

# Cross Pressured Representatives: A Lobbying Experiment in Uganda

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# Motivation

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**Causal question:**

Do legislators change their behavior when they receive more information about voter's priorities?

# Motivation

- Design information aggregation and delivery tools that make sense
- Help civil society make trade offs between various strategies
- Address a gap in the evidence on the effects of raising citizen voice

# Accountability and Responsiveness Literature

- Public Opinion Information → Citizen action
  - Scorecard interventions have delivered *information about the behavior of representatives to voters* (Humphreys and Weinstein 2012, Banerjee et al 2011).
- Citizen action → Public Opinion Information
  - Information Communication Technology interventions have attempted to *increase the extent to which voters signal their needs and priorities to their representatives* (Grossman et al 2014).

### What about these causal chains in isolation?

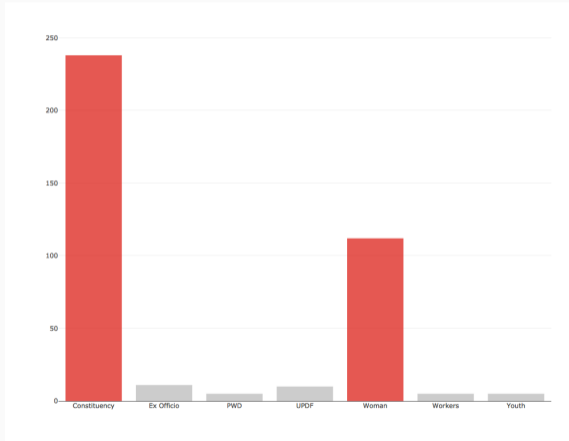
- Citizen action → Elite Response
- Public Opinion Information → Elite Response
- Citizen action + Public Opinion Information → Elite Response

## Case

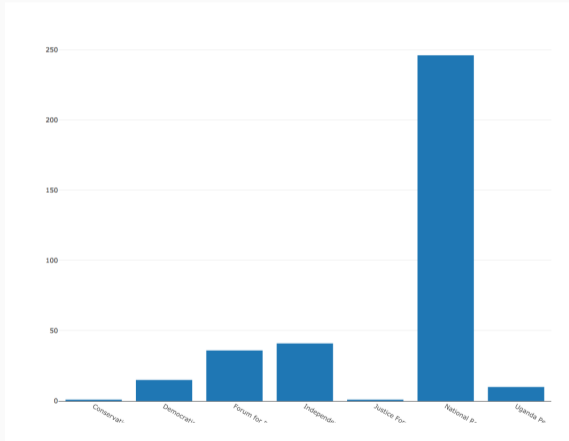
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**Figure 1: MP Types in the Ugandan Parliament**

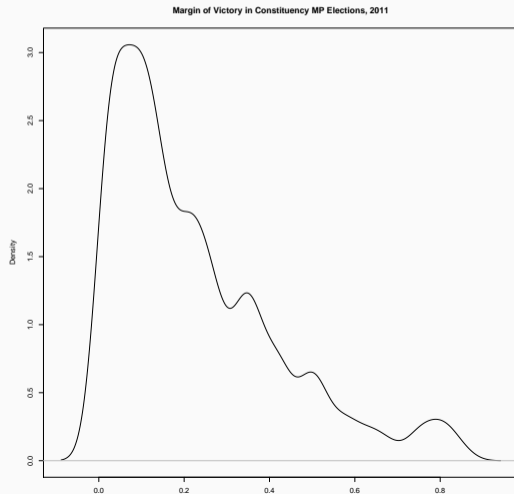


**Figure 2: Parties in the Ugandan Parliament**

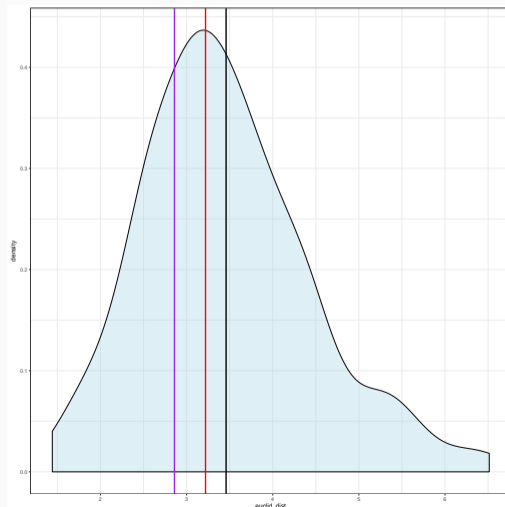


# Elections are competitive

**Figure 3:** Competitiveness in Elections



**Figure 4:** Distribution of MPs Distance Scores



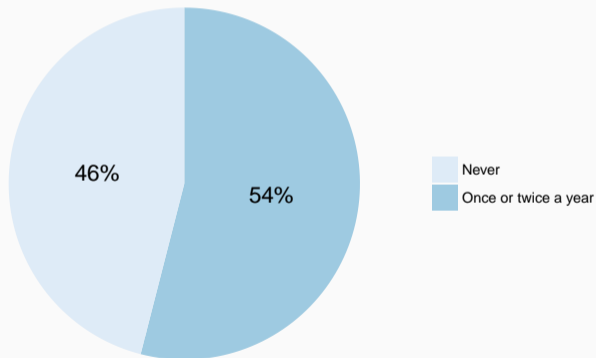
## Its not clear how powerful voters can be

We don't have a clear picture of how electoral incentives can act to change MP behavior because

- Mobilization has been poor
  - Constituent MP contact is very limited in this context
  - Advocacy groups do not rely heavily on voters
  - Attempts to increase voter MP contact have not been successful
- Pressure from the party is strong

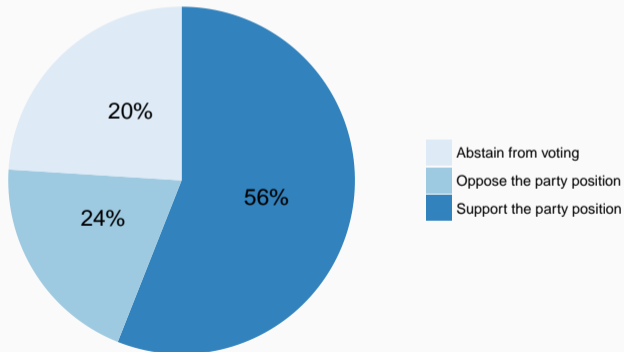
## What ALP tells us about the frequency of elite contact

**Figure 5:** Do you ever use or consult civil society groups in your work as an MP?



## What ALP tells us about the strength of political parties in this context

**Figure 6:** What should MPs do when there is conflict between their political party's position and constituents?



## **Policy Issue**

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# Health Service Delivery in Uganda

Health Services in Uganda are poor:

- 6.5 % of people are living with HIV/AIDS
- Medicines, including antiretrovirals, frequently do not reach local health centers
- Health workers earn \$ 100 per month
- Miserably low budget operational levels averaging (UGX 450k per quarter per health centre III), not enough to provide health centers with qualified staff or put an end to drug stock outs
- Budget for health 9% of overall budget, as opposed to the 15% required by the Abuja declaration

## ...and the government faces budget constraints

Foreign aid has been significantly reduced in the wake of Uganda outlawing homosexuality.

The NRM and MPs have incentives to keep service delivery costs low:

- The government was preparing for the 2016 elections, administration and campaigning are incredibly expensive. 2014 was the first year where the budget includes allocations for election preparation
- MPs want to raise their own salaries

Current 2014 budget proposal included cuts for health.

To the extent that MPs care, but aren't able to access aggregated, relevant public opinion data

Introducing better communication technology might work

This is a test of that idea

# Design

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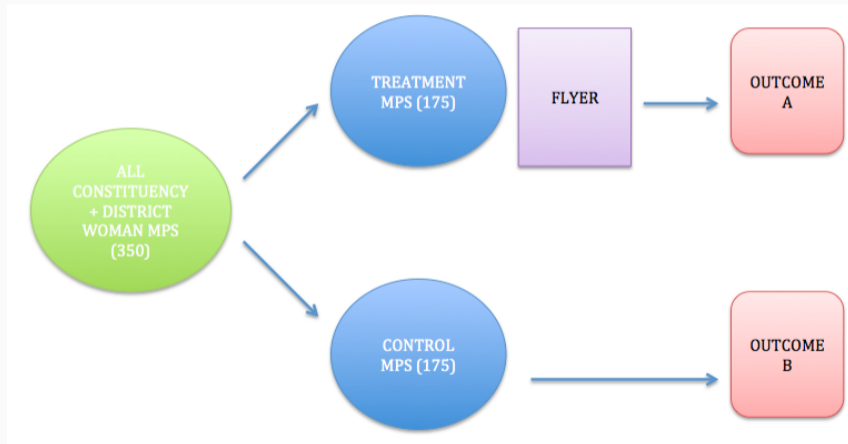
## Empirical Test: Lobbying Experiment

We are interested in measuring the influence voters could have over MPs willingness to bargain for increasing the health budget.

- **Experiment** in Uganda that randomly delivers information to some MPs and not others that their constituents support budget increases for health.
- **Treatment** signals that they may face punishment in the next election if they do not work to accomplish this goal.
- I expect MPs faced with voter pressure will be **more likely to take costly actions** to support budget increases, even when these actions are visible to the party.
- **Outcome** measures changes in elite behavior.

# Random Assignment

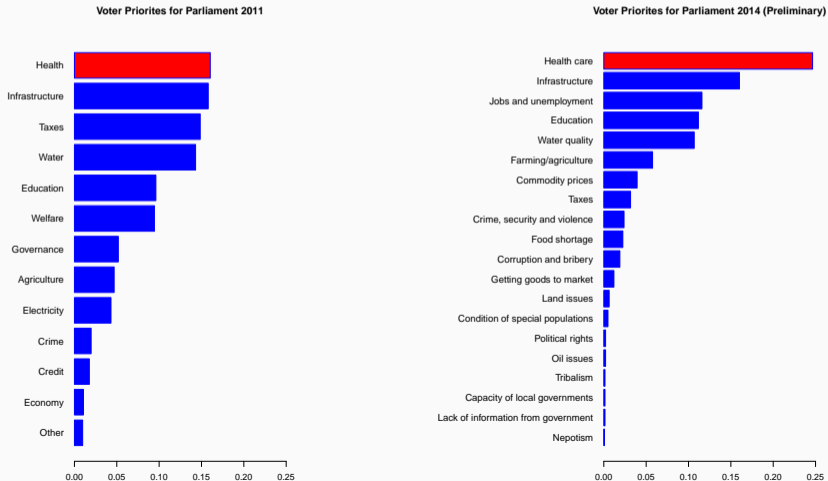
Figure 7: Design



## Treatment: Priorities + Pressure

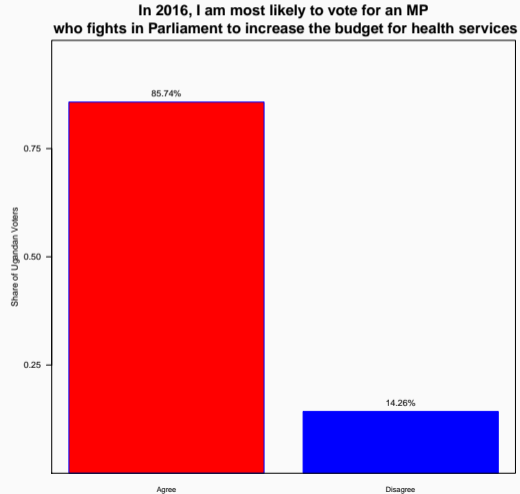
We use preliminary survey evidence to make the case that voters care about health, and are willing to punish inactive MPs.

## Figure 8: Voter Priorities for Parliament 2011-2014





## Figure 9: Voters really care about the budget



## Figure 10: Voters really care about improved services

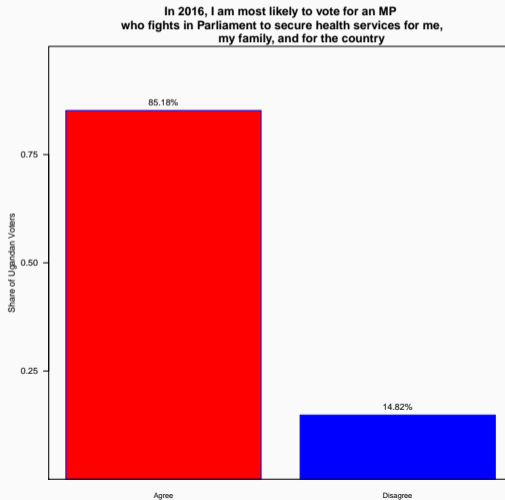
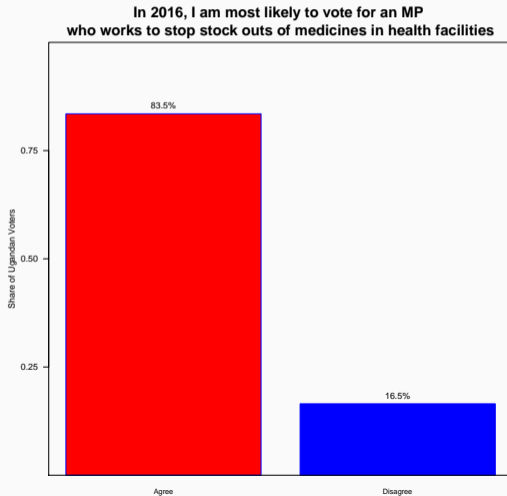


Figure 11: Voters really care about access to drugs



## Outcome Measure: Public Petition

*The coalition is circulating a public petition to try to secure an increase in health spending for FY2014/15 and is asking MPs to sign. **Would you like to add your name to this list and signal that you will fight to raise health expenditures before the 2014/15 budget is passed?***

*We will be sharing which MPs sign and which do not with the media, other MPs, and the parties.*

## Results

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**Table 1:** Petition Outcomes Across Experimental Groups

	<b>No</b>	<b>Maybe</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Not Reached</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Control</b>	24	5	96	50	175
<b>Treatment</b>	7	13	93	62	175
<b>Total</b>	31	18	189	112	350
<b>Difference</b>	-17	8	-3	12	

# Willing to say "no"?

Figure 12: The effect of treatment on willingness to go against public opinion

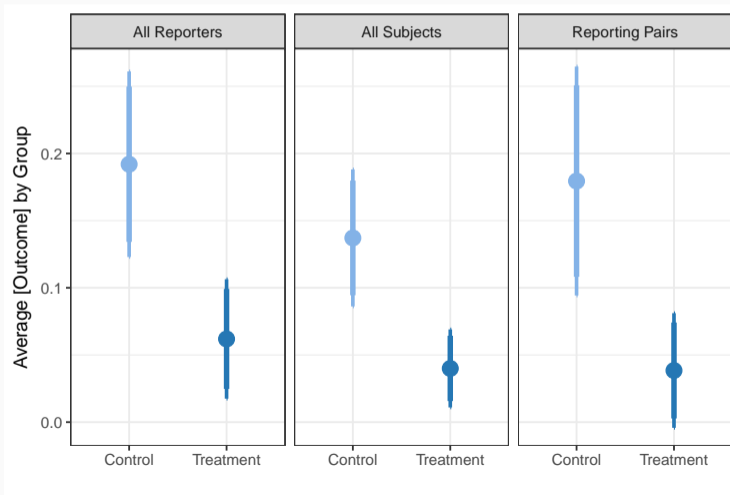
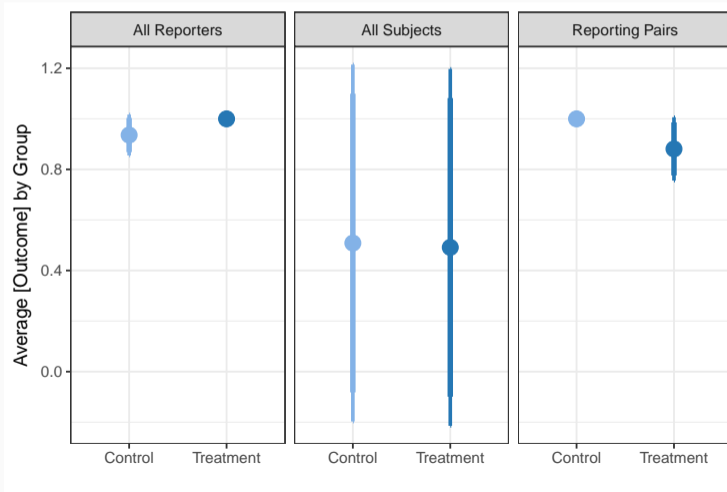


Figure 13: The effect of treatment on signing the petition





## The vote in Parliament

The budget passed unamended with no increases for health.

## Conclusion

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## How do we interpret these results?

MPs change their behavior but not in the way we predict..... MPs shifted their signals but not their legislative behavior (what matters!).

If we seek to inform elites about public opinion, we need to consider when they have incentives to act against the public's wishes

Elites could put their efforts into hiding their behavior or changing their voters minds— both of those are a "backfire" Enforce/encourage public position-taking by using feedback loops

## Redesign this study online

Detect network effects

Secondly: Can networks be leveraged to offset obfuscation?

It would be good to get a wider sense of which politicians are likely to use this tactic; this is interesting but could also help civil society groups identify allies/targets