Democracy Corrupted: Apex Corruption and the Erosion of Democratic Values*

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Abstract

Democratic values are eroding just as citizens perceive increasing corruption, with numerous cases implicating the highest-level politicians. Could perceived increases in *apex corruption* be weakening democracy? We first present event study analyses of more than 170 high-profile corruption scandals involving some of the most prominent politicians in 17 Latin American countries. We show that in the aftermath of such *apex corruption* scandals, support for democracy falls by $0.07sd$, support for authoritarianism rises by 11% and violent protests rise by 70%. We complement these results with a field experiment in Mexico. Randomized exposure to footage of apex corruption scandals, particularly implicating politicians known for their *anti*-corruption platforms, decreases individuals' support for democracy by $0.15sd$, willingness to trust politicians and neighbors in incentivized games by 18% and 11%, volunteering as election observers by 45%, and actual voter turnout by about $5pp$, while raising stealing from local mayors by 4%. The undermining of democratic values produces latent effects that even cumulate four months later. Seeking solutions, priming national identity proved an unsuccessful antidote, but providing exposure to national stock index funds holds some promise.

JEL: D72, D73, C93, C72, D02, D91, K42, O10, P00, Z1
Keywords: apex corruption, apex honesty, democratic recession, trust, institutions, civic norms, voting, nation-building, finance, populism, field experiment

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"Corruption is the poison of democracy"

Mario Vargas Llosa

1 Introduction

Democratic institutions of government face severe challenges in many countries around the world (Diamond, 2022; V-DEM, 2023).[1] Political parties avowedly skeptical of democratic institutions are taking power, admitted to ruling coalitions in a quarter of countries as of 2020 (Funke et al., 2023). While the willingness of citizens to stand up for democratic institutions is often seen as a key driver of democratic resilience (Graham and Svolik, 2020; Besley and Persson, 2019; Claassen, 2020; Acemoglu et al., 2024), around the world, surveys suggest that citizens' *dissatisfaction* with democracy has increased by 10 percentage points since the mid-1990s (Foa et al., 2020). In Latin America, the focus of our study, satisfaction with democracy has fallen by 15 percentage points (Figure 1(a)) even while the share of citizens who say democracy is preferable to authoritarian government fell from 65% in 2010 to 51% in 2018 (Latinobarometro, 2008-2018).[2] Diagnosing the underlying causes for this crisis of faith in democracy is crucial for uncovering solutions to reverse it.

Even as faith in democracy has been falling, citizens perceive that corruption is on the rise, with many cases implicating the highest-level politicians. References to corruption have doubled in English and tripled in Spanish language news outlets since 2000 (see Figure OA-1). In Latin America, the share of people who say corruption is their country's most important problem has more than doubled, from 4% in 2010 to 10% in 2018 (Figure 1(b)). Latin America is not alone: for example, the United States shows similar patterns as well (see Figures OA-2 and OA-3.)

Are these macro correlations coincidental, or could perceived increases in corrupt acts by high-level politicians be eroding democracy? In this paper, we empirically evaluate whether declines in democratic values are the result of *apex corruption*, which we define as *corrupt* acts—the misuse of public office for private gain— implicating *apex*— high-level— politicians.[3] Measuring the causal effect of *apex* corruption is very challenging, particularly given the selection and strategic decisions involved in covering, alleging, and engaging in corrupt activity. Further, increased coverage of corrupt activity could actually be positive for democracy, reflecting the important role of political watchdogs, opposition groups and a free media in fostering increased transparency and political accountability (e.g. Ferraz and Finan, 2008; Dunning et al., 2019; Guriev et al., 2020;

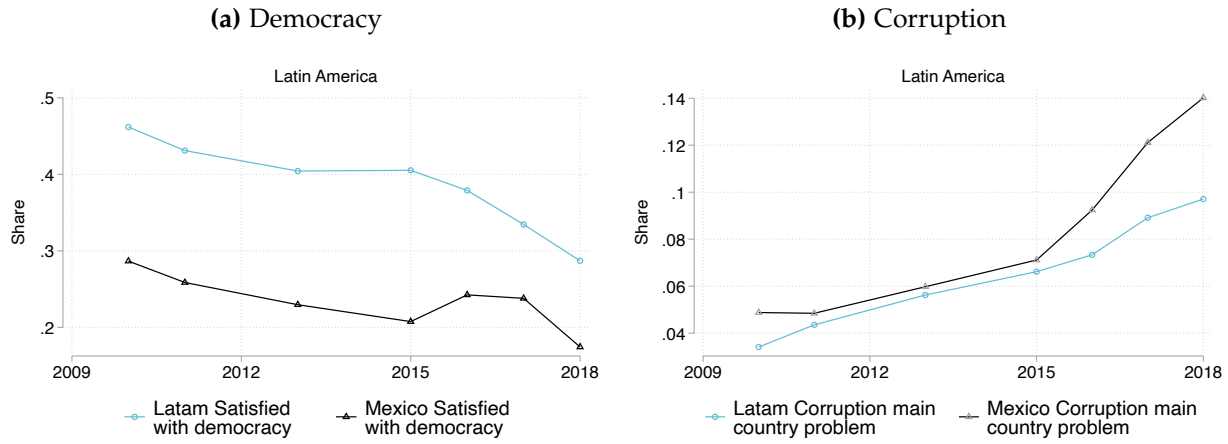
[1] The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2022 fell to 1986 levels (V-DEM, 2023). This is echoed by US President Biden, who in a prominent speech in September 2022 cautioned "*[A]s I stand here tonight, equality and democracy are under assault. We do ourselves no favor to pretend otherwise.*"

[2] In the United States, the share of citizens considering it essential to live in a democracy was 71% for those born in 1930s but only 29% for those born in the 1980s (Mounk, 2018) (see also Figure OA-2).

[3] Our study complements other prominent explanations for democratic backsliding, all of which are likely to play a role. These include: financial crises and economic stagnation (e.g. Przeworski, 2019), austerity policies and government ineffectiveness (e.g. Howell and Moe, 2020; Fetzer, 2019), and the rise of social media and polarization. See Campante et al., eds (2023) for a very useful overview.

Larreguy et al., 2020).

Figure 1: Concerns about Corruption Rise as Democratic Satisfaction Falls



The figure depicts trends in corruption and satisfaction with democracy using Latinobarometer surveys from 2009 to 2018. Panel (a) reports the share that say they are very satisfied or satisfied with democracy. Panel (b) reports the share of respondents that answered "corruption" when asked, "What is the main problem in the country?" With more than 30 alternatives coded. We report the moving averages for the current and previous year.

Yet, we argue that increases in perceptions, not to mention the reality, of *apex corruption* could also be *particularly harmful* for democratic institutions. *Apex* politicians differ from regular politicians not only in their heightened ability to shape state organizations and influence policymaking directly, but also by their prominence, with more citizens aware of who they are and their actions, and aware that others are too. These differentiating features also make them likely to be particularly destructive of the *complementary organizations, internalized norms and beliefs* that comprise *liberal democratic institutions*.[4]

We build on a theoretical literature that emphasizes a number of reasons why this may be so (see below). First, when citizens are exposed to evidence of corruption by apex politicians, they are more likely to stop trusting the state *organizations* over which apex politicians have influence, including those that are meant to prevent corruption and support electoral fairness. Further, citizens may also perceive such otherwise successful politicians to be examples to emulate, influencing *norms*. They may also change their *beliefs*, inferring from the success of apex politicians that the system tolerates, if not condones, such corrupt practices. The prominence of apex politicians also naturally implies that there is heightened mutual, if not common, knowledge

[4] Here we build upon the definition of *institutions* developed by Greif (2006).

of their corrupt acts.[5] Thus, scandals involving apex politicians are more likely to have impact on the beliefs of individuals about the pervasiveness of corruption more generally. Given that corruption often involves strategic complementarities: that one's incentives to cheat increases with one's belief that others do the same (see e.g. Mauro (1995); Klašnja et al. (2018)), the stronger resultant effects on beliefs can lead not only to decreases in support for democratic systems of government in general, they may further manifest themselves in greater incentives to cheat, reduced trust in other citizens, and may even undermine internalized norms. In this paper, we test whether apex corruption does indeed have such causal effects.

We adopt two complementary strategies to do so. The first employs event studies of more than 170 naturally occurring apex corruption scandals in 17 Latin American countries over 10 years, providing substantial external validity. The second strategy consists of a field experiment in Mexico where we expose a randomized set of citizens to evidence of actual corruption by apex politicians, and study its impact on attitudes, behaviors, and longer-run outcomes.

In our first strategy, we combine large-scale survey data with an event study exploiting the *exact* timing of apex corruption scandals in 17 Latin American countries from 2008 to 2018. Using an identification strategy building on that of Durante et al. (2020), we compare the answers of respondents surveyed a few days before versus a few days after the scandal. We find that relative to otherwise similar respondents surveyed just before an apex corruption scandal, those surveyed just afterward reveal lower support for democracy by 0.07 standard deviations (σ), and a fall in trust in democratic institutions also by 0.07σ, even while their preference for authoritarianism increases by 11%. They are also 30% more likely to perceive corruption to be the *main* problem faced by the country. The effect size on the democracy index is correlationally equivalent to finishing college vs not. These results are not driven by general pessimism: satisfaction with the state of the economy and other attitudes are unchanged. Instead, people appear to relate the problem to democratic institutions.

We augment these results with data on protests from the Mass Mobilization (MM) Data Project 2009–2018. This allows us to look at actual behavior and study longer-run outcomes. We further compare the effects on *non-violent* protests, which are more likely to be conducive to democratization and potentially complementary with formal democratic institutions in supporting accountability, to those on *violent* protests– that are more likely to indicate that citizens lack faith in national institutions to successfully process political disagreements non-violently. In an event-study design controlling for country-year, month and day-of-week fixed effects, we find that, unlike non-violent protests, the occurrence of apex corruption scandals increases violent protests by 70% ($1.6pp$). The rise in violent protests lingers even 120 days after the scandal. This result highlights how the corroding effects of apex corruption scandals go beyond survey responses and perceptions and influence political *behaviors* as well.

[5] See Chwe (2013) Morris and Shin (2002).

In the second strategy, we implemented a large-scale randomized control trial (RCT) with over 3,300 citizens that we recruited door-to-door from both 69 (rural) municipalities and the capital city of the state of Oaxaca in Mexico in the run-up to the 2021 federal congressional elections. This setting provides an especially valuable environment to test the effects of apex corruption and the mechanisms through which it operates. Oaxaca had emerged as a strong locus of support for the incumbent president, Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) who had won election in 2018 as an anti-corruption crusader, on a platform of *apex honesty*. Therefore, we can examine how randomly assigned evidence of apex corruption involving AMLO's own family members compare in their effects to acts of corruption by leading opposition politicians and evaluate other potential mechanisms in influencing democratic values and behaviors.

Specifically, our basic experiment compares a control group against a set of two *apex corruption treatments*. These involved showing citizens 3-minute videos which, besides presenting official statistics on corruption and bribes in Mexico, showed real footage of apex politicians taking stacks of cash. One of those videos —which we call the *incumbent corruption video*— features the brother of the incumbent president, and the other —the *opposition video*— features senators and leading members of the two main opposition parties exchanging bribes.

Our basic RCT results confirm the main results of the event-studies. First, randomized exposure to evidence of apex corruption raises corruption perceptions by 0.23σ while simultaneously lowering support for democracy by 0.16σ.[6] This is accompanied by an undermining of trust in democratic institutions by 0.19σ. The effects are particularly marked among ex ante supporters of the incumbent president. Consistent with the logic of coordination and strategic complementarities, these corrosive effects also spill over, reducing trust in other citizens as well (by 0.11σ). Further, and consistent with our pre-registered hypotheses, the effects on perceptions of corruption tend to be higher for those exposed to evidence of *apex corruption by the incumbent* (0.27σ) rather than by the opposition (0.18σ, p-value of a greater effect: 0.06).[7] This is consistent with the widespread beliefs about the *apex honesty* of the incumbent president and the lack thereof of the opposition. While both corruption treatments undermine support for democracy by similar amounts, the incumbent corruption treatment also has significantly greater effects on undermining trust in institutions (0.28σ vs 0.10σ, p-value of a greater effect: 0.001) and on people more generally (0.18σ vs 0.05σ, p-value of a greater effect: 0.007).

We next go beyond self-reported measures and examine *behaviors*: in particular how evidence of apex corruption can change how individuals choose to interact with the *organizations* and how it changes *beliefs and internalized norms* that constitute democratic institutions. As behavioral measures of support for the *organizations* necessary for democracy, we gave respondents the opportunity to donate to the autonomous agency tasked with implementing fair elections (the *Instituto Nacional Electoral, INE)* in two ways: either money—to buy drinking water for poll

[6] The indices we use to measure these effects were prespecified in AEARCTR-0007770.

[7] See AEARCTR-0007770.

booth workers in the upcoming election— or time —by registering themselves as an electoral observer.[8] Further, as an incentivized measure of individuals' *beliefs* in the trustworthiness of political figures and fellow citizens, we arranged for a set of respondents to play two trust games with an anonymous counterpart: either a politician or neighbor, involving real stakes (building on the *lab in the field* literature, including Karaja and Rubin (2022), Alan et al. (2021) etc., see also Sapienza et al. (2013)). Finally, we also examine whether apex corruption can alter *internalized norms* against cheating. A random subset played a version of the Resource Allocation Game as a measure of propensity to steal, either from a donation intended to go to the municipal mayor for public projects, or from a random neighbor (building on Lowes et al. (2017)). We find that evidence of apex corruption has effects on each of these behaviors that are broadly consistent with the attitudinal measures in the surveys.[9]

Beyond these immediate responses, we were able to access administrative data on turnout among the universe of potential voters in July's 2021 election, through a special arrangement with the Electoral Authority of Mexico. We find that the apex corruption videos decrease *actual voting* in Federal Congressional elections by about $5pp$ to $7.8pp$ on average (relative to a turnout rate around 57%). Further, using a follow-up survey four months post-treatment, we find that there are persistent effects of apex corruption on undermining support for democracy: though corruption perceptions among the treatment and control groups converge over time, the undermining of democratic values not only lingers, it appears to even accumulate in the presence of further evidence of apex corruption. And when respondents are exposed to new evidence of not just one but *two* brothers of the incumbent president taking bribes, the undermining of support for democracy become even more pronounced among individuals previously exposed to treatment in the first wave.[10]

We implemented a set of further treatments to shed further light on the mechanism and potential solutions. We contrast the effects of direct exposure to evidence of corruption with that of poor economic and policy performance. We find that the economic ineffectiveness video also raises perceptions of corruption, as well as decreases expressed preferences for democracy. However it does not undermine trust in fellow-citizens, including most incentivized measures of democracy-supporting behaviors, and it actually *increases* turnout. We interpret these effects as suggesting that economic underperformance is a distinct, and likely complementary, channel to corruption perceptions in undermining democratic support. While information on economic ineffectiveness can *spur* voters' willingness to hold politicians accountable, the revelation of actual apex corrupt activity can be more corrosive, undermining societal trust, pro-social behaviors, and

[8] Electoral observers are volunteers trained by INE to be present during election day at polling stations.

[9] Exposure to the Incumbent Corruption video decreases the willingness to be an electoral observer by 45% and decreases the average amounts entrusted to politicians and neighbors in the trust game by 11% and 6% respectively. Finally, respondents exhibit increased willingness for deceit in the resource allocation game: they keep 5% more money when the rest was slated to go to the municipal mayor, and (weakly) 2.7% more from their neighbors as well (p-value of increased stealing: 0.14). On these dimensions, too, the Opposition treatment tends to have more muted effects.

[10] See our preregistration of the followup experiment in *AEARCTR-0008170*.

faith in voting itself.

Our intention in the field experiment was to diagnose the causal effects of informing individuals about apex corruption and to begin to uncover how we can mitigate its potential ill-effects and strengthen democratic institutions. Therefore, we complete the paper by testing two promising interventions– common identity and common financial exposures. We commissioned a bespoke *nation-building* video from a professional media designer to prime *common identity* to participants, reminding them of rich cross-cutting aspects of Mexico's culture, from its food, music, sports and shared sacrifice, fortitude in the face of adversity, and history, in which they might justly take pride (see e.g. Akerlof and Kranton (2000); Durante et al. (2020); Levendusky (2018); Shayo (2020); Rohner and Zhuravskaya (2023); Esposito et al. (2023); Voelkel et al. (2022)). Despite being appreciated for its quality, nation-building treatment itself had modest, even negative effects. It raises stated support for democracy somewhat (0.069σ, p-value=0.092) but, on average, had no, or, if anything, a backlash effect on civic political behaviors.

After measuring the short-run outcomes of the video treatments, we also implemented an alternative treatment with the potential for social spillovers: treating a subset of individuals in the urban sample with shared financial exposure to the common good– and common risks– of the national economy through the stock market (adapted from Jha and Shayo (2019)).[11] We find that shared financial exposure yielded encouraging (though suggestive) evidence of positive effects that offset some of the negative impacts of apex corruption. The treatment effect of stock exposure on the treated raised support for democracy by 0.8σ (p-value=0.04), trust in other citizens by 0.43σ (p-value = 0.16), and trust in politicians by 0.58σ (p-value =0.04). The propensity to turnout to vote also increased by $5pp$ (relative to a 57% average turnout rate), though this is not precisely estimated.

We contribute to several strands of the literature. First, on corruption: a large and growing literature studies its extent (Svensson, 2003; Reinikka and Svensson, 2004; Fisman, 2001), source (Fisman and Miguel, 2007), organization (Shleifer and Vishny, 1993; Olken and Barron, 2009), detection (Zitzewitz, 2012), and policies to fight it (Olken, 2007) (see also Fisman and Golden (2017)). An innovative emerging subset of these studies its effects on cheating by citizens (Ajzenman, 2022; Gulino and Masera, 2023), and on incumbent reelection, prices and economic activity, especially when highlighted by the media (Ferraz and Finan, 2008; Di Tella and Schargrodsky, 2003; Guriev et al., 2020; Colonnelli and Prem, 2021; Enríquez et al., 2024)). Another prominent stream of research has focused on measuring the effects of disclosure of results of audits of local government on accountability, including turnout and voting against incumbents (e.g. Ferraz and Finan, 2008; Chong et al., 2015; Arias et al., 2022). These includes pathbreaking work by Chong

[11] Treated individuals received 200 pesos (about $ 10) of financial assets tracking the broad S&P BMV IPC Mexican stock index, receiving text messages allowing them to trade up to 25 pesos each week. Jha and Shayo (2019) show that in Israel, a related though monetarily stronger intervention among participants in an internet panel changed the political attitudes of individuals as they came to evaluate policies, including that of peace, based upon their benefits to the broader economy. It also increased generalized trust, particularly among the politically polarized (Jha et al., 2023).

et al. (2015), who show that providing flyers indicating public spending irregularities by Mexican municipal mayors can '*crush the hope*', and reduce local voter turnout for both incumbent and challengers (by about 2.5pp). However, the results of such audit dissemination studies more generally have been mixed (Dunning et al., 2019).

We build upon and contribute to this literature in several ways. In terms of treatments, we focus our attention on the study of *apex corruption*– focusing on high profile scandals (rather than audits of expenses) involving some of the highest-level politicians (rather than local governments). In doing so, we provide evidence consistent with an important set of theoretical contributions pointing out how leaders and prominent figures can affect culture and institutions, including by persuading and organizing followers (e.g. Hermalin, 1998), creating reference behaviors that coordinate group action (Akerlof and Holden, 2016), as well as affecting expectations and social norms (Bursztyn et al., 2020; Acemoglu and Jackson, 2015). In this way, our paper also adds to a growing body of empirical work demonstrating that individual leaders and central figures in hierarchical networks can shape organizational performance (e.g. Bertrand and Schoar, 2003; Jackson and Yariv, 2011; Bandiera et al., 2020), the efficacy of public policy campaigns (Banerjee et al., 2019; Alatas et al., 2021) and can even have macro-level political and economic consequences (e.g. Jones and Olken, 2005; Jha and Wilkinson, 2012; Dippel and Heblich, 2021; Bai et al., 2022; Cagé et al., 2023; Jha and Wilkinson, 2023). We show that corrupt acts by apex politicians can have substantial effects not only on norms, beliefs and organizations, but spillover into broader economic, political and cultural behaviors well.[12]

In terms of outcomes, while several important studies focus on turnout, we focus on understanding the decline in *democratic values* (e.g. Lipset, 1959; Almond and Verba, 1963; Besley and Persson, 2019; Acemoglu et al., 2024), including support for and trust in the organizations, beliefs and internalized norms that comprise liberal democratic *institutions* (Greif, 2006).[13] By measuring the effects on each of these components, and combining these measures with administrative data on voting and incident data on violent protests, we can construct a rich picture of the corrosive effects of apex corruption scandals on democratic institutions and society. We show, for instance, that while the disclosure of high-profile corruption scandals does lead to punishment at the ballot box, there is also a cost in terms of support for democratic institutions and civic disengagement. Further, we show that these effects can even accumulate, further undermining democratic support as new scandals emerge over time.

Despite the importance of *democratic values*, establishing the causal determinants of democratic decline has hitherto remained highly challenging.[14] Important contributions, including Fuchs-

[12] Beyond this, our treatments allow us to distinguish the impacts of exposure to evidence of government underperformance (potentially by honest officials) versus actual corrupt activity (potentially by nonetheless effective politicians). The fact that the effects on turnout of these different treatments go in different directions may, in part, account for the mixed results uncovered by Dunning et al. (2019) and other major contributions to the literature.

[13] A pioneering literature also documents negative correlations (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003; Clausen et al., 2011) between corruption and attitudes toward government that are consistent with a number of our results.

[14] Prominent recent contributions are careful when interpreting results causally. For instance, Acemoglu et al. (2024)

Schündeln and Schündeln (2015); Acemoglu et al. (2024), have used parallel trends assumptions or waves of democratization as instruments to show that support for democracy increases as citizens spend more time of their lives in (successful) democracies. We combine a quasi-experimental study in 17 countries with an RCT in Mexico, permitting both strong external validity and causal rigor. Paralleling an important survey experiment literature that studies how informing citizens about inequality or social mobility changes their preferences for redistribution and government spending (Kuziemko et al., 2015; Alesina et al., 2018), we study how informing citizens about corruption affects their preferences and behaviors in support of democracy. We thereby show that democracies that are unsuccessful in tackling corruption may also see their support erode.[15] Further, by randomizing the timing of the information and by implementing a follow-up survey, we can also study short and longer-run outcomes and shed more light on the mechanisms.

Finally, having established the effects of apex corruption, we also innovate by taking steps to assess countervailing treatments, including testing the effects of making shared identity salient, and testing whether another treatment with social spillovers: shared financial exposures in the common good. We find some reason for hope.

2 Context

Examples of *apex corruption*— corruption by leading political figures— are unfortunately all-too-common, and can involve very substantial sums.[16] For example, in Latin America, in 2019, a single company (Odebrecht) was disclosed to have paid almost $ 1 Billion in bribes in order to obtain contracts. Alleged recipients include apex politicians such as Brazilian President Michel Temer, the vice-president of Ecuador, Jorge Glas, *four* ex-presidents of Peru, among others.[17] Latin America is far from alone.[18] The Panama Papers implicated 140 prominent politicians in 50 countries, spanning both rich and developing nations.[19] Even in a country often perceived to be in a low-corruption equilibrium like the United States, the leading presidential candidates in each of the 2016, 2020 and 2024 election cycles (or close family members) have faced allegations

write that "the timing and nature of the effects are *consistent with* a causal interpretation." [our italics].

[15] While similar mechanisms may be present in autocracies, this paper focuses on democratic backsliding *in democracies* both because it is a critical issue and because our measures of voting and volunteering are more appropriate in this context.

[16] Beyond undermining faith in democracy, economically, too, apex corruption can be very costly, as resources may be misallocated away from their most productive use to towards networks of cronies and to purchases that are easier to hide (Shleifer and Vishny, 1993; Khwaja and Mian, 2005). By lowering investment (Johnson et al., 2002) and generating rent-seeking, corruption may also slow down economic growth. Finally, it can render government programs ineffective (Reinikka and Svensson, 2004; Ferraz et al., 2012). It may also contribute to economic inequality, as it typically favors the already well-off.

[17] See: "*Odebrecht case: politicians world-wide suspected in bribery scandal*", BBC News, 17 April 2019.

[18] For example, President Mobutu Sese Seko is believed to have looted the treasury of Zaire for $5 billion dollars, and Suharto and Ferdinand Marcos, presidents of Indonesia and the Philippines, are estimated to have embezzled between 10 to 35 billion dollars.

[19] See "*The Power Players: Politicians in the Panama Papers, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*, 2016. and Guriev et al. (2020) who show that those featured suffer electorally in places already benefiting from the rollout of 3G smartphones.

and investigations for corruption.

Because corruption is illegal, the degree to which it is in fact pervasive is notoriously hard to measure, despite progress in monitoring and forensic approaches (Zitzewitz, 2012; Olken and Pande, 2012). Certainly, citizens believe that corruption is widespread: 68% of citizens in Latin America in 2018 believed that half or more of their politicians are corrupt (LAPOP 2018). Strikingly, Figure OA-3 shows that close to 80% of both Americans and Latin Americans agree with the statement that "*corruption [is] widespread throughout the government in this country*".[20] In our own survey, respondents believe that 67.2 out of every 100 pesos of tax revenue are stolen.

Indeed, media reports of corrupt activities have risen along with citizens' disillusionment in the probity of their politicians. Figure OA-1 uses data from the LexisNexis corpus to show that media reports of corruption have *doubled* in English and *tripled* in Spanish from 1999 to 2019, even normalizing for the growth of media reports in general. Alternative measures like bribe paying by firms and reports by experts have also increased (Figures OA-4 and OA-5), suggesting the media reports may not be entirely divorced from on-the-ground practice.

This has generated what many see as an anti-corruption wave in Latin America and elsewhere too. "*Corruption has become very obvious... Society is just fed up*" (Washington Post). This arguably also creates opportunities for charismatic political figures promising "to drain the swamp", i.e. advocating for change and national renewal often at the expense of existing democratic institutions seen as corrupt and compromised.

The case of Mexico. A prominent example is Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), Mexico's incumbent president at the time of our study. AMLO ran his 2018 presidential campaign with a strong anti-corruption message as a core theme. He rallied voters with a battle cry against corruption and proposed substantial reforms, leading both national and international media observers to label him an "*anti-corruption crusader*".[21] He pledged to use savings from eliminating corruption to finance social policies and fight poverty, and founded a new party: *Morena— the Movement for National Regeneration*.

This approach appears to have resonated with many voters, who voted for him in a landslide. AMLO's decisive victory was arguably a strong rejection by voters of continued *apex corruption* in which many would likely implicate AMLO's predecessor as president, Enrique Peña Nieto. Nieto

[20] Other data sources and question align: when people in the US are asked "How high would they place their views on corruption in the US on a 10-point scale, where 10 is the highest", the average answer is 8 in the World Values Survey 2017.

[21] "*López Obrador, an anti-corruption crusader, has dominated polls this election season, riding a wave of anger about government corruption...*" (Texas Tribune, July 1st 2018). "*The left-wing anti-establishment candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, will make tackling corruption his top priority after winning Mexico's presidential election on Sunday*" (BBC). "*Mexico's new leader is riding a wave of anti-corruption furor that's changing Latin America*", and that "*The new president insists that his anti-corruption campaign —including a 50-point plan to fight corruption and reduce privileges for officials — will be transformative.*" (Washington Post, Nov 29, 2018).

was alleged to have directed "*millions in bribes*" while in office.[22] That AMLO won by more than 30 points suggests that many Mexicans believed his promise of *apex honesty* instead. "*The scandals have been too much for citizens...[AMLO] is a very sincere, very human man*," (Interviewed citizen, Washington Post). AMLO himself has cultivated the image of honesty by using commercial aircraft and driving a cheap car, by constantly repeating his motto '*no somos iguales*' (we are different) and his campaign slogan '*honestidad valiente*' (courageous honesty).

Both voting behavior and official national surveys suggest that people's beliefs both in the probity of the person of the president and the prospect of lower institutional corruption did change. Figure OA-6 shows that between 2017 (the year before he took office) and 2019 (one year after he took office), there was a 21 percentage point drop in the fraction of people who believe the Mexican presidency to be corrupt. A well-regarded survey in Mexico showed after the 2018 election 52% of citizens thought corruption would decrease with AMLO vs 22% that thought it would increase (Reforma). At the time of our study, even while many Mexicans regarded the main opposition parties (PRI, PAN, PRD) to be highly corrupt, they also continued to believe that AMLO and the Morena party were clean. In our baseline survey, only 4% think the incumbent party is more corrupt than the opposition.[23] This may have further given the Morena party latitude to introduce an electoral reform law that cuts the funding of the well-regarded independent electoral agency (INE), and may lead to the firing of 85% of its employees.[24]

We argue that AMLO's movement both provides an intriguing case in which a single leader appears to have had some influence in shaping corruption perceptions and support for democratic institutions in society, and also a valuable empirical environment to test for differential effects when high expectations related to *apex honesty* are not met. We thus pre-specified that evidence of corruption involving *anti-corruption* Morena party would have stronger effects than evidence of corruption involving opposition parties, as the latter were already widely considered to be compromised.

3 The effect of apex corruption scandals across Latin America

Despite the grave nature of the current democratic recession, its causes in general, and their relationship to apex corruption in particular, remain unclear. To shed new empirical light on the latter, we use two distinct but complementary methods. We first describe the event study component of the paper before turning to the randomized control trial. Our first approach measures the effects of apex corruption scandals across Latin America. We use large-scale survey data combined with an event study exploiting the exact timing of 176 apex corruption scandals in 17 countries from 2008 to 2018.

[22] See "*Will an Investigation of a Former Mexican President Lead to Charges?*" New York Times, August 3, 2022.

[23] This could be for a number of reasons: AMLO's charismatic leadership, motivated reasoning, the "what you see is all there is" heuristic (Enke, 2020) (Morena was a new party with little track record, including a corruption one).

[24] See e.g. Anne Applebaum, "How Do You Stop Lawmakers From Destroying the Law?", the Atlantic, March 1, 2023..

3.1 Data

Data on corruption scandals. To identify the exact timing of each corruption scandal, we scraped the Twitter news feeds of the 4 major news outlets in each of 17 Latin American countries for the period 2008–2018 (see Table OA-5 for a list) searching for words related to corruption, such as "corrupt," "corruption," "bribery," and "illicit enrichment", among others. We supplemented this with news reports from the LexisNexis Spanish newspapers database using the same words for 15 countries during the same time period.[25] This resulted in 142,000+ news-tweets and 10,000+ LexisNexis news reports for all countries and years. Because we want to focus on apex corruption, we define an event to be an 'apex corruption scandal' if it satisfies all of the following conditions: (i) The news event had to be covered by at least two news channels in the country on the same day; (ii) those involved in the scandal had to be high-ranked politicians such as presidents, former presidents, ministers, former ministers, opposition leaders, governors, federal congressmen, or high ranking judges[26]; (iii) the news event had to be a *scoop*, that is, the scandal had to be a new scandal and not just continued reportage on an existing one.[27] We identified 176 corruption scandals over the period that satisfied our definition (the complete list of events can be found linked here.) The scandals that intersect with the days where Latinobarometer was being fielded are displayed in Table OA-6.

Some examples of corruption scandals include: the arrest of former president Lula Da Silva for corruption accusations (Brazil), Former president Mauricio Funes accused of money laundering (El Salvador), President Otto Perez's involvement in import bribes (Guatemala), that the opposition leader Keiko Fujimori was declared under investigation by the DEA for money laundering (Peru), that a federal program was used by the Minister of Agriculture to give millions in subsidies to drug traffickers (Colombia), President Juan Orlando Hernández identified as a co-conspirator in a drug trafficking scandal (Honduras), and that Ricardo Martinelli was found receiving bribes from Odebrecht during his presidential period (Panama).[28]

[25] The LexisNexis platform encompasses over 45,000 sources and covers more than 200 countries. The platform however does not have any coverage in Paraguay, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. The word list includes "Corrupt, Corruption, Bribery, Influence peddling, Money laundering, Arrest warrant, Diversion of resources, Diversion of funds, Illicit enrichment, Impunity, Corruption scandal, Prison ex-president, Ex-president investigated, Corrupt politician, Prison president, President investigated, President corrupt."

[26] To screen for importance, besides checking each news item manually with a team of five enumerators, we manually checked there was a spike in Google Trends for the country in that day using the names or positions of the personality involved.

[27] We double-checked criteria (ii) and (iii) manually using Google and Wikipedia. We also checked Wikipedia for any additional political scandals (see, for instance, this list for Chile).

[28] There could be errors of inclusion and exclusion. Errors of inclusion are easier to check since it amounts to researching on the internet if the 176 corruption scandals we report are indeed scandals. We did this by independent checking by research assistants. Errors of exclusion are harder to detect, but given that we are concerned with major scandals, also not that challenging. We do not believe major corruption scandals are excluded from the final list we use in the paper. Regardless, given our short-run event-study research design, the omission of some events would reduce sample size but should not necessarily bias the estimated effect of the included scandals.

Latinobarometer data. Latinobarometer conducts a series of yearly nationally representative surveys covering most Latin American countries. Interviews are conducted in person in house-to-house fieldwork that takes between 1 and 3 months to complete (see Table OA-12). The questionnaires are standardized, enabling comparison across countries, and consist of core questions and questions that change across years. Broadly, they ask about the public's perception of and confidence in political institutions, citizens' political engagement, opinions on economic conditions and policies, views on social issues like inequality, poverty, and education, and, importantly, attitudes towards democratic principles and institutions. Our analysis focuses on individuals' attitudes toward democracy, voting, and trust. We use individual-level survey data from waves of the Latinobarometer conducted between 2008 and 2018 in 17 Latin American countries.[29] Because Barometer datasets for Africa and Asia have been widely used in economics (e.g. Nunn and Wantchekon (2011); Durante et al. (2020); Bazzi et al. (2019)), we do not delve into more detail here (please see Latinobarometro.org for more information).

We group the main outcome variables into four sets, and create indices where more than one related variable exists. The first outcome measures the perceived importance of corruption. The exact question we use for this is: *"In your opinion, which is the most important problem facing the country today?"*. Our corruption variable is an indicator = 1 if the person stated *corruption* as the main problem and zero otherwise.[30] We focus on this variable since it was asked consistently across years and reflects citizens' major concerns about corruption. Our second outcome variable is an index of support for democracy created by standardizing the sum of the following two variables: 'Support for democracy', equal to 1 for those who agree with the statement "*In some circumstances, an authoritarian government may be preferable*", equal to 2 for those who agree with the statement "*People like me, we don't care about a democratic regime or a non-democratic one*", and equal to 3 for those who agree with the statement "*Democracy is preferable to any other form of government.*". The second variable in the index is 'satisfaction with democracy', and is the response to the following question: *In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, slightly satisfied or not at all satisfied with democracy in your country?* which takes values from 1 to 4 depending on the satisfaction level with democracy, from "Not satisfied at all" to "Very satisfied".

Beyond studying directly stated preferences for democracy and formal democratic organizations, we also study the effect on the complementary beliefs and norms that comprise liberal democratic institutions (Besley and Persson, 2019; Claassen, 2020).[31] Democratic theories put trust

[29] Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, El Salvador, Uruguay. We removed Venezuela because it is not considered a democracy by the experts. Latinobarometer was not implemented in 2019 and given Covid started 2020 we our period covers until 2018. Because we use Twitter to identify scandals, we started only in 2008, before that Twitter information was sparse.

[30] There are more than 30 alternatives including Environment, Unemployment, Insecurity, Drugs, Economic Situation, Migration, etc.

[31] Summarizing global patterns over time, Larry Diamond argues: "*Over the years, I have found that the greatest damage to democracy is done where it is least visible: in the culture. When democracy withers, it often has a lot to do with what citizens think, believe, and value*", and that "*institutional restraints are only as strong as the norms that underpin them.*" (Diamond,

at the heart of the stability of democracy (Mitchell, 1994; Almond and Verba, 1963; Przeworski, 1991). We therefore focus on trust in government, in political parties, and in electoral institutions. Our third outcome variable is thus an index that measures 'Trust in Democratic Institutions', and is the standardized sum of trust in the federal government, trust in political parties, trust in Congress, and trust in the electoral authority, that arise from the questions *"How much do you trust..."*. Answers take values from "No trust at all"= 1 to "A lot of trust." = 4.

Our fourth outcome is 'Support for Authoritarian Alternatives'. Because there is no single question on authoritarianism repeated across years and countries, we pooled several that are analogous and were asked in different years. The outcome variable Authoritarian Alternatives = 1 if respondents answer affirmatively to the questions *"I would support a military government instead of a democratic one"* (2009, 2010, 2011); *"I wouldn't mind if an undemocratic government came to power"* (2008, 2016); *"More than political parties and congress, what we need is a strong leader (2013)*.[32] We believe the four outcomes provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the eroding effects of corruption on support for democracy and are similar to the ones used in Acemoglu et al. (2024)

Finally, we implement checks using outcomes we conjecture would likely be unrelated to corruption scandals. The first, 'Satisfaction with Economic System,' mimics our satisfaction with democracy measure but applied to the economic system instead. It is an indicator =1 if they report satisfaction in the two highest levels to the question *"Rate your satisfaction with the economic system from 1 to 4"*. The second outcome is an assessment of the 'Current macroeconomic situation', using the question *"Rate the economic situation in the country from Very Bad* 1 *to Very Good* 5*"*, where 5 is the highest rating. The third outcome, 'Support for a market economy' measures agreement with the statement *"A market economy is the only system with which [name of the country] can become a developed country"*, =1 if the answer is agree or mildly agree, and 0 otherwise.

Country Level Violent Protest Data. We use country-level data on conflicts from the Mass Mobilization Data Project (MM).[33] The dataset, available for the period 1990–2020, includes information on the date, size, and location of any episodes where 50 or more protesters publicly demonstrate against the state. The dataset decomposes protest into violent and non-violent. MM defines a protest as violent if it includes violence, from riotous behavior that destroys property on a large scale to shooting. Our main variable is an indicator at the country-day level of the occurrence of a violent or non-violent protest. We focus on the years 2009–2019, given that our corruption scandals data is concentrated in those years. There were 362 nonviolent and 152 violent protests during our sample period. The data is organized around corruption scandal events. For each event we examine a window of 120 days before and after the scandal, and record if there

2019). These values, attitudes, and beliefs are typically best measured using survey data (Stantcheva, 2023).

[32] Because there were years that did not include questions eliciting authoritarian preferences, the sample size is smaller for this outcome.

[33] The Mass Mobilization project is sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force, which is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. See https://massmobilization.github.io/about.html.

were protests for each of these days. We do this separately for violent and non-violent protests.

3.2 Empirical strategy

Our empirical strategy consists of comparing perceptions of corruption and stated preferences for democracy for citizens surveyed a few days after a corruption scandal occurs versus those surveyed a few days before, both within the same country and survey round. Concretely, we estimate regression equation 1, where Y_{ictd} are measures of stated preferences for democracy or other outcomes of citizen i in country c in month t on day after the scandal d; X_i is a vector of baseline individual controls[34], $\Gamma_{c,t}$ includes country × year fixed effects, month fixed effects, and day-of-the-week. ϵ_{icdt} is an error term which is heteroscedasticity-robust, clustered either by country×year or by country×year×event day.[35]

$$Y_{ictd} = \alpha + \beta 1(\text{Post Corruption})_{ictd} + \gamma' X_i + \Gamma_{ct} + \epsilon_{ictd} \tag{1}$$

Because Latinobarometer field work often lasts less than two months, we focus on the sample of individuals interviewed in the 15 days before and after the scandal. This includes over 27,000 individuals. Figure OA-7 plots the distribution of observed days before and after corruption events. The need to focus on the period where Latinobarometro is being fielded means that we focus on only 26 scandals in this first part. Note that we cannot guarantee that each respondent actually knew about the scandal, and as such one can view the estimate as an intent-to-treat effect.

In order to interpret the estimated β in our event-study strategy as causal, the identification assumption is that within a window of the corruption scandal event—15 days plus/minus in our case— the *exact* timing of the occurrence of the scandal is as good as random, in the sense that citizens interviewed just right before and right after the scandal would have otherwise had the same potential support for democracy. This is likely to hold since the logistics involved in the implementation of the Latinobarometer survey require many months of preparation (selection of the enumeration sites, setting up of the field teams, etc) and does not change with the occurrence of a corruption scandal, making it implausible that the survey dates of a particular type of citizen are correlated with the exact corruption scandal dates. The same identification strategy has been successfully used by Durante et al. (2020). We further confirm the comparability of the samples before and after the scandals through balance tests, corruption scandal prediction tests, and other tests.

The first concern is that corruption scandals may be strategically released on certain specific dates, for example, on Mondays when more people may be paying attention to the news. This by itself is not a problem for internal validity. It would be a problem if, on those same exact Mondays,

[34] Education, gender, age, employment status, size of the city, a proxy for socioeconomic status, and civil status.

[35] One can think of the treatment variable (the corruption scandal) as a random variable assigned at the country–year-day level. In such a case clustering at the country-year-day level is justified (Abadie et al., 2022).

Latinobarometer surveyed a selection of people who were already disenchanted with democracy, which is unlikely. Nonetheless, we control for month, day-of-month and day-of-week indicators. Likewise, smooth seasonal trends, like proximity to an election, would not be a problem because we rely on a discontinuous event for identification (only 6 events out of 176 of our events happen at or within 30 days of an election).[36]

A second concern is that citizens interviewed right after the scandal are different.[37] We test whether this is the case using observable characteristics. Table OA-2 estimates equation 1, except that instead of controlling for demographics, now the dependent variables are the pre-determined demographics. We fail to reject that citizens interviewed before versus after the election are the same. We also test and fail to reject that the number of refusals to have an interview before a realized interview happened is the same. Below, we also present tests showing that *non-political* attitudes and beliefs are not affected, only political ones. These three sets of tests and the discontinuity of the effect in event studies shown below build confidence that we are estimating the average causal effect of corruption scandals. The experimental evidence we provide is also consistent with this interpretation.

3.3 Effects of apex corruption scandals on support for democracy in Latin America

This section estimates the effects of apex corruption scandals in Latin America on perceptions of corruption as the most important problem, on support for democracy and authoritarianism, as well as on trust in democratic institutions.

Corruption Perceptions. If indeed apex corruption scandals are affecting democracy by making citizens more aware of and concerned about corruption, there should be an increase in the fraction that perceives corruption as the main problem of the country. This is indeed what we find. Column 1 of Table 1 estimates equation 1 where the outcome variable is an indicator for whether the citizen responds that corruption is the most important problem in the country. We find that the fraction of people who think corruption is the most important problem increases by $2.9pp$ (or 31% of the mean). The effect size is equivalent to the difference between (relatively clean) Costa Rica versus Guatemala. This provides a useful manipulation check, demonstrating that our scandals are indeed affecting citizens' perceptions of corruption.

Support for Democracy. As explained in Section 3.1, we created a standardized index to measure support for democracy. Column 2 of Table 1 shows that support for democracy decreases by 0.069σ days after the corruption scandal. Even though this is likely better interpreted as an

[36] To inquire further, we tried to find patterns of corruption scandal occurrence by predicting the exact day the corruption scandal happened using day-of-week, month, day-of-month, and days to the next election indicators. The coefficient estimates are not significant, and in-sample accuracy rates are all below 1% (see Appendix Table OA-1 and Figure OA-8).

[37] This question - about the comparability of those who answer surveys- is often a concern in public opinion research more generally.

Table 1: Effects of Apex Corruption Scandals on Stated Preferences and Trust

	(1) Corruption Main Problem	(2) Democratic Index	(3) Trust Institutions	(4) Authoritarian Index
Corruption	0.029	-0.069	-0.062	0.039
	(0.011)**	(0.035)*	(0.031)*	(0.012)***
	[0.008]***	[0.033]**	[0.031]**	[0.013]***
Observations	25790	27016	27016	11865
R-squared	0.073	0.022	0.033	0.223
Country x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.361

This table shows the effect of corruption scandals in Latin America by analyzing the responses of people interviewed for the Latinobarometer survey within 15 days before and after corruption scandals, estimating equation 1. Robust standard errors clustered by country × year are shown in parentheses, while robust standard errors clustered by country × year × relative distance to corruption scandal grouped in blocks of three days are shown in square brackets. Individual Controls: gender, age, schooling, employment, civil status, size of town, socioeconomic status level, month and day-of-week indicators. Significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

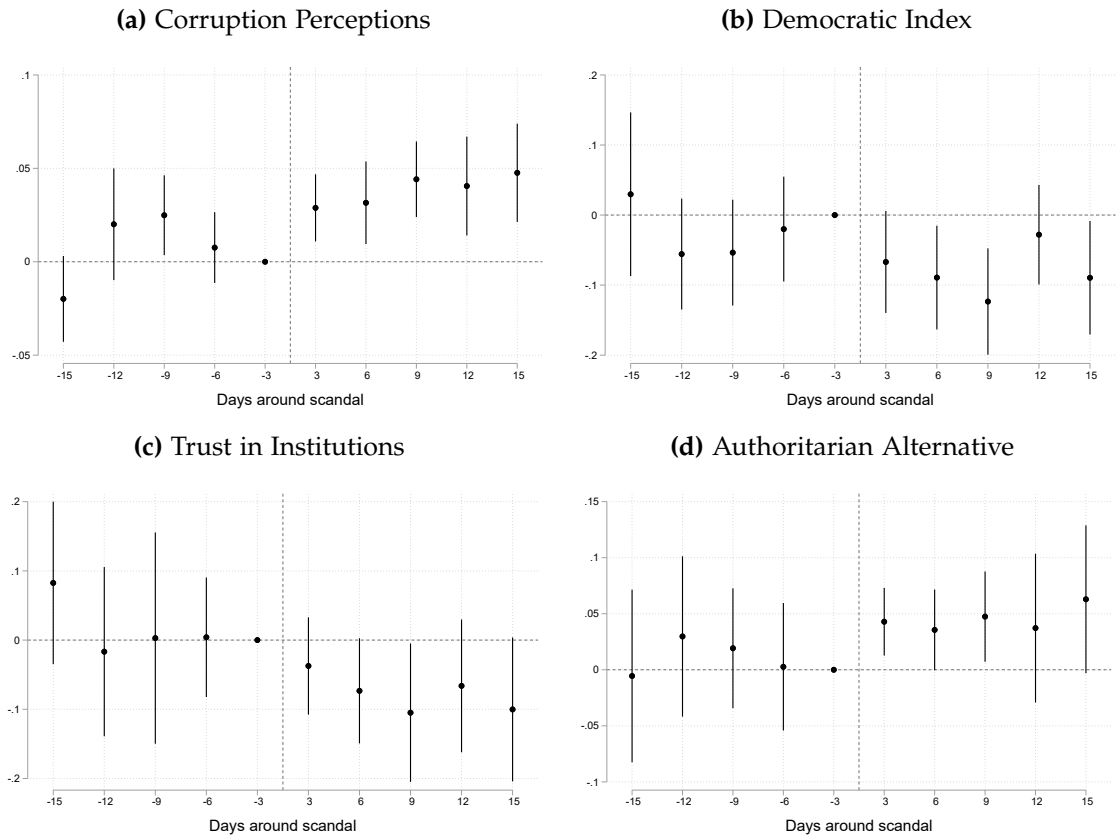
intent to treat effect, its magnitude is not small. It is close to the difference between Chile and Bolivia in our Democratic Index. Correlationally, the effect is equivalent to having a university education vs. just high school, owning a car or a computer vs. not, and reporting to be in a high socioeconomic level (top 1/4 vs. lower 3/4). Given the population size of Latin America, this fraction is equivalent to 11 million adults. Finally, note that this is the effect of a single scandal. The effect size implies that 4.7 scandals per country would be enough to explain the decrease in satisfaction with democracy (measured by our index) in the last decade if they accumulated linearly.[38]

Trust in political institutions. Column 3 in Table 1 estimates the effect in trust in political institutions. We find that trust decreases by 0.062σ. Appendix Table OA-3 shows that trust in all four institutions (Congress, Federal Government, Political Parties, and Electoral Authority) declines by about 10% of their respective means.

Authoritarianism. The decrease in the support for democracy may not necessarily generate an increased preference for authoritarianism, as it may lead to a lack of faith in *all* forms of government. Further, it is possible that despite their disillusionment with democracy, citizens may still prefer democratic institutions to concrete authoritarian alternatives. Yet, as we argue, apex corruption could also make a more authoritarian government, with its promise of strong rules and enforcement, more attractive. This could be particularly the case if citizens find credible an alternative led by *anti-corruption authoritarians*: by which we mean those who promise to root out corruption, even if it may also mean weakening institutional checks and balances. Column 4 shows that citizens' loss of faith in democracy in the aftermath of an apex corruption scandal does

[38] Indeed, as we describe below, we find evidence from the *Another Brother* treatment in our randomized control trial that the effect of apex corruption scandals on democratic support does cumulate as additional evidence of apex corruption becomes available.

Figure 2: Effect of Apex Corruption Scandals: Event Studies



Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals of event study regression in 3-day blocks from 15 days before to 15 days after the corruption scandals. The period between 3 to 1 days before the scandals is normalized to zero. Confidence intervals are based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by country × year × 3-day blocks.

indeed coincide with a rise in support for authoritarianism. We estimate an increase of $3.9pp$ in the authoritarianism index, equivalent to 11% of its mean value.

Figure 2 shows the corresponding event studies for our four main outcomes. We fail to reject the hypothesis of null effects before news of the scandal breaks. However, news of the scandal is accompanied by an *immediate* increase in corruption perceptions, a decrease in support for democracy, a decrease in trust in political institutions, and an increase in the preference for an authoritarian alternative.

A bad news effect? An alternative interpretation of these results are that corruption scandals generate negative affect, i.e. there could be a *bad news* effect that causes people to exhibit short-term pessimism across the board. To assess this mechanism, we can examine if responses change on non-political satisfaction indicators. In particular, we use the question *"In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, rather satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the working of the economic system in the country?"* to generate an indicator that takes the value of one if the respondent answered very satisfied or rather satisfied and zero otherwise. A second question is more concrete and asks *"How would you describe the country's present economic situation? Would you say it is... very good (=5),..., very bad (=1)?"*. A third variable is more ideological and asks for agreement or disagreement with the following statement: *"The market economy is the only system with which the country can become a developed country"*.

However as Table OA-4 shows, we fail to find an effect of corruption scandals on any of these variables. We interpret this to mean that corruption mostly undermines trust in political institutions and democracy. The lack of negative results across the board also makes it much less likely that the effects we estimate are just the result of respondents being in a generally negative affective state (i.e. a bad mood) when interviewed.

3.4 Effects on protests

Two limitations of the event study methodology we use are that outcome measures are necessarily short-term, as fieldwork lasts less than 2 months, and that survey responses on support for democracy may have little actual relationship to democracy-supporting *behaviors*.[39] One way to address both points is to look at the effects on longer-run behaviors as an outcome. We do this by focusing on street protests. We focus specifically on violent as opposed to non-violent protests. While non-violent protests can be conducive to democratization and potentially complementary with formal democratic institutions in supporting accountability (Chenoweth and Stephan, 2012; Bhavnani and Jha, 2014), protests that turn violent are more likely to indicate that citizens lack

[39] Arguing against the second critique, Claassen (2020) shows that survey questions like the ones we study do have predictive power for sustaining democracies, while Besley and Persson (2019) argue theoretically that the existence of democratic values can explain stylized facts of democratic (non)-persistence and change. Santos et al. (2024) show for Mexico that survey questions such as the ones use do predict turnout at the person level.

faith in the ability of a nation's institutions to successfully process political disagreements non-violently.

To address the impact of corruption scandals on violent protests, we use country-level data on conflicts from the Mass Mobilization Data Project for the years 2008–2018 described in Section 3.1. We build a dataset around corruption scandals. For each scandal event, we define event time 120 days before and 120 days after. We then estimate the following regression:

$$1(\text{Protest})_{ctde} = \beta_{60} 1(\text{0-60 days after})_{ctde} + \beta_{120} 1(\text{60-120 days after})_{ctde} + \gamma_w + \delta_{ct} + \epsilon_{ctde} \quad (2)$$

where $1(\text{Protest})_{ctde}$ is a dummy variable equal to one if there was a protest in country c, at year t, at a event day d relative to when corruption scandal e happened. $1(\text{0-60 days after})_{ctde}$ and $1(\text{60-120 days after})_{ctde}$ are indicators that turn on in those respective days after the respective corruption scandal. One advantage of using protest data is that we do not need to restrict to the scandals that intersect with Latinobarometer, and therefore we use all 176 events. We include a set of month and day-of-week dummies γ_w, δ_{ct} country x year dummies to control for macro trends within a country on the prevalence of protests and to absorb smooth trends in discontent with democracy. We are identifying β_{60} and β_{120} as deviations from this trend. We report two sets of standard errors, clustered at the country-year-relative month level or at the country-year level.

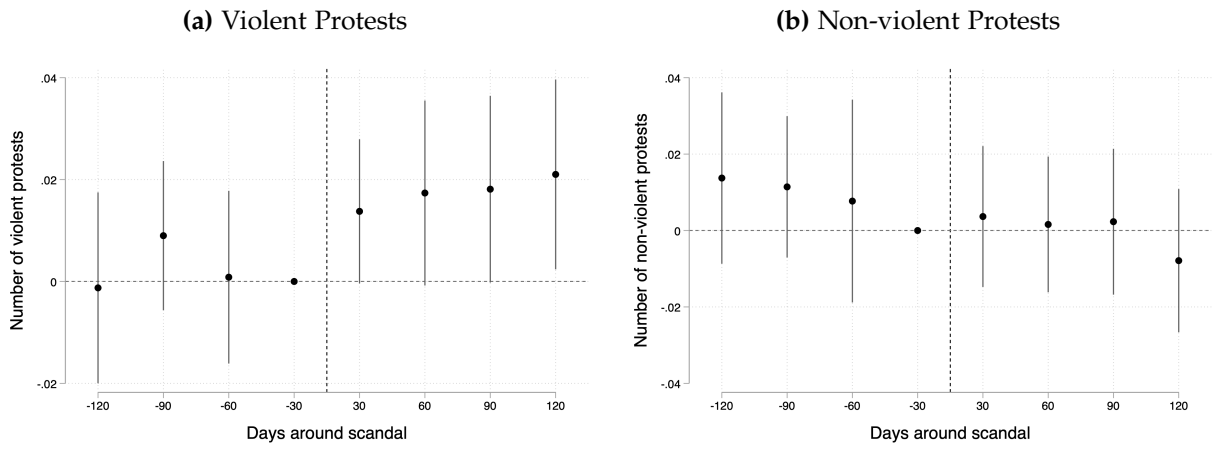
Table 2: Effects of Latin American Corruption Scandals on Protests

	(1) Protests	(2) Violent Protests	(3) Non-violent Protests
0-60 days post-scandal	0.008	0.013	-0.005
	(0.013)	(0.007)*	(0.010)
	[0.010]	[0.007]**	[0.008]
60-120 days post-scandal	0.007	0.017	-0.010
	(0.017)	(0.012)	(0.012)
	[0.012]	[0.008]**	[0.008]
Observations	42449	42449	42449
R-squared	0.232	0.126	0.302
Country x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month and day-of-week	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.080	0.023	0.057

This table provides an analysis of the impact of corruption scandals on protests in 17 Latin American countries over the period spanning from 2008 to 2018 using data from the Mass Mobilization Data Project (MM). Column 1 measures the effect on protests, while columns 2 and 3 focus on violent and non-violent protests, respectively, as defined by MM. The regression is estimated at the event level, comparing 120 days before the scandal and 120 days after. We included month, day of the week, and country × year FE. Standard errors shown in parentheses are clustered by country × year, while the standard errors shown in brackets are clustered by country × year × days from and to the corruption scandal grouped in blocks of thirty days. The significance is reported at levels *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.1$

Table 2 shows that while there are no effects of corruption scandals on *non-violent* protests, the incidence of *violent* protests increase after corruption scandals: in the 60 days after a corruption scandal, violent protests increased by 1.3pp (56% of the mean). Furthermore, this effect persists and even grows, 60-120 days after the corruption scandal to 1.7pp (78% of the mean).[40] Figure 3 plots event studies that show that violent protests increase exactly after the corruption scandal happens and not before, and that there is no change in non-violent protests.

Figure 3: Effect of Latin American Corruption Scandals on Protest



This figure plots the coefficients and the 90% confidence intervals for seven dummies indicating 30-day blocks from 120 days before to 120 days after the corruption scandals. The coefficient for the period between 30 to 1 days before the scandals is normalized to zero. Confidence intervals are based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by year × country × month relative to event.

Results on protests allow us to reach the following conclusions. First, corruption scandals have consequences outside of the survey environment and into real political behaviors in the streets. Second, the effects are durable and persist several months after the corruption scandal. Third, corruption scandals increase violent rather than non-violent protest. Though protests in general can indicate increased pro-sociality, the violent nature of protests in the aftermath of corruption scandals is consistent with a decline in trust in democratic institutions and the political system.

Discussion. Our evidence using corruption scandals 'in the wild' strongly suggests that corruption scandals are corrosive of support for democracy and trust in political institutions. They also lead to violent protests in the streets, the effect lasting for several months.[41]

[40] The pooled effect without separating between short and medium run is 1.6pp, p-value=0.012. We can compare these magnitudes to a randomization inference exercise with 1000 iterations, where for each iteration, we allocate 176 *fake* corruption scandals to different country months and apply the same regression specification. The real violent protest effects are above the 93th and 96th percentile of the effect distribution (see Figure OA-11.

[41] We also find suggestive evidence that apex corruption scandals are associated with lower turnout and more populist electoral wins. We assembled a data set on 147 federal elections for the 17 countries in our sample for the period

While looking at a decade of data for 17 countries gives us substantial external validity, there are several limitations of the event studies which we will now circumvent using an RCT. In the field experiment, we make sure that participants actually see the corrupt activity and that exposure is completely random, eliminating potential selection issues. We also vary the content of what they see and when they see it. Second, we link with voter turnout administrative data to study longer-term effects on voting. Finally, we study a broader set of incentivized democratic and pro-social behaviors and examine potential countervailing measures for democratic erosion.

4 The Field Experiment

We implemented a field experiment involving more than 3,300 adult Mexican citizens in Oaxaca, located in the south of Mexico. We selected Oaxaca because it is one of Mexico's largest and most diverse states with 570 municipalities out of Mexico's 2471. In 2021, Oaxaca also ranked 6th out of 32 States in Mexico in corruption perceptions according to *Mexicanos Contra la Corrupcion y la Impunidad*, a prominent NGO. Not surprisingly then, AMLO's anti-corruption message resonated strongly among Oaxaqueños: 65% voted for Morena, 11% for PAN, 17% for PRI in 2018. Within Oaxaca, 41% of the sample was allocated to the capital, Oaxaca City, while the rest was allocated across 69 rural municipalities (see map in Figure OA-9).[42]

4.1 Information Treatments

The main objective of the experiment was to diagnose the causal effects of informing adult Mexican citizens of apex corruption, by providing evidence of actual corrupt activity, and, as we discuss below, to then begin to test treatments that could strengthen democratic institutions. Because we wanted the information to be credible and impactful and to communicate it in a homogeneous and scalable way, we show this evidence in video format on electronic tablets.[43]

The videos were implemented as part of a survey. Each day, a team of enumerators would go to election precincts we selected at random, and they would knock on doors explaining that we came from academic institutions and were conducting a survey lasting approximately 30 minutes.[44] The survey was conducted on a high-resolution Samsung tablet. In the middle of the

2008–2019, building on (Grzymala-Busse and McFaul, 2020). 25 had a scandal 12 months before but not 12 months after (which we call the *T-group*), and 32 had a scandal 12 months after but not 12 months before (which we call the *P-group*). We find that turnout is much smaller in the *T-group* than the *P-group*: 57.9% versus 66.9% (p-value of H_0: zero difference=0.009), consistent with the RCT below. Second, the share of elections where a populist party wins is 56% in the *T-group* versus 40% in the *P-group* (one-tail p-value of H_0: more populist wins=0.12, two-tailed=0.25).

[42] Municipalities were stratified to ensure we have several with "*usos y costumbres*"—traditional indigenous governance institutions— and on weather suitability for growing cochineal, as we are studying this for a different project.

[43] There is evidence showing videos communicate more persuasively than text (Wittenberg et al., 2021). Moreover, many of the actual corruption scandals are disseminated through video clips, making it appropriate that we test the effects of an intervention that mimics this common format.

[44] Respondents received 50 pesos for participating and could receive more on behavioral games at the end of the survey.

survey, respondents were randomly allocated to videos and were told they would see a video. All participants then watched the videos, which were each 3 minutes in duration. The survey continued after watching the video, enabling us to measure the immediate outcomes that we describe below. The two main videos provide evidence of corruption. A third video shows evidence of economic under-performance, while a fourth *nation-building* video was intended to prime shared national identity.[45]

Apex Corruption: We designed two apex corruption videos. The first part of the video contains official statistics on the fraction of procurement contracts that are assigned directly without a bidding process (explaining that this practice facilitates corruption), and official data on the amount of bribes citizens report paying as part of bureaucratic extortion to obtain permits and pay for government services.[46] Nearly three-fourths of contracts, even large ones, are assigned directly with no bidding, and close to half of Mexicans report having paid a bribe when pursuing bureaucratic procedures. The second part of the videos had two different versions. The **Incumbent Corruption Video** (CI) provides footage of the brother of the incumbent president (AMLO) taking bribes. The **Opposition Corruption Video** (CO) similarly shows footage of prominent politicians from the main opposition party (PAN) taking large quantities of money, as well as testimony from a politician from the other major opposition party (PRI) about large bribes taken by PRI cabinet members.

Economic underperformance: This video also lasts close to 3 minutes and shows that the performance of the three last Mexican governments (PAN, PRI, Morena) in three dimensions: poverty, economic growth, and government relief during COVID-19. Using official data from Mexico's CONEVAL, CEPAL, and the World Bank, it shows that 1 in every 4 Mexicans are in poverty and that this has stayed almost constant since 2000, while Chile, Panama, and Uruguay have performed much better. In terms of economic growth, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay had grown more than twice as much as Mexico from 2010 to 2019. Finally, it shows that Mexico had the 3rd worst place in terms of COVID-related deaths to that point and that the government invested less than 0.7% of GDP on COVID relief, which is several times smaller than the world at large.

Nation-Building: We hired a renowned media designer to present an emotive national narrative in a video reminding Mexicans of their shared identity and rich culture. The video encompasses the formation of the country from the Aztecs and Mayans to the Spanish conquest, the flag and Mexican colors, Mexican humor, family values, poets and heroes, Mexican food and music, the

[45] Links for the videos are as follows: Incumbent corruption video: https://youtu.be/BSdueriPSA4; Opposition video: https://youtu.be/HyLrEmvzqPQ; Economic video: https://youtu.be/6Y8EM9uGmwE; Nation-building video: https://youtu.be/-fE$_U$gbDl34.

[46] The data is from the *Encuesta Nacional de Calidad e Impacto Gubernamental 2017 and 2019*, and includes obtaining permits (e.g. to open a firm, to build, to obtain a driver's license), paying for services (e.g. electricity, water, pay taxes), requesting a government loan, using the courts, among others. We had piloted this information before and found that coming from official statistics, citizens found it credible and perceived it as non-partisan.

importance of religion, tragedies and fortitude in the face of natural disasters, indigenous origins, how Mexicans treat death, and the institutions Mexicans built together. We were motivated by an emerging literature (see Rohner and Zhuravskaya (2023)) showing that national narratives delivered in movie format can increase nationalism (Esposito et al., 2023) and priming nationalism and shared identity can decrease partisan affective polarization (Levendusky, 2018; Voelkel et al., 2022). We conjectured that the nation-building narrative could increase trust, foster pro-social behaviors, and support for public goods and democratic institutions.

4.2 First Randomization

We randomize respondents into main 5 experimental arms, corresponding to the 4 videos above plus a control group with no video.[47] Table 3 shows the experimental design. Randomization was done in Stata at the individual survey-folio level and loaded into the tablets the day before the fieldwork started. It was blind to the enumerator and the respondent. The tablet popped up a notification message when the video treatment module was about to start. The enumerator then ensured the respondents saw the video. After the video treatment, the survey continued, and we measured short-run effects. Because the survey has measures before and after the video treatments, in Figure 4 we call this first survey the baseline/endline survey.

Timing randomization. For the urban sample in the city of Oaxaca (41% of participants) we also randomized at the electoral precinct level *when* respondents were interviewed and exposed to the videos. 1274 individuals in 29 precincts were allocated to receive the videos 3–5 weeks before the election, while 402 individuals in 10 precincts received it 5–8 days before the election. This randomization allows us to measure the durability of the effect of the videos on voting, which has proven an enduring challenge for survey experiments in this domain.[48]

"Stocks" cross-randomization. For the urban sample in Oaxaca city, where continued communications could be conducted via text message, we implemented a cross-randomized arm where citizens were assigned 200 pesos (about $10 USD), of which they could trade a portion weekly in the main Mexican index fund, similar in spirit to Jha and Shayo (2019). This randomization was implemented after the immediate survey outcomes were recorded, and thus only impacts the long-term outcomes (Tables OA-26 and OA-27).

Experimental integrity. One advantage of the survey experiment is they typically yield negligible attrition. Among those who started the survey, 100% assigned to the video saw the video and finished the remainder of the survey. That is, we have no attrition, and of course no differential

[47] Originally we planned to have 650 observations in each of the corruption videos, 300 in the economic video, 1000 in the nation-building video, and 1400 in the control group. For budgetary and logistical reasons (including disruptions related to Covid), samples ended up being close but slightly smaller than these targets.

[48] See Alesina et al. (2018); Kuziemko et al. (2015); Gerber et al. (2011) find that political TV ads during electoral campaigns have strong but short-lived effects. The fieldwork took longer than planned, and some survey work was not completed before the election, so the sample to measure actual vote turnout was somewhat smaller than anticipated, as we explain below.

attrition by arm. Randomization also achieved balance. Table OA-7 shows balance for our main results sample, while Table OA-8 shows balance for the timing randomization.

Table 3: Basic experimental design

	Stocks (cross randomized)		No stocks		
	City	Rural	City	Rural	Total
Incumbent corruption video	162	0	0	438	600
Opposition corruption video	175	0	0	422	597
Economics video	1	0	149	127	277
Mexico video	327	0	0	564	891
No video (Control group)	338	0	560	347	1245
Total	1003	0	709	1898	3610

The 5 experimental arms are listed in rows. Columns indicate the observations that belong to Oaxaca city (city) and outside Oaxaca city (rural), as well as the "stocks" cross-randomization. Because the main survey outcomes are measured before giving the "stocks" information, the cross-randomization only influences actual voting and the longer-term outcomes.

4.3 *Another* Brother: Testing Accumulation and Persistence

Four months after the treatment, for the city of Oaxaca, we re-surveyed our sample using a follow-up survey. We paid careful attention to ensure that the same person that was interviewed before was interviewed for this survey by going to the same address, same picture of the house exterior, the respondent had the same gender and age, and name. This allows us to test for persistence by using the original randomization and measuring support for democracy and trust at the beginning of the follow-up survey. However, after eliciting persistence, we took advantage of the opportunity to run a second experiment. The second experiment allows us to test for different types of *accumulation* of the corruption effects exploiting newly released footage that emerged between waves of a *second brother* of the incumbent president taking bribes.

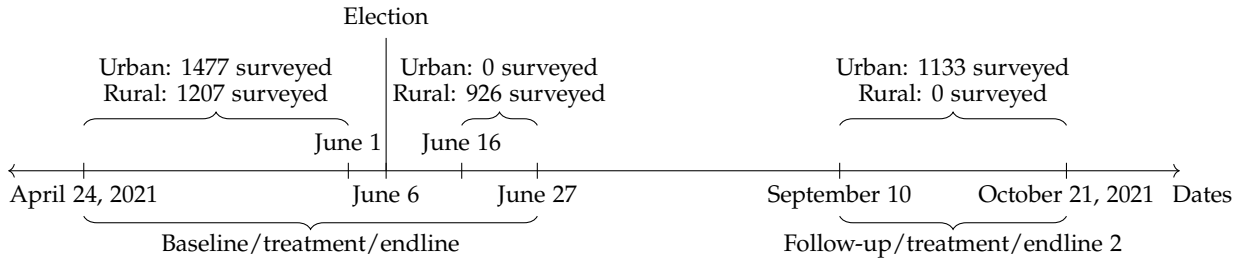
We randomly assign half the former control group to a news report that shows footage of bribes taken both by the original brother and the second as well, and explicitly reinforces the point that evidence now exists of, not just one, but *two* brothers of the president being involved in corruption.[49] We compare the rest of the control group with this newly treated group. However, we also allocated this new video to a random subset of those that had received the original videos. Although the split samples afford less power, we can test for several different types of accumulation/replication, comparing the effects of learning of corruption by two brothers in a single report (versus our original one), as well as how such a treatment differs when participants have been randomly exposed to evidence of past corruption by different actors, economic under-performance, and nation-building. For the follow-up survey, we could locate and interview 77% of those interviewed at baseline. Tables OA-14 and OA-15 in the Appendix show balance and no

[49] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6nheyGHc3g

differential attrition for the follow-up survey.

Figure 4 provides a timeline of surveys/treatments. As can be seen, 926 rural surveys were conducted after the election, thus we have a smaller sample of 2614 (1477 urban and 1207 rural) available to study effects on actual voter turnout.[50]

Figure 4: Timeline of treatment and surveys



4.4 Outcome measures

We collect survey data on a pre-specified range of beliefs about corruption, support for democracy and for authoritarian alternatives, as well as trust in several democratic institutions, and trust in people more generally. We collect these both for the endline survey following treatment and for the follow-up survey. The design of the survey experiment aligns well with the recommendations of Stantcheva (2023) about making the information in treatments legitimate and trustworthy, incentivizing some responses, providing limited information about the purpose of the study, monitoring implementation in real time, introducing attention checks, limiting attrition, and reducing fatigue by keeping the survey short and engaging. The order of the modules and the questions within the modules were randomized to avoid order effects. Importantly, we also gather data on pro-democratic and on pro-social *behaviors*. Finally, we also are able to access administrative data on actual voter turnout. We explain each of these below.

4.4.1 Survey outcomes

The following outcome measurements were pre-registered:

[50] We study outcomes at the individual level and not at the precinct level, as randomization was conducted at the individual level. The average number of respondents per electoral precinct in our sample is 34.7, while precincts in Mexico typically have more than 1000 registered voters.

Beliefs about corruption. To measure whether the videos increase the perception of corruption, we asked the following survey questions: (a) Progress fighting corruption: *"How much progress do you think has been made in reducing corruption in State institutions in the last 2 years? A lot (1), Some (2), Little (3) or None (4)"*, (b) Extent politicians corrupt: *"What percentage of politicians in Mexico do you think are involved in acts of corruption? (0% to 100%) "*; (c) Extent money stolen: *"Of every $100 pesos in taxes collected by the government, what percentage do you think politicians steal?" (0% to 100%)*. (d) *"Please state if you strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1) with the following statement: "All politicians are corrupt"*. We created a standardized index using these 4 variables, with higher values indicating more perceived corruption.

Support for democracy and alternatives. We asked the following questions: (a) Voting essential: *"Does it seem essential and important to you to live in a country where rulers are elected by vote? Yes or No"*; (b) Satisfaction with democracy: *"In general, would you say that you are very satisfied (4), satisfied (3), not very satisfied (2), or not at all satisfied (1), with democracy in Mexico?"*; (c) Alternatives to democracy: *"Please tell me if you strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) or strongly disagree (1) with the following statement: Democracy can have its problems, but it is the best system of government"*. We created the Democratic Index by standardizing each of these three variables, and then summing and standardizing the sum, as we did in Section 3.1.

Trust in democratic institutions. In addition, we asked the following question: *"Please tell me, for each of the institutions mentioned in the list, how much trust do you have in them: a lot (4), some (3), little (2) or no trust (1) in [...]: the president, congress, media, and political parties"*. We created a standardized index using the four resulting variables.

Trust in people. The trust in people index is based on the following questions: (a) General trust: *"Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that one is never careful enough when dealing with others?"*, and (b) trust in specific people: *"Please tell me, for each of the groups or people mentioned in the list, how much trust do you have in them: a lot (4), some (3), little (2) or no trust (1). How much do you trust [...]: your neighbors; a Mexican that is not from Oaxaca."* We created a standardized index using these three variables.

4.4.2 Behaviors Measuring the Components of Liberal Democratic Institutions

We next turn to study political *behaviors*. We first do so using incentivized behavioral measures on each of three complementary components that comprise liberal democratic institutions — willingness to support *formal organizations*, *beliefs* in the trustworthiness and fairness of politicians and fellow-citizens, and *internalized norms* of honesty with respect to both local public goods and fellow citizens. We further measure how these manifest themselves in actual voting behavior. These measures were also pre-registered.

Support for Formal Organizations. We measure support for the formal organizations supporting democracy in two ways: providing participants the opportunity to donate either their *time* (likely to be more costly for the more affluent) or *money* (likely to be more costly for the less affluent). For the time dimension, we asked subjects if they would be willing to be official electoral observers in the forthcoming election. This required them to provide their email and voter ID to start the process immediately on INE's webpage. Volunteering as an electoral observer is a measure of the desire to participate in the democratic process and protect the integrity of voting, and it is a costly action. We explained that the short-run cost would be to devote five minutes to be enrolled, and the long-run one would be to undergo a short official training of a few hours online. We recorded whether they registered. To measure the money dimension, we asked subjects if they would be willing to donate 10 pesos to buy water and snacks for poll booth workers, reminding them that these workers were essential to holding elections. We had a piggy bank where respondents could deposit the money.[51]

Beliefs. As an incentivized measure of how individual's *beliefs* in the trustworthiness of political figures and citizens change in response to apex corruption, we had a randomized subset of participants play *two trust games*, one with an anonymous politician— who was an actual congressman— and one with a random (and anonymous) neighbor (building on the *lab in the field* literature, including Karaja and Rubin (2022), Alan et al. (2021), etc.; see also Sapienza et al. (2013)). In these games the subjects were given 4 coins of 10 pesos (40 pesos amounts to 1/4 of the minimum wage). They could then choose to send between zero or all 4 coins to the other player. Researchers multiplied any amount sent by three. We explained that their counterparts had also started with four coins, and had pre-specified a strategy for how much to return as a function of how much was sent back, but the strategy was not disclosed to the subject.[52] We recorded how much money the subjects sent.

Internalized Norms. While trust games can measure beliefs about others, apex corruption may also affect internalized norms of honesty and pro-social behavior, complementary to democratic institutions. Indeed, important recent work has found that exposure to evidence of corruption by local politicians and officials can encourage dishonesty more generally (e.g. Ajzenman, 2022; Gulino and Masera, 2023). Could such effects extend to apex corruption as well? To capture the effect on such internalized norms, we assigned another randomized subset of participants to *resource allocation games* with their local municipal mayor and with a random neighbor, in which they also had the opportunity *to steal* with impunity, if they so chose.[53]

We measure the propensity to steal by adapting the resource allocation game (RAG, building on Lowes et al. (2017)). We gave subjects a non-transparent bag that contained 30 coins and an

[51] Researchers used this money to buy and deliver water and snacks for poll booth workers.

[52] Based on piloting, we decided that the best way to explain the trust game was with a video, which can be found here.

[53] See also, Fisman and Miguel (2007), who find a strong role of internalized norms explaining corruption, and evidence in the lab by Gächter and Shulz (2016), among others.

opaque envelope. The envelope was labeled "*To the municipal mayor*". In private, the respondent was asked to choose heads or tails before flipping a coin. They were entitled to keep the coin if their guess (unobserved by us) was correct. However, they were asked to place the coin inside the envelope if their guess was incorrect. After doing this for the 30 coins, the respondent would seal the envelope and give it back to the surveyor to be sent to the mayor. We explained that the surveyor would not open the envelope. We had the subject then repeat the exercise, but with the envelope labeled '*Neighbor*' instead.[54] We then opened each envelope and counted the coins, noting any deviation from the 50% (15 coins) expected had there been no theft.[55] In the resource allocation game, there is no external punishment. Thus following Lowes et al. (2017), Gulino and Masera (2023) and Fisman and Miguel (2007), we interpret any stealing as consistent with the weakening of *internalized norms* among citizens against *rule-breaking* and *theft*.

Participation in the Formal Democratic Process Our final measure is *actual turnout* in elections. Through a special agreement with Mexico's Electoral Authority, we were able to obtain *administrative data at the individual level* on whether the respondent turned out to vote in the 2021 election.[56] We found 80% of our subjects in the administrative data using the Mexican official person identifier. The matched percentage, and respondents' characteristics are balanced across arms (see Tables OA-10 and OA-11).

5 Results

We employ Ordinary Least Squares to estimate the following equation:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_{CI} CI_i + \beta_{CO} CO_i + \beta_{NB} NB_i + \beta_E E_i + \gamma X_i + \epsilon_i \tag{3}$$

where CI_i indicates exposure to the Incumbent Corruption video, CO_i indicates the Opposition Corruption video, E_i the Economic Ineffectiveness Video and NB_i the Nation Building Video, while X_i includes controls.[57] Outcomes Y_i are as defined in Section 4.4.

[54] We randomized whether the trust game or the stealing game was played first, and within each of them, we randomized whether the politician or the neighbor module was played first. Because surveyors were handling money we had a supervisor for every five surveyors. We told surveyors that we would audit a fraction of the surveys. Finally, the envelopes were such that once sealed they would be torn if somebody tried to open them. We do not find a different number of coins by surveyor.

[55] Because the enumerator does not see or know how many coins are in the envelopes, it is unlikely that experimenter demand effects drive this result. In the trial registry we wrote that "We conjecture the stealing from politicians will be larger and more precise than stealing from neighbors."

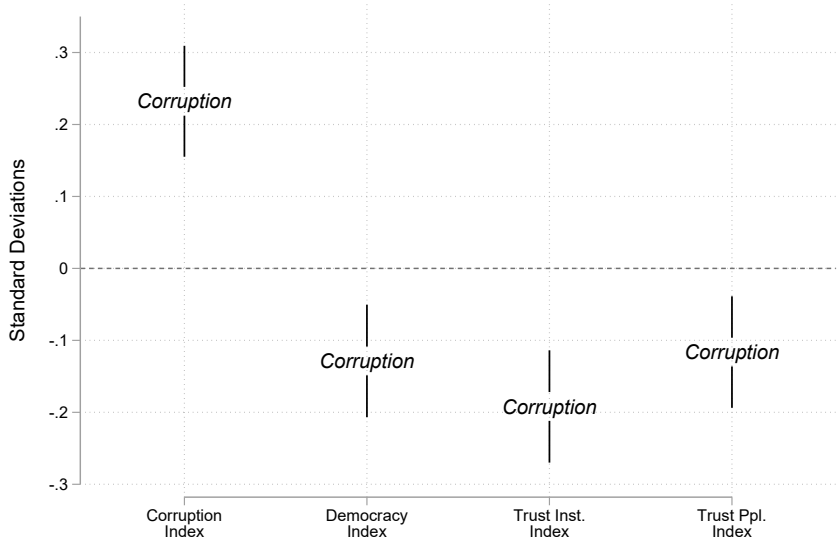
[56] Needless to say, this is very unique data and to our knowledge only has been used before by one of the authors of this paper in Finan et al. (2021).

[57] These controls are municipality and enumerator fixed effects, as well as age, gender, schooling, employment status, socioeconomic status, current economic satisfaction, initial corruption perception, and initial support for the incumbent and for the opposition party. Table OA-16 in the appendix provides more detail.

5.1 Effects on corruption perceptions, democratic values, and trust

Effect on corruption. Figure 5 previews the basic effects of the treatment, pooling the two corruption treatments. Those experimentally exposed to evidence of corruption by apex politicians increase their perceptions of corruption by 0.23σ, even while their support for democracy falls by 0.12σ. This is accompanied with an undermining of trust in democratic institutions, by 0.19σ. This corrosive effect on trust also spills over to faith in other citizens as well (by 0.11σ).[58]

Figure 5: Pooled Basic Effects of Apex Corruption Treatments



The figure shows the pooled estimates for the apex corruption treatments, from equation 3, along with their 95 percent confidence intervals.

Heterogeneity by support for the anti-corruption incumbent. Figure 6(a) shows the coefficient estimates, separating the incumbent from the opposition corruption video treatments (see also Table OA-16). We find that being exposed to the Incumbent Corruption video causes an increase of 0.27σ in the prevalence of perceived corruption, while being exposed to the Opposition Corruption video causes an increase of 0.18σ. As described above, because citizens perceived the relatively new incumbent Morena party, which campaigned on an anti-corruption platform to be much less corrupt ex-ante[59], we anticipated that the incumbent video would affect corruption perceptions

[58] We report effects on pre-specified indices, which should allay concerns about multiple hypotheses testing. Nonetheless, Table OA-18 also reports $q-$values and finds that our results are statistically robust.

[59] Indeed, in our baseline survey, while 57% people believed that the Opposition party was the *most corrupt*, only 4% believed that of the Incumbent. The remaining 39% expressed the view that all the political parties were equally corrupt.

more[60], a prediction confirmed (with p-value 0.06).[61] Further Figure 6(b) shows that the effects on corruption perceptions tend to be larger for incumbent (Morena) supporters at baseline, and particularly so when exposed to evidence of corruption by those close to the *anti-corruption* incumbent.

Effect on support for democracy. At baseline, though only 28% of people in our survey were satisfied with democracy, 78% of respondents consider it the best form of government and 76% consider it important to vote to elect representatives. However, consistent with the observational study in Section 3.3, the corruption treatments undermine this support (Figure 5). Both corruption treatments significantly decreased the support for democracy index (by 0.16σ). The effects are again more marked among supporters of the incumbent (Figure 6b), and among those who were previously less concerned about corruption (Figure OA-10(a)).[62]

Trust in formal democratic officeholders and organizations. Showing a video of high-ranking politicians taking bribes may not necessarily lead to a broader deterioration of trust in formal democratic officeholders and organizations more generally, including the president, congress, political parties, or the *fourth estate*, the media. However, we find that it does. Mirroring the effects on corruption perceptions, the effects undermining trust in democratic institutions are largest for the incumbent video, an effect of 0.28σ compared to 0.11σ for the opposition (Figure 5a). Again the effect is essentially zero among those exposed to evidence of opposition corruption who already perceived corruption to be the most important problem (Figure OA-10(a)). Table OA-23 shows that, perhaps not surprisingly, evidence of corruption implicating the brother of the incumbent president affects trust in the President the most (0.11σ), followed by trust in Congress (0.08σ), trust in the media (0.06σ), and trust in parties more generally (0.04σ).

Trust in other citizens. We find evidence that apex corruption also undermines peoples' expressed trust in one another as well. These effects are again driven mainly by the incumbent corruption video, which decreases trust in others by 0.18σ (compared to 0.05σ for the opposition). Unlike with support of democracy and trust in democratic institutions, however, the effects are more marked for those exposed to the incumbent corruption video who already perceived corruption to be the most important problem (Figure 5b). We interpret these effects as reflecting how corruption can be particularly corrosive for trust beyond politics when it implicates those close to

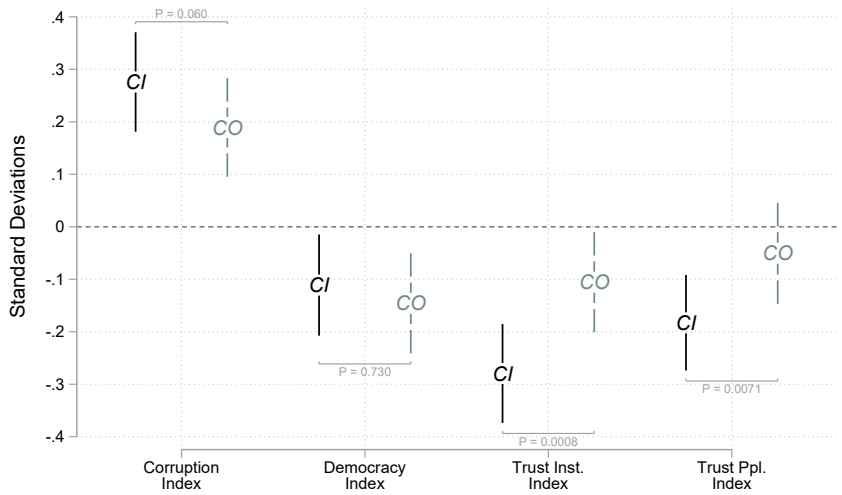
[60] Please see also our pre-registration: *AEARCTR-0007770*.

[61] Indeed, as Figure OA-10(b) shows, the effects on corruption perceptions are close to zero among those who were both exposed to evidence of corruption by the opposition and already perceived corruption to be the most important problem for Mexican society at baseline. Figure OA-10(a) shows results by baseline corruption. These results accord with Arias et al. (2022), who emphasize the importance of prior beliefs.

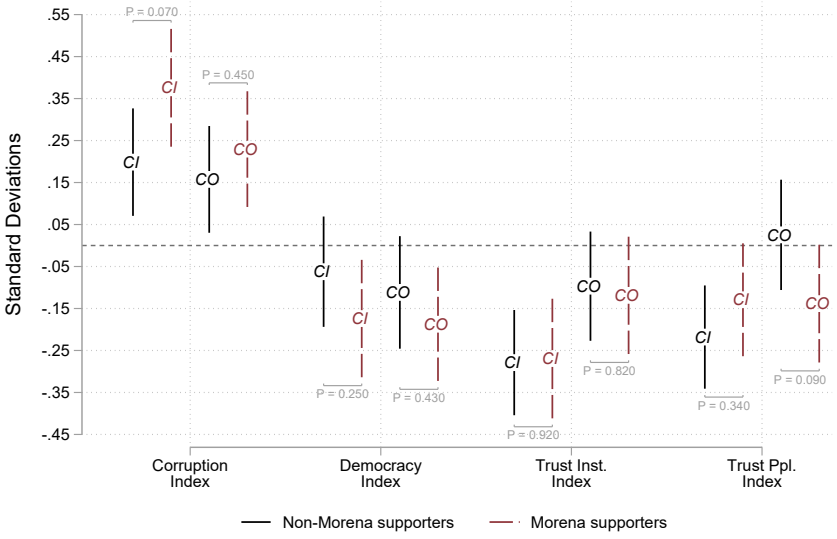
[62] In terms of effect sizes, the effects of the three minute corruption treatments we employ on reducing the support for democracy are about twice as large as those of the strongest of the eight-minute video treatments found to have a backlash effect on support for democratic practices among an internet panel of US partisans found in Voelkel et al. (2022) (see Figure OA-13).

Figure 6: Effects of Apex Corruption by Incumbent (CI) and Opposition (CO) treatments

(a) Overall



(b) By ex ante support for the incumbent (Morena)



The figure shows the estimates for the Incumbent Corruption (CI) and Opposition Corruption (CO) treatments, from equation 3, along with their 95 percent confidence intervals. For part (b), Morena supporter is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent's support for the political party is above the median. In particular we ask *We would like to know your attitude towards certain groups. I will read out the name of some groups and ask you to evaluate each group from 0 to 10 according to the following criterion: An evaluation of 0 means that you totally reject that person or institution. An evaluation of 5 means that you are indifferent and an evaluation of 10 means that you completely support that person or institution.* We consider an individual to be an ex ante Morena supporter if they evaluate Morena about 5 on this scale.

a person in an apex position of trust and particularly when they position themselves explicitly to

be *fighting* corruption, as was the case for the incumbent president (Figure 6a).[63]

Discounting negative evidence against own party? Given that affective polarization in Mexico has also risen substantially in recent years (Greene et al., 2024; Castro Cornejo, 2023; Moreno, 2020), one likely possibility is that individuals discount negative evidence about their own party due to motivated reasoning etc. However, our results are not consistent with this (Figure 6(b)). If any anything, Morena supporters update their beliefs more about corruption when given the Incumbent Video than when receiving the Opposition video. Similarly, these patterns are also reflected in their voting decisions, as we discuss below.[64]

5.2 Effects on Political *Behavior*

So far, we have relied on survey measures of support for democracy, building on an influential literature that has found that the questions we use to be predictive of democratic stability (Claassen, 2020) and empirically related to the quality and extent of past democratic experiences (Acemoglu et al., 2024; Fuchs-Schündeln and Schündeln, 2015). However, one may still be concerned about potential social desirability or experimenter demand effects. Such demand effects would not explain the *differential* effects we find for the incumbent video, nor the heterogeneous effects by partisanship or prior perceptions of corruption. Nor would it explain the patterns we observe in the natural experiments above. Nevertheless, to allay any lingering concerns of this kind, we also measure effects both on incentivized citizen behaviors on each of the organizational, beliefs and norms components of democratic institutions (as described in Section 4.4.2) as well as exploiting our unique administrative data on individual turnout.

Support for Formal Organizations. As described above, we gave respondents the opportunity to donate either money (to provide bottled water and snacks to poll-booth workers) or time (to enroll themselves as electoral observers). As Table 4 shows, while 22% of respondents were willing to donate their 10 pesos to electoral observers, this decreases by 16% if exposed to the

[63] Table OA-24 shows that apex incumbent corruption affects all types of interpersonal trust: trust in general, in neighbors and in non-neighbor Mexicans as well. Table OA-17 further reports the indices separately for the urban sample in Oaxaca city versus in the 69 rural municipalities in our sample. There are marked differences in the responses. While the corruption videos raise corruption perceptions in both (by 0.23σ (CI) and 0.17σ (CO) in urban areas compared to 0.26σ (CI) and 0.13σ (CO) in rural municipalities), the effect on undermining support for democracy of each is about double in magnitude in rural municipalities; (urban: -0.09σ (CI) and -0.11σ (CO) vs rural: -0.20σ(CI) and -0.19σ (CO) respectively). Further, while the incumbent video reduces trust in democratic institutions in both samples by similar amounts, the opposition video only does so in urban areas. Finally, while the corruption video, particularly of the incumbent, has a large impact on inter-personal trust in urban areas (by -0.34σ), rural respondents are much less likely to lose their trust in others as a result (an insignificant effect of -0.07σ). The relative lack of impact on trust between citizens in rural areas is arguably consistent with the prospect for repeated interactions that can support more durable trust in smaller rural communities and its relative fragility in larger urban settings where the ability to cheat and leave trading partners is often greater (Athey et al., 2016).

[64] We also examine whether these results seem driven by social desirability or negative affect (Table OA-25). However, we find that there are no effects on willingness to engage in socially desirable actions unrelated to democracy (in the Mexican context) like willingness to take the Covid vaccine, serve in the army in case of war. Similarly we find no effect on pessimism on judicial effectiveness.

incumbent corruption video (p-value of a decrease: 0.06). Similarly, while 4.6% volunteered to enroll in the certification process to become an electoral observer, the fraction is almost cut in half (45%) when exposed to evidence of incumbent corruption (p-value of a decrease: 0.02). Once again, the effects of the opposition treatment are more muted.

Table 4: Effect of Corruption videos on incentivized political behaviors

	(1) Donates to Elec. Inst.	(2) Electoral Observer	(3) Trust Game Politician	(4) Trust Game Neighbor	(5) RAG Coins Mayor	(6) RAG Coins Neighbor
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	-0.036	-0.021**	-0.182***	-0.113*	-0.654**	-0.400
	(0.024)	(0.011)	(0.062)	(0.060)	(0.329)	(0.371)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	0.001	0.005	-0.120*	-0.084	0.150	-0.274
	(0.024)	(0.013)	(0.064)	(0.059)	(0.350)	(0.384)
Observations	2481	2460	3331	3331	1573	1573
R-squared	0.136	0.083	0.132	0.112	0.104	0.092
Mun. and Enum. FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.223	0.046	1.600	2.036	14.766	14.925
CI $\geq$ 0 (p-value)	0.063	0.025	0.002	0.031	0.024	0.141
CO $\geq$ 0 (p-value)	0.488	0.358	0.029	0.076	0.334	0.238

This table presents treatment effects of corruption on behaviors. Although the regression includes the economic and nation building videos, we omit showing the coefficients here, see Table OA-19 for the full table. *Donates to Electoral Institute* measures the responses when we asked participants if they would be willing to donate 10 pesos to buy water and snacks for poll booth workers. *Electoral observer* indicates whether citizens started the procedure to become an official electoral observer. Sample sizes are smaller in columns 1 and 2 compared to columns 3 and 4 since, for the former, we condition this sample on surveys before the election. *RAG Coins Mayor* and *RAG Coins Neighbor* measure the results of a version of the *Resource Allocation Game* described in the text. Sample sizes are smaller for RAG by design: to economize on budget we selected only a random sample to play this game. *Trust Game Politician* and *Trust Game Neighbor* measures coin sending in a traditional trust game, with the same individual controls. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. We also report the p values testing equality between the coefficients of pairs of treatments and the one-sided test that the treatment decreased each outcome relative to control (i.e. rejecting an increase). The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Beliefs. Table 4 finds that the Incumbent Corruption video decreased participants' beliefs in the trustworthiness of politicians as measured by the number of coins sent to them in the trust game. While the control group sends 1.6 out of 4 coins[65], citizens exposed to the CI video send 0.18 fewer coins, amounting to 11% of the mean. Further, evidence of apex incumbent corruption also causes beliefs in the trustworthiness of neighbors to fall: by 5% of the mean. Effects on beliefs due to the opposition corruption treatment are also present but more muted, causing a decline of 0.12 coins entrusted to the politician, and a (non-significant) decline of 0.08 coins entrusted to a neighbor. These results mimic the documented self-reported decrease in trust in the survey.

Internalized norms In the Resource Allocation Game, we find that on average people keep 14.7 coins. This very close to the benchmark of 1/2 (15 coins) and consistent with very limited theft. However, when exposed to the incumbent corruption video, citizens return 0.65 fewer coins (i.e. they 'steal' 4% of the mean) from the local mayor. When playing against the neighbor,

[65] Similarly, other papers have found sending close to 40%-50% (Johnson and Mislin, 2011) of the endowment.

we find a smaller, but still negative coefficient of -0.4 coins (statistically indistinguishable from zero). Again, the opposition corruption treatment has no detectable effect on stealing. Though internalized norms can be deep-rooted, having emerged from institutions of the past (e.g. Greif, 2006; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011; Jha, 2013; Diaz-Cayeros and Jha, 2022; Lowes et al., 2017; Karaja and Rubin, 2022), these results are consistent with the role of apex corruption in influencing such norms as well. Thus apex corruption has similar spillover effects on weakening internalized norms of honesty to local political corruption (Ajzenman, 2022; Gulino and Masera, 2023), albeit with the potential for affecting norms at a macro scale.

Participation in the Formal Democratic Process: Voting We have so far provided evidence consistent with apex corruption having a negative impact on three components that comprise liberal democratic institutions: organizations, beliefs and internalized norms. We now turn to examine whether apex corruption may affect participation in the formal democratic process itself. We study the effect of the apex corruption treatments on voting in Mexico's 2021 congressional federal election in three ways: using surveys on voting *intentions*, retrospective surveys on voting *decisions*, and employing administrative data on *actual turnout*.[66]

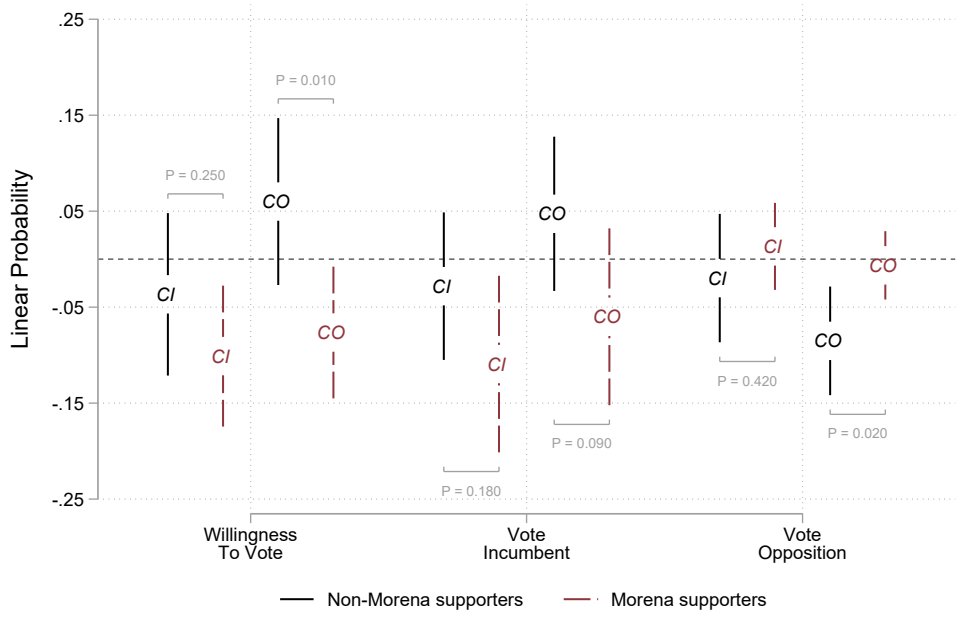
On one hand, exposure to evidence of apex corruption could raise turnout and lead to the switching of votes, as voters seek to hold corrupt politicians accountable by voting for the opposing side. On the other, insofar as voting reflects support for democracy and formal democratic organizations, beliefs in the fairness of the democratic process, or internalized norms of voting as a *civic duty* (e.g Blais, 2000; Feddersen, 2004; Ali and Lin, 2013; Besley and Persson, 2019), one might expect apex corruption to reduce political participation and turnout. A third possibility, as discussed above, is that due to motivated reasoning, political partisans disregard evidence of apex corruption on their own side, but respond more to evidence of corruption by the other side. We find evidence inconsistent with motivated reasoning, but again in line with a decline in democratic values.

Figure 7 shows the immediate effects on (self-reported) *voting intentions*.[67] As with the results above, there are again notable differences in the effects by the perpetrator of apex corruption and by ex ante incumbent support in their immediate responses. Supporters of the (perceived to be anti-corruption) incumbent Morena party reduce their expressed willingness to turn out to vote by 10.1pp when exposed to evidence of apex corruption by the incumbent and 7.6pp by the opposition. Further, these effects are closely mimicked in magnitude (10.9pp and 6.0pp) by falls

[66] On 2021 June 6th, Mexicans voted for 500 federal congresspersons (Diputados). Oaxaquẽnos had to choose 10 of those (with an average of 170K voters in each district) as well as 42 local congresspersons and 153 municipal mayors. Morena won all but one of the 10 districts. Elections rules combine simple majority and proportional representation.

[67] In the baseline/endline survey, we asked "*If the elections were this Sunday, which party would you vote for?*". One of the answer options is *I will not vote*, and we use the inverse of this to define the dependent variable in Column 1, as an indicator of intent to turnout in the elections.

Figure 7: Effect on voting intentions by support for the incumbent party

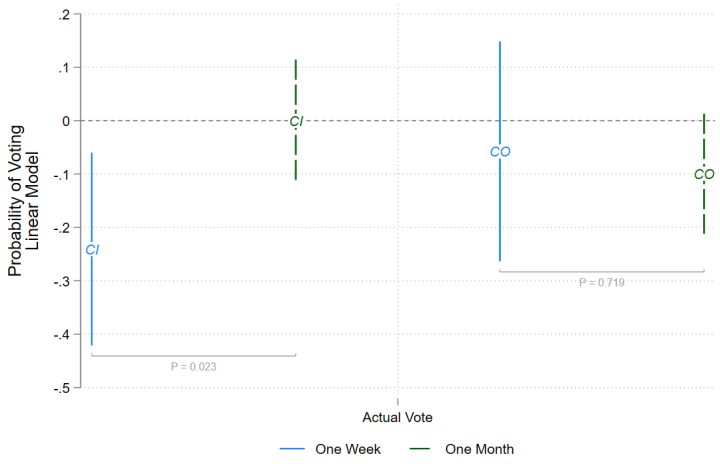


This figure shows coefficients of regressing each outcome on the treatment assignment to each video and the interaction of treatment assignment with being classified as Morena supporter or Non-Morena supporter. Black lines represent the treatment effect and 95% confidence interval of the CI or CO video on each outcome for the Non-Morena supporter group. Maroon lines represent the treatment effect and 95% confidence interval of the CI or CO video on each outcome for the Morena supporter group. For columns 1–3 we have 1577 observations because we interviewed them after the election.

in intentions to vote for the incumbent party specifically among its supporters. In contrast, ex ante opposition supporters are actually 6.0pp *more* likely to report their willingness to turnout when exposed to evidence of opposition corruption, switching their *vote away* from the featured opposition parties by (8.5pp) towards the incumbent (by 4.7 pp). This response to apex corruption appears consistent with an immediate desire for accountability. However, as we discuss below, those exposed to the opposition ultimately actually turnout to vote *less*, and do not report voting for the incumbent.

Durability of Effects on Actual Turnout Though these immediate effects on voter intentions are broadly consistent with the incentivized behavior measures, a natural question is whether these effects last. Indeed, Gerber et al. (2011) show that TV ad campaigns have substantial short-term effects on public opinion but these disappear within less than a week. In a different context studying tolerance, Broockman and Kalla (2016) find in contrast, that a door-to-door canvassing treatment can have *"durable"* effects on attitudes measured three months later.[68] How durable are the effects of our exposures to evidence of apex corruption on actual voting?

Figure 8: Effect of Corruption Videos on Actual Turnout by Proximity of Treatment



This figure shows the treatment effects on actual vote for respondents in Oaxaca City for whom we have administrative INE data. This coefficients correspond to those in column (3) from Table OA-26.

As mentioned above, in our urban sample, we also randomized whether participants received the treatment approximately a *month* (3-5 weeks) before the election (1274 individuals across 29 precincts) or approximately a *week* (5-8 days) before the election (402 individuals in 10 precincts),

[68] Jha and Shayo (2019) find effects of financial exposure on political attitudes even a year after treatment. The seminal papers by Kuziemko et al. (2015); Alesina et al. (2018) emphasize the difficulties as well as the importance of studying persistence more generally.

allowing us to experimentally study treatment effect decay on voting. Figure 8 shows that the effect of apex incumbent corruption is *much* stronger–reducing actual turnout by a remarkable $24.1pp$– if it was received a week before the election, than a month before (where the effects have fallen to zero). In contrast the effects of apex opposition corruption are fairly consistent, suppressing turnout whether treatment was provided a month or a week before the elections (by about $5pp - 10pp$). These differences are consistent with the very substantial campaign advantages of the incumbent party over the opposition in offsetting the treatment during the election period. When we use the entire sample instead of focusing on the city of Oaxaca where we could randomize the timing, we find that both videos reduce turnout by $2.6pp$ and by $5.6pp$ respectively (Table OA-26, Column 1), with these effects being further more marked in the urban sample: $5.1pp$ and $7.8pp$ respectively (Column 2).

The last four columns of Table OA-26 confirm that the patterns we find in the administrative data on turnout closely mimic those on turnout from our post-election urban survey. This survey further allows us to ask whom the voters voted for. As mentioned above, unlike the immediate responses on voter intent, there is little evidence for voters retrospectively claiming to have punished the perpetrator by voting for the other side (or non-involved third parties). Instead, the effect of both apex corruption treatments is to reduce turnout in support of the identified perpetrators.

5.3 Do the Effects Accumulate? The Treatment from *Another* Brother

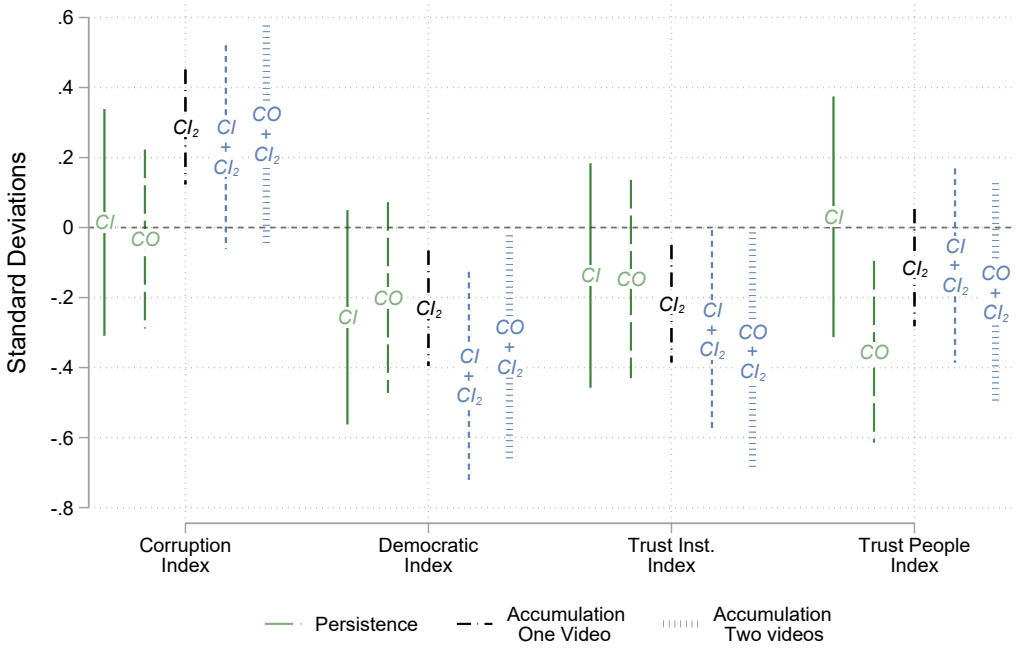
So far we have shown that the effect on actual vote turnout persists at least a week after treatment for apex incumbent corruption and a month for the opposition. Section 3.4 further shows that the effect of corruption scandals on violent protest was detectable even six months after. We now try to assess whether apex corruption has longer-term effects—including *latent* ones— on support for democracy. By *latent* effects, we mean those that may be dormant on their own, but be reactivated in the response to new reminders or new stimuli.

To do this, as explained above, we implemented a follow-up survey three months after the elections (and thus three-four months after treatment) for the urban sample. To measure persistence we asked the same questions used to construct our indices on corruption, support for democracy and trust. By asking these same questions to the same person four months later we can test for persistence. However, while planning fieldwork a second brother of the president was caught taking bribes, and we took advantage of this to implement a further treatment: the *Another* Brother Corruption video (CI_2)—this time showing footage of both the first and an additional *second* brother of the president taking stacks of otherwise-undocumented campaign donations in cash. This video did not have information from INEGI on retail bribes.

After asking questions about trust and support for democracy, we cross-randomized the assignment of this new three-minute video to half of the Oaxaca city sample, using the other half

as a control group, stratifying by the treatment arms of the first experiment.[69] In effect, we estimate a regression analogous to that in equation 3 but interacting the 5 arms of the first experiment with the second Corruption Incumbent video CI_2.[70] We recognized that the second experiment by its nature has less power and therefore the findings are more tentative.[71] Nonetheless, we believe the effects are illuminating.

Figure 9: Testing Accumulation: The *Another* Brother treatment



This figure shows persistence, replication, and accumulation using the regression equation in the footnote on this page. *Persistence* is shown in the two leftmost intervals of each column, and is represented by CI and CO (note that these are two-tailed confidence intervals, but pre-registration of the direction of the hypothesis allows for one-sided p-values). *"Replication"/Accumulation* is represented by CI_2 in black dashed lines as the middle confidence interval. While *Accumulation* is shown as $CI + CI_2$ or $CO + CI_2$ at the two rightmost confidence intervals in each column.

Persistence. As Figure 9 shows, after three months, the apex corruption treatment and control groups had largely converged in terms of their corruption perceptions. However, differences in

[69] Table OA-13 shows the distribution of observations across treatment arms. Tables OA-15 and OA-14 verify there is no differential attrition in response rates and that respondent's characteristics are balanced across arms.

[70] The equation is $Y_{i,2} = \alpha + \delta CI_{2,i} + T_i'\beta + (T_i \cdot CI_{2,i})'\gamma + \epsilon_i$, where $CI_{2,i}$ is an indicator for the *Another* brother video, with δ estimating *"replication"*; $T_i = (CI_i, CO_i, NB_i, E_i)$ being a vector containing the indicators for the previous treatment arms, whose associated $\beta = (\beta_{CI}, \beta_{CO}, \beta_{NB}, \beta_E)$ estimate *persistence*; and finally, the interaction terms $(T_i \cdot CI_{2,i})$ allow for the estimation of accumulation, as estimated in the associated $\gamma = (\gamma_{CI}, \gamma_{CO}, \gamma_{NB}, \gamma_E)$ plus β.

[71] See our follow-up trial registration: *AEARCTR-000817*.

support for democracy persisted for both apex corruption treatments, 0.25σ for CI and 0.20σ for CO (p-values of a decrease 0.05, and 0.075 respectively, see also Table OA-27). Trust in institutions and people also tend to (somewhat) suffer.

Accumulation: two brothers in a single treatment After measuring persistence, we randomly exposed members of both the previously treated and a subset of the control group to the apex incumbent corruption treatment involving *two* presidential brothers. By comparing the former control which did not get the second brother video with the one which got it we can measure a specific form of accumulation. Because the treatment now shows two instead of one brother taking bribes, corruption may seem more pervasive and tolerate. Indeed, those in the former control group so-exposed show consistent although somewhat larger effects than in the original single brother treatment: increases in corruption perceptions by 0.28σ and corresponding declines in support for democracy by 0.23σ, and lower trust in institutions and people as well.

Accumulation: two treatments. Because half of the citizens originally treated with the CI or the CO video were then also assigned the video of *Another* Brother, we can compare support for democracy for citizens that received one video four months earlier with those that got both. We find that the point estimates of the negative effect on support for democracy appear to *cumulate* even on top of the lingering long-term negative effects (to $CI + CI_2 : 0.427\sigma$ and $CO + CI_2 : 0.342\sigma$). Trust is undermined in a similar fashion as well. Thus, taken together, our results suggest that the effects of corruption scandals cumulate in undermining support for democracy and institutional trust.

5.4 Alternative Channels and Potential Antidotes

We now exploit our other auxiliary treatments to shed further light on alternative channels and potential antidotes to the corrosive effects of apex corruption. As detailed in section 4.1, we implemented two other video interventions—one providing information about the (unfortunately) relative under-performance of Mexico's economy and policies compared to other Latin American countries, to unpack whether simple underperformance (potentially by well-meaning and non-corrupt policymakers) might have similar effects. A second video intended as a potential antidote primed pride in common identity and shared values. Finally, we provided a subset of common financial exposure to broad index funds.

Economic underperformance. First it is useful to contrast the effects of direct exposure to evidence of apex corruption with that of poor economic and policy performance (see Figure 10 and Table OA-16). We find that the economic ineffectiveness video treatment also raises perceptions of corruption by (0.18σ), as well as decreases expressed support for democracy and trust in political institutions (by 0.28σ and 0.25σ respectively), which are also reflected (somewhat)

Figure 10: Alternative Treatments: Economic Underperformance and Nation-Building

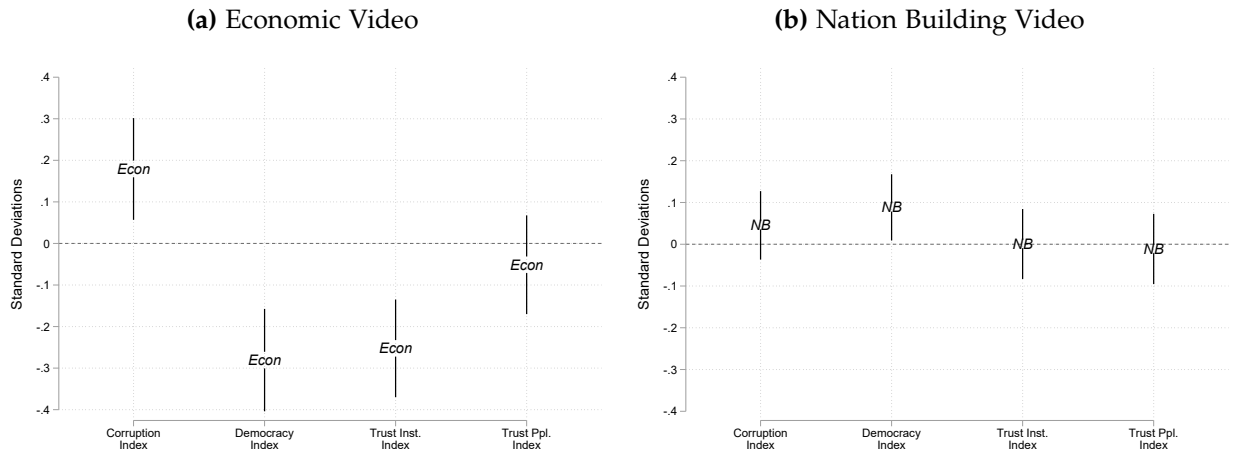


Figure 6(a) shows the estimates for β_E for different outcome variables, from equation 3 along with their 95 percent confidence intervals, and Figure 6(b) estimates for β_{NB}.

in negative effects on incentivized behaviors (Table OA-19).

However unlike apex corruption, the economic underperformance treatment actually *increases* turnout by $8pp$ overall , and $9.9pp$ in the urban sample (Table OA-20). Further, looking at the long-term, unlike apex corruption, the economic underperformance treatment has no lingering effect on undermining support for democracy (Table OA-27), and the additional effect of having exposure to the two brothers corruption treatment among those previously treated with the economic underperformance treatment is not much more than for those in the control that were then treated with just the two brothers treatment (0.28σ vs 0.23σ).

We interpret these effects as suggesting that economic underperformance is a complementary but distinct channel to apex corruption that also has different effects on undermining democratic support. We find that information on economic ineffectiveness also gives people the perception of corruption. However, by also giving voters a gauge of (in)competence, it appears to *spur* citizens to hold politicians accountable by turning out to vote, and does so without longer term deleterious effects on democratic institutions. In contrast, the revelation of actual apex corrupt activity can be more corrosive, undermining societal trust, pro-social behaviors and voting itself.

Common Identity: Nation-building. As we described above, we commissioned a bespoke video from a prominent media designer to prime a common social identity to participants, reminding them of rich cross-cutting aspects of Mexico's culture, from its food, music, sports and shared sacrifice, fortitude in the face of adversity, and history, in which they might justly take pride (see e.g. Akerlof and Kranton (2000); Durante et al. (2020); Levendusky (2018); Shayo (2020); Rohner and Zhuravskaya (2023); Esposito et al. (2023); Voelkel et al. (2022)). While this *nation building*

video had high quality and was appreciated by participants[72], the nation-building video treatment had modest effects (see Figure 10 and Table OA-16). It raises stated support for democracy somewhat (0.069σ, p-value=0.092, mainly by increasing the share of individuals who believe it essential to live in a democracy.[73] However, the video seems to have actually slightly increased corruption perceptions (by 0.045σ) as well. Further, while self-reported trust was unaffected, the nation-building video had a *negative* effect on some behavioral measures, including volunteering rates and the amounts entrusted to politicians and neighbors (see Table OA-19). These were not the effects we anticipated. Instead, they appear more consistent with the nation-building treatment, particularly when deployed close to the elections, having been perceived as propaganda. Indeed, there is a slight ($3.4pp$) and insignificant reduction in actual vote in the nation-building group treated one week before the elections.[74] Further, when they were exposed to evidence of apex corruption in the form of the *Another Brother* treatment, four months later, those in the nation-building treatment also show continued and augmented undermining of democratic support and trust (Table OA-27).

Common Financial Exposure As described above, after collecting proximate outcomes, we assigned a set of individuals in the urban sample to shared financial exposure in broad Mexican index funds, intended as second potential antidote, this time not in the form of a video. We assigned a subset of participants the opportunity to hold (and, should they choose, sell and then buy) an asset that tracked the broad Mexican S&P BMV IPC stock index. While the first primes common identity, the second provides a shared exposure to an important component of the common good and the Mexican economy, an opportunity to build trust by entrusting one's investments to the care of companies that involve anonymous other parties, as well as by making salient to participants the knowledge that such shared investment opportunities in the economy exist not just to themselves, but also to many others as well.[75]

Such an approach can have social spillovers, as individuals are more likely to invest when their peers do (Bursztyn et al., 2020), and individuals learn about a setting where people can and do entrust some of their resources to anonymous others (Jha et al., 2023). Further, exposure to broad index funds provides a means to share in and learn about the gains of the common good—and common risks— of an important component of the national economy while also making more apparent that others are also so-invested. Jha and Shayo (2019) show that in Israel, a related intervention among participants in an internet panel changed the political attitudes of individuals

[72] Asked to rate the video from 1-10 after watching it, 88% gave a rate ≥ 8.

[73] The effect size of our nation-building video treatment lines up closely to those found in an eight-minute video emphasizing common national identity on reducing support for undemocratic practices among a US internet panel in Voelkel et al. (2022) (see Figure OA-13)

[74] As we discuss in companion work, however, despite these average effects, the nation-building video *was* particularly effective in engendering trust in others in rural (i.e. more indigenous) municipalities that did not enjoy a past history of inter-ethnic complementarity due to suitability for cochineal production (see Diaz-Cayeros and Jha (2022) and Diaz-Cayeros et al. (2022).)

[75] See Jha and Shayo (2019),Jha and Shayo (2022) and Jha et al. (2023).

as they came to evaluate policies, including that of peace, based upon their benefits to the broader economy. It also increased trust (Jha et al., 2023).[76] Treated individuals received 200 pesos (about $ 10) of financial assets tracking the broad S&P BMV IPC Mexican stock index, receiving text messages allowing them to trade up to 25 pesos each week. Particularly coming after the other treatment arms in a Covid context, takeup was relatively low— 28% agreed to participate in the financial treatment. Yet, importantly, as we follow both the compliers and the non-compliers, we are able to estimate the treatment effect on the treated. The results are nonetheless encouraging.

Table OA-28 Panel A shows the treatment effect on the treated of receiving common financial exposure. While there is no effect on corruption perceptions, as one might expect, nonetheless, the treatment effect of stock exposure on the treated raised support for democracy by 0.8σ (p-value of an increase 0.04), trust in other citizens by 0.43σ (p-value of an increase 0.16), trust in politicians by 0.59σ (p-value of an increase 0.04). The actual vote turnout rate also increased by $5pp$ (relative to a 57% average turnout rate), though this is not precisely estimated.[77] We see these results as promising but naturally suggestive at best. More (and more highly powered) research clearly needs to be done, yet these findings provide some hope that treatments that can be designed to incorporate *positive* social spillovers, including shared financial exposures, may be able to counteract some of the negative spillovers of apex corruption on democratic values and societal trust.

6 Conclusion

Scandals implicating those at the very highest levels of government in democratic states in corrupt activities have been all-too-common, even while democratic values have been eroding. In this paper, combining evidence both from 'apex corruption in the wild' and a randomized control trial, we show that such apex corruption has marked causal effects, reducing not only citizens' willingness to engage in costly activities in support of democratic organizations, but also even undermining citizens' internalized norms of honesty and trust in institutions and one another. Apex corruption leads to civic disengagement and lower voting. Further, we find that the effects on democratic values linger over time, remerging and even cumulating in the face of further evidence of corruption. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that rather than seeking to solve political disagreements peacefully through those institutions, we also find that citizens in

[76] See also Jha et al. (2024). This intervention differs from the ones above in a number of important ways. First, we assigned the intervention after the corruption and other treatment arms to see if it could have offsetting effects. Second, we employed door-to-door sampling of individuals rather than employing an internet panel. Further, we study a much poorer developing country context with much weaker infrastructure, one where we use text messages to provide opportunities to trade rather than an internet platform (Israeli GDP per capita in 2021 was *five times* that of Mexico). Further, unlike in the Israel study, where individuals who missed an opportunity to record their weekly decision simply lost the 10% of their portfolio, the incentives were much more stark and binary: respondents had to register a decision each of four possible opportunities in order to receive the value of their portfolio at the end.

[77] Table OA-28 Panel B reports the intent to treat results, which show consistent patterns, but not surprisingly are weaker given the relatively small shares that actually took up the treatment. Nonetheless, even the intent to treat raises the democracy index by 0.117σ (p-value of an increase 0.097).

places exposed to apex corruption are more likely to resort to violence rather than relying on the democratic process to settle disagreements. Further, while disclosing evidence of corruption may lead to punishment at the ballot box, there appears to be a darker side to disclosing apex corruption to the public: an erosion of democratic values.

However, our paper also points to potential paths forward. While our intervention priming nation-building proved ineffective in positively impacting actual political behaviors, providing equity in the broader economy through common financial exposures holds some promise. Further, just as we have shown that corrupt acts by highly-placed individuals can have broad negative impacts, this implies that such individuals can have agency. This opens up the possibility that evidence of *apex honesty* among such high-profile leaders may also have the potential to reduce broader corruption and rebuild societal trust as well.

Our paper thus raises several important questions for future research. First, to what extent can scaled-up interventions, including using common financial exposures, counteract the negative impacts of apex corruption? Second, could evidence of apex honesty be effective for reducing corruption and building trust? Does such apex honesty further also tend to strengthen democratic institutions or could leaders who exhibit apex honesty instead become extremely potent advocates for *reducing checks and balances*, thereby consolidating power in themselves? Are the effects of apex corruption and apex honesty similar in authoritarian regimes?[78] Further, do prominent displays of judicial enforcement and punishment of those implicated in apex corruption scandals serve to restore faith in the system, or reinforce perceptions of the pervasiveness of corrupt acts? With support for democracy eroding to worrying levels in many settings around the world, the need to better understand how to counteract the effects of apex corruption is great indeed.

[78] Indeed, we conjecture that having leaders who are perceived to possess apex honesty may itself not be an unalloyed blessing for democratic societies. Leaders who campaign as anti-corruption crusaders, particularly if they exhibit personal honesty, may be effective at consolidating power at precisely the moments when apex corruption has undermined democratic values. Thus, apex corruption may not only undermine democratic values directly, it may ironically also provide opportunities for *anti-corruption* leaders who then themselves may be highly effective agents at further undermining democratic checks and balances. The latter dynamic is further not limited to democracies. As recent anti-corruption campaigns in China, Vietnam and elsewhere demonstrate, leaders can use anti-corruption campaigns to consolidate power in authoritarian regimes as well.

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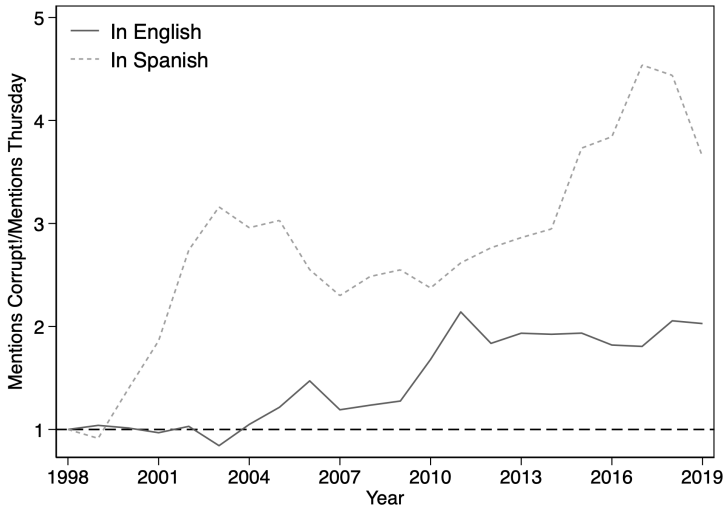
Supplementary Appendix for "Democracy Corrupted"

Eduardo Rivera Enrique Seira Saumitra Jha

Contents

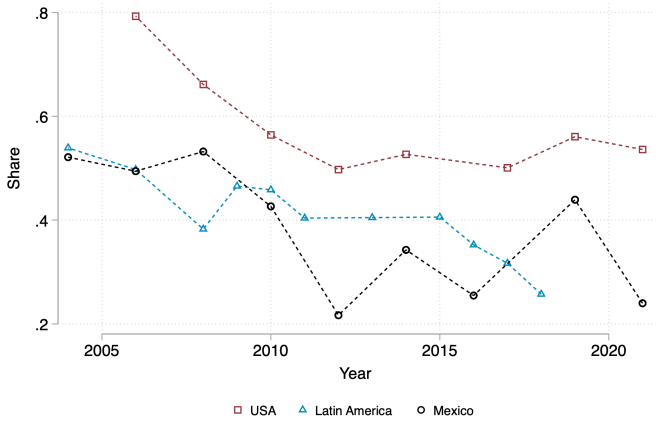
Appendix A. Corruption scandals in Latin America

Figure OA-1: Media mentions of corruption



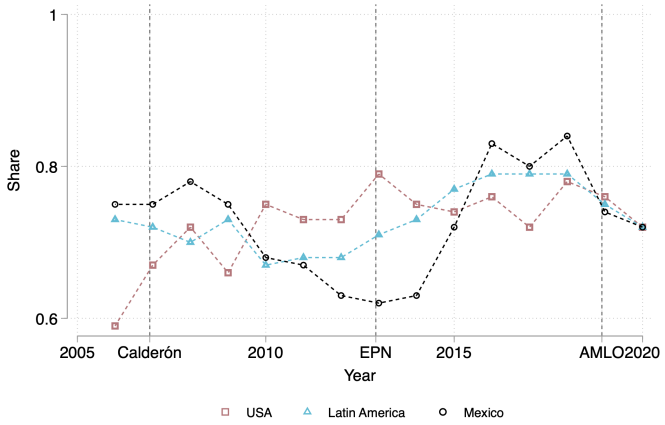
Source: LexisNexis corruption-related newspaper articles (includes the news sources in the Lexis Nexis platform, presumably over 45,000, from 15 countries). For the searches in English the prefix word is keyword "corrupt", while for Spanish we use "corrupt!" and "corrupción" also containing mentions of countries in our LA sample. We normalize both measures by the word "thursday" or "jueves", respectively, and normalize 1998=1.

Figure OA-2: Satisfaction with democracy in the US, Latin America and Mexico



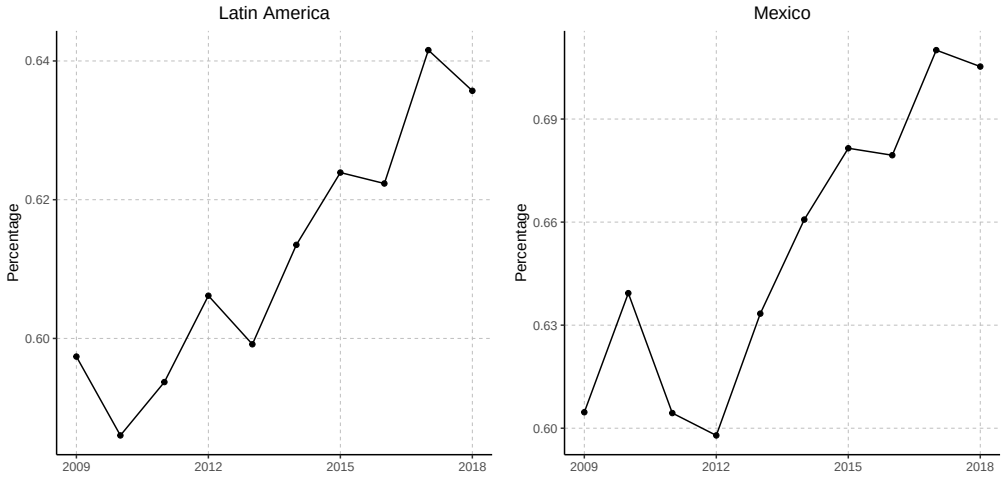
Notes: This figure depicts the trends in satisfaction with democracy according to Lapop for the United States, Latin America and Mexico. Satisfaction with democracy is a dummy that takes the value of one if the respondent answered that he or she was very satisfied or satisfied with democracy.

Figure OA-3: Perception of widespread government corruption in the US, Mexico and Latin America



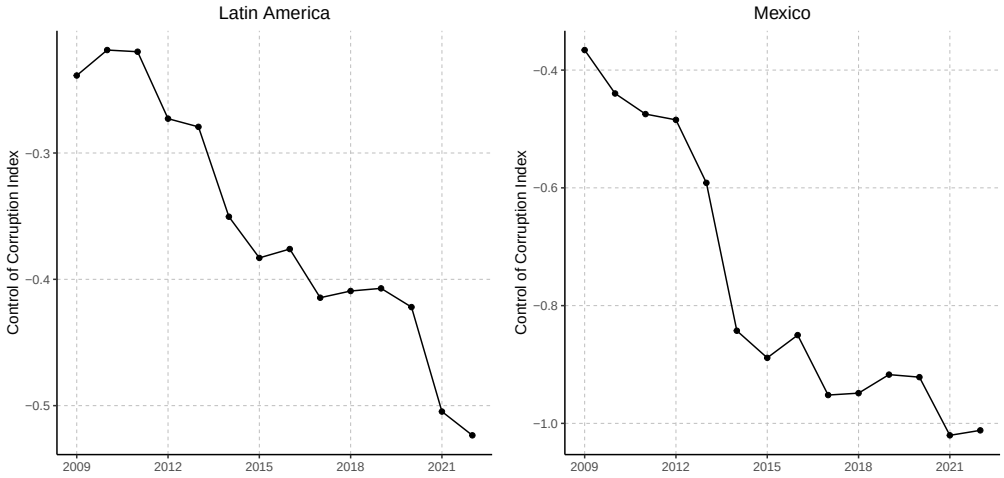
Notes: This figure depicts the trends in perception of widespread corruption throughout the government according to data from Gallup Analytics in the United States, Mexico and Latin America from 2006 to 2020. Corruption in government is a variable that recorded yes, no and do not know/ refuse answers to the question "Is corruption widespread throughout the government in this country, or not?" and we report the share of "Yes" answers.

Figure OA-4: Firms' increases in bribes



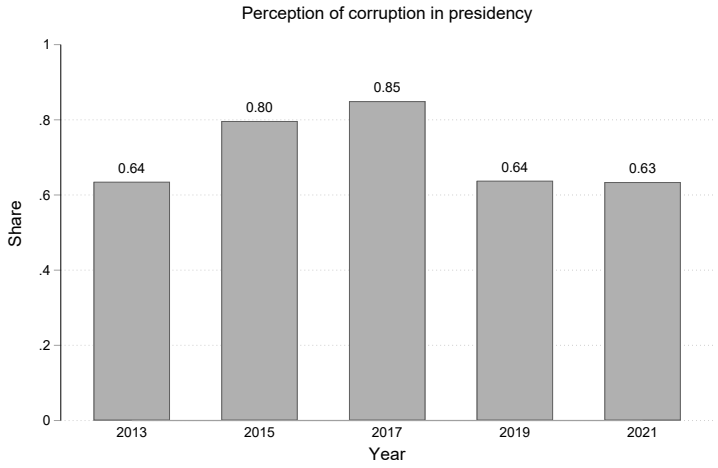
Global Competitiveness Survey from the World Economic Forum. The survey gathers data through a questionnaire distributed to domestic and foreign-owned firms worldwide. This graph shows the average percentage of yes in questions related to irregular payments in exports and imports, in public utilities, in tax collection, in public contracts, in judicial decisions.

Figure OA-5: Control of Corruption



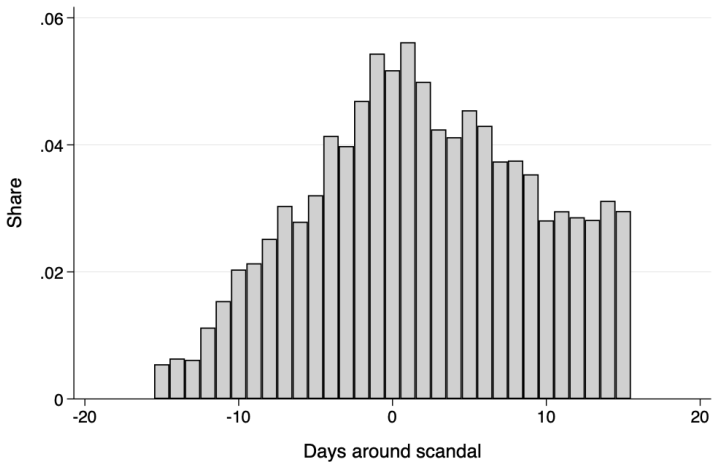
Source: the Worldwide Governance Indicators project, WB. Household, expert, firm surveys + commercial providers, NGOs, and public sector organizations. Actual bribing + perceived corruption. It encompasses both minor and major corruption, as well as the state's domination by elites and private interests. The Index takes values from -2.5 to 2.5, where a higher score means more control of corruption, using Unobserved Components Model.

Figure OA-6: The incumbent president (since 2018) is perceived as less corrupt



Notes: This figure plots the citizens' perception of corruption in the presidency over time. Specifically, it plots the average of a dummy that takes the value of one if the surveyed answered "very frequent" or "frequent" to "In your opinion, how frequent are the acts of corruption in the presidency of Mexico?". Source ENCIG, INEGI

Figure OA-7: Distribution of interviews relative to timing of corruption scandals



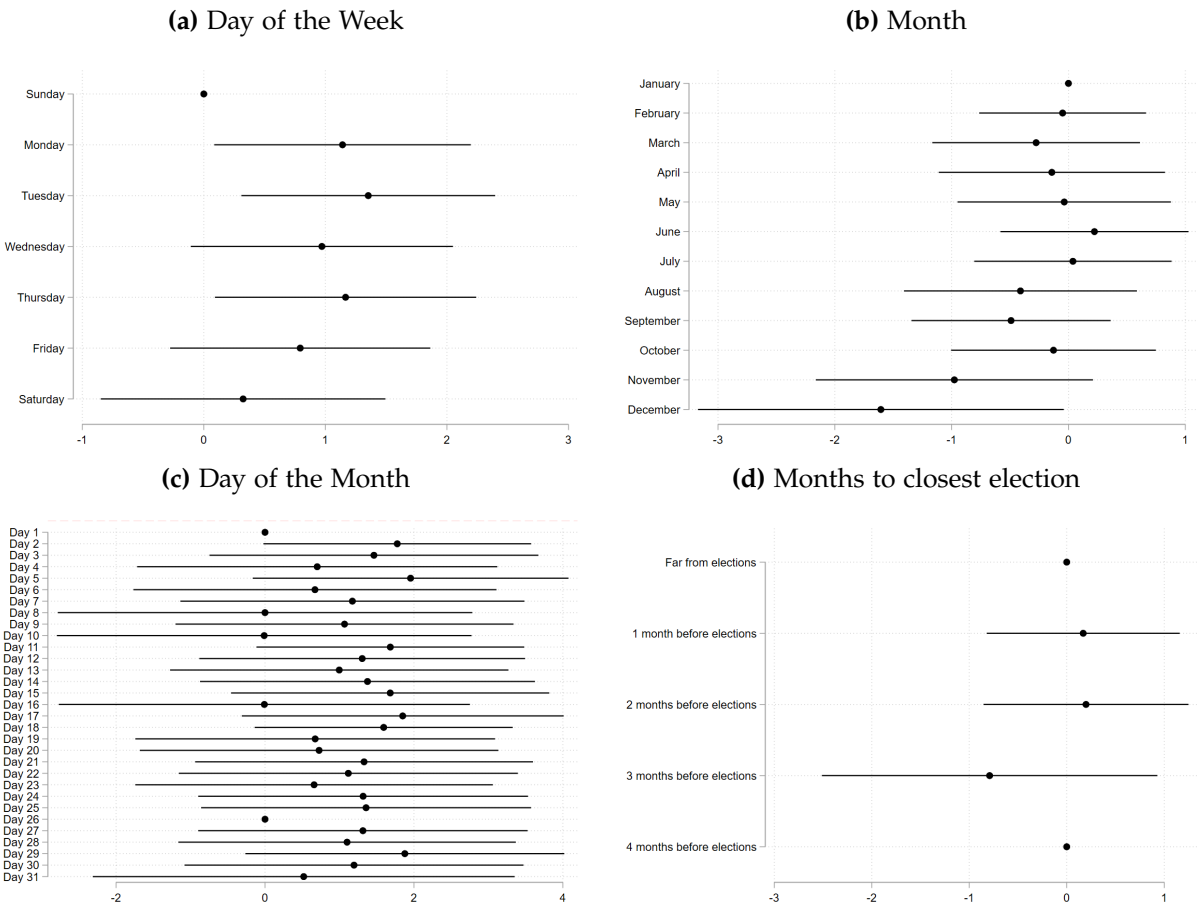
This figure plots the distribution of interviews per day relative to the respective corruption scandal.

Table OA-1: Predicting Corruption Scandals

	(1) scandal	(2) scandal	(3) scandal	(4) scandal
Mean dep. var	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003
Accuracy (Out of sample)	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002
AUC (Out of sample)	0.746	0.759	0.736	0.734
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of week	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of the Month	No	No	Yes	Yes
Close to Election	No	No	No	Yes

This table shows 4 different regressions trying to predict when corruption events happen. We take a random sample of 50% of all country-year observations (where 170 are true scandals) and estimate logit models using this sample. We then impute a prediction of 1 whenever the estimated probability is larger than the median probability of a country-year being a true scandal and a prediction of 0 otherwise. We use all 170 corruption events since we are not limited to those just falling within Latinobarometer. The dependent variable is 1(Corruption)$_{ictd}$, which =1 for the exact day in which the corruption scandal is revealed. Explanatory variables are different sets of indicators as described in the table and the text. Accuracy is measured as an indicator equal to 1 whenever the prediction equals the true value for the dependent variable. For column (1) the explanatory variables are country fixed effects, year fixed effects and day of week fixed effects, in column (2) we add month fixed effects, in column (3) we add day of the month fixed effects and in column (4) we add closeness to election dummies, that is, a dummy for whether the scandal occurred 1 month before the election, a dummy for whether the scandal occurred between 1 and 2 months before the election, a dummy for whether the scandal occurred between 2 and 3 months before the election and a dummy for whether the scandal occurred between 3 and 4 months prior the election. The omitted dummy is for scandals occurring more than 4 months away from the election. AUC is the Area Under the Curve measure useful for evaluating whether the model is good at classifying the occurrence of scandals. It is calculated by obtaining the are under the ROC curve, which plots the True Positive Rate on the vertical axis and the False Positive Rate on the horizontal axis.

Figure OA-8: Predicting Corruption Scandals: coefficient plots



This figure plots coefficients from a single logit regression where the dependent variable is the occurrence of a corruption scandal $1[C]_{cdmty}$ in a on particular day-of-week d, on a particular month m, day-of-month t, year y and country c. Regressors include day-of-week, month, day-of-month, months from election. We plot the coefficients estimated on these indicators along with their 95 percent confidence intervals. All regressions control also for year and country dummies. The omitted category is shown as a dot without a confidence interval.

Table OA-2: Corruption Scandals: Covariate Balance Among Respondents

	(1) β	(2) Cluster 1 SE	(3) Cluster 2 SE	(4) Observations	(5) Mean dep. var
Male	0.022	(0.014)	[0.010]**	27080	0.482
Age in years	0.523	(0.572)	[0.442]	27080	40.239
Married	0.014	(0.012)	[0.009]	27016	0.548
Middle-school completed	0.021	(0.024)	[0.019]	27080	0.450
Employed	-0.078	(0.057)	[0.048]	27080	0.484
Middle-High SES	0.021	(0.015)	[0.014]	24126	0.470
Has sewer system	-0.009	(0.012)	[0.011]	27080	0.886
House owner	-0.029	(0.024)	[0.021]	26850	0.615
Car owner	0.019	(0.014)	[0.010]*	26934	0.763
Num. tries at interview	-0.007	(0.016)	[0.012]	26873	0.306

This table shows the balance in covariates for people interviewed by Latinobarometer before versus after the corruption scandals. The sample includes respondents interviewed within 15 days before or after the corruption scandal event. All variables except of age in years and number of tries to get an interview are indicators. All are self explanatory. An observation is an interview. We regress 1(Post Corruption)$_{ictd}$, the main explanatory variable in equation 1 separately on each of the above respondent characteristics. We control for country × year, month, and day-of-week indicators. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered by country × year in parentheses, while robust standard errors in brackets are clustered by country × year × days from scandal grouped in blocks of three days. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Table OA-3: Effects of Corruption Scandals on Trust in Distinct Political Institutions

	(1) Institutions index	(2) Trust in fed. gov.	(3) Trust in pol. parties	(4) Trust in electoral inst.	(5) Trust in fed. congress
Corruption	-0.062	-0.031	-0.014	-0.030	-0.022
	(0.031)*	(0.014)**	(0.008)*	(0.015)*	(0.010)**
	[0.031]**	[0.012]**	[0.009]	[0.013]**	[0.010]**
Observations	27016	26597	26444	19938	26165
R-squared	0.033	0.084	0.034	0.096	0.036
Country x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.000	0.315	0.172	0.396	0.236

An observation is an interview. We regress each outcome on 1(Post Corruption)$_{ictd}$, the main explanatory variable in equation 1. We control for country × year, month, and day-of-week indicators. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered by country × year in parenthesis, while robust standard errors in brackets are clustered by country × year × days from scandal grouped in blocks of three days. For columns (2) to (5) the variables measure trust in the federal government, political parties, electoral institute and federal congress from the survey responses where respondents are asked to rate their level of trust on each of those groups from 1 to 4, where 1 indicates the most trust, each trust variable takes the value 1 if the response from the survey was 1 or 2, and the value 0 otherwise. *Institutions index* was defined in the text. Individual controls are included.

Table OA-4: Effects of Corruption Scandals on Economic Satisfaction Measures

	(1) Satisfaction with economic system	(2) Current macro situation (1-5)	(3) Support for a market economy
Corruption	-0.010	-0.017	-0.004
	(0.019)	(0.031)	(0.012)
	[0.016]	[0.025]	[0.013]
Observations	26095	26827	19988
R-squared	0.046	0.127	0.027
Country x Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.227	2.761	0.747

This table shows the effect of corruption scandals on non-political measures relating to satisfaction with the economy. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered by country × year, while robust standard errors in brackets are clustered by country × year × relative distance to corruption scandal grouped in blocks of three days. Individual Controls: Gender, Age, Schooling, Employment, Civil Status, Size of town, Socioeconomic Status, Month and Day. The significance is reported at levels *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$ and * $p < 0.1$

Appendix B. Additional Tables: Latin American Corruption Scandals

Table OA-5: Scraped News Channels' Twitter Accounts

Country	Institution	Account	Followers	Country	Institution	Account	Followers
Argentina	Clarín	@clarincom	3.1 M	Guatemala	Prensa Libre	@prensa_libre	1.3 M
Argentina	La Nación	@LANACION	3.4 M	Guatemala	Diario La Hora	@lahoragt	328 mil
Argentina	Infobae	@infobae	2.8 M	Guatemala	Telediario Guatemala	@TelediarioGT	1 M
Brasil	O Globo	@JornalOGlobo	6.4 M	Guatemala	Nuestro Diario	@NuestroDiario	863 mil
Brasil	Jornal do Brasil	@JornaldoBrasil	617,7 mil	Nicaragua	LA PRENSA Nicaragua	@laprensa	356 mil
Brasil	Folha de S.Paulo	@folha	7.5 M	Nicaragua	Canal 10 - Nicaragua	@canal10nica	211 mil
Brasil	UOL Notícias	@UOLNoticias	3.4 M	Nicaragua	El Nuevo Diario	@elnuevodiario	220 mil
Bolivia	La Razón	@LaRazon_Bolivia	565 mil	México	Noticieros Televisa	@NTelevisa_com	3,1 M
Bolivia	EL DEBER	@grupoeldeber	641 mil	México	Reforma	@Reforma	3,1 M
Bolivia	Los Tiempos	@LosTiemposBol	352 mil	México	El Universal	@El_Universal_Mx	5.7 M
Chile	BioBioChile	@biobio	3.2 M	México	López Doriga	@lopezdoriga	7,6 M
Chile	TVN	@TVN	3.1 M	Paraguay	ABC Digital	@ABCDigital	999 mil
Chile	T13	@T13	3.2 M	Paraguay	Última Hora	@UltimaHoracom	1 M
Chile	La Tercera	@latercera	1.9 M	Paraguay	Diario La Nación	@LaNacionPy	319 mil
Costa Rica	La Nación	@nacion	612 mil	Panamá	La Prensa Panamá	@prensacom	538 mil
Costa Rica	Teletica	@teletica7	424 mil	Panamá	TVN Noticias	@tvnnoticias	846 mil
Costa Rica	La República	@La_Republica	166 mil	Panamá	Mi diario Panamá	@MiDiarioPanama	311 mil
Colombia	El Espectador	@elespectador	5.3 M	Panamá	La Estrella | Panamá	@EstrellaOnline	254 mil
Colombia	El Tiempo	@ELTIEMPO	7.1 M	Perú	El Comercio	@elcomercio_peru	464 mil
Colombia	Noticias RCN	@NoticiasRCN	7.9 M	Perú	Agencia Andina	@Agencia_Andina	616 mil
Colombia	Noticias Caracol	@NoticiasCaracol	8.8 M	Perú	Diario La República	@larepublica_pe	2.2 M
Ecuador	El Tiempo	@eltiempocuenca	219 mil	Perú	Diario Correo	@diariocorreo	1 M
Ecuador	La Hora Ecuador	@lahoraecuador	575 mil	Perú	Panamericanatv	@PanamericanaTV	1 M
Ecuador	El Comercio	@elcomerciocom	1.7 M	Uruguay	El País	@elpaisuy	720 mil
Ecuador	TC Televisión	@tctelevision	1.3 M	Uruguay	Subrayado	@Subrayado	727 mil
Ecuador	Teleamazonas	@teleamazonasec	2.1 M	Uruguay	La República	@larepublica_uy	110 mil
El Salvador	El Salvador.com	@elsalvador.com	778 mil	Uruguay	El Observador	@ObservadorUY	720 mil
El Salvador	Teledos	@teledos_tcs	650 mil	Rep. Dom.	Periódico Hoy	@PeriodicoHoy	698 mil
El Salvador	Diario El Mundo	@ElMundoSV	362 mil	Rep. Dom.	Diario Libre	@DiarioLibre	1.2 M
El Salvador	Noticias 4Visión	@noticias4vision	780 mil	Rep. Dom.	LISTINDIARIO	@ListinDiario	1 M
Honduras	Diario La Prensa	@DiarioLaPrensa	479 mil	Rep. Dom.	Noticias SIN	@SIN24Horas	1.2 M
Honduras	Diario El Heraldo	@diarioelheraldo	371 mil	Venezuela	El Universal	@ElUniversal	5 M
Honduras	Diario Tiempo	@DiarioTiempo	246 mil	Venezuela	Últimas Noticias	@UNoticias	4.1 M
Honduras	Diario La Tribuna	@LaTribunahn	263 mil	Venezuela	Runrunes	@RunRunesWeb	2.2 M

Notes: This table includes the twitter accounts for the main news channels in Latin America that were used for scraping in twitter, including country, institution, account, and follower count in 2022.

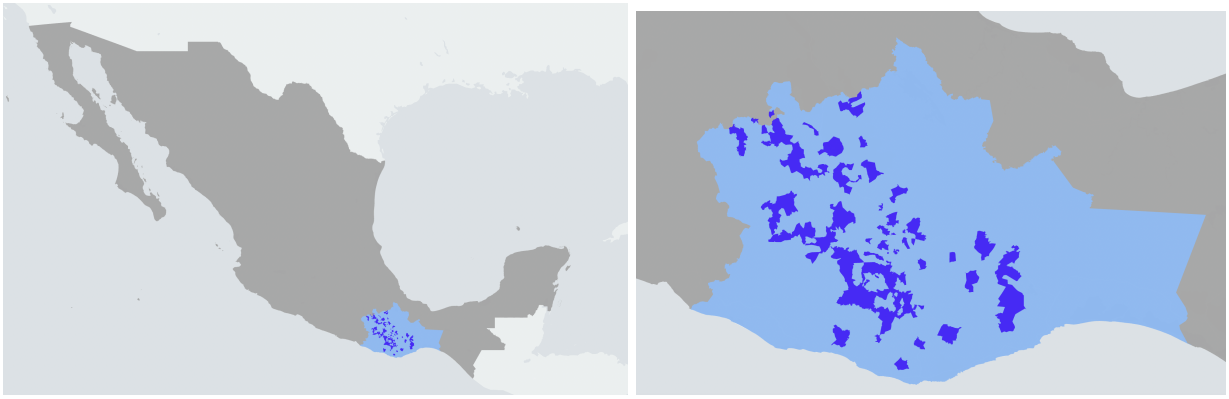
Table OA-6: Corruption Scandals that intersect with Latinobarometer Survey Fieldwork

Country	Date	Corruption Scandal
Argentina	14/06/2016	Nine million dollars and a monastery: Argentina's latest corruption scandal
	23/07/2017	Governor of Santa Cruz was filmed receiving "a bribe of 2 million pesos"
Bolivia	11/06/2013	Eight YPFB high ranked directors arrested for corruption
	13/05/2016	Minister Juan Ramon Quintana denounced of influence peddling
	31/07/2017	The National Director Jorge Bohorquez, arrested for acts of corruption and extortion
Brazil	17/06/2013	Information leak of corruption in public works for the World Cup
	24/05/2016	Minister Juca audio leak in which he said that would obstruct investigations
	12/07/2017	Lula Da Silva is arrested due to corruption accusations related with Lava Jato
Chile	11/05/2013	Congresswoman supported a Fishing Law in exchange of a bribe
	22/01/2015	SQM Case: Hugo Bravo is prosecuted for bribery, and money laundering.
Colombia	08/10/2009	Former Minister Felipe Arias involved in scandal of Agro Ingreso Seguro subsidies
	14/07/2011	Corruption network is discovered in the DIAN for millionaire fraud in the VAT refund
	05/02/2015	WSJ reveals video showing bribes from senior PetroTiger executives to former Ecopetrol official
	08/06/2017	Audios prove that the Spanish company Inassa bribed Colombian politicians
	21/06/2018	The Attorney General revealed investigation against congressmen for electoral crimes
Costa Rica	06/07/2017	Prosecutor, Congressmen and President involved in a scandal for influence peddling in the import of Chinese cement
Ecuador	16/05/2016	Former Petroecuador director is arrested for influence peddling.
Guatemala	26/05/2016	CICIG discover a monumental blow to corruption in Congress for illegal hiring
	15/07/2017	Micivi Corruption: Companies that paid bribes have received 6.7 billion from the Federal Government
Nicaragua	05/07/2018	The president's father-in-law and 2 officials are accused of corruption by the US Dep. of Treasury
Panama	28/01/2015	Cost overruns of more than 45 million dollars were detected in the National Aid Program. Investigations against Martinelli begin
Paraguay	29/09/2009	Federal Prosecutor of Coronel Oviedo is charged with bribery request
	09/08/2011	Federal Prosecutor of Ciudad del Este is arrested for alleged bribery
	01/06/2013	Seam's administrative director arrested for bribery
	23/05/2016	Son of a Supreme Court judge receives bribes in name of his father
	05/07/2018	Official is recorded asking for a bribe in the name of a Supreme Court judge
Peru	15/05/2016	DEA investigates opposition leader Keiko Fujimori for alleged money laundering
	07/07/2018	Audio leak reveals offers of reduced sentences, requests for favors, or negotiations for promotions in the Council of Magistracy

Notes: This table includes an overview of the political corruption scandals that happened in Latin America during times when Latinobarometer surveys were being conducted.

Appendix C. Robustness and details of RCT

Figure OA-9: Field Experiment sites: Oaxaca, Mexico



Notes: We sampled 68 urban and rural municipalities in Oaxaca

Table OA-7: RCT Balance Check (main sample)

	CI	CO	NB	E	All = 0 P Value	N	Mean dep. var.
Male	.013	-.034	-.039	-.005	.198	3331	.386
	(.026)	(.025)	(.022)	(.034)			
Age	-.842	-.005	.131	1.044	.622	3331	40.359
	(.853)	(.866)	(.742)	(1.106)			
Completed Middle	-.004	-.008	.006	-.032	.785	3331	.777
	(.023)	(.022)	(.019)	(.029)			
Employed	-.001	.002	-.01	-.01	.986	3331	.632
	(.025)	(.025)	(.022)	(.032)			
High-middle class	-.005	-.006	-.003	-.011	.96	3331	.953
	(.011)	(.012)	(.01)	(.016)			
Gvt. Satis. (1–4)	.006	.05	.025	-.045	.597	3321	2.329
	(.043)	(.044)	(.039)	(.058)			
Econ. Satis. (1–4)	.011	.05	.009	-.013	.701	3331	1.821
	(.036)	(.037)	(.032)	(.048)			
Support Incumb. (1–10)	-.305	-.119	-.025	-.102	.452	3331	5.47
	(.169)	(.172)	(.15)	(.226)			
Corruption Percep (1–3)	.025	-.012	-.028	.021	.752	3331	1.808
	(.041)	(.041)	(.035)	(.053)			
Democratic scale	.038	.014	.133	-.05	.715	3331	5.663
	(.125)	(.125)	(.105)	(.165)			
Vote as Duty	-.06	-.008	-.023	-.001	.393	3326	3.451
	(.031)	(.029)	(.026)	(.035)			

This table shows the balance in covariates for people interviewed in the RCT across the four possible treatment videos for Corruption Incumbent, Corruption Opposition, Nation Building, and Economic, using the same sample as in the main index. Each row shows the estimates of equation 1, using a different pre-determined variable on the left-hand side. *Male* takes a value of 1 if the respondent identifies as male and 0 otherwise. *Age* measured the respondent age in years. *Completed Middle School* takes a value of 1 if the respondent completed middle school and 0 otherwise. *Employed* takes a value of 1 if the respondent is currently employed and 0 otherwise. *High-middle class* takes a value of 1 if the interviewer rated the socioeconomic level of the respondent as medium, good, or very good, based on the quality of the household, furniture and general appearance. *Government Satisfaction* measures the responses of the question "How satisfied are you with the performance of the government in this country?" from 1 to 4, where 1 is the most satisfied. Coefficients are shown in the same row as the covariate name and robust standard errors are shown below each coefficient.

Table OA-8: RCT Balance Check: One Month vs One Week to Election

	(1) β	(2) Observations	(3) Mean dep.variable
Male	0.00826	1154	0.393
	(0.034)		
Age	-1.514	1154	39.98
	(1.122)		
Completed Middle School	0.0635	1154	0.819
	(0.024)***		
Employed	-0.0346	1154	0.690
	(0.033)		
High-middle class	0.0000340	1154	0.970
	(0.012)		
Govt Satis. (1-4)	0.0754	1153	2.224
	(0.060)		
Econ Satis. (1-4)	0.0356	1154	1.798
	(0.050)		
Support Incumb. Party(1-10)	0.305	1154	5.146
	(0.233)		
Corruption Perception (1-3)	-0.0665	1154	1.881
	(0.054)		
Democratic Scale	0.0489	1154	5.599
	(0.179)		
Vote as Duty	-0.0907	1152	3.481
	(0.042)**		

This table shows estimates of regressing each covariate on a dummy indicator for whether the treatment was received close to the election by the respondent. Coefficients thus report the differences in means between the far-to-the-election and close-to-the-election subgroups. We define being close to the election whenever the respondent receives treatment within 8 to 0 days before the election. The sample is restricted to Oaxaca City where we did the timing randomization. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Table OA-9: RCT Balance Check by Treatment One Month or One Week prior to Election

	CI	CO	NB	E	All = 0 p	N	Mean dep. var.
Male	.056	-.16	-.123	-.058	.23	264	.45
	(.099)	(.103)	(.076)	(.101)			
Age	.52	-1.246	3.215	3.235	.614	264	37.392
	(3.221)	(3.369)	(2.482)	(4.113)			
Completed Middle	-.034	-.059	-.024	.028	.888	264	.892
	(.06)	(.076)	(.053)	(.069)			
Employed	-.077	-.083	.001	-.092	.768	264	.667
	(.095)	(.097)	(.075)	(.12)			
High-middle class	.019	0	.02	.061	.348	264	.958
	(.031)	(.035)	(.027)	(.031)			
Gvt. Satisfaction (1–4)	-.135	-.258	.014	.126	.388	264	2.342
	(.155)	(.168)	(.152)	(.207)			
Econ. Satis. (1–4)	-.208	.051	-.031	-.302	.259	264	1.875
	(.135)	(.151)	(.109)	(.17)			
Support Incumb. (1–10)	1.086	-.661	1.393	.654	.028	264	5
	(.615)	(.867)	(.502)	(.904)			
Corruption Perception (1–3)	-.127	.211	-.19	-.178	.147	264	1.875
	(.157)	(.15)	(.126)	(.183)			
Democratic scale	-.412	-.19	.291	.653	.524	264	5.6
	(.489)	(.511)	(.385)	(.602)			
Vote as Duty	-.057	-.132	-.043	-.075	.682	264	3.417
	(.105)	(.09)	(.068)	(.109)			

This table shows balance in covariates across treatment arms within the set of people treated about 1 week before the election, hence the smaller sample. Coefficients are shown in the same row as the covariate name. Robust standard errors are shown below each coefficient.

Table OA-10: RCT Balance Check: Subjects Matched to Administrative (INE) data

	CI	CO	NB	E	p	N	Mean dep. var.
Male	-.001	-.071	-.037	-.061	.135	2134	.403
	(.033)	(.032)	(.028)	(.041)			
Age	-1.078	1.14	.422	.459	.468	2134	40.421
	(1.06)	(1.073)	(.911)	(1.346)			
Completed Middle	-.004	-.027	0	-.04	.708	2133	.786
	(.028)	(.028)	(.023)	(.035)			
Employed	-.012	-.043	0	-.031	.665	2133	.654
	(.031)	(.032)	(.027)	(.04)			
High-middle class	.014	.002	.012	.017	.739	2134	.947
	(.014)	(.015)	(.012)	(.016)			
Gvt. Satisfaction (1–4)	-.034	.005	-.02	-.093	.716	2127	2.306
	(.054)	(.057)	(.049)	(.07)			
Econ. Satis. (1–4)	-.001	.028	-.017	-.13	.138	2122	1.831
	(.045)	(.048)	(.039)	(.056)			
Support Incumb. (1–10)	-.219	-.239	.114	-.269	.384	2134	5.264
	(.211)	(.223)	(.189)	(.271)			
Corruption Perception (1–3)	.013	-.019	-.001	.029	.971	2097	1.836
	(.053)	(.053)	(.045)	(.065)			
Democratic scale	-.098	.031	.134	-.067	.669	2084	5.638
	(.159)	(.163)	(.132)	(.203)			
Vote as Duty	-.117	-.051	-.033	0	.057	2123	3.481
	(.041)	(.038)	(.033)	(.043)			

This table uses the sample that could be matched to administrative data on voting, and shows balance across arms on observed characteristics by regressing each covariate on the treatment arms. Coefficients are shown in the same row as the covariate name. Robust standard errors are shown below each coefficient.

Table OA-11: Attrition table for match with INE

	(1) Matched INE
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	0.014
	(0.023)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	-0.015
	(0.024)
Nation Building (NB)	0.008
	(0.020)
Economic (E)	0.031
	(0.028)
Observations	2481.000
R-squared	0.072
Mean dep. var.	0.795

This table regresses an indicator for being matched with administrative data on voting against treatment arms. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

Table OA-12: RCT Balance in Follow-Up survey

	CI	CO	NB	E	All = 0 P Value	N
Male	.054	-.039	-.044	-.005	.427	1096
	(.051)	(.049)	(.037)	(.054)		
Age	-1.476	-.675	-.135	1.865	.656	1096
	(1.658)	(1.613)	(1.219)	(1.845)		
Completed Middle	-.007	.035	.012	-.006	.882	1136
	(.039)	(.037)	(.029)	(.043)		
Employed	.033	-.02	.043	.016	.657	1135
	(.047)	(.046)	(.035)	(.05)		
High-middle class	.013	.013	.025	.021	.404	1136
	(.016)	(.018)	(.013)	(.018)		
Gvt. Satis. (1–4)	-.032	.022	-.039	-.106	.801	1132
	(.088)	(.089)	(.068)	(.096)		
Econ. Satis. (1–4)	-.012	-.014	-.057	-.13	.455	1133
	(.07)	(.073)	(.054)	(.074)		
Support Incumb. (1–10)	-.04	.195	-.042	-.848	.164	1136
	(.326)	(.332)	(.253)	(.362)		
Corruption Percep (1–3)	-.065	-.018	-.119	.026	.293	1117
	(.084)	(.081)	(.058)	(.085)		
Democratic scale	-.144	-.361	-.002	-.243	.577	1124
	(.258)	(.256)	(.17)	(.259)		
Vote as Duty	-.089	-.062	-.016	-.027	.653	1132
	(.067)	(.06)	(.05)	(.061)		

This table shows balance in covariates across treatment arms in the follow up survey. Not all respondents answered the follow up survey and questions were not mandatory, hence the difference in observations across covariates. Coefficients are shown in the same row as the covariate name. Robust standard errors are shown below the coefficients.

Table OA-13: Long run experimental design

Baseline Treatment	Follow-up CI_2 Treatment				
	Treated		Control		
	stocks	no stocks	stocks	no stocks	Total
Control	138	136	124	129	527
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	70	0	54	0	124
Corruption Opposition (CO)	57	0	67	0	124
Nation Building (NB)	127	0	131	0	258
Economic (E)	0	50	1	49	100
Total	392	186	377	178	1133

The table shows the cross-randomization of the Two Brothers Incumbent Corruption video CI_2 done in Oaxaca city at follow-up 3 months after the first intervention. The first experiment arms are displayed in rows, while columns display the allocation of CI_2, indicating the separation of the previous cross randomization of stocks.

Table OA-14: Balance Check of the *Another* Brother treatment

	Control (1)	Treated (2)	Diff. no FE (3)	Diff. inc FE (4)
Male	0.365	0.388	0.023	0.016
	(0.482)	(0.488)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Age	40.601	41.325	0.724	0.657
	(15.815)	(16.833)	(0.988)	(0.985)
Completed Middle School	0.818	0.825	0.007	0.007
	(0.386)	(0.380)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Employed	0.683	0.692	0.009	0.007
	(0.466)	(0.462)	(0.028)	(0.028)
Middle SES or more	0.971	0.965	-0.006	-0.005
	(0.167)	(0.183)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Government Satisfaction (1-4)	2.266	2.286	0.021	0.005
	(0.883)	(0.876)	(0.052)	(0.053)
Economic Satisfaction (1-4)	1.792	1.773	-0.020	-0.037
	(0.731)	(0.712)	(0.043)	(0.042)
Support for Incumbent Party (1-10)	5.169	5.173	0.004	-0.031
	(3.325)	(3.312)	(0.197)	(0.197)
Corruption Perception (1-3)	1.905	1.873	-0.031	-0.043
	(0.794)	(0.761)	(0.047)	(0.047)
Democratic Scale (1-10)	5.631	5.720	0.089	0.094
	(2.472)	(2.358)	(0.144)	(0.142)
Vote as Duty (1-4)	3.450	3.444	-0.006	-0.006
	(0.687)	(0.673)	(0.041)	(0.038)
Observations	555	578	1133	1133

This table shows balance in covariates for people interviewed in the RCT follow-up survey. We compare citizens that got the second brother video against those that did not. For columns (1) and (2) we show the mean of each individual variable for the control and treated groups, respectively. Column (3) includes the coefficient and robust standard error (in parentheses) from a regression where the variable in each row is the dependent variable and the treatment status is the main regressor. Column (4) shows estimates from the same regressions but includes fixed effects for municipality and surveyor. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The significance is reported at levels *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$ and * $p < 0.1$

Table OA-15: Attrition table for Follow-up Survey

	(1) Answered follow-up
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	0.021
	(0.038)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	-0.063
	(0.040)
Nation Building (NB)	0.024
	(0.028)
Economic (E)	0.013
	(0.040)
Observations	1366
R-squared	0.060
Mean dep. var	0.769

This table regresses an indicator answering the follow-up survey against the original treatment arms.

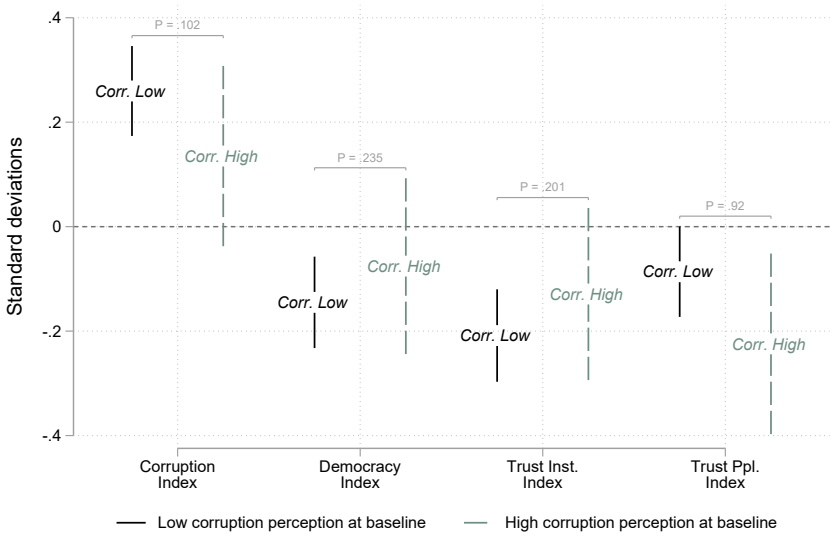
Table OA-16: Effects on Corruption Perceptions, Support for Democracy, and Trust

	(1) Corruption Index	(2) Democratic Index	(3) Trust Institutions Index	(4) Trust People Index
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	0.276***	-0.159***	-0.280***	-0.183***
	(0.048)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.046)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	0.189***	-0.161***	-0.106**	-0.051
	(0.048)	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.049)
Nation Building (NB)	0.045	0.069*	0.001	-0.011
	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.043)
Economic (E)	0.179***	-0.281***	-0.252***	-0.051
	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.060)	(0.061)
Observations	3331	3331	3331	3331
R-squared	0.201	0.186	0.211	0.170
Mun. and Enum. FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.000	0.001	-0.008	-0.003
$\mid CI \mid \geq 0$	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
$\mid CO \mid \geq 0$	0.000	0.001	0.015	0.151

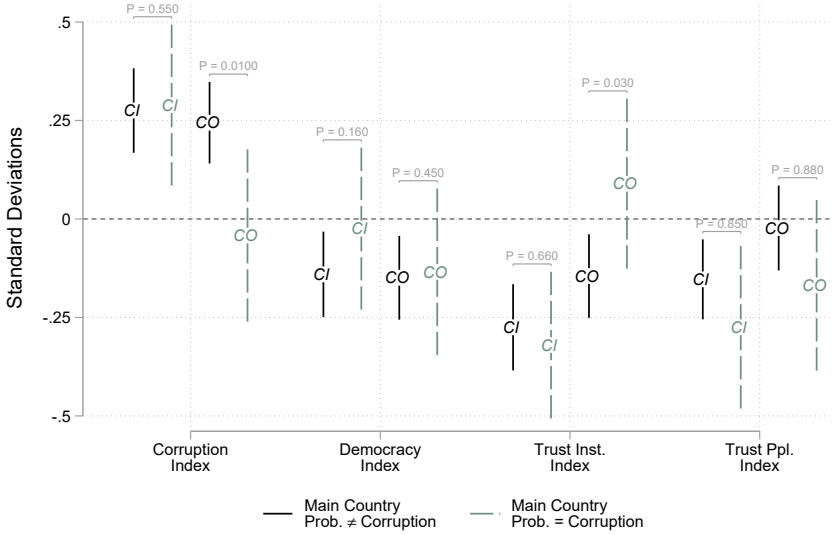
This table presents the effects of the four different videos on the four main outcomes described in the text. Individual Controls include: Gender, Age, Schooling, Employment, Current Economic Satisfaction, Perception of Democracy in Mexico, Initial corruption perception, Support for Incumbent and Opposition parties, and Socioeconomic status. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The bottom panel reports p values associated to the test of equality of coefficients across treatment arms. Compared to Table OA-7 we lose about 270+ obs because of missing values in some survey answers. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Figure OA-10: Effects of corruption videos by corruption perceptions at baseline

(a) By baseline corruption perception



(b) By baseline corruption perception and video content



Grey brackets indicate p-values of one-sided tests and that these estimates are weaker among those who perceive corruption as the most important problem in the country ex ante.

Table OA-17: Effects on Corruption Perceptions, Support for Democracy and Trust: Urban vs Rural Samples

	(1) Corruption Index	(2) Democratic Index	(3) Trust Institutions Index	(4) Trust People Index
Panel A: Urban Sample				
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	0.235***	-0.099	-0.295***	-0.345***
	(0.076)	(0.091)	(0.078)	(0.083)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	0.173**	-0.116	-0.189**	-0.107
	(0.079)	(0.082)	(0.079)	(0.081)
Nation Building (NB)	0.036	0.079	0.036	-0.031
	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.064)
Economic (E)	0.188**	-0.102	-0.278***	-0.118
	(0.095)	(0.093)	(0.081)	(0.086)
Observations	1366	1366	1366	1366
R-squared	0.177	0.161	0.217	0.182
Enumerator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
$\mid CI \mid \geq 0$	0.001	0.139	0.000	0.000
$\mid CO \mid \geq 0$	0.014	0.078	0.009	0.095
Panel B: Rural Sample				
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	0.269***	-0.202***	-0.252***	-0.070
	(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.063)	(0.062)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	0.139**	-0.190***	-0.057	0.023
	(0.064)	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.067)
Nation Building (NB)	0.057	0.045	-0.017	0.034
	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.062)
Economic (E)	0.027	-0.453***	-0.212**	0.032
	(0.094)	(0.088)	(0.089)	(0.089)
Observations	1965	1965	1965	1965
R-squared	0.165	0.186	0.193	0.116
Enumerator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
$\mid CI \mid \geq 0$	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.132
$\mid CO \mid \geq 0$	0.015	0.003	0.184	0.365

This table presents the effects of the four different videos on the four main outcomes described in the text, separately for the urban and rural samples. Individual Controls include: Gender, Age, Schooling, Employment, Current Economic Satisfaction, Perception of Democracy in Mexico, Initial corruption perception, Support for Incumbent and Opposition parties, and Socioeconomic status. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The bottom panel reports p values associated to the test of equality of coefficients across treatment arms. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Table OA-18: Q-values for Effects on Corruption Perceptions, Democratic Attitudes, and Trust Political Institutions, and Trust in People

	(1) Corruption Index	(2) Democratic Index	(3) Trust Institutions Index	(4) Trust People Index
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	0.276	-0.159	-0.280	-0.183
	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.000)
	[0.001]	[0.002]	[0.001]	[0.001]
Corruption Opposition (CO)	0.189	-0.161	-0.106	-0.051
	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.030)	(0.302)
	[0.001]	[0.002]	[0.022]	[0.160]
Nation Building (NB)	0.045	0.069	0.001	-0.011
	(0.279)	(0.095)	(0.989)	(0.792)
	[0.160]	[0.055]	[0.448]	[0.359]
Economic (E)	0.179	-0.281	-0.252	-0.051
	(0.004)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.398)
	[0.004]	[0.001]	[0.001]	[0.166]
Observations	3331	3331	3331	3331
R-squared	0.201	0.186	0.211	0.170
Enumerator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

This table shows the p-values in parentheses and q-values in brackets for the coefficients of the corruption, democratic, trust in institutions, and trust in others indices. We keep the same individual controls. The q-values are computed as first introduced in Benjamini et al. (2006). The procedure is as follows: First we compute p-values for the multiple hypotheses we are testing. We arrange these p-values in ascending order. Compute critical values according to the formula proposed in Benjamini et al. (2006). We then compare p-values to these critical values and consider the hypothesis associated to the p-value as significant if it is less than or equal to the critical value. Lastly, assign as a q-value for that hypothesis the minimum False Discovery Rate at which the hypothesis may be deemed significant.

Table OA-19: Effect of Apex Corruption on Democracy-Supporting Behaviors

	(1) Donates to Elec. Inst.	(2) Electoral Observer	(3) Trust Game Politician	(4) Trust Game Neighbor	(5) RAG Coins Mayor	(6) RAG Coins Neighbor
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	-0.036	-0.021**	-0.182***	-0.113*	-0.654**	-0.400
	(0.024)	(0.011)	(0.062)	(0.060)	(0.329)	(0.371)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	0.001	0.005	-0.120*	-0.084	0.150	-0.274
	(0.024)	(0.013)	(0.064)	(0.059)	(0.350)	(0.384)
Nation Building (NB)	-0.028	-0.018*	-0.132**	-0.187***	0.342	0.252
	(0.020)	(0.010)	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.331)	(0.337)
Economic (E)	-0.014	0.001	-0.097	-0.113	-0.663*	-0.634
	(0.031)	(0.016)	(0.081)	(0.077)	(0.392)	(0.396)
Observations	2481	2460	3331	3331	1573	1573
R-squared	0.136	0.083	0.132	0.112	0.104	0.092
Mun. and Enum. FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.223	0.046	1.600	2.036	14.766	14.925
CI $\geq$ 0 (p-value)	0.063	0.025	0.002	0.031	0.024	0.141
CO $\geq$ 0 (p-value)	0.488	0.358	0.029	0.076	0.334	0.238

This table presents treatment effects on behaviors. *Donates to Electoral Institute* measures the responses when we asked participants if they would be willing to donate $10 pesos to buy water and snacks for poll booth workers. *Electoral observer* indicates whether citizens started the procedure to become an official electoral observer. *RAG Coins Government* and *RAG Coins Neighbor* measure the results of a version of the resource allocation game described in the text. *Trust Game Government* and *Trust Game Neighbor* measure coin sending in a traditional trust game. Same individual controls. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. We also report the *p* values testing equality between the coefficients of pairs of treatments. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Table OA-20: Effects of Videos on Actual Voting, by Proximity to Election

	(1) Vote	(2) Vote	(3) Vote
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	-0.024	-0.045	-0.235**
	(0.032)	(0.047)	(0.092)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	-0.056*	-0.079*	-0.060
	(0.033)	(0.047)	(0.105)
Nation Building (NB)	0.006	-0.003	-0.034
	(0.027)	(0.036)	(0.076)
Economic (E)	0.081**	0.099*	0.017
	(0.040)	(0.051)	(0.126)
Far from Election			-0.135**
			(0.054)
Far from Election x CI			0.235**
			(0.106)
Far from Election x CO			-0.039
			(0.116)
Far from Election x NB			0.020
			(0.085)
Far from Election x E			0.119
			(0.136)
Observations	2045	1154	1154
R-squared	0.127	0.127	0.136
Mean dep. var	0.604	0.575	0.575
CI+Far x CI			0.000
CI+Far x CI = 0 (p-value)			0.993
CO+Far x CO			-0.099
CO+Far x CO = 0 (p-value)			0.082
NB+Far x NB			-0.014
NB+Far x NB = 0 (p-value)			0.771
E+Far x E			0.136
E+Far x E = 0 (p-value)			0.023

This table presents the effects on actual voting from matching the subjects with the electoral administrative data. The first column regresses an indicator for the respective citizen voting in 2021 Federal Congress election for the entire sample. The second column reports the results of the same regression, limiting the sample to Oaxaca city. Column 3 defines an indicator *Close to Election*=1 if the citizen was exposed to the videos within 8 days or less from the election, and =0 if exposure happened 4 or more weeks from the election. We show results of interacting this indicator with treatment. Because we randomized the interview timing these timing effects are causal. Individual Controls included. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Table OA-21: Decomposing effect on Corruption Perceptions

	(1) Corruption Index	(2) Progress Fighting Corruption (1-4)	(3) Share of Corrupt Pol. (0-100)	(4) Share of Taxes Stolen by Pol (0-100)	(5) All Politicians Are Corrupt (1-4)
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	0.276***	-0.200***	4.357***	3.572***	0.113***
	(0.048)	(0.046)	(1.216)	(1.350)	(0.041)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	0.189***	-0.089**	3.285***	1.671	0.135***
	(0.048)	(0.045)	(1.167)	(1.305)	(0.040)
Nation Building (NB)	0.045	-0.014	0.752	1.631	0.004
	(0.042)	(0.039)	(1.045)	(1.138)	(0.036)
Economic (E)	0.179***	-0.168***	0.936	-0.604	0.180***
	(0.062)	(0.055)	(1.600)	(1.726)	(0.050)
Observations	3331	3266	3240	3222	3314
R-squared	0.201	0.169	0.102	0.109	0.172
Mun. and Enum. FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.000	2.314	72.279	65.819	2.814

Notes: This table shows the decomposition of the effect across treatments on the variables measuring corruption. *Corruption index* is created by normalizing the variables in columns (2) to (4) measuring corruption, individually subtracting their mean and dividing by their standard deviation, adding them up, and once again normalizing the result by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation. *Progress Fighting Corruption (1-4)* is calculated through the answers of the question "How much progress do you think has been made in reducing corruption in State institutions in the last 2 years?" in the survey. *Share of Corrupt Politicians (0-100)* is measured from the answers to the survey question "What percentage of politicians in Mexico do you think are involved in acts of corruption?". *Share of Taxes Stolen by Politicians (0-100)* is calculated from the responses of the survey question "Of every $100 pesos in taxes collected by the government, what percentage do you think politicians steal?". *All Politicians Are Corrupt (1–4)* is calculated through the answers of the question "Do you strongly agree, agree, do not agree or strongly do not agree with the statement 'All politicians are corrupt'" in the survey. Same individual level controls. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Table OA-22: Decomposing Effects on Democratic Attitudes

	(1) Democratic Index	(2) Democratic Satisfaction	(3) Democracy best government	(4) Essential to live in a democracy
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	-0.159***	-0.048**	-0.032	-0.026
	(0.050)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	-0.161***	-0.040*	-0.052**	-0.047**
	(0.050)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Nation Building (NB)	0.069*	0.001	-0.013	0.035**
	(0.041)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Economic (E)	-0.281***	-0.094***	-0.037	-0.092***
	(0.063)	(0.027)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Observations	3331	3307	3231	3300
R-squared	0.186	0.182	0.088	0.122
Mun. and Enum. FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.001	0.278	0.782	0.788

Notes: This table shows the decomposition of the effect across treatments on the variables measuring democratic attitudes. *Democratic index* is created by normalizing the variables in columns (2) to (4) measuring democratic attitudes, individually subtracting their mean and dividing by their standard deviation, adding them up, and once again normalizing the result by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation. *Democratic Satisfaction* is calculated through the answers of the question "In general, would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, a little satisfied or not satisfied with the democracy in Mexico?" in the survey. *Democracy best government* is measured from the answers to the survey question "Please, state if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "Democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government". *Essential to live in a democracy* is calculated from the responses of the survey question "Do you consider it essential to live in a country where governors are elected by the majority's vote?" Same individual level controls. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Table OA-23: Decomposing Effect of Trust in Political Institutions

	(1) Institution Index	(2) Trust in President	(3) Trust in Parties	(4) Trust in Media	(5) Trust in Congress
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	-0.280***	-0.114***	-0.039**	-0.060**	-0.084***
	(0.048)	(0.023)	(0.016)	(0.023)	(0.020)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	-0.106**	0.001	-0.009	-0.036	-0.033
	(0.049)	(0.023)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Nation Building (NB)	0.001	0.002	0.003	-0.005	-0.020
	(0.043)	(0.021)	(0.015)	(0.021)	(0.019)
Economic (E)	-0.252***	-0.102***	-0.028	-0.024	-0.085***
	(0.060)	(0.031)	(0.020)	(0.031)	(0.025)
Observations	3331	3327	3326	3326	3321
R-squared	0.211	0.261	0.083	0.064	0.101
Mun. and Enum. FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	-0.008	0.565	0.122	0.311	0.249

Notes: This table shows the decomposition of the effect across treatments on the variables measuring trust in political institutions. *Institutions index* is created by normalizing the variables in columns (2) to (5) measuring democratic attitudes, individually subtracting their mean and dividing by their standard deviation, adding them up, and once again normalizing the result by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation. *Trust in President, Parties, Media and Congress* variables are calculated from the answers of the following question in the survey "Please tell me, for each of the groups, institutions or people mentioned in the list, how much trust do you have in them: a lot, some, little or no trust in: the president, congressman, media, and political parties." where each variable takes a value of 1 if the answer is a lot or some trust, and 0 otherwise. Same individual level controls. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The significance is reported at levels *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$ and * $p < 0.1$

Table OA-24: Decomposing Effect on Trust in People

	(1) Trust in Others Index	(2) General Trust	(3) Trust in Neighbors	(4) Trust in Non-Neighbor Mexican
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	-0.183***	-0.038**	-0.056**	-0.072***
	(0.046)	(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.022)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	-0.051	0.001	-0.026	-0.016
	(0.049)	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.023)
Nation Building (NB)	-0.011	-0.000	0.001	0.012
	(0.043)	(0.017)	(0.022)	(0.021)
Economic (E)	-0.051	-0.036	0.057*	-0.038
	(0.061)	(0.024)	(0.033)	(0.030)
Observations	3331	3314	3329	3317
R-squared	0.170	0.106	0.100	0.123
Mun. and Enum. FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	-0.003	0.175	0.550	0.332

Notes: This table shows the decomposition of the effect across treatments on the variables measuring trust in people *Trust in Others Index* is created by normalizing the variables in columns (2) to (4) measuring democratic attitudes, individually subtracting their mean and dividing by their standard deviation, adding them up, and once again normalizing the result by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation. *General trust* is calculated from the answers of the following question in the survey "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that one is never careful enough when dealing with others?". *Trust in Neighbors, Members of other community* are based on the responses of the survey question "Please tell me, for each of the groups, institutions or people mentioned in the list, how much trust do you have in them: a lot, some, little or no trust in: your neighbors, and a non-local Mexican.", each variable takes a value of 1 if the answer is a lot, or some trust. Same individual level controls. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Table OA-25: Effect on Other Social Outcomes

	(1) Covid Vaccine	(2) Defend Country in War	(3) % Criminals who Go to Jail
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	-0.026	-0.027	-0.045
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(1.539)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	-0.002	0.013	0.787
	(0.024)	(0.025)	(1.472)
Nation Building (NB)	-0.030	0.022	0.329
	(0.021)	(0.022)	(1.287)
Economic (E)	-0.035	-0.047	-2.956
	(0.032)	(0.033)	(1.878)
Observations	2757	3274	3235
R-squared	0.087	0.171	0.068
Mun. and Enum. FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean dep. var	0.773	0.491	36.218

Notes: This table shows the 'effect' on other social outcomes across the four treatments. *Covid Vaccine* measures whether or not respondents say they will get the Covid vaccine. *Defend Country in War* is an indicator =1 if the respondent claims he/she would defend Mexico in a war. *Judicial System Effectiveness* uses the question, "Out of every 100 criminals, how many end up in jail?". Same individual controls. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The significance is reported at levels *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$ and * $p < 0.1$

Table OA-26: Effects of corruption videos on actual and retrospective voting

	Actual vote			Retrospective vote			
	(1) Actual Vote	(2) Actual Vote	(3) Actual Vote	(4) Went to vote	(5) Incumbent Party	(6) Opposition Parties	(7) Vote Other Party
Corruption Incumbent (CI)	-0.026	-0.051	-0.241***	-0.226**	-0.184*	0.001	-0.014
	(0.033)	(0.047)	(0.092)	(0.088)	(0.100)	(0.081)	(0.046)
Corruption Opposition (CO)	-0.056*	-0.078*	-0.058	-0.135	0.005	-0.207***	0.009
	(0.033)	(0.047)	(0.105)	(0.094)	(0.098)	(0.065)	(0.057)
Far from Election	-0.036	-0.068	-0.102	-0.029	0.021	0.003	-0.042
	(0.063)	(0.067)	(0.077)	(0.066)	(0.073)	(0.062)	(0.039)
Far from Election x CI			0.240**	0.225**	0.235**	-0.091	0.003
			(0.105)	(0.101)	(0.112)	(0.091)	(0.049)
Far from Election x CO			-0.042	0.134	-0.057	0.227***	0.009
			(0.116)	(0.105)	(0.112)	(0.078)	(0.062)
Observations	2045	1154	1154	1162	1162	1162	1162
R-squared	0.128	0.131	0.136	0.081	0.166	0.152	0.059
Mean dep. var	0.604	0.575	0.575	0.785	0.609	0.206	0.042
CI+Far x CI			-0.000	-0.000	0.051	-0.090	-0.011
CI+Far x CI = 0 (p-value)			0.995	0.993	0.315	0.032	0.432
CO+Far x CO			-0.099	-0.001	-0.052	0.020	0.019
CO+Far x CO = 0 (p-value)			0.083	0.982	0.330	0.644	0.375
$\mid CI \mid \geq 0$	0.210	0.138	0.005	0.005	0.033	0.506	0.378
$\mid CO \mid \geq 0$	0.045	0.049	0.291	0.075	0.519	0.001	0.437

This table presents, in columns (1)–(3) the effects on actual voting from matching the subjects with the electoral administrative data. For conciseness, we are not displaying indicators of the economic and nation-building video; The first column uses as a dependent variable an indicator for the respective citizen voting in the 2021 Federal Congress election for the entire sample. The second column reports the results of the same regression, limiting the sample to Oaxaca City. Column 3 defines an indicator *Far from Election*=0 if the citizen was exposed to the videos within 8 days or less from the election, and =1 if exposure happened 3 or more weeks from the election. We show results of interacting this indicator with treatment. Because we randomized the interview timing these timing effects are causal. We also include a dummy indicating who was randomized into the finance arm. In columns (4)–(6) we show treatment effect estimates on retrospective voting for different outcomes. We only did retrospective voting surveys for people located in Oaxaca city. In column (4) the outcome is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent said she cast a vote and 0 otherwise. For columns (5) and (6) we use the questions *Which party did you vote for?* and *which party would you have voted for in case you did not vote?* (not all parties are included in column 6 just those shown in the CO video). Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. The significance is reported at levels *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

Table OA-27: Testing Accumulation: The *Another* Brother treatment

	(1) Corruption Index	(2) Democratic Index	(3) Trust Institutions Index	(4) Trust People Index
Only Baseline CI	0.015	-0.256	-0.137	0.031
	(0.165)	(0.156)	(0.163)	(0.175)
Only Baseline CO	-0.033	-0.200	-0.147	-0.355***
	(0.130)	(0.139)	(0.144)	(0.132)
Only Baseline NB	0.039	-0.142	-0.042	-0.225**
	(0.117)	(0.110)	(0.115)	(0.114)
Only Baseline E	0.218	0.010	0.003	0.118
	(0.172)	(0.193)	(0.160)	(0.180)
CI_2	0.287***	-0.231***	-0.217**	-0.114
	(0.084)	(0.084)	(0.085)	(0.085)
Baseline CI + CI_2	0.230	-0.424***	-0.291**	-0.109
	(0.148)	(0.151)	(0.145)	(0.141)
Baseline CO + CI_2	0.267*	-0.342**	-0.354**	-0.186
	(0.158)	(0.162)	(0.173)	(0.159)
Baseline NB + CI_2	0.199*	-0.427***	-0.303***	-0.220**
	(0.109)	(0.112)	(0.114)	(0.110)
Baseline E + CI_2	0.386**	-0.283*	-0.297**	0.102
	(0.163)	(0.150)	(0.144)	(0.158)
$\mid CI \mid \geq \mid CI + CI_2 \mid (p-value)$	0.139	0.190	0.208	0.241
$\mid CO \mid \geq \mid CO + CI_2 \mid (p-value)$	0.044	0.227	0.147	0.832
$\mid CI_2 \mid \geq \mid CI + CI_2 \mid (p-value)$	0.651	0.898	0.298	0.484
$\mid CI_2 \mid \geq \mid CO + CI_2 \mid (p-value)$	0.552	0.752	0.211	0.676
$\mid CI \mid \geq 0 \, (p-value)$	0.464	0.050	0.201	0.570
$\mid CO \mid \geq 0 \, (p-value)$	0.600	0.075	0.154	0.004
$\mid NB \mid \geq 0 \, (p-value)$	0.370	0.099	0.359	0.024
$\mid E \mid \geq 0 \, (p-value)$	0.103	0.520	0.508	0.744
$\mid CI_2 \mid \geq 0 \, (p-value)$	0.000	0.003	0.006	0.090
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipio FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Enumerator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.156	0.200	0.193	0.158
Observations	1054	1056	1055	1052

This table presents the results of the follow-up survey. The sample is only for the city of Oaxaca. *Only Baseline* are indicators for groups that received no further Incumbent Corruption video between the baseline and the follow-up surveys. The coefficients associated with them measure how persistent the first exposure was. CI_2 indicates the subsample that received the new incumbent corruption video. *Baseline* $X + CI_2$ are interactions. The omitted category is composed of citizens who did not receive either the first set of videos or the second. *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05 and * p < 0.1

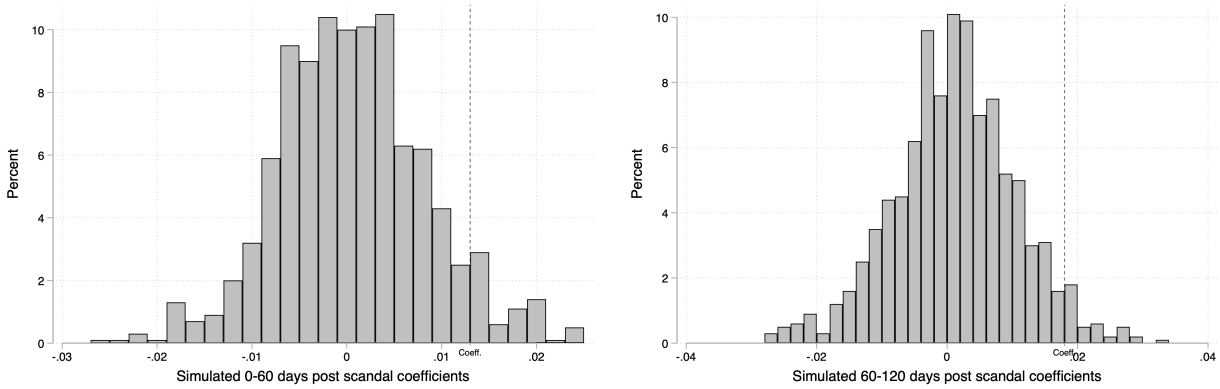
Appendix D. Treatment Effects of Common Financial Exposure

Table OA-28: Treatment Effects of Common Financial Exposure

	(1) Corruption Index Follow-up	(2) Democracy Index Follow-up	(3) Trust Persons Follow-up	(4) Trust Politicians Follow-up	(5) Real voting
Panel A: Treatment on the Treated					
Stocks Active	-0.071	0.806*	0.429	0.588*	0.049
	(0.349)	(0.478)	(0.448)	(0.349)	(0.187)
Observations	1061	1063	1059	1062	1154
R-squared	0.110	0.088	0.100	0.129	0.109
F	233.860	235.698	230.839	233.462	295.279
Kleibergen-Paap rk LM statistic	66.462	63.904	66.710	66.761	61.867
Hansen J statistic	1.164	1.420	1.392	1.210	1.285
J statistic p-value	0.281	0.233	0.238	0.271	0.257
$\|S\| \geq \|CI\|$	0.444	0.029	0.182	0.040	0.312
$\|S\| \geq \|CO\|$	0.470	0.034	0.096	0.039	0.261
$\|S\| \geq \|NB\|$	0.458	0.034	0.100	0.061	0.389
$\|S\| \geq \|E\|$	0.271	0.036	0.269	0.027	0.626
S offsetting	0.420	0.046	0.169	0.046	0.397
Panel B: Intent to Treat					
Assigned to stocks (S)	0.008	0.117	0.039	0.112	0.027
	(0.087)	(0.090)	(0.090)	(0.087)	(0.041)
Observations	1061	1063	1059	1062	1154
R-squared	0.130	0.141	0.131	0.163	0.131
Mean dep. var.	0.111	-0.065	0.026	-0.099	0.575
Enumerator FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
$\|S\| \geq \|CI\|$	0.582	0.035	0.401	0.089	0.122
$\|S\| \geq \|CO\|$	0.644	0.054	0.077	0.089	0.064
$\|S\| \geq \|NB\|$	0.622	0.048	0.079	0.187	0.264
$\|S\| \geq \|E\|$	0.132	0.177	0.833	0.067	0.944
S offsetting	0.537	0.097	0.333	0.099	0.258

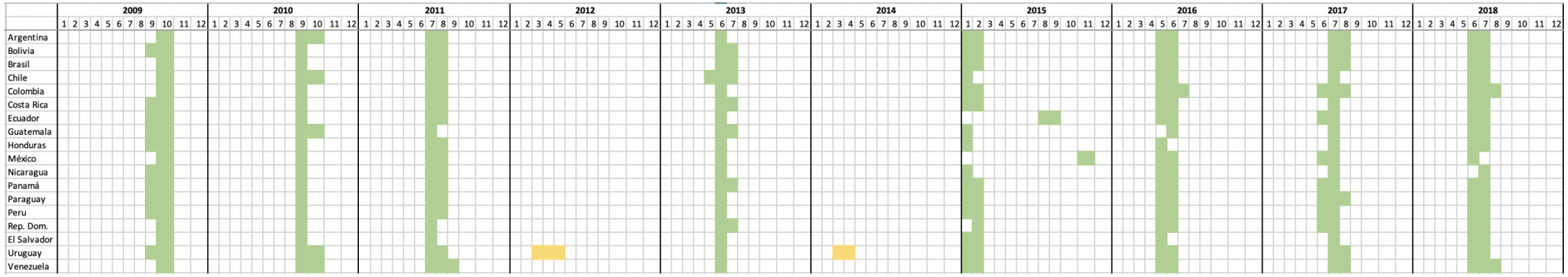
Appendix E. Additional Figures

Figure OA-11: Histograms for simulated coefficients of the number of violent protests post-scandal



Histograms show the simulated coefficients for the number of violent protests 0-60 days (left) and 60-120 days (right) post-scandal. For the simulation, we ran 1000 trials generating random dates for the scandals, following the same distribution of the number of scandals by country.

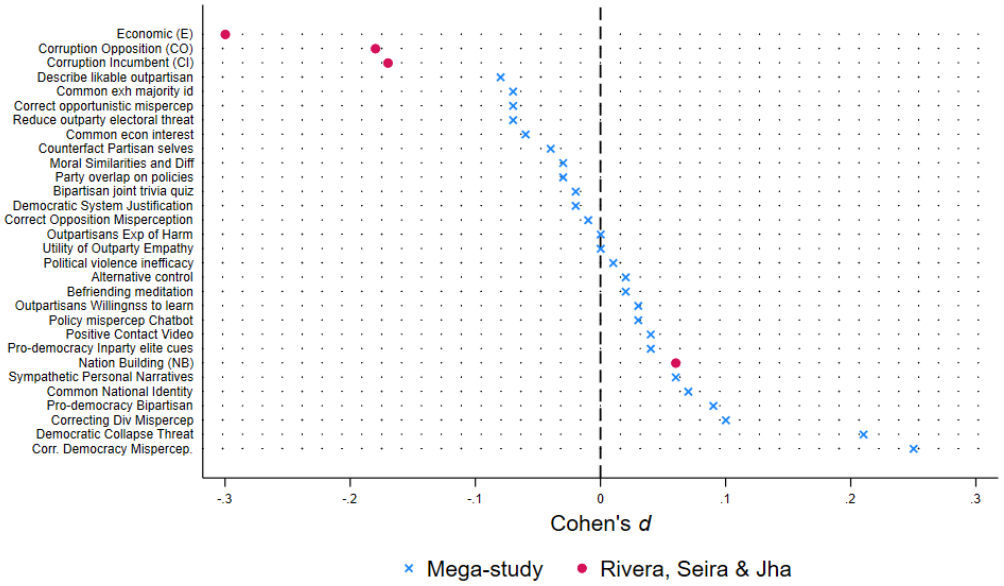
Figure OA-12: Timeline for Latinobarometer surveys



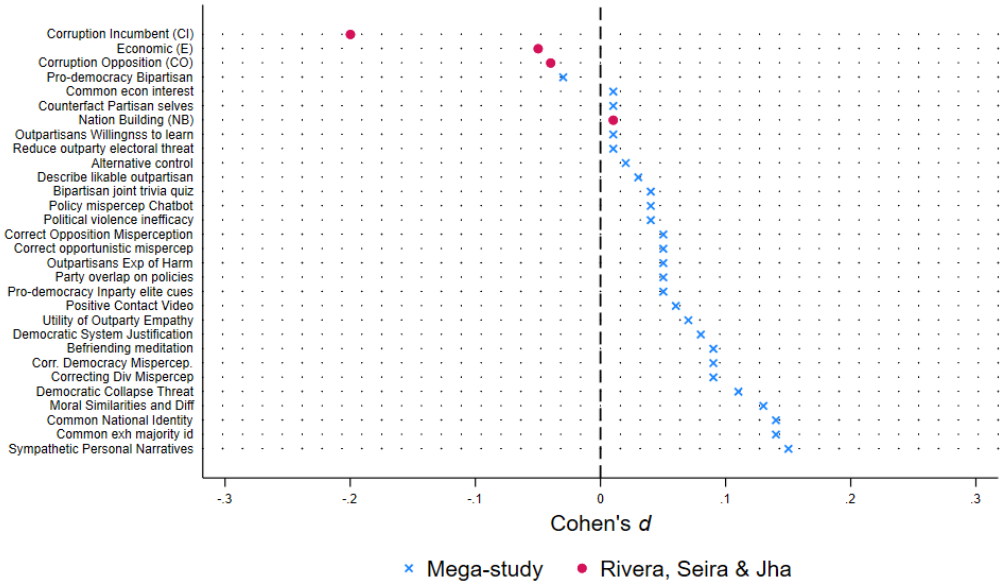
Months of Latinobarometer field world by country and year.

Figure OA-13: Effect size comparison relative to Voelkel et al. (2022)

(a) Democracy Index vs Inverse of Support for Undemocratic Practices

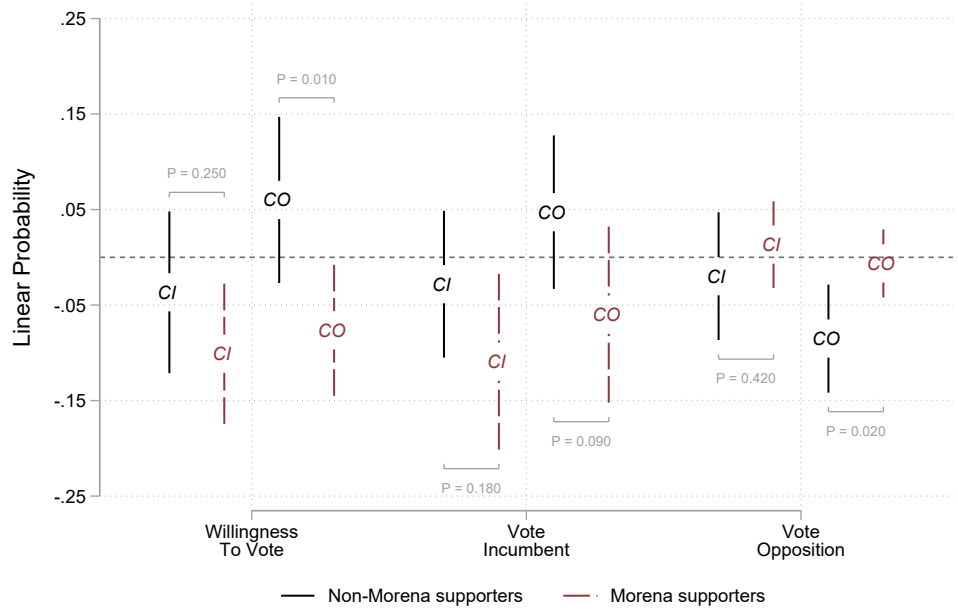


(b) Trust in people vs Inverse of Social Distrust



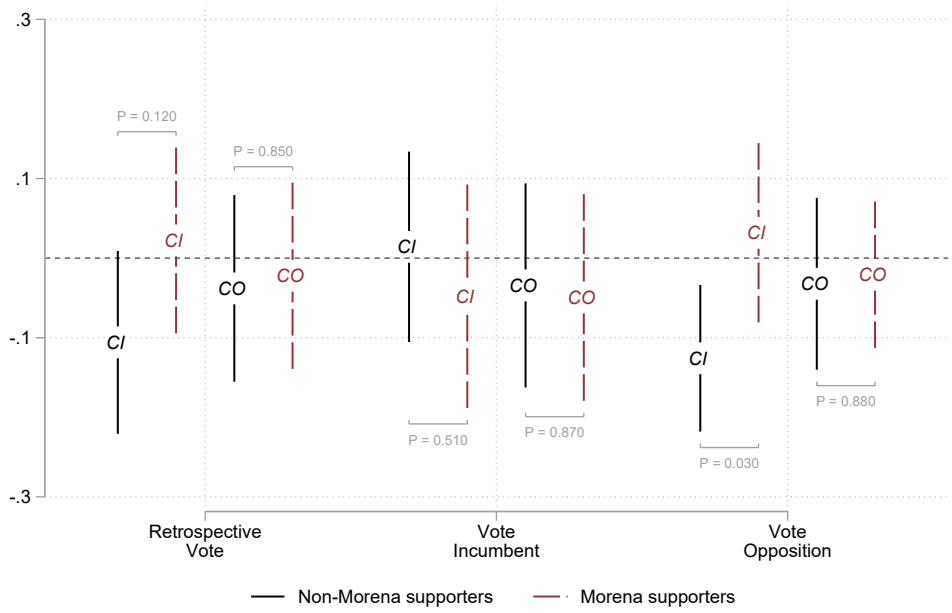
This figure shows a comparison of effect sizes, namely, a comparison of Cohen's d. We compare our estimated treatment effects to those in (Voelkel et al., 2022). Panel A focuses on democratic support, while Panel B focuses on trust. Each 'row' in the figure is a treatment arm. For more information refer to (Voelkel et al., 2022).

Figure OA-14: Effect on self-reported vote intentions by support for the incumbent party



This figure uses the sample of individuals for whom we have no missing values in both the outcome variable and any of the control variables (N=1577). Morena supporter is defined as 1 if the respondent rates (on a scale from 0 to 10) Morena at a value higher than the median and 0 (i.e. Non-Morena supporter) otherwise.

Figure OA-15: Effect on self-reported vote by support for the incumbent party - Surveys After election



This figure uses the sample of individuals for whom we have no missing values in both the outcome variable and any of the control variables, who were interviewed after the election took place and lived in Oaxaca city (N=1162). Morena supporter is defined as 1 if the respondent rates (on a scale from 0 to 10) Morena at a value higher than the median and 0 (i.e. Non-Morena supporter) otherwise.