Endorsements as Gatekeeping?

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Abstract. Endorsements designed to draw voters away from undemocratic candidates have been branded as a possibility for elite gatekeeping in contexts of democratic backsliding. However, which type of endorsement, if any, have such a persuasive effect remains untested. In this paper, I provide conditions under which endorsements are persuasive and explore several channels through which they operate. I ran a survey experiment fielded in France mimicking the upcoming 2027 presidential election, where I randomly vary the ideological distance between endorsed candidate, endorsing elite, and voter. Under some of these distance combinations, endorsements can have a true persuasive effect and increase vote intention for the endorsed candidate. In other cases, they produce only watered-down persuasion by decreasing vote intentions for the radical candidate and increasing abstention. Endorsements affect beliefs about candidates' ideological positions and valence, but beliefs over democratic positions are robust. The salience of the ideology and democracy dimensions do not vary after observing an endorsement, but across all conditions democratic alignment with candidates matters for voters.

1 Introduction

Democratic backsliding is generally thought of as a gradual weakening of democratic norms and institutions (Waldner and Lust 2018) in which all political actors have a role to play (Druckman 2024). Political elites, civil society actors (e.g., NGOs, social movements, interest groups, etc.), citizens and even international actors can intervene to prevent or overturn democratic backsliding. Since backsliding is a process, as opposed to a more brutal change of regime such as a coup, many opportunities to intervene arise. Elections are a key moment in backsliding contexts, where voters can elect a would-be autocrat or vote one out of power. The election of a would-be autocrat does not necessarily imply that voters do not care about democracy: for example, voters could be uninformed, uncertain about whether backsliding will occur or not, or simply value other issue dimensions or candidate characteristics more than whether a candidate will respect democracy once elected (Chiopris et al. 2025; Grillo and Prato 2023; Svolik 2020, 2023). Experimental studies of voter behavior when democracy is under threat have shown that policy proximity, partisanship, or competence can lead voters to overlook undemocratic behaviors or statements issued by candidates (Frederiksen 2022, 2024, 2025; Graham and Svolik 2020; Svolik 2023). Although survey respondents punish undemocratic candidates by voting for them less than democratic ones, all else equal, they nonetheless prefer to cast a ballot for an in-party (or policy-aligned, or highly competent) undemocratic candidate rather than an out-party democratic one.

This bleak finding naturally leads one to wonder if there are circumstances under which voters can be convinced to prioritize democracy. The influence that other actors can have on citizen behavior is understudied, compared to the strand of the literature that focuses on understanding what voters care about in backsliding contexts. We do have evidence that pro-democracy messaging by elites can have a positive effect on reducing support for undemocratic candidates and practices in some cases (Voelkel et al. 2024), or that peer punishment among MPs for undemocratic behavior can decrease propensity to

vote for the criticized MP (Hobolt and Osnabrügge 2025). However, the effects of elite behavior on voter behavior during elections remain largely untested.

In particular, political elites have the possibility, some might say the duty, to communicate with voters. These communications can take many forms, from encouraging turnout to criticizing outparty candidates in the media. Endorsing a candidate is an ubiquitous form of elite communication, and a clear attempt to persuade voters. In electoral contexts where one only cares about issue position, endorsements can provide useful spatial cues to voters who might be uncertain about the location of candidates, in particular which candidate is closer to them ideologically (Grofman and Norrander 1990; McKelvey and Ordeshook 1985a, 1985b, 1986). In a backsliding context, where (at least) one of the candidates is perceived to represent a threat to democracy, endorsements become more complex, as they can signal ideological positions or democratic positions of candidates. Specifically, elites who do not belong to the would-be autocrat's party can attempt to pull voters away from this undemocratic candidate by endorsing another candidate.

However, in democratic backsliding contexts, the value of endorsements as an effective gatekeeping tool is often assumed. For example, Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) recount how some elites from the Conservative party of Austria (ÖVP), in the 2016 presidential election, acted as gatekeepers against the far-right candidate by endorsing the Green candidate. The assumption the authors make is that the endorsement did have the causal effect of persuading voters to pick the Green candidate, that is, that they otherwise would not have done so and the endorsement changed their mind. There is however, to the best of my knowledge, no causal evidence that supports this claim. The effectiveness of endorsements in contexts of backsliding, especially when ideological preferences might conflict with gatekeeping incentives, has been so far untested. This project aims to fill this gap. I designed a survey experiment fielded in France in the context of the 2027 presidential election to test how endorsements coming from different sources can persuade voters to turn away from an undemocratic candidate and vote for a democratic one

instead, in particular in cases when a voter is less aligned ideologically with the democratic candidate than with the undemocratic one. Using elicited probabilities of vote choice, and allowing for abstention and blank ballots, I recover the effect of endorsements on votes as well as on different channels they operate through, such as salience of ideology or beliefs about candidates' positions. I find that some endorsements are persuasive, meaning I causally identify a positive effect on the probability of voting for an endorsed democratic candidate. However, endorsements where elites "cross the political spectrum", as in the 2016 Austrian presidential election, only provide a weaker version of persuasion. Voters observing this type of endorsement do not become more likely to vote for the endorsed candidate, but are less inclined to vote for the undemocratic one, with abstention and blank votes being the beneficiaries of the reallocated vote intentions.

The rest of the paper is as follows. The next section reviews the literature on endorsements. Then, I present the survey design, followed by the theoretical approach using a random utility model. The presentation of the data and descriptive statistics comes next, followed by a description of the empirical models. After the results are presented, the last section concludes.

2 Endorsements

Electoral endorsements have been well-researched both theoretically and empirically. When we assume that only ideological distance matters to decide who to vote for, whether we consider one or more issue dimensions, endorsements provide a helpful heuristic (Grofman and Norrander 1990; McKelvey and Ordeshook 1985a, 1985b, 1986) that at least some voters will rely on to help inform their vote choice (Lau and Redlawsk 1997, 2001). But not all endorsements are born equal: variations in the ideological distances between endorser, endorsee, and voter are theoretically expected to lead to different effects (Calvert 1985; Grofman and Norrander 1990; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). In formal

models of persuasion, if a voter is strongly biased in favor of a candidate, it is very hard to persuade them not to vote for that candidate. It takes trust that the source of the endorsement is knowledgeable and has the voter's best interests at heart, as well as some uncertainty over which alternative is best, for voters to be persuaded (Lupia and McCubbins 1998). In some cases, when the voter's bias is large, only a source who they believe shares their bias making an endorsement going against this bias can persuade them to change their vote (Calvert 1985).

Empirical studies provide evidence that endorsements do have an effect, although not always the one hypothesized when drawing on the implications of models. Whether in primary or general elections, or when evaluating policy preferences, endorsements by sources close to the voter — e.g., their own party, or a group ideologically aligned, such as a union and Democrats — of the expected candidate or policy usually have a positive effect on support for the endorsed candidate or policy (Albarello and Komisarchik 2026; Brader and Tucker 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Brader et al. 2013; Kousser et al. 2015; McDermott 2006). When voters observe endorsements by a source ideologically distant from them, it can have a negative effect on their vote choice or policy preference (Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009; Lupia 1992; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Nicholson 2012). For example, Republican voters become less likely to vote for a union-backed Democrat, as opposed to a Democrat who did not receive a union endorsement (McDermott 2006).

Finally, when endorsements are surprising because they run counter to the expected bias of their source, theory predicts that they can be persuasive where other sources would fail (Calvert 1985). This implication is somewhat supported by the literature. In some cases, support for the unexpected position or candidate increases among those close to the messenger (Blatte et al. 2024; Ramos et al. 2025). In other circumstances, perhaps because of a lack of credibility, there is no effect (McDermott 2006). Finally, Berinsky (2017) shows that a message coming from an unexpected politician that invalidates a rumor does decrease belief in that rumor among co- and out-partisans, but does not increase belief in the alternative narrative contained in the message; instead, it is

uncertainty about what to believe that increases.

Building on the literature presented above, I derive three hypotheses regarding the effect of endorsements under different combinations of distance between the source and the voter, and the source and the endorsed candidate, which proxies for how surprising it is to observe an endorsement. Figure 1 summarizes the hypotheses. In the bottom left quadrant is the case where the source is ideologically close to both the voter and the candidate. I expect endorsements in this case to be persuasive, i.e., increase the likelihood of voting for the endorsed candidate, if voters are not already convinced (in which case the effect would be null because of a ceiling).

Hypothesis 1 *Endorsements have a positive or null effect on vote choice for the endorsed candidate when made by a source ideologically proximate to the voter.*

In the top left quadrant are cases where a source close to the voter endorses a candidate ideologically far from them. The ÖVP endorsement in the 2016 Austrian presidential election exemplifies this combination. I expect this type of endorsement to be very effective, as the source overcomes its perceived bias (on the ideological dimension).

Hypothesis 2 *Endorsements of candidates ideologically far from a source, when that source is close to the voter, have a stronger effect than endorsements of candidates ideologically close to that same source.*

The bottom right quadrant corresponds to an endorsement of a candidate close to the source, when the source is far from the voter. These endorsements provide a negative signal to voters, since they are not aligned with the sender of the message. Thus, I expect them to have a negative effect on votes for the candidate endorsed, or a null effect if there is a floor.

Hypothesis 3 *Endorsements have a null or negative effect on vote choice for the endorsed candidate when made by sources ideologically far from the voter.*

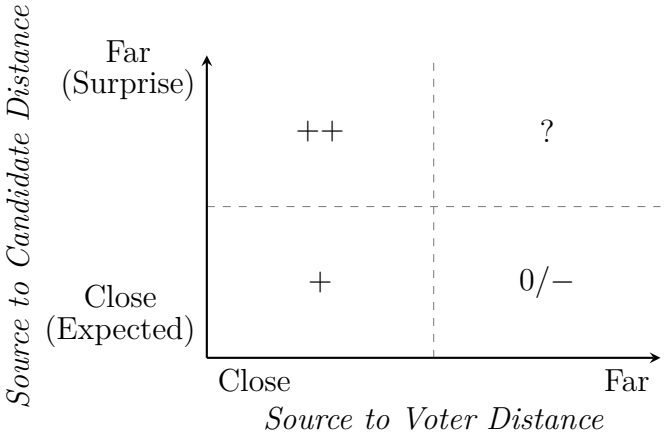


Figure 1: Predicted effect of endorsement conditional on distance between source and endorsed candidate/source and voter

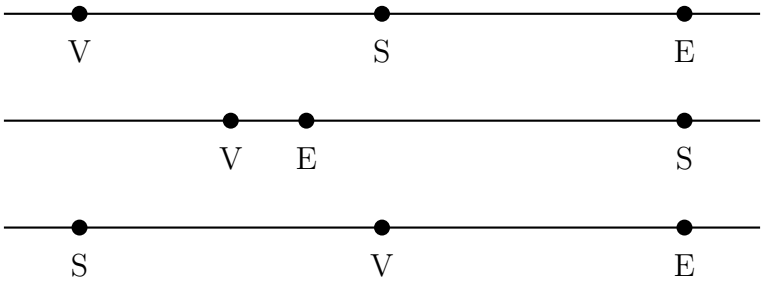


Figure 2: Some examples of 'Far - Surprise' cases

In the top right quadrant are cases where the source is far from both the voter and the endorsed candidate. This distance combination can yield many different configurations of voter-source-endorsed candidate spatial positions, making it hard to infer a specific direction of the endorsement effect. Figure 2 gives some examples of these possible configurations. V is the voter, E the endorsed candidate and S the source. In the first case, the source is in between the voter and the candidate, in the second the voter and the candidate are close to each other, and in the last case the voter is in the middle. One would expect in the last case a positive effect, since the source is left of the voter but endorsing a candidate to their right. In the second case, there might be a deterrence effect, if an endorsement of a candidate the voter would have been likely to cast a ballot for by a distant source gives a negative signal about that candidate. Therefore, I am agnostic regarding the effect of endorsements in this particular case.

3 Survey design

The survey makes use of the French case to test the effect of endorsements in an ecologically valid setting and with high experimental realism[1]. French presidential elections use a runoff system, in which endorsements between rounds issued by candidates who lost in first round are extremely common. The survey mimics the next presidential election, which will be held in the spring of 2027, with a first round, a second round, and for treated respondents an endorsement in between. The candidates that appear in the survey are real politicians who were either declared or likely candidates for the 2027 election at the time the survey was fielded.

3.1 Context

The French political landscape has evolved in recent years similarly to other established Western democracies. Political polarization is on the rise, and extreme parties are growing in popularity. Both on the far-right and far-left, the major parties — La France Insoumise (LFI) for the left, the Rassemblement National (RN) for the right — are widely perceived as threats to democracy.[2] Traditional left and right parties, which held the presidency from 1958 until 2017, have not reached the second round of a presidential election in either 2017 or 2022. In the last two presidential elections, held in 2017 and 2022, the same two candidates reached the second round of the runoff. Emmanuel Macron, the current president and a center-right politician who seceded from the left-wing Socialist Party and founded his own party on a "neither left nor right" platform a few months before the 2017 election, won both times. He was facing Marine Le Pen of the RN, daughter of its founder Jean-Marie Le Pen, who managed in the fifteen years between 2002 and 2017 to

1. Respondents are likely to be engaged as the survey pertains to the upcoming presidential election, using real candidates and throughout asking respondents to make choices they will have to face a year after the survey was fielded. For some of them, the endorsement they observed might even be realized.

2. Based on the results of the 2025 "Fractures Françaises" survey, 66% of respondents believe LFI is dangerous for democracy, and 49% hold a similar belief about the RN.

Party	LFI[a]	Socialist Party	Renaissance[b]	The Republicans	RN[c]
Party Family	Far-left	Trad. left	Center	Trad. right	Far-right
2012:					
Candidate	Jean-Luc Mélenchon	**François Hollande**	NA	Nicolas Sarkozy	Marine Le Pen
1st round share	11.1	28.6	NA	27.2	17.9
2nd round share	NA	51.6	NA	48.4	NA
2017:					
Candidate	Jean-Luc Mélenchon	Benoît Hamon	**Emmanuel Macron**	François Fillon	Marine Le Pen
1st round share	19.6	6.4	24	20	21.3
2nd round share	NA	NA	66.1	NA	33.9
2022:					
Candidate	Jean-Luc Mélenchon	Anne Hidalgo	**Emmanuel Macron**	Valérie Pécresse	Marine Le Pen
1st round share	22	1.8	27.9	4.8	23.2
2nd round share	NA	NA	58.6	NA	41.5

[a]. In 2012, LFI did not exist yet. Jean-Luc Mélenchon was the candidate of the Front de Gauche party.
[b]. Renaissance was founded in 2016 by Emmanuel Macron. It was first named En Marche from 2016 to 2017, then La République en marche from 2017 to 2022, and Renaissance since 2022.
[c]. In 2012 and 2017, the RN was still called the Front National (FN).

Table 1: Past presidential election results by party

transform the RN from a niche, radical right party plagued by accusations of antisemitism and racism to a mainstream party winning over 40% of the vote in the second round of the 2022 presidential election. Table 1 provides more detailed information about the performance of the main political parties in recent elections. The winner of each election is in bold.

The next presidential election will, as mentioned, take place in April 2027, about a year after this survey was fielded. With Emmanuel Macron being term-limited, there will be no incumbent running in this election. At the time that the survey was fielded in the spring of 2026, the two potential RN candidates, Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella, were polling at 30-35% voting intentions in the first round of the election.[3] The LFI candidate, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who announced on May 3rd, 2026 that he would be running for the fourth time, was polling at 10-13% voting intentions in the first round. The 2027 election will thus see two candidates perceived as threats to democracy running in the first round, and it is likely that at least one will reach the second round.

3. Marine Le Pen was condemned to five years of ineligibility for her involvement in embezzling EU funds. She appealed the decision and the final verdict was released on July 7, 2026. The appellate court found her guilty but convicted her to only 15 months of ineligibility, which she had already served. She declared her candidacy and began her campaign in July 2026. Jordan Bardella is not running in this election.

3.2 Survey flow

The survey targets the voting age population (i.e., 18+ citizens) that does not intend to vote for the RN or LFI candidate in the first round of the 2027 election. The goal of the survey is to understand how endorsements affect the trade-off between ideological proximity and democratic proximity to candidates that voters make. I thus remove first-round extreme voters, as they are not facing a trade-off comparable to other voters in the second round of the runoff (i.e., their first round preferences suggest they already prefer an extreme party and thus they would not face a trade off in the second round). The main steps of the survey are presented in Figure 3. The four steps to the left of the dashed line are part of the pre-treatment phase. The line represents the randomization process. The steps on the right of the line are the treatment (for respondents who are not in the control group) and post-treatment phases. In the following sections, I will discuss in detail each of the steps of the survey.

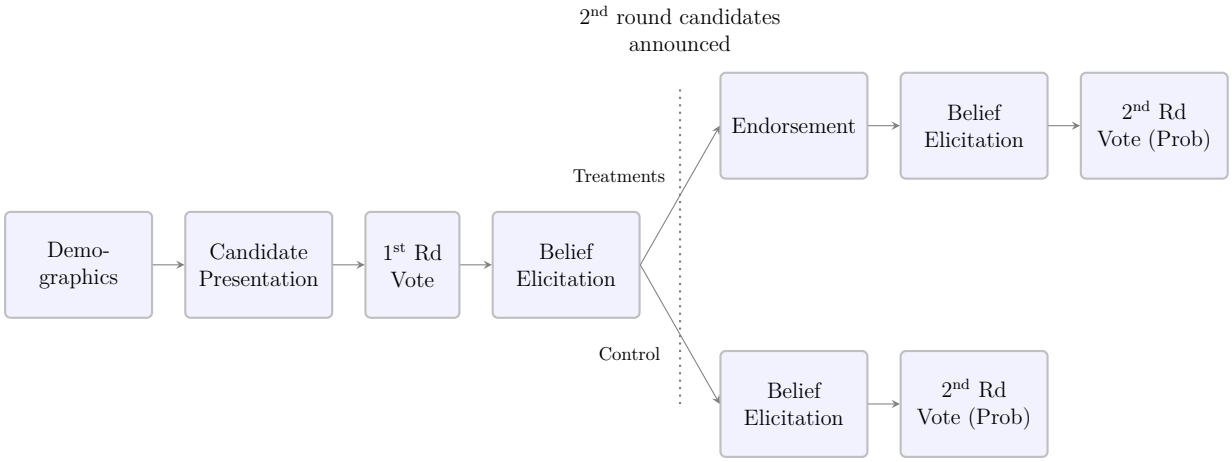


Figure 3: Survey Flow

Pre-treatment

The demographics collected are age, gender, region, job status, education level, and income (bracketed). After demographics are collected, nine candidates are presented to

respondents, in randomized order.[4] These are politicians who have either declared their candidacy or are likely to do so, and are located all along the political spectrum.[5] Figure 4 shows an example of what a respondent saw for the candidate presentation.

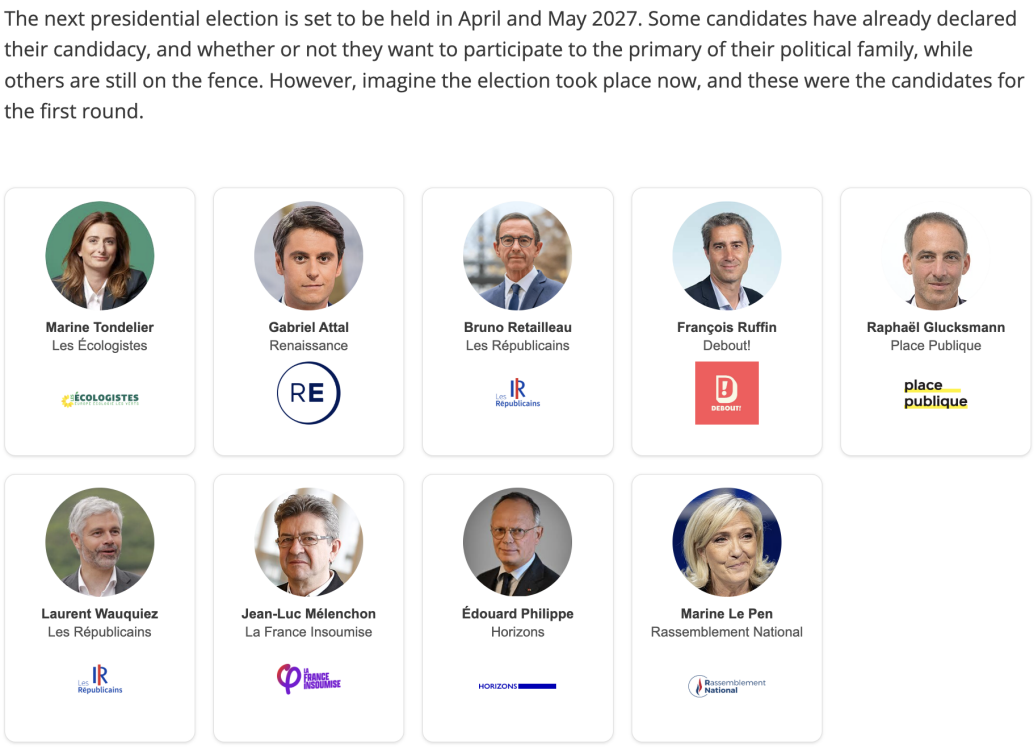


Figure 4: Candidates in the survey

After seeing the candidates, respondents are asked to vote in the first round of the election. They can vote for one of the candidates, cast a blank ballot, or abstain. If they vote for Marine Le Pen or Jean-Luc Mélenchon, they are screened out of the survey, and do not receive payment, as mentioned. The 'Belief Elicitation' step comes next, with several measures taken. These are used in the analysis to evaluate how voters make trade-offs between ideology and democracy when choosing a candidate, as well as to understand how endorsements affect beliefs. Respondents first place themselves and the candidate on a left-right scale, measured from 0 (far left) to 100 (far right). If they select 50 for themselves, they are asked whether they lean a certain way. To provide some

4. The order in which candidates are displayed is randomized across respondents, but held fixed for each respondent throughout the survey when they report their beliefs about candidates ideological and democratic positions.

5. Some candidates declared their candidacy while the data collection was ongoing. Bruno Retailleau and Jean-Luc Mélenchon declared their candidacy on April 19 and May 3, 2026, respectively.

anchors when placing candidates, respondents see how three politicians who ran in 2022 were rated on average in the 2022 French Election Survey.[6] Some respondents are then screened out, if the distribution of their own and candidates' ideological position is such that later on in the survey, it would be impossible to (randomly) assign them to one or more of the treatment conditions. More details on these selection rules are given in Section 3.3. The respondents then rate each candidate on a "democracy scale", ranging from 0 (not dangerous at all) to 100 (extremely dangerous).[7] The next task, for the respondent, is to rank the nine candidates from most to least preferred, then to give their own position in terms of preference for democracy, specifically liberal democracy. This is measured using the 7-item battery introduced by Claassen et al. (2025). Each of the seven items is measured on a 5 point Likert scale. Answers are recoded on a 100 point scale, with 0 being the most democratic value and 100 the least democratic. The average of the seven answers constitutes the respondent's democratic self-rating. Two attention checks were used in the pre-treatment phase to screen out inattentive respondents.

Treatment and outcomes

This section covers the steps to the right of the dashed line in Figure 3. After the belief elicitation, respondents are randomized into one of five groups: a pure control where they see no endorsement, or one of the four treatment groups presented in Table 2. They are now in the second round of the election, with only two candidates left. The treatment consists of an endorsement of a non-extreme candidate in the second round of the election, made by one of the candidates who "lost" the first round, referred to as the source. I vary the distance between the source and the endorsed candidate (ideologically close or far) and between the source and the voter (ideologically close or far) in the four conditions. When a source and an endorsed candidate are ideologically close to each

6. The three 2022 candidates are Anne Hidalgo (Socialist Party), rated 32; Emmanuel Macron (Renaissance), rated 63; and Éric Zemmour (Reconquête), rated 90.

7. The exact question is: In recent years, some political parties or candidates have been deemed "**dangerous for democracy**". Where would you place the following candidates, from **not dangerous at all** for democracy to **extremely dangerous** for democracy?

other, the endorsement is *expected*; when they are distant, the endorsement is a *surprise*. Conditions are named first by referencing the source-endorsed candidate distance, then the source-voter distance.

		Source to Voter Distance	
		Close	Far
Source to Endorsed Cand. Distance	Close (No Surprise)	"Close - Expected"	"Far - Expected"
	Far (Surprise)	"Close - Surprise"	"Far - Surprise"

Table 2: Treatment conditions

Depending on the condition to which they are assigned and on their own answers to the ideological placement questions, respondents saw different candidate and source names in the second round. The rules that guided the pairing selection are outlined in Section 3.4. For the vast majority of respondents, the second round opposed the radical candidate on their side of the political spectrum — i.e., Jean-Luc Mélenchon for a left voter and Marine Le Pen for a right voter[8] — and a non-extreme candidate. In most cases, although the frequency of this occurring differs by condition, this non-extreme candidate was on the opposite side of the political spectrum (relative to the respondent). If the respondent was in a treatment condition, the non-extreme candidate was endorsed while the radical one was qualified as undemocratic (see Appendix for the vignette). For instance, as much as possible given their assigned condition, a left voter had to choose between Jean-Luc Mélenchon — the left radical — and a traditional or center-right candidate, e.g., Édouard Philippe. The latter would be the one endorsed, if the respondent is treated. Figure 5 gives an example of a second round pairing. This (fictitious) respondent placed themselves ideologically at 24, i.e., on the left, and was randomized into the 'Close - Surprise' condition. For them, the second round is between Jean-Luc Mélenchon (left radical) and Bruno Retailleau (traditional right). The latter is endorsed by Raphaël Glucksmann, a center-left candidate ideologically close to the respondent and far from the endorsed candidate.

8. For respondents who placed themselves at the exact center of the spectrum and refused to choose

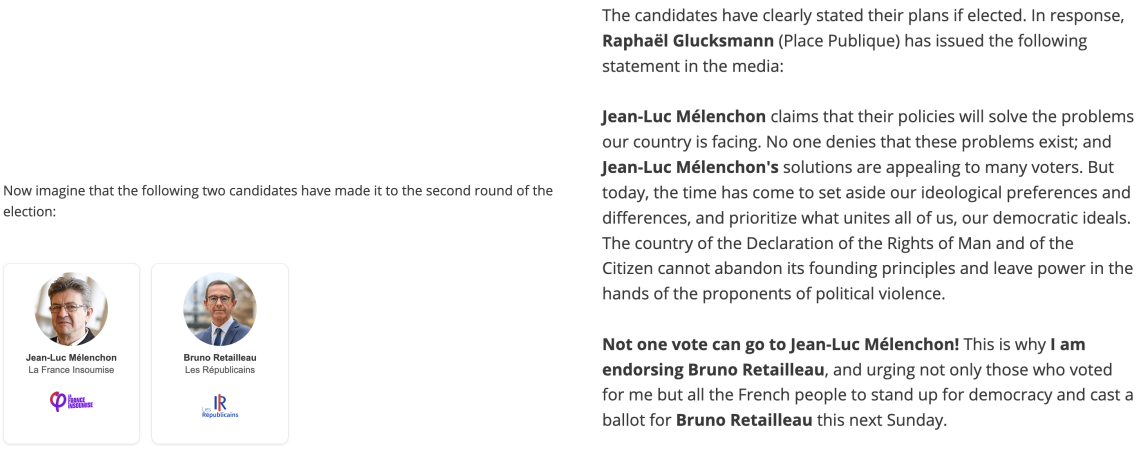


Figure 5: Example of a second round pairing and endorsement

After the two second-round candidates are announced and respondents in the treatment conditions read the endorsement text, treated respondents are asked whether they believe the endorser made the right endorsement choice, or whether they should have endorsed the other candidate or no one. They are asked whether they believe the endorser will be punished by their party and how severely. Then, beliefs about the ideological positions of the two candidates and the source, as well as the democratic positions of the two candidates, are elicited in the same way as in the pre-treatment phase. Respondents then report their probabilities of voting for each candidate, casting a blank ballot or abstaining, with the four probabilities summing up to 1. This is the main outcome of interest. They are asked about their perception of political efficacy and the probability a candidate who sincerely represents them reaches the second round of the presidential election in the next ten years.[9] Finally, a short debrief highlighting that the candidates are not necessarily really declared yet, and that the endorsement was fictitious, is presented to respondents (see Appendix).

a leaning, left or right was randomly assigned with a 50% chance for each.

9. This section of the survey was added after analysis of the pilot results, hence data are available only for 3119 out of 3724 respondents.

3.3 Ideology distribution screening rules

The four treatment conditions vary the ideological distance between the respondent and the source of the endorsement and the distance between the source and the endorsed candidate. This means that pairings of source and endorsee, and pairing of the two candidates in the runoff, are determined by the respondent's ideological placement of candidates and of themselves in the pre-treatment part of the survey. It can thus happen that respondents have a distribution of ideologies that does not allow them to be randomized into every condition. For example, if a (poor quality) respondent placed all the candidates and themselves at 50, there would be no pairing options that allow this respondent to fit into one of the surprise conditions, where the source and the endorsed candidate are far from each other. But even an attentive respondent could have a distribution of ideologies that do not allow full randomization. These respondents have to be screened out, as inference is compromised if the respondent cannot (ex ante) be randomized into every condition. In total, there were 2080 respondents who had passed the first attention check and did not vote for Marine Le Pen or Jean-Luc Mélenchon who were screened out because of ideological distributions. Although this number might seem high compared to the total number of respondents, the second attention check was located after this step, meaning some of these screened out respondents would have failed the second check. In the Appendix, I detail the demographic composition of this group and compare it to the composition of respondents who completed the survey.

To be able to randomly assign a respondent to any of the five categories, they have to place themselves and candidates (in terms of ideology) in a way that satisfies the following conditions:

1. At least two candidates are close to the respondent and close to each other

2. At least two candidates are far from the respondent and close to each other

Close is defined as less than 15 points away (on a 0-100 scale) and far as more than 30 points away. Respondents who did not provide a distribution of ideological positions that fit these conditions were removed from the survey.

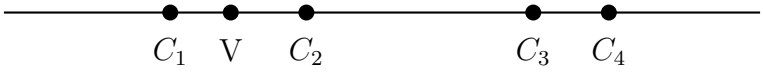


Figure 6: Necessary and sufficient conditions for the randomization

Without loss of generality, Figure 6 exemplifies these necessary and sufficient conditions. If the respondent is in the "Expected - Close" condition, C_1 endorses C_2 or vice-versa. If they are in the "Expected - Far" condition, C_3 endorses C_4 or vice-versa. For a respondent in the "Surprise - Close" condition, C_1 or C_2 endorse C_3 or C_4. Finally, in the "Surprise - Far" condition, C_3 or C_4 endorse C_1 or C_2.

3.4 Selection of source and second round candidates

As much as possible, given the respondent's ideological placements, and since the trade-off between ideology and democracy is the main interest of this survey, the two candidates in the runoff are the extreme candidate on the same side as the respondent and a non-extreme candidate on the opposite side of the respondent, with the latter being the endorsed one. 'Side' is determined by the ideological placement or leaning of the respondent, with a coin flip choosing the side if the respondent placed themselves at 50 and said they do not lean either way. Depending on the respondent's ideological perceptions and the treatment condition, in particular when the source has to be close to both the endorsee and the respondent, the ideal pairing described above might not be possible to fulfill. In this case, another pairing was chosen, following the algorithm outlined in Table 3. If a step cannot be "fulfilled" with the available pairings of source and endorsed candidate, the selection algorithm moves on to the next one.

To better grasp this pairing selection process, let's unpack what happened for one of

Step	Radical Cand.	Endorsed Cand.	Source
1	Same side	Opposite side, non-radical, not first round vote	Non-radical
2	Same side	Opposite side, non-radical, not first round vote	Any
3	Same side	Opposite side, not first round vote	Non-radical
4	Same side	Same side, non-radical, not first round vote	Non-radical
5	Same side	Same side, non-radical, not first round vote	Any
6	Same side	Opposite side, allow first round vote	Non-radical
7	Same side	Opposite side, allow first round vote	Any
8	Same side	Same side, allow first round vote	Non-radical
9	Same side	Same side, allow first round vote	Any
10	Opposite side	Same side, radical	Any

Table 3: Second round pairings: selection rules

the survey's respondent.[10] This respondent, we will call them X, placed themselves at 61, i.e., on the right. X was randomized into the 'Close - Expected' condition, so they must see a second-round pairing in which the source is closed to themselves and to the endorsed candidate. In the first round, they voted for Marine Tondelier (MT). Figure 7 shows how X placed themselves and all the candidates, denoted by their initials.[11] Dots in red, to the left of the dotted line, are candidates rated lower than 50. Dots in blue, to the right of the line, are those rated higher than 50.

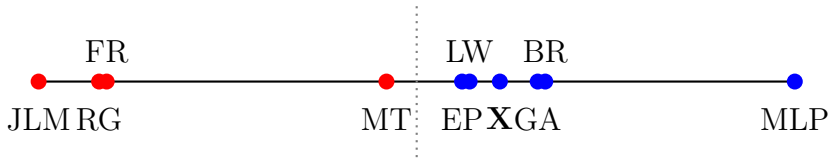


Figure 7: Distribution of ideological positions for respondent X

X being in the 'Close - Expected' condition, there were 16 possible pairs of source and endorsed candidate for X. Both members of each pair could endorse the other, as denoted by the double-sided arrows.

10. The respondent's identification number, under the variable 'ticket', is ef58e663-908a-4791-8240-38d62a4075e4.

11. To avoid overlap of the initials for pairs of candidates very close to one another (RG and FR, EP and LW, and GA and BR), the initials of the candidate with the lower rating are below the horizontal line and the initials of the candidate with the higher rating are above the line.

- MT ↔ EP; MT ↔ LW
- EP ↔ LW; EP ↔ GA; EP ↔ BR
- LW ↔ GA; LW ↔ BR
- GA ↔ BR

Marine Tondelier (MT) is the only candidate on the opposite side of the respondent, but she was also their first round pick, which means none of steps 1, 2 or 3 could be fulfilled. All the other pairs fulfill step 4, so the algorithm randomly chose one, and X ended up with a second round opposing Marine Le Pen (right radical) and Laurent Wauquiez (traditional right), the latter endorsed by Marine Tondelier (traditional left and X's first round choice).

I simulated the occurrence of each type of pairing for the four treatment conditions.[12] In the simulation, the two candidates are on opposite sides on average 70% of the time across the four treatment conditions, and on the same side about 30% of the time. I used these proportions to choose the control group candidate pairings in the second round, in order to have a control group comparable to the average of the treatment conditions. Thus, respondents randomized into the control group are then randomly assigned to see as candidates either the radical on their side and a non-radical on the other side (with a 70% chance) or both the radical and a non-radical on their side (with a 30% chance).

Note that the occurrence of each type of pairing (same side or opposite sides) varies a lot by condition, as shown in Table 4. In particular, in the conditions where the source is far from either the voter or the endorsed candidate but close to the other, it was possible

12. I created 10000 respondents with ideology normally distributed, with mean 50 and standard deviation 25; candidates also have normally distributed ideological positions with standard deviation 10 and means as follows: "Jean-Luc Melenchon" = 7.5, "Francois Ruffin" = 20, "Marine Tondelier" = 25, "Raphael Glucksmann" = 40, "Gabriel Attal" = 60, "Edouard Philippe" = 65, "Laurent Wauquiez" = 75, "Bruno Retailleau" = 80, "Marine Le Pen" = 92.5. I then determine the Source-Endorsee pairs for each respondent and each condition, and select one triad of candidates + source according to the selection rules I outlined. I can thus obtain the incidence rate of each selection rule and associated candidate pair in the treatment conditions.

to find pairings of candidates on opposite sides in virtually every case. However, when the source is either close to or far from both the voter and the endorsed candidate, cases were the pairing selection algorithm moved to same side candidates occur between 50% and 60% of the time. In the analyses, I include a dummy variable controlling for whether the two candidates were on opposite sides or on the same side.[13]

Condition	Opposite sides (%)	Same side (%)
Control	68	32
Expected - Close	39	61
Surprise - Close	97	3
Expected - Far	95	5
Surprise - Far	51	49

Table 4: Percentage of opposite and same side second round candidate pairings by condition

4 Theoretical Model of Vote Choice

This section presents the random utility framework adopted in this study and details the meaning of the parameters recovered in the empirical analysis. Using this framework provides a useful formalization of the relationship between vote probabilities, elicited in the survey, and endorsements, and incorporates the different mechanisms I will explore. Moreover, applying the log-odds transformation to the random utility model, as I will explain in Section 6, yields a linearized version of the multinomial logit model which allows me to exploit respondents' uncertainty over their vote choice using a simple OLS model.

Let us start with the relatively benign assumption that voters want to make the electoral choice that maximizes their utility. For some voters, abstention is the best available option. For others, they will be better off casting a ballot for a candidate. I define the

13. In the Appendix, I present models where this dummy variable is interacted with the treatment conditions. Results are similar.

utility of each alternative such that — if the alternative is a candidate — it depends on the ideological distance between the candidate and the voter, as in the canonical spatial model of voting (Downs 1957), as well as on the "democratic distance" between the candidate and the voter. Departing from the norm in the theoretical backsliding literature, respect for democratic rules and norms is not treated as a (weighted) valence term in the model. Most of the literature assumes that voters always prefer greater respect for democracy, although the importance of this preference in their utility calculation can vary (Chiopris et al. 2025; Graham and Svolik 2020; Grillo and Prato 2023; Svolik 2020, 2023). Building on Wunsch et al. (2025), who find that citizens who do not have a liberal understanding of democracy are less likely to condemn democratic violations, I allow for the possibility that voters might not perceive democracy as a valence attribute but instead have their own varying preference over the "level of democracy" in their country. Each alternative also has traits that are unrelated to ideological or democratic position, but can affect voters' preferences, such as party ID, gender, or perceived electability.

Consider an election where voters can choose between candidates, abstain entirely, or cast a blank ballot.[14] Not all parameters enter into the utility function of the four alternatives. For example, there is no concept of "distance" (ideological or democratic) that can be applied to a blank ballot or to abstention. Let us first focus on the case of candidates. Equation 1 specifies the utility voter i derives from choosing alternative j when j is a candidate.

$$U_{ij} = -\alpha_i L(x_i, x_j) - \beta_i L(d_i, d_j) + \kappa_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \tag{1}$$

x_i and d_i are the voter's ideal points on the ideological and democratic dimensions, respectively. Preferences are assumed to be single-peaked on both dimensions. x_j and d_j are the candidate j's positions in each dimension. The voter does not know the true

14. In recent presidential elections in France, blank vote was a small but not insignificant share of ballots cast, especially in the second round of the presidential election: 1st round: 1.8% (2017), 1.5% (2022); 2nd round: 8.5% (2017), 6.4% (2022).

candidate positions, but has some belief about each of them. L is a loss function — e.g., quadratic ($-(x_i - x_j)^2$) or absolute ($-|x_i - x_j|$) loss — which means that as the candidate's perceived position gets further away from the voter's ideal point, the utility of voting for that candidate decreases. α_i is the weight placed on ideological proximity in the utility calculation, and β_i is the weight placed on democratic proximity. These weights are assumed to be non-negative. If a weight is equal to 0, it means that for voter i, the corresponding dimension does not affect their utility. Note that the weights are not indexed by j, i.e., they are constant across candidates. In other words, the importance of ideological and democratic proximity to a candidate does not depend on who the candidate is, but is identical across all candidates in the race, for a given voter i. κ_{ij} is a constant term for candidate j, capturing the candidate-specific characteristics that affect utility but are unrelated to ideology or democracy. Finally, ε_{ij} is the random component of the utility voter i gets from choosing candidate j. It is akin to uncertainty about j which can be resolved by obtaining more information (that is not available to the voter at the time of measurement), and that we expect will be resolved by the time the choice is made (Blass et al. 2010).

The utility derived from casting a blank ballot is defined in Equation 2. Here, since no ideological or democratic distance between a blank ballot and the voter can be measured, only the blank-specific characteristics enter the representative utility through the constant $\kappa_{i,blank}$. This constant does not contain traits such as party ID or candidate characteristics, but can capture the cost of voting, the benefit of turning out, or the benefit of expressing dissatisfaction with the available candidates. Finally, the representative utility from abstaining is normalized to 0, so that only the unobserved $\varepsilon_{i,abstain}$ enters the voter's utility for this alternative.

$$U_{i,blank} = \kappa_{i,blank} + \varepsilon_{i,blank} \tag{2}$$

The parameters of the utility function and their meaning are summarized in Table 5.

Parameter	Meaning
α_i	Importance of ideological proximity for i
x_i	i's (ideological) ideal point
x_j	i's belief about j's ideological position
β_i	Importance of democratic proximity for i
d_i	i's preference for level of democracy
d_j	i's belief about j's preference/respect for democracy
κ_{ij}	Constant for alternative j

Table 5: Observed parameters in voter's utility function

Note: Only the last parameter affects the utility of a blank ballot. All other parameters only matter when the alternative is a candidate.

Alternative j is chosen over alternative j' when $U_{ij} > U_{ij'}$. If there are more than two alternatives, as in a multiparty system or in a two-candidate context where we allow abstention or protest vote like in this survey, alternative j is chosen among J alternatives when $U_{ij} > U_{ij'} \; \forall \; j' \neq j$.

The survey measures probabilities of vote choice as well as voters' beliefs about ideological and democratic positions pre- and post-treatment, two elements that allow us to recover the weights and constant terms of the utility function in the empirical analysis. In other words, we will be able to evaluate not only the global effect of different endorsements on vote choice but also the channels through which they operate: by changing the salience of either dimension (i.e., changing α_i or β_i), the voter's beliefs about the ideological or democratic position of the candidates (i.e., changing beliefs x_j or d_j), or the constant term associated with each alternative (i.e., changing κ_{ij}). I am agnostic regarding which of these mechanisms would be activated by the different types of endorsements I propose in this survey, or the direction of the effect (if it exists). However, the hypotheses presented in Table **??** can be connected to the random utility framework. I expect subjects in the 'Close - Expected' and 'Close - Surprise' conditions to be more likely to vote for the endorsed candidate than subjects in the control group. That is, the utility derived from voting for the endorsed candidate will be higher for respondents in these two treatment groups than for respondents in the control group. Conversely, I expect the utility of voting for the endorsed candidate to be lower for respondents in the

'Far - Expected' condition than for respondents in the control group, or to be statistically indistinguishable for both groups.

5 Data

The survey was fielded in metropolitan France through the survey vendor Netquest/Bilendi. Data collection took place between March 19, 2026 and May 14, 2026, and the final sample size is 3724.[15] Quotas for gender, region and age group were used.[16] The median completion time is slightly short of 11 minutes. The typical respondent has received a degree from a higher education institution, is employed, and has a good level of income. Women are, by quotas, slightly more numerous than men, and older respondents are overrepresented for feasibility reasons. More detailed descriptive statistics of respondents' demographic characteristics are reported in Table A.1, and descriptive statistics of the outcomes of interest can be found in Table A.2.

For the experiment to be informative about the effects of endorsements on the general population of non-extreme voters, the sample needed to contain a diversity of ideological and democratic positions. Figure 8 displays the distributions of respondents' ideological and democratic self-ratings. The sample is almost perfectly balanced in terms of ideology, with 1670 left or left-leaning respondents and 1746 right or right-leaning ones. The sample covers the whole left-right spectrum although quite predictably — since far-left and far-right voters are not part of the sample — there are few extreme values. Out of the 418 respondents who placed themselves at 50 on the ideological scale, i.e., at the exact center, 308 refused to choose a leaning in a follow-up question, 58 reported lean-

15. Unfortunately, in some cases, the randomization of candidates and source for the second round failed and respondents saw pairings where the source and the radical candidate were the same person. The 76 respondents who faced this technical issue are excluded from the sample. There is one additional respondent who faced a technical issue: none of their answers on pre-treatment democratic placement of candidates was recorded. Thus, their data is automatically excluded from any analysis that uses democratic proximity.

16. For feasibility reasons, quotas were partially relaxed at the end of the data collection, but the final sample is still quite close to population estimates for these three variables.

ing left and 52 leaning right.[17] Regarding democratic self-placement, the vast majority of respondents had quite low scores, with almost 14% of respondents placed at 0, the most democratic value. There is a small positive and significant relationship between ideology and democratic score, meaning that more right-wing respondents tend to be less democratic.

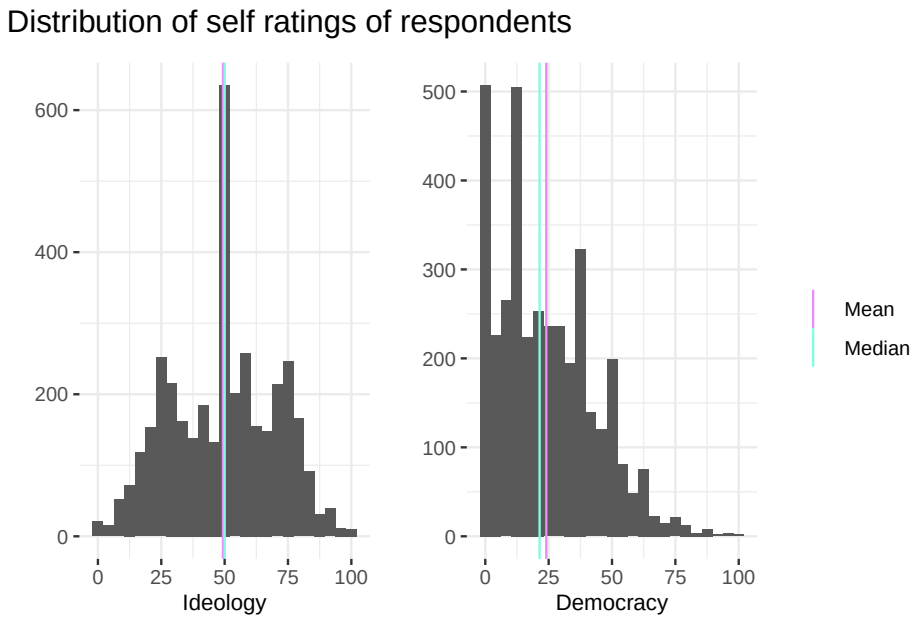


Figure 8: Respondent ideological and democratic positions

The nine candidates in the survey were chosen to present respondents with a variety of ideological and democratic profiles. Their status as extreme or not and as left- or right-wing was determined not based on respondents' answers but on how these political figures or their party are generally characterized by experts and the media. It is thus important to verify that respondents have a similar perception of these candidates as was pre-determined. Figure 9 shows that on average, all candidates categorized as left-wing are rated as such by respondents, and the same goes for right-wing candidates.[18] Moreover, the two candidates categorized as extreme — Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Marine Le Pen — are the only two candidates rated as highly undemocratic by respondents

17. Those who refused to choose a side were randomly assigned one for the second round part of the survey.

18. Left: Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Marine Tondelier, François Ruffin, Raphaël Glucksmann. Right: Gabriel Attal, Édouard Philippe, Laurent Wauquiez, Bruno Retailleau, Marine Le Pen.

(see Figure 10). Thus, the candidate classification used in the survey programming is validated in the data.

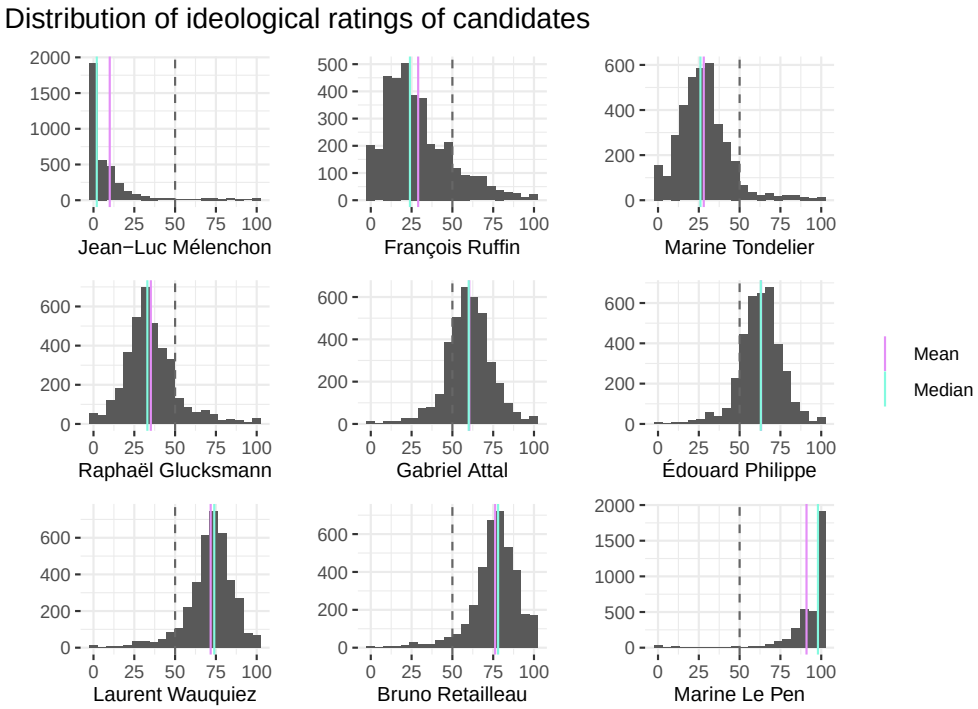


Figure 9: Distribution of candidates' ideological ratings

Note: 0 = Far left, 100 = Far right.

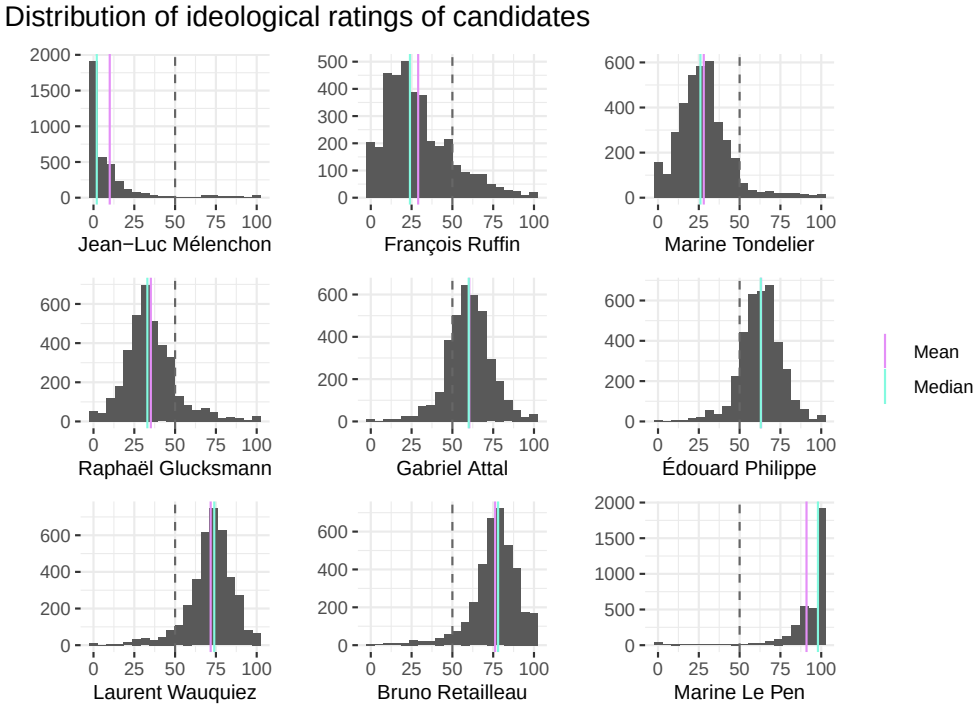


Figure 10: Distribution of candidates' democratic ratings

Note: 0 = Not at all dangerous for democracy, 100 = Extremely dangerous for democracy.

A discussion of other pre-treatment data can be found in the Appendix. In particular, the first round vote shares are reported in Figure A.2 and the distribution of candidate rankings in Figure A.3.

6 Empirical Models

Do endorsements affect vote choice? Which mechanisms do they operate through? This section presents the empirical models used to answer these questions. First, I introduce the log-odds model, a linearized version of the multinomial logit model (Blass et al. 2010; Delavande and Manski 2010; Wiswall and Zafar 2015), used to recover the effect of endorsements on vote choice as well as their effect on two mechanisms: ideological and democratic salience and other characteristics of the available choices. Although connecting the data to the random utility model in order to recover these coefficients of interest involves some formalization — laid out below — the result is a simple OLS equation. OLS is also used to evaluate the effect of endorsements on beliefs about ideological and democratic positions of candidates, the third mechanism I explore. Finally, I present the OLS and logit models used to analyze the effect of endorsements not on the candidates or on votes but on the respondent's evaluation of the endorser (or source).

6.1 Log-odds

As presented in Section 4, an alternative j is chosen by a voter i if $U_{ij} > U_{ij'} \; \forall \; j' \neq j$ where $j, j' \in J$. This can be expressed in probability form, where the probability that a respondent chooses alternative j amongst all available alternatives and given Equations 1 and 2 is:

$$p_{ij} = Pr(U_{ij} > U_{ij'}, \; \forall \; j' \neq j) \tag{3}$$

For simplicity, we can rewrite Equation 1 as $U_{ij} = x_{ij}\gamma_i + \varepsilon_{ij}$, where the x_{ij} term

regroups the alternative-specific constant and the ideological and democratic losses if the alternative is a candidate, and γ_i is the vector of coefficients associated with each variable in x_{ij}. Under the assumption that ε_{ij} are distributed i.i.d. Type I extreme value, as is the norm in the literature using elicited probabilities (Blass et al. 2010; Delavande and Manski 2010; Wiswall and Zafar 2015, 2018), Equation 3 can be rewritten as:

$$p_{ij} = \frac{e^{x_{ij}\gamma_i}}{\sum_{k=1}^{J} e^{x_{ik}\gamma_i}} \tag{4}$$

Recall that there are four alternatives for voters in the second round: two candidates, blank ballot or abstention. In the survey, respondents report the probability of choosing each alternative with the constraint that they must sum to 1. The natural logarithm of 0 is $-\infty$ so when this value is found in the data, it is transformed to 0.001 to make computation possible, and 1 is transformed into 0.999. Both of these changes are standard in the elicited probabilities literature (Blass et al. 2010; Delavande and Manski 2010; Wiswall and Zafar 2015). Abstention is used as the reference alternative and the representative utility of abstention is normalized to 0 so that $U_{i,abstain} = \varepsilon_{i,abstain}$. This simplifies the interpretation of coefficients in the analysis and is plausible substantively, as by abstaining one both avoids paying the cost of voting and forgoes any benefit coming from a sense of fulfilled duty. Using the log-odds transformation, we obtain the linear mixed-logit model:

$$\ln\left(\frac{p_{ij}}{p_{i,abstain}}\right) = x_{ij}\gamma_i = x_{ij}\Gamma + x_{ij}\eta_i \tag{5}$$

Where η_i is the cross-sectional distribution of γ, and is assumed to be independent of x. We set $E(\eta) = 0$ so that $E(\gamma) = \Gamma$ and $E(x\eta|x) = 0$. This yields the ordinary least squares model:

$$E\left[\ln\left(\frac{p_{ij}}{p_{i,abstain}}\right)\middle| x\right] = x_{ij}\Gamma \tag{6}$$

Now going back to the explicit formulation of utility in Equations 1 and 2, the following

equations are estimated for each respondent:

$$E\left[\ln\left(\frac{p_{ij}}{p_{i,abstain}}\right)\middle|x\right] = -\alpha_1 L^{post}(x_i, x_j) - \beta_1 L^{post}(d_i, d_j) + \kappa_j + \kappa_{j,n}\boldsymbol{T_{i,n}} \tag{7}$$
$$- \alpha_{2,n} L^{post}(x_i, x_j)\boldsymbol{T_{i,n}} - \beta_{2,n} L^{post}(d_i, d_j)\boldsymbol{T_{i,n}}$$

$$E\left[\ln\left(\frac{p_{i,blank}}{p_{i,abstain}}\right)\middle|x\right] = \kappa_{blank} + \kappa_{blank,n}\boldsymbol{T_{i,n}} \tag{8}$$

In Equation 7, the j index represents either the radical or the other candidate. Elements in red are the coefficients estimated by the model corresponding to the salience and valence parameters. In black are the survey data, including the vector of treatment indicators $\boldsymbol{T_{i,n}}$. The losses $L^{post}(x_i, x_j)$ and $L^{post}(d_i, d_j)$ are evaluated using the post-treatment beliefs, measured after the second round candidates — and the endorsement, for treated respondents — are revealed. Since there is no ideological or democratic loss to measure in the case of a blank ballot or abstention, these parameters are set to 0 for these alternatives, as is made explicit in the second equation. The data is stacked so that the log-odds model estimates Equations 7 and 8 simultaneously for the three alternatives (radical candidate, other candidate, and blank ballot) over abstention. Standard errors are clustered at the respondent level to account for the correlation between observations obtained from a single respondent.

For each of the four treatment conditions,[19] the effects of endorsements on ideological and democratic loss, as well as on the three alternative specific constants, are recovered through this least squares regression. For example, letting the Close - Expected condition be numbered $n = 1$, the effect of this type of endorsement on the weight of ideological loss is the difference $\alpha_{2,1} - \alpha_1$. The former is the average weight of ideological loss for respondents in the Close - Expected condition, and the latter is the average weight for respondents in the control group. Standard errors are clustered at the respondent level.

The linearized multinomial logit also permits the computation of the treatment effects

19. Close - Expected, Close - Surprise, Far - Expected and Far- Surprise. See Table 2 for details.

on the probability of choosing each alternative. The coefficients obtained from the log-odds model, in blue and red in Equations 7 and 8, and the survey data are plugged into Equation 4, which yields the individual probability of voting for each candidate, blank, or abstaining. The average by condition is computed and the difference between the treatment groups and the control yield the treatment effects on vote probabilities.

6.2 Belief update

Endorsements could also alter where the voter perceives candidates to be located. Consider an endorsement of a left-wing candidate by a right-wing source. If the voter believes the endorsement holds or reveals some information about the location of the candidate and/or of the source, it is likely that the voter will consider the left-wing candidate to be more to the right (closer to the source) than they first thought, or the source to be more leftist (closer to the candidate) than they originally believed. This mechanism also applies to the democratic dimension, and is supplemented by the nature of the endorsement presented in the survey, in which the radical candidate is depicted as dangerous for democracy and the endorsed candidate as (implicitly) not a danger. Beyond the question, interesting in itself, of whether endorsements move beliefs, if ideology and democracy matter, a change in beliefs can contribute to the effect of endorsements on vote choice. I will explore this channel by measuring the effects of endorsements on the change in perceived proximity between the respondent and each candidate. Respondents' own positions on both the ideological and democratic dimensions are measured only pre-treatment, as these positions are not beliefs but preferences. However, beliefs about candidates' positions are measured pre- and post-treatment for the two candidates who enter the second round. Thus, the difference in the perceived proximity of respondent i to candidate j, one of the two second-round candidates, is the post-pre difference in losses measured either in absolute terms ($-|x_i - x_j|$) or quadratic terms ($-(x_i - x_j)^2$). The following OLS model is estimated to assess how each type of endorsement change respondents' perceptions of

candidates:

$$\Delta_{ij}^{dim} = \beta_0 + \beta_{1,n}\boldsymbol{T_{i,n}} + \varepsilon_i \tag{9}$$

The outcome, Δ_{ij}^{dim}, is the change in perceived proximity between respondent i and candidate j on dimension dim which is either ideology or democracy. $\boldsymbol{T_{i,n}}$ is the vector of treatment indicators, taking value 1 for the group the respondent is assigned to (i.e., if they are in the control group, all indicators have value 0).

6.3 Endorser analyses

As mentioned above, belief update can occur not only regarding the position of candidates but also the position of the source. Thus, I also analyze using OLS how the different endorsements affect the perceived proximity between the respondent and the source, as well as between the candidates and the source. Also of interest is the respondent's perception of the source's decision to endorse. I use a multinomial logit model to assess how the different treatments change the perception of whether the source made the right choice by endorsing the non-radical candidate, or if they should have endorsed the radical, or made no endorsement at all. Finally, I use an ordered logit model to evaluate the effect of the different treatments on respondent belief over how the party the source belongs to will react to their endorsement, from being supportive to severely critical.

Covariates

Because treatment assignment is randomized, the inclusion of covariates is not necessary for identification. However, in order to increase the precision of the estimates, including respondent characteristics as covariates can be useful. Thus, I will report models which account for age, gender, education level, income level, region, and whether the respondent knows the non-radical candidate.[20] I also account for whether the contest is between

20. All the respondents knew who the two radical candidates are.

candidates on opposite sides or on the same side of the political spectrum.

7 Results

The following section reports the results of the models laid out above. I begin by presenting the aggregate effect of different endorsements on vote choice, then turn to how these treatments operate on diverse channels theoretically related to vote choice. More specifically, I expose how endorsements can change respondents' beliefs about each candidate's ideological and democratic positions (the belief change channel), affect the weight of these two dimensions (the salience channel) and other characteristics of alternatives (the valence channel). I then simulate elections using my experimental sample as the electorate, with candidates and source positions drawn randomly and a single endorsement observed at a time, to evaluate the effect of endorsements not on voters individually but on the electorate as a whole. Finally, I present how different endorsements lead to different perceptions of the source and of the cost they will incur. Due to the many interactions terms, the coefficients of the log-odds model are quite complicated to interpret directly. I thus present only choice probabilities and marginal effects in the main text; please refer to Table A.4 in the Appendix for the full regression table.

By design, the treatments vary distances between the source of endorsement and both the respondent and the endorsed candidate. Consequently, the distance between the respondent and the candidate become conditional on treatment assignment. In other words, balance across groups on distance (particularly ideological) between endorsed candidate and respondent is not respected.[21] Although this is a feature of the design and not a bug, it still needs to be accounted for when computing treatment effects. Otherwise, the naive difference in outcome between treatment and control groups does not identify the effect of an endorsement alone, but the effect of an endorsement *and* a different set of candidates. Thus, I compute four sets of weights for the control group

21. See Figure A.4 in the Appendix.

respondents so that for each of the four treatment conditions, the control group compared to it is balanced on ideological and democratic distance between the respondent and the endorsed candidate. Note that this is costly in terms of precision, as the effective sample size of the control groups after reweighting is smaller than the full group.

7.1 Vote Choice

The endorsements I presented in this survey have effects on vote choices, although not necessarily the one intended by the endorser. Recall that the survey has four conditions and four alternatives to choose from in the second round. Not every condition greatly affects each alternative; but every treatment has a significant effect on the probability of choosing at least one alternative. Figure 11 displays the average effect of each endorsement condition on the probability of choosing each alternative: the radical, the endorsed candidate, a blank ballot, or abstention.[22]

Each panel corresponds to one of the four types of endorsements, and each color to one of the four choices. Coefficients should thus be read as the effect of a given type of endorsement on the predicted probability of making a given choice. The similarities between, respectively, the first and fourth panel and the second and third are striking. The first pair of panels corresponds to the two conditions in which the source is close to or far from both the endorsed candidate and the voter ('Close - Expected' and 'Far - Surprise'). The second pair of panels display effects when the source is close to either the candidate or the voter, and far from the other ('Close - Surprise' and 'Far - Expected').

In the first pair of panels, endorsements are persuasive: the probability of voting for

22. Since the ideological distance to the candidates, specifically the endorsed one, is endogenous to the condition respondents were assigned to, I cannot hold this distance constant in the data generated for predictions. Therefore, I report predicted probabilities using each respondent's own data with post-treatment beliefs, essentially reversing the process laid out in section 6. The coefficients are estimated from the log-odds model with a control group weighted to match the distribution of ideological and democratic distance for each treatment group. The confidence intervals are estimated through non parametric bootstrap with weights recomputed in each iteration. The reduced effective control group size and uncertainty from repeated reweighting lead to large confidence intervals.

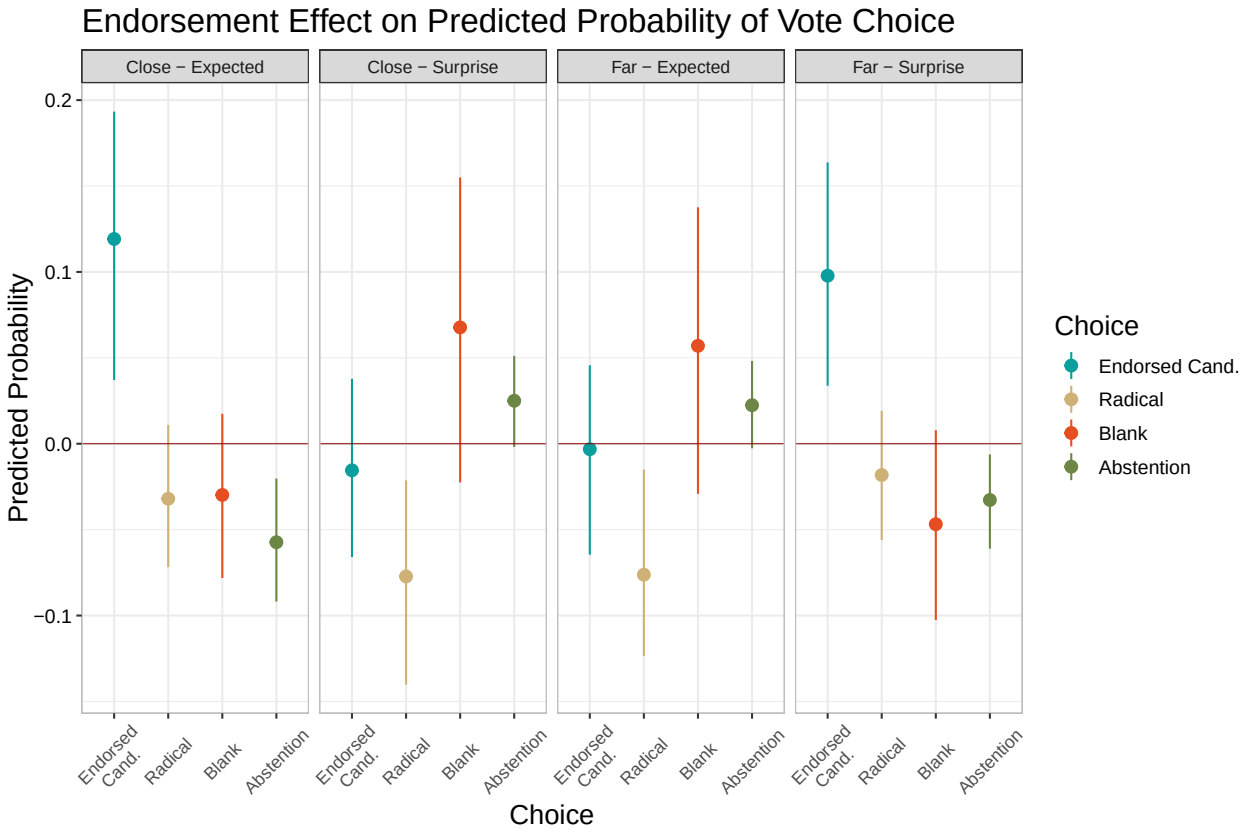


Figure 11: Endorsement effect on predicted probabilities of vote choice

Note: Each coefficient represents the average change in probability of choosing an alternative estimated via the log-odds model. Each panel is the effect for that treatment group compared to a control group reweighted to be balanced with the given treatment group on respondents' ideological and democratic distance to candidates. 95% CIs computed through non-parametric bootstrap (1000 iterations) with control weights are re-estimated for each new draw. Standard errors are clustered at the respondent level.

the endorsed candidate increases by about 10% compared to the control group. This gain for the endorsed candidate comes from a combined decrease in probability of choosing the other three alternatives, although that loss is only statistically significant for abstention. These endorsements "work", in the sense that voters exposed to them become more likely to do what the endorsement tells them to do — vote for the endorsed candidate — than if they had not received it.

The second pair of panels tells a different story. Endorsements in these two conditions are *not* persuading voters to choose the candidate endorsed. Respondents however become less likely (by about 7.5%) to vote for the radical candidate. The associated gain, since the probabilities must sum to one, is split between blank ballots and abstentions,

although neither are statistically significantly different from control values. Although these endorsements fail to persuade voters entirely, they nonetheless provide a partial safeguard for democracy by decreasing radical votes. Since blank votes and abstention do not enter vote share computations, this effect indirectly leads to a boost in support for the endorsed candidate.

To tie these findings back to the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the article, the persuasive effect of endorsement in the 'Close - Expected' condition supports H1. Similarly, the null effect on probability of voting for the endorsed candidate in the 'Far - Expected' condition supports H3. On the contrary, H2 receives no support, as endorsements in the 'Close - Surprise' condition are not persuasive.

Salience, valence and belief change channels

I have established that endorsements can affect vote choices in democratic backsliding contexts, and messages coming from different sources do so in diverging ways. The design of my experiment allows me to investigate potential reasons why they do so, in other words which components of vote choice get affected — or not — by these endorsements.

The first channel I consider is issue salience. In my model of vote choice, both ideological and democratic distance to candidates are (potentially) relevant to candidate evaluation.[23] The first question to answer here is how relevant they are, that is, whether the weight of each dimensions is null (i.e., it does not factor into voters' considerations) or positive. Then, one can ask how different endorsements affect these weights, whether a treatment raises the salience of a dimension or not.

Panel A of Figure 12 displays the weight of each of these two dimensions for respondents in the five experimental conditions. The first thing to notice is that all the weights

23. Under this specification of the linearized log odds, the weights of both dimensions are assumed to be constant across alternatives. In other words, the extent to which ideological (or democratic) proximity to a candidate matters to a voter is the same regardless of whether that candidate is a radical or a traditional/centrist candidate. Thus, there is no "alternative-specific" estimate of salience.

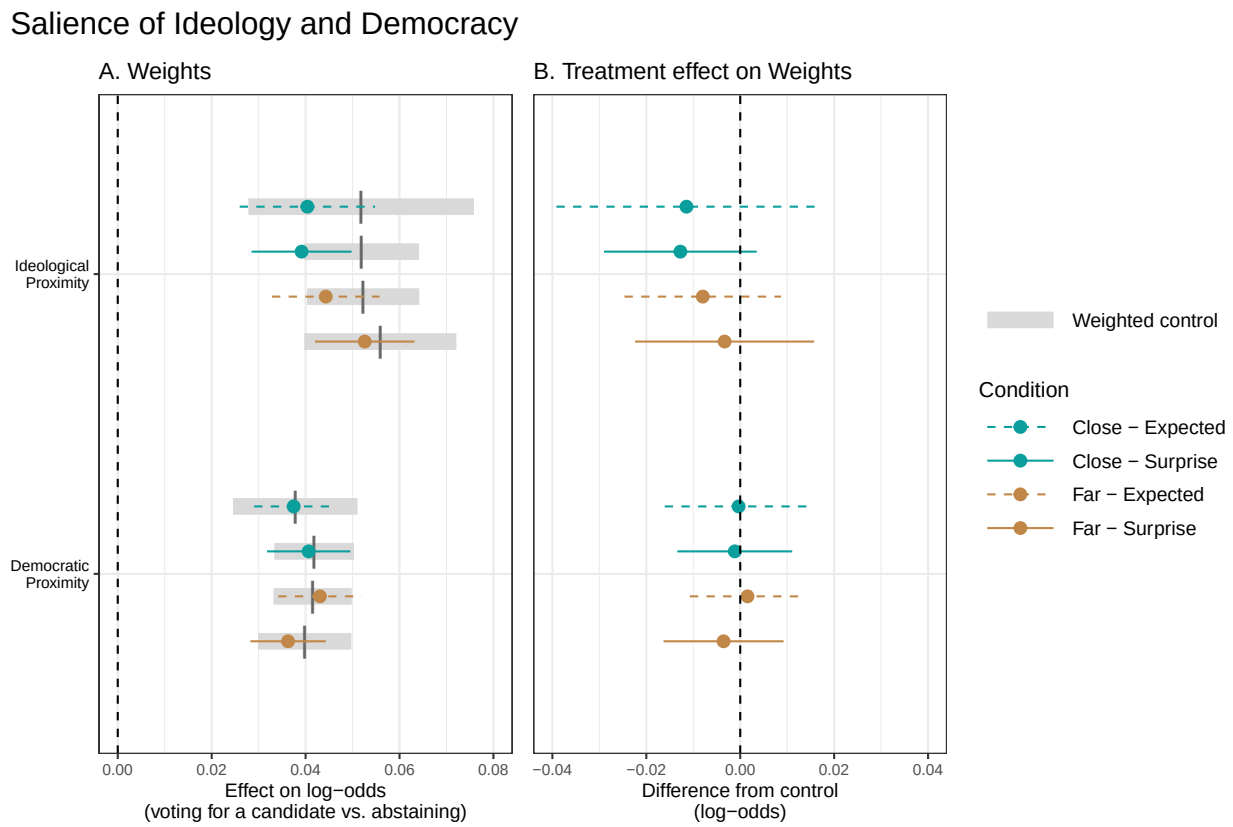


Figure 12: Salience by Dimension and Condition

Note: Panel A displays the coefficient and 95% CI for the salience of each dimension, by condition, estimated via the log-odds model. In grey are the control coefficients and CIs. Each treatment group is compared to a weighted control group balanced with the given treatment group on respondents' ideological and democratic distance to candidates. Panel B displays the difference in salience of each dimension between a given treatment and its associated weighted control. Standard errors are clustered at the respondent level and for panel A estimated using the delta method.

are positive: voters in all the conditions care about how aligned they are with candidates, both on the ideological and the democratic dimensions. In other words, this figure tells us that all else equal, voters are more likely to pick a candidate ideologically or democratically closer to them. Within each condition, the magnitude of the weights is comparable: although ideology is always slightly more important than democracy in terms of point estimate, the weights of the two dimensions are statistically indistinguishable from each other. This answers the first question: voters across all conditions care about both ideological and democratic proximity to a candidate, and about both with relatively similar intensity.

This is an important finding. Previous literature on trade-offs between ideology and

democracy (Frederiksen 2024; Graham and Svolik 2020; Svolik 2020) tends to find that voters might punish undemocratic candidates, but they nonetheless prefer an undemocratic candidate who shares their party ID or policy preferences to a democratic candidate from another party or whom they disagree with. However, these salience results show that once the possibility of voting for an in-party candidate is removed and we account for voters' own preferences over the level of democracy — instead of assuming democracy is a valence attribute — then voters are not so easily willing to give up alignment to candidates on the democratic front in order to gain ideological proximity.

Panel B of Figure 12 answers the second question. Overall, endorsements do not affect the salience of either dimension, at least not to a level statistically detectable given the sample size. The null effect is more precise for the democratic dimension, whereas ideology seems to become marginally less important for respondents (although not in a statistically significant way).

We can also assess how endorsements affect the valence of each alternative, measured as the constant term κ_j in Equations 7 and 8. This term captures how treatment affect respondents' perceptions of choice characteristics that do not pertain to ideology or democracy. For the blank term, it can be interpreted the value of turning out to vote to "protest" or to fulfill the voter's perceived duty to turn out. If it goes up, respondents prefer turning out over abstaining but not to vote for a candidate. It could be that they feel the necessity to participate in elections is greater, or they want to express dissatisfaction. If the constant term for the blank vote decreases, then the appeal of turning out without expressing a preference over candidates is lower than the utility from abstaining. For the candidates, this constant term is more obscure. It can capture the respondent's preference over a candidate for perceived electability, likeability, or many other traits that the endorsement would have affected. An increase in this valence term could be an increase in any of these black box traits, or a higher value of turning out *for someone* (as opposed to turning out for a blank vote). To assess the endorsement effects on this channel, I compute the effect of each condition on the constant term associated with each choice

while holding ideological and democratic distances at 0 for the candidates.[24] Although a distance of 0 on both dimensions is almost always out-of-sample, holding distances at their mean (or any other non-null value) does not allow me to isolate the valence channel completely, since the weights on the distances (α and β) are always positive.[25] Figure 13 displays the results.

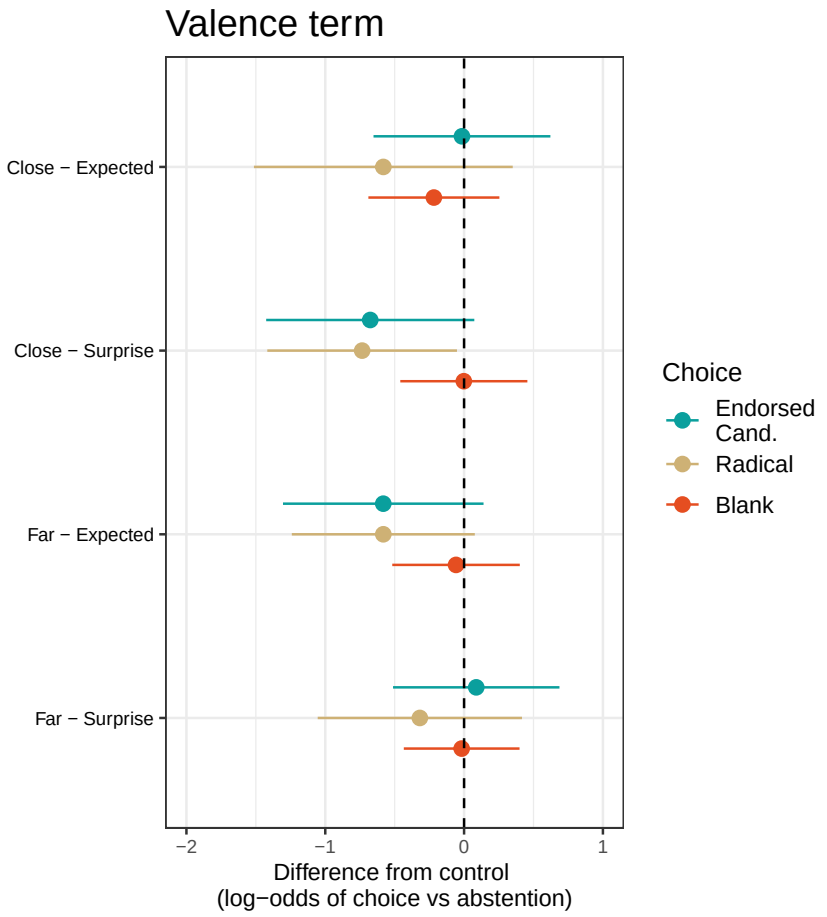


Figure 13: Treatment Effects on Valence Terms

As for the predicted probabilities, the effects on valence terms are similar respectively for the case when the source is close to or far from both the candidate and the respondent, and for the case when the source is close to one and far from the other. Note that none of the effects, except for the radical in the Close - Surprise condition, are statistically significant, hence this discussion pertains to direction only. In the first set of cases, there

24. For the blank ballot and abstention options those are automatically 0.
25. See Figure A.7 in the Appendix for the treatment effect on the constant terms when the distances are held at their mean values.

is no effect of treatment on the valence of the endorsed candidate and very little on the value of a blank vote, and a negative effect for the valence of the radical. In the second set of cases, both the endorsed candidate's and the radical's valence decreases in a similar magnitude. [26]

Endorsements might not affect the weight voters place on ideology and democracy, but they can change beliefs regarding the position of candidates. Panel A of Figure 14 shows that endorsements have either a negative or null effect on perceived ideological proximity to the radical candidate,[27] i.e., the respondent sometimes feels farther away from that candidate post treatment. For the endorsed candidate, all endorsements except in the last condition, Far - Surprise, make respondents feel that the endorsed candidate is ideologically closer to them. The treatment effects on democratic proximity are more puzzling. Although many of the results are null, respondents seem to feel closer democratically to the radical post-treatment in two conditions. This is surprising given that the vignette depicts the radical candidate as undemocratic, and one might have expected that respondents would perceive the radical as more undemocratic post-treatment.

7.2 Source

Let us now turn to results pertaining to the source of the endorsement. I have so far assumed that endorsements made by a source far from a candidate would be more costly, especially if the voter is themselves close to the source. I will now verify if this assumption holds, by estimating the reputational cost for the source of making different types of endorsements.

Figure 15 present the results of the multinomial logit model estimating respondents' assessment of whether the source was right to endorse as they did, should have abstained

26. Note that in the second set of conditions, an endorsed candidate perfectly aligned with the respondent on the ideological dimension is completely out of sample, as shown in Figure A.4.

27. The effect is statistically significant for the two mismatched conditions, Close - Surprise and Far - Expected.

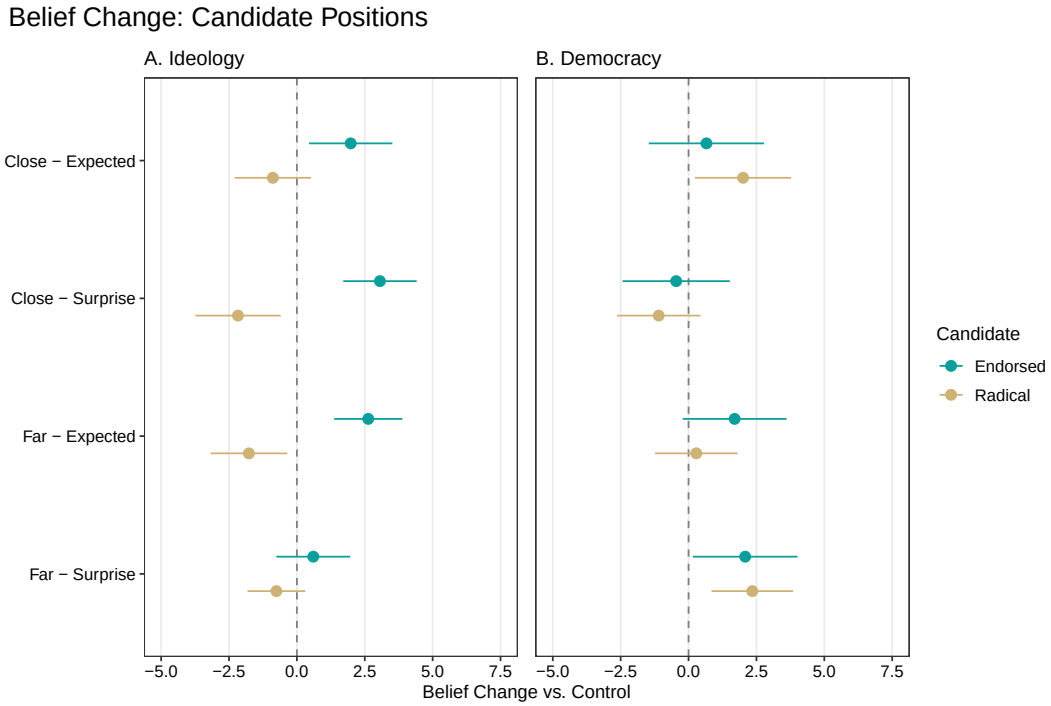


Figure 14: Belief Update

from endorsing either candidate, or should have endorsed the radical candidate. Notice a very clear pattern: regardless of the condition, when the candidates are on the same side — i.e., for a left voter both are left-wing and vice-versa for a right voter[28] — the model predicts that the respondent is more likely to think the source was right and less likely to believe they should have abstained or endorsed the radical. Then, regardless of the condition or candidate sides, respondents do not generally believe the source should have endorsed the radical: the predicted probability of this outcome is never higher than 0.15, when candidates are on opposite sides in the 'Close - Surprise' condition. This condition and contest combination is also the one for which the predicted probability of thinking the source was right is the lowest, at 0.23. If we focus only on the case where the candidates are on opposite sides, when the source is close to both the voter and the candidate respondents are as likely (around 0.45-0.5) to think they made the right choice or that they should not have issued an endorsement, while in the other three conditions respondents are more likely to think the source should have abstained from endorsing

28. With the exception of 11 cases in which the last option in Table 3 was used, and the radical in on the opposite side of the respondent.

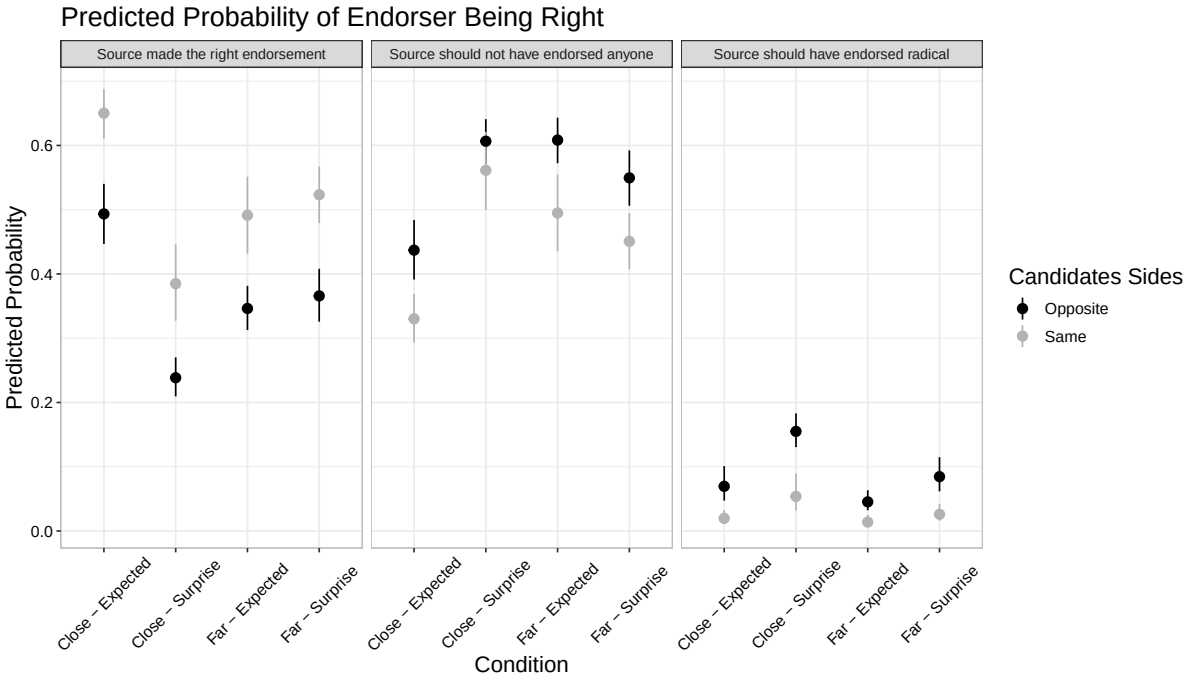


Figure 15: Predicted probability of endorser being right by condition and contest type

(0.5-0.6) than to think they were right (0.2-0.4).

The results of the ordered logit analyzing respondents' belief about the source being supported or punished by their party for the endorsement are displayed in Figure 16, and tell a different story. There are no statistically significant differences between the predicted probabilities in the two contest types. As one might expect, respondents are more likely to believe the source will be supported by their party (and less likely to believe they will face severe criticisms) when the source and the candidate are ideologically close, compared to when they are far. This effect is stronger in the condition where the voter is far from the source than where they are close. This could be due to voters having a finer grain knowledge of party politics of elites ideologically close to them, thus being more cautious in asserting party support for the source, as opposed to when the source is far and they might not know enough about intra-party dynamics to mitigate their beliefs.

Results from these two logit models provide evidence that surprising endorsements, especially coming from a source close to the voter, are costly. Respondents in the two "surprising" conditions are more likely to think the source will face criticism, in particular

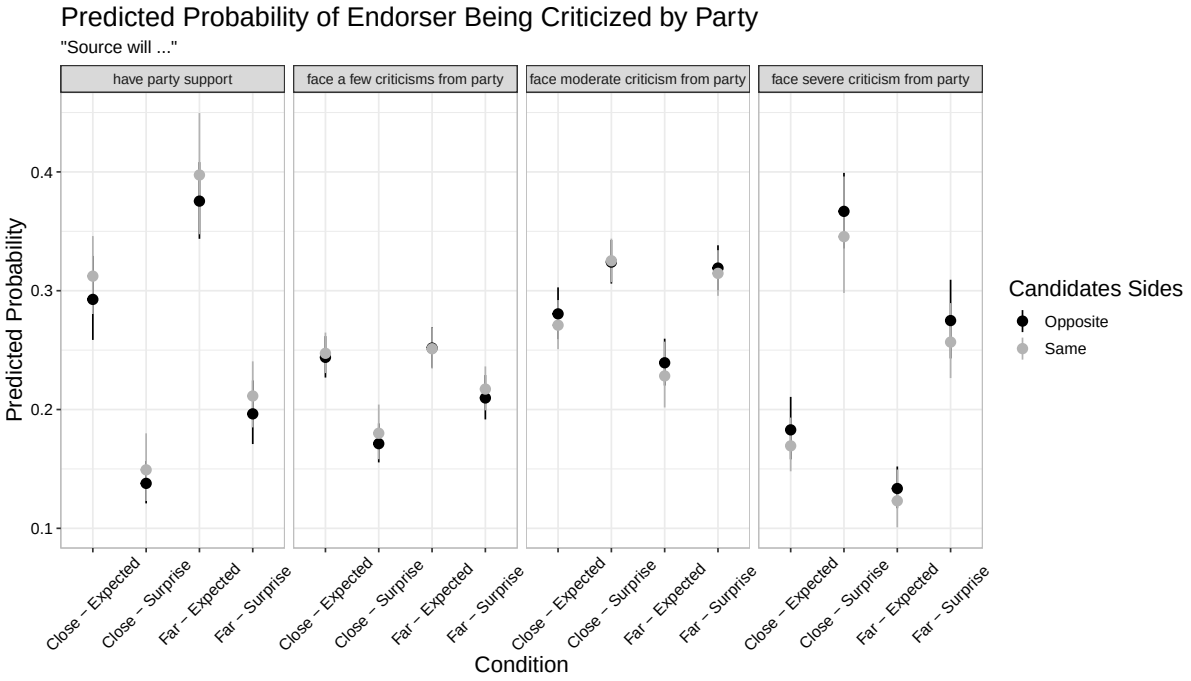


Figure 16: Predicted probability of endorser being criticized by party by condition and contest type

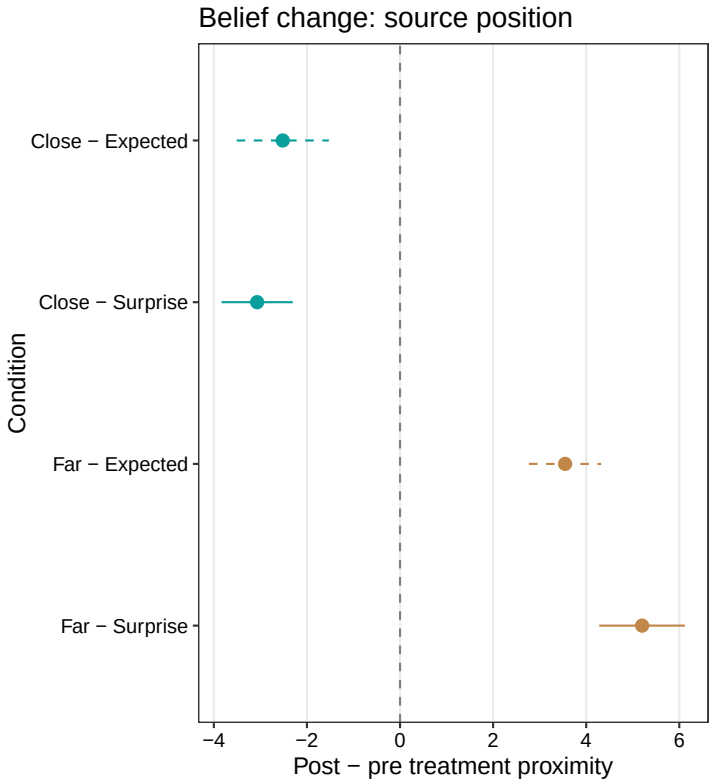


Figure 17: Belief update: respondent and source ideology

severe criticism, from their party than respondents in the "expected" conditions. They are also relatively unlikely (22 to 38%) to think the source made the right endorsement (as are respondents in the 'Far - Expected' condition).

Finally, it is interesting to know how beliefs about the source's ideological position changes in each condition. Respondents tend to feel like the source is ideologically closer to them when they where far from the source to begin with, and farther when the source was close (see Figure 17).

8 Conclusion

Elites taking action to prevent radical parties from accessing office or government is becoming more and more frequent. From commitment to exclude the AfD from coalitions in Germany — even if it means cross-aisle compromise for the CDU and SPD — to endorsements of candidates one does not align with ideologically in Austria and France, barricade politics are on the rise. I have shown in this paper that the extent to which endorsements are an effective gatekeeping strategy varies. When the source is either close to both the voter and the candidate, or far from both, endorsements are persuasive. The probability that voters cast a ballot for the endorsed candidate, relative to a lack of endorsement, is higher. However, when the source is close to the voter but far from the candidate, or the other way around, endorsements are not fully persuasive. They decrease the probability of turning out for the radical, but do not increase votes for the endorsed candidate.

Of course, in a real election, voters do not witness a single endorsement. Numerous and potentially contradictory messages are sent by political elites over the course of a campaign, and the effects of endorsements might change when voters receive an accumulation of signals, either reinforcing or competing. This is an avenue for future research on endorsements in contexts of democratic backsliding.

Appendix

Power analysis

I ran a simulation for power analysis and found that if each treatment is assumed to have small effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.2$), at least 500 respondents per group (2500 total) are needed to achieve 80% power. This is with statistical significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ but corrected (using Holm correction) to account for the fact that 4 treatment conditions are compared to the control group.

Under a different scenario, where two groups have a true effect of size $d = 0.2$ and two have true null effects, 550 respondents would be needed for each group (2650 total).

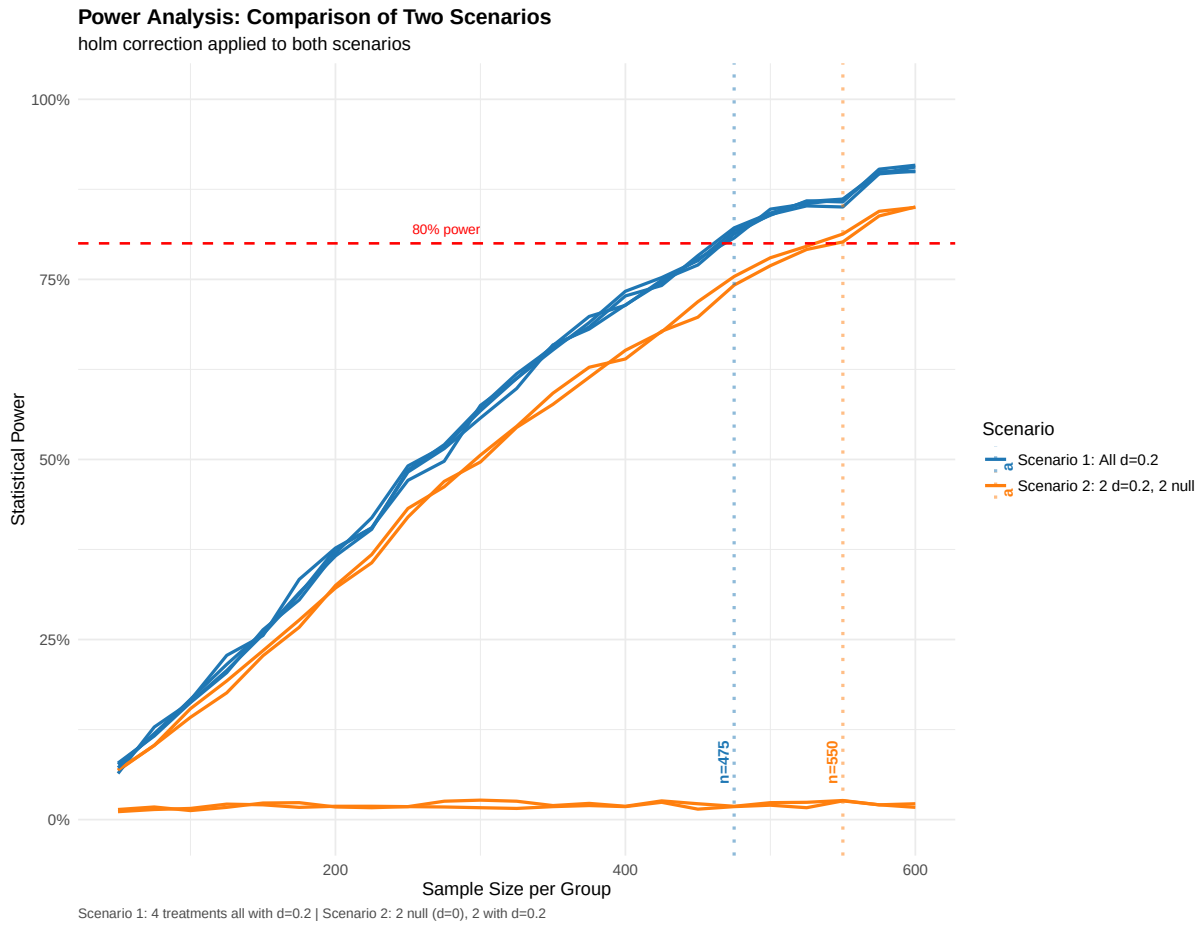


Figure A.1: Power simulations

Vignette

Both candidates have clearly stated their plans if elected. In response, **"SOURCE"** has issued the following statement:

"RADICAL CANDIDATE" claims that their policies will solve the problems our country is facing. No one denies that these problems exist; and the solutions offered by **"RADICAL CANDIDATE"** are appealing to many voters. But today, the time has come to set aside our ideological preferences and differences, and to prioritize what unites all of us, our democratic ideals. The country of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen cannot abandon its founding principles and yield power to proponents of political violence.

Not one vote can go to **"RADICAL CANDIDATE"**! This is why **I am endorsing "TRADITIONAL CANDIDATE"**, and urging not only those who voted for me in the first round but all the French people to defend democracy and **cast a ballot for "TRADITIONAL CANDIDATE"** this next Sunday.

Debrief

For control respondents:

Thank you for filling out this survey. As you could see, we presented you with potential candidates to the 2027 presidential election. Please note that some of the candidates we included **are not currently** candidates.

For treated respondents:

Thank you for filling out this survey. As you could see, we presented you with potential

candidates to the 2027 presidential election. Please note that some of the candidates we included **are not currently** candidates. Moreover, you read a text which contained an endorsement. As was stated, this endorsement was imaginary. SOURCE **has not really** issued the statement you read. Knowing whether a candidate in the 2027 presidential election is dangerous for democracy is important, however it is something each of us must decide by themselves. This survey is not intended to convince you that a particular candidate represents a threat for democracy.

Descriptive statistics

Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Median	Mode	Min	Max
Age	53.190	15.728	54	65	18	95
Gender	1.501	0.500	2 - Woman	2 - Woman	1 - Man	2 - Woman
Region	-	-	-	Ile-de-France	-	-
Employment	-	-	-	Employed	-	-
Education	-	-	Bachelors Degree	Graduate Degree	No Degree	Graduate Degree
Net HH Income	-	-	Between 3000 and 3499	Between 4000 and 5999	Less than 750	10,000 or more

Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics: Demographics

Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Median	Mode	Min	Max
Pr(Vote Radical)	0.229	0.343	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.999
Pr(Vote Endorsed Cand.)	0.344	0.395	0.110	0.001	0.001	0.999
Pr(Vote Blank)	0.311	0.395	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.999
Pr(Abstain)	0.118	0.283	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.999
Endorser Right	-	-	-	Wrong - No endorsement	Right	Wrong - Endorse radical
Endorser Party Criticism	-	-	Moderate criticism	Moderate criticism	Support	Severe criticism
Elected Officials Don't Care	-	-	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree
Pr(10 years)	38.861	24.555	36	50	0	100

Table A.2: Descriptive Statistics: Outcomes

The first four rows of Table A.2 contain the reported probabilities of choosing each of the four alternatives in the second round. Because the level of granularity of the survey item does not allow respondents to report answers with more than one digit after the decimal point, all answers coded 0.001 and 0.999 were 0 and 1, respectively, before recoding occurred. Using 0 and 1 instead of 0.001 and 0.999 when taking the average does not affect the first two digits after the decimal point. Note that voting for the non-radical is the only outcome for which less than 50% of the sample reports zero probability. The last four rows in Table A.2 focus on other outcomes of interest. Rows 5 and 6 are measures

of the cost to the endorser, first whether the respondent approves of their endorsement decision, second the respondent's belief about party response to the endorsement. The last two rows focus on measures of political efficacy: to what extent the respondent agrees that elected officials do not care what people like them think, and the probability (in percentage) that a candidate who represents their interests qualifies for the second round of the presidential election in the next ten years.

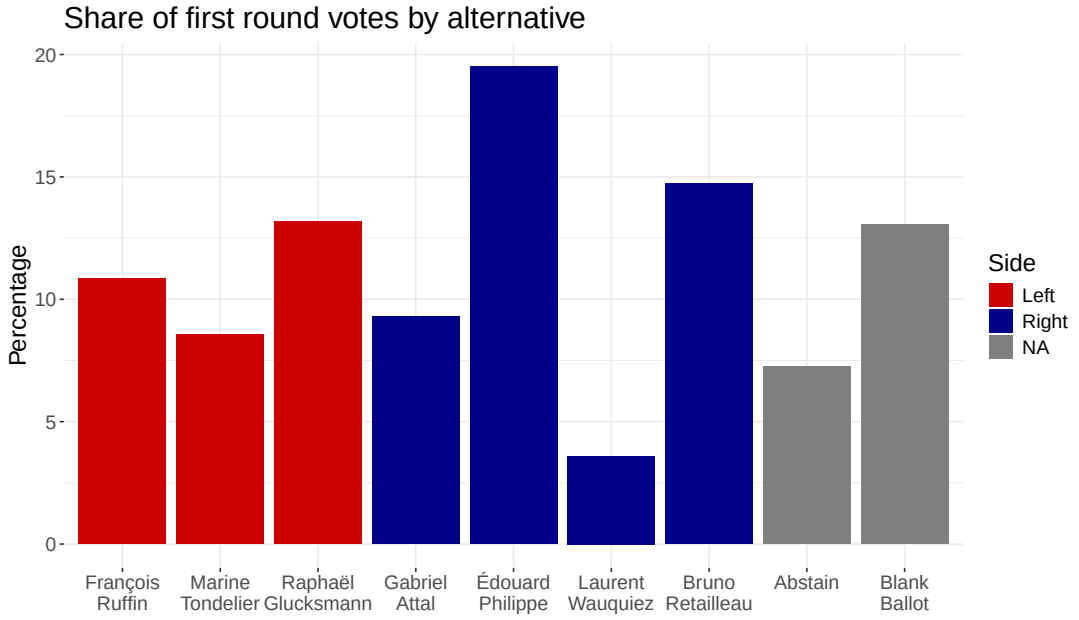


Figure A.2: First round shares

The candidate who received the highest share of votes in the first round is Édouard Philippe, former Prime Minister (from 2017 to 2020) during Emmanuel Macron's first term as president, current mayor of Le Havre, and president of the center-right party Horizons. Vote shares for each candidate, as well as shares of abstention and blank ballot, are reported in Figure A.2. These shares do not include respondents who "voted" for Marine Le Pen or Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the first round. Interestingly, even with nine candidates to choose from, over 12% of respondents chose to cast a blank ballot, and about 7% chose to abstain. Expression of dissatisfaction with the choices available is quite high even in the (fictitious) first round. The share of votes obtained by each "category" (left, right, or NA, i.e., abstention or blank ballot) is quite close to the share of options belonging to each category, out of the nine options. 44% of the alternatives

are right-wing candidates, and they total about 47% of the votes. Left candidates, who represent 33% of the options, total over 32% of the vote. Finally, abstention and blank ballot total 20% of vote shares, and they represent 22% of the available options.

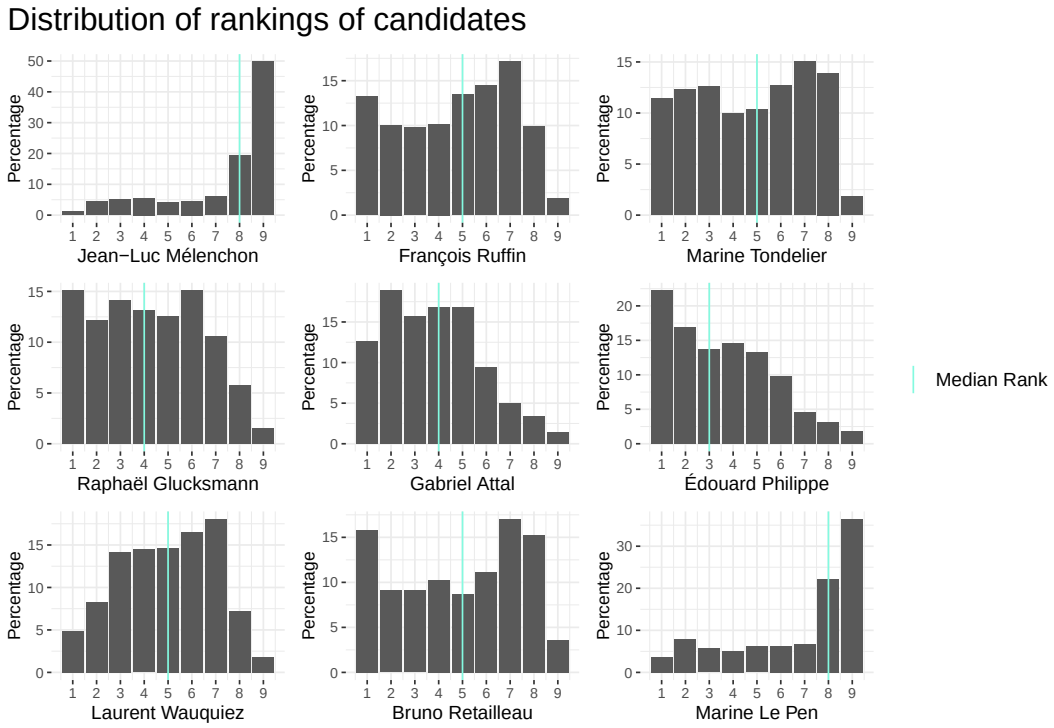


Figure A.3: Distribution of candidates' preference rankings

Preferences expressed through votes are reflected quite well by candidate rankings. Figure A.3 displays the distribution, for each of the nine candidates, of the preference rankings reported by respondents. Ranks go from 1 (most preferred) to 9 (least preferred) for each candidate. Édouard Philippe is the most popular candidate both in terms of how many respondents ranked him first (around 22%) and of median ranking (3). He also received the 'least preferred' ranking among less than 2% of respondents. The two extreme candidates, Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Marine Le Pen, are very unpopular, with a median ranking of 8 for both of them and respectively about 50% and 36% of respondents ranking them last. This is not very surprising, given that those who chose them in the first round are removed from the sample at this point of the survey. The remaining 6 candidates are relatively similar in terms of popularity, with median rankings of either 4 or 5, and distributions of rankings more or less polarizing. Laurent Wauquiez and

Gabriel Attal are the least polarizing candidates, with only some very high or very low ranks, while Bruno Retailleau is the most polarizing non-extreme candidate with fewer respondents' ranking him in the mid-range than giving him 1, 7, or 8 rankings.

Figures A.4 and A.5 respectively present the distribution of ideological and democratic distances (pre-treatment) between respondents in each condition and both candidates.

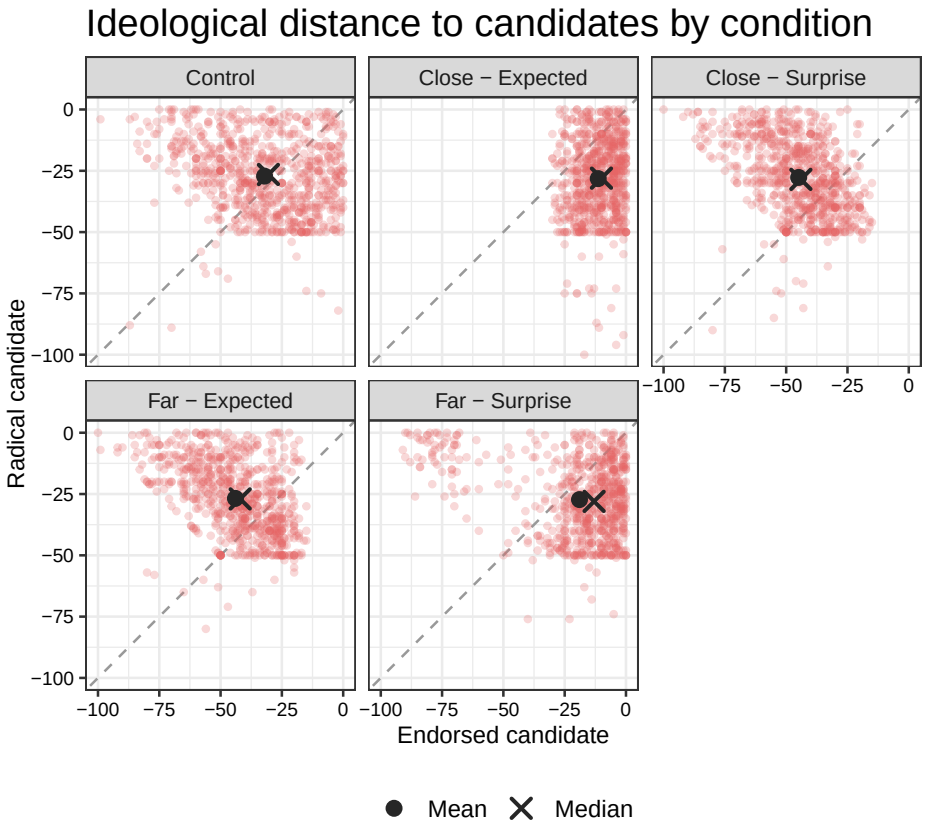


Figure A.4: Ideological distances

Each dot represent a respondent's distance to the radical and the endorsed candidates they saw in the second round. When a dot is below the 45 degree dashed grey diagonal, it means the respondent is closer to the endorsed candidate than to the radical candidate. It is interesting to note that for the democratic dimension, regardless of the condition the average and the median respondents are closer to the endorsed candidate, although not very far from the dashed line. There is, except perhaps in the Close - Expected condition, a large spread of perceived distances for both candidates. Ideological distances are much more clustered than democratic ones, partly due to the way treatments are

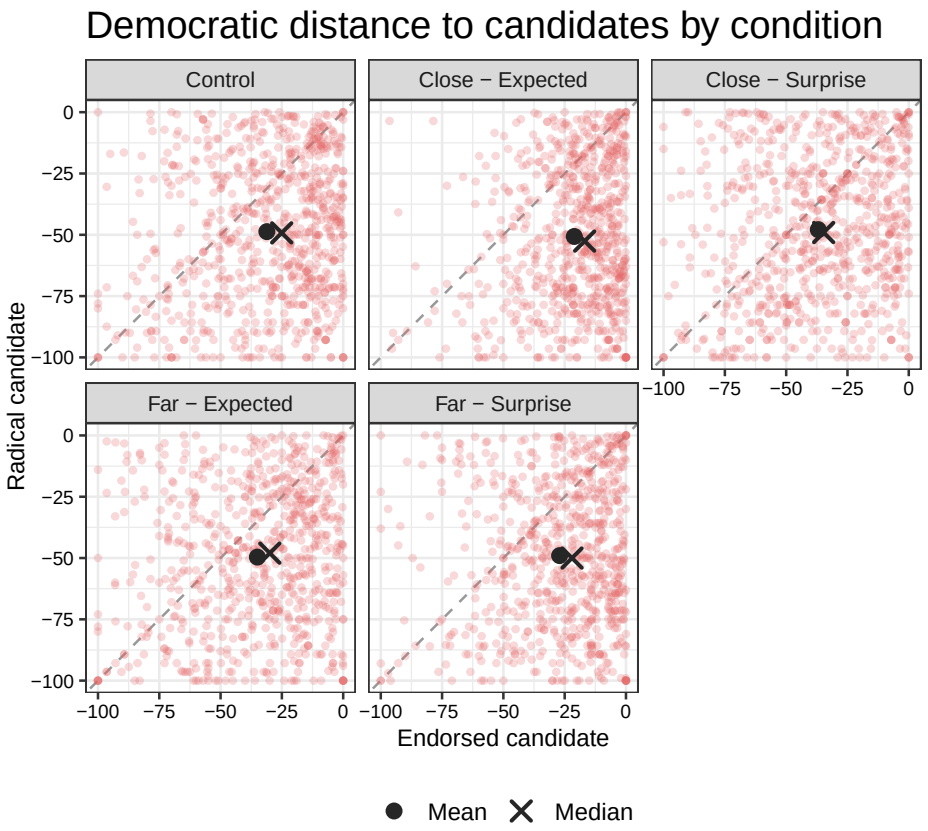


Figure A.5: Democratic distances

constructed. For example, in the Close - Expected condition, by design the endorsed candidate cannot be more than 30 point away from the respondent. That explains the cluster in the top right corner of the plot for that panel. Note that for ideology, the average and median respondents are sometimes closer to the radical (Close - Surprise and Far - Expected conditions) and sometimes to the endorsed candidate (Close - Expected and Far - Surprise conditions), and barely closer to the radical in the Control group. However as for democracy, these typical respondents are never very far from the line indicating equal distance between the candidates.

Screened-out respondents

This section details the composition of the group of respondents who were screened out because the distribution of their ideological placements prevented them from being ran-

domized into (at least) one of the treatment conditions. They are slightly less educated and earn a bit less than the final sample, but do not differ demographically otherwise on the measures variables.

Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Median	Mode	Min	Max
Age	51.039	15.407	51	-	18	90
Gender	1.667	0.471	2 - Woman	2 - Woman	1 - Man	2 - Woman
Region	-	-	-	Ile-de-France	-	-
Employment	-	-	-	Employed	-	-
Education	-	-	High School Degree	Bachelors Degree	No Degree	Graduate Degree
Net HH Income	-	-	Between 2500 and 2999	Prefer not to answer	Less than 750	10,000 or more
Ideology (self)	50.124	16.609	50	50	0	100

Table A.3: Descriptive Statistics: Screened-out respondents

They differ however in their political preferences. Figure A.6 shows the number of votes for each option in the first round for respondents eventually screened out. Compared to the actual sample, whose vote shares are displayed in Figure A.2, the screened-out respondents are much more likely to have abstained or voted blank in the first round.

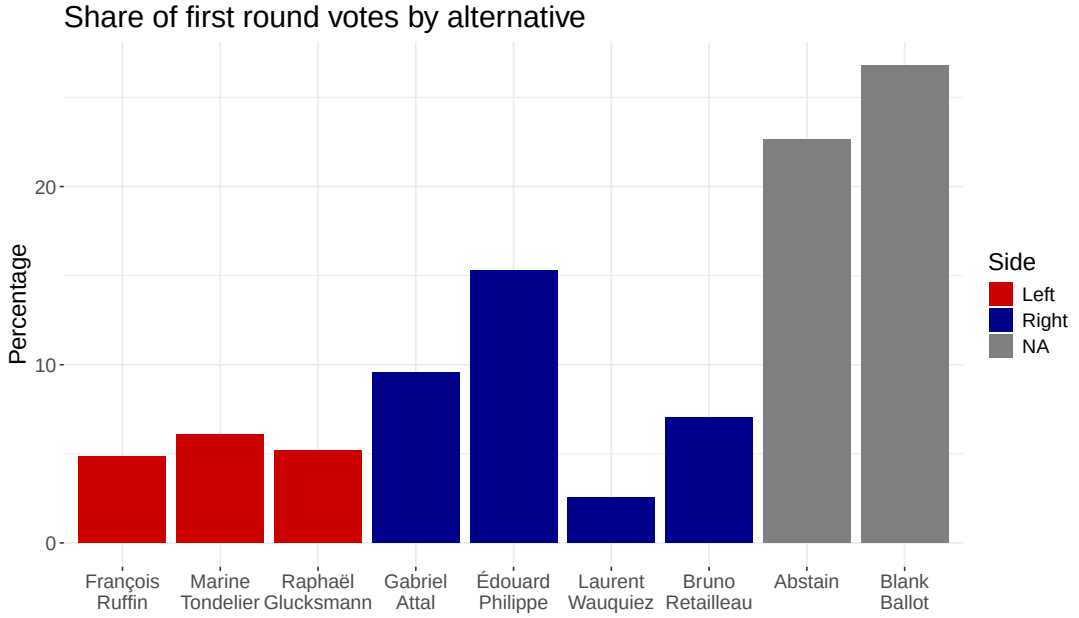


Figure A.6: First round shares: Screened-out respondents

Supplementary results

	Close - Expected	Close - Surprise	Far - Expected	Far - Surprise
Control × Blank	-4.569^{***}	-5.475^{***}	-3.591^{***}	-4.210^{***}
	(1.022)	(0.833)	(0.843)	(0.838)
Treatment × Blank	−0.218	−0.002	−0.058	−0.017
	(0.241)	(0.234)	(0.234)	(0.213)
Ideo Loss	0.052^{***}	0.052^{***}	0.052^{***}	0.056^{***}
	(0.012)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.008)
Demo Loss	0.038^{***}	0.042^{***}	0.042^{***}	0.040^{***}
	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Control × Radical	3.069^{***}	3.044^{***}	3.063^{***}	3.143^{***}
	(0.408)	(0.285)	(0.278)	(0.314)
Control × Endorsed Cand.	3.582^{***}	2.959^{***}	2.989^{***}	3.435^{***}
	(0.320)	(0.315)	(0.304)	(0.280)
Treatment × Ideo Loss	−0.011	−0.013	−0.008	−0.003
	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Treatment × Demo Loss	−0.000	−0.001	0.002	−0.004
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Treatment × Radical	−0.364	−0.733	−0.524	−0.301
	(0.501)	(0.401)	(0.389)	(0.410)
Treatment × Endorsed Cand.	0.202	−0.674	−0.524	0.105
	(0.378)	(0.435)	(0.418)	(0.357)
Same Side	−0.044	−0.462	−0.476	−0.255
	(0.206)	(0.257)	(0.244)	(0.168)
Num. obs.	4488	4521	4467	4464
R^2 (full model)	0.280	0.245	0.214	0.248
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.275	0.240	0.208	0.242

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Table A.4: Estimation of endorsement effects - Neg. Absolute Loss

Note: Each column compares one treatment group to the control group reweighted to match it on pre-treatment distances. SE clustered at the respondent level.

	Close - Expected	Close - Surprise	Far - Expected	Far - Surprise
Control × Blank	-4.647^{***}	-5.513^{***}	-3.645^{***}	-4.290^{***}
	(1.022)	(0.833)	(0.848)	(0.839)
Treatment × Blank	−0.221	0.015	−0.037	−0.020
	(0.241)	(0.234)	(0.235)	(0.213)
Ideo Loss	0.001^{***}	0.000^{***}	0.000^{***}	0.001^{***}
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Demo Loss	0.000^{***}	0.000^{***}	0.000^{***}	0.000^{***}
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Control × Radical	1.901^{***}	1.669^{***}	1.701^{***}	1.858^{***}
	(0.325)	(0.252)	(0.246)	(0.256)
Control × Endorsed Cand.	2.572^{***}	1.230^{***}	1.259^{***}	2.255^{***}
	(0.273)	(0.260)	(0.250)	(0.234)
Treatment × Ideo Loss	-0.000^{*}	−0.000	0.000	−0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Treatment × Demo Loss	0.000	−0.000	−0.000	−0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Treatment × Radical	−0.425	−0.561	−0.560	−0.328
	(0.400)	(0.342)	(0.340)	(0.339)
Treatment × Endorsed Cand.	0.279	−0.339	−0.281	0.247
	(0.328)	(0.351)	(0.344)	(0.307)
Same Side	0.034	−0.385	−0.370	−0.183
	(0.205)	(0.258)	(0.244)	(0.168)
Num. obs.	4488	4521	4467	4464
R^2 (full model)	0.274	0.236	0.201	0.239
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.268	0.231	0.194	0.233

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Table A.5: Estimation of endorsement effects - Neg. Quadratic Loss

Note: Each column compares one treatment group to the control group reweighted to match it on pre-treatment distances. SE clustered at the respondent level.

Condition	Alternative	Estimate	SE	Test Statistic	p-value	95% CI - Lower	95% CI - Upper
Close - Expected	Blank	-0.218	0.241	-0.904	0.366	-0.689	0.254
Close - Surprise	Blank	-0.002	0.234	-0.008	0.993	-0.460	0.456
Far - Expected	Blank	-0.058	0.234	-0.248	0.804	-0.517	0.401
Far - Surprise	Blank	-0.017	0.213	-0.082	0.935	-0.434	0.399
Close - Expected	Radical	-0.171	0.231	-0.741	0.459	-0.623	0.281
Close - Surprise	Radical	-0.359	0.206	-1.741	0.082	-0.764	0.045
Far - Expected	Radical	-0.464	0.211	-2.203	0.028	-0.876	-0.051
Far - Surprise	Radical	-0.041	0.195	-0.209	0.834	-0.424	0.342
Close - Expected	Endorsed Cand.	0.245	0.255	0.962	0.336	-0.255	0.745
Close - Surprise	Endorsed Cand.	-0.053	0.207	-0.253	0.800	-0.459	0.354
Far - Expected	Endorsed Cand.	-0.280	0.212	-1.324	0.185	-0.695	0.135
Far - Surprise	Endorsed Cand.	0.305	0.217	1.409	0.159	-0.119	0.730

Table A.6: Marginal Effects of Treatment on Choice Constant by Alternative - Neg. Absolute Loss

Condition	Alternative	Estimate	SE	Test Statistic	p-value	95% CI - Lower	95% CI - Upper
Close - Expected	Blank	-0.221	0.241	-0.916	0.360	-0.694	0.252
Close - Surprise	Blank	0.015	0.234	0.066	0.948	-0.444	0.474
Far - Expected	Blank	-0.037	0.235	-0.159	0.874	-0.497	0.423
Far - Surprise	Blank	-0.020	0.213	-0.094	0.925	-0.438	0.398
Close - Expected	Radical	-0.010	0.236	-0.041	0.967	-0.472	0.453
Close - Surprise	Radical	-0.417	0.209	-1.994	0.046	-0.826	-0.007
Far - Expected	Radical	-0.507	0.214	-2.372	0.018	-0.927	-0.088
Far - Surprise	Radical	0.013	0.197	0.067	0.947	-0.373	0.400
Close - Expected	Endorsed Cand.	0.371	0.253	1.467	0.142	-0.125	0.866
Close - Surprise	Endorsed Cand.	-0.122	0.208	-0.587	0.557	-0.529	0.285
Far - Expected	Endorsed Cand.	-0.328	0.211	-1.549	0.121	-0.742	0.087
Far - Surprise	Endorsed Cand.	0.588	0.219	2.681	0.007	0.158	1.017

Table A.7: Marginal Effects of Treatment on Choice Constant by Alternative - Neg. Quadratic Loss

Condition	Estimate	SE	t value	p-value	95% CI - Lower	95% CI - Upper
Close - Expected	-0.011	0.014	-0.810	0.418	-0.039	0.016
Close - Surprise	-0.013	0.008	-1.536	0.125	-0.029	0.004
Far - Expected	-0.008	0.009	-0.937	0.349	-0.025	0.009
Far - Surprise	-0.003	0.010	-0.342	0.732	-0.022	0.016
Close - Expected	-0.0003	0.008	-0.043	0.966	-0.016	0.015
Close - Surprise	-0.001	0.006	-0.186	0.852	-0.013	0.011
Far - Expected	0.002	0.006	0.248	0.804	-0.011	0.014
Far - Surprise	-0.004	0.007	-0.543	0.587	-0.016	0.009

Table A.8: Treatment effect on salience - Absolute loss

Condition	Estimate	SE	t value	p-value	95% CI - Lower	95% CI - Upper
Close - Expected	-0.0005	0.0002	-2.021	0.043	-0.001	-0.00001
Close - Surprise	-0.0001	0.0001	-0.606	0.544	-0.0003	0.0001
Far - Expected	0.00004	0.0001	0.334	0.739	-0.0002	0.0002
Far - Surprise	-0.0002	0.0001	-1.516	0.130	-0.0005	0.0001
Close - Expected	0.00001	0.0001	0.089	0.929	-0.0001	0.0001
Close - Surprise	-0.00002	0.0001	-0.384	0.701	-0.0001	0.0001
Far - Expected	-0.00004	0.0001	-0.597	0.551	-0.0002	0.0001
Far - Surprise	-0.00003	0.0001	-0.533	0.594	-0.0002	0.0001

Table A.9: Treatment effect on salience - Quadratic loss

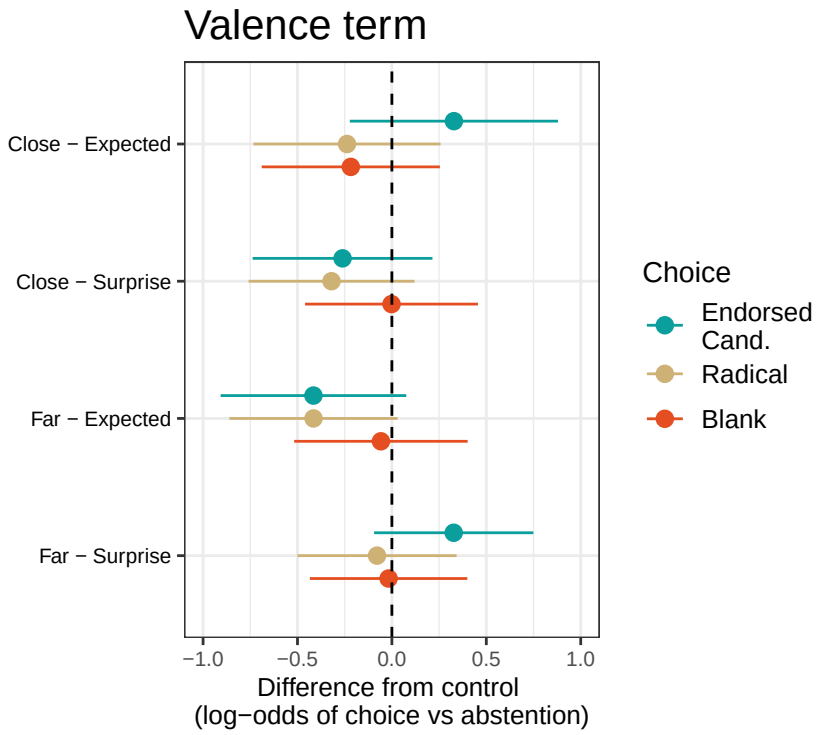
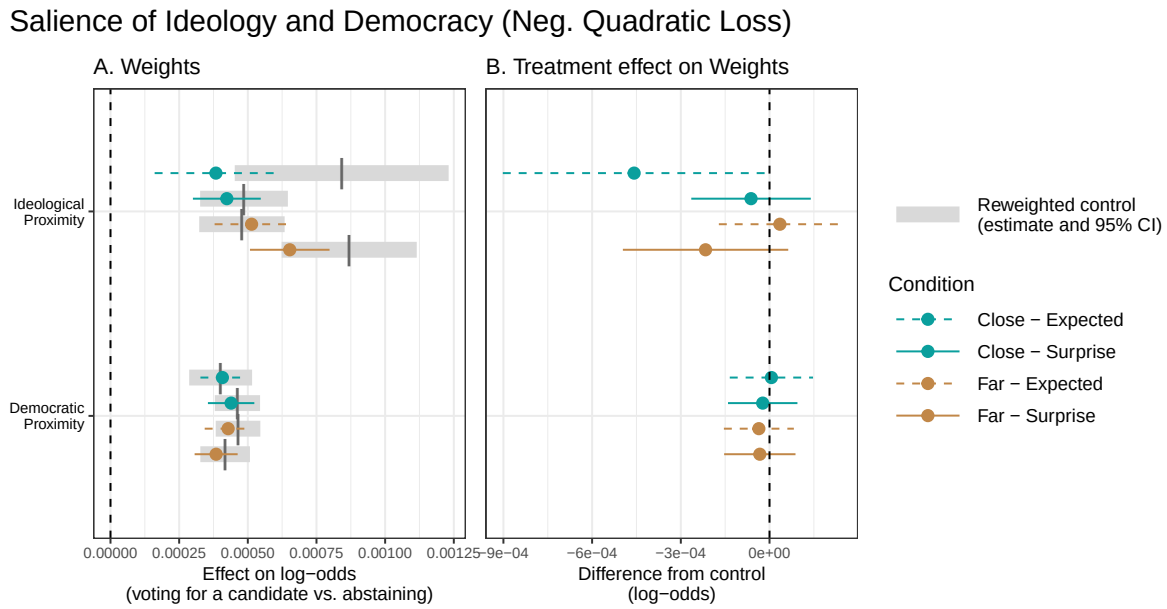


Figure A.7: Effect on Valence Terms - Mean Distances

Note: Distances are held at their mean rather than at 0.



Note: Control reweighted to match each treatment group on pre−treatment distances. SE clustered at the respondent level.
In panel A, the grey band and tick show each treatment group's reweighted control (95% CI and estimate).

Figure A.8: Salience by Dimension and Condition - Neg. Quadratic Loss

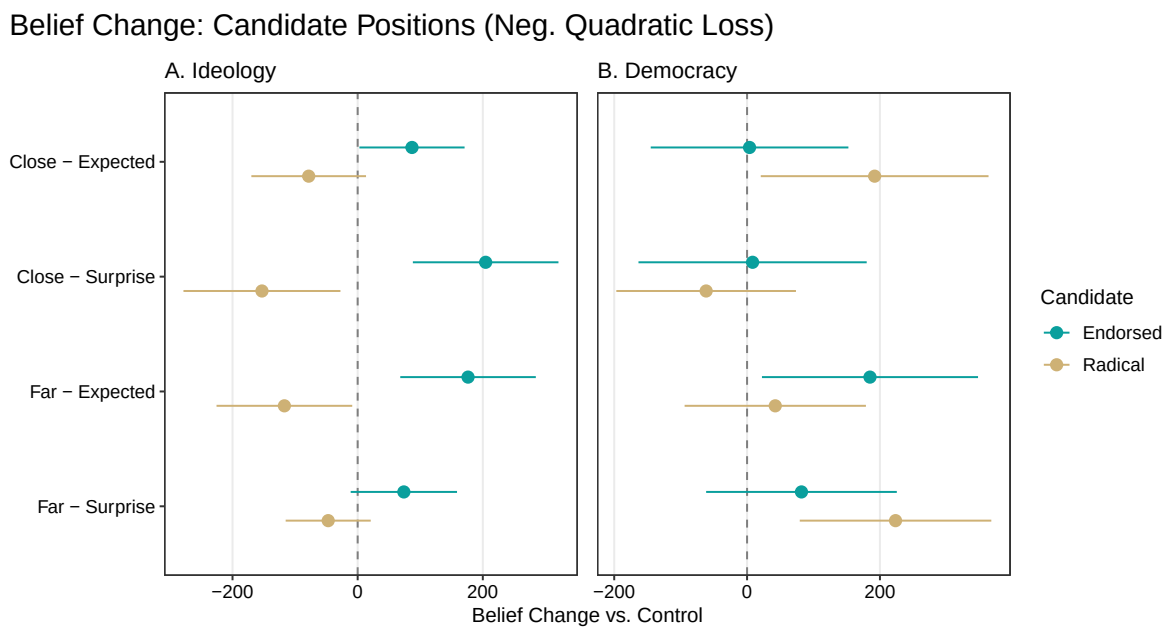


Figure A.9: Belief Update - Neg. Quadratic Loss

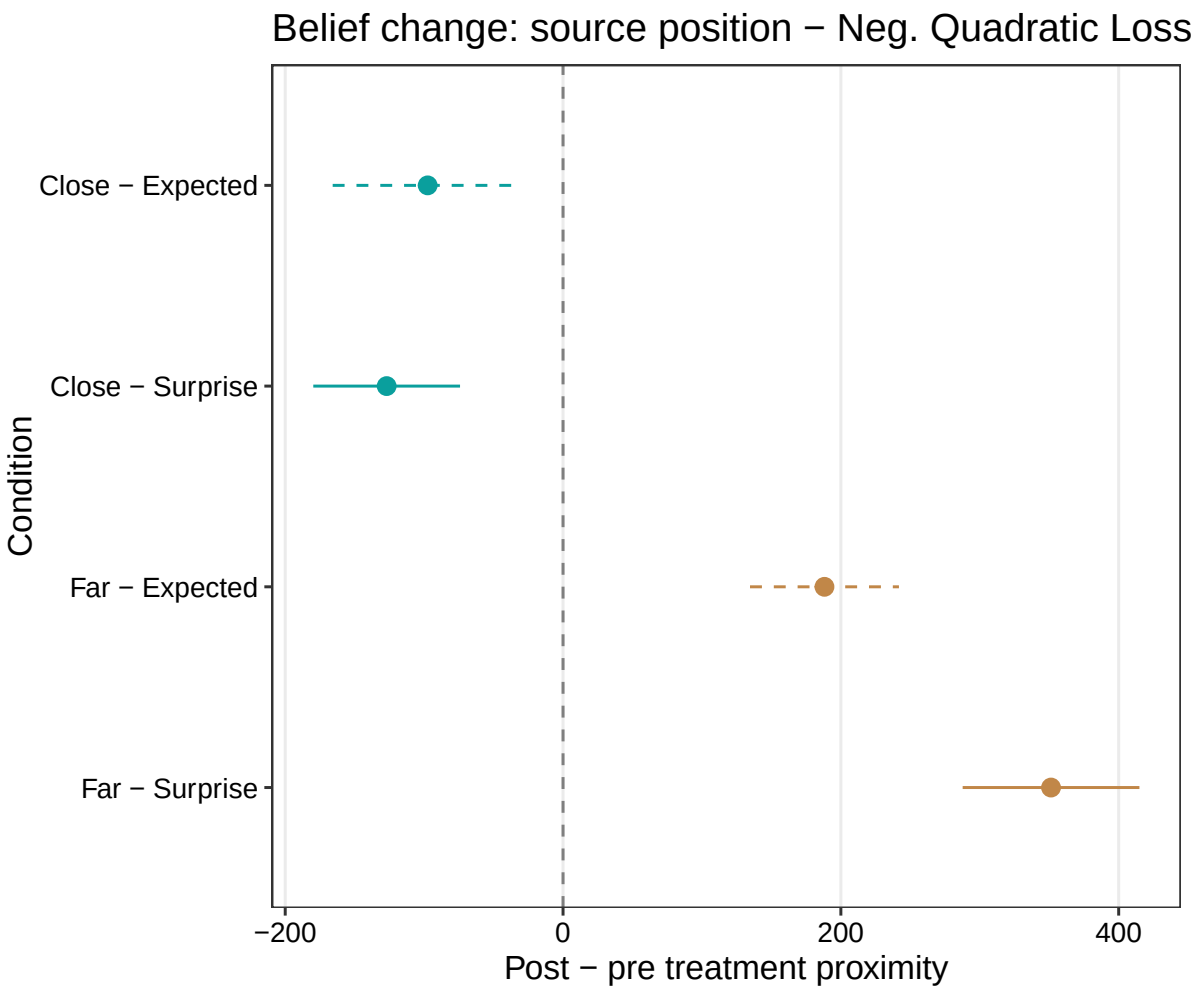


Figure A.10: Belief update: respondent and source ideology - Neg. Quadratic Loss

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