Chiefs' Endorsements and Voter Behavior *

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Abstract

Traditional leaders can influence electoral outcomes. We designed an experiment to investigate why public endorsements by chiefs affect voters – and which types of voters they influence. Chiefs have incentives to prefer politicians who will promote local development, and can use endorsements to sway elections accordingly. We argue that voters often interpret chiefs' endorsements as a signal of candidate quality. To assess this argument, we exposed voters to real endorsements made by chiefs during Ghana's 2020 presidential election. We show that endorsements impact the vote choice of undecided voters. Consistent with a signaling mechanism, respondents exposed to chiefs' rationale for endorsing a candidate were no more likely to vote for the endorsed candidate than those who only heard chiefs' approval of a candidate. Further, treated respondents hold higher evaluations of the endorsed candidate on multiple dimensions of candidate quality. Our results suggest that chiefs influence voters through a non-coercive mechanism, which has positive implications for accountability.

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1 Introduction

Most Africans approve of the performance of their traditional leaders – unelected notables whose prominent positions derive from their communities' historical socio-cultural customs (Baldwin 2016).[1] Chiefs' words and actions have been found to influence voter behavior in a number of countries, including South Africa, Senegal, Zambia and Ghana (De Kadt and Larreguy 2018; Koter 2013; Baldwin 2013; Nathan 2019). While there is some consensus that chiefs can influence voters, there is much more debate surrounding (and fewer empirical answers to) questions related to the extent of their impact, which voters are swayed, and why. Since roughly a quarter of the world's population lives under the authority of traditional leaders,[2] a better understanding of their influence is relevant in African countries and beyond (Baldwin and Holzinger 2019).

Understanding how traditional leaders can persuade individuals to vote for the chiefs' preferred political candidates is important because if chiefs rely on coercive tactics, this can undermine electoral accountability. Traditional leaders' control over local social and economic benefits (Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson 2014) may pressure citizens to oblige their chief's wishes due to feared material repercussions or norms of deference (Koter 2013; Mamdani 2018; Ntsebeza 2005). However, if chiefs influence voters via *noncoercive mechanisms*, they may instead bolster political responsiveness by helping voters coordinate their support for candidates who will perform best for their communities (Baldwin 2016).

In this study, we focus on one way in which chiefs can influence voting behavior: by publicly endorsing political candidates. We argue that in many contexts the effect of chiefly endorsements on vote choice likely operates through a non-coercive channel. Chiefs have both public and private incentives to bring development to their traditional areas. They often have physical and economic ties to an area and are unable to transfer locations. Their public legitimacy also often depends on bringing development to local residents (Boafo-Arthur 2003). Since they cannot levy their own

[1] For example, see Logan 2013 and Logan and Katenda 2021

[2] This percentage rises to 80% in African countries.

taxes, chiefs largely rely on public funds (controlled by politicians) for new projects. Given these incentives, it is rational for chiefs to support political candidates who they believe will promote local development. To the extent that voters also seek to elect welfare-enhancing candidates and believe that chiefs care about development, we argue that they interpret chiefs' endorsements as a signal of candidate quality and rally around the endorsed politician. Voters pay more attention to the *source* of the endorsement and the incentives of this actor than to the endorsement's informational content.

We also expect the impact of endorsements to vary according to voters' partisanship. A signaling mechanism is unlikely to alter the attitudes of voters who are already aligned with an endorsed candidate, as they already believe the candidate will perform well. Endorsements will have more significant effects on voters who do not hold strong partisan preferences – unaligned voters. Unaligned voters may use endorsements to update their beliefs about a candidate or political party.

We also expect endorsements to have larger effects among voters who approve of their chief; prior studies have found that endorsements influence voting behavior when voters perceive the source to be credible (Lupia 1994). Citizens who disapprove of their chief's performance are less likely to believe he is a credible source. We pre-registered the hypotheses that we test in this paper.[3] Below, we also note one instance where we test a hypothesis that was not pre-registered.

There are at least three empirical challenges associated with estimating and understanding the causal effect of endorsements. First, since traditional leaders may back candidates who are already popular, correlations between endorsements and vote shares may be an unreliable measure of chiefs' influence.[4] The second challenge is related to the mechanism: since coercive and non-coercive channels of chiefly influence can both generate the same observed outcome (i.e., a vote for the endorsed candidate), it is difficult to identify voters' motivations. Finally, aggregate vote returns

[3] Appendix A presents our pre-registered hypotheses and notes deviations from the original pre-analysis plan. The full pre-analysis plan can be found here: [url redacted for anonymity].

[4] The endorsements literature acknowledges this endogeneity problem. For example, see Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009; Kousser et al. 2015.

cannot be used to discover which types of voters are influenced by chiefs' partisan endorsements.

We use an experimental approach to overcome these challenges, and to estimate the causal effects of chiefly endorsements on citizens' vote choices in Ghana's December 2020 presidential election. Our design allows us to move beyond prior studies in two ways. First, by randomizing chiefly endorsements at the individual level, we can assess *which* voters are driven by such messages. Second, and relatedly, we investigate *why* endorsements influence vote choice in presidential races. We do so by unbundling individual components of endorsement messages, as well as by assessing the impact of endorsements on an array of potential intermediate outcomes. To the best of our knowledge, our study is the first to experimentally manipulate exposure to endorsements in a developing democracy using real endorsements made by actual elites during an election campaign.

We limit our analysis to paramount chiefs because these are the leaders presidential candidates seek endorsements from.[5] We also restrict the study to endorsements of the *incumbent* presidential candidate to avoid possible heterogeneity according to candidate status. We also discuss potential ethical concerns related to conducting an experiment close to an election in Section 5.1.[6]

To assess our argument, we randomly exposed individuals to news about their traditional leader's endorsement of the incumbent presidential candidate (one of the two main candidates in the race). This news consisted of *real* messages delivered by chiefs at public events during the campaign. To reiterate, our treatment consists of three distinct public endorsements messages, with respondents matched to their corresponding traditional leader in three traditional areas. We investigated the treatment's immediate and medium-term effects by interviewing the panel of respondents (N $\approx 1,700$) in two waves: the week before the presidential election (Wave 1) and about a week after the election (Wave 2).

To assess whether endorsements operate via a signaling mechanism based on the source's position or through their informational content, we disaggregated endorsement messages into two

[5]Parliamentary candidates seek endorsements from sub-chiefs either instead of, or in addition to, paramount chiefs.
[6]The authors' academic institution provided ethics approval for the research project.

components: (1) explicit *approval* of a candidate and (2) a *rationale* for their support. To evaluate our argument that voters will positively update their attitudes regarding the candidate's expected quality and performance, we gathered data on theoretically relevant intermediate outcome variables (e.g., expectations of local public goods). We also collected intermediate outcomes that would indicate coercive channels (e.g., fear of exclusion) to assess alternative mechanisms.

Our results show that endorsements influence voters' attitudes and behavior. In the full sample, the treatment had a significant and strong immediate effect, stimulating a 4-percentage-point (pp) increase in *intention* to vote for the endorsed candidate. Disaggregating these results by prior partisanship, this effect is concentrated among unaligned voters, who experience a 12-pp treatment effect. Considering *actual* vote choice, the effect disappears in the full sample. However, we continue to detect a positive and significant effect among unaligned voters, who are 8.5 pp more likely to have voted for the endorsed candidate. As expected, these effects are moderated by approval of the chief: the treatment effect among unaligned voters who also approve of their chief's performance is 14 pp.

Regarding mechanisms, we find that providing voters with information about *why* the chief endorsed a particular candidate had no additional effect beyond the approval message. This suggests that endorsements operate through a signaling – as opposed to a direct informational – channel. Our investigation of intermediate outcomes suggests that this signaling runs through a positive channel. Voters exposed to the treatment update positively on candidate characteristics and expected performance. A mediation analysis indicates that the public's expectation that the endorsed presidential candidate will deliver local development (i.e., local public goods) is most responsible for driving the positive treatment effect among unaligned voters.

This study makes three significant contributions. First, we advance the literature on traditional leaders and democratic accountability by providing evidence that chiefs do not influence residents' voting behavior through coercion. Our results build on those of Baldwin (2013; 2016), but suggest a broader argument. Citizens vote with their chiefs because they expect traditional leaders to

support candidates who share their interest in local development; this effect is independent of whether they think local public goods are co-produced by chiefs and politicians. These results have positive implications for electoral accountability, as voters can punish politicians who renege on their promises. In Section 8, we outline three potentially important scope conditions for our argument.

Second, the study contributes to the literature on indirect political appeals in the context of a developing democracy. Our results suggest that the *source* of an endorsement matters more than its informational content, and that such messages can persuade unaligned voters. These findings build on research from Bolivia, which shows that voters can be persuaded even when endorsements contain no direct information about policy platforms (Poertner 2021). The implication is that organizations or elites who seek to influence voters need to build public legitimacy rather than hone their messages.

Third, our findings add to the literature on voting behavior and persuasion during campaigns. These findings share similarities with results from Kenya that endorsements from in-group members can persuade voters to support out-group politicians (Arriola, Choi, and Gichohi 2021). They also complement burgeoning research on the role of trusted elites in shaping electoral or civic attitudes in developing democracies (McClendon and Riedl 2019; Condra, Isaqzadeh, and Linardi 2019; Blair et al. 2021; A. Grossman, Nomikos, and Siddiqui 2022).

2 Theoretical background and hypotheses

Chiefs can influence the voting behavior of local residents (De Kadt and Larreguy 2018; Koter 2013; Baldwin 2013; Nathan 2019). Based on findings from the prior literature, our theoretical starting point is not *whether* endorsements influence voters, but *why*. Theoretically, endorsements by local elites (including chiefs) may influence voters through coercive or non-coercive channels. Coercive mechanisms entail voters interpreting endorsements as an instruction to vote for a leader's

preferred candidate to avoid potential sanctions, for example, losing access to private benefits or services that chiefs control. Under such mechanisms, voters do not consider the candidate's quality or expected performance (Stokes 2005; Mares and Young 2019). In contrast, non-coercive channels involve voters using endorsements as a signal of candidate quality or expected high performance.

Much of the literature suggests that chiefs mobilize support for particular candidates through coercive channels. Chiefs are important elites who are embedded in their communities' social, economic, and political networks. They often have significant powers, including the ability to determine (customary) laws, allocate land, and adjudicate disputes (Goldstein and Udry 2008; Koter 2013; Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson 2014; Baldwin 2016; Baldwin and Mvukiyehe 2015).[7] They also often manage the distribution of private investments, aid projects, and government patronage within their communities (Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Adotey 2019).[8] Accordingly, chiefs can leverage their networks to monitor and sanction citizens' behavior, including their vote choice (Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson 2014). Coupled with the chiefs' authority over laws, land rights, and the distribution of patronage within their communities, citizens may fear they will be disadvantaged if they do not oblige their wishes (Koter 2013; Conroy-Krutz 2018).

Yet, the image of fearful and threatening chiefs is somewhat at odds with public opinion data which shows that chiefs are popular and well trusted in many African countries. The most recent Afrobarometer surveys, which were conducted in 2019–2021, show that traditional leaders consistently receive significantly higher ratings – on trust, performance, listening, and lack of corruption – than elected representatives. Across 22 African countries, 64% of respondents had *a lot* or *some* trust in, and approval of, their chief.[9] Africans are four times as likely to say that

[7]Some scholars suggest that traditional authorities' importance to the socioeconomic lives of citizens varies with the level of urbanization (e.g., Koter 2016; Nathan 2019b). However, regarding land allocation and rights, chiefs remain principal actors even in urban areas, where there is intense commercialization of land (Knierzinger 2011).

[8]For example, Adotey (2019) reports a World Bank project that delivers a $5 million grant directly to the Ashanti and Akyem traditional authorities in Ghana to supply education and health services in their communities and to build their capacities to resolve disputes.

[9]By contrast, in the same sample, only 39% trusted and 38% approved of the performance of their national representative.

traditional leaders listen to them compared to elected parliamentarians.

We argue that in many contexts endorsements by chiefs are likely to influence voters through a non-coercive channel that is rooted in traditional leaders' desire to advance local development. Chiefs have public and private incentives to help bring to power politicians they expect to perform well. It is thus rational for voters to interpret chiefly endorsements as a credible signal of candidate quality. Voters then vote with their chief not because they are coerced, but because they expect the favored candidate to best serve the community.

Since the pre-colonial period, traditional leaders' legitimacy has been linked with their ability to advance the socio-economic wellbeing of citizens within their traditional areas (Addo-Fening 2008; Logan 2013). Citizens expect chiefs to use their access to, and control over, local and external resources to support local development. Since several democratic constitutions do not allow chiefs to tax residents, they must rely on resources from either the government or non-governmental organizations to provide major public infrastructure in their traditional areas. This reliance on government resources ties chiefs' fates to the actions of politicians. Accordingly, chiefs have an incentive to use their positions to rally public support for political candidates who they think will help deliver public goods to local communities (Boafo-Arthur 2003).

Beyond chiefs' public reputations, they also have private incentives to support candidates who they expect to better serve their communities. Chiefs cannot transfer their authority to another traditional area or region. Baldwin (2016) describes them as "stationary bandits" in classical Olsonian terms (p. 21). Accordingly, chiefs typically make economic investments in their traditional areas, for example locating businesses there (Goldstein and Udry 2008). Chiefs also often receive royalties from the sale of natural resources in their traditional areas. These private economic interests incentivize chiefs to back candidates who they believe will provide infrastructure that supports the local economy.

Finally, formal institutions encourage good governance and benevolent leadership by chiefs. While chiefs are typically not elected, they can be sanctioned or removed if they do not serve in the

interests of local communities. They also typically rule by consensus and are subject to oversight, for example by councils of advisers (Addo-Fening 2008; Nathan 2019). These advisers may question chiefs who support a candidate who is not expected to perform well. Baldwin and Holzinger (2019) report that 68% of traditional institutions use inclusive decision-making approaches: chiefs often consult with a broad cross-section of the population to make decisions.

Importantly, these incentives need to be combined with chiefs having the *ability* to gather relevant information on political candidates. Chiefs can gain information about candidates through two types of interactions with them that voters and other community leaders are often not privy too. First, paramount chiefs interact with national-level politicians through their seats on regional or national advisory bodies. Such bodies include, for example, Ghana and Botswana's National House of Chiefs, and South Africa's National House of Traditional Leaders. Second, political candidates may hold meetings with paramount chiefs during election campaigns. Through these meetings, chiefs acquire knowledge of the presidential candidates' intensions.

Regarding voters, voters also typically seek to elect politicians who they expect will bring development to their communities. For example, in national elections, voters prefer presidential candidates who promise to dedicate public funds to specific local projects (Wantchekon 2003). Therefore, voters' and chiefs' interests are often aligned, which can lead citizens to vote for a chief's preferred candidate because they expect this individual to best serve their community. In short, voters takes chiefly endorsements as a signal of candidate quality and future performance.

Our focus on citizens' developmental concerns and chiefs' role in development is similar to that of Baldwin (2013, 2016). However, unlike Baldwin, our argument does not assume that voters think the chief and the endorsed candidate will *coproduce* local public goods. Baldwin (2013) uses data from Zambia to show that exposure to endorsements increases voter support for the endorsed parliamentary candidate by 18 pp for people who perceive the joint importance of their chief and Member of Parliament delivering development, compared to a 4-pp increase in the full sample. However, while the argument of coproduction is convincing, it is less applicable to presidential

candidates. In the context of presidential elections, individual chiefs are unlikely to directly wotk with elected presidents to fundraise for, and construct, local infrastructure.

If voters take endorsements by chiefs as a signal of candidate quality, we can expect voters who are exposed to endorsements to assess the endorsed candidate as being of higher quality – more likeable and trustworthy, in our context. In evaluating candidates' performance, we expect voters to update their beliefs that the approved candidate will successfully deliver local development. While we outline a non-coercive mechanism that aligns the interests of voters and chiefs, given prior literature we also explore coercive channels of influence. We test two types of coercive strategies: (1) distributing private benefits and (2) threatening to withdraw private or public benefits. To test the former, we assess whether individuals who are exposed to endorsements vote for the favored candidate because they expect to receive private benefits from the chief. To investigate the latter, we evaluate whether chiefly endorsements influence vote choice because voters fear negative reprisals for themselves or their community.

While many voters may interpret endorsements from chiefs as a signal of candidate quality, such support is unlikely to have uniform effects across voters (Kousser et al. 2015). The endorsement may have little effect on voters who already support the endorsed candidate, as it provides no new information; ceiling effects will likely mask any positive effects for co-partisan supporters. By contrast, unaligned or opposition voters may be swayed by the endorsement since it can provide new information about the candidate. Unaligned (or "swing") voters have also been shown to base their voting decisions on public goods provision (Weghorst and Lindberg 2013). Accordingly, if non-partisans take the endorsement as a signal of performance, this show of support will encourage them to vote for the favored candidate. In theory, the endorsement may cause opposition voters to moderate their positions and switch their support to the endorsed candidate (Brierley, Kramon, and Ofosu 2020; Platas and Raffler 2021). However, it is equally likely that they will not be moved by chiefly endorsements as other information continues to hold sway. Accordingly, we assess whether chiefly endorsements have a greater effect on voters who are (i) undecided or (ii) opposition

supporters.

Voters' prior evaluation of the chief is also likely to condition the extent to which the leader's endorsement influences their voting decision. In general, endorsements have been shown to influence voters when the source is deemed to be honest or credible (Lupia 1994) – i.e., they consistently provide accurate and valuable information to, or perform useful services for, the voter (Sobel 1985). Research from Kenya shows that only endorsements from co-ethnic elites can persuade citizens to support non-coethnic political candidates (Arriola, Choi, and Gichohi 2021). This suggests that endorsements are most effective when voters trust the endorser. Therefore, we argue that those who approved (did not approve) of the chief prior to treatment may be more (less) influenced by his endorsement. Specifically, we hypothesize that endorsements will have stronger effects on those who have higher pre-treatment evaluations of the chief.

3 Ghanaian chiefs in context

Ghana has held multi-party elections since 1992. Presidents are elected via majority rule in a single nationwide constituency.[10] Because votes count equally irrespective of where they are cast, parties have an incentive to mobilize nationally. Two parties dominate national politics – the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). In the 2020 election that we studied, Nana Akuffo-Addo (NPP) was the incumbent president, and his main competitor was John Mahama (NDC). Akuffo-Addo won the election with 51% of the votes.

Chiefs play important socio-economic and cultural roles in life across rural and urban constituencies that are comparable to those in other African countries along three dimensions: they (1) promote local development, (2) allocate land, and (3) resolve local disputes. First, chiefs have been key development actors since pre-colonial times (Boafo-Arthur 2003). Communities often select highly educated chiefs in anticipation that they will use their professional networks to organize and

[10] If no candidate secures a majority in the first round, the top two candidates compete in a second round.

lobby for local development projects and initiatives (Kleist 2011). To support local development, chiefs often develop bilateral ties to international donors and establish personal foundations with developmental aims. Second, and relatedly, traditional institutions control more than three-quarters (78%) of Ghana's land (Colandef 2019). Chiefs' control over land relates to their developmental role, because government actors must gain their permission to construct new local infrastructure. Control over lands by traditional authorities is relatively common in many African countries. Afrobarometer (Round 8) data indicates that across 22 African countries 54% of respondents believe chiefs influence land allocation, rising to over 60% in Sierra Leona, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Niger, Zambia, and Liberia (Logan and Katenda 2021). Third, chiefs mediate local disputes. Recent Afrobarometer data (Round 8) shows that 71% of African respondents thought traditional leaders have "a lot" or "some" influence in solving local disputes (Logan and Katenda 2021). These figures reach 80% or more in Lesotho, Sierra Leona, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya.

Our study is conducted in traditional areas in the Bono, Bono East, and Ahafo regions. Chiefs from these regions are part of the Akan chieftaincy system.[11] Selection into positions can be very competitive. Chiefs are selected based on both hereditary criteria and their level of education and professional backgrounds (Boafo-Arthur 2003; Kleist 2011).

We focus on the pronouncements of paramount chiefs who head the sub-chiefs of communities that constitutes the traditional area. It is true that citizens interact more with their community chiefs than paramount chiefs. Moreover, in theory, sub-chiefs may endorse a different candidate to the paramount chief. However, paramount chiefs often consult and "speak" on behalf of their community chiefs. In all the endorsements that we study, the paramount chiefs stated that their endorsement represents that of their council of sub-chiefs and elders. Therefore, citizens are likely to believe that their local chief support the candidate endorsed by the paramount chief.

[11] We discuss in Section 5.1 the rationale behind the selection of the traditional areas that we worked it.

3.1 Chiefs and politics

While many countries prohibit chiefs from explicitly participating in party politics, they are often believed to influence the outcomes of elections in African countries. According to Round 8 of the Afrobarometer, nearly 40% of Africans think chiefs have "a lot" or "some" influence over vote choice.[12] Ghana's constitution bans chiefs from engaging in "active partisan politics" and prohibits them from becoming Members of Parliament (Articles 276 and 277). The Code of Royal Ethics, published by Ghana's House of Chiefs (2012), also states that "A chief should not openly declare his support by word or deed for a particular political party" (3.1.6).

Yet traditional leaders have pronounced their support for presidential candidates in all eight of the country's multi-party elections (Ansah-Koi 1996; Gyimah-Boadi 2007; Boafo-Arthur 2003).[13] In the 2016 presidential elections, the paramount chiefs of the Gbese, Dormaa, and Sunyani traditional areas declared their support for the incumbent, NDC candidate John Mahama. The paramount chiefs of Sefwi Anhwiaso, Adoagyir, and Nwoase-Ahenkro supported the opposition NPP's candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo.[14]

Presidential aspirants actively court chiefs' endorsements because they believe they can influence voters (Rathbone 2000; Gyampo 2009).[15] During the December 2020 election, the incumbent president's campaign team publicly claimed that 95% of chiefs had endorsed the president.[16]

Explicit endorsements from chiefs were also reported in recent elections in Zambia and Malawi.[17] In Malawi, the head of the Electoral Commission urged traditional leaders not to endorse candidates and to desist from creating "no-go zones," stating that chiefs are "expected to be

[12] High shares of respondents identify chiefs as vote brokers in Nigeria (60%), Liberia (60%), Mali (51%), and Zambia (49%) (Logan and Katenda 2021).

[13] There is a longstanding debate on whether such endorsements are unconstitutional.

[14] Source: "Why chiefs should not engage in partisan politics", April 20, 2020.

[15] Parliamentary candidates have also been known to solicit the help of chiefs to persuade or coerce rival candidates to stand down (Jonah 2003).

[16] *GhanaWeb*, "95% of chiefs have endorsed Akufo-Addo – Eugene Arhin," October 5, 2020. https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/95-of-chiefs-have-endorsed-Akufo-Addo-Eugene-Arhin-1077946.

[17] *Lusaka Times*, "Kawambwa chiefs endorse President Lungu 2021 candidature," November 29, 2020. https://www.lusakatimes.com/2020/11/29/kawambwa-chiefs-endorse-president-lungu-2021-candidature/.

non-partisan when discharging their duties."[18]

Public endorsements by chiefs generate considerable debate in Ghana. Those concerned about the practice argue that it violates the constitution (Gyampo 2009). Beyond the legal ramifications, there are concerns that such pronouncements damage a chief's reputation and jeopardize their long-term ability to promote local governance and development (Gyampo 2009; Boafo-Arthur 2003). Partisan engagements can also damage the perception that chiefs are wise and symbols of cohesion and unity (Abotchie 2006; Ansah-Koi 1996).[19] By inciting partisan divides, citizens may refuse to comply with a chief's call to contribute labor or in-kind support (or pay levies) to collective projects in the future (Nugent 1996) or send their disputes to the leader (Addo-Fening 2008). However, others argue that endorsements do not constitute engagement in active partisan politics, and that chiefs have a constitutional right to voice their political opinions (Boafo-Arthur 2003).

4 Chiefly political endorsements

We define *chiefly political endorsements* as a traditional leader's public praise of *and* direct appeal to dependents to vote for a particular candidate. Such endorsements must express *explicit electoral support*. Such endorsements may occur at a chief's palace, traditional ceremonial grounds, or a public (official) event. We consider political endorsements to differ from the routine courtesy visits of political aspirants to chiefs' palaces, usually to ask for "permission" to mobilize voters within the traditional area.

Such endorsements typically contain three components. First, the traditional leader applauds the national policies of the political aspirant. Second, he expresses "appreciation" for the politician's supply of local public infrastructure and social programs and appeals for more. Third, he calls on

[18]Green Muheya and Duncan Mlanjira, "Malawi: MEC Cautions Malawi Chiefs On Endorsing Presidential Candidates, Creating Create 'No-Go-Zones,' " May 2, 2020. https://allafrica.com/stories/202005040101.html.

[19]Also, see comments by Abdul Malik Kweku Baako, the Editor-in-Chief of the *New Crusading* Newspaper in "Why chiefs should not engage in partisan politics", April 20, 2020.

resisdents to vote for the politician or pledge their support to the candidate.

In our study, for example, the paramount chief of Drobo Traditional Area, Okokyeredom Sakyi Ako II, praised the president for his exemplary bravery and leadership. He also lauded the "many" social intervention programs he had rolled out, including the Free Senior High School program (*national policy*). He expressed gratitude to the president for rehabilitating the 31.7 km Baafono-Zezera-Adamsu feeder road (*local infrastructure*). He then appealed for him to build a mast to boost telecommunication network connectivity, build a police station to strengthen security, and help complete the Drobo-Berekum road (*request*). The speech ended with the chief assuring the president that he and his people "will not let him down," and that they should grant him "Four more [years] for Nana" (*endorsement*).[20]

5 Research design

We adopt an experimental approach to estimate the causal effects of chiefly political endorsements on citizens' vote choice. The treatments take the form of audio news reports that were designed to be as authentic as possible in three ways. First, they were designed to sound like actual news reports of endorsements that voters may hear on the radio. Second, they contained only *real* information that each chief said during an actual political endorsement event. Third, they contained the chief's voice as they made the endorsement: respondents in the treatment groups listened to the message from their own paramount chief.[21] These features add to the external validity of the study. The news reporter was held constant across all treatment audios.[22] The recordings were in Akan, the dominant local language in all three traditional areas studied. The treatment was as similar as possible across the three traditional areas, although the specific projects that chiefs mentioned obviously varied according to the local context.

[20] Appendix I describes the content of the three endorsments, which all took the same structure as above.
[21] We obtained these voice clips from public recordings of campaign events.
[22] The authors employed a reporter for this project.

We explore potential mechanisms in two ways. First, we examine whether a chief's reason for approving a candidate has an independent or additional effect on behavior by exposing a subset of respondents to the chief's rationale. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three treatment arms: (1) the chief's *endorsement* (as described in Section 4) (A), (2) the chief's endorsement (A) plus *rationale* (B), and the control group (Table 2). Those in the control group listened to an apolitical comedy skit. Each audio segment was 4.5 minutes long. Second, we investigate mechanisms by testing the effect of the treatment on theoretically relevant intermediate variables.

5.1 Sampling, interview procedure, and ethical considerations

While the random selection of traditional areas into the sample may be desirable, this sampling method was not possible for multiple reasons. First, we limited our sample to traditional areas where the chief had publicly endorsed the incumbent candidate. This was to ensure that our treatment contained only genuine information. Indeed, an important ethical concern of the project is that the treatment could induce feelings of coercion among treated respondents. Only operating in chieftaincies where paramount chiefs had made actual public endorsements ensured that the treatment exposed respondents to information they may have "naturally" encountered in their ordinary lives.

Second, we restricted the sample to a single chieftaincy system. We focused on the Akan system because endorsements of the incumbent were prevalent among Akan chiefs, and because this is the largest traditional system in the country. Finally, within the Akan system we restricted the sample to traditional areas in the Bono, Bono East, and Ahafo regions. We selected these regions because they are electorally competitive, which ensures a mix of partisan preferences among voters. Finally, we selected traditional areas where the chiefs' endorsements were similar in length and detail to promote consistency in the treatment across traditional areas. Further analysis shows that the sampled traditional areas are comparable to traditional areas that fall under the Akan system of

governance, and the nation more broadly.[23] For example, levels of contact and approval of chiefs within the sampled areas is 25 and 58 percent, respectively, compared to nationwide figures of 21 and 55 percent, and Akan area only figures of 20 and 52 percent.[24]

Table 1: Traditional areas in the sample

Region	Traditional Area	Name of Chief	Constituencies
Ahafo	Duayaw Nkwanta	Nana Boakye Tromo III	Tano North/Tano South
Bono East	Techiman	Nana Oseadeayo Akumfi Ameyaw IV	Techiman South
Bono	Drobo	Okokyeredom Sakyi Ako II	Jaman South

Within traditional areas, the sampling of respondents and randomization decisions were guided by two further ethical considerations. First, we ensured that the number of respondents who received the endorsement audio constituted only a small percentage of the electorate to avoid the risk that our experiment influenced the election outcome.[25] Second, randomization occurred at the individual, rather than cluster, level to minimize the potential for spillover effects.

Our sample comprises of 1,706 respondents located in three traditional areas. Four electoral constituencies were nested within these traditional areas. Communities (electoral areas) within a constituency may fall under different traditional authorities. Before administering the survey, we worked with personnel at traditional councils and local governments to identify the electoral areas and polling stations under a chief's jurisdiction. We took a random sample of 24 polling stations in each authority, 96 polling stations in total.[26]

At the sampled polling stations, enumerators used a random-walk technique to select households.

[23] In Appendix B we use census and Afrobarometer data to compare districts within the three traditional areas to (i) the nation and (ii) traditional areas under the Akan system of chieftancy. We do not find statistically significant differences across a number of key variables that scholars suggest to predict the influence of traditional leaders: proportion of rural population, urbanization (proxied by access to electricity and population with primary education), and the share of the population that works in agriculture.

[24] These figures are from Round 7 of the Afrobarometer. See Appendix Table B.2.

[25] As noted above, the nation is a single constituency in presidential races. We treated 1,124 respondents with endorsement messages (see Table 2). Even the closest presidential race in Ghana's history had a margin of more than 40,000 votes.

[26] To assess the potential effect of distance from the palace on chiefly influence, we stratified polling stations by distance before randomly sampling. Appendix Figure F.5 shows the effects do not vary by distance, suggesting chiefly influence is unlikely to run through the fear of monitoring.

Table 2: Treatment conditions

	Wave 1		Wave 2		
Treatment condition	# Resp.	Prop.	# Resp.	Prop.	Attrition rate
Control	582	0.341	504	0.341	0.134
Endorsement (A)	544	0.319	476	0.322	0.125
Endorsement (A) + rationale (B)	580	0.340	500	0.338	0.138
Total	1706	1.000	1480	1.000	0.132

Within households, respondents were randomly selected, alternating between males and females. If selected respondents were not home, enumerators waited or returned to interview them. Informed and voluntary oral consent was sought and received from all participants. Respondents were told they were part of a research study.

The survey software randomized a third of the respondents into each of the three treatment conditions (Table 2).[27] We first interviewed respondents the week before the presidential election (Wave 1). We re-interviewed these respondents about a week after the election (Wave 2), which allows us to investigate the treatment's immediate and medium-term effects. Attrition between the two surveys is balanced across both treatment conditions (about 13%), and is thus unlikely to bias our estimates (Table 2).

After completing a short survey, participants listened to the chiefs' endorsement or placebo message using earphones, so the interviewers were blind to the treatment conditions. Our analysis demonstrates that the endorsement messages provided new information to the vast majority of respondents: only 21% of the control group said they had already heard about their traditional leader's public endorsement.

We use the following survey item as a manipulation check: "Thinking back to the audio I just played you, do you think it was an endorsement for Nana Akufo-Addo?" About 87% of those assigned to the treatment correctly recognized it as such; about 9% of those assigned to the control group incorrectly identified it as an endorsement of the incumbent candidate (see Appendix Table D.1). Because not all treated participants correctly identified the treatment, our estimates are

[27] Surveys were conducted on electronic tablets.

intent-to-treat (ITT) effects.[28]

5.2 Sample and balance statistics

Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics of our sample. Our respondents were 40 years old, on average, and equally split between males and females. Most participants had a primary-level education or less, and a plurality (48%) said they were farmers. About 66% of our respondents said they felt close to a political party. Among those, about two-thirds reported that they were close to the incumbent party, NPP. About half knew the formal name of the paramount chief of their traditional area. This is a hard test of knowledge, because many respondents are likely to know the chief simply as "Nana" – the Akan word for chief. Further evidence that most respondents knew of their paramount chief is that 82% of respondents had an opinion about the performance of their chief. In all cases, before listening to the audio message, enumerators confirmed to respondents the name of the paramount chief for their area.[29] On average, respondents lived about 9.7 km (SD = 7 km) from their chief's palace. Appendix Figure C.1 shows that the randomization successfully ensured that respondents' background characteristics were similar (balanced) across the three treatments.

[28] In Appendix Figure E.1 we drop those who failed the manipulation check. The results remain unchanged.
[29] The reporter also introduced the paramount chief at the start of each treatment audio.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of respondents

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Demography			
Age	39.514	15.187	1701
Gender (Female=1)	0.495	0.500	1706
Education (Primary or less =1)	0.719	0.450	1695
Employment (Farming=1)	0.475	0.500	1705
Partisanship			
Feel close to a party	0.655	0.476	1706
Feel close to the incumbent party (NPP)	0.667	0.472	1117
Closeness to incumbent party on Likert scale (0–7)	4.117	2.895	1645
Chieftaincy			
Correctly name chief	0.488	0.500	1706
Distance to chief's palace (KMs)	9.748	7.110	1706
Approval of chief performance (0-7)	4.767	2.198	1394
Approve of chief (4-7)	0.752	0.432	1394

5.3 Measurement of main outcomes and moderator variables

We focus on the causal effects of chiefly political endorsements on *vote choice* for the favored candidate. In each wave, we asked respondents to identify the candidate they intended to vote for (Wave 1) or did vote for (Wave 2).To diminish response bias, we presented this question as an electronic ballot; after being reassured again that survey responses were anonymous respondents privately clicked on the logo of their preferred party.[30] Balance in non-response rates across treatment and control groups provides evidence that respondents felt equally comfortable to provide answers.[31]

Regarding moderator variables, our partisanship measure has three categories: incumbent supporter; opposition supporter; and unaligned. We asked respondents whether they feel close to a political party, and if so, which party. Unaligned voters are those who said they did not feel close to any political party. Incumbent supporters are those who identify as being close to the

[30]The exact wording of this question in Wave 1 was: "I am going to show you a list of the political parties that are competing in the upcoming presidential elections. Please take a look at the list. Please click on the party that you would vote for if the upcoming presidential elections were held today. You will be able to answer this question in private. Remember, the survey is anonymous, so please feel free to answer honestly."

[31]In Wave 1, 15 percent of treated individuals did not provide an answer and 18 percent of the control group. In Wave 2, the comparable figures were 8 percent and 9 percent.

NPP, otherwise, respondents are classified as opposition supporters (NDC and minor parties). In Appendix F.2, we display our results using two alternative classifications of partisanship.[32] Across each measure the results are substantively the same.

To measure respondents' approval of their chief, we use a question that asks their "overall assessment" of the chief. Responses are measured on a Likert scale (0 = lowest, 7 = highest). We code those who assessed the chief's performance as 4 or above as approving the chief.[33]

5.4 Estimation strategy

To examine the effect of chiefly endorsements on vote choice, we estimate:

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta_0 * T_{ij} + \gamma_j + \theta X_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{1}$$

where Y_{ij} denotes the vote choice of participant i in electoral area j. In Equation 1, we estimate the causal effect (β_0) of receiving either treatment (T_{ij}) relative to the control. We test whether our treatment conditions have different effects in Equation 2. We estimate both models without (simple difference-in-means tests) and with a set of pre-specified controls X_{ij}.[34]

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta_1 * T1_{ij} + \beta_2 * T2_{ij} + \gamma_j + \theta X_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{2}$$

In both models, γ_j are fixed effects for each electoral area. The electoral area fixed effects ensure that our inferences are driven by differences between voters who have the same traditional leader, and should increase the efficiency of our estimates by controlling for differences across constituencies and local communities that could impact our outcomes of interest.

[32] The two alternative classify respondents based on (1) the strength of their party affiliation (i.e., an ordinal measure of our main coding); and (2) participants' voting histories in the last two elections (2016 and 2012).

[33] Exact question: "What is your overall assessment of the Paramount chief of this traditional area?"

[34] These controls are age, education, individual wealth, and partisanship.

6 Results

6.1 Do chiefly endorsement affect vote choice?

We begin by displaying results from the full sample, before analyzing effects across partisan groups. Figure 1 displays the treatment and control means (Panel A) and ITT effects (Panel B) related to whether the respondent voted for the endorsed candidate. In Wave 1, the treatment has a positive effect on vote choice: it increases the probability that a respondent will report that she intends to vote for the chief's endorsed candidate by 4.3 pp ($p < 0.01$).[35] This demonstrates that chiefly endorsements have a causal effect on vote intentions.

However, in Wave 2, the causal effect of about 2 pp is not statistically significant. While a similar share of treated respondents say they will vote for the endorsed candidates as in Wave 1, a much larger share of respondents in the control group report voting for the endorsed (72%, up from roughly 66% (top, left panel)).[36] In sum, our results lend some support to our hypothesis: endorsements have a significant and positive effect on vote intention in Wave 1.

[35] Appendix Table E.1 shows the regression results.

[36] We explore what might explain the rise in vote choice for the endorsed candidate among respondents in the control group in Appendix E.3. We consider two possibilities: response bias and spillover effects. We find no differential nonresponse rates for intended and actual vote choice across treatments in our survey, suggesting response bias is unlikely to drive our results. However, we find suggestive evidence of a potential spillover effect among voters who indicated that they "don't know" who they will vote for in the election in the control group. Among these voters, a higher proportion reported finally voting for the incumbent. Moreover, this tilt in favor of the incumbent among the undecided voters in the control group was concentrated in polling stations where a higher proportion of our respondents saw the endorsement videos. These results indicate a potential spillover effect and suggest that our Wave 2 treatment effects represent a lower bound estimate.

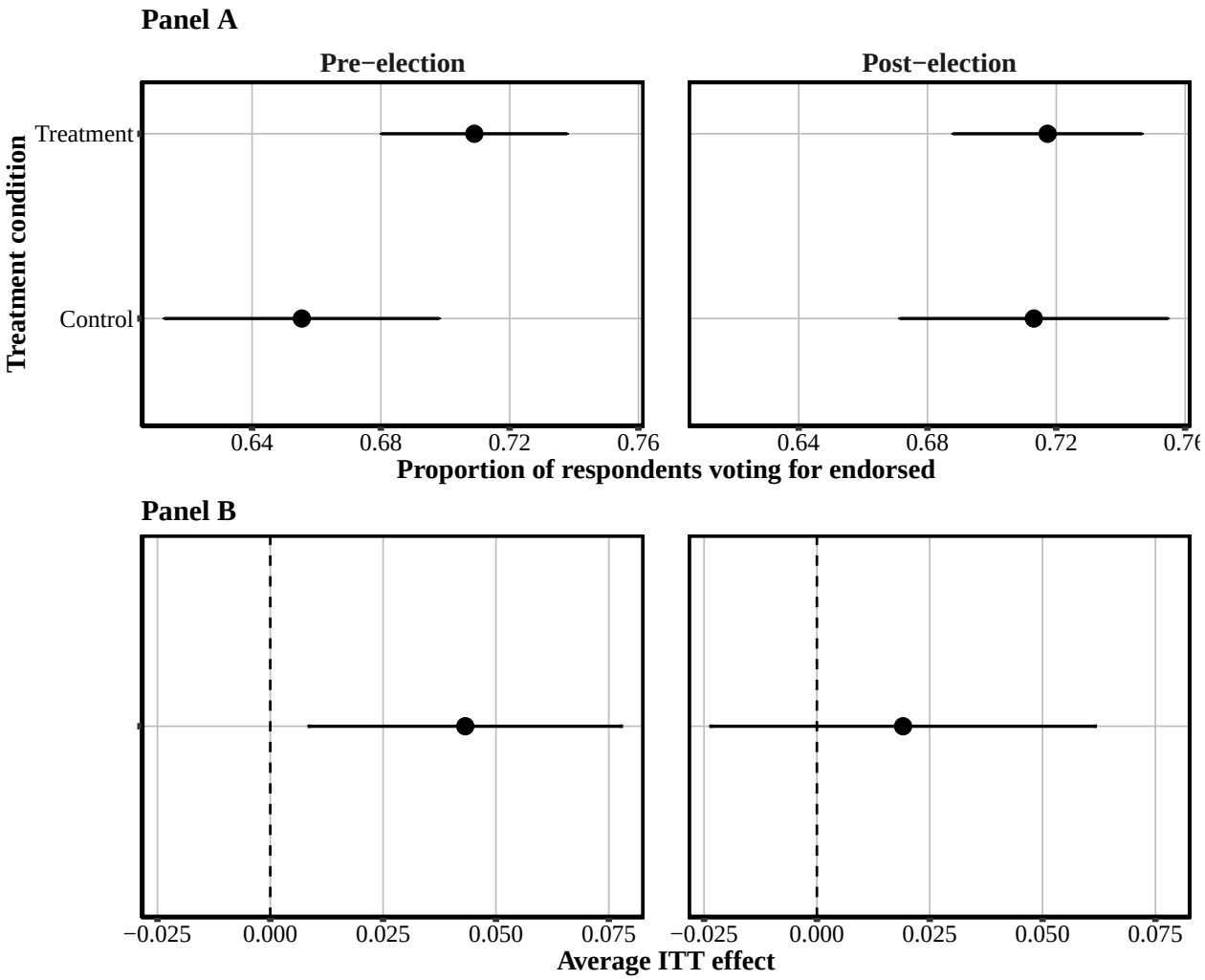

Figure 1: Average intent-to-treat effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice

Note: Figure 1 (Panel A) shows the proportion of respondents who said they will vote (left) or voted (right) for the endorsed candidate in each treatment condition. Panel B reports the respective average ITT effects, which are estimated using OLS regressions in column 2 of Appendix Tables E.1 and E.2. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals (CIs).

6.2 Heterogeneous effects by partisanship and prior approval of chief

Figure 2 displays the average marginal effect (AME) of the treatment by respondents' partisanship.[37] The left side shows the AME for copartisans of the endorsed candidate in the pre-election (circle) and post-election period (triangle) with 95% confidence intervals. The middle shows the results for opposition parties' supporters and the right panel shows that for unaligned voters. The results (left) show that the endorsement did not change the vote choice of those who were copartisans of the endorsed candidate. Similarly, the treatment did not move supporters of opposition parties: the treatment effect is close to zero in both survey waves.

In contrast, the results on the right side of Figure 2 show that endorsements have a large and positive effect on the voting intentions and final vote choice of unaligned voters. In Wave 1 (pre-election), the treatment effect is 12 pp. In Wave 2 (post-election), it is 8.5 pp. These results show that the treatment has a significant effect on unaligned voters, but is unable to sway the intentions or final vote choice of opposition supporters.[38]

Regarding evaluations of chiefs' performance, it is less clear whether this variable moderates the treatment effect (see Appendix Appendices F.3). In Wave 1, we find positive effects for respondents who approve and for those who disapprove of the chief (6 pp and 6.6 pp, respectively). However, the effect is not statistically significant for those who do not approve ($p < 0.23$), but significant at the 6 percent level for those who do approve. In Wave 2, the effect is close to zero for those who do not approve, and while it remains positive for those who approve of the chief (4.1 pp), it is not statistically significance ($p < 0.2$). Overall, these results suggest that prior levels of approval do not strongly moderate the effect.[39]

[37] Appendix Table F.1 displays the regression estimates.

[38] Further analysis shows that the partisan heterogeneous effect is not driven by voters located in a single traditional area. See Appendix Figure F.7.

[39] We also pre-specified that the results may be moderated by distance to the chief's palace and age. We proposed that respondents who live closer to the palace and older voters may be more likely to be moved by endorsements. We also investigate whether the effects differed by respondent gender, occupation (farmer or not), ethnicity (ethnic majority or not), and knowledge of the chief's name. Appendices F.8, F.9, F.11, and F.10 show and discuss these results,

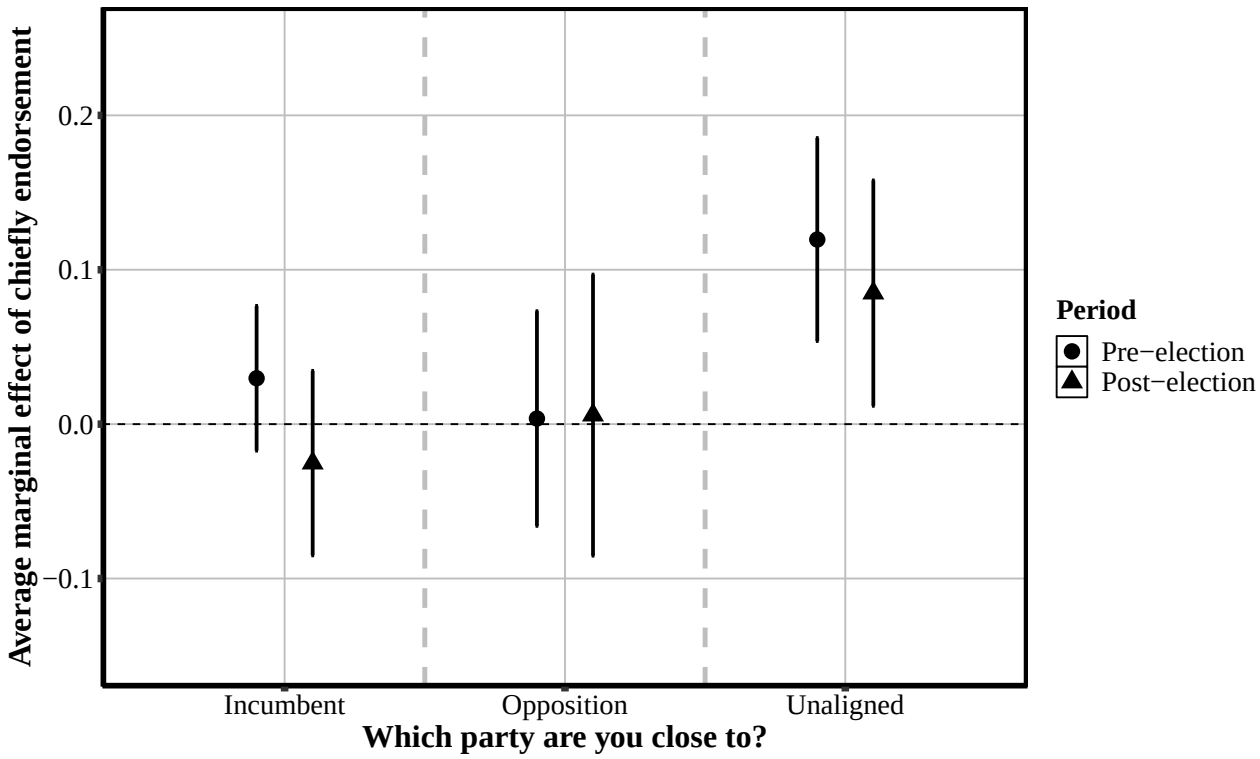

Figure 2: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by partisanship

Note: Figure 2 plots the average marginal effect of chiefly endorsements. We compute the AMEs using an interaction model between the treatment and partisanship reported in Models (2) and (4) of Appendix Table F.1. Bars represent 95% CIs.

We next explore whether there is an interactive effect between partisanship and prior approval. We did not pre-specify the interaction of these two moderators, and therefore these results may be taken as exploratory. Figure 3 displays the results. The results for incumbent supporters are presented in the left panel, opposition supporters in the middle panel, and unaligned voters in the right panel. As we subset the full sample into smaller categories, our results become less precise (larger confidence intervals).[40] However, overall these heterogeneous results indicate a very strong interaction effect. Specifically, chiefly endorsements were more effective among respondents who were unaligned *and* approved of the chief's performance; the treatment significantly increased their propensity to say that they intend to vote for the endorsed candidate and reporting actually voting for them. The size of this AME is 10.4 pp ($p < 0.02$) and 14 pp ($p < 0.001$) in Waves 1 and 2, respectively. For comparison, for unaligned voters who did not approve of the chief's performance, the AME is 11.3 pp ($p < 0.11$) and -0.6 pp ($p < 0.94$) in Waves 1 and 2, respectively. In contrast, the results do not display clear evidence of an interaction effect among either incumbent or opposition respondents, although we note that these null effects may be due to insufficient power. Overall, these results suggest that chiefly endorsements have the largest and most consistent effect among unaligned supporters who hold position evaluations of the chief.

respectively. None of these variables moderated the results.

[40] In addition, the number of cases drop as we interact partisanship and approval because of missingness from non-responses on either variable.

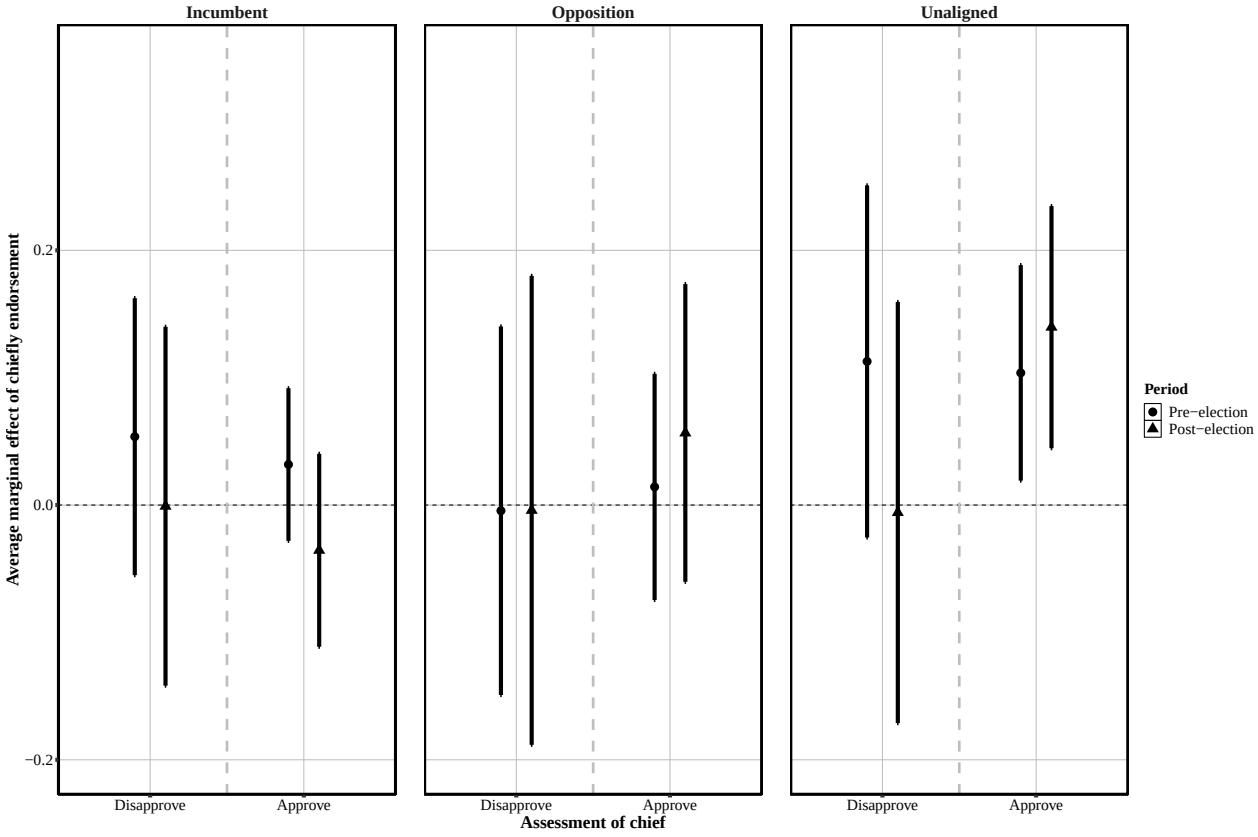

Figure 3: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement by partisanship and evaluation of chief

Note: Figure 3 plots the average marginal effect of chiefly endorsements by respondents' partisanship *and* chief's approval. We compute the the AMEs using columns (2) and (4) of Appendix Table F.4. Bars represent 95% CIs.

7 Mechanisms

We study mechanisms in two ways. First, we disaggregate the treatment to determine whether the rationale chiefs provide for their approval has an effect over and above the endorsement alone. Second, we analyze the effect of the endorsement on theoretically relevant intermediate variables that might mediate the treatment and the outcome measure. As pre-registered, we focus on the mechanism that drives the effect of endorsements we detect among unaligned voters.[41]

7.1 Does the rationale for the endorsement matter?

Figure 4 displays the average ITT effects, disaggregating the treatment into its components in the pre-election and post-election periods. The figure shows that the treatment has no additional positive effect when respondents hear the rationale in addition to the endorsement. In Wave 1 the average ITT effect is 9.5pp ($p < 0.15$) for endorsements only (circle) and 14.2 pp ($p < 0.02$) for endorsements plus rationale (triangle).[42] The difference between these two treatment effects is not statistically significant (difference = 4.7pp, SE=0.09, $p < 0.60$). In Wave 2, the ITT effect is 8.7 pp ($p < 0.12$) for endorsements only and 9.6 pp ($p < 0.08$) for endorsements plus rationale.[43] Again, the difference between these treatment effects is not statistically significant (difference = 0.009pp, SE=0.078, $p < 0.91$). These results suggest that the informational content of endorsements is not important, and supports the argument that endorsements operate through a signalling mechanism that is dependent on the chiefs' positions.

[41] We had pre-specified to focus our analysis on both unaligned and opposition voters. However, because the treatment had no effect on opposition voters we limit our analysis to the former.

[42] See Appendix Table G.1, column 2.

[43] See Appendix Table G.1, column 4.

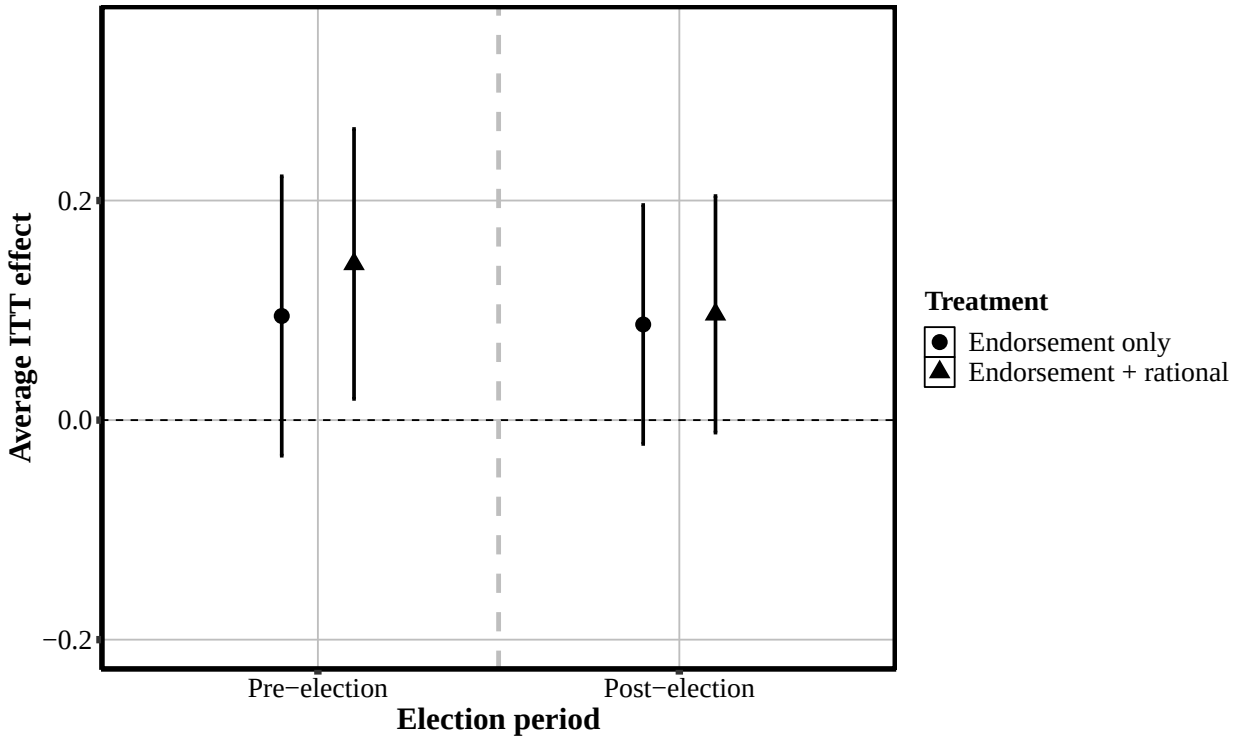

Figure 4: Average ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice among unaligned voters by treatment type

Note: Figure 4 plots the average ITT effects of the treatment type among unaligned voters estimated in Appendix Table G.1 columns (2) and (4) for the pre- and post-election periods. Bars represent 95% CIs.

7.2 Effect on intermediate variables and causal mediation analyses

We argue that because of chiefs' personal and private interests in electing high-performing candidates, a non-coercive way in which endorsements may influence voters is through voters interpreting the endorsement as a signal of candidate quality. Accordingly, we assess whether endorsements lead treated voters to update their beliefs on the (i) quality and (ii) candidates' expected performance. As endorsements may affect vote choice through coerceive channels, we also assess two alternative mechanisms. First, voters expecting private benefits from the chief if they support the endorsed candidate. Second, increased fear of being disadvantaged by the chief if they do not vote for the endorsed candidate. These mechanisms are not mutually exclusive: respondents may update on multiple beliefs. The outcomes we report were collected in Wave 1 of the survey after respondents had heard the treatment or control audio and before answering questions related to our main outcomes.[44]

To investigate the potential mediating role of these intermediary outcomes, we first examine the average ITT effects related to each mechanism: we compare means in control and treatment groups. Second, we employ a semi-nonparameteric approach of causal mediation analysis to determine which of our intermediate variables mediates most of the effect of the treatment on vote choice (Imai et al. 2011).[45] Under the strong assumption of sequential ignorability, this approach helps to causally identify the proportion of the total effect of the treatment on the primary outcome that runs through a hypothesized mechanism (i.e., indirect effect or average causal mediation effect (ACME)) vs. all other channels (i.e., direct effect or average direct effect).

Sequential ignorability implies assuming that: (1) the observed pre-treatment confounders are

[44] We record responses in Wave 1 because we can be less certain that voter attitudes on candidates after the elections are causally related to the endorsement. Indeed, such beliefs could be affected by any information that voters are exposed to between hearing the treatment and the post-election survey.

[45] Specifically, we first model a specified intermediate variable as a function of the endorsement treatment and pre-treatment covariates (i.e., age, education, total assets, closeness to incumbent party (NPP), and electoral area). We then model the outcome (i.e., vote for the endorsed candidate) as a function of the specified mediator, treatment, and the same set of pre-treatment covariates. We use ordinary least squares regressions for these models. Finally, we supply these models as inputs to the `mediate` function from the `mediation` package in R to estimate the total, average causal mediation and average direct effects (Tingley et al. 2014).

independent of the treatment and (2) there are no pre-treatment and post-treatment covariates that confound the relationship between the intermediary variable and the outcome. While the first ignorability assumption is satisfied by randomization, the second cannot be proven by observed data (Manski 2009). Accordingly, Imai et al. (2011) propose a sensitivity test to examine the extent to which this assumption must be violated to reverse the conclusions. The sensitivity tests we perform give us confidence that our conclusions are not susceptible to severe violations of the assumption. Appendix Figures H.1 and H.2 display the results for the causal mediation and sensitivity analysis for each of our intermediate variables, respectively.

Table 4 reports the means and standard errors of the intermediate variables in the control and treatment groups. It then shows average ITT effects and their associated *p-values*. The last two column display the percentage of the effect of endorsement on vote choice that is mediated by the specified mediator and the associated *p-values*. All our variables are measured on a Likert scale (1–7) except "fear," which ranges from 1–5. Appendix Figure H.1 shows the ACMEs for each.[46]

We find evidence of positive updating on candidates' perceived likability and trustworthiness (0.32, $p < 0.02$). These effects represent a 6% increase from a mean of 5.539 in the control group. The causal mediation analysis shows that respondents' updates of the endorsed candidate's personal qualities meditate 64% (ACME = 6.4 pp) of the total effect among unaligned voters. Overall, these results are consistent with H2: there is evidence of positive updating on candidate quality.

We also find evidence that endorsement led to positive updating on expectations that the candidate will bring local development. The ITT effect is 0.35 ($p < 0.04$)), which represents a 7% increase from the control group (the control group mean was 4.775). Further, we find that local development accounts for 65% (ACME = 6.7 pp) of the total effect of endorsement on vote choice.

[46]We note that by estimating the ACME for one hypothesized mediator at a time, we assume a lack of dependence among these intermediate variables (Tingley et al. 2014). This is a strong assumption. We assess whether a violation of such an assumption may drive our conclusion. Specifically, because "bringing local development" appears to be the most impactful variable in our analysis, we take it as our primary mediator. We then check whether including any of the other intermediate variables as a possible confounder significantly changes the ACME of our primary mediator. Appendix H.3 shows the results, which suggest that our finding is not driven by the presence of any of these rival mediators.

By contrast, we find no evidence that endorsements affect perceptions of the endorsed candidate's performance in delivering national policies.

Concerning *how* voters expect presidential candidates to deliver local development, and whether voters think endorsements signal that chiefs will co-produce public goods with the candidate, we also asked respondents about their expectations regarding the future working relationship between the chief and the candidate. First, we asked whether they expect the candidate to listen to the chief after they are elected, which we use to measure how effectively chiefs can lobby for local public goods. Second, we asked respondents how well the chief and candidate would work together to bring about local development. The treatment has a small positive effect on beliefs that the favored candidate would listen to appeals from the chief (0.06), but this effect is not statistically significant ($p < 0.65$). Similarly, while the effect on perceptions of an enhanced working relationship between the chief and the president is also positive (0.21), again, it is not statistically significant ($p < 0.12$). Further, we find that these intermediate variables do not mediate a significant share of the treatment's effect on vote choice (15% and 21%, respectively). These results indicate that beliefs about the need for a collaborative working relationship between the chief and the endorsed for the production of local public goods does not primarily drive the endorsement's effect. Overall, our results suggest that the treatment effect among unaligned voters is not driven by voters' expectations of co-production of public infrastructure by chiefs and endorsed presidential candidates.

We do find some support for the argument that voters expect private benefits from the chief. The treatment increased voters' belief that electing the endorsed candidate would put their chief in a position to provide benefits to themselves or their families by 0.43 ($p < 0.03$)), which represents about a 12% increase from the mean in the control group. However, the causal mediation analysis shows that such expectations of private benefits from the chief if the favored candidate is elected only mediates the effect by 15% (ACME = 1.7 pp). Thus, while unaligned voters expect the chief to stand a better chance of providing private benefit under the endorsed's term in office, such change in beliefs does not appear to drive their ultimate vote.

Table 4: Average ITT effects of chiefly endorsement on intermediate outcomes

	Control group N=178		Treatment group N=334		Estimated ITT			Mediation effect			
Variable	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	ITT effect	SE	$P <$	ACME	SE	% mediated	$P <$
Personal quality											
Personal quality (likable and trustworthy)	5.247	0.115	5.539	0.077	0.324	0.133	0.015	0.064	0.030	63.71	0.058
Expected performance											
Bring local development	4.775	0.142	5.117	0.096	0.351	0.167	0.036	0.067	0.029	65.36	0.052
National policy	5.135	0.124	5.284	0.093	0.193	0.155	0.213	0.027	0.025	26.85	0.308
Chief-politician relationship											
Listening ear of endorsed	5.691	0.098	5.677	0.077	0.057	0.129	0.658	0.015	0.010	14.86	0.090
Work well with endorsed for local development	5.449	0.112	5.548	0.079	0.211	0.137	0.123	0.023	0.012	21.15	0.064
Voter's private gain											
Chief can provide private benefits	3.770	0.164	4.237	0.118	0.435	0.205	0.035	0.017	0.012	15.17	0.132
Fear											
Fear of personal or community disadvantage	1.371	0.072	1.476	0.061	0.090	0.100	0.365	0.003	0.006	1.73	0.626

Note: The exact survey questions we use to assess each of these mechanisms are as follows:

- Personal quality: (i) How likeable do you think Nana Akufo-Addo is as a presidential candidate? (ii) How trustworthy do YOU think Nana Akufo-Addo is as a presidential candidate?
- Expected performance: How likely do you think it is that Nana Akuffo-Addo will do a good job at constructing new infrastructure in your local area/working in Accra to make good policies for the country?
- Chief-politician relationship: (i) How likely is it that [chief name] would have the listening ear of Nana Akufo-Addo if he were to be elected? (ii) How likely is it that [chief name] would be able to work with Nana Akufo-Addo to advance development in your local area?
- Private gain: Should Nana Akufo-Addo win, how likely is it that [chief name] will provide more benefits to you personally or your family?
- Fear: Assuming that [chief name] did endorse a candidate, how fearful are you that if you do not vote for the candidate that [chief name] endorses you or your community will be disadvantaged?

Finally, we do not find significant evidence that the treatment increased respondents' fear of incurring a personal or communal disadvantage. While the ITT effect is positive (0.09), it is not statistically significant at conventional levels. Furthermore, the causal mediation analysis suggests that such fears mediates only 2% (ACME = 0.3 pp) of the effect.

In short, the positive results we find on how endorsements affect vote choice appear to operate primarily through citizens updating their beliefs about candidate quality and presidential candidates' intention to provide local development projects.

8 Conclusion

We leverage real endorsement messages from traditional leaders for the incumbent candidate in Ghana's 2020 presidential election and an experimental design to investigate chiefly influences on

vote choice. Our results show that upon hearing chiefs' endorsements voters are more inclined to vote with the endorsed candidate. However, it is only among unaligned ("swing") voters that endorsements affect final vote choice. We find particularly large impact among unaligned voters who held positive evaluations of their paramount chief. Our results on mechanisms suggest that unaligned voters – who are often considered to engage in performance-based voting – take chiefs' endorsements as a signal of candidate quality. Endorsements enhance voters' perceptions about the personal characteristics and expected performance of the candidate in delivering infrastructure and public service in their local area.

We believe that these results are likely to apply to other African countries and contexts beyond Ghana. Our results suggest that traditional leaders might have a more substantial influence where partisan attachments are weaker and where citizens hold positive evaluations of traditional leaders. While Ghana has significant proportions of citizens who consider themselves unaligned (40%) and evaluate their chiefs' performance highly (50%), these figures are below the continental averages (53% and 59%, respectively) according to recent Afrobarometer data (Round 8).[47]

However, our theory may be subject to at least three important scope conditions. First, our theory relies on chiefs having incentives to support candidates they think will perform well. As we argue, this is part relies on chiefs being personally invested and tied to a particular area of land. Second, it also likely depends on chiefs facing informal or formal checks on their power. As we state in the theory section, 68% of traditional authorities operate with inclusive decision-making institutions, which leaves a significant minority that do not (Baldwin and Holzinger 2019). Research from Ghana shows that succession institutions may be particularly important in determining whether chiefs work to enhance local livelihoods or capture resources for themselves (Nathan 2019). Third, a non-coercive relationship between chiefs and citizens is more likely when the democratic space is relatively open, supported a vibrant and independent local media and judiciary. Free media grants

[47]Countries that scored higher on both of these measures are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo.

citizens the ability to report and push back against overt intimidation by traditional leaders.

Our results have important implications for governance and accountability. We provide causal evidence that exposure to chiefly endorsements affects individual voting decision. Thus chiefly endorsements can give favored candidates an advantage over their opponents. As incumbent candidates are often better positioned than opposition candidates to solicit endorsements, the results suggest that chiefly endorsements can be considered a form of incumbency advantage and can undermine democratic competition.

Nonetheless, our results suggest that chiefs' influence on voters runs through a positive mechanism, in which voters update their beliefs about the potential to advance community development, rather than a coercive channel, which complements Baldwin (2013)'s seminal contribution. However, our findings also demonstrate that it is not through improving their relationship with the chief that presidential candidates are expected to be more able to deliver development. Indeed, we find null effects on the intermediate variable based on a question that asks whether voters expect the chief and politician to work together to bring development. These results contrast with those of Baldwin (2013), who argues that voters support chiefs' preferred (parliamentary) candidates because they expect them to successfully coproduce local public goods. Our findings suggest that the developmental effect can run independently of expected chief–politician dynamics.

We interpret our results related to mechanisms – which combine null effects on the rationale component of the endorsements with the significant effects on expectations of local development – as illustrating that voters expect chiefs to support politicians who they anticipate will provide local public goods to the traditional area. Thus, voters interpret a chief's endorsement of a candidate as a signal of how the chief is likely to perform in office. Our discovery of a non-coercive rather than coercive causal channel is reassuring for accountability, because voters can sanction politicians who go on to underperform.

Further research could examine how chiefly endorsements affect support for opposition candidates. Most chiefs support the incumbent candidate, and our study suggests that this may provide a

source of incumbency advantage in new democracies. However, it remains unclear whether similar results would hold for opposition politicians.

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Appendix

A Pre-analysis Plan

We filed a pre-analysis plan on 19th December 2020 on the EGAP website. A complete copy of this plan is publicly available at the following website: *url redacted*. The PAP overviews the experimental conditions, sample, and the hypotheses that we set out to test. We pre-registered the following hypotheses. We highlight in bold the hypotheses that we test in the main paper.

- **Main Effects**
  - H1: Turnout will be higher among individuals exposed to the endorsement treatment compared to those in the control group.
  - **H2: Individuals will be more likely to vote for the endorsed candidate if they hear about the chiefs endorsement compared to those who do not hear about the chiefs endorsement.**
  - H3: Chiefly endorsements are likely to undermine traditional leaders' ability to serve as conflict mediators and to mobilize public labour, especially among supporters of opposition candidate (i.e., Moderates and NDC supporters), for community development.
- **Mechanisms**
  - **H4: Individuals exposed to the endorsement will say the candidate is more likeable compared to individuals who do not hear the endorsement.**
  - **H5: Individuals exposed to the endorsement will say the candidate is more trustworthy compared to individuals who do not hear the endorsement**
  - **H6: Individuals exposed to the endorsement will more likely to say the candidate will perform well in office**
  - **H7: Individuals exposed to the endorsement will more likely to say that their local chief and the candidate will work well to bring development to the traditional area**
  - **H8: Individuals exposed to the endorsement will more likely to say that their local chief and the candidate will work well to bring private benefits to voters in the traditional area.**
  - **H9: Individuals exposed to the endorsement will more likely to say they fear negative effects if they do not vote in line with the chief**
  - H10: Endorsement effects will be stronger for individuals who live closer to the chiefs palace compared to those who live further away

- **H11: Endorsements effects will be stronger for individuals who have higher pre-treatment evaluations of the chief**
- **H12: Endorsements effects will be stronger for individuals who were initially not pre-disposed to vote for the chief's preferred candidate**
- H13: Endorsements effects will be larger older age voters compared to younger voters

We do not show tests of H1, H3, H10 and H11 in the paper. We were unable to assess H1 because we did not have enough variation in reported turnout among our respondents:100% of our final sample reported turning out. We do not report results for H3 on backlash in response to endorsements as we felt these results were too unrelated to the content of the rest of the paper. Regarding H10, we do not find evidence that the treatment had larger effects among respondents who live closer to the chief's palace (See Figure F.5). Regarding H13, we do not find strong evidence that the treatment had larger effects among older respondents (See Figure F.4).

A.1 Deviation from pre-analysis plan

We deviated from the PAP in the following ways:

1. we dropped a number of the control co-variates because of missingness in responses

B Descriptive statistics of sampled traditional areas

Using Ghana's 2010 census data and Afrobarometer Round 7 results, we find that our study districts are similar along important socio-demographic features to districts that fallen under Akan chieftancy. As described in section 5.1, we purposely sampled three traditional areas that satisfied a set of criteria. Contained within these traditional areas are four districts: Techiman, Tano South, Tano North, and Jaman South. Table B.1 aggregates census data at the level of districts and compares districts within the sample to districts across the entire country (column (1)) and districts under the Akan chieftaincy system (column (2)). We classify all districts in the Eastern, Western, Central, Ashanti, and Brong Ahafo regions as falling under the Akan chieftaincy system. Column 3 shows that our study districts are similar to districts in the Akan dominant regions (and the country more broadly) regarding access to electricity, proportion of people with primary education or work in the agricultural sector. However, although not statistically different, our study districts are slightly more rural than the average district in the Akan dominated region.

Table B.1: Descriptive statistics of traditional areas

	Mean				
	Country	Akan dominant regions	Traditional areas	Diff ((2) -(3))	Pvalues
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(3)	(4)
Rural population	0.631	0.605	0.505	0.099	0.259
	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.14)		
Electricity	0.518	0.581	0.619	-0.038	0.448
	(0.21)	(0.17)	(0.08)		
Primary education	0.862	0.856	0.852	0.004	0.732
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.02)		
Agriculture work	0.423	0.401	0.471	-0.07	0.312
	(0.20)	(0.17)	(0.11)		

We use Afrobarometer data to compare our study districts to other districts in the country. We note that this analysis is not too reliable because of the low number of respondents interviewed within our study districts (n=40). The Afrobarometer survey (Round 7) asked respondents how often they have contacted their traditional leader in the past year, and their level of trust and approval of their chiefs. Table B.2 shows the results. For these variables, column (1) shows the proportion

for the entire country and columns (2) and (3) shows that for districts in Akan dominant regions and the study districts, respectively. Column (4) shows the difference in the estimated proportions and column (5) displays the associated p-values. These figures show that our study districts are similar to those in the Akan dominant regions (and the country more broadly).

Table B.2: Citizens' contact and evaluations of traditional leaders using Afrobarometer Round 7

	Proportion of respondents			Difference	
	Country	Akan dominant regions	Sampled traditional areas	Col (2) - Col (3)	P-value
Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. Contacted traditional leader	0.207	0.204	0.25	-0.046	0.518
	(0.405)	(0.403)	(0.439)		
2. Trust traditional leader	0.536	0.523	0.525	-0.002	0.983
	(0.499)	(0.5)	(0.506)		
3. Approve traditional leader's performance	0.55	0.524	0.575	-0.051	0.529
	(0.498)	(0.5)	(0.501)		
N	2400	1376	40		

Note: Standard deviation reported in parentheses. AB questions:

1. During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views? Traditional leaders (*A few times or often*)
2. How much do you trust each of the following haven't you heard enough about them to say? Traditional leader (*Somewhat or a lot*)
3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past year or haven't you heard enough about them to say? Traditional leader (*Approve or strongly approve*)

C Balance statistics

Figure C.1 shows the *p-values* associated with a difference in means tests across treatments. The left panel shows the results between the "only endorsement" treatment and the control group. The middle presents that for "endorsement and rational" versus control, and the right panel shows that for any treatment versus control. These results show that respondents were similar across treatment conditions, on average.

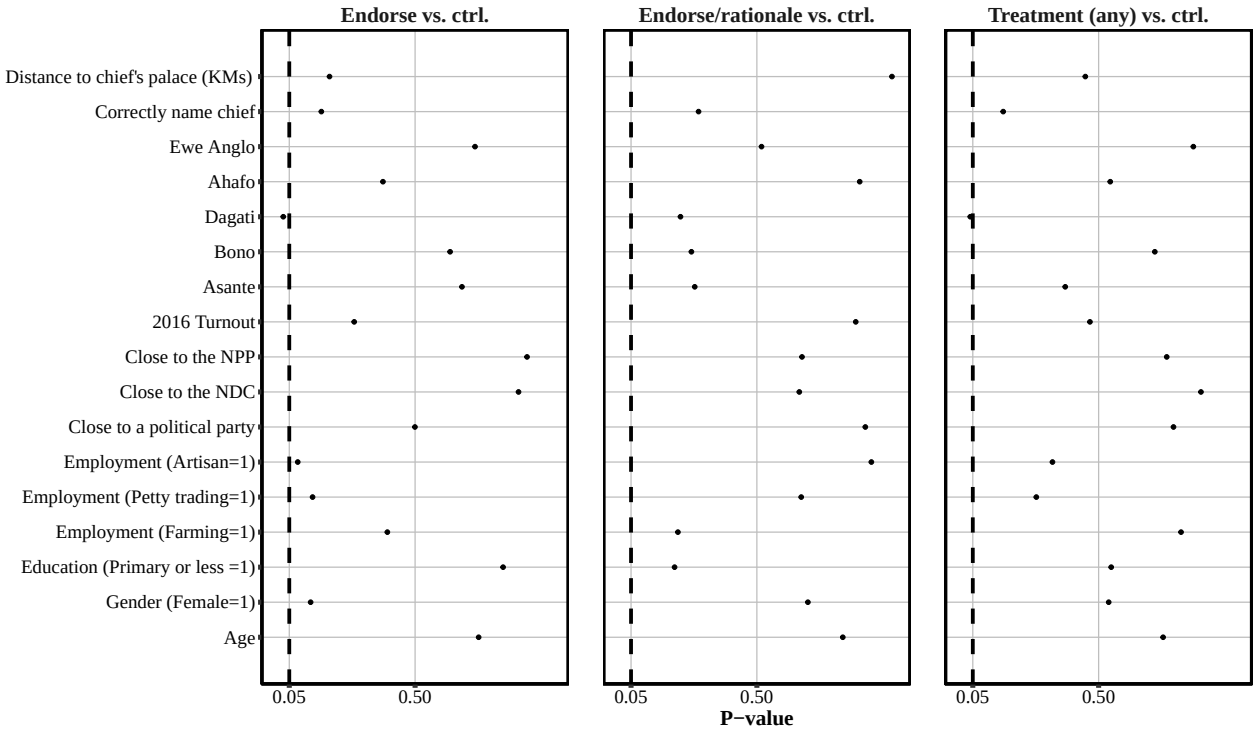

Figure C.1: Balance statistics

Note: dashed lines mark test of statistical significance at $p < 0.05$.

D Manipulation check

Table D.1 shows the proportion of respondents across treatment who said that the treatment audio contained an endorsement for the incumbent candidate. Specifically, we asked, "Thinking back to the audio I just played to you, do you think it was an endorsement for Nana Akufo-Addo?" As expected, about 90% and 85% of those in the Endorsement and Endorsement and rationale treatment groups answered "yes." In contrast, only 9% of respondents in the control group answered in the affirmative. In Figure E.1, we replicate results regarding the effect of endorsements on vote choice excluding respondents who failed the manipulation check. We find similar results.

Table D.1: Manipulation check

Treatment condition	Proportion
Placebo	0.085
Endorsement (A)	0.897
Endorsement (A) + rationale (B)	0.852

E Main results tables

In this section, we provide the regression tables of the results presented in the main paper. In all tables, we first estimate the difference-in-means between treatment and control and then include our set of pre-specified covariates.

E.1 Effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice

Table E.1: Average ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice (Pre-election)

	Chose endorsed candidate					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Any endorsement message	0.054**	0.043**				
	(0.026)	(0.018)				
Age		−0.0004		−0.0003		−0.0003
		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)
Education		0.007		0.007		0.007
		(0.005)		(0.005)		(0.005)
Total assets		−0.014**		−0.014**		−0.014**
		(0.007)		(0.007)		(0.007)
Closeness to incumbent party (NPP)		0.117***		0.117***		0.117***
		(0.003)		(0.003)		(0.003)
Endorsement Only			0.043	0.042**		
			(0.030)	(0.021)		
Endorsement and rationale			0.063**	0.045**		
			(0.030)	(0.020)		
Placebo video					−0.043	−0.042**
					(0.030)	(0.021)
Endorsement and rationale					0.019	0.003
					(0.030)	(0.021)
Constant	0.655***	0.154*	0.655***	0.153*	0.699***	0.194**
	(0.021)	(0.087)	(0.021)	(0.087)	(0.022)	(0.088)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,428	1,398	1,428	1,398	1,428	1,398
R^2	0.003	0.582	0.003	0.582	0.003	0.582

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table E.2: Average ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice (post-election survey)

	Voted endorsed candidate					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Any endorsement message	0.004	0.019				
	(0.026)	(0.022)				
Age		-0.001^{*}		-0.001^{*}		-0.001^{*}
		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)
Education		0.007		0.006		0.006
		(0.006)		(0.006)		(0.006)
Total assets		-0.017^{**}		-0.017^{**}		-0.017^{**}
		(0.009)		(0.009)		(0.009)
Closeness to incumbent party (NPP)		0.077^{***}		0.077^{***}		0.077^{***}
		(0.004)		(0.004)		(0.004)
Endorsement Only			−0.001	0.024		
			(0.030)	(0.025)		
Endorsement and rationale			0.010	0.015		
			(0.030)	(0.025)		
Placebo video					0.001	−0.024
					(0.030)	(0.025)
Endorsement and rationale					0.011	−0.009
					(0.030)	(0.025)
Constant	0.713^{***}	0.521^{***}	0.713^{***}	0.523^{***}	0.712^{***}	0.547^{***}
	(0.021)	(0.102)	(0.021)	(0.102)	(0.022)	(0.102)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,355	1,299	1,355	1,299	1,355	1,299
R^2	0.00002	0.376	0.0001	0.376	0.0001	0.376

$^{*}p < .1$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{***}p < .01$

E.2 Do results hold if we exclude respondents who failed the manipulation check?

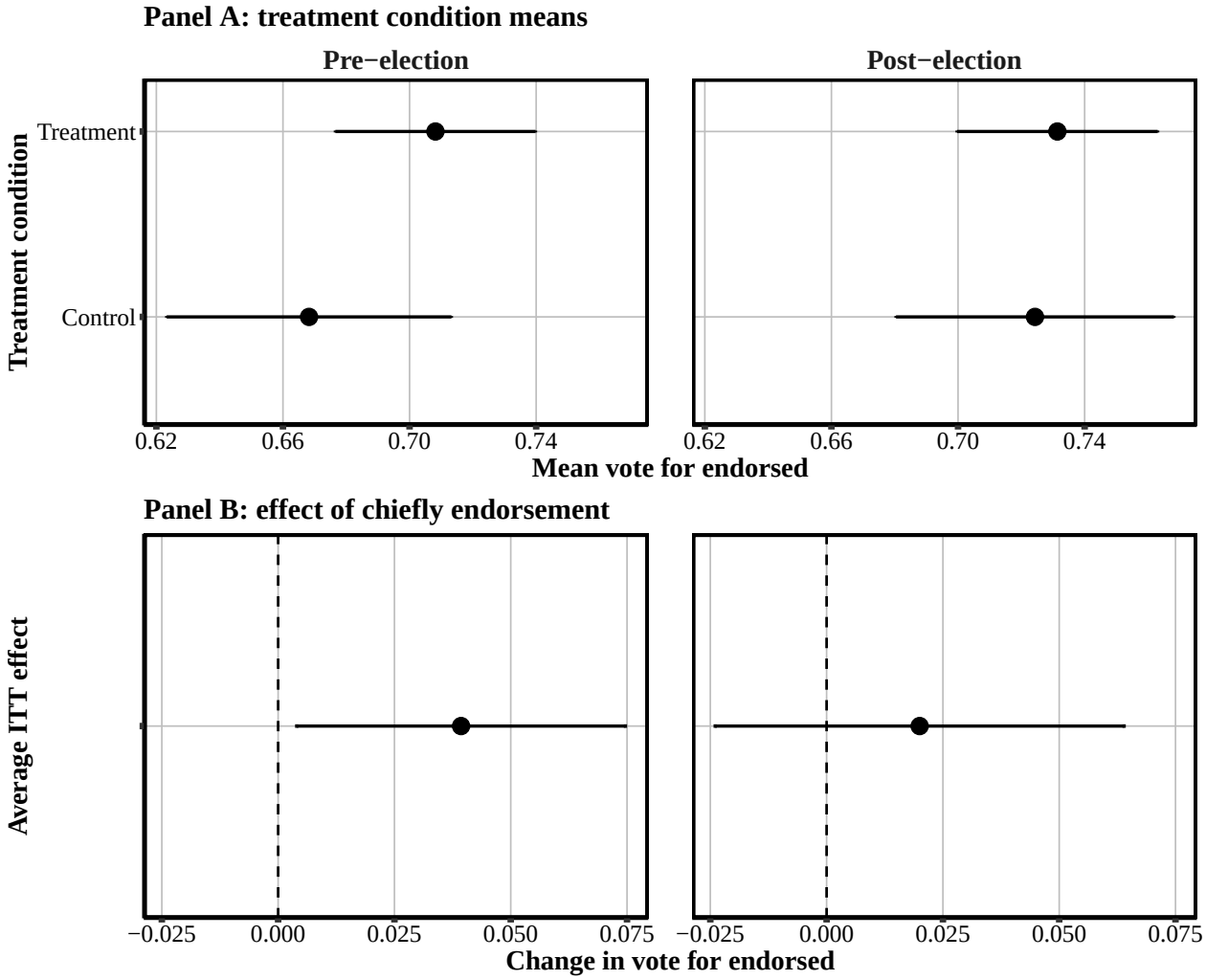

Figure E.1: Average intention-to-treat effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice restricting sample to only those who passed manipulation check
Note: dark thick lines are 95% confidence intervals and dashed lines are null.

E.3 Exploring what might explain the null finding in Wave 2

We explore two potential explanations for why the treatment effect in the first round disappears in the second round. First, we examine whether it was due to response bias. For example, suppose more people in the control group were less likely to indicate their vote intention for the incumbent in the first round of the survey but do so in the second round. In that case, that can account for our null finding in wave two.

We do not find evidence supporting response bias. Table E.3 show the responses for candidate preference in Wave 1 and 2. In the first round, 16% of respondents reported "don't know" to the question regarding who they will vote for in the upcoming elections in the full sample. We find that 18% and 15.5% of respondents answered "don't know" in the control and treatment groups. The difference 2.5% is not statistically significant ($p < 0.189$). In Wave 2, 8% answered "don't know"; 9% in the control and 8% in the treatment ($p < 0.333$). Accordingly, response bias is less likely to increase support for the incumbent in our control group.

Table E.3: Distribution of preference for endorsed candidate in Wave 1 and 2

		Treatment condition	
Candidate preference	Full sample	Control	Treatment
Wave 1			
Opposition	0.26	0.28	0.25
Incumbent (endorsed)	0.58	0.54	0.60
Don't know	0.16	0.18	0.15
N	1706	580	1126
Wave 2			
Opposition	0.26	0.26	0.26
Incumbent (endorsed)	0.66	0.65	0.66
Don't know	0.08	0.09	0.08
N	1480	500	980

Second, some respondents in the control group may have become exposed to the treatment before our follow-up survey (i.e., spillover effect), reducing our effect size. We randomized our treatments at the individual level, and respondents listened to their treatment audio using a headset,

reducing the potential for spillover effect in Wave 1. However, people may have discussed the content of the message in the audio message they heard with people in their communities. We surmise this might be more likely in places where many respondents received the endorsement treatment by chance. We expect 66% of respondents to receive treatment within a polling station, on average. We leverage the variation in the proportion of respondents treated within communities in our sample to test for potential spillover effects. Specifically, we test whether respondents in the control group at polling stations above this threshold showed higher preference for the incumbent than those below in Wave 2.

Table E.4 shows a cross-tabulation of who respondents said they will vote for in Wave 1 and who they said they voted for him in Wave 2 in control (Panel A) and treatment (Panel B). The results indicate that, in the control group, a significant proportion of respondents who were undecided at first were more likely to have said they voted for the incumbent than not in Wave 2, a difference of about 31 pp. In the treatment, the difference was only 9 pp. This significant difference in the support composition for the incumbent in Wave 2 among the "undecided" voters may have accounted for the null results.

Table E.4: Crosstabulation of vote preference in Wave 1 and 2 by treatment

		Vote intention (Wave 1)		
Panel A	Vote choice (Wave 2)	Opposition	Incumbent (endorsed)	Don't know
Control group				
	Opposition	0.72	0.04	**0.24**
	Incumbent (endorsed)	0.16	0.91	**0.56**
	Don't know	0.13	0.05	0.20
	N	135	279	86
Panel B				
Treatment group				
	Opposition	0.68	0.07	**0.36**
	Incumbent (endorsed)	0.21	0.89	**0.45**
	Don't know	0.10	0.05	0.18
	N	241	598	141

We find that a potential spillover effect among the undecided may account for the difference.

Specifically, we find that the propensity to vote for the incumbent among the control among the undecided was significantly higher in the polling stations where a high percentage of individuals were in the treatment group (83%) compared to those in places with fewer teated individuals (62%) (see Table E.5).

Vote intention	Treatment saturation	Proportion voting for incumbent (endorsed)
Opposition	high	0.208
Opposition	low	0.157
Incumbent	high	0.933
Incumbent	low	0.968
Don't Know	**high**	**0.833**
Don't Know	**low**	**0.622**

Table E.5: Proportion of respondents who reported voting for the incumbent (endorsed) by prior vote intention and treatment saturation in the control group

F Heterogeneous effects

In this section, we present results of a set of heterogeneous treatment effects of chiefly endorsements. We assess potential heterogeneous effects by a set of pre-specified variables: partisanship, prior approval of the chief, age, and distance from the chief's palace. As discussed in the paper, we find heterogeneous effects on partisanship and prior approval of the chief.

Based on comments we received at conferences and workshops, we also test whether the treatment effect varies by traditional area, respondent's gender, occupation, ethnicity, and whether the respondent could name the chief based on comments we received. None of these variables appears to significantly moderate the treatment effect.

F.1 Partisanship

Table F.1 shows the regression estimates of the interaction between treatment and partisanship used in Figure 2.

Table F.1: ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by partisanship

	Pre-election		Post-election	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.031	0.030	−0.019	−0.025
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Close to NDC (Opposition)	−0.864***	−0.824***	−0.671***	−0.611***
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.046)	(0.047)
Close to no party (Unaligned)	−0.418***	−0.396***	−0.321***	−0.317***
	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.040)	(0.040)
Treatment x Close to NDC (Opposition)	−0.027	−0.026	0.005	0.031
	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Treatment x Close to no party (Unaligned)	0.106***	0.090**	0.088*	0.110**
	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.049)	(0.048)
Constant	0.963***	0.968***	0.953***	1.077***
	(0.019)	(0.086)	(0.025)	(0.101)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,428	1,415	1,355	1,343
R^2	0.583	0.608	0.327	0.403

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

F.2 Alternative specification of partisanship

In this section, we present results of the heterogeneous effects of chiefly endorsement using two alternative measures of partisanship. First, we use respondents' reported closeness to the endorsed candidate's political party on a Likert scale of 0–7. Using the distribution the measure of the entire sample, we classified those who were 0 or 1 as opposition supporters and those who said 6 or 7 as incumbent supporters of the endorsed. We classified those in the middle as "Moderate."

Table F.2 reports out results. Figure F.1 displays the marginal effects. Similar to our results in Table F.1 and Figure F.1, it shows that moderate (or unaligned) voters drive our results.

Table F.2: ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by partisanship(closeness to NPP)

	Pre-election		Post-election	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.022	0.028	−0.017	−0.022
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.032)	(0.031)
Moderate [2-5]	−0.366***	−0.351***	−0.288***	−0.283***
	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.044)	(0.044)
NDC [0-1]	−0.833***	−0.794***	−0.579***	−0.525***
	(0.037)	(0.038)	(0.046)	(0.046)
Treatment x Moderate [2-5]	0.047	0.031	0.097*	0.127**
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.055)	(0.053)
Treatment x NDC [0-1]	0.055	0.038	0.021	0.035
	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.055)	(0.055)
Constant	0.961***	0.965***	0.935***	1.066***
	(0.021)	(0.093)	(0.026)	(0.105)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,411	1,398	1,311	1,299
R^2	0.507	0.541	0.270	0.357

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

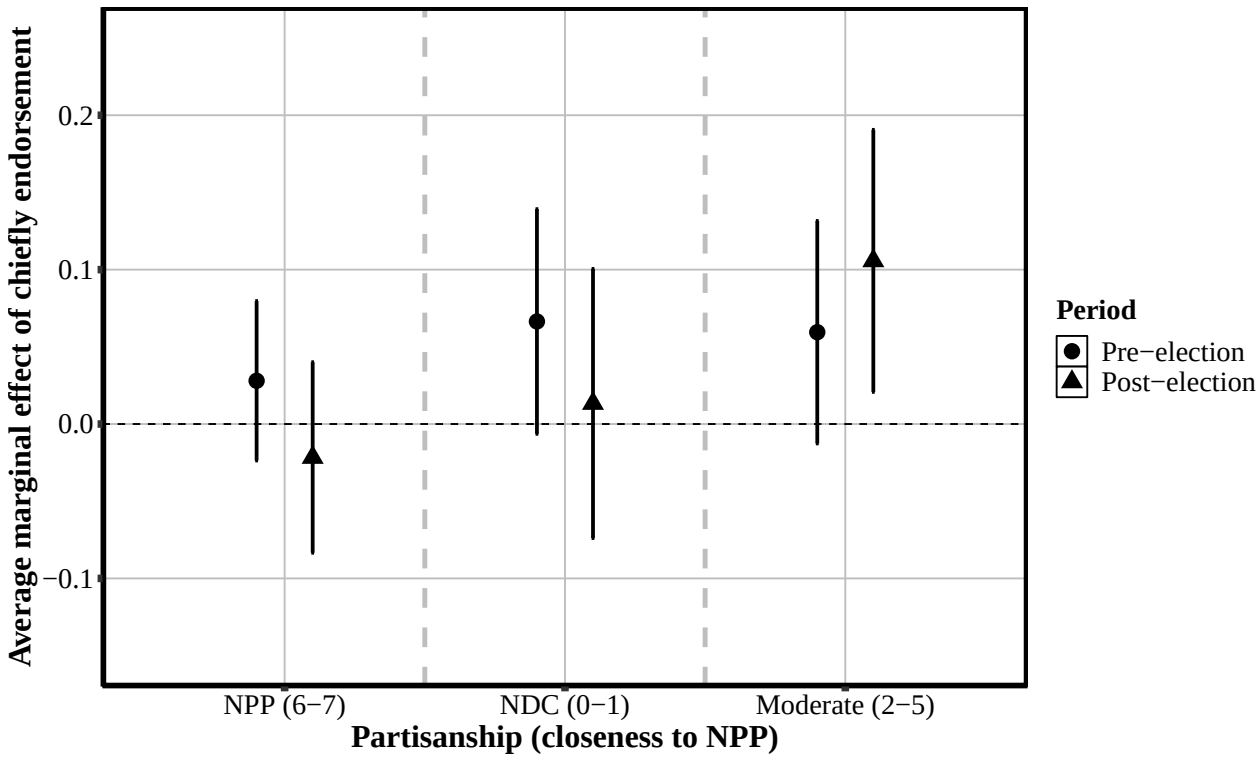

Figure F.1: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by partisanship
Note: dark thick lines are 95% confidence intervals.

Another approach of coding partisanship is using past vote records of respondents. We asked participants which presidential candidate they voted for in the past two elections (2012 and 2016). The analysis is limited to those who qualified and voted in these two elections (i.e. younger respondents are not in this analysis as they could not vote in one or both of the prior elections). Among these respondents, we coded those who voted in the two elections for the NPP (NDC) as supporters of the NPP (NDC). Respondents who switched between the two parties in these two elections were coded as "Swing" voters. Table F.3 and Figure F.2 show the results from this alternative measure. Again, we find that endorsement is the largest among swing voters.

Table F.3: ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by partisanship (voting history)

	Pre-election		Post-election	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.029	0.034	−0.044	−0.043
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.034)	(0.034)
NDC partisan	−0.788***	−0.756***	−0.685***	−0.634***
	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.048)	(0.050)
Swing voter	−0.486***	−0.465***	−0.466***	−0.461***
	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.056)	(0.057)
Treatment x NDC partisan	−0.031	−0.042	0.093	0.102*
	(0.046)	(0.048)	(0.059)	(0.059)
Treatment x Swing voter	0.227***	0.215***	0.238***	0.266***
	(0.058)	(0.059)	(0.069)	(0.070)
Constant	0.947***	0.949***	0.966***	1.101***
	(0.022)	(0.103)	(0.027)	(0.124)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	988	977	925	915
R^2	0.584	0.619	0.365	0.442

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

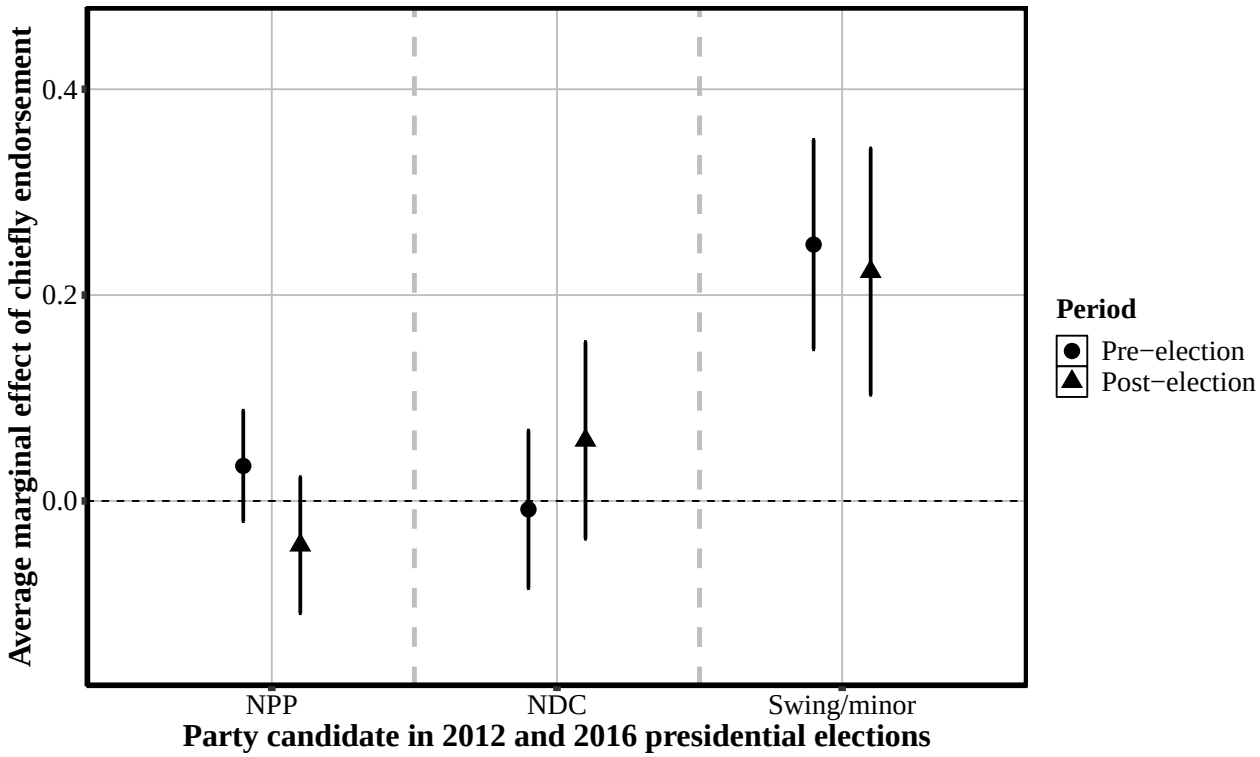

Figure F.2: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by partisanship as coded by respondent's voting history

Note: dark thick lines are 95% confidence intervals.

F.3 Effect of cheifly endorsement by evaluation of chief's past performance

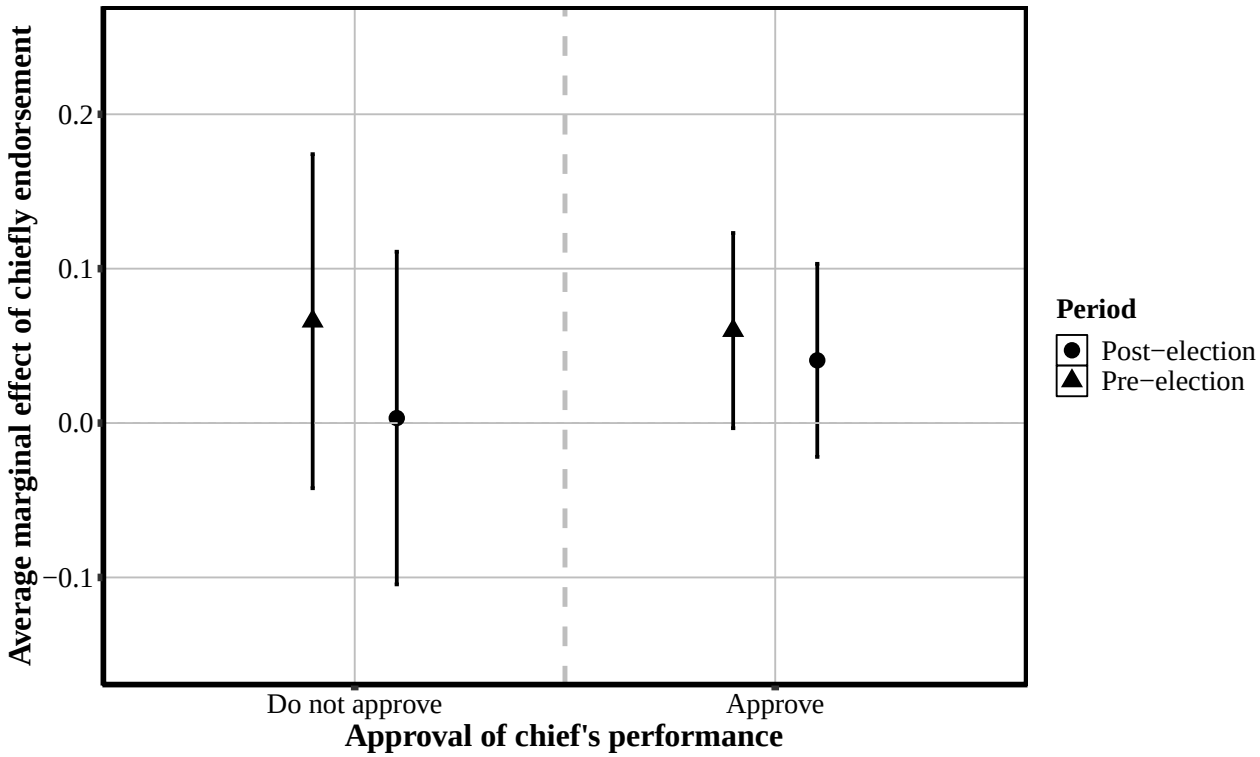

Figure F.3: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by approval of chief
Note: dark thick lines are 95% confidence intervals.

F.4 Partisanship and chiefly approval

Table F.4: ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by partisanship and approval of chief

	Pre-election		Post-election	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.041	0.054	−0.008	−0.001
	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.071)	(0.072)
Close to NDC	−0.882***	−0.802***	−0.624***	−0.543***
	(0.073)	(0.075)	(0.096)	(0.097)
Close to no party	−0.407***	−0.402***	−0.195**	−0.214**
	(0.070)	(0.072)	(0.089)	(0.090)
Approve of chief	0.001	0.010	0.034	0.052
	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Treatment x Close to NDC	−0.016	−0.058	−0.020	−0.003
	(0.091)	(0.092)	(0.118)	(0.118)
Treatment x Close to no party	0.068	0.059	−0.047	−0.005
	(0.087)	(0.090)	(0.110)	(0.112)
Treatment x Approve of chief	−0.007	−0.022	−0.019	−0.035
	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.081)	(0.082)
Close to NDC x Approve of chief	0.023	−0.028	−0.080	−0.115
	(0.085)	(0.086)	(0.112)	(0.113)
Close to no party x Approve of chief	0.015	0.037	−0.170*	−0.152
	(0.082)	(0.085)	(0.102)	(0.102)
Treatment x Close to NDC x Approve of chief	−0.015	0.041	0.071	0.095
	(0.105)	(0.107)	(0.138)	(0.138)
Treatment x Close to no party x Approve of chief	0.018	0.013	0.198	0.180
	(0.102)	(0.104)	(0.126)	(0.127)
Constant	0.959***	0.950***	0.929***	1.059***
	(0.043)	(0.101)	(0.057)	(0.122)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,197	1,187	1,129	1,119
R^2	0.585	0.612	0.331	0.402

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

F.5 Age

Appendix Figure F.4 shows that chiefly endorsement might be more effective among respondents

between 36 and 55 years and do not affect younger and older voters. However, these results are suggestive.

Table F.5: ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by age

	Pre-election		Post-election	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment (any)	0.030	0.018	−0.005	−0.007
	(0.038)	(0.026)	(0.039)	(0.032)
Age:36-55	−0.019	−0.036	−0.020	−0.058
	(0.046)	(0.031)	(0.047)	(0.039)
Age: 56 and above	0.005	−0.046	−0.054	−0.078
	(0.065)	(0.044)	(0.061)	(0.052)
Treatment (any) x Age:36-55	0.044	0.052	0.017	0.057
	(0.057)	(0.038)	(0.057)	(0.048)
Treatment (any) x Age: 56 and above	0.032	0.038	0.020	0.034
	(0.078)	(0.053)	(0.074)	(0.062)
Constant	0.662***	0.163*	0.729***	0.504***
	(0.031)	(0.085)	(0.031)	(0.099)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,424	1,398	1,354	1,299
R^2	0.004	0.583	0.001	0.377

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

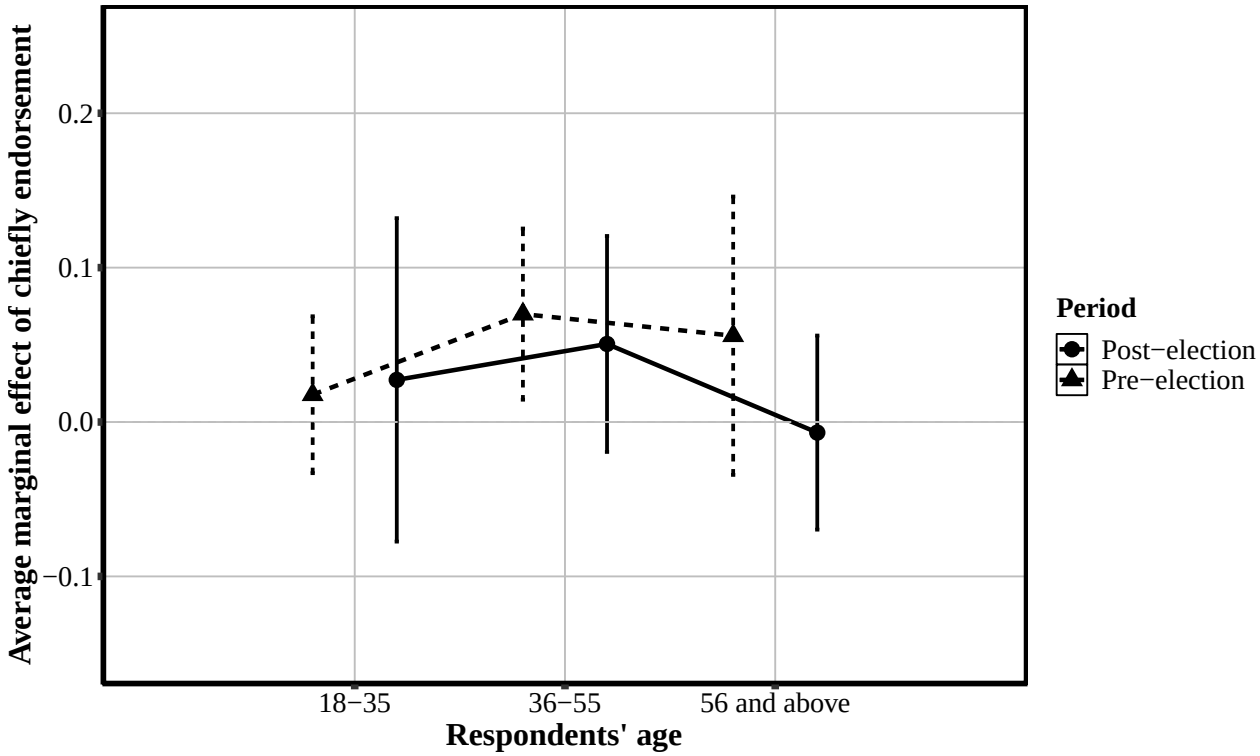

Figure F.4: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by age
Note: Bars are 95% CIs.

F.6 Distance

Figure F.5 indicates that the treatment's effect did not differ by how far a subject lived away from the chief's palace.

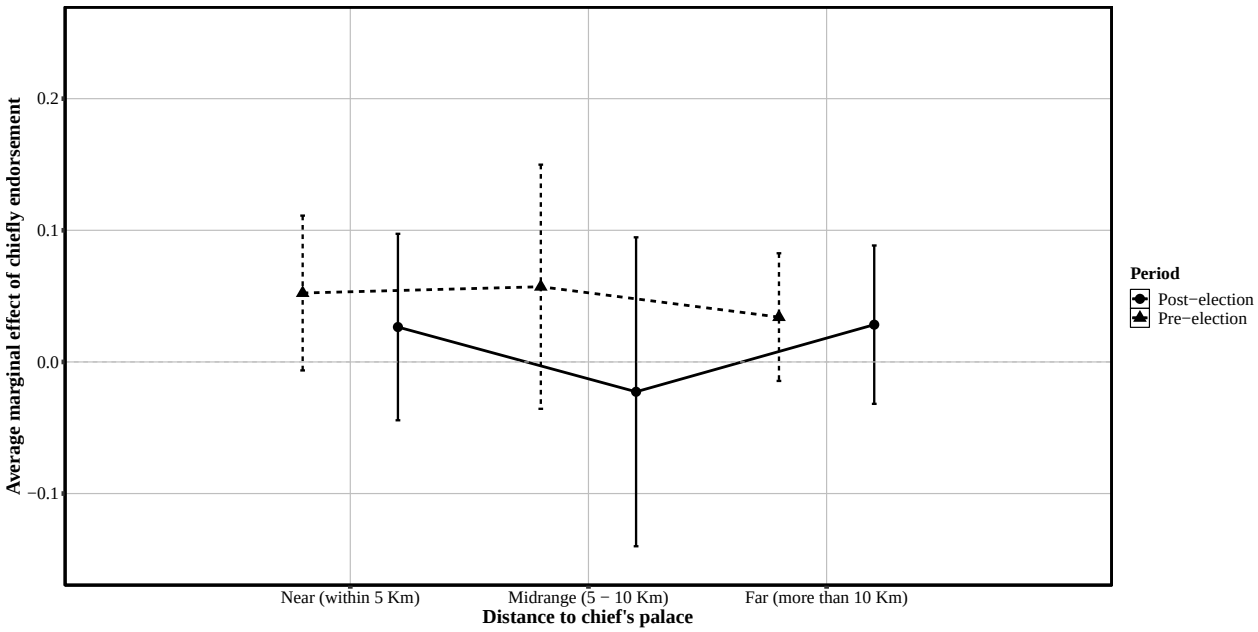

Figure F.5: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by distance to the paramount chief's palace
Note: bars are 95% confidence intervals.

F.7 Does a particular traditional area drive the results?

Figure F.6 shows that results in two traditional areas mainly drive our main results: Drobo and Techiman. The treatment appears to have not change vote choice in Duayaw Nkwanta. However, Figure F.7 shows that out heterogeneous effect by partisanship largely hold across the three traditional areas — although not statistically significant at conventional levels.

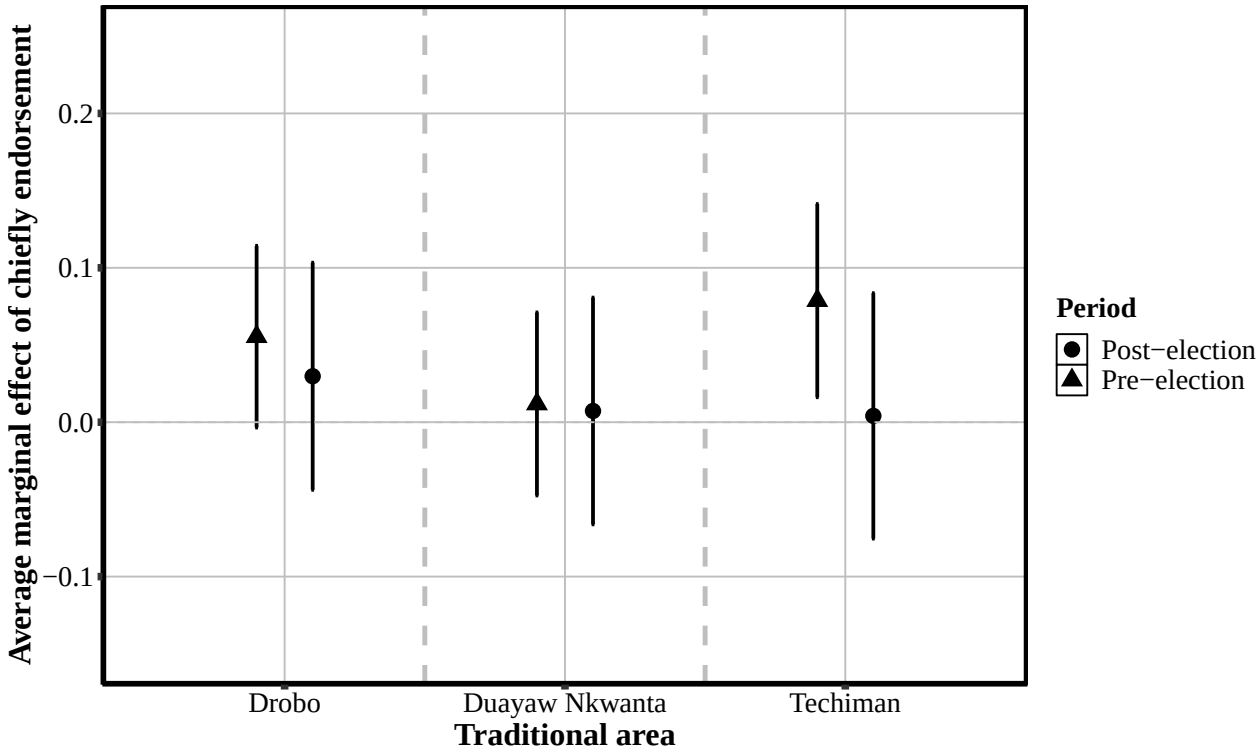

Figure F.6: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by traditional area
*Note:*bars are 95% confidence intervals.

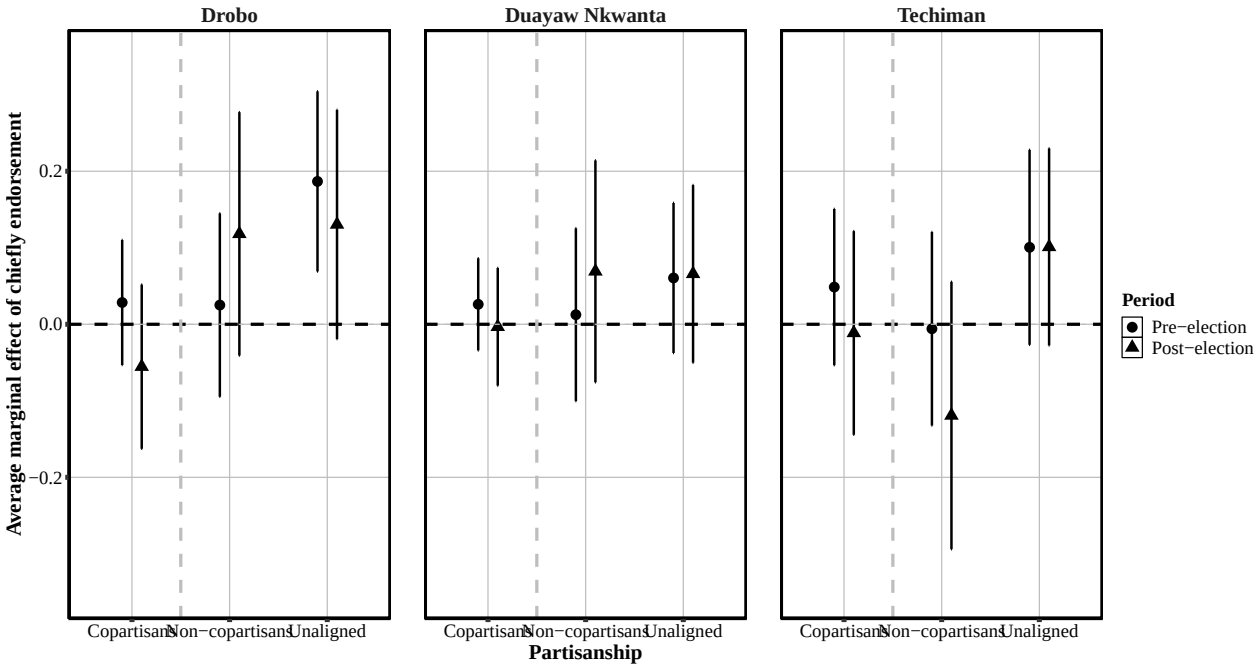

Figure F.7: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by partisanship and traditional area

Note: bars are 95% confidence intervals.

F.8 Gender

Figure F.8 shows that the treatment may have been slightly higher among male respondents compare to females. However, the differences in the treatment effects by gender in both survey waves is not statistically significant, which suggest that our results is not driven by a particular gender.

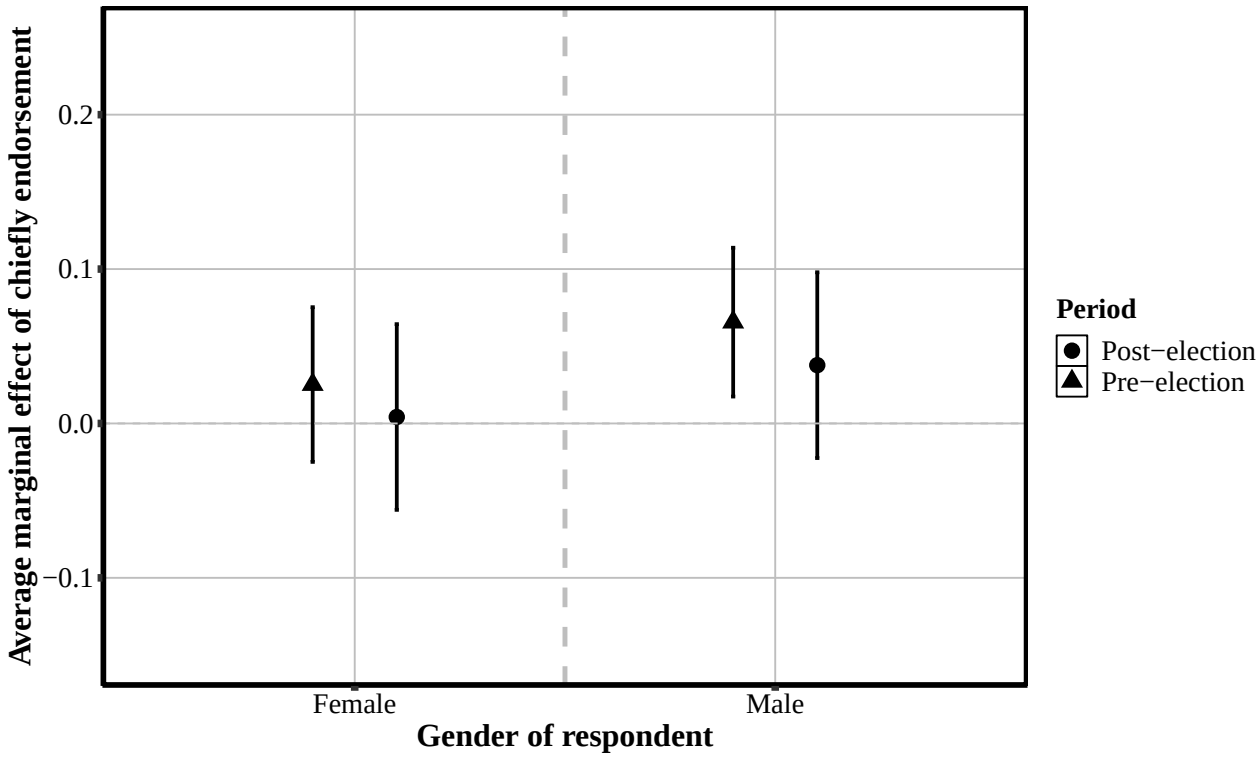

Figure F.8: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by gender
Note: bars are 95% confidence intervals.

F.9 Occupation

We test whether the effect of a traditional leader's endorsement differs by the respondent's occupation. Because almost half of our respondents said they worked as farmers, we analyze whether the effect among this group of workers was different from the remainder of the respondents. Figure F.9 shows that there are no significant differences. These results also underscore our finding that perceptions of personal or communal fear did not drive the effect of endorsement. Specifically, because farmers depend more on land for their livelihood than other community members, one would expect the chief's effects to be higher among these respondents because traditional leaders are believed to influence the administration of lands. However, these heterogeneous effects do not support such a hypothesis.

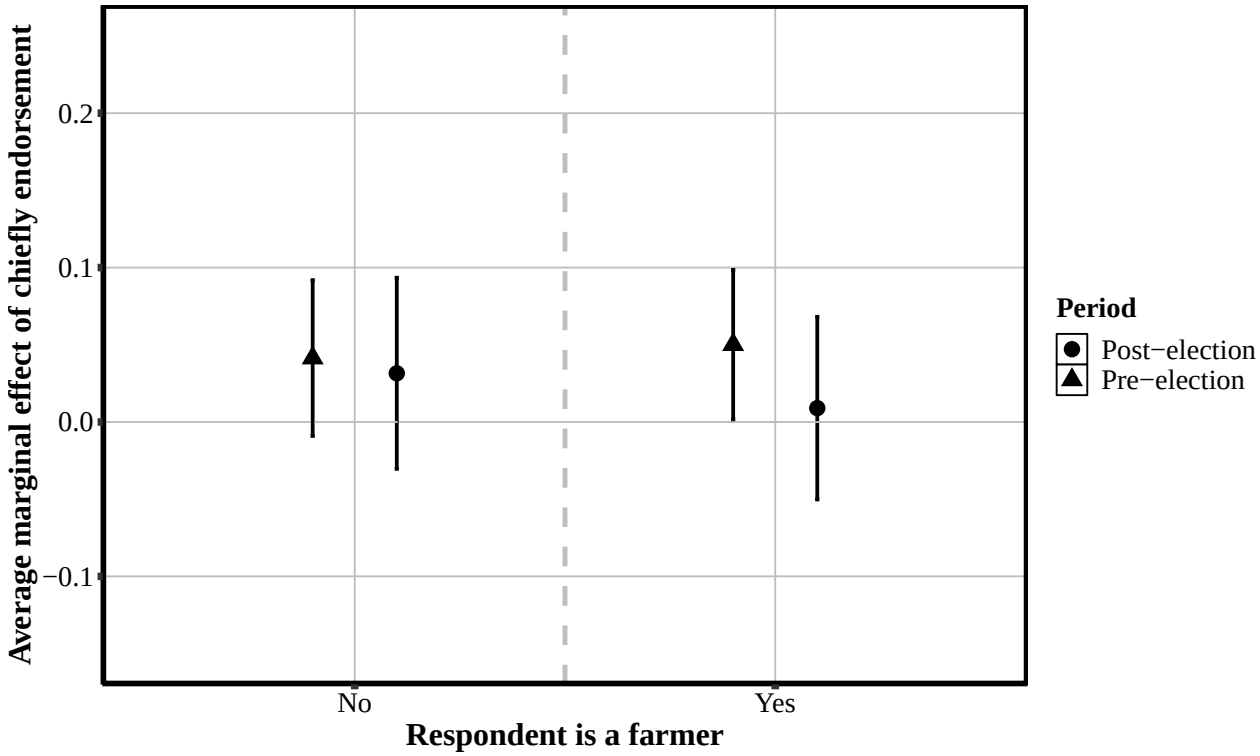

Figure F.9: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by occupation
Note: bars are 95% confidence intervals.

F.10 By whether respondent was able to correctly name traditional leader

Respondents who could name their traditional leader may be more attentive to traditional rule in their area. Being attentive to traditional rule does not necessarily imply complying with its electoral directive. However, it is also possible that individuals with knowledge of the traditional leader's name may also listen to his advice relative to those who do not. We disaggregate our results by whether the respondent could correctly say the traditional leader's name. We asked this question before the treatment. Figure F.10 shows the results. It does not provide strong support for such a supposition.

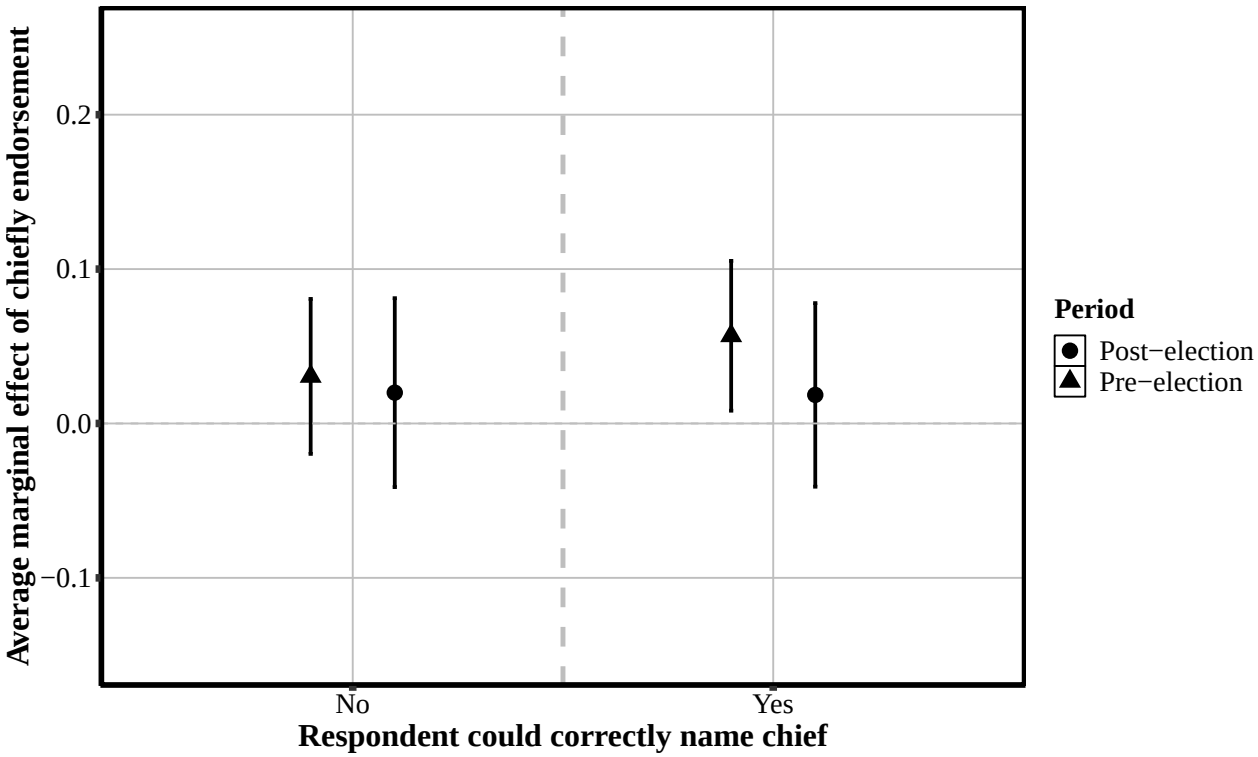

Figure F.10: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by whether respondent could correctly name chief
Note: bars are 95% confidence intervals.

F.11 By whether respondent belong to the majority ethnic group

Finally, we examine whether the treatment's effect varies with the respondent's ethnicity. We assess whether chiefly endorsement is less effective among the paramount chief co-ethnics than non-coethnics. Imagine that the chief's influence runs through their control of lands. In that case, co-ethnics may be less swayed by their pronouncement in elections because they can obtain lands through family connections. However, non-coethnic who may depend on the chief for their lands may be more moved by the treatment. However, suppose citizens are swayed because they believe their chief has better information on the quality of the candidate. In that case, their influence may not depend on sharing ethnicity with the respondent.

We code the majority ethnic group that shares an ethnicity with the chief in two ways. First, we compare the Bono with other ethnic groups. Second, we combine Bono and Ashantis, who belong to the broader Akan group. Figures F.11 Panel A and B show these results, respectively. We do not find systematic differences in the treatment effects.

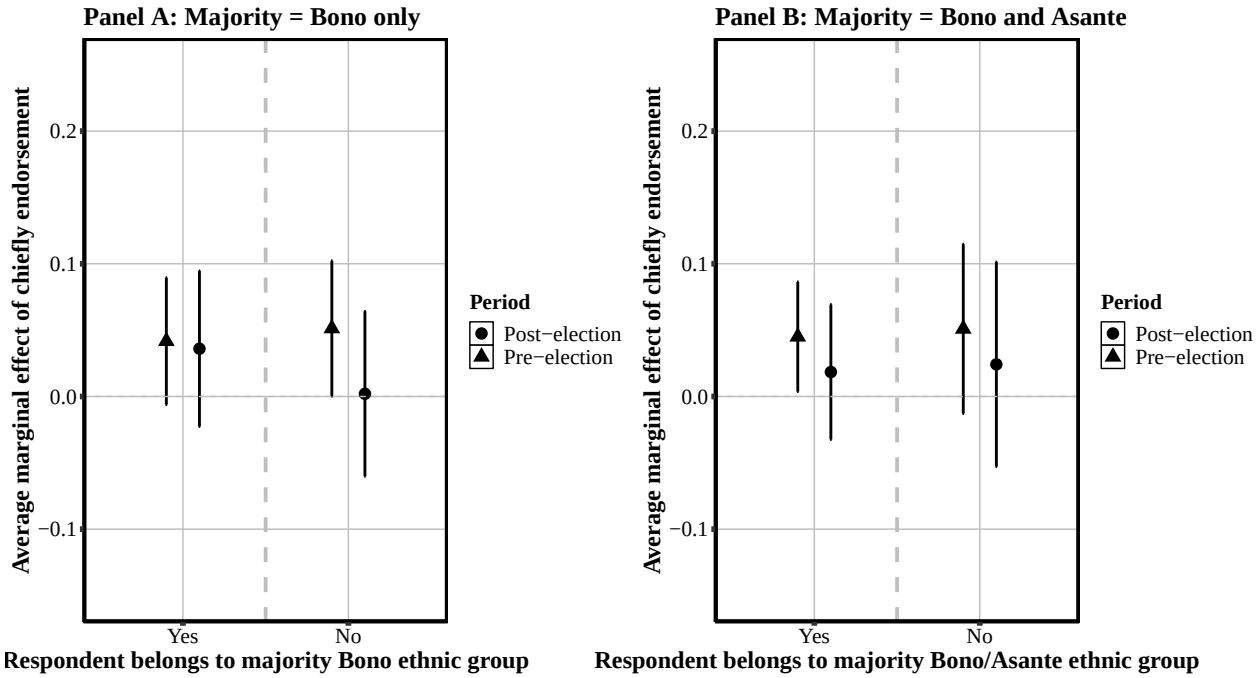

Figure F.11: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by ethnicity
Note: bars are 95% confidence intervals.

G Mechanism

Table G.1: ITT effect of chiefly endorsement type on vote choice

	Pre-election		Post-election	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Endorsement only	0.101	0.095	0.060	0.087
	(0.062)	(0.065)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Endorsement + rationale	0.166***	0.142**	0.077	0.096*
	(0.059)	(0.063)	(0.054)	(0.055)
Constant	0.545***	0.632***	0.633***	1.135***
	(0.043)	(0.238)	(0.039)	(0.219)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	379	376	425	423
R^2	0.021	0.210	0.005	0.248

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

H Results of causal mediation analyses

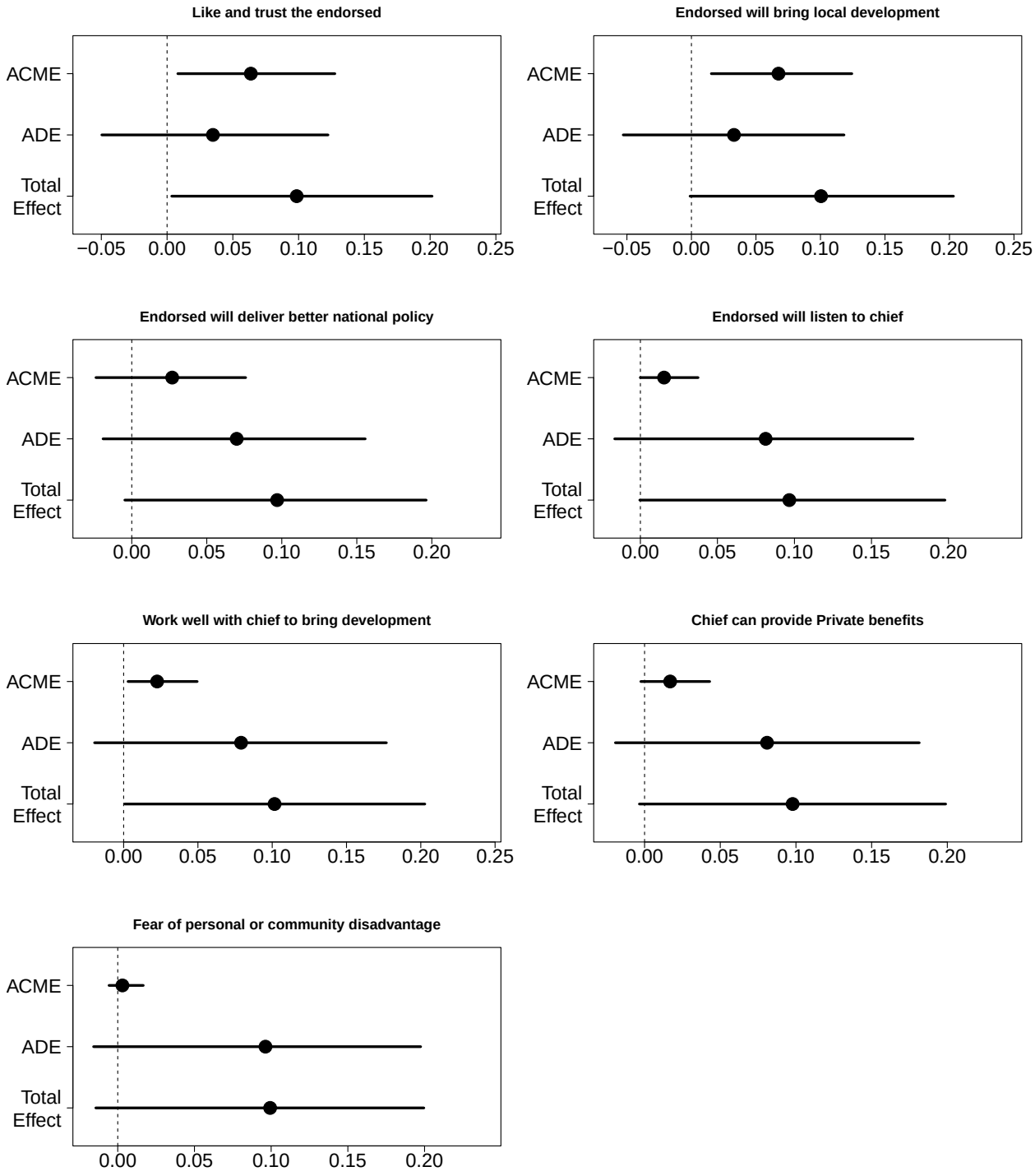

Figure H.1: Total, direct, and indirect effects of intermediate variables on vote choice
Note: Bars are 95% CIs.

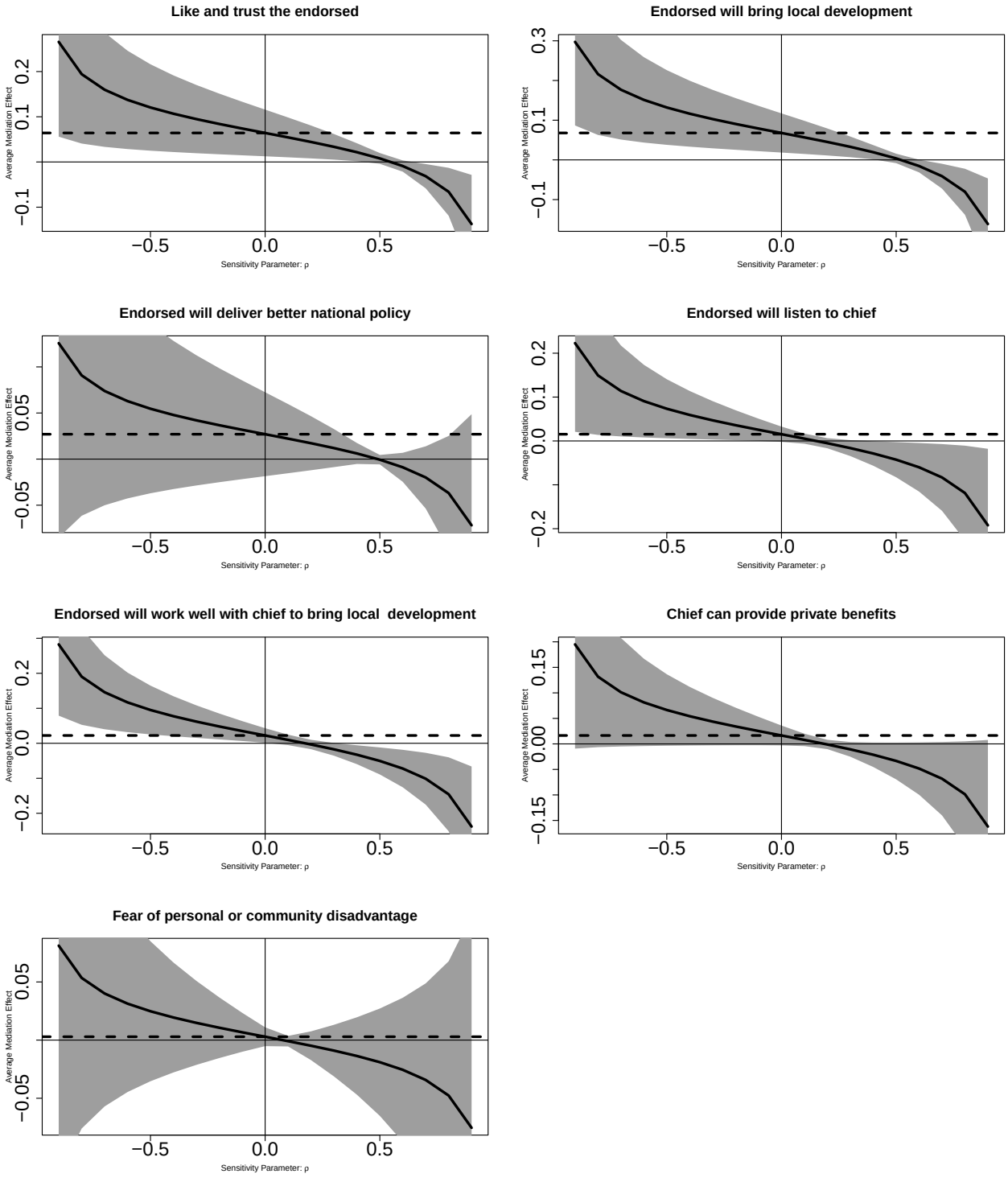

Figure H.2: Sensitivity analysis of causal mediation analysis

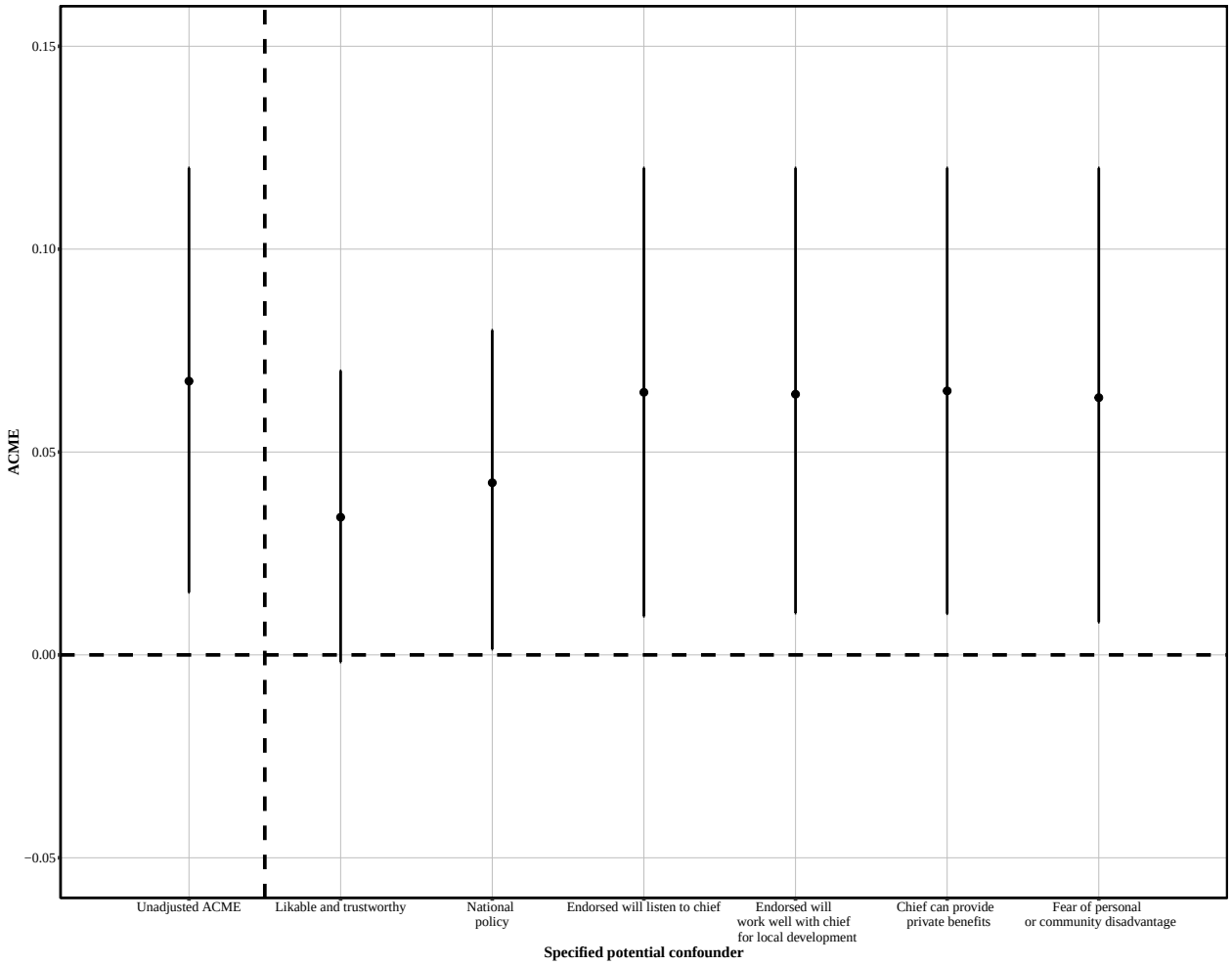

Figure H.3: ACME of candidate will "bring local development" with a specified confounder. These models assume that the interaction effect between treatment and the primary mediator is constant across individual units (i.e., homogeneous interaction assumption).
Note: Bars are 95% CIs.

I An example of transcripts used in the audio treatment

TECHIMAN TRADITIONAL AREA:

On 7th December 2020, Ghana will hold its general elections. Accordingly, presidential candidates of the various political parties have been campaigning in constituencies across the country. These political parties include Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the NPP, John Dramani Mahama of the NDC, Ivor Kobina Greenstreet of the CPP, and Brigitte Dzogbenuku of the PPP. In October 2020, Nana Akufo-Addo, toured the Bono, Bono East, and Ahafo regions to conduct his campaigns. At a durbar, the paramount chief and community members of the Techiman traditional area welcomed him to the Techiman South constituency. In his speech, Nana Oseadeeyo Akumfi Ameyaw IV said:

Rationale:

National: Thankful to the government for resolving not to legalize the Okada [motorcycle] transportation business in the country, which also contravenes Techiman's traditional laws.

Local: In his speech, the paramount chief of the Techiman traditional area, Nana Oseadeeyo Akumfi Ameyaw IV, stated that the president has heeded to the peoples' call by:

- Creating a region for the area and restoring its capital, Techiman
- Providing resources such as vehicles to kickstart the smooth running of the new regional administration
- Inaugurating and providing resources such as cars to the Bono East regional house of chiefs, which was dear to the hearts of the people
- Providing public infrastructure to the area

Request: Nana Ameyaw IV appealed to the president to provide the traditional area with

- roads to ease congestion in the Techiman municipality; and

- to ask the national police service to deploy more police officials to boost security in the traditional area.

Endorsement: It is now up to us to make sure that in December 2020, we go to the booth and thump print for Nana to ensure his second term in office. The paramount chief said that doing so will ensure that Nana will continue his good work and see the seeds that he has grown flourish.

Thanks for listening.

Sources:

- https://www.facebook.com/7893934835/videos/341301840252912
- https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/regional/paramount-chief-of-techiman-traditional-council-endorses-akufo-addo-ahead-of-december-polls/ (video is on the MyJoyOnline link)

DROBO TRADITIONAL AREA:

On 7th December 2020, Ghana will hold its general elections. Accordingly, presidential candidates of the various political parties have been campaigning in constituencies across the country. These political parties include Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the NPP, John Dramani Mahama of the NDC, Ivor Kobina Greenstreet of the CPP, and Brigitte Dzogbenuku of the PPP. In October 2020, Nana Akufo-Addo, toured the Bono, Bono East, and Ahafo regions to conduct his campaigns. At a durbar, the paramount chief and community members of the Drobo traditional area welcomed him to the Jaman South constituency.

Rationale:

The Omanhene of Drobo Traditional Area in Region Okokyeredom Sakyi Ako II has applauded the president, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo for:

National:

- his bravery and leadership qualities, which has made him serve as a model for other leaders to emulate
- many social intervention programs including the free senior high school

Local: the rehabilitation of the 31.7 kilometer Baafono-Zezera-Adamsu feeder road

Requests: He however appealed to the president to:

- Communication network connectivity
- Build a police station in the border community to improve security
- Complete the Drobo-Berekum road, which is very dear to the heart of the people.
- Complete the E block (day senior high schools) that was started by the previous administration.

Endorsement: We promise the president that we "will not let him down." For all that you have done, we want to say well done and "Four more for Nana." Indeed, construction of the road alone was enough justification for the people to reelect the president.

Thanks for listening

Sources:

- https://www.facebook.com/7893934835/videos/243044510343196
- News report: https://www.gna.org.gh/1.18677686

DUAYAW NKWANTA TRADITIONAL AREA:

As we all know on 7th December 2020, Ghana will hold its general elections. Accordingly, presidential candidates of the various political parties have been campaigning in constituencies across the country. These political parties include Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the NPP, John Dramani Mahama of the NDC, Ivor Kobina Greenstreet of the CPP, and Brigitte Dzogbenuku of the PPP. In October 2020, Nana Akufo-Addo, toured the Bono, Bono East, and Ahafo regions to conduct his campaigns.

When the president got to Duayaw Nkwanta traditional area in the Tano North constituency, the paramount chief of the area and its community members welcomed the president at a grand durbar.

Rationale: Speaking on behalf of the paramount chief of the traditional area, Nana Boakye Tromo III, Nana Ameyaw stated that the president has accomplished a lot for Ghanaians and by extension for the people of Nkwanta traditional area.

National

For example, when it comes to national policies, he applauded the president for his flagship programs:

- Free Senior High School
- Planting for food and jobs
- One District one Factory

Local

For the tradition area

- He stated that the people of Duayaw Nkwanta have benefited from all these national initiatives. For example, the planting for food and jobs has helped to reduce the incidence of hunger in the area even during periods of limited rain.
- He thanked that president for working with the local authorities to build schools and clinics for the community.

- He also expressed gratitude to the president for the creation of a new region for the area in fulfilment of his 2016 manifesto

Request: However, he also appealed to the president to:

- Help build a fire training center for which the traditional authority has already allocated 10 acres of land. [He said that this is extremely important to Nana Boakye Tromo III who wants the establishment of the training center to be counted as one of the achievements during his time.]
- A farmers' council to help farmers in the area to channel their grievances to the government.
- Establish some of the regional administration offices in the traditional area to befit its municipal status.

Endorsement: All these achievements indicate that you have anointed by God to lead us. We are fully behind you, Nana. We say "Four more for Nana, four more to do more"

Thanks for listening.

Source: https://www.facebook.com/7893934835/videos/1748893331960237