What do African voters want from their legislators? Evidence from a choice experiment in Ghana

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Abstract

Legislators are multitasking agents of citizens but operate with limited time and resources. They must make two important decisions regarding how best to use their time: (1) how to divide their time between the capital (for parliamentary work) and their electoral district (for constituency-related work) and (2) how much effort to dedicate to political representation, constituency services, and social gatherings in their constituency. The extent to which these nested decisions match constituents' preferences indicates democratic responsiveness. Yet we know little about African voters' views of these decisions. I use a conjoint survey experiment to investigate which legislator activities citizens value. I find that citizens prefer politicians to dedicate as much time to their electoral district as to the capital. At home, they value greater efforts in political representation *and* constituency services that focus on building public infrastructure. Citizens place less value on pledged support for personal transfers, casework, and social events. These findings have important implications for political representation and democratic accountability in the developing world.

Word count: 8,681

1 Introduction

Legislators engage in four principal tasks on behalf of citizens: parliamentary work, *political* representation, constituency service, and *symbolic* representation. They must choose how to allocate their limited time and resources to these activities. First, representatives must decide how to divide their time between the capital (for parliamentary work) and their electoral districts (for constituency-related activities). Then they must determine how to allocate their efforts to constituency-focused activities. Finally, where the state provides discretionary funds for constituency services, politicians must decide how to distribute them between public works and private benefits.

The extent to which legislators' decisions match constituents' wishes indicates political responsiveness (Eulau and Karps 1977; Hyden 2010; Powell 2005). Yet, we know little about voters' views on these decisions and the potential trade-offs politicians must make, especially in developing countries. Understanding *what voters want* is an essential first step in evaluating political responsiveness and assessing electoral accountability (Golden and Min 2013; Grant and Rudolph 2004; Griffin and Flavin 2011). Misperceptions about voters' priorities can lead to the misallocation of state resources to undesired policies (Barkan and Mattes 2014) as well as voter dissatisfaction with representatives or the political system more broadly (Bowler and Karp 2004).

Prior work has explored which roles legislators deem important (Barkan et al. 2010), and sometimes interpret this as the activities that citizens prioritize (Lindberg 2010). Other research has considered whether legislators distribute discretionary benefits in a nonpartisan (Bussell 2019) or partisan manner (Butler and Broockman 2011; McClendon 2016).

Studies that focus on voters tend to only consider how they rank legislators' roles in terms of importance or their most preferred legislator task; they generally say little about the *balance* (i.e., trade-offs) they want their representatives to strike between competing functions (Vivyan and Wagner 2016). Scholars have yet to consider whether citizens are satisfied if legislators substi-

tute representation with constituency-centered activities, or whether they expect both. We do not know whether constituents prefer politicians who use statutory funds to provide public over private goods or vice versa. Finally, researchers have yet to examine whether citizens consider symbolic representation when deciding who to vote for.

In this article, I contribute new insights on voter preferences regarding politicians' decisions. I use a conjoint survey experiment to investigate the weights citizens place on various legislator tasks. I asked respondents to choose between hypothetical candidates who varied on several attributes including *promised* time allocations between the capital (doing parliamentary work) and home (conducting constituency-related activities) as well as pledged efforts to engage in political representation, constituency services, and symbolic representation.[1]

I consider two key constituency services: (1) spending state funds to improve constituents' welfare (and how citizens would like politicians to allocate these funds to public works vs. private benefits) and (2) casework.

The survey design allows me to assess how these pledged activities influence citizens' voting decisions. By comparing the relative effects (weights) of the various attributes on vote choice, the conjoint survey helps to investigate citizens' views on the trade-offs legislators must make while in office (Bansak et al. 2021). For example, a voter who wants spending to focus on public goods but opposes political representation may face a dilemma if an election pits an aspirant dedicated to public works and political representation against one who is committed to spending on private benefits and offers no representation. When deciding how to cast their ballot, voters must identify their preferences regarding each legislator activity and make *trade-offs* across them.

The survey respondents (n=2,020) were randomly selected from a stratified sample of 12 constituencies in Ghana. I stratified districts by electoral competition and urbanization, which allows me to determine whether voter preferences vary across district types. I also assess variation on

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[1]My design is similar to that of Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto (2016) and Vivyan and Wagner (2015), who employ conjoint survey experiments to estimate how candidates' characteristics and Members of Parliament (MPs') constituency service promises affect voter preferences in Japan and the UK, respectively.

individual characteristics that may be relevant to preferences (see Griffin and Flavin 2011).

I observe three main findings which demonstrate that Ghanaians care about how their representatives allocate their time, effort, and resources across their multiple tasks. First, citizens want legislators to equally divide their time between work in parliament and activities at home (rather than focusing mainly on parliamentary work). Second, at home, citizens equally value political representation and public works-oriented constituency services. They prefer politicians who pledge to hold regular community meetings to listen to constituents' concerns and debrief them about parliamentary debates *and* candidates who will exert more effort to use state funds to address their community infrastructure needs. Third, legislators' efforts at private financial transfers from state funds, casework, and support for social gatherings (i.e., symbolic representation) positively affect citizens' vote choices. However, the impacts of such activities are less critical than political representation and solving community infrastructure needs, which implies that citizens may prioritize the latter type of tasks.

In Ghana, citizens elect their representatives under plurality rule in single-member districts. The study's results are therefore likely to travel to other sub-Saharan countries with similar electoral systems – about a third of African countries (International IDEA).[2] And since Ghanaians have been shown to represent average African voters' expectations (Mattes and Mozaffar 2016),[3] I believe my findings will apply more broadly.

This study makes three significant contributions to the literature on the legislator–citizen relationship. First, it advances research on what spheres of representatives' duties citizens prioritize by investigating voters' views on the trade-offs legislators must make (Barkan et al. 2010; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Grant and Rudolph 2004; Kimball and Patterson 1997; Krasno 1997; Lindberg 2013; Lindberg and Morrison 2008). My findings suggest citizens want their representa-

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[2] https://www.idea.int/data-tools/question-view/130355, accessed, March 22, 2023.

[3] In a 2008–2009 survey of African voters' views of what legislators should do in 17 countries, about 45% of respondents in the sample (n=20,339) said the most important responsibility of their representative is representation; 31% said constituency service, 15% responded lawmaking and 6% named oversight. The corresponding figures for Ghana were: 45% (representation), 40% (constituency service), 8% (lawmaking), and 2% (oversight).

tives to strike a fine balance between being in their district and in the legislature. At home, African voters want legislators to not only provide (or facilitate) community development projects, but also listen to their views. Thus, the study complements emerging research which maintains that citizens desire opportunities to deliberate with officeholders (Barkan and Mattes 2014; Paller 2019), and to serve as a link between constituents and the central government (Barkan 1979; Barkan and Okumu 1974; Krönke 2023). However, the findings suggest citizens do not want representation at the expense of constituency service.

Second, this article contributes to research on voting behavior in sub-Saharan Africa's legislative elections. The results align with emerging scholarship that suggests citizens care more about public than private benefits from legislators (Bratton, Bhavnani, and Chen 2012; Harding 2015; Mattes and Mozaffar 2016; Oduro and Amanfo-Tetteh 2016).

Finally, it extends work that investigates how demographic factors shape voters' demands for constituency services (Carman 2007; Davidson 1970; Griffin and Flavin 2011). Consistent with prior work, I show in Section 5 that some district- and individual-level factors shape citizens' demands and constituency service priorities in developing countries, providing complementary and contrasting results to those in established democracies.

2 What do voters want from their representatives?

Figure 1 displays the multiple decisions legislators must make on constituents' behalf during their time in office. First, they must decide how much time to spend in the capital versus the electoral district. I assume that time spent in the capital focuses on parliamentary work such as policy-making and executive oversight. Legislators undertake three significant activities in their districts: political representation, constituency service, and symbolic representation. Political representation involves organizing meetings to listen to constituents' views and debrief them about parliamentary business (Barkan and Mattes 2014). Constituency service entails addressing constituents' non-

policy concerns, which includes distributing state funds to address community or individual needs and helping citizens navigate the government's bureaucracy (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1984; Fenno 1978; Keefer and Khemani 2009). Symbolic representation includes attending or supporting social gatherings with constituents, such as funerals, weddings, religious services, festivals, and sporting events (Dixit and Londregan 1996; Eulau and Karps 1977). Politicians must decide how much effort to dedicate to each of these activities when they visit their district. When distributing funds, they must also decide how to split them between public works and private benefits (Ofosu 2019). Below, I consider what citizens might prefer.
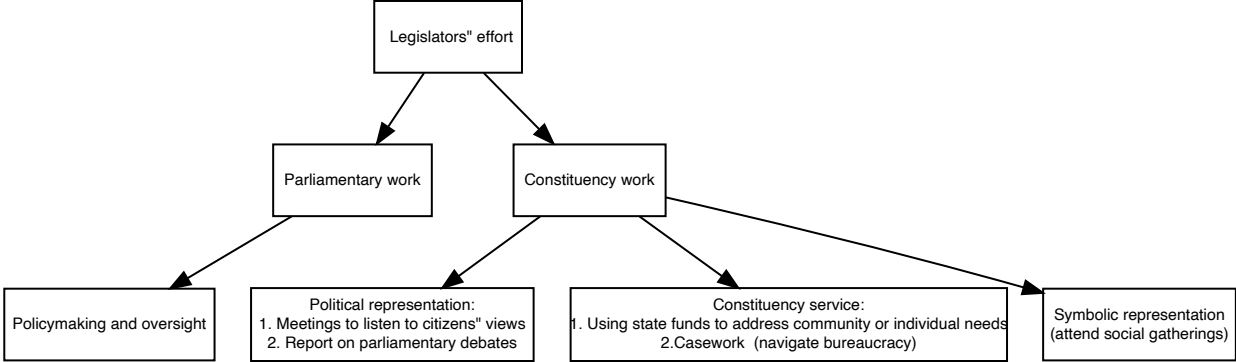

Figure 1: Tasks legislators perform on citizens' behalf

2.1 Being in parliament versus in the constituency

Scholarship on citizen–legislator linkages in much of the developing world, including sub-Saharan Africa, suggests that citizens prefer legislators who dedicate more of their time to addressing local issues over the national concerns of lawmaking and executive oversight (Barkan 1979; Bussell 2019; Hyden 2010; Lindberg 2010). Researchers infer from surveys of legislators and citizens in which they rank these activities that voters want representatives to spend more time at home than in the legislature. Accordingly, some scholars take the frequency of legislator visits to indicate political responsiveness (Bratton 2013; Young 2009).

However, some evidence suggests that citizens may want legislators to spend more time on

parliamentary work. For example, Lindberg (2013) finds that although Ghanaian voters expect MPs to address local concerns (provide local development projects), their evaluation of the state of the national economy and the government's policies influences their vote choice in legislative elections.

Although previous work does not provide direct evidence of voters' preferred *balance* (i.e., trade-off) of time between parliamentary work and constituency work, the bulk of past research suggests voters may prefer politicians who spend more time at home than in the legislature.

2.2 Constituency work

2.2.1 Constituency services and political representation

We do not know what voters want politicians to prioritize at home – constituency service or political representation (Barkan and Mattes 2014). The consensus in the literature appears to be that where access to public infrastructure and services is limited, and the government bureaucracy is very inefficient, citizens prefer legislators to focus on constituency services. Specifically, voters want legislators – their only "political broker" with legal status in the central government – to help provide or improve public services in their communities (Barkan 1979; Bussell 2019). Accordingly, citizens will prefer politicians who [at least promise to] provide more constituency services than less, and will not consider their efforts at representation in their vote choice.

However, voters may want their legislators to focus on political *representation* – listening and "re-presenting" constituents' concerns in the legislature. For example, Barkan and Mattes (2014) note that while the introduction of Constituency Development Funds (CDFs) allows MPs to provide valued local public goods (constituency services), these have not boosted the incumbent reelection rate in sub-Saharan Africa. Together with findings from Afrobarometer surveys that suggest almost a majority of citizens want representatives to organize meetings to listen to their concerns, Barkan and Mattes (2014) argue that voters may care more about legislators expressing

their concerns at the heart of government than directly solving them. Barkan compares MPs to a "suitor who showers the object of his affection with jewels and expensive clothes, while the woman (i.e., the citizen) secretly confides to her friends that 'I just want someone to listen to me' "(Mattes and Mozaffar 2016 pg. 210).[4]

Thus, voters will be influenced by legislators' efforts at *representation (organizing meetings to listen to constituents' demands and briefing them on parliamentary meetings*); constituency services, which include spending state funds or conducting casework (see Section 2.2.1.1), will not affect vote choice. Since voters may value representation and constituency services equally (Barkan et al. 2010), both could have a similar impact on vote choice in legislative elections. Below I provide initial insights into each of these possibilities.

2.2.1.1 Constituency services: community projects versus personal benefits

Constituency service involves three main activities: (i) helping citizens navigate bureaucratic bottlenecks (casework); (ii) providing financial support; and (iii) lobbying for or commissioning infrastructure. In developing countries, legislators are often provided with funds to commission community projects and provide individual financial support in the form of CDFs (or their equivalent) (Barkan and Mattes 2014; Mezey 2014; Opalo 2022). Legislators can allocate these funds to support: (1) local public goods to communities or (2) individual financial needs.

In line with prior work, I classify constituency services as either public or private. *Public* services target entire communities or constituents. These include the provision of public infrastructure such as roads, clinics, schools, marketplaces, electricity, and toilets (Eulau and Karps 1977). *Private* services focus on individuals and include: (1) providing personal financial support from statutory funds and (2) casework.

When gauging their support for public vs. private goods, individuals are likely to assess the probability that they will personally benefit from a particular service. Public goods are non-

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[4]However, Bowles and Marx (2021) find a positive relationship between the per capita allocation of CDF (i.e., available CDF per constituent) and legislators (successfully) seeking reelection.

excludable and non-rivalrous (Olson 1971), while private benefits are bestowed on favorites or those who have access to politicians (Grossman, Humphreys, and Sacramone-Lutz 2014). A growing number of studies show that access to personal support or casework from politicians often depends on shared partisanship or ethnicity/race with the legislator (Butler and Broockman 2011; Dinesen, Dahl, and Schiøler 2021; McClendon 2016) or the ability to participate in local elections (Gaikwad and Nellis 2021). Thus, citizens will prefer public over private constituency services because they are more likely to benefit.

2.2.2 Symbolic representation

The last constituency-related activity that I consider is symbolic representation, which Eulau and Karps (1977) defines as "public gestures of a sort that create a sense of trust and support in the relationship between representative and represented" (pg. 241). It involves attending social events such as funerals, weddings, naming ceremonies, traditional festivals, and religious services to share in constituents' joys and griefs or supporting disaster-stricken communities (Dixit and Londregan 1995).

Although largely overlooked in the literature, nearly 8 in 10 Ghanaian MPs report that attending social events (funerals, traditional festivals, church services) is one of the top three activities they take part in when they visit their constituency (Ofosu 2017). Hyden (2010) argues that such participation indicates that Ghanaian legislators are "socially embedded." Politicians believe that missing such community events would prevent them from getting reeleced. I infer from these beliefs that *citizens prefer politicians who attend more social events.*

3 Research design

To examine how citizens want legislators to juggle their various tasks, I conducted a conjoint survey experiment in Ghana. Ghanaian MPs are elected for 4-year terms using plurality rule in

single-member districts. Survey participants were given descriptions of three pairs of hypothetical candidates running for parliament in their constituency. These candidates were characterized by nine attributes (or features) (see Table 1).

The first five attributes concerned a set of pledged time allocations to activities in the capital vs. at home, and the level of effort they would commit to political representation, constituency services, and symbolic representation: (a) allocation of *Time between the constituency versus the capital (Accra)* (3 levels); (b) *Organizing constituency meetings* to listen to constituents' concerns; (c) *Use of MP's Common Fund (CDF)* (4 levels) to provide *public goods* or *private benefits*; (d) *Personal assistance (casework)* (3 levels) to constituents to navigate the state bureaucracy; and (e) attending *Social events* (3 levels).

The remaining attributes were personal characteristics of the hypothetical candidate: (f) *Party affiliation* (3 levels); (g) *Hometown/residency* status (3 levels); (h) *Profession* (6 levels); and (i) *Gender* (2 levels).[5] I randomized the values of each attribute, which helps simultaneously estimate the causal effects (average marginal component effects (AMCE)) of each attribute relative to a chosen baseline on candidate choice (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2013).

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[5]I used data from the profiles of all candidates who contested the country's 2016 general election from the website of the Electoral Commission to determine realistic attribute levels regarding a candidate's party, gender, profession, and place of birth, which increases the external validity of the survey design. I also piloted the survey in three constituencies (Awutu Senya West, Sege, and Krowor) in August 2018 to ensure that participants would understand the questionnaire.

Table 1: Values of candidates' promises and characteristics in the conjoint survey

Candidate Attribute	Attribute levels	Probabilities
Parliament vs. constituency		
a) Time in constituency versus capital (Accra)	Constituency (C): [**25**, **50**, **75**] percent; Accra (A):[**25**, **50**, **75**] percent [**Use levels** ($T_{C,A}$):	
	$T_{25,75}$[1]	1/3
	$T_{50,50}$[2]	1/3
	$T_{75,25}$ [3]	1/3
Political representation		
b) Community meetings	Never [1]	1/5
	Monthly [2]	1/5
	Every three months [3]	1/5
	Every six months [4]	1/5
	Yearly [5]	1/5
Constituency services		
c) Use of MP's Common Fund (CDF)	[**Levels: 1) Ten (10) percent; 2) 50 percent; 3) 90 perecent**] of MPCF to support the construction or renovation of community school and clinics, repairs of roads and bridges, and other community self-help projects. [**Levels: 1) Ten (10) percent; 2) 50 percent; 3) 90 perecent**] of MPCF to pay school fees, medical bills, and apprenticeship fee for some individual members of this constituency. [**Use levels:**	
	$P_{10,10}$ [1]	1/4
	$P_{50,50}$ [2]	1/4
	$P_{10,90}$ [3]	1/4
	$P_{90,10}$ [4]	1/4
d) Personal assistance (casework)	[**Levels:** Hardly (1/10)[1], Sometimes (5/10)[2], Always (10/10)[3]] support constituents who need help to obtain government services such as business license, passport, birth certificate, facilitate loans or get government jobs	
	Hardly (1/10)[1]	1/3
	Sometimes (5/10)[2]	1/3
	Always (10/10)[3]	1/3
Symbolic representation		
e) Social events	[**Levels:** Hardly (1/10)[1], Sometimes (5/10)[2], Always (10/10)[3]]: attend or contribute to social events such as funerals, church/mosque activities, and traditional festivals.	
	Hardly (1/10)[1]	1/3
	Sometimes (5/10)[2]	1/3
	Always (10/10)[3]	1/3
Personal attributes		
f) Political Party	Independent (IND)[1]	1/3
	New Patriotic Party (NPP)[2]	1/3
	National Democratic Congress (NDC)[3]	1/3
g) Hometown/residency status	Hails from and resident in constituency [1]	1/3
	Does not hail but resident in constituency [2]	1/3
	Hails from but not resident [3]	1/3
h) Profession	Farmer/Agriculturalist (1)	1/6
	Lawyer (2)	1/6
	Educationist/teacher (3)	1/6
	Business person (4)	1/6
	Accountant (5)	1/6
	Architect (6)	1/6
i) Gender	Female [0]	1/5
	Male [1]	4/5

3.1 Measurements

I examine how citizens would like their representatives to divide their time (T) between their constituency (C) and the capital, Accra (A), $T_{(C,A)}$ (*Time in constituency versus capital (Accra)*). Citizens may prefer a legislator who spends most of their time in the constituency and only a little in the capital, $T_{(75\%,25\%)}$. Alternatively, they may select a hypothetical MP who dedicates most of their time to legislative business in the capital, $T_{(25\%,75\%)}$, or divides their time equally between the constituency and the capital, $T_{(50\%,50\%)}$. These alternatives help examine citizens' views on such a trade-off.

Several scholars use the frequency of legislators' visits to their constituency (and thus the time spent) to indicate their attentiveness to or knowledge of constituents' concerns (e.g., Fenno (1978), Ingall and Crisp (2001), Bratton (2013), Barkan and Mattes (2014)). Accordingly, how citizens want their legislators to divide their time between the constituency and the capital likely reveals how they prioritize constituency service versus legislative work.

However, simply focusing on the frequency or amount of time citizens want their MPs to spend in the constituency says little about what they would like them to do when they visit.[6] Voters may want their representatives to focus on either political representational activities (i.e., listening and debriefing constituents) or constituency services. They may also simply want them to engage in symbolic representation. My research design allows me to examine the *weights* citizens place on specific activities when their representative visits.

Concerning *political representation*, the survey asked respondents to consider how frequently a hypothetical candidate promises to organize community meetings to listen to constituents' concerns and brief them about government policies discussed in parliament (*Community meetings*). Hypothetical candidates promised *never* to organize such meetings or to do so *monthly*, *every 3 months*, *every 6 months*, or *yearly*. A demand for frequent meetings indicates that citizens place a

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[6]Regular visits to one's constituency may be used for other constituency service purposes, such as to visit loved ones or family, work on their businesses located in the constituency, raise campaign funds or give policy speeches on behalf of the president (Crisp and Simoneau 2018).

high value on representation.

The conjoint survey uses two key features to examine how citizens prioritize constituency services. First, Ghana provides MPs with equal amounts in CDFs, and they have discretion over their use. Using these funds takes time and effort to deal with the local bureaucracy (Ofosu 2019). Accordingly, voters may want their representatives to focus on their other constituency-related roles. The impact of any form of spending on vote choice therefore indicates the degree to which voters value this type of constituency service (*Use of MP's Common Fund (CDF)*).

I also examine citizens' preferences regarding four possible CDF spending (trade-offs): $P_{(\text{public}(\% \text{ CDF}), \text{private}(\% \text{ CDF}))}$. At the extreme ends, a voter may prefer politicians to use almost all their funds to provide public infrastructure ($P_{(90\%, 10\%)}$) or to focus mainly on providing individual benefits ($P_{(10\%, 90\%)}$). Alternatively, voters may want legislators to divide the CDF equally between each ($P_{(50\%, 50\%)}$). I use minimal spending on each type, $P_{(10\%, 10\%)}$, as the baseline category (indicating that the MP does not spend all of their allocated funds).[7]

Second, I asked respondents to weigh how a hypothetical candidate promises to provide personal support to individuals who need help obtaining government services such as business licenses, passports, or birth certificates, or to facilitate loans or get a government job (*Personal assistance (casework)*). To aid comprehension, such assistance was also stated as the proportion of individual requests the candidate would support. The research assistants told the respondents that the hypothetical candidate promises that during her term in office, for, say, every 10 residents who come to request casework, she would: *hardly (1/10)*, *sometimes (5/10)*, or *always (10/10)* help with their requests.

To systematically test the impact of *symbolic representation* on vote choice, I asked respondents to consider the extent (also expressed out of ten) to which a hypothetical candidate promises to participate (or donate) to social events in their community: *hardly* (1/10), *sometimes* (5/10), or

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[7]Ideally, one would use no spending as the baseline. However, because voters may not consider CDF spending in their choice of MPs in the first place, choosing a 0% use of CDF could simply prime respondents rather than elicit a genuine response.

always (10/10). I included donation in the description because my scoping suggested many expect MPs to donate funds at such events even if they are unable to attend (e.g., donate to bereaved families and religious festivals, or buy food and drinks for a traditional festival). Accordingly, I am unable to distinguish the effect of merely attending versus donating to social gatherings. However, the study provides initial insights into whether symbolic representation is important to African voters.

3.2   Personal attributes of hypothetical candidates

Voters may not consider candidate promises about effort or the decisions they will make in office when deciding how to vote; they may focus instead on these aspirants' traits. These characteristics may serve as heuristics to determine which politician will better serve them. Therefore, in addition to promised efforts, I also consider four factors that my field interviews (and the literature) indicate may be more important in citizens' vote choices in parliamentary elections in Ghana – candidates' party affiliation, hometown and residence status, profession, and gender.

Party affiliation. Two major parties, the New Patriotic Party (*NPP*) and the National Democratic Congress (*NDC*), have dominated Ghana's parliamentary (and presidential) elections since the country's return to multiparty elections in 1992 (Fridy 2007; Gyimah-Boadi 2009). Accordingly, I use these two parties and *independent* as the possible values of party affiliation. To facilitate substantive interpretation of the effect of party affiliation, I re-coded each profile as a copartisan, non-copartisan, or independent pair conditional on the match between the partisanship of the respondent and the hypothetical candidate (see Section 3.3).

Hometown/residence status. I consider all the legal residential requirements for MP candidates. The law permits those who *hail from but are not resident* in the constituency as well as those who *do not hail from but are resident in the constituency* to stand for election.[8] I also asked respondents

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[8]The law requires candidates to be a permanent resident or to have lived in the constituency they seek to represent for five of the ten years preceding the election (Public Election Regulations, 1996 (CI 15)).

to consider a hypothetical candidate who *hails from and is resident in the constituency*. These options allow me to tease out whether simply hailing from or being resident is more important to voters (or whether they prefer both). In addition, whether a candidate is originally from a particular constituency may signal whether he or she belongs to a local ethnic group. However, holding a residential status can signal shared preferences for similar local public infrastructure or common challenges with local government bureaucracies.

Profession. I gleaned data from the profiles of candidates who competed in the country's 2016 parliamentary elections.

Gender. Candidates' gender was either female or male.

3.3   Sampling respondents

Respondents were selected from a stratified sample of 12 constituencies. I stratified the country's 275 constituencies by the level of electoral competition, classifying those who won by a margin of 10% or less in the 2012 and 2016 parliamentary elections as competitive. Half of the sampled constituencies are competitive according to this definition, which generates a large enough subsample of respondents to test my hypotheses about how electoral competition shapes citizens' priorities. Five of these constituencies are urban.[9]

I randomly selected ten polling stations from each constituency. Enumerators then followed a random walk sampling procedure to select approximately 17 respondents living within the catchment of each voting center.[10] Thus, we interviewed about 170 constituents in each constituency.

Table 2 shows the summary statistics of the participants ($n = 2022$). Respondents were 39 years old, on average, and half were female. Approximately 30% have no education.

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[9]I classify constituencies as urban or rural based on the mean of the proportion of sampled communities in a constituency with access to electricity, pipe water, sewage, mobile phone services, post office, schools, police station, clinic, market, bank, and daily transport. This measure correlates with the proportion of rural residents according to Ghana's 2010 census.

[10]Appendix Tables A.1 and A.2 report the summary statistics of the characteristics of the sampled respondents and polling station (recorded by enumerators), respectively.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of respondents

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Demographics		
Age	38.937	14.730
Female	0.496	0.500
No education	0.299	0.458
Poverty index (0-6)	1.928	1.538
Political participation		
Voted in prior election (2016)	0.863	0.344
Feel close to a party	0.740	0.439
Party close to: incumbent party (NPP)	0.555	0.497
Political knowledge =		
Claim to know MP name	0.750	0.433
Of those who claim to know MP name, correctly names	0.957	0.203

To measure respondents' wealth, I sum six indicators of lived poverty to generate a poverty index scored from 0 to 6: going several times or more without food, water, medicine, fuel for cooking, cash income, and living in a hut or shack housing. Those scoring between 0 and 3 are classified as high income (rich), and those from 4 to 6 as low income (poor).[11] Respondents averaged 1.928 on the poverty index, where higher values indicate higher levels of lived poverty. Over three-fourths (86%) said they voted in the most recent elections in 2016, and 74% reported being close to a political party. Of those close to a party, 56% said it was the incumbent party (NPP). An impressive 75% said they knew the name of their MP, of which 96% could correctly name the representative.

To code respondents' partisanship, I use the questions about whether they feel close to a party and which one it was. To simplify the presentation, education level is classified as either none or primary education/above; participants with primary and secondary education had similar demands.

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[11]Dividing participants into three income groups (0 or 1 as high (rich), 2 or 3 as medium (middle), and 4 to 6 as low (poor)) does not change the substantive results. High- and middle-income participants had similar demands and preferences.

3.4 Interviewing respondents, balance statistics, and profile order effect

Appendix B details the interview procedure and the narrative presented to respondents. Appendix Figure B.1 shows an example of a conjoint choice presented to a respondent.[12] The profiles were presented side by side, each pair on a separate screen. Respondents chose which candidate from each pair they would vote for in a hypothetical election.

Appendix Table C.2 illustrates that the order in which the profile appeared did not affect the results. The attributes were presented in a randomized order that was fixed across the three pairings for each study participant to ease the cognitive burden for respondents and to minimize primacy and recency effects. Appendix Table C.1 demonstrates that the randomization was successful. Controlling for multiple variables that were not balanced across treatments, as expected by chance, does not change the results.

3.5 Estimation strategy

To assess the relative importance of the various legislator tasks to citizens, I estimate the how each promised effort allocation on an activity (relative to its baseline) affect vote choice relative using ordinary least squares. In all cases, I use the minimal provision of a task as the baseline and estimate how promised increases change the probability of choosing a candidate's profile. The unit of analysis is a rated *profile*; the dependent variable is coded 1 for the candidate profiles respondents preferred within a pair, and 0 for those they did not. The independent variables are all dummy variables for each attribute level in the conjoint survey. Because respondents was presented with three candidate pairs and appear in the dataset multiple times, I cluster standard errors at the respondent level to account for the non-independence of responses. Also, to ensure that I am comparing individuals within the same electoral district, I include constituency fixed effects. Moreover, respondents' experiences within their constituency are likely to shape how they

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[12] I used SurveyCTO software installed on smartphones to conduct the interviews to ease data entry, minimize enumerator errors, and facilitate the randomization of treatments in the conjoint survey.

perceive the profiles of hypothetical candidates. For example, if a profile indicates that candidate A does not hail from the constituency but is a resident, they might think about their own MP who is also not from the area, which may influence how they focus on the other attributes that are provided for that hypothetical candidate. Including constituency fixed effect helps account for such idiosyncrasies.

Importantly, because respondents were forced to choose between a candidate pair in a hypothetical contest, this approach helps measure which legislator tasks they prioritize (trade-offs)(Bansak et al. 2021). Moreover, estimating the causal effect of different legislator activities on the same outcome – vote choice – permits a comparison of causal effects.

To evaluate subgroup differences in preferences regarding legislator tasks, I compare (subgroup) marginal means of selecting profiles with different levels of promised legislator activity, as suggested by Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley (2019). I then assess whether a regression model accounting for these subgroup differences is statistically significantly different from those assuming no such distinctions. Finally, if different, I consider which preferences over legislator activities differ across these subgroups.

4   Results

4.1   What do citizens want from their legislators?

Figure 2 shows the main results of the causal effects of time allocation between the capital and the constituency, political representation, the various constituency services, symbolic representation, and candidates' attributes on vote choice. It displays the AMCEs (points) and 95% confidence intervals (bars).[13] The findings suggest that citizens want legislators to at least divide their time equally between legislative work and constituency-related activities. These results indicate that, on average, citizens prefer politicians who will exert more effort to address their non-policy concerns

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[13]Appendix D Table D.1 reports the full regression results.

as part of their constituency service. However, when forced to make trade-offs, voters privilege some types of services over others. Also, contrary to conventional wisdom, citizens do *not* substitute representation for constituency services.

4.1.1 Time in the constituency ("home") versus legislature ("capital")

Respondents were 3pp (significant at $p \leq 0.01$) more likely to pick a candidate who promised to split her time equally between the constituency and the capital compared to those who pledged to spend about three-quarters of their time in the capital. They were also slightly more likely (1.9pp) to prefer candidates who pledged to spend three-quarters of their time in the constituency than those who committed to staying more in the capital. However, the effect is only significant at $p \leq 0.114$. These results imply that citizens may want their legislators to divide their time at least equally between national issues in the capital and constituency-focused activities at home. Nonetheless, relative to political representation and constituency services, how a candidate promises to divide their time appears to have minimal impact on vote choice. Next, I consider how respondents weigh political representation and constituency service activities in their vote choice.

4.1.2 Constituency services: public works versus private benefits

First, considering how citizens want legislators to divide their CDF between public infrastructure and individual financial support, the results suggest they would prefer a politician who will dedicate at least half of their funds to public works. Respondents were 12.2pp and 13.3 pp more likely to prefer a candidate who promised to spend half ($P_{[\text{pub}(50\%),\text{priv}(50\%)]}$) or almost all ($P_{[\text{pub}(90\%),\text{priv}(10\%)]}$) of their CDF to provide public infrastructure, respectively, compared to those who promised to use only a small amount on private and public goods ($P_{[\text{pub}(10\%),\text{priv}(10\%)]}$). These estimates are statistically significant at $p \leq 0.01$. By contrast, the promise to use almost all the funds ($P_{[\text{pub}(10\%),\text{priv}(90\%)]}$) to provide private benefits to constituents increases the probability of choosing a candidate by only 7.1pp ($p \leq 0.01$) relative to the baseline ($P_{[\text{pub}(10\%),\text{priv}(10\%)]}$).
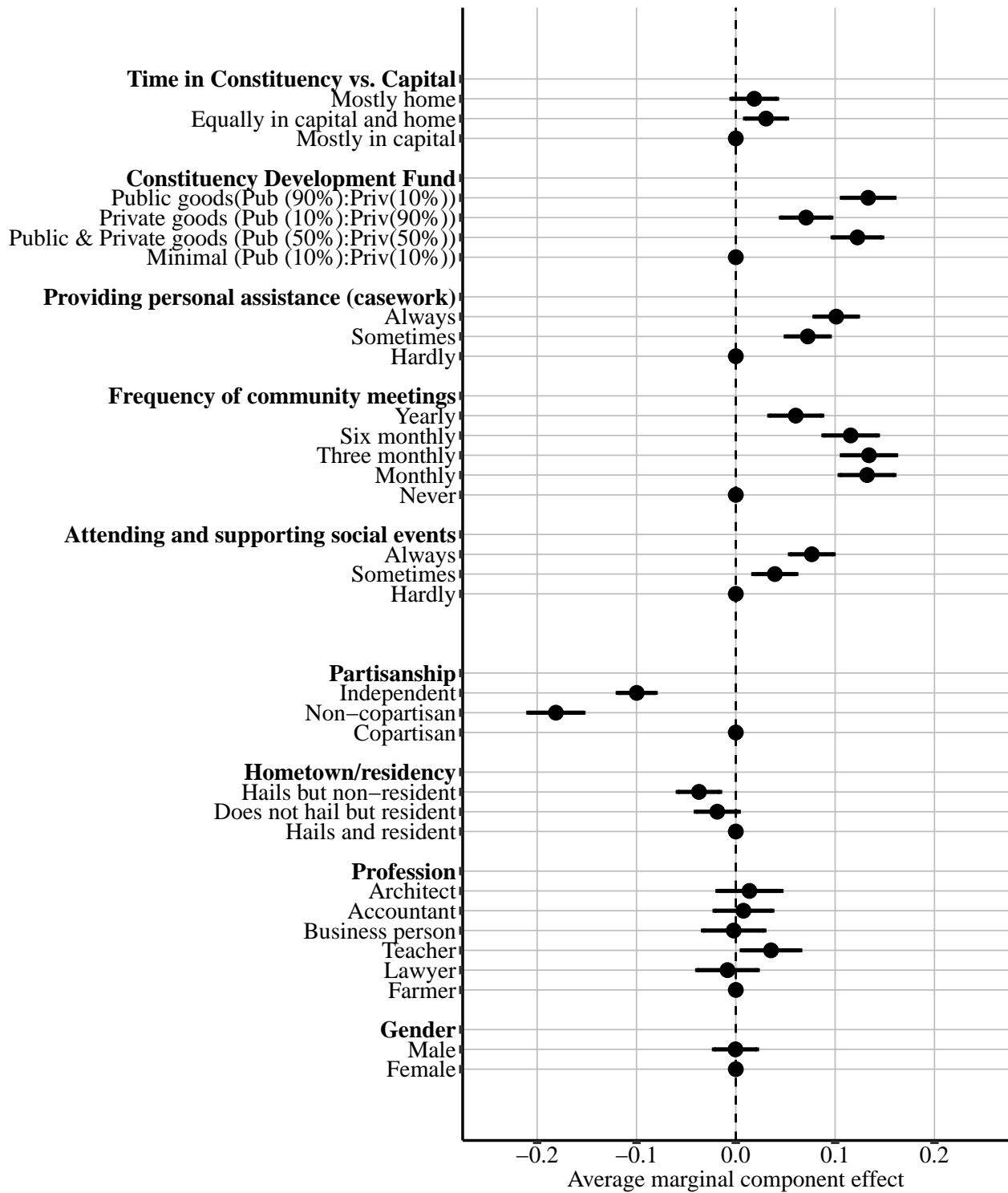
Figure 2: Average marginal component effect of candidate attributes on being preferred as an MP.

Accordingly, consistent with my expectation, citizens prefer candidates who will use more of their CDFs to provide more, rather than less, private and public goods. Nonetheless, conditional on spending, these results indicate that respondents prefer politicians who will allocate more of these funds to local public goods than individual transfers.

I argued that this is because citizens are more likely to benefit from public than from private services. However, an alternative explanation is that when the survey respondents assessed a hypothetical candidate, they could not gauge their odds of benefitting personally. If they were evaluating a real candidate, they could more accurately determine this likelihood. This could make study participants less likely to believe candidate promises to provide personal benefits. To check this possibility, I examine whether these patterns change when I account for partisanship. For example, we should expect that when comparing copartisan candidates, citizens will select those who promise more private benefits. Beyond the copartisan advantages enjoyed by hypothetical aspirants discussed in Section 4.2, Appendix Figures D.1 and D.2 show that respondents' partisanship does not change their preference for more public than private benefits from the MP's CDF.

Second, I find that the provision of personal assistance (casework) to help constituents navigate the government bureaucracy or find state employment, another form of private benefit, is salient to voters when selecting parliamentarians. Candidates who promise to sometimes (half of the time) or always help constituents in this way are 7.2 and 10.1pp more likely to be preferred, respectively, compared to those who promise to help little. Both estimates are significant at $p \leq 0.01$.

4.1.3   Political representation matters to citizens

I find that respondents value candidate promises to regularly organize community meetings to listen to their concerns and brief them about parliamentary debates. Compared to a candidate who does not promise to organize community meetings, citizens are 13.2 (monthly), 13.4 (every 3 months), and 11.6 (every 6 months) pp more like to prefer MPs who will organize regular community meetings. These estimates are significant at $p \leq 0.01$. The probability of selecting a candidate

who promises only yearly meetings decreases to about 6 pp ($p \leq 0.01$).

My results indicate that citizens consider both political representation and constituency services in their vote choice, even when we account for candidates' attributes. They also suggest that voters prioritize some tasks over others. Promising to deliver services targeted at entire communities or constituencies (public infrastructure and community meetings) rather than individuals (financial transfers and casework) attracts the most voter support .

4.1.4 Symbolic representation

Finally, in line with popular beliefs among Ghanaian parliamentarians, I find that promising to attend or financially support constituents with social events such as funerals, religious services, traditional festivals, and naming ceremonies increases their preference for a candidate. Compared to candidates who pledged to hardly attend such events, those who offered to participate half of the time or always were 3.9 pp and 7.6 pp more likely to be preferred, respectively. These estimates are significant at $p \leq 0.01$. This novel finding suggests African citizens care about symbolic representation from their representatives. However, because the measure captures attending *or* contributing financially to these events, it remains unclear whether voters care more about their representative's presence or donations, or both. Future studies can explore this question.

4.2 Effects of candidates' personal attributes

The analysis yields three main results regarding the effects of candidates' personal attributes. First, participants were significantly less likely to select a non-copartisan (18.1 pp) or independent (10 pp) aspirant than they were to choose a copartisan politician. This result suggests a strong partisan bias in the selection of legislative aspirants.

Second, I find evidence to suggest that residency in the constituency is important to voters, which complements my finding that citizens want more political representation. Compared to candidates who are from *and* live in the constituency (my baseline category), indigenous politicians

who do not reside in the constituency were the least favored (about NA pp less likely to be selected, $p \le 0.01$). Aspirants who do not come from but reside in the constituency were approximately 1.9 pp less likely to be preferred as an MP (only significant at the 10% level).

Third, I observe that citizens place less emphasis on the candidate's profession (although educationists or teachers are 3.5 pp more favored than farmers, significant at $p \le 0.05$) and gender. These results suggest that citizens also consider aspirants' partisanship and residence status when selecting legislators.

5   Do effects vary by constituency and respondents' traits?

I consider whether voters' constituency and personal characteristics shape which legislator tasks they prioritize. Following previous work on what drives the supply and demand of constituency services and political representation, I focus on two constituency (urbanization and electoral competition) and four personal (partisanship, gender, wealth, and education) characteristics.

5.1   Constituency type: urbanization and electoral competition

5.1.1   Urbanization

Prior studies suggest rural and urban constituents may vary in the weights they put on different legislator tasks. For example, urban dwellers may prefer legislators who spend more time in the district than rural residents, especially if they are far from the capital (Fenno 1978).

Concerning constituency-related activities, the need for local public infrastructure and services may be higher in rural and poor areas than in urban and rich locations (Barkan 1979). Research shows that citizens in rural communities are more likely than those in urban areas to prioritize local public goods (Nathan 2019). Similarly, rural voters may find it harder to access the government

bureaucracy relative to their urban counterparts. In the United States, Griffin and Flavin (2011) find that places with high household incomes demand less constituency service. André, Depauw, and Sandri (2013) also show that a district's prosperity is negatively associated with the provision of constituency service. Accordingly, *rural dwellers are more likely to focus on constituency service provision than urban residents*. It is unclear theoretically whether urbanization will shape the extent to which vote choice depends on political and symbolic representation.

Figure 3 displays the marginal means of candidate features by level of urbanization (Panel A) and their differences (Panel B).

In contrast to the above expectation, rural and urban voters do not differ significantly in their constituency service priorities (i.e., public infrastructure, private financial support, and casework). Thus, the main causal effects reported in Section 4.1 apply to urban and rural settings equally.[14] Prior studies have shown that citizens in urban areas may also need help navigating the bureaucracy to obtain government assistance (Norris 1997; Resnick 2012). Similarly, in developing countries, public infrastructure needs may cut across the rural–urban divide.

However, urban voters expect more legislator presence in their constituency than rural voters. Respondents in urban areas were 2.4pp ($p \leq 0.107$) more likely to choose the candidate promising to spend more time at "home" and 2.5pp ($p \leq 0.065$) less likely to pick those proposing more time in the capital. Urban and rural respondents were equally likely to select candidates who pledged to divide their time equally between the capital and the constituency.

Furthermore, urban voters were 3.7pp ($p \leq 0.044$) and 6.3pp ($p \leq 0$) less likely to pick a candidate who promises only yearly or no meetings to listen to constituents' concerns and brief them about parliamentary meetings. Urban voters chose profiles of candidates promising monthly meetings 4.5pp ($p \leq 0.017$) more than rural voters.

The level of urbanization does not shape the demand for symbolic representation.

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[14] An ANOVA test indicates urbanization is an important interaction factor for some of these candidate attributes (F-stat=2.105 , $p \leq 0.002$).

Together, these results suggest that while urban and rural voters desire similar levels of constituency services and symbolic representation, urban voters prefer more political representation activities than their rural counterparts.[15]
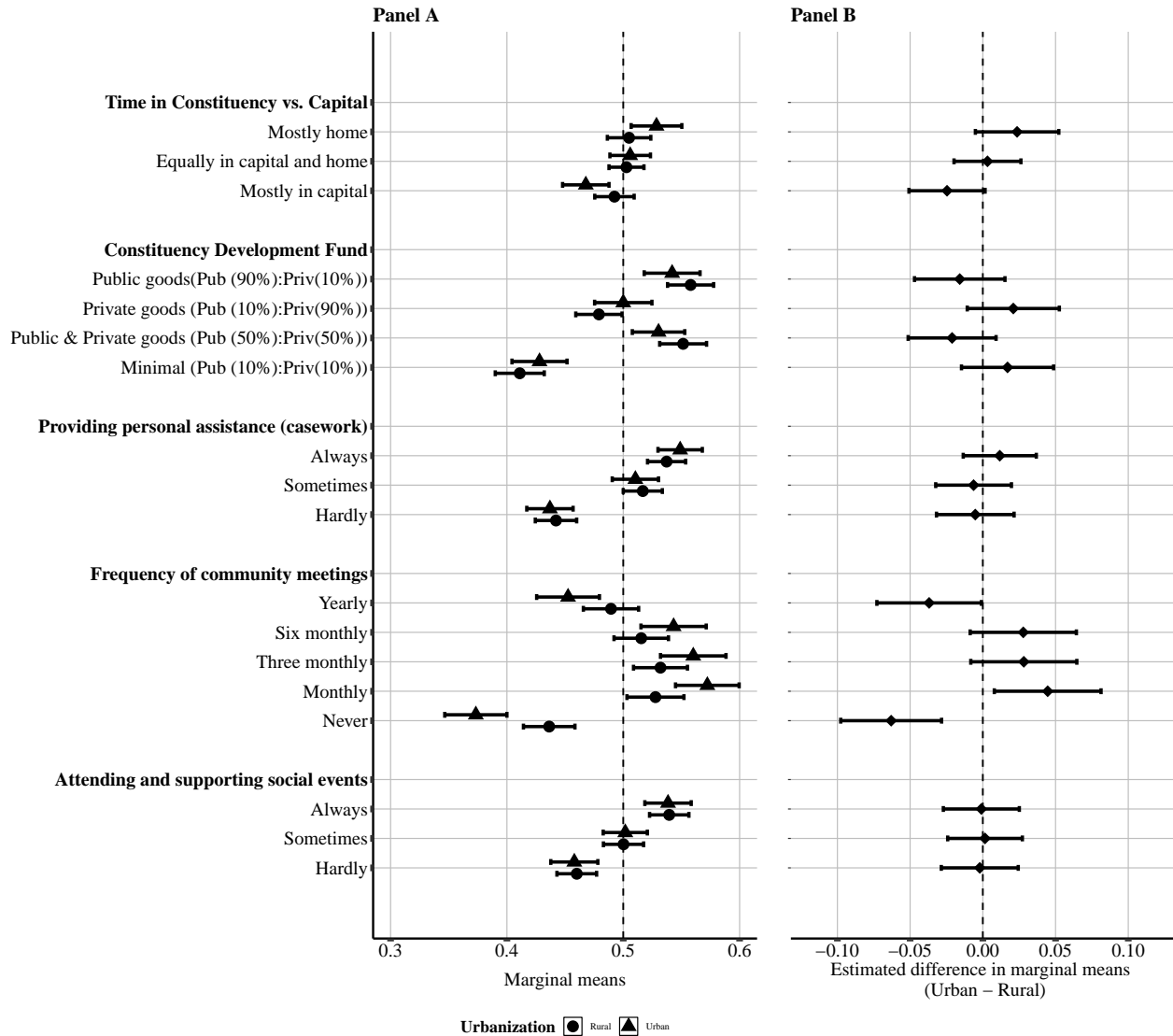

Figure 3: Differences in conditional marginal means by urbanization

[15]Regarding candidates' personal attributes, I find that partisanship is more important to rural than urban voters. Rural voters were 4.7pp ($p \leq 0.005$) more likely than urban voters to pick a copartisan candidate. The equal preference for independent candidates, the baseline category for my main results, suggests that the partisanship results are driven by the stronger preference for copartisans in rural vs. urban areas. Rural voters were also 2.1pp more inclined to pick a candidate who hails from, but is not a resident of, the constituency. Although this is only significant at $p \leq 0.113$, it is consistent with the finding that urban voters demand much more legislator presence at home than rural voters.

5.1.2 Electoral competition

Prior research indicates that politicians in competitive, compared to noncompetitive, districts exert more effort on constituency-related activities, especially constituency services (Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2006; Grossman and Michelitch 2018; Keefer and Khemani 2009), because voters can easily observe these activities, which can help cultivate a personal vote (Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2006). However, the evidence that voters reward, for example, constituency service, is mixed (Crisp and Simoneau 2018). Moreover, it is unclear whether voters in competitive settings value these activities more than those in noncompetitive constituencies.

I test whether respondents in competitive and noncompetitive districts have different preferences regarding legislator tasks. Figure 4 displays two main results. First, electoral competition does not shape citizens' preferred legislator time trade-offs between the capital and the electoral district. Second, regarding constituency-related activities, citizens in competitive and noncompetitive constituencies differ only in how candidates promise to spend their CDFs.[16]

Constituents in competitive electoral constituencies were 7.6 pp ($p \leq 0.001$) and 3.5pp ($p \leq 0.022$) more likely to pick an aspirant who promised to spend most of their funds on local public infrastructure and to split the funds equally between public and private benefits, respectively. By contrast, respondents in competitive constituencies were 9.2pp ($p \leq 0$) less likely to choose a candidate who pledged minimal spending from their funds. I find no difference in the propensity to select an aspirant promising to spend most of their funds on personal benefits. However, the individual marginal means (Panel A of Figure 4) show that respondents in noncompetitive constituencies were fairly indifferent regarding efforts related to CDF spending. This finding is consistent with existing work suggesting that politicians elected in competitive or fairer elections were likely to spend their CDFs, which indicates democratic responsiveness (Grossman and Michelitch 2018; Keefer and Khemani 2009; Ofosu 2019). However, residents in competitive and noncompetitive

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[16]That is, the model incorporating electoral competition indicates it is an important interacting variable (F-stat = 3.379, $p \leq 0.001$).

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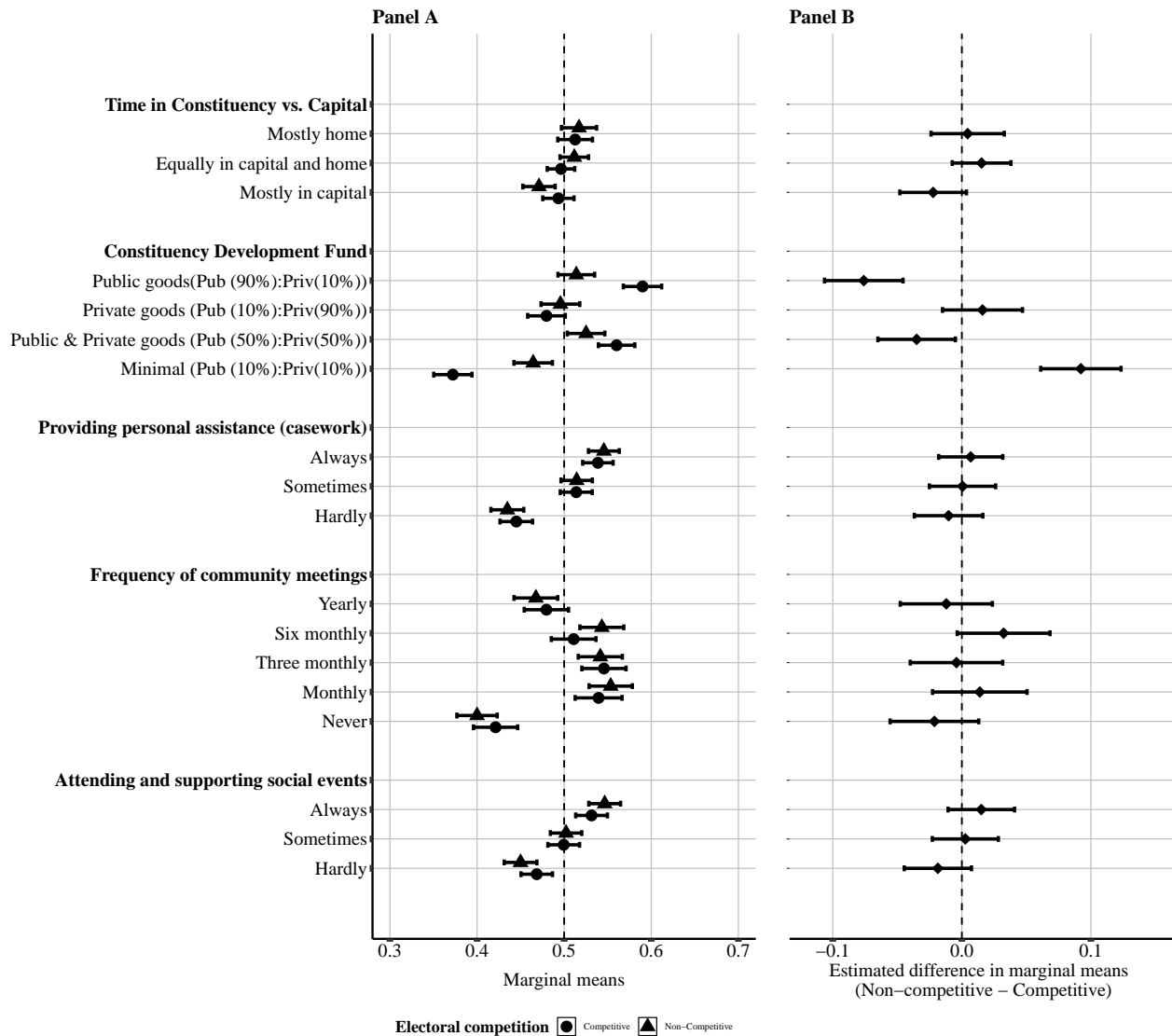areas equally value casework as well as political and symbolic representations.

Figure 4: Difference in marginal means by electoral competition

5.2 Individual-level characteristics

Finally, I examine whether individual-level factors shape citizens' priorities regarding legislator tasks. Individuals vary in their needs and what they expect to get from officeholders, which can shape their preferences (Griffin and Flavin 2011). Following prior studies, I focus on four main

factors that can shape individual preferences: partisanship, gender, wealth, and education.

Much of the literature assumes strong partisans are not persuaded by opposition promises or performance (Dropp and Peskowitz 2012; Weghorst and Lindberg 2013).[17] Accordingly, *how a legislator allocates their time or resources is assumed to be unlikely to influence partisans' vote choices*.

Since poorer voters are more dependent on government services than the rich (Griffin and Flavin 2011; Nathan 2019; Norris 1997; Weitz-Shapiro 2012), *poorer voters are expected to prioritize constituency service more than wealthy voters*. Similarly, *more educated voters are likely to focus less on constituency service*. Prior work suggests that educated and more politically informed voters prioritize policy responsiveness over constituency service (e.g., Arnold 2013; Carpini and Keeter 1996; Hutchings 2001, 2005; Wolpert and Gimpel 1997). Moreover, educated voters may consider legislators' primary job as policymaking and executive oversight rather than constituency service (in the form of providing local public infrastructure) (Mezey 2014).

Finally, multiple studies suggest that male and female voters may prioritize different policies (see Clayton et al. (2019), Gottlieb, Grossman, and Robinson (2018)). In terms of constituency service, it is possible that female voters prioritize public goods over private benefits. Women are more likely to benefit from public goods than private benefits, which are susceptible to clientelism (Wantchekon 2003).

My research design allows me to test these possibilities. I find no subgroup differences in what citizens want from legislators based on partisanship (F-stat= 0.648 , $p \leq 0.892$) or gender (F-stat= 0.909, $p \leq 0.59$). However, my analyses suggest differences based on wealth as measured by lived poverty (F-stat = 1.461, $p \leq 0.068$) and education (F-stat = 2.522, $p \leq 0.001$).

Appendix Figure E.1 depicts the differences in marginal means by respondents' wealth. More affluent voters focused more on using CDFs to provide local public infrastructure than poorer voters: they voters were 4.9 pp ($p \leq 0.017$) more likely to choose candidates who pledged to

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[17]Although, see Brierley, Kramon, and Ofosu (2020) and Conroy-Krutz and Moehler (2015).

spend almost all of their CDFs on providing local public infrastructure, and 5.5 pp ($p \leq 0.009$) less likely to pick those who committed to minimal spending. These results suggest that wealthy constituents prefer a CDF allocation that prioritizes the provision of public infrastructure more than poor voters.

Even so, more affluent voters are similar to poorer voters regarding how much they prioritize casework and support for social events (i.e., symbolic representation). They are also identical in the value they place on political representation.

Appendix Figure E.2 shows the results disaggregated by constituents' education level. Survey respondents with no education exhibit different preferences regarding CDF allocation and political representation compared to those with a primary education or more. Those with any education were 7.1 pp ($p \leq 0$) more likely to pick a profile with a candidate who dedicates almost all of their CDF funds to public infrastructure provision compared to those without any education. By contrast, those with no education were 8 pp ($p \leq 0$) more likely to pick the profile of a candidate promising minimal effort in spending their CDF funds than those with at least a primary education.

Educated respondents also demanded more political representation than their uneducated counterparts. Constituents with at least a primary education were 1.3 pp ($p \leq 0$) and 5.2 pp ($p \leq 0$) pp less likely to pick profiles of aspirants pledging yearly or no community meetings, respectively, than those with no education. However, they were 1.3 pp ($p \leq 0.281$) and 5.2 pp ($p \leq 0.018$) more likely than those with no education to pick those promising 6-monthly and monthly meetings, respectively.

Together, these results suggest that the influence of constituency service on vote choice is not driven by the respondent's partisanship or gender. Instead, wealth and education levels appear to shape some of these effects. The large impacts of high CDF spending on public infrastructure and frequent community meetings on vote choice may reflect the preferences of wealthy and more educated voters.

6 Conclusion

In this article, I examine what voters want from their MPs. Legislators are multitasking agents of citizens (Ashworth 2012; Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2006) who must make critical trade-offs to balance resource (time and money) constraints. The more time MPs spend on national policymaking in the legislature, the less they have to meet and listen to constituents' views and conduct constituency services. When in their district, efforts at representation may detract from constituency services. Spending more of their discretionary funds on individual financial requests implies less support for public infrastructure.

Assessing whether these nested trade-offs are responsive to citizens' preferences requires a firm understanding of voters' views. Inferring citizens' preferences based on elite surveys is susceptible to multiple biases. To win elections, politicians may focus on tasks or spend on the the most visible items (Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2006) or those they believe voters care about (Lindberg 2010; Pereira 2020). Similarly, research asking citizens to rank various legislator activities in terms of importance does not provide insights into voters' desired balance. Yet, a mismatch between what citizens want and what legislators provide undermines democratic quality (Powell 2005).

I investigated the multidimensional preferences of Ghanaian voters regarding legislators' pledged allocation of effort to their various tasks and politicians' attributes using a conjoint survey experiment and found three main results. First, citizens care about how legislators allocate their effort time when they are provided with information about aspirants' partisanship, gender, hometown and residency status, and profession. In contrast to conventional wisdom, citizens want legislators to at least divide their time between policymaking in the capital and constituency-related activities at home rather than focus mostly on parliamentary work. This finding indicates voters value parliamentary work more than is commonly assumed. Second, citizens consider both political representation and constituency service when deciding who to select as their legislator. Specifically, citizens favor politicians who will organize regular community meetings to listen

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to their concerns and debrief them about parliamentary debates. They also value politicians who pledge to dedicate more effort than less to constituency services. Third, citizens prioritize constituency services that target the entire community (i.e., public services) over those that focus on the individual (private benefits). Politicians who promise to spend more of the available constituency funds on public infrastructure are more likely to be elected than those who would pay more for personal benefits or provide casework (i.e., help with bureaucratic bottlenecks and finding jobs).

My findings have important theoretical and methodological implications for assessing political accountability and democratic responsiveness in the developing world. Theoretically, and consistent with emerging research on how elites' beliefs may diverge from those of citizens, the study suggests that inferring African voters' preferences from representatives' opinions can be unreliable. Methodologically, the results indicate that when researchers only ask citizens to choose between or rank legislator roles, we may incorrectly infer they do not value those that do not come to the top. For example, although tentative, the findings of my conjoint choice experiment demonstrate voters are likely to value a fine balance between parliamentary work and local issues.

Since the study is set in Ghana, three necessary scope conditions apply. First, citizens elect their representatives under plurality rule in single-member districts. This electoral system incentivizes constituency service over parliamentary work and representation, which may explain why citizens want representatives to pay some attention to the latter. It remains to be seen if similar results would be found in countries using proportional representation. Second, Ghana has a mix of competitive and non-competitive electoral constituencies. Although the two major parties (NPP and NDC) dominate some constituencies, the overall competitiveness of parliamentary races has increased over time. After winning their party primaries, about a quarter of MPs seeking reelection lose (Ofosu 2019).[18] Accordingly, certain aspects of the findings shaped by electoral competition (i.e.,

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[18]Between 2000 and 2012, the overall turnover rate for the Ghanaian Parliament was 45.38% (i.e., either retiring or losing through party primaries or general elections), and the percentage of seats changing between parties averaged 22.45%.

how MPs allocated their funds to public and private goods) may not apply to countries with a dominant party system. Third, and related to the allocation of funds, I consider how citizens want their legislators to use their state-allocated funds in the form of CDFs. While multiple countries have adopted these measures, they are not universal. My results are therefore most pertinent to countries with CDFs in which legislators have substantial discretion over how they are spent.

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Appendix

A Descriptive statistics of sample

Table A.1: Summary statistics of respondents' characteristics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Age	2,016	38.937	14.730	18	95
Job with cash income	2,022	0.572	0.495	0	1
Gender(Female=1)	2,022	0.496	0.500	0	1
Employed (full time)	1,157	0.917	0.276	0	1
Own a mobile phone	2,022	0.752	0.432	0	1
Own a radio	2,022	0.469	0.499	0	1
Own a TV	2,022	0.456	0.498	0	1
Own a blender	2,022	0.065	0.246	0	1
Own a car	2,022	0.015	0.121	0	1
Total assets (out of 5)	2,022	1.758	1.131	0	5
Turnout (2016 election)	2,022	0.863	0.344	0	1
Feel close to a political party	2,022	0.740	0.439	0	1
Close to the incumbent party (NPP)	1,497	0.555	0.497	0	1
Closeness to the opposition party (NDC)[0-7]	1,969	3.415	2.838	0	7
Closeness to opposition party (NPP)[0-7]	1,973	3.878	2.840	0	7
Voted for the incumbent party's MP candidate in 2016	1,744	0.541	0.498	0	1
Will vote for incumbent party's MP candidate tomorrow	2,022	0.407	0.491	0	1
Report to know MP's name	2,022	0.750	0.433	0	1
Correctly names MP	1,517	0.957	0.203	0	1
Gone without food in past year	2,022	0.192	0.394	0	1
Gone without clean water in past year	2,022	0.258	0.438	0	1
Gone without medicine	2,022	0.245	0.430	0	1
Gone without cooking fuel	2,022	0.166	0.372	0	1
Gone without cash income	2,022	0.613	0.487	0	1
Lives in a hut/shack	2,015	0.454	0.498	0	1
Poverty index	2,015	1.928	1.538	0	6
Often get news from radio	2,022	0.577	0.494	0	1
Often get news from TV	2,022	0.458	0.498	0	1
Often get news from newspaper	2,022	0.011	0.106	0	1
Often gets news from internet	2,022	0.094	0.293	0	1
Often get news from social media	2,022	0.105	0.307	0	1

Table A.2: Summary statistics: polling stations

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Pctl. 25	Pctl. 75	Max
Electricity	118	0.88	0.32	0	1	1	1
Pipe water	115	0.46	0.5	0	0	1	1
Sewage	105	0.086	0.28	0	0	0	1
Mobile service	118	0.91	0.29	0	1	1	1
Post office	115	0.087	0.28	0	0	0	1
School	118	0.93	0.25	0	1	1	1
Police station	118	0.21	0.41	0	0	0	1
Clinic	117	0.57	0.5	0	0	1	1
Market stall	118	0.52	0.5	0	0	1	1
Bank	117	0.2	0.4	0	0	0	1
Daily transport	118	0.63	0.49	0	0	1	1
Paved road	118	0.13	0.33	0	0	0	1
Paved roads to 5km to village	118	0.18	0.38	0	0	0	1
Road condition in village good	118	0.35	0.48	0	0	1	1

B Conjoint design: narrative

I trained twelve experienced research assistants to conduct in-person interviews in the sampled constituencies. After introducing the conjoint, enumerators read (narrated) the attributes and values of the conjoint features as "campaign promises'' of hypothetical candidates (i.e., what a particular candidate will do if elected to office). Enumerators started the conjoint surveys as follows:

1. As you may know, during elections, candidates with different qualifications and characteristics compete to represent your constituency as a Member of Parliament (MP). These candidates also make promises as to what they would do to serve you and your constituency if you elect them as your MP. There could be only one MP. Let us say two people are standing for elections in your constituency for the 2020 parliamentary elections. I am going to tell you a little bit about these two people and then ask your opinion about them.

2. Should I repeat these instructions?

My RAs then narrated the attributes and their corresponding values of two hypothetical candidates in pairwise comparison. They then asked respondents whether they should repeat the attributes and its values. Respondents were then asked the following questions:
Questions:

1. Which of these two candidates would you vote for?

[ ] Candidate A

[ ] Candidate B

Figure B.1: An example of candidates' profiles respondents saw

C   Balance statistics and profile order effect check

Table C.1: Randomization Check

	Age	Closeness incumbent party	Turnout (2016)	Education	Employed	Akan	Ewe	Kokomba	Correctly names MP	Total assets
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Constituency Development Fund:										
Public,50:Private,50	0.311	0.003	0.004	−0.026	−0.002	−0.007	0.005	−0.0004	−0.003	−0.0004
	(0.366)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.053)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.028)
Public,10:Private,90	0.309	−0.003	−0.001	−0.016	0.0003	−0.017	0.005	0.002	0.009*	−0.043
	(0.393)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.055)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.030)
Public,90:Private,10	0.167	0.020	0.006	−0.019	0.023*	0.003	−0.0002	0.013	−0.001	−0.050*
	(0.372)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.056)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.029)
Time in Constituency vs. Capital										
Const.:50-capital:50	0.091	−0.012	0.010	0.052	0.015	0.017*	0.006	−0.001	−0.005	0.021
	(0.338)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.045)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.024)
Const.:75-capital:25	0.365	−0.025*	0.003	0.052	−0.006	0.0003	0.004	−0.007	0.001	0.042
	(0.365)	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.052)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.028)
Community meeting										
Monthly	0.303	−0.002	−0.007	−0.048	−0.021	0.011	−0.003	−0.010	−0.007	0.004
	(0.435)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.059)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.033)
Every three months	0.204	−0.007	0.007	−0.079	−0.025*	−0.004	−0.006	−0.005	−0.0002	0.013
	(0.432)	(0.016)	(0.010)	(0.057)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.032)
Every six months	−0.471	0.008	−0.007	−0.057	−0.012	0.010	0.0003	−0.008	−0.008	−0.043
	(0.430)	(0.016)	(0.010)	(0.061)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.032)
Yearly	0.009	0.002	−0.005	−0.117*	−0.015	0.024*	−0.003	−0.0004	−0.006	−0.021
	(0.437)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.060)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.033)
Social event										
Sometimes	−0.373	0.018	−0.008	−0.005	0.006	0.032***	−0.006	−0.009	0.007	0.043*
	(0.333)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.046)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.025)
Always	0.027	0.006	−0.003	−0.075	0.011	0.009	0.0004	−0.011	0.009**	0.002
	(0.326)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.047)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.026)
Personal assistance (casework)										
Sometimes	−0.262	−0.005	0.008	0.012	−0.008	−0.012	−0.001	−0.003	0.002	0.014
	(0.327)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.045)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.025)
Always	−0.151	−0.010	−0.004	0.027	−0.005	−0.021**	−0.001	0.015**	−0.001	−0.010
	(0.325)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.047)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.025)
Profession										
Lawyer	−0.426	0.034*	−0.011	0.026	−0.002	−0.011	−0.008	−0.0002	−0.011	−0.006
	(0.434)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.063)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.035)
Educationist/teacher	0.021	0.002	−0.025**	−0.004	−0.010	0.007	0.0001	0.008	−0.014**	−0.015
	(0.447)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.065)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.035)
Business person	−0.197	0.005	−0.005	−0.008	0.012	0.003	−0.001	−0.007	−0.003	0.022
	(0.457)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.066)	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.035)
Accountant	0.076	0.012	−0.009	−0.065	−0.006	0.006	−0.001	−0.003	−0.006	0.042
	(0.465)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.063)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.035)
Architect	−0.295	0.022	−0.001	0.057	0.0003	0.011	−0.002	0.010	−0.005	0.018
	(0.485)	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.067)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.036)
Gender										
Male	0.721**	0.005	−0.003	−0.147***	−0.013	−0.005	0.006	0.011	−0.005	−0.036
	(0.339)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.049)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.025)
Political party										
New Patriotic Party	−0.310	0.004	−0.018**	−0.027	0.014	0.002	0.007	−0.012*	−0.002	−0.034
	(0.328)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.045)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.026)
National Democratic Congress	−0.242	−0.037***	0.0002	−0.049	0.006	0.007	0.004	−0.003	0.005	−0.028
	(0.319)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.046)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.025)
Hometown										
Does not hail but resident in constituency	−0.104	0.012	−0.009	−0.013	−0.015	−0.017*	−0.006	0.009	0.003	0.023
	(0.326)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.047)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.025)
Hails from but not resident	−0.134	0.026**	0.008	−0.061	−0.011	−0.013	0.003	0.017**	0.003	0.029
	(0.328)	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.047)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.024)
Constant	38.671***	0.541***	0.878***	3.629***	0.589***	0.283***	0.076***	0.117***	0.964***	1.776***
	(0.765)	(0.029)	(0.017)	(0.109)	(0.025)	(0.022)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.057)
Observations (rated profiles)	12,096	8,982	12,132	12,030	12,132	12,132	12,132	12,132	9,102	12,132
R²	0.001	0.003	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.003	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.002
Adjusted R²	−0.001	0.001	0.0005	0.0003	−0.0003	0.001	−0.001	0.0005	−0.0002	0.0001
Prob >F (23 attributes)	**0.841**	**0.121**	**0.199**	**0.275**	**0.672**	**0.049**	**0.991**	**0.193**	**0.561**	**0.381**

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the individual level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C.2: The profile order of the three "voting task" has no effect of the effect of attributes

	Dependent variable	Preferred candidate profile	
	Variable coefficient	Interaction effect (*Second profile)	Interaction effect (*Third profile)
Second profile	−0.036		
	(0.056)		
Third profile	−0.056		
	(0.056)		
Constituency Development Fund			
Public (90%):Private (10%)	0.126***	0.027	−0.001
	(0.023)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Public (50%):Private (50%)	0.096***	0.054*	0.025
	(0.022)	(0.030)	(0.031)
Public (10%):Private (90%)	0.049**	0.031	0.031
	(0.022)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Time in Constituency vs. Capital			
Const.:50-capital:50	−0.002	0.038	−0.003
	(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.028)
Const.:75-capital:25	0.009	0.057**	0.021
	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.028)
Community meeting			
Monthly	0.139***	−0.018	−0.001
	(0.024)	(0.033)	(0.034)
Every three months	0.149***	−0.051	0.007
	(0.025)	(0.035)	(0.035)
Every six months	0.095***	−0.0005	0.064*
	(0.024)	(0.035)	(0.035)
Yearly	0.035	0.027	0.046
	(0.024)	(0.035)	(0.033)
Social event			
Sometimes	0.033*	0.018	0.011
	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Always	0.089***	−0.019	−0.013
	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.026)
Personal assistance (casework)			
Sometimes	0.079***	0.011	−0.032
	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Always	0.109***	0.001	−0.020
	(0.019)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Profession			
Lawyer	−0.031	0.031	0.035
	(0.026)	(0.038)	(0.038)
Educationist/teacher	0.032	−0.005	0.013
	(0.026)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Business person	−0.012	0.041	−0.013
	(0.027)	(0.038)	(0.038)
Accountant	0.019	−0.001	−0.033
	(0.027)	(0.038)	(0.038)
Architect	0.003	0.038	−0.007
	(0.028)	(0.040)	(0.039)
Gender			
Male	0.014	−0.040	0.004
	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Political party			
New Patriotic Party	0.049***	−0.020	−0.030
	(0.019)	(0.026)	(0.026)
National Democratic Congress	0.029	−0.024	−0.024
	(0.019)	(0.026)	(0.027)
Hometown			
Does not hail but resident in constituency	−0.063***	0.060**	0.066**
	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Hails from but not resident	−0.051***	0.025	0.016
	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Constant	0.241***		
	(0.040)		
Observations (Rated Profiles)	12,132		

Notes: Standard errors are clustered at the individual level. *$p<0.1$; **$p<0.05$; ***$p<0.01$

D Average marginal component effect of conjoint experiment

Table D.1: Effects of candidate attributes on the probability of being selected as Member of Parliament

	Dependent variable:	
	Preferred candidate profile	
	(1)	(2)
Constituency Development Fund		
Public (50%):Private (50%)	0.123***	0.123***
	(0.013)	(0.013)
Public (10%):Private (90%)	0.070***	0.070***
	(0.013)	(0.013)
Public (90%):Private(10%)	0.135***	0.136***
	(0.014)	(0.014)
Time in Constituency vs. Capital		
Constituency (50%) : Capital (50%)	0.030***	0.031***
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Constituency (75%) : Capital (25%)	0.015	0.016
	(0.012)	(0.012)
Community meeting		
Monthly	0.135***	0.134***
	(0.014)	(0.014)
Every three months	0.134***	0.133***
	(0.014)	(0.014)
Every six months	0.117***	0.117***
	(0.014)	(0.014)
Yearly	0.062***	0.060***
	(0.014)	(0.014)
Social event		
Sometimes	0.042***	0.043***
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Always	0.078***	0.079***
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Personal assistance (casework)		
Sometimes	0.072***	0.073***
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Always	0.102***	0.104***
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Profession		
Lawyer	−0.009	−0.008
	(0.016)	(0.016)
Educationist/teacher	0.035**	0.033**
	(0.015)	(0.015)
Business person	−0.003	−0.003
	(0.016)	(0.016)
Accountant	0.007	0.004
	(0.015)	(0.015)
Architect	0.014	0.013
	(0.017)	(0.017)
Gender		
Male	0.001	0.0003
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Political party		
New Patriotic Party (incumbent)	0.032***	0.031***
	(0.011)	(0.011)
National Democratic Congress (opposition)	0.011	0.010
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Hometown		
Does not hail but resident in constituency	−0.021*	−0.023**
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Hails from but not resident	−0.038***	−0.036***
	(0.011)	(0.011)
Controls	No	Yes
Constant	0.210***	0.210***
	(0.023)	(0.024)
Observations	12,132	11,994
R^2	0.037	0.037
Adjusted R^2	0.034	0.034

Notes: Table D.1 shows estimates of the effects of randomly assigned parliamentary candidate attribute values on the probability of being preferred as Member of Parliament in the next election. Estimates are based on an OLS model with standard errors clustered by repondent. The model also includes constituency fixed effects to ensure within constituency comparison. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.
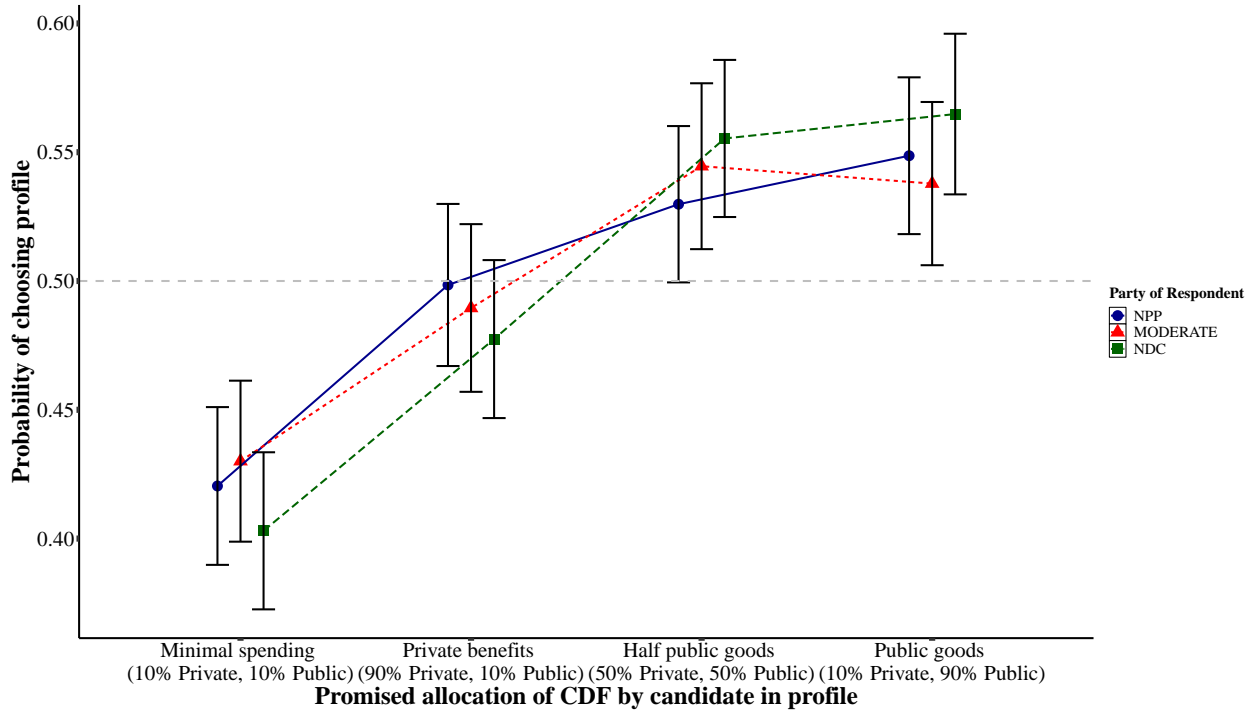
Figure D.1: Marginal means of picking profile promising different allocation of Constituency Development Funds by partisanship
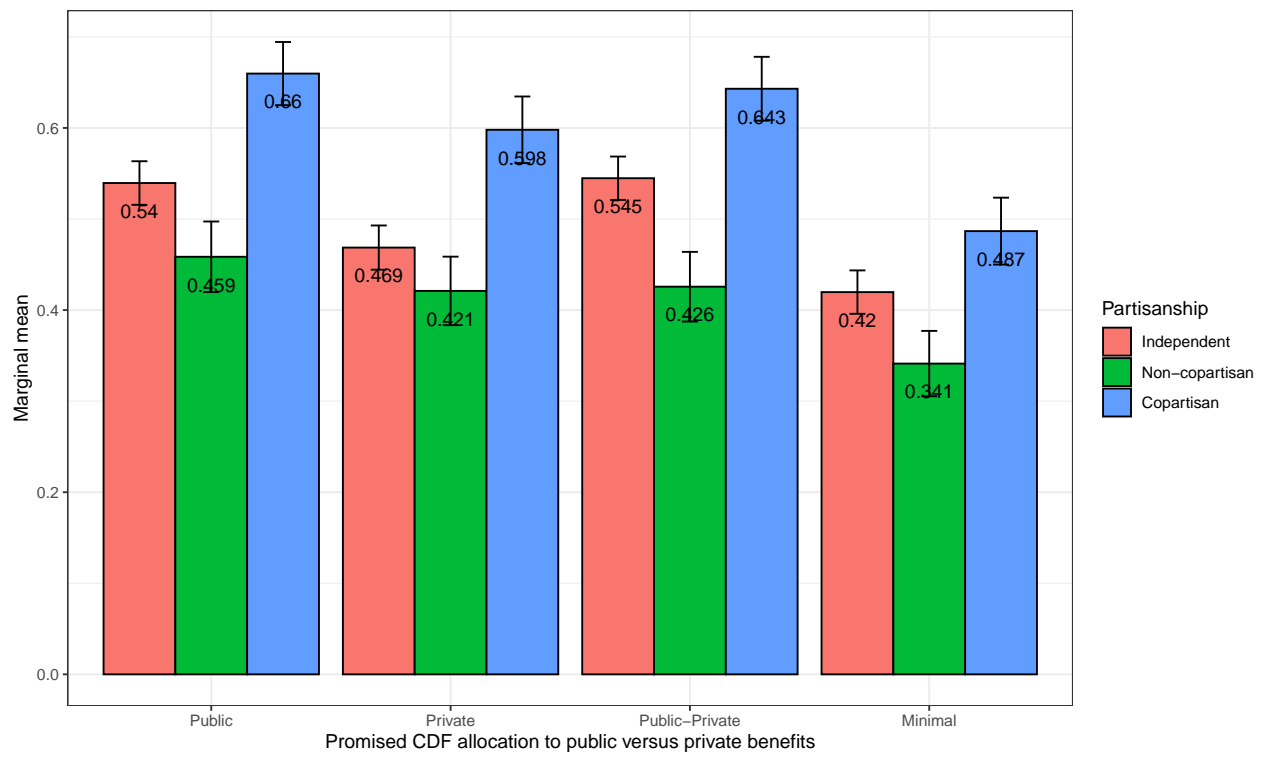
Figure D.2: Marginal means of picking profile promising different allocation of Constituency Development Funds by partisanship
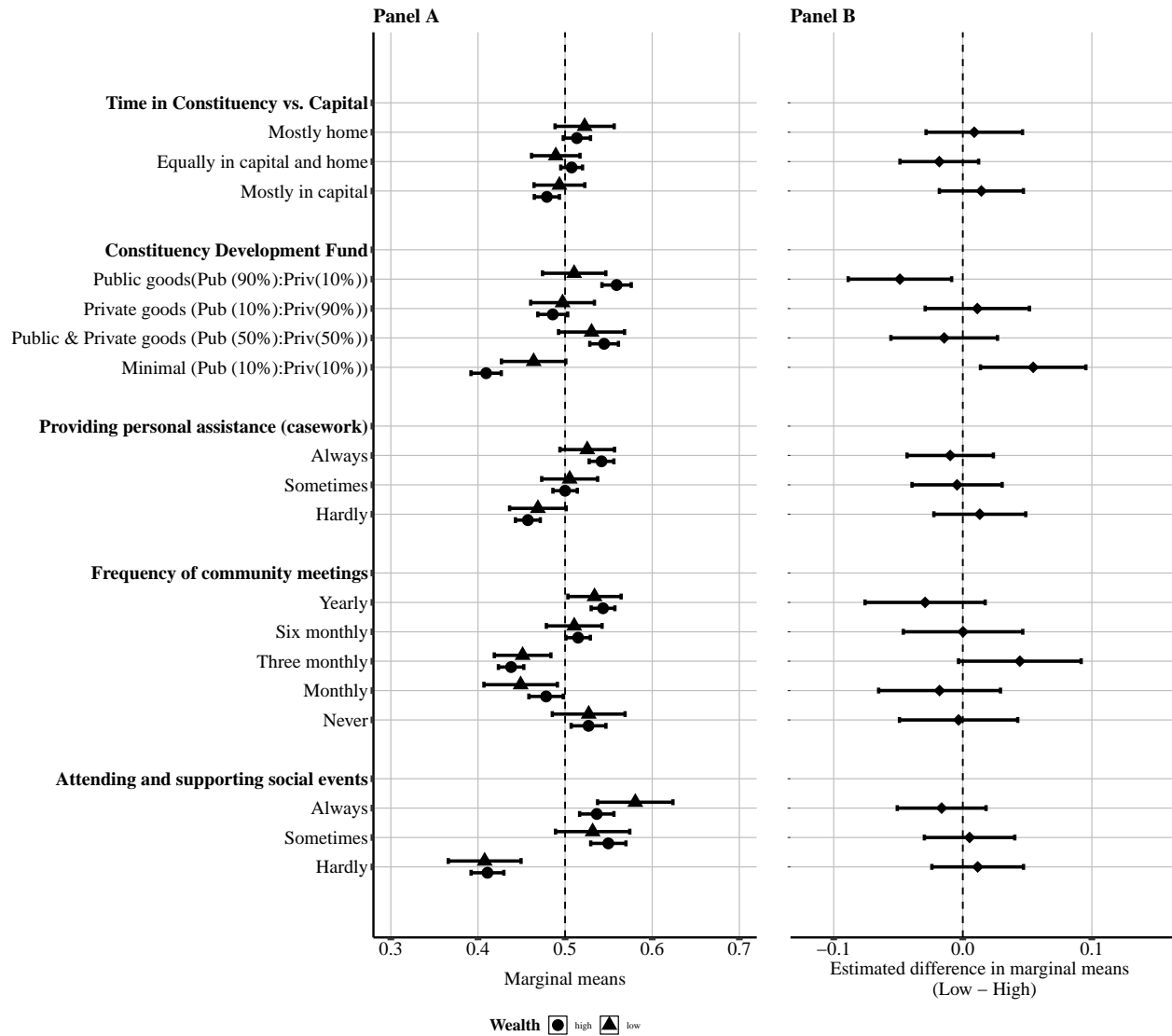
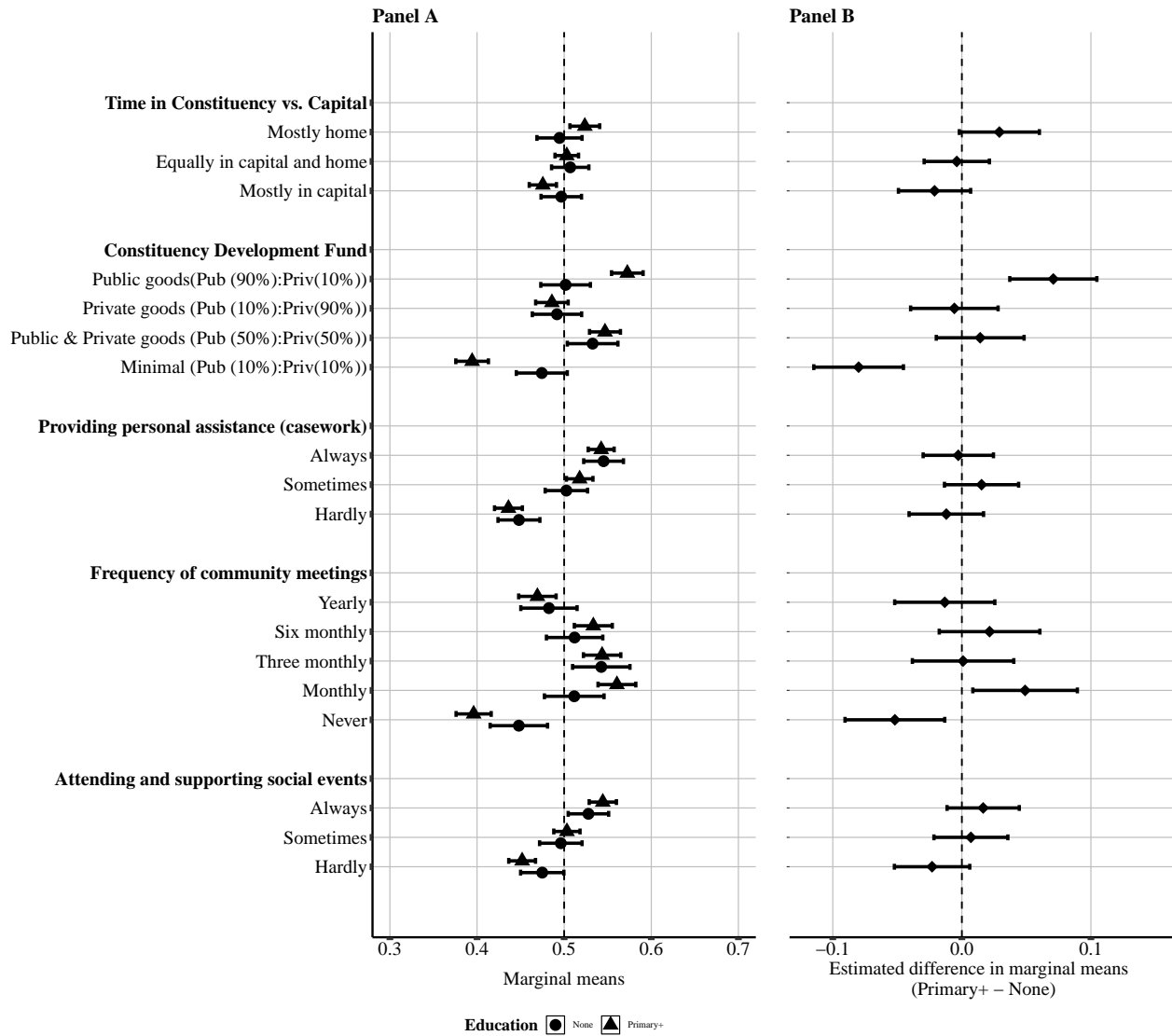# E   Heterogeneous effects

Figure E.1: Differences in marginal means by wealth

Figure E.2: Differences in marginal means by education level