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# Do chiefs' endorsements affect voter behaviour?



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# Do Chiefs' Endorsements Affect Voter Behavior?\*

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## Abstract

We study whether and why traditional leaders can influence voter behavior using real endorsement messages made by chiefs in support of the incumbent presidential candidate during Ghana's 2020 presidential elections. Using an experimental design, we document a positive impact of endorsement messages on vote choice, but not on turnout. We find that the effect of chiefs' endorsements is driven by their influence on unaligned and opposition voters. We also find evidence that voters' prior beliefs about the traditional leader's performance in their duties shape chiefly influence. Our analysis of causal mechanisms indicates the effect of chiefly endorsement among unaligned and opposition voters runs primarily through lending credibility to the candidate's promise to build local public infrastructure, rather than their national policies. Our results imply that traditional elites can shape political outcomes, which has important implications for democratic accountability.

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# 1 Introduction

Traditional leaders or chiefs – unelected elites who derive their leadership position by historical socio-cultural customs of their communities – are believed to have a significant influence on voter behavior (Scott 1972; Mamdani 2018; Boone 2003; Logan 2013; Baldwin 2020). Accordingly, politicians often attempt to gain chiefs’ active support and verbal public endorsements during election campaigns. The extent to which chiefs’ potential influence on voters is coercive versus cooperative has important implications for electoral accountability and democratic responsiveness in new democracies (Gottlieb 2017; Baldwin 2013).

Do chiefs influence voters’ behavior because citizens fear they can withhold their access to crucial benefits such as land (Mamdani 2018; Conroy-Krutz 2018; Ntsebeza 2005; Stokes 2005; Boone 2003; Ribot 2002), or do established norms of deference and reciprocity make voters feel obliged to support the chief’s candidate (Scott 1972; Auyero 2000; Lemarchand and Legg 2017; Williams 2010; Koter 2013)? Do voters follow their traditional leaders’ opinions because endorsements convey information about which politician can work with the chief to deliver development (Baldwin 2020)? Or do chiefs’ opinions matter to voters because they provide cues about candidate quality and future performance (Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Lupia 1994; Sobel 1985)?

To address these questions, we conducted an experiment analyzing the impact of chiefly endorsements ahead of Ghana’s 2020 presidential election. We test *whether* a traditional leader’s approval increased support for the endorsed candidate and *which* voters were influenced. Further, we examine *why* endorsements have any effects. Because the source of chiefly influence might be shaped by local formal and informal institutional factors, we restrict our study to one region (Brong Ahafo) with similar chieftaincy institutions and to chiefs of the same status (paramount chiefs) (see Boone 2003; Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson 2014; Gottlieb 2017; Nathan 2019 ).<sup>1</sup> The chieftaincy institution in the Brong Ahafo region is part of the Akan system of traditional gov-

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<sup>1</sup>In 2018, the region was divided into three regions: Bono, Ahafo, and Bono East regions (see BBC: “Ghana Referendum: 2.2million Ghanaians dey vote Yes or No for creation of six new regions”, accessed June 4, 2021.)

ernance, which constitute the largest single cultural and linguistic group in Ghana (Addo-Fening 2008).<sup>2</sup> Our analysis is also restricted to endorsements of the incumbent presidential candidate. This controls for possible incumbency effects.

In addition, we assess whether partisan endorsements by chiefs have negative effects on their position in society. Endorsements of particular candidates may alienate some voters, and, at worst, lead to revolt. Therefore, partisan endorsements by traditional leaders can undermine their roles as neutral conflict mediators and mobilizers for community works or development in new democracies (Boafo-Arthur 2003; Bob-Milliar 2009; Logan 2013).

We conduct a two-wave panel survey of voters ( $N \approx 1,700$ ). Surveys were conducted in the days before and a few days after the December 2020 election. We randomly exposed individuals to news about their traditional leader's endorsement of a candidate in the presidential election. These were *real* endorsement messages said by chiefs during public events in the run-up to the election. We compare the behavior of individuals who were randomly assigned to listen to news about their chief's endorsement to those exposed to a placebo message. To test whether the effect of chiefly endorsement varies by voter type, we examine the treatment's impact by voters' partisanship and their prior approval of chief.<sup>3</sup>

We adopt two approaches to investigate the mechanism through which chiefly endorsements may influence vote choice. First, endorsements messages were composed of two components: chiefs explicit *approval* of a particular candidate and their *rationale* for support. Rationale statements typically praised the candidate for providing specific national or local public infrastructure. We designed our experiment to examine whether messages that included the rationale had differential effects compared to those that only included the approval.

Second, we test whether chiefly endorsements effect theoretically relevant intermediate out-

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<sup>2</sup>Ghana has 192 traditional councils (areas), which is often headed by a Paramount chief with divisional and sub-chiefs (Baldwin 2016 , pg. 164).

<sup>3</sup>In the Appendix, we also investigate the effects of voters' distance from the chief's palace and age. We pre-registered to analyse these four moderating variables.

comes that might link approval to vote choice. Specifically, we investigate whether the treatment change individuals' perceptions about the candidate's personal qualities, expected performance, anticipation of private benefits or fear of personal or community reprisals.

Our results show that traditional leaders' endorsements, while not effecting individual propensity to turn out, increase voter support of the endorsed candidate by 4.6 percentage points (pp). Disaggregating the result by prior partisanship, shows that it is driven by the effect of endorsement messages among unaligned and initially opposed voters. Among these voters the effect size on final vote choice is 7.9 pp. Conversely, there is no effect among prior supporters of the candidate. We also find evidence that chiefly endorsements are more influential among individuals who hold positive perceptions of the chief. Finally, we find a positive interaction between these two variables: we find strong positive effects for non-copartisans who held high evaluations of the chief leading to a 16 pp increase above the control group.

Concerning mechanisms, first, we find that chiefly endorsement messages with and without a rationale had similar impact on vote choice. Second, regarding intermediate variables, we find that the influence of chiefs runs through enhancing the likability and trustworthiness of the candidate and updated beliefs regarding the presidential candidate's future delivery of local infrastructure. We find no evidence that fear or delivery on national policies drives the effect.

Finally, our results demonstrate that chiefs' active endorsements do not hurt their social positions. Endorsements did not change individuals' overall willingness to contribute labor or resources to community help projects. Endorsements also do not change individual views about the chief's ability to resolve community conflicts. However, the treatment reduced the probability that opposition voters' would send personal disputes to the leader, although this effect was substantively small.

This study makes four primary contributions to the literature on the impact of unelected local elites on voter behavior in new democracies. First, to our knowledge, the paper is the first to directly consider the causal effects of traditional leaders' endorsements in an election. Exist-

ing studies often infer chiefly influence using aggregate vote returns (e.g., De Kadt and Larreguy 2018; Nathan 2019). However, because chiefs may endorse a candidate who is already popular among voters, using aggregate returns may be misleading (Baldwin 2013). This potential for reverse causality is well recognized in the broader literature on endorsements (Kousser et al. 2015). Second, our study shows that chiefly influence may be confined to unaligned or opposition voters and those who believe the traditional leader is doing well. It complements existing studies that suggest that politicians may leverage credible local elites to reach out to opposition voters (e.g., Koter 2013). It also complements growing research that shows that voters in developing democracies and autocracies moderate their partisan attitudes in response to new information on candidates (Conroy-Krutz and Moehler 2015; Brierley, Kramon, and Oforu 2020; Platas and Raffler 2019). This result stands in contrast to the findings from high-income democracies (Kousser et al. 2015). Third, drawing on Baldwin (2013)'s assessment of chiefs as "stationary bandits," we argue that traditional leaders' position in their communities lends credibility to their endorsements to politicians' promises of local public infrastructure. Although, chiefs need not be coproducers of such public goods with the politician (Nathan 2019). Finally, we provide initial tests of the potential adverse effects of the chiefs' partisan involvement on their position in society as neutral conflict mediators and mobilizers for community works in new democracies.

## **2 Theoretical background and hypotheses**

Political endorsements can provide important information to voters in complex electoral contexts with limited information (Lupia 1994; Lau and Redlawsk 2001). Voters use endorsements from parties (Hobolt 2007), individuals (Dominguez 2011) and groups (Stone, Rapoport, and Abramowitz 1992; Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009) as signals to determine which candidate or policy proposals will serve their interests (Lupia 1994). Scholars of political behavior suggest that voters are influenced by the positive endorsements of groups or individuals they believe share

their interests and who are less likely to mislead them (i.e., someone with “reputation for honesty” or credibility) (Lupia 1994). Credible groups or individuals are those who consistently provide accurate and valuable information or perform useful services to the voter (Sobel 1985).

Many Africans report high levels of trust in their local chief: chiefs’ approvals ratings are often much higher than politicians. For example, 56 percent of Afrobarometer respondents report trusting their chief (*somewhat* or *a lot*), and 61 percent approve of their chiefs performance over the last year. In contrast, 44 percent approve of the performance of their national representative.<sup>4</sup> Given the generally positive public view of chiefs as a credible and trustworthy actor, we expect that *turnout will be higher among individuals exposed to the endorsement (H1)* and *treated individuals will be more likely to vote for the endorsed candidate (H2)*.

## **2.1 Why do chiefly endorsements influence citizens’ vote choice?**

When credible individuals or organizations endorse candidates or parties, in theory, this can affect voters’ beliefs about the candidate. Elites may influence two main sets of voters’ beliefs about candidates. First, the endorsement may lead voters to update their beliefs about the *personal qualities* of the candidate. Second, the endorsement may lead voters to update their beliefs about the future expected *performance* of the candidate.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding personal qualities, if chiefly endorsements serve as an informational shortcut on candidate type, candidates endorsed by traditional leaders may be perceived as *more likable (H3)* or *more trustworthy (H4)* in the eyes of voters compared to non-endorsed candidates. Such an increase in likability and trust suggests a transfer of personal qualities from the endorser to the endorsed (Arriola, Choi, and Gichohi 2021).

Regarding performance, in many developing countries, voters are particularly concerned with whether the election of a particular politician will result in the production of additional local public

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<sup>4</sup>These figures are taken from the Afrobarometer Round 7 results (2016/2018).

<sup>5</sup>Personal qualities and performance may be related. For example, a voter may think that a trustworthy candidate will perform well. However, in this case we should detect increases in both intermediary outcome variables.

goods and services (Wantchekon 2003; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Chiefly endorsements can serve as credible heuristics to voters about whether a candidate will serve their interests. Baldwin (2016) argues that because traditional leaders are socially and economically embedded in local communities they have an incentive to organize collective response to the developmental needs of their communities. In Ghana, Addo-Fening (2008) observes that the survival of chiefs depends on “promoting the material well being of their people” (pg. 53). Accordingly, chiefly endorsement may lead voters to update their beliefs that the endorsed candidate *will perform well in delivering local development (H5)*.

Performance may also be related to the design or implementation of national policies. Accordingly, we assess whether chiefly endorsements lead voters to update their beliefs that the endorsed candidate *will perform well in delivering national policies (H6)*.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, two alternative mechanisms may explain the effect of endorsements on vote choice. First, individuals may be influenced by endorsements because they expect to gain personally for the election of the endorsed candidate. Chiefs can leverage politician support among constituents to lobby or demand patronage resources for citizens or gain presidential appointments that can help in championing citizens’ individual needs (Addo-Fening 2008; Gottlieb and Larreguy 2020). Accordingly, voters may expect that the success of the endorsed candidate will put the traditional leader in a strategic position to *bring private benefits to those living in the traditional area (H7)*.

Second, it has been argued that voters often vote for their chiefs’ preferred candidate because of fear of personal or communal reprisals (Mamdani 2018; Ntsebeza 2005; Ribot 2002; Nathan 2019; Kramon 2019). Traditional leaders are socially embedded in their local communities and can use their network to monitor and sanction individuals’ behavior, incentivizing voters to listen to their chief. Moreover, individuals may support the chief’s endorsed candidate from local norms of deference or reciprocity prevalent in local rural communities (Schaffer 2000; Kitschelt and

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<sup>6</sup>In our pre-analysis plan, we did not formulate separate hypotheses for local and national performance. Upon reflection, this was a mistake, as the two need not be correlated.

Wilkinson 2007; Stokes 2005; Logan 2013). Thus, chiefly endorsements may influence vote choice because *voters fear negative reprisals for either themselves or for their community (H8)*.

## **2.2 Which voters are influenced by chiefly endorsements?**

Theoretically, the impact of chiefly endorsements on turnout or vote choice may vary by the prior partisanship of the individual or their (dis)approval of the chief (Kousser et al. 2015). For voters who already support the endorsed candidates the endorsement may have little effect as it does not provide new information to the voter. In contrast, unaligned or opposition voters may be swayed by the endorsement message as it can provide new information about the candidate.<sup>7</sup> Scholars have shown that partisans in developing democracies and autocracies moderate their views about or vote for opposition politicians when exposed to new and credible information about their quality and policy positions (Conroy-Krutz and Moehler 2015; Brierley, Kramon, and Ofosu 2020; Platas and Raffler 2019; Kramon 2021). Accordingly, the effect of chiefly endorsements may be *larger for voters who are undecided or not likely to vote for the endorsed candidate (H9)*.

Voters' prior evaluation of the chief may also condition the extent to which they consider the leader's endorsement in their voting decision. We argue that those with prior positive approval of the chief may be more influenced by the leader's endorsement compared to those who prior to treatment disapproved of the chief. Specifically, we hypothesize that *endorsements effects will be stronger for individuals who have higher pre-treatment evaluations of the chief (H10)*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>We note that the opposite effect is theorized in the literature on developed democracies, where voters can respond negatively to endorsements from opposition parties and groups [grossman1999; Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009)].

<sup>8</sup>We also pre-registered that voters' age and how far they live from the chief's palace (residence) as potential moderating variables. In the interest of space, we discuss these hypotheses and the results in the Appendix.

### 3 Chiefs in Ghana’s presidential elections

Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1993. The country operates a majoritarian, single-member district electoral system to elect a president.<sup>9</sup> Votes count equally irrespective of where they are cast, which provides parties an incentive to mobilize nationally. Two parties dominate national politics – the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). During the 2020 election, Nana Akuffo-Addo (NPP) was the incumbent president, and his main competitor was John Mahama (NDC). Nana Akuffo-Addo won the election with 51 percent of votes.

Chiefs play an important role in social and cultural life. This is true in both rural and urban constituencies (Paller 2019). The country is divided into 300 traditional authorities (Colandef 2019). Each traditional area is headed by a traditional leader often identified as a Paramount Chief, or in other cases referred to as an Overlord, Family or Clan Head. Chiefs’ importance stems from the control they have over land, with about 78 percent of the land in the country falling under the control of traditional institutions (Colandef 2019).

Regarding politics, Ghana’s 1992 Constitution prohibits traditional leaders from “active partisan politics” (Article 276 (1)).<sup>10</sup> Specifically, it bars chiefs from contesting for the office of Member of Parliament (MP) or President.<sup>11</sup> However, the law allows the president to appoint chiefs to various public offices including boards of state corporation and enterprises.

Despite “the ban” it is common for traditional leaders to pronounce their support for candidates: endorsements have occurred during each of Ghana’s eight multiparty elections (Ansah-Koi 1996; Gyimah-Boadi 2007; Boafo-Arthur 2003). For example, in the 2016 presidential elections, the paramount chiefs of Gbese, Dormaa, and Sunyani traditional areas declared their support for the

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<sup>9</sup>In the event that no candidate secures a majority in the first round, there is a second-round ballot for the top two candidates.

<sup>10</sup>Ghana’s 1992 Constitution defines a “Chief” as a person, who, hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queen mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage (Article 277).

<sup>11</sup>Section (1) of Article 276 states: “A chief shall not take part in active party politics; and any chief wishing to do so and seeking election to Parliament shall abdicate his stool or skin.” Article 62 (c) of the Constitution provides the relevant provision disqualifying chiefs from vying for executive office.

NDC's candidate John Mahama, the then incumbent. Those of Sefwi Anhwiaso, Adoagyir, and Nwoase-Ahenkro supported the opposition NPP's candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo.<sup>12</sup> Presidential aspirants have also actively courted the endorsement of some chiefs because they believe they can influence their subjects (Rathbone 2000; Gyampo 2009).<sup>13</sup> During the December 2020 election – the election we study – the incumbent president's campaign team boasted that 95 percent of chiefs had endorsed the president.<sup>14</sup>

Within Ghana, public endorsements by chiefs generate much debate. Those concerned with the practice argue that endorsements violate the constitution (Gyampo 2009). Beyond the legal ramifications of endorsements, there is a concern that such pronouncements damage a chief's reputation and in the long-term harm their ability to promote local governance and development (Gyampo 2009; Boafo-Arthur 2003). The perception of chiefs as wise, and symbols of cohesion and unity can also be hurt through partisan engagements (Abotchie 2006; Ansah-Koi 1996).<sup>15</sup> Through inciting partisan divides, citizens may desist chief's call to contribute labor or in-kind support (or pay levies) towards collective projects in the future (Nugent 1996) or send their disputes to the leader (Addo-Fening 2008). In support of endorsements, other argue that they do not constitute engagement in active partisan politics, and that chiefs have a constitutional right to voice their political opinions.

Despite the debate, we have no systematic evidence of whether chiefs' pronouncements in Ghana influence vote choice or lead to adverse effects on their position in society.<sup>16</sup> Our study contributes such evidence using data from Ghana's 2020 presidential elections.

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<sup>12</sup>Source: "Why chiefs should not engage in partisan politics", date April 20, 2020.

<sup>13</sup>Parliamentary candidates are also believed to solicit the help of chiefs to persuade or coerce rival candidates to stand down, narrowing the competition for their preferred candidate (Jonah 2003).

<sup>14</sup>Source: "95% of chiefs have endorsed Akufo-Addo – Eugene Arhin", date October 5, 2020.

<sup>15</sup>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", date April 20, 2020.

<sup>16</sup>An exception is Nathan (2019) who shows that subjects within a traditional leader's jurisdiction often block vote, especially those under chiefs established by former colonial powers. However, it is unclear whether this results from chiefs' endorsements or that chiefs pronouncements follow their assessment of the popular preference.

## 4 Chiefly political endorsements

We define *chiefly political endorsements* as public praise of *and* direct appeal to dependents to vote for a party's candidate by a traditional leader. In this study, the expression of *explicit electoral support* is as an essential component of chiefly political endorsements. Such endorsements may occur at a chief's palace, a traditional ceremonial grounds, or a public (official) event. We distinguish chiefly political endorsements from the routine visits of political aspirants to chiefs' palaces during election campaigns to "ask for permission" to mobilize support among their subjects. Indeed, politicians deem visits to a chief's house as necessary and a sign of respect before organizing rallies and house-to-house canvassing in a leader's traditional area. These events may serve as an occasion for a traditional leader to endorse a candidate, but according to our criteria these visits do not constitute an endorsement.<sup>17</sup> Many chiefs believe that they must give an audience to all political candidates.<sup>18</sup>

In traditional leaders' endorsements, chiefs openly express support for a party's candidate. In our setting, chiefly endorsements took the same format. First, the traditional leader applauded the national policies of the political aspirant. Second, he expressed "appreciation" for the politician's supply of local public infrastructure and social programs and appeal for more. Third, he calls on subjects to vote for the politician or pledge subjects' support to the candidate.

To illustrate, the paramount chief of Drobo Traditional Area in the Bono region, Okokyeredom Sakyi Ako II praised the President for his exemplary bravery and leadership and the "many" social intervention programs he has rolled out, including the Free Senior High School program (*national policy*). He also expressed gratitude to the President for rehabilitating the 31.7 Km Baafono-Zezera-Adamsu feeder road (*local infrastructure*). He appealed to Nana Akufo-Addo to build a

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<sup>17</sup>Voters may infer endorsement of a candidate by seeing their chiefs with a particular candidate or from the praise of the traditional leader with respect to a candidate's achievements (Lau and Redlawsk 2001). However, for the purposes of our study, we resolve that without an explicit endorsement, voters may not necessary make such a conclusion.

<sup>18</sup>However, there have been occasions where chiefs have barred some aspirants from campaigning in their jurisdiction. For example, see "Agona Duakwa: Chief bans NDC MP from campaigning for disrespecting them," October 4, 2020.

mobile communication mast to boost telecommunication network connectivity, build a police to strengthen security, and help complete Drobo-Berekum road (*request*). The chief ended his speech by assuring the President that he and his people “will not let him down,” and that for all that you [the President] have done we say “Four more [years] for Nana” (*endorsement*).<sup>19</sup>

## 5 Research Design

To estimate the causal effects of chiefly political endorsements on turnout and vote choice, we adopt an experimental approach. The treatments take the form of audio news reports that were designed to be as real 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 contain the voice of the chief as they made the endorsement. These features add to the external validity of the study. The news reporter was held constant across all treatment audios.<sup>20</sup> Recordings were in Akan, the dominant local language in each of the traditional areas in the study.

Regarding mechanisms, first, to examine whether a chief’s rationale for approving a candidate has independent or additional effect on behavior, we use a *withdrawal* experimental design. Specifically, the first treatment (A) focuses on chiefs’ *endorsements alone*, excluding the reason for the leader’s endorsement. The second (B) includes both chief’s *rationale* and the endorsement message (as described in section 4). Table 2 shows the three treatment arms, including the control group. Participants are randomly assigned to one of our three treatments. Those in the control group listened to a local comedy skit. Each of these audio segments were four and a half minutes long. Second, we investigate mechanisms by collecting data on theoretically-relevant intermediary variables.

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<sup>19</sup>An example of transcripts used in the audio experiment can be found in Appendix F.

<sup>20</sup>The news report is a Ghanaian radio journalist employed by the authors for the purpose of this project.

## 5.1 Sampling and interview procedure

Our selection of traditional areas and sampling of respondents were restricted to places where the paramount chief provided an *explicit* endorsement of the President. We focus on three traditional areas. Table 1 shows the names of the chiefs of selected areas.<sup>21</sup>

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

Our sample comprises of 1706 respondents located in 53 electoral areas 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. Prior to administering the survey, we worked with personnel at traditional councils and local governments to identify the EAs 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.<sup>22</sup>

At each polling station, enumerators used a random-walk technique to select households. Within households, respondents were randomly selected, alternating between males and females. The survey software then randomized respondents into the three treatment conditions.<sup>23</sup> Table 2 shows that, as expected, roughly a third of our respondents were assigned to each treatment condition. We interviewed respondents in the week prior to the presidential election (Wave 1) and about a week after the election (Wave 2). The panel allows us to investigate both the immediate and medium-term effects of the treatment. Table 2 shows the attrition rate between the two surveys. Attrition is roughly the same across each treatment condition (about 13%) and is, thus, unlikely to

<sup>21</sup>We initially included Nkomi traditional area in the Sene East Constituency. This area is politically aligned with the opposition party (NDC). We were forced to stop collecting data in this traditional area following threats made to survey enumerators by party agents.

<sup>22</sup>To assess the potential effect of distance from the palace on chiefly influence, we stratified polling stations by distance before randomly sampling.

<sup>23</sup>Surveys were conducted on electronic tablets.

Table 2: Treatment conditions

Treatment condition	Wave 1		Wave 2		Attrition rate
	# Resp.	Prop.	# Resp.	Prop.	
Placebo	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

bias our estimates.

After completing a short survey, participants listened to chiefs’ endorsement or placebo message. Respondents listened to these message using earphones, which made interviewers blind to treatment conditions.

## 5.2 Descriptive and balance statistics

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of our sample. Our respondents were 40 years old, on average, and equally split between males and females. A majority of our participants had a primary-level education or less, and a plurality (48 percent) said they were farmers. About two-thirds said they were close to the incumbent party, NPP. About half could correctly name the paramount chief of their traditional area.<sup>24</sup> On average, subjects lived about 9.7 kilometers (SD= 7 Km) from their chief’s palace. Appendix Figure A.1 shows that the randomization successfully ensured that respondents’ background characteristics were similar (balanced) across the three treatments.

## 5.3 Manipulation check

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. In contrast, about 9% of those assigned to

<sup>24</sup>In all cases, prior to listening to the audio message respondents were told who the paramount chief was for their area. The news reporter then introduced the paramount chief at the start of each treatment audio.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of respondents

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
<b>Demography</b>		
Age	39.514	15.187
Gender (Female=1)	0.495	0.500
Education (Primary or less =1)	0.719	0.450
Employment (Farming=1)	0.475	0.500
<b>Partisanship</b>		
Close to the NPP	0.667	0.472
<b>Chieftaincy</b>		
Correctly name chief	0.488	0.500
Distance to chief's palace (KMs)	9.748	7.110

control said it was an endorsement of the incumbent candidate (see Appendix Table B.1). Because not all treated participants correctly identified the treatment, our estimates are *intention-to-treat* effects.

## 5.4 Measurement of main outcomes

We focus on the causal effects of chiefly political endorsements on two primary outcomes: *turnout* and *vote choice* for the endorsed candidate. We use survey responses to measure these outcomes. Wave 1 measured intended vote choice. Wave 2 responses record actual vote choice.

To measure *turnout*, we asked respondents:

Wave 1: “As you know, the election is coming up soon. First, I would like to ask you how likely are you to vote in the presidential election on December 7th?”

Wave 2: “Understanding that not everyone was able to vote on 7th December. I would like to ask you whether you were able to vote in the election on Monday 7th December?”

As pre-specified, we created a dummy variable, *Intention to vote* (Wave 1), that takes on a value of 1 when the respondent said they will definitely or probably vote and otherwise 0.<sup>25</sup> In Wave 2,

<sup>25</sup>The other options were: 3: Maybe yes, maybe no; 4: I will probably not vote; 5: I will definitely not vote

our measure, *Turnout*, takes a value of 1 if the respondent voted and 0 otherwise.

To capture *Vote intention* and *Vote choice* for the endorsed, in each wave we asked respondents to identify the party they would vote for (Wave 1) or did vote for (Wave 2).<sup>26</sup> This question was presented as an electronic ballot, with respondents clicking on the logo of their preferred party. This selection took place in private. These steps were taken to diminish potential response bias.

## **5.5 Coding of partisanship of respondents**

Partisanship is measured by asking respondents how close they feel to the endorsed candidate's party (NPP) on a Likert Scale (0 - 7), with higher values indicating being closer to the NPP. Figure 1 presents the distribution of closeness of the ruling party. Those who chose values greater than or equal to 4 are coded as NPP partisans and 0 otherwise (i.e., moderates and opposition). We also consider the effect of chiefly endorsement by each level of attachment to the candidate's party in Appendix Figure D.1.

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<sup>26</sup>In Wave 1, we also asked respondents how likely they were to vote for the endorsed candidate using a Likert scale (0-7). We present these results, which mirror the intended vote choice results, in the Appendix.

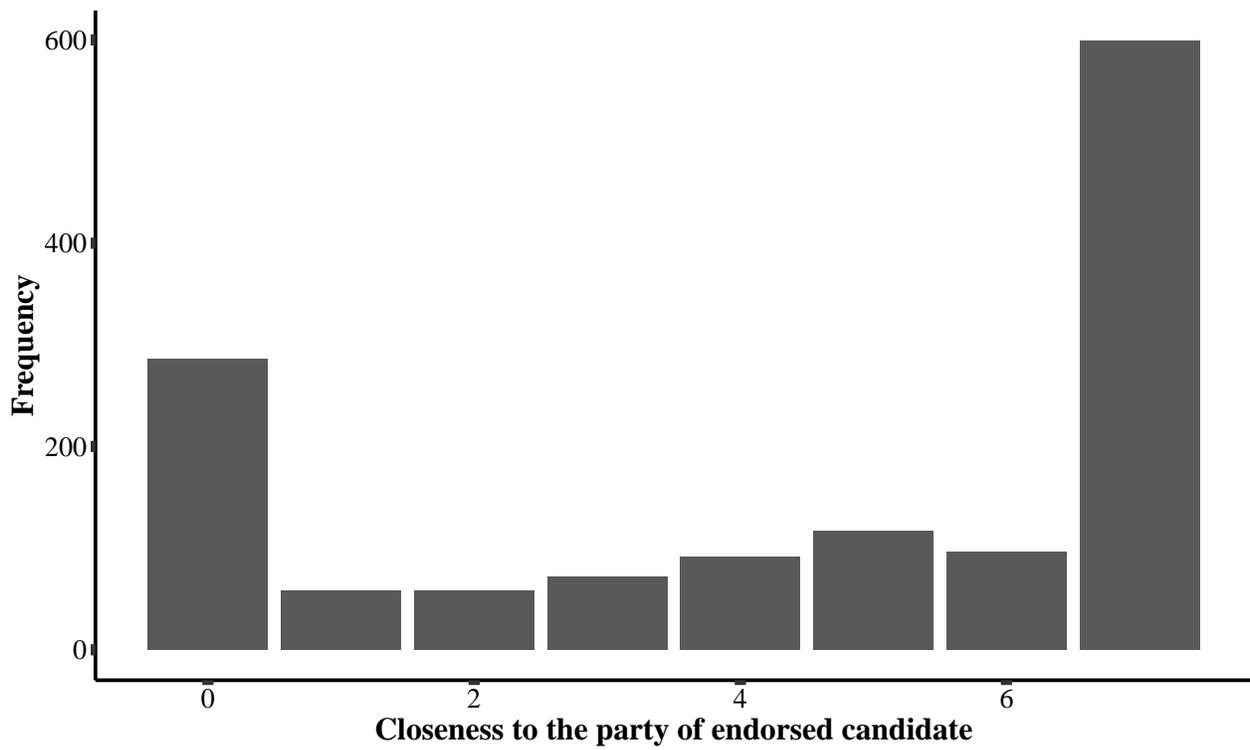


Figure 1: Distribution of closeness to endorsed candidate's political party (NPP). Higher values indicate being closer to the NPP.

## 5.6 Estimation strategy

To examine the effect of chiefly endorsements on our main outcomes, we estimate:

$$Y_{ijk} = \alpha + \beta_0 * T_{ij} + \gamma_j + \theta X_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

where,  $Y_{ij}$  is an outcome (turnout, 7-point evaluation of endorsed candidate, and vote choice) for participant  $i$  in electoral area  $j$ . In Equation 1, we estimate the causal effect ( $\beta_0$ ) of receiving any of the endorsement treatment ( $T_{ij}$ ) relative to the placebo audio. 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  $X_{ij}$ .

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

In both models,  $\gamma_j$  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.

## 6 Results

### 6.1 Do chiefly endorsement affect voters' turnout and vote choice?

Figure 2 is composed of two panels. Panel A (top) displays the mean for (pooled) treatment and control groups. Means for the pre-election survey are on the left. Means for the post-election survey are on the right. Panel B (bottom) displays the ITT effects. Again, the left panel indicates the pre-election ITT effect. The right panel indicates the post-election ITT effect. In all cases, estimates are displayed along with the 95 percent confidence interval bars.

The results show that chiefly endorsements did not affect respondents' intentions to turn out or actual turn out. This result may be explained by high levels of intention to vote and actual turnout in the elections. Focusing on the control group, close to 95 percent on respondents in Wave 1 said they intended to vote. This figure increased to 100 percent (claimed) turnout in Wave 2. Given these high levels of reported turnout in the control group, it is not possible for the treatment to have any effect on this outcome.

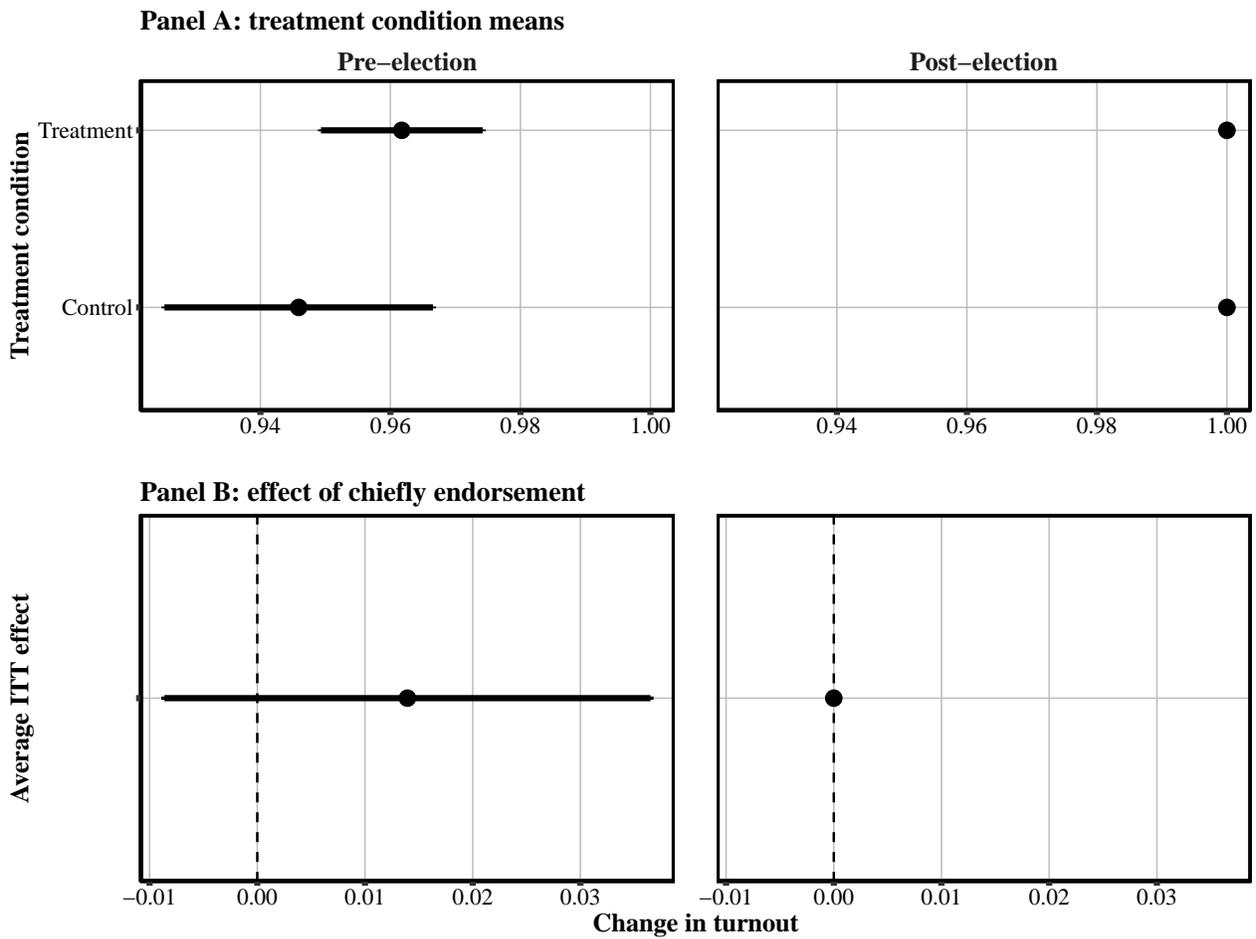


Figure 2: Average intention-to-treat effect of chiefly endorsement on turnout

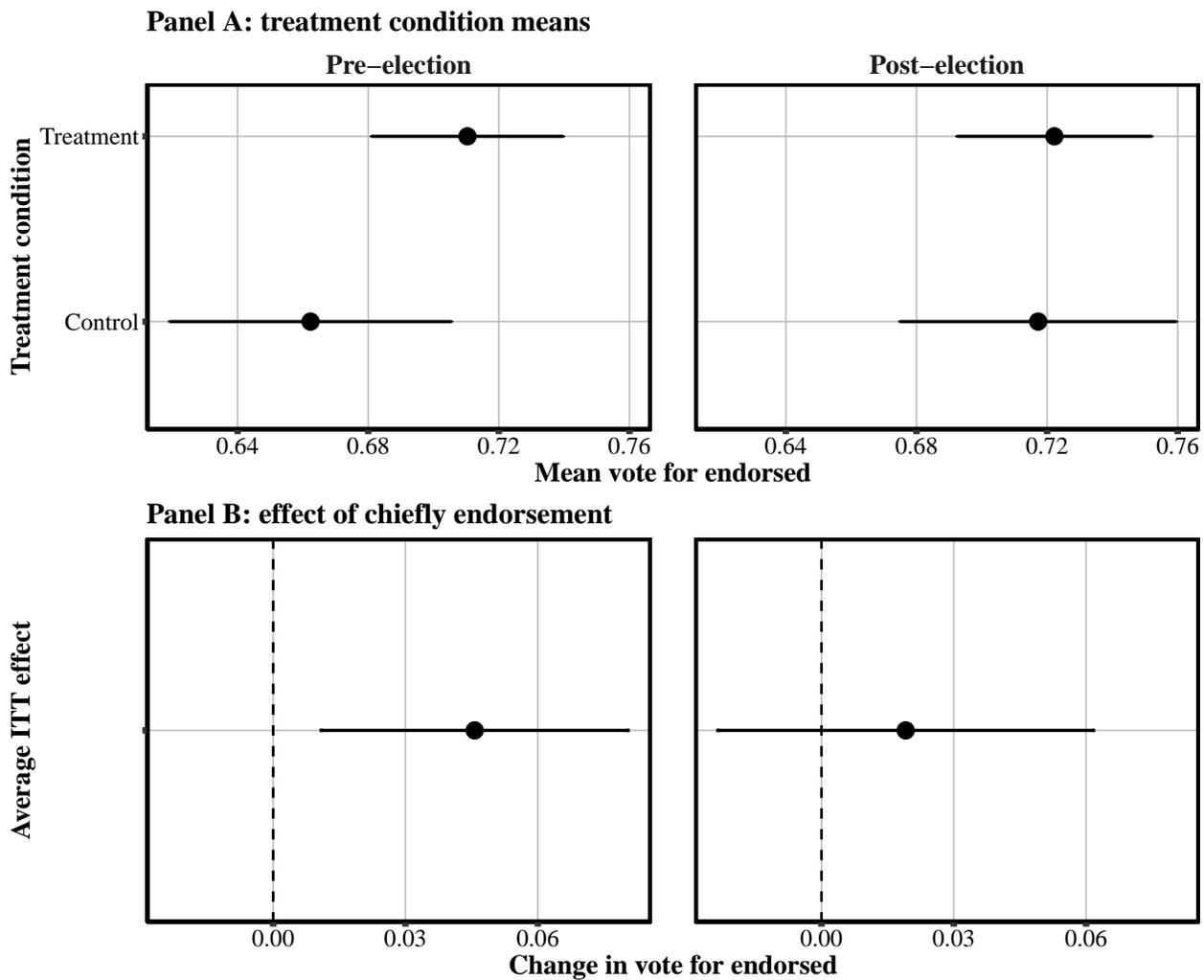


Figure 3: Average intention-to-treat effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice

Figure 3 again displays the treatment and control means (Panel A) and the 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 increasing the probability that a respondent says she will vote for the chief’s endorsed candidate increased by 4.6 percentage points (pp) ( $p < 0.01$ ).<sup>27</sup> In Wave 2 (bottom, right panel) this effect goes away. The effect potentially disappears because there is an increase in the share of respondents in the control group who say they voted for the endorsed candidate. In Wave 1, roughly 66 percent of the control group say they will vote for the endorsed candidate (top, left panel). In Wave 2, this figure increases to 72 percent.

In summary, our results do not support H1 that endorsements increase turnout. This is explained by high levels of turnout irrespective of the treatment. Our results lend some support to H2: endorsements have a significant and positive effect on vote intention in Wave 1. We next investigate whether the latter effect varies by respondents’ partisanship and prior approval of the chief.

## 6.2 Heterogeneous effects

### 6.2.1 Partisanship

Figure 4 shows the average marginal effect (AME) of the treatment by respondents’ partisanship.<sup>28</sup> The left side shows the AME for copartisans of the endorsed candidate in the pre-election (triangle) and post-election period (circle) with 95% confidence intervals. The right side shows the results for non-copartisans of the approved candidate. The results (left) show that the endorsement did not change the vote choice for those who were copartisans of the endorsed candidate: the treatment effect is close to zero in both Wave 1 and Wave 2.

The results on the right side of Figure 4 show a large and positive effect of endorsements on the

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<sup>27</sup>Appendix Table C.2 shows the regression results.

<sup>28</sup>Table D.1 shows the regression estimates.

vote choice of non-co-partisan voters. This effect is sustained across both waves of the survey. In Wave 1 (pre-election), the treatment effect is 7.9 pp. In Wave 2 (post-election), it is 8.9 pp. These results lend support to H9, confirming that the treatment has a larger effect on voters who originally opposed the endorsed candidate.

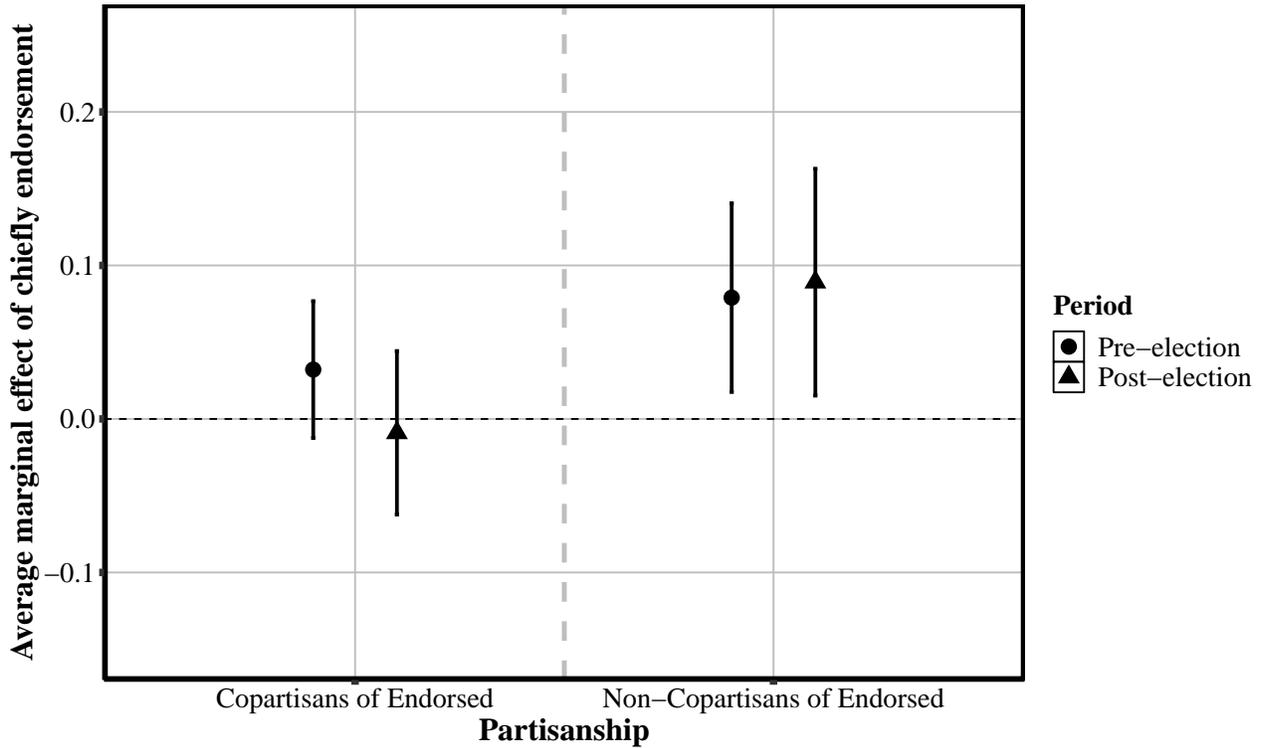


Figure 4: Average Marginal Effect of Chiefly Endorsement on Vote Choice by Partisanship

### 6.2.2 Prior approval of the chief

We next assess whether prior approval of the chief moderates the effect endorsements have on vote choice. In the survey (prior to treatment), respondents were asked to rate their chief's performance. Responses were on a Likert scale (0-7). Respondents who assessed the performance of the chief as 4 or above are coded as approving of the chief.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Exact question: "What is your overall assessment of the Paramount chief of this traditional area? On a scale of 0 to 7: where 7 means that you have a very positive assessment and 0 signifies that you have a very negative assessment."

The results show that prior approval does moderate the effect of endorsements. The treatment has a positive and significant effect on those who approve of the chief's performance. Specifically, in Wave 1, the treatment effect size is 6 pp ( $p < 0.06$ ). In Wave 2, the effect size is 4.1 pp ( $p < 0.2$ ). In contrast, endorsement messages do not have a positive effect on voters who do not approve of their chief's performance.

### **6.2.3 Interacting partisanship and prior approval of the chief**

We briefly explore whether there is an interactive effect between partisanship and prior approval. Interacting these two moderators was not pre-specified, and the results should be taken as exploratory. Figure 5 shows the results. Overall, the results point to a clear interaction effect. Specifically, respondents who were both non-copartisans of the endorsed candidates and approved of the chiefs performance were significantly more likely to vote for the candidate. The size of this AME is 11.3 pp ( $p < 0.01$ ) and 16.2 pp ( $p < 0$ ) in Wave 1 and 2, respectively. In comparison, for non-copartisans who did not approve of the chiefs performance, the AME is 9.3 pp ( $p < 0.14$ ) and 5.4 pp ( $p < 0.49$ ) in Wave 1 and 2, respectively. The treatment had no effect on copartisan respondents, irrespective of whether they approved of their chiefs performance or not.

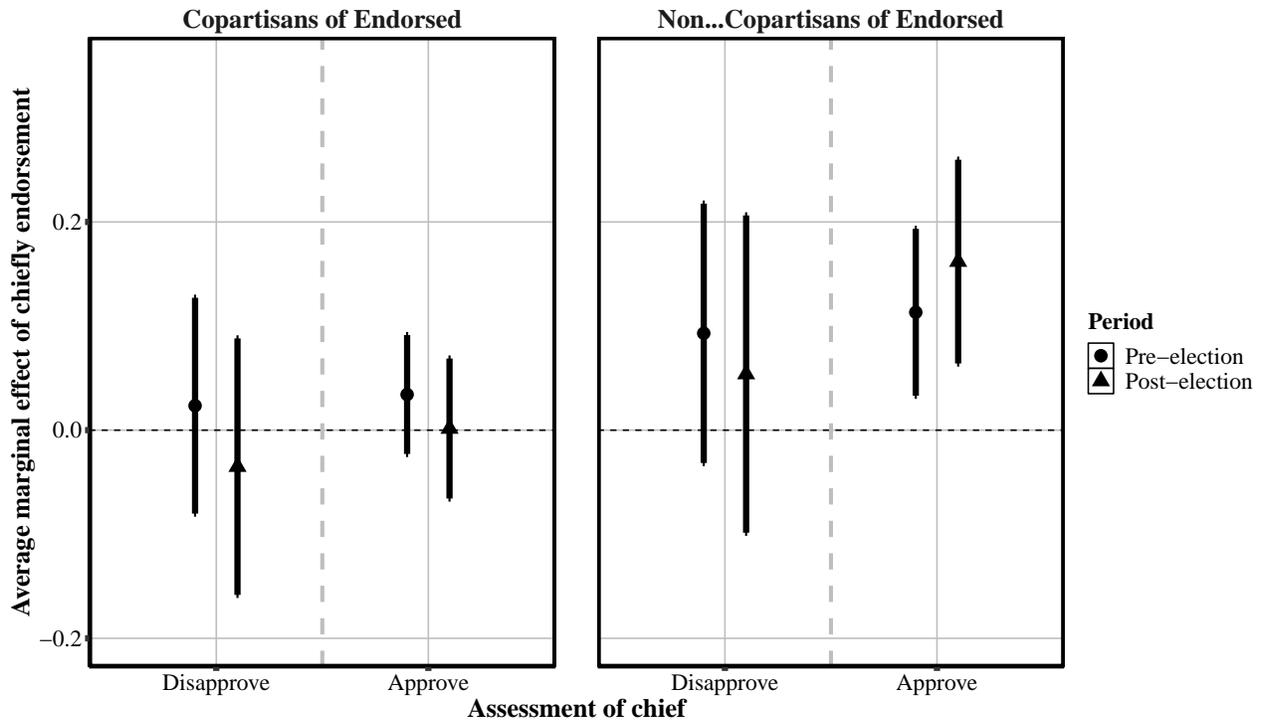


Figure 5: Average marginal effect of chiefly endorsement by partisanship and evaluation of chief

## 7 Mechanisms

We study mechanisms in two ways. First, we disaggregate the treatment to consider whether when chiefs provide the rationale for their approval this has an effect over and above the endorsement effect. Second, we analyze theoretically-relevant intermediate variables that might mediate treatment and the outcome measure. As pre-registered, we focus on the mechanism that drives the effect endorsements have on non-copartisans of the endorsed candidate.

### 7.1 Does the rationale for the endorsement matter?

Figure 6 displays the ITT effects disaggregating the treatment into its components. We present the effect in Wave 1 (circles) and Wave 2 (triangles). Figure 6 shows that there is no additional positive effect of the treatment when respondents hear the rationale in addition to the endorsement. Specifically, in Wave 1 the ITT effect is 7.2pp ( $p < 0.13$ ) for endorsements only and 11.5 pp

( $p < 0.02$ ) for endorsements and rationale. In Wave 2, the ITT effect is 8.6 pp ( $p < 0.13$ ) for endorsements only and 6.2 pp ( $p < 0.28$ ) for endorsements and rationale. The differences in these estimates are not statistically significant.

The rationale chiefs provided focused on the presidential candidates past performance in delivering national and local development. This was combined with a request for additional local infrastructure. If the effect size was larger for respondents who heard the rationale, we would take this as evidence that respondents positively updated about the likely past or future performance of the endorsed candidate. However, the absence of this result does not also allow us to infer that respondents did not update their beliefs about future performance. They may infer this from the endorsement alone: they may trust the chief's assessment and infer performance from their approval of the candidate. Indeed, our second results on intermediary variables suggest that increased expectations of candidates to deliver local development is the main mechanism that explains the results.

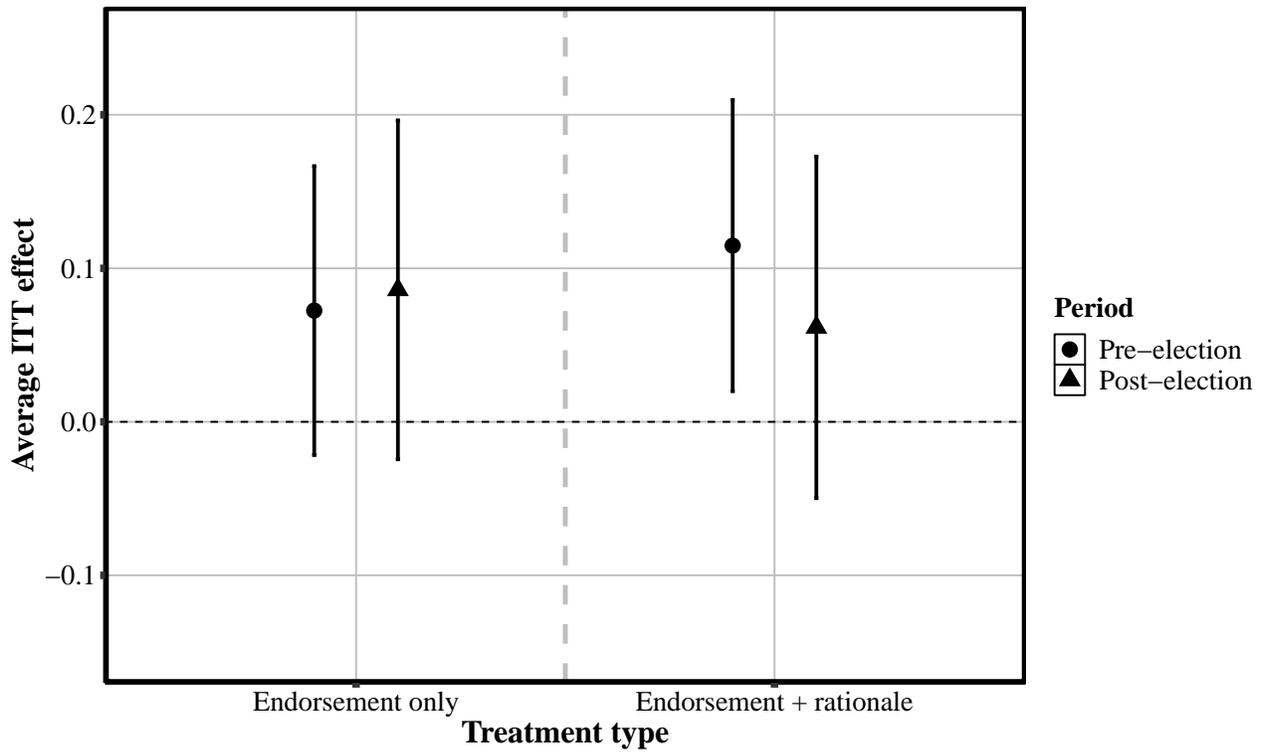


Figure 6: Average ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice among opposing voters by treatment type

## 7.2 Effect on intermediate variables and causal mediation analyses

We hypothesized four main mechanisms through which endorsements may affect vote choice. First, focusing on the endorsed candidate, the endorsement may lead respondents to update their beliefs on the candidate’s quality (or type). Second, they may lead respondents to update on expected performance of the candidate. Third, and unrelated to the candidate, voters may expect that supporting the chief’s preferred candidate will increase their access to private benefit. Fourth, respondents may fear that not voting for the chief’s preferred candidate will lead to negative reprisals.

These four mechanisms are not mutually exclusive: respondents’ may update on multiple beliefs or there may be variation in how different respondents update. The outcomes we report were collected in Wave 1 of the survey after respondents had heard the treatment audio (or placebo).

To investigate the role of these intermediary outcomes, for each variable, we first investigate the ITT effects related to each mechanism: we compare means in control and treatment groups. Second, we employ a nonparametric causal mediation analysis.<sup>30</sup> This approach estimates 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)) and that through all other channels (i.e., direct effect or average direct effect (ADE)). To apply this method, we need to assume that there are no pre-treatment covariates that confound the relationship between the intermediary variable and the outcome (i.e., Sequential Ignorability).<sup>31</sup>

Figure 7 displays the results. Panel A (top) displays the ITT effect for each of the intermediate variables. Panel B (bottom) displays the ACMEs for each. Both plots display the 95% confidence intervals.

Regarding candidate qualities, we find evidence of positive updating on the perceived likability

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<sup>30</sup>This method is taken from Imai et al. (2011).

<sup>31</sup>Imai et al. (2011) proposes sensitivity tests to examine the extent to which this assumption may be violated. violation should occur to reverse conclusions about the hypothesized mechanism. The sensitivity tests we perform give us confidence that our conclusions are not susceptible to the violation of the assumption. Appendix Figures E.1 and E.2 show the results for causal mediation and sensitivity analysis for each of our intermediate variables, respectively.

(0.27 ( $p < 0.09$ )) and trustworthiness (0.27 ( $p < 0.12$ )) of the candidate. These increases are on a 1 to 7 scale. They represent about a 6 percent increase from the mean in control (4.71 and 4.34 for likability and trustworthiness, respectively). The causal mediation analysis shows that likability and trust of the endorsed candidate mediate 28% (ACME = 2.8 pp) and 36% (ACME = 3.7 pp), respectively of the total effect. Overall, these results are consistent with H3 and H4: there is evidence of positive updating on candidate quality.

Regarding performance, we find evidence that endorsement lead to positive updating on expectations that the candidate will bring local development. Specifically, the ITT effect is 0.42 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This effect is also substantively large: it represents a 11 percent increase from the control group (the control group mean was 3.80). The bottom panel of Figure 7 shows that local development accounts for 61% (ACME = 6.3 pp) of the total effect. Of all the mediating variables we analyze, this effect is the largest. In contrast, we do not find evidence that endorsements affect perceptions of the endorsed candidates performance on delivering national policies. These results support H5, but do not support H6.

Baldwin (2016) argues that chiefly endorsements do not serve as mere cues to voters. Instead, they work among voters who believe that chiefs and politicians need to work together to produce public infrastructure, which suggests a more strategic behavior of voters. However, we do not find substantive support for this argument in our study. Specifically, Appendix E shows that perceptions that the chief will have the “listening ear” of the endorsed or that he will “work well” with the approved candidate to deliver local development account for only about 17% and 14% of the total effects, respectively.

Concerning private benefits, we find some evidence to support this mechanism (H7). The treatment increased voters beliefs that the election of the endorsed candidate will put their chief in a position to provide benefits to they or their families by 0.33 ( $p < 0.07$ ) on a scale of 1 to 7 (an increase of about 10 percent from a mean of 3.38 in control). The causal mediation analysis show that private benefits from the chief mediate the effect by 17% (ACME = 1.8 pp).

Finally, we do not find significant evidence that the treatment generated an increase sense of fear among respondents (H8). While the ITT effect is positive (0.13) it is not statistically significant as conventional levels. Furthermore, the causal mediation analysis suggests that fear mediates only 3% (ACME = 0.4 pp) of the effect.

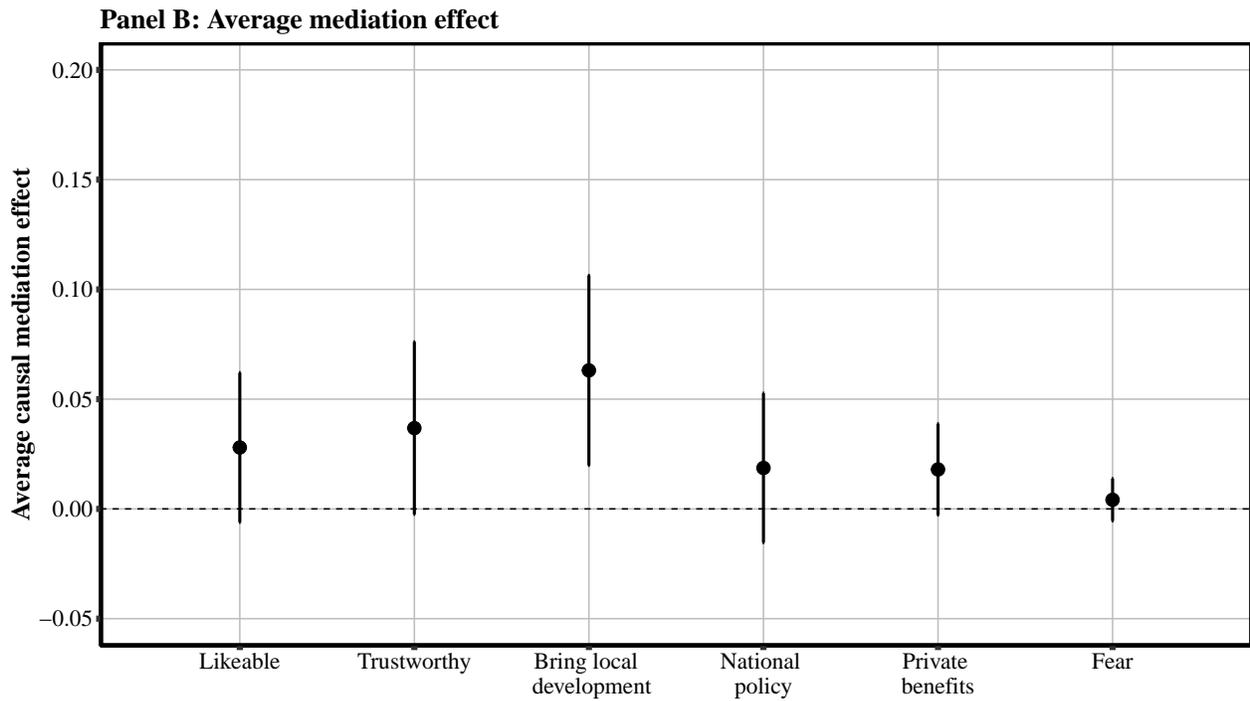
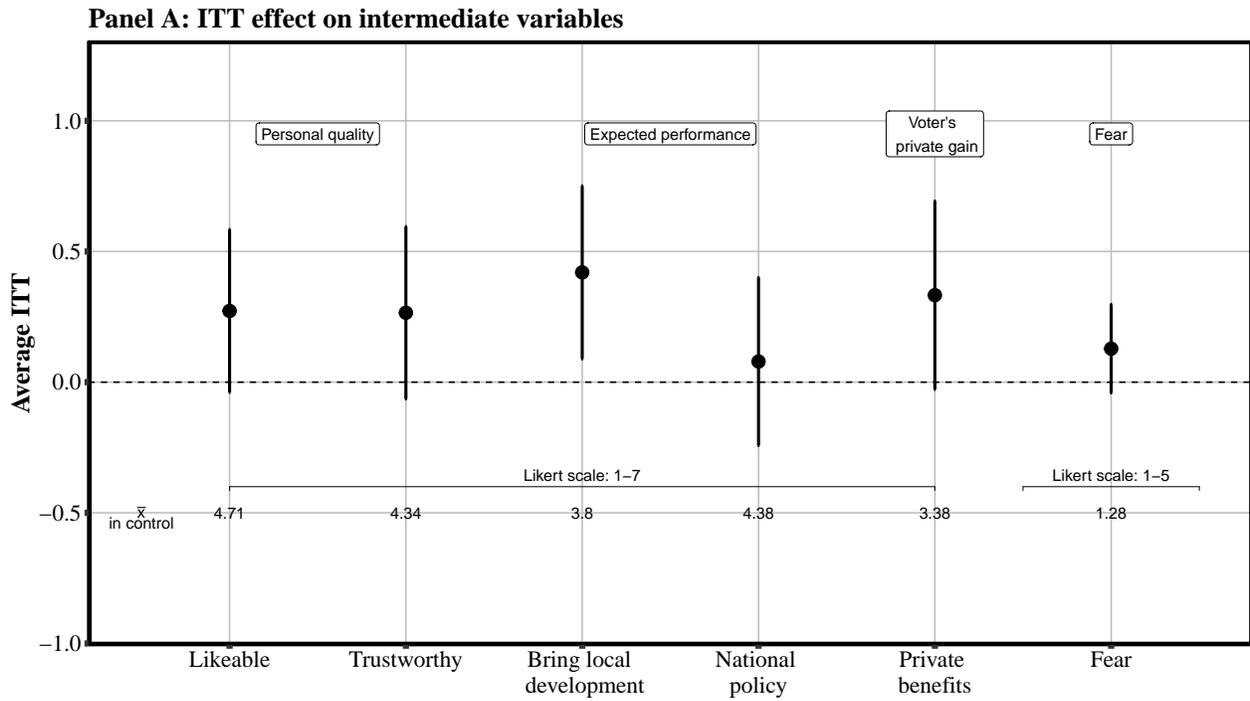


Figure 7: Average ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on intermediate outcomes (Panel A). Average causal mediation effects of intermediate variables on vote choice (Panel B)

## **8 Do endorsements have adverse impact on chief's legitimacy?**

Finally, we examine whether explicit endorsements undermine traditional leaders' position in society to mobilize their community for self-help projects and adjudicate disputes. As pre-specified, we focus on non-supporters of the endorsed candidate because these are subjects who may come to distrust the impartiality of the traditional leader.

Table 4 Column (1) shows that chiefly endorsements reduce opposing subjects' trust in the leader's ability to advance development in their traditional area, which may express concerns about backing the wrong horse. Specifically, the treatment reduced non-supporters of the endorsed candidate's belief that the chief will promote community development in the years ahead by 0.347, a 10 percent decrease from a mean of 3.633 on a 1-7 scale in the control group. However, the treatment did not affect how likely they will participate should the chief call for community members to contribute labor or funds to build a local infrastructure such as a school, community center, clinic, or bridge (Column (2) Table 4).

Regarding conflict resolution, our results indicate that political endorsement did not change opposing subjects' beliefs about how effective the chief will be in mediating community conflicts (Column (3) Table 4). However, they were 0.238 less likely to report a personal dispute with a neighbor to the chief for resolution, representing only about a 4 percent decrease from the mean of 5.511 on a 1-7 scale in the control.

Our findings suggest that chiefly endorsement may not be pernicious to leaders' ability to mobilize for community works, although beliefs about their ability to do so may suffer among opponents. Furthermore, while opposing subjects may reduce their trust in chiefs as independent arbitrators of personal disputes, such a reduction may not be substantial.

Table 4: Average ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on trust in leader’s ability to mobilize development and adjudicate dispute

	Bring development (1)	Contribute to community work (2)	Chief’s ability to resolve conflict (3)	Take personal dispute to chief (4)
Treatment	−0.347** (0.162)	−0.089 (0.122)	0.012 (0.134)	−0.238* (0.142)
Constant	1.548** (0.707)	6.389*** (0.533)	7.338*** (0.587)	6.119*** (0.619)
EA fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	530	530	530	530
R <sup>2</sup>	0.217	0.170	0.213	0.218

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

## 9 Conclusion

In this study, we leverage real endorsement messages by traditional leaders for the incumbent candidate in Ghana’s 2020 presidential election and an experimental design to investigate chiefly influences on voter behavior. First, we analyze whether the open endorsement of the incumbent encourages citizens to turn out and vote for the endorsed. Our results show that the chiefs’ blessings do not change individuals’ propensity to turn out. However, endorsements increase the vote shares of the approved candidate. The impact is highest among unaligned and opposing voters of the endorsed politician. The treatment also increased support for the endorsed candidate among voters who believe that the chief has done an excellent job in their responsibilities in the traditional area. Further, we discover that the effect of chiefly partisan endorsement is highest among opposition voters who hold positive evaluations of the chief’s performance of their duties within their traditional areas.

Results from our experimental design show that the effect of chiefly endorsement does not differ by its content. Specifically, endorsements with and without a rationale for the approval generated a similar impact. Further analysis suggests that the effect of chiefly endorsement plausibly runs through improving perceptions about the personal qualities and, importantly, lending credibility to the candidate’s promise to provide local public infrastructure. Drawing on existing literature, we argue that chiefly endorsements provide cues to voters about the credibility of candi-

dates' promises. Traditional leaders are trusted individuals in their society (relative to politicians) and often share their dependents' socio-economic interests. Our research also shows that the endorsements made opposing voters to believe that a win for the approved candidate will put their traditional leader in a position to provide personal benefits to them or their family. Together, these results provide new evidence to support how voters use the pronouncements of chiefs on electoral candidates strategically in their voting decision.

The study also provides insights to indicate that the involvement of chiefs in partisan politics in the form of endorsing candidates may not substantially damage their reputation and position in society, as some scholars, policymakers, and citizens fear.

Further research should examine the effect of chiefly endorsements on support for opposition candidates. Most chiefs, but not all, support the incumbent candidate, and our study suggests that this may provide another 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 Balance statistics

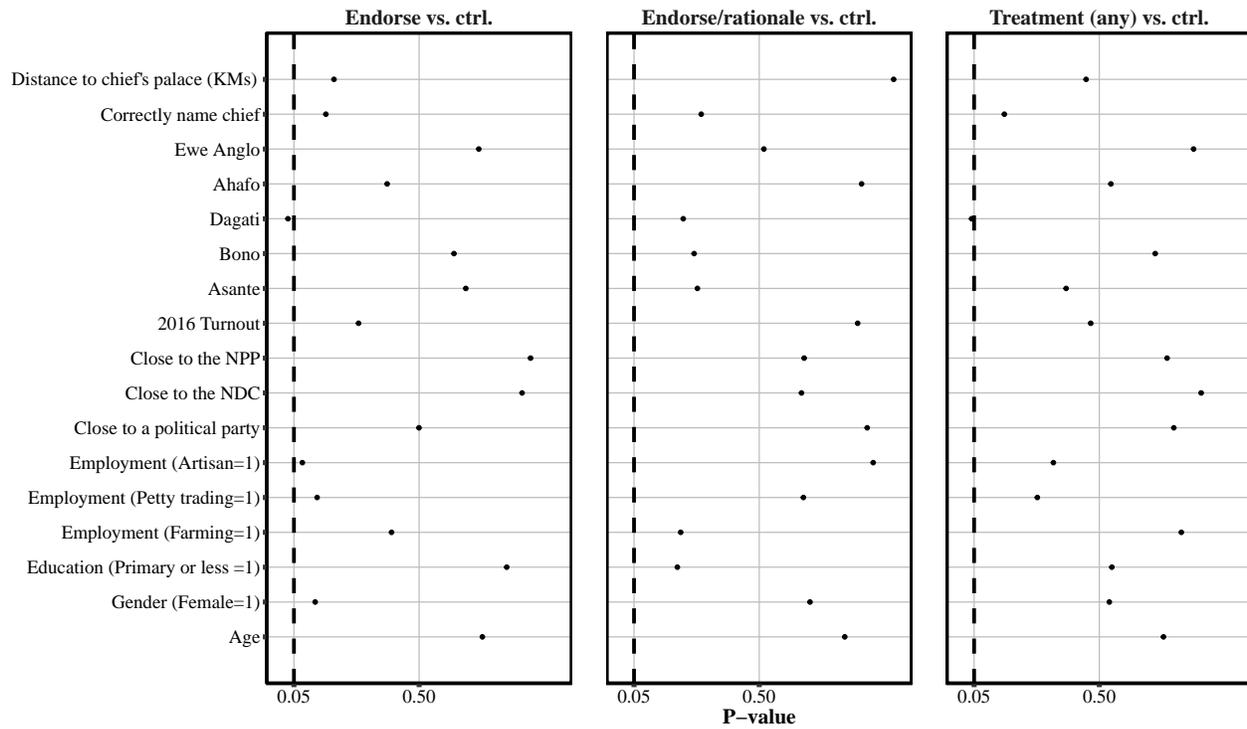


Figure A.1: Balance statistics

## B Manipulation check

Table B.1: Manipulation check

Treatment condition	Proportion
Placebo	0.085
Endorsement (A)	0.897

Endorsement (A) + rationale (B)	0.852
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*Note:* Proportion of respondents saying 'Yes' to the question: 'Thinking back to the audio I just played you, do you think it was an endorsement for Nana Akufo-Addo'

## **C Main Results Tables**

Table C.1: ITT Effect of Chiefly Endorsement on Turnout

	Pre-election		Post election	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment (any)	0.016 (0.012)	0.014 (0.012)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Age		0.001*** (0.0004)		-0.000 (0.000)
Education		-0.007** (0.003)		0.000 (0.000)
Total assets		0.008* (0.005)		-0.000 (0.000)
Closeness to incumbent party (NPP)		0.009*** (0.002)		0.000 (0.000)
Constant	0.946*** (0.009)	0.920*** (0.056)	1.000*** (0.000)	1.000*** (0.000)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,377	1,377	1,299	1,299
R <sup>2</sup>	0.001	0.105	0.500	0.500

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

Table C.2: Average ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice (Pre-election)

	Chose endorsed candidate			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Any endorsement message	0.048*	0.046**		
	(0.026)	(0.018)		
Age		-0.0004		-0.0004
		(0.001)		(0.001)
Education		0.006		0.006
		(0.005)		(0.005)
Total assets		-0.014**		-0.014**
		(0.007)		(0.007)
Closeness to incumbent party (NPP)		0.117***		0.117***
		(0.003)		(0.003)
Endorsement Only			0.039	0.045**
			(0.031)	(0.021)
Endorsement and rationale			0.056*	0.046**
			(0.030)	(0.020)
Constant	0.662***	0.163*	0.662***	0.163*
	(0.021)	(0.087)	(0.021)	(0.087)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,377	1,377	1,377	1,377
R <sup>2</sup>	0.002	0.582	0.003	0.582

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

Table C.3: Average ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice (post-election survey)

	Voted endorsed candidate			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Any endorsement message	0.005 (0.026)	0.019 (0.022)		
Age		-0.001* (0.001)		-0.001* (0.001)
Education		0.007 (0.006)		0.006 (0.006)
Total assets		-0.017** (0.009)		-0.017** (0.009)
Closeness to incumbent party (NPP)		0.077*** (0.004)		0.077*** (0.004)
Endorsement Only			0.0001 (0.031)	0.024 (0.025)
Endorsement and rationale			0.010 (0.030)	0.015 (0.025)
Constant	0.717*** (0.022)	0.521*** (0.102)	0.717*** (0.022)	0.523*** (0.102)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,299	1,299	1,299	1,299
R <sup>2</sup>	0.00003	0.376	0.0001	0.376

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

## **C.1 Results for using Likert scale**

Table C.4 presents the effect of chiefly endorsement on respondents' self-assessed likelihood of voting for the endorsed candidate on a scale of 1 to 7. Higher values indicate a higher chance of voting for the approved candidate. Columns (1) and (2) show the effect for receiving any (pooled) of the endorsement messages without and with controls, respectively. We run a similar analysis in Columns (3) and (4), respectively, disaggregating the results by treatment type.

We find that the treatment increases a respondent's chance of voting for the endorsed candidate by 0.3 on the 1-7 scale from the average in the control of about 5.04, representing a six percent increase. The disaggregated results in Columns (3) and (4) show that whether a chiefly endorsement provided a rationale does not significantly change its effect on the intention to vote for the chief's preferred candidate.

## **D Heterogeneous effects**

### **D.1 Partisanship**

Table C.4: ITT: Chiefly Endorsement on Likelihood of Voting for Endorsed Candidate

	How likely will you vote for the endorsed (Likert scale:1-7)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment (any)	0.299** (0.143)	0.293*** (0.098)		
Age		-0.003 (0.003)		-0.003 (0.003)
Education		0.043 (0.028)		0.043 (0.028)
Total assets		-0.115*** (0.039)		-0.115*** (0.039)
Closeness to incumbent party (NPP)		0.628*** (0.017)		0.628*** (0.017)
Endorsement			0.246 (0.167)	0.293** (0.114)
Endorsement and rationale			0.348** (0.164)	0.294*** (0.113)
Constant	5.039*** (0.117)	2.304*** (0.481)	5.039*** (0.117)	2.303*** (0.482)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,377	1,377	1,377	1,377
R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.573	0.003	0.573

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

Table D.1: ITT Effect of Chiefly Endorsement on Vote Choice by Partisanship

	Pre-election		Post-election	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment	0.027 (0.023)	0.032 (0.023)	-0.014 (0.028)	-0.009 (0.027)
Incumbent non-supporters (INS)	-0.732*** (0.032)	-0.692*** (0.032)	-0.539*** (0.039)	-0.494*** (0.039)
Treatment x INS	0.060 (0.039)	0.047 (0.039)	0.088* (0.048)	0.098** (0.047)
Constant	0.914*** (0.019)	0.922*** (0.091)	0.899*** (0.023)	1.039*** (0.104)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,377	1,377	1,299	1,299
R <sup>2</sup>	0.512	0.552	0.263	0.359

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

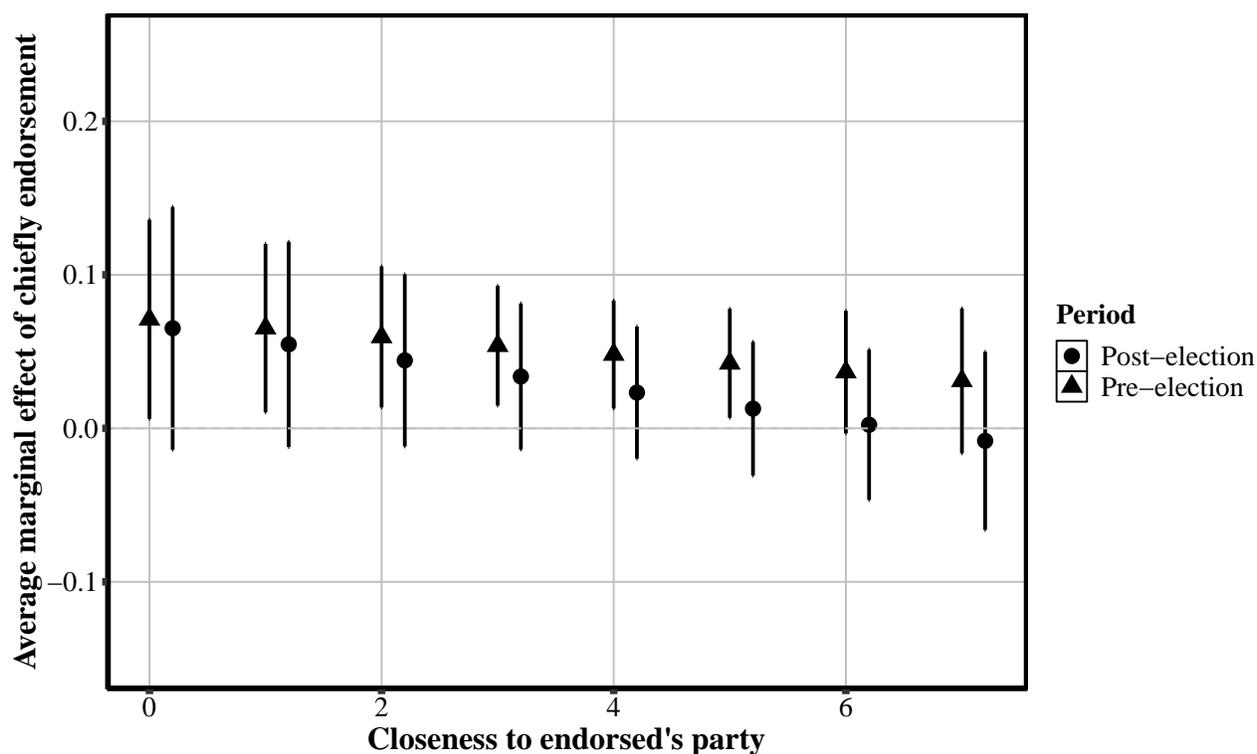


Figure D.1: Effect of chiefly endorsement by partisanship (Likert scale 0-7)

### D.1.1 Distance and Age

Appendix Figure D.3 shows that chiefly endorsement might be more effective among subjects between 36 and 55 years and do not affect younger and older voters. However, these results are only suggestive. Finally, Appendix Figure D.2 indicates that the treatment's effect did not differ by how far a subject lived away from the chief's palace.

## D.2 Distance

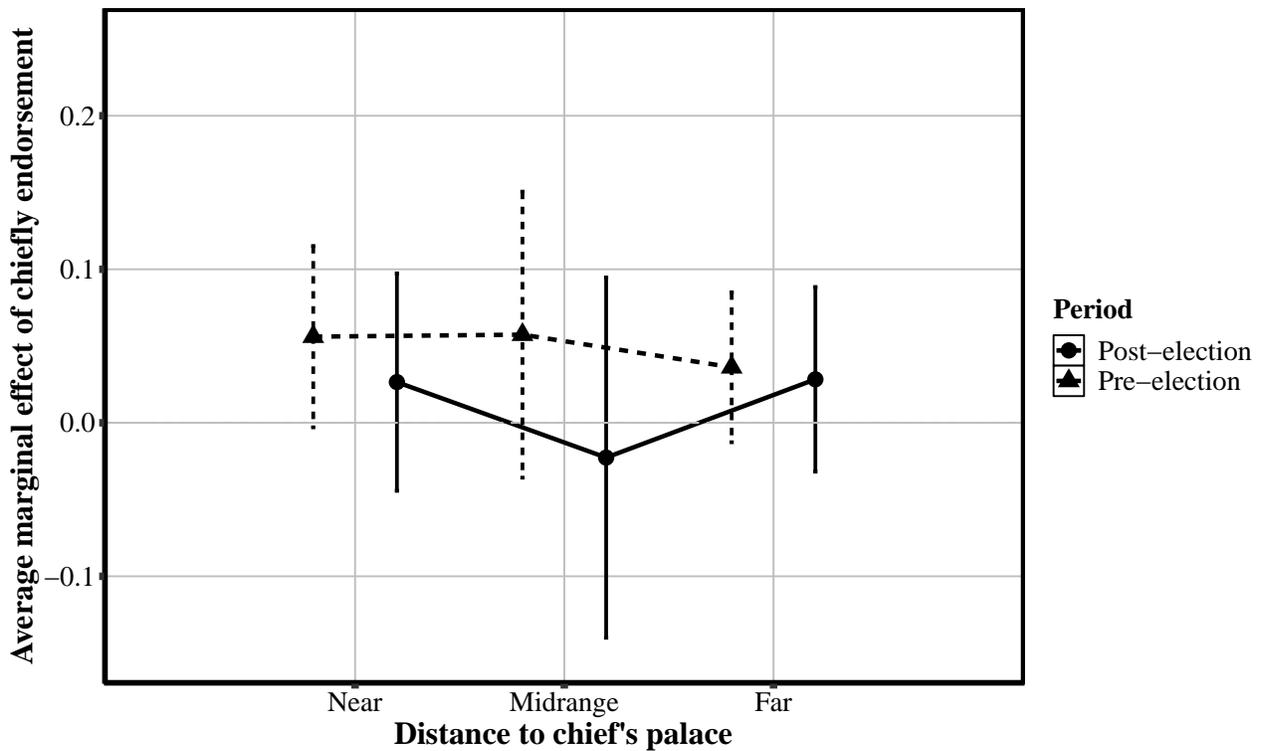


Figure D.2: Average Marginal Effect of Chiefly Endorsement on Vote Choice by Distance

## D.3 Age

Table D.2: ITT effect of chiefly endorsement on vote choice by age

	Pre-election		Post-election	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment (any)	0.026 (0.039)	0.020 (0.026)	-0.009 (0.039)	-0.007 (0.032)
Age:36-55	-0.023 (0.046)	-0.034 (0.031)	-0.034 (0.047)	-0.058 (0.039)
Age: 56 and above	0.013 (0.066)	-0.050 (0.045)	-0.047 (0.062)	-0.078 (0.052)
Treatment (any) x Age:36-55	0.049 (0.057)	0.049 (0.038)	0.032 (0.058)	0.057 (0.048)
Treatment (any) x Age: 56 and above	0.016 (0.079)	0.046 (0.053)	0.019 (0.075)	0.034 (0.062)
Constant	0.670*** (0.031)	0.170** (0.085)	0.738*** (0.032)	0.504*** (0.099)
EA fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	1,377	1,377	1,299	1,299
R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.582	0.001	0.377

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

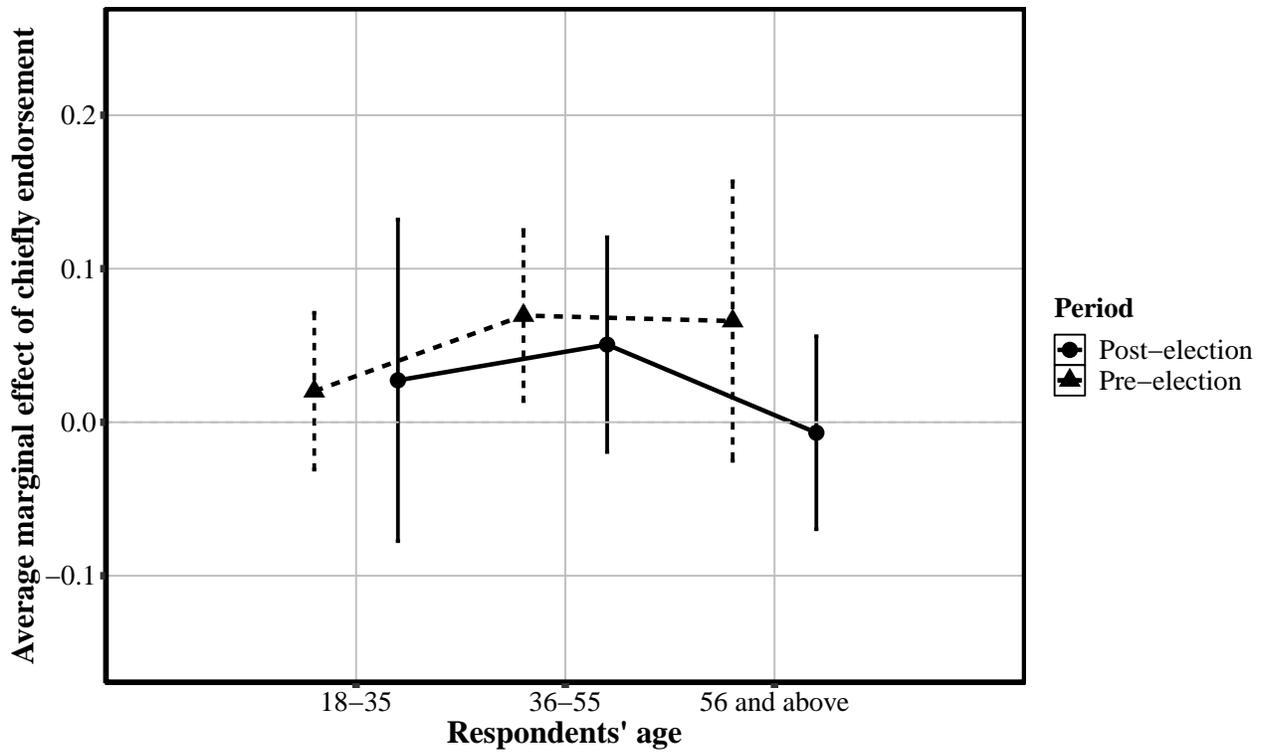


Figure D.3: Average Marginal Effect of Chiefly Endorsement on Vote Choice by Distance

#### D.4 Evaluation of chief's past performance

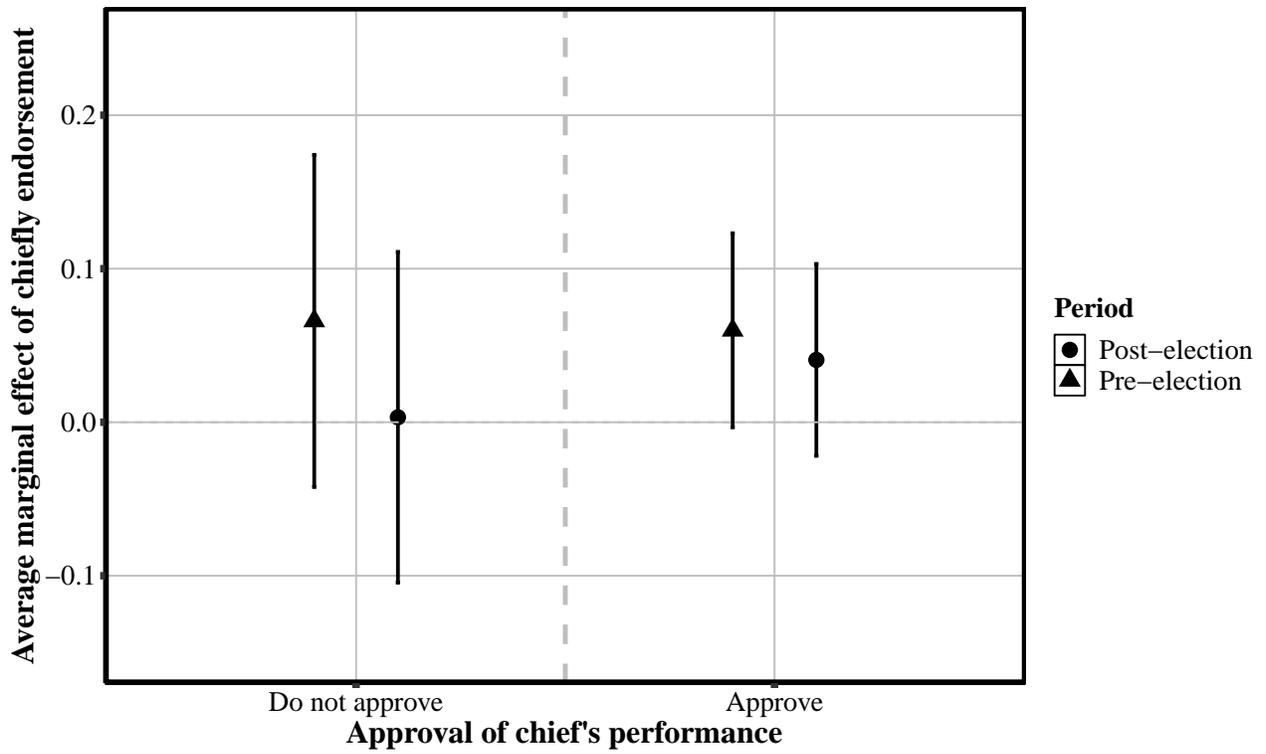


Figure D.4: Average Marginal Effect of Chiefly Endorsement on Vote Choice by Approval of Chief

## E Results of causal mediation analysis of intermediate variables

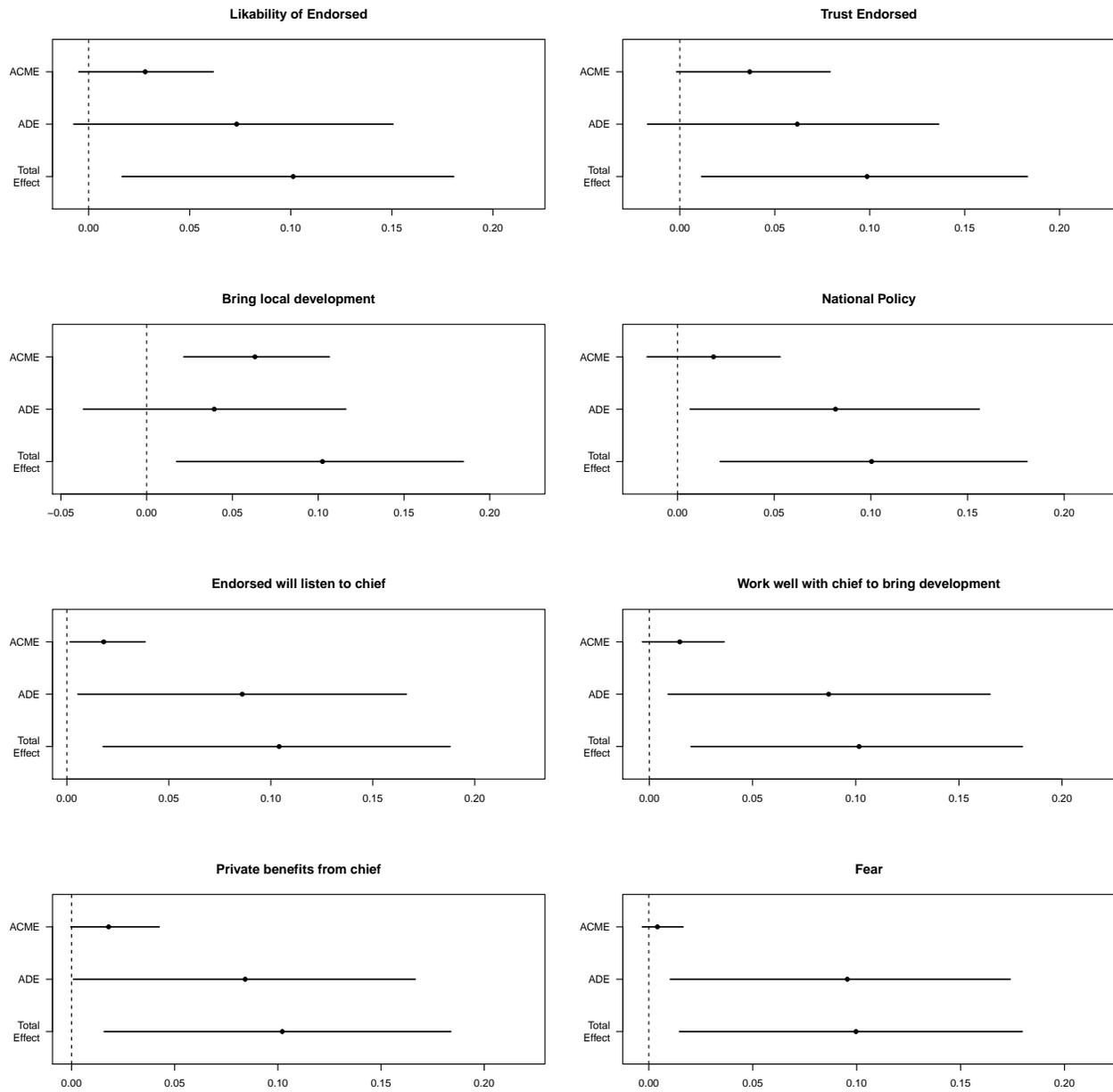


Figure E.1: Total, direct, and indirect effects of intermediate variables on vote choice

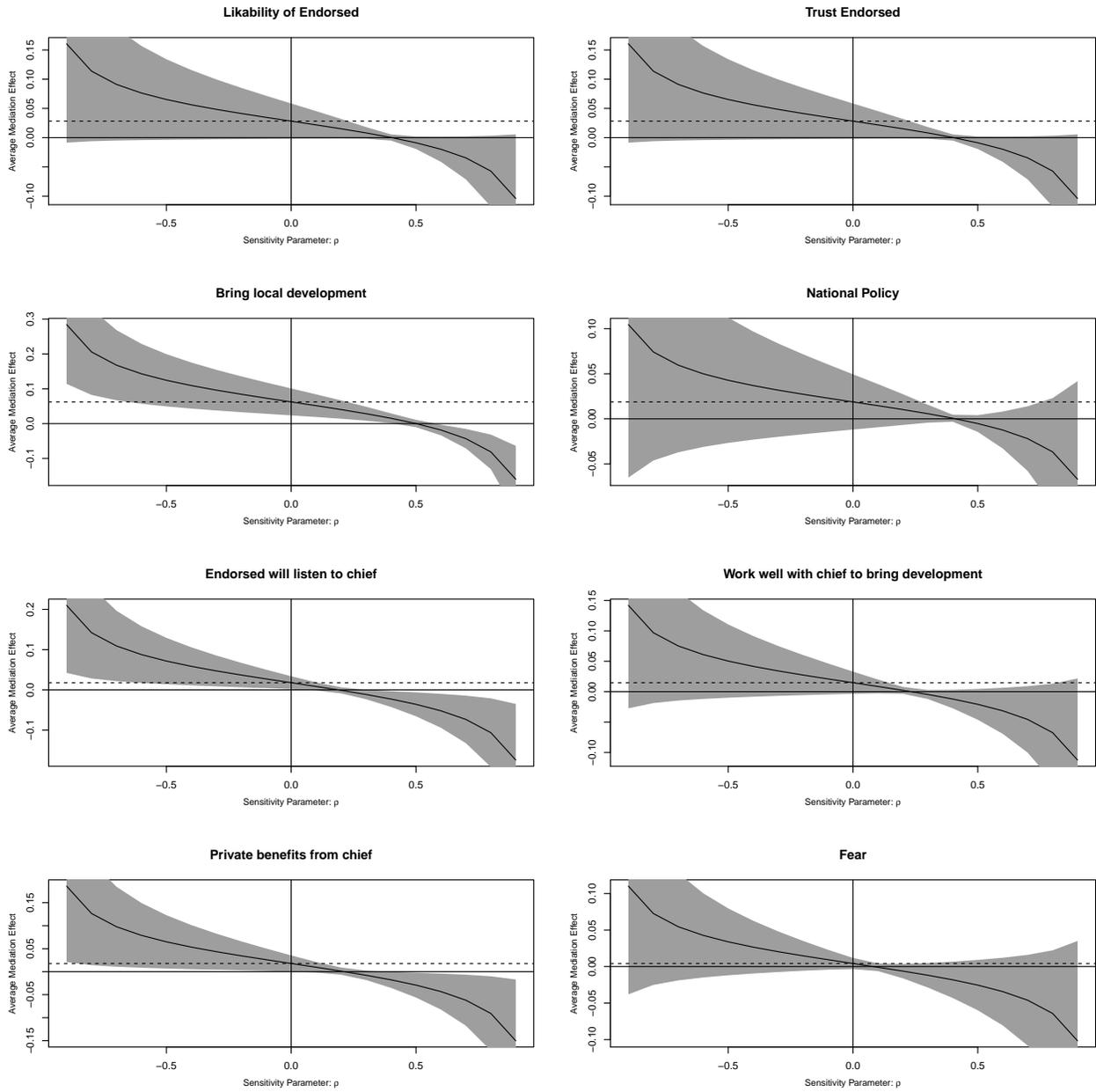


Figure E.2: Sensitivity analysis of causal mediation analysis

## **F 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> (Techiman, explicit endorse)
- <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)

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