0.011	0.016	0.012	0.012	0.020	0.018	0.018
	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.008)
IYI	0.004	0.002	0.002	0.004	0.003	0.002	0.005	0.003	0.003	0.007	0.006	0.007
	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.005)
CHP	0.002	0.008	0.009	0.001	0.007	0.009	0.001	0.007	0.008	0.002	0.005	0.006
	(0.011)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.011)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.005)
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: Non-affiliated=IYI=CHP	0.455	0.314	0.196	0.541	0.526	0.334	0.523	0.471	0.373	0.389	0.479	0.308
Strata fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outcome in 2018		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Full set of controls			Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes

Notes: This table explores the robustness of our results from the field experiment to different sets of controls separately by treatment content (Panel A) and canvasser affiliation (Panel B). The results are shown for the 2023 first-round presidential election (Columns 1-3), the 2023 second-round presidential election (Columns 4-6), the 2023 parliamentary election (Columns 7-9), and the 2024 municipal election (Columns 10–12). The estimates are based on ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text. Columns 1, 4, 7, and 10 include only strata fixed effects as controls. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 include strata fixed effects and the 2018 opposition parliamentary vote share at the neighborhood level as controls. Columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 are based on our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The table also reports the number of observations and the mean of the dependent variable for the control group. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Table A-9: Unbundled Treatment Effects in the Online Experiment Under Different Controls

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	A. Effectiveness of Institutions				
Placebo Media	0.020	0.031	0.005	-0.009	-0.001
	(0.048)	(0.042)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.036)
Placebo Democracy	0.029	0.036	-0.004	-0.010	-0.023
	(0.048)	(0.043)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Treatment Media	0.088	0.086	0.069	0.056	0.065
	(0.048)	(0.042)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Treatment Democracy	0.106	0.128	0.090	0.068	0.065
	(0.047)	(0.042)	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.036)
Observations	4,232	4,182	4,007	3,614	3,614
Mean	2.540	2.540	2.540	2.540	2.540
p-value Media: Placebo=Treatment	0.156	0.195	0.070	0.081	0.071
p-value Democracy: Placebo=Treatment	0.103	0.029	0.008	0.037	0.015
	B. State of Institutions				
Placebo Media	-0.064	-0.030	-0.014	0.005	-0.008
	(0.047)	(0.026)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.021)
Placebo Democracy	-0.057	-0.114	-0.080	-0.073	-0.047
	(0.047)	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.020)
Treatment Media	-0.131	-0.064	-0.064	-0.056	-0.065
	(0.047)	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.022)
Treatment Democracy	-0.101	-0.150	-0.094	-0.086	-0.070
	(0.047)	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.020)
Observations	4,343	4,343	4,150	3,678	3,678
Mean	1.417	1.417	1.417	1.417	1.417
p-value Media: Placebo=Treatment	0.156	0.214	0.041	0.016	0.009
p-value Democracy: Placebo=Treatment	0.337	0.155	0.551	0.584	0.230
	C. 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	0.577	0.577	0.577	0.577	0.577
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 at baseline		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Imbalanced controls			Yes	Yes	Yes
Full set of controls					Yes

Notes: This table explores the robustness to varying the set of controls of our results for the unbundled treatments from the online experiment. Panels report effectiveness of institutions, perceived change in state of institutions, and self-reported intention to vote for the opposition (see notes to figures for definitions). Column 1 includes no controls. Column 2 includes the pre-treatment value of the dependent variable for the same individual. Columns 3 and 4 additionally include the baseline variables for which we observe imbalances in Appendix Table A-4 at the 5% and 10% levels, respectively, while Column 5 is based on our baseline specification that includes the full set of pre-treatment variables listed in Appendix Table A-4 as controls. The table also reports the number of observations, the mean of the dependent variable, and the p-value from a test of equality between the placebo and informational treatments. Standard errors are robust to heteroskedasticity. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Table A-10: 2SLS Estimates of the Effect of Completed Conversations on the Opposition's Vote Share in the Field Experiment with Different Controls

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Presidential First			Presidential Second			Parliamentary			Municipal 2024		
A. Bundled Treatment												
Completed Conversation	0.023	0.023	0.022	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.022	0.021	0.021	0.028	0.027	0.031
	(0.022)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.013)
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. Research-based vs. Basic												
Completed Conversation - Research-based	0.007	0.026	0.025	0.005	0.024	0.023	0.007	0.026	0.024	0.003	0.016	0.027
	(0.026)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.025)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.025)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.016)
Completed Conversation - Basic	0.051	0.017	0.018	0.048	0.015	0.019	0.047	0.014	0.015	0.070	0.046	0.037
	(0.027)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.026)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.026)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.016)
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: Research-based=Basic	0.154	0.604	0.680	0.164	0.624	0.820	0.185	0.470	0.566	0.027	0.206	0.600
C. Canvasser Affiliation												
Completed Conversation - Non-affiliated	0.041	0.032	0.030	0.036	0.027	0.025	0.036	0.027	0.026	0.046	0.040	0.042
	(0.026)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.026)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.025)	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.026)	(0.022)	(0.018)
Completed Conversation - IYI	0.020	0.012	0.008	0.022	0.013	0.012	0.024	0.016	0.014	0.038	0.031	0.037
	(0.053)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.051)	(0.025)	(0.021)	(0.052)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.054)	(0.036)	(0.027)
Completed Conversation - CHP	0.005	0.019	0.020	0.003	0.017	0.022	0.004	0.017	0.019	0.004	0.012	0.015
	(0.025)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.025)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.024)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.023)	(0.015)	(0.012)
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: Non-affiliated=IYI=CHP	0.530	0.733	0.633	0.592	0.858	0.865	0.562	0.852	0.843	0.391	0.491	0.277
Strata fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outcome in 2018		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Full set of controls			Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes

Notes: This table examines the robustness of the effect of completed conversations on the opposition's vote share in the field experiment to different sets of controls. Panel A presents the results for the bundled treatment, while Panels B and C present the results separately by treatment content (Panel B) and canvasser affiliation (Panel C). The results are shown for the 2023 first-round presidential election (Columns 1–3), the 2023 second-round presidential election (Columns 4–6), the 2023 parliamentary election (Columns 7–9), and the 2024 municipal election (Columns 10–12). The estimates are based on 2SLS estimates of the equation reported in footnote 23. Columns 1, 4, 7, and 10 include only strata fixed effects as controls. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 include strata fixed effects and the 2018 opposition parliamentary vote share at the neighborhood level as controls. Columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 are based on our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The table also reports the number of observations and the mean of the dependent variable for the control group. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Table A-11: Field Experiment Results Are Driven by Neighborhoods with Lower Opposition Support in 2018

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Presidential First			Presidential Second			Parliamentary			Municipal 2024		
A. Neighborhoods with Below-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018												
Treatment	0.015	0.013	0.011	0.016	0.014	0.009	0.014	0.012	0.010	0.013	0.012	0.011
	(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.006)
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	0.483	0.483	0.483	0.511	0.511	0.511	0.516	0.516	0.516	0.503	0.503	0.503
B. Neighborhoods with Above-Median Opposition Vote Share in 2018												
Treatment	0.003	0.004	0.004	0.000	0.002	0.004	0.003	0.004	0.004	0.007	0.008	0.005
	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)
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	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.638	0.638	0.638	0.629	0.629	0.629	0.599	0.599	0.599
Strata fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outcome in 2018		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Full set of controls			Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes

Notes: This table explores the robustness of our main field experiment results, using different sets of controls, separately for neighborhoods with opposition vote shares below the median (Panel A) and above the median (Panel B) in the 2018 parliamentary election. The outcome is the opposition's vote share, which is presented for the 2023 presidential election, the 2023 presidential run-off, the 2023 parliamentary election, and the 2024 municipal election, as indicated in the header. The results are based on ITT estimates of equation (1) in the text. Columns 1, 4, 7, and 10 include only strata fixed effects. Columns 2, 5, 8, and 11 include strata fixed effects and the 2018 opposition parliamentary vote share at the neighborhood level as controls. Columns 3, 6, 9, and 12 are based on our baseline specification, which includes as controls the number of registered voters at each ballot box in 2023; ballot-box geographic controls (population density, precipitation, temperature, ruggedness, distance to Istanbul, and distance to the coast); neighborhood-level controls from the 2018 parliamentary election (opposition vote share, turnout, and number of registered voters); as well as dummies for different regions and strata fixed effects. The table also reports the number of observations and the mean of the dependent variable for the control group. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are robust to heteroskedasticity. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.

Table A-12: Bundled Treatment Effects in the Online Experiment with Different Controls – Heterogeneity by Baseline Beliefs about Institutional Change

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Sample of Individuals with Above-Median Perceived Change in State of Institutions at Baseline					Sample of Individuals with Below-Median Perceived Change in State of Institutions at Baseline				
	A. The Dependent Variable is the Effectiveness 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	1.986	1.986	1.986	1.986	1.986	3.048	3.048	3.048	3.048	3.048
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 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	2.188	2.188	2.188	2.188	2.188	0.687	0.687	0.687	0.687	0.687
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 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	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.934	0.934	0.934	0.934	0.934
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 at baseline		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 explores the robustness of our main results from the online experiment to varying the set of controls separately for respondents with above-median perceived change in the state of institutions at baseline (Columns 1-5) and below-median perceived change in the state of institutions at baseline (Columns 6-10). Panels report effectiveness of institutions (Panel A), perceived change in state of institutions (Panel B), and self-reported intention to vote for the opposition (Panel C) (see notes to figures for definitions). Columns 1 and 6 have no additional controls, Columns 2 and 7 include the outcome in the pre-treatment period, Columns 3, 4, 8, and 9 control for the outcome in the pre-treatment survey and the five baseline variables for which we observe imbalance in Table A-4 at the 10% level (Closeness Nation Alliance, Top government priority Inflation, Better institutions improve economy, Level institutions: 2023 and Current support for party voted), and Columns 5 and 10 are based on our baseline specification that includes the full set of pre-treatment variables listed in Appendix Table A-4 as controls. The table also reports the number of observations, the mean of the dependent variable for the control group and the p-value from a test of equality between the placebo and informational treatments. Standard errors are robust to heteroskedasticity. For more details on variables and measurement, see Appendix Table A-1.