

Convictions for Corruption and Government Approval: Global Evidence

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Abstract

In this paper, we investigate whether incumbent governments benefit politically from the punishment of corruption. Using an original data set on convictions from across the world and annual nationally representative surveys for 160 countries from 2006 to 2019, we show that convicting former heads of government for corruption reduces citizens' perceptions of corruption and boosts government support. Furthermore, we demonstrate that these effects last for at least two years. We also present suggestive evidence that the decision by the executive to pardon a conviction attenuates these effects while a decision by courts to overturn it does not. By focusing on a later stage in the process of judicial accountability, our results provide an important complement to the rich literature that emphasizes the negative effects of corruption scandals on trust in public institutions. Our results inform debates on the political implications of anticorruption, showing that convictions help strengthen governments' hold on power, creating incentives for governments to favor the prosecution of their predecessors.

Keywords: convictions for corruption; anti-corruption; government approval; judicial system and courts

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1 Introduction

Since 2000, the world has witnessed an increasing number of former heads of government convicted of corruption. Notorious examples include the convictions of presidents Menem (Argentina), Lula (Brazil), Chirac and Sarkozy (France), Myung-bak and Park (South Korea), and prime ministers Zia (Bangladesh), Berlusconi (Italy), Sharif (Pakistan) and Tymoshenko (Ukraine). The courts in these countries convicted leaders for embezzling state resources, receiving bribes from businesses, bribing others in exchange for political support, or committing undue influence peddling in favor of specific companies. This contrasts with the commonly held belief that grand corruption flourishes because powerful politicians are immune from punishment. Convicting those who once held the top executive office in the country is one of the most visible achievements of anti-corruption policies. However, the political implications of convictions have not yet been subjected to systematic examination.

Most research that addresses the political consequences of corruption focuses on the effects of revelations, scandals, and investigations rather than convictions. This literature has found that revealing information about malfeasance makes citizens lose trust in political elites and government institutions ([Aassve, Daniele and Le Moglie, 2022](#); [Anderson and Tverdova, 2003](#); [Guriev, Melnikov and Zhuravskaya, 2021](#); [Morris and Klesner, 2010](#); [Seligson, 2002](#)). Information about corruption causes resignation and less trust in political efficacy and even makes citizens more likely to engage in illegal behavior themselves ([Ajzenman, 2021](#); [Bauhr and Grimes, 2014](#); [Chong et al., 2015](#); [Cheeseman and Peiffer, 2021](#)). Together with the lack of credible alternatives, this helps to explain why corruption revelations do not lead to electoral punishment for those incriminated ([De Vries and Solaz, 2017](#); [Dunning et al., 2019](#); [Incerti, 2020](#); [Pavão, 2018](#)). By shifting the lens to the analysis of the actual punishment of corruption by judicial authorities, we uncover different consequences for the popularity of those in power and for perceptions of corruption held by the public.

In this paper, we argue that convictions against former heads of government (HOG) boost the popular support of sitting governments. Judicial convictions enable incumbents to delegitimize potential challengers, shift blame for bad governance performance, and take credit for the anticorruption achievement. To test this argument, we compile a data set on all convictions received by former HOGs. We combined this data set with public opinion measures derived from multiple rounds of the Gallup World Poll (GWP) that covered 160 countries between 2006 and 2019, allowing us to capture the attitudes of more than 99% of the world's adult population yearly. Furthermore, GWP has used a consistent methodology across countries and years. ([Guriev and Treisman, 2020](#)). This allows us to exploit the timing of the convictions to examine the corresponding changes in public opinion by comparing countries where former HOGs were convicted for corrup-

tion with those where they were not convicted. Our estimates account for time-invariant unobservable country-level heterogeneity, temporal effects that might shape the relationship between convictions and government approval (e.g., global shocks or changes in technology), and country-specific temporal trends.

We find that convicting former HOGs for corruption benefits those in power by strengthening public approval of the country’s leadership and confidence in the national government. Punishing politicians for corruption often sparks a debate about the extent to which prosecutions and judicial decisions uphold the rule of law or whether the incumbent government weaponizes them to fulfill its political interests (Buckley et al., 2022; Gillespie and Okruhlik, 1991; Popova, 2012; Zhu and Zhang, 2017). We contribute to this debate by showing that incumbent political elites around the world are indeed able to capitalize politically on prominent convictions for corruption.

More specifically, three main findings emerge from our analyses. First, the effects on the government’s popularity are substantial: a conviction increases leadership approval by approximately 6 percentage points (for an average of 46%) and confidence in the national government by approximately 5.5 percentage points (for an average of 48%). The findings are robust to different specifications and consistent across subgroups of the population (e.g., citizens’ educational attainment and whether they live in urban or rural areas). Second, by analyzing the dynamic effects of the convictions, we establish that these positive effects on the governments’ popularity last for the year of the conviction and for at least one additional year. Third, these results are accompanied by a drop of 3.5 percentage points (for an average of 67%) in the proportion of the population who perceives that corruption in government is widespread. This negative effect is robust to controlling for different measures of corruption, suggesting that changes in citizens’ perceptions may not be tracking actual levels of corruption.

Our study advances existing studies on the political effects of corruption and anti-corruption policies in three ways. First, an advantage of our study is its scope. Existing studies have examined the effect of corruption-related information in individual countries, some of which experimentally randomize the assignment of information to ensure internal validity (Chong et al., 2015; Dunning et al., 2019). To complement these efforts, we tested our argument in very realistic settings and considered convictions against HOGs worldwide over the last two decades. Furthermore, our outcome variables allow us to track and credibly compare political preferences and attitudes across countries and over time.

Second, our results contrast with two closely related studies. In one of the few existing articles that also investigates the effects of convictions against former leaders, the authors show that the dominant effect of convicting former presidents in Argentina and Costa Rica is to remind citizens of widespread corruption, which sparks distrust in public institutions (Poertner and Zhang, 2022). Furthermore, unlike our results, investigations

of corruption committed by subnational officials in China have been found to undermine the popularity of the national government (Wang and Dickson, 2022). However, our findings are consistent with the results highlighted by other papers in the Chinese context, which found that punishing officials benefits the national government (e.g., Tsai 2021; Tsai, Trinh and Liu 2022; Zhu and Zhang 2017). Third, we examine effects over time, i.e. including the possibility that the effects last for a few years after the prominent event. Existing studies compare citizens' attitudes immediately proceeding and following the event (e.g., the release of a corruption scandal) to understand the latter's effect (Ares and Hernández, 2017; Poertner and Zhang, 2022). Although it rigorously captures short-term changes, such a design does not allow the possibility that citizens gradually update their perceptions and attitudes (Hill, 2017); nor does it account for the strategies adopted by political elites in response to convictions over time (Gehrke, 2019), which can also have important effects on public opinion.

2 Convictions, Corruption Perceptions, and Government Approval

Our theoretical starting point is that citizens have limited information on government performance. Most citizens support governments based on “top of the head” considerations and on cues from political elites, usually received through the media (Zaller, 1992). The way citizens interpret information about the government depends on their political affiliations and other politically significant group identities (Achen and Bartels, 2017). Furthermore, citizens support governments based on current economic growth and the degree to which they benefit from specific policies that have substantial effects on their material well-being (e.g., cash transfer programs) (Campello and Zucco, 2020; Manacorda, Miguel and Vigorito, 2011).

In addition to these factors, whether citizens perceive their governments to be honest is an important consideration that affects their decision to support a government or not (Guriev, Melnikov and Zhuravskaya, 2021). Due to limited experiences and information, as well as selective sources of information, citizens' views about honesty in government might suffer from important misperceptions and biases (Agerberg, 2020).¹ People are less likely, for example, to change their attitudes when evidence of corruption involves politicians in their preferred political party (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003; Anduiza, Gallego and Muñoz, 2013; Chang and Kerr, 2017; Solaz, De Vries and De Geus, 2019).

¹Corruption is by definition illegal and, therefore, often hidden, what poses additional difficulties for citizens to gather information of its actual level. Consequently, perceptions of corruption are often far from reality (Donchev and Ujhelyi, 2014; Olken, 2009). Although there are less clear reasons to hide, citizens also severely misperceive other aspects of society, such as economic inequality (Gimpelson and Treisman, 2018), gender-related norms (Bursztyn, González and Yanagizawa-Drott, 2020), and intergenerational mobility (Cheng and Wen, 2019).

We argue that convictions of former HOGs for corruption, the focus of this study, are political events that achieve high levels of publicity and shape people's evaluations of government. First, political elites in government can capitalize on the conviction of a former leader for corruption to shift blame for problems (e.g., sluggish economic growth, high unemployment rates, or problems in the provision of public goods) and attribute them as a legacy of their incriminated predecessor (Cai, 2008; Kovras, McDaid and Hjalmarsson, 2018). Corruption convictions, therefore, allow those in power to discredit rival elite factions or opposition by focusing on one of the most prominent individuals who could challenge them in the subsequent elections or contest for power with the incumbent leader. Second, convictions allow those in power to signal their probity and commitment to building a clean government. The public may perceive that punishment deters future corruption, leading them to foresee a cleaner government (Zhang and Kim, 2018). Third, incumbent politicians can claim credit for the conviction of their predecessor(s) in efforts to convince people that they are genuinely committed to and have the power to uphold retributive justice. Because people may have a deep-seated need for social and moral orders, when a powerful politician is punished ("the wrongdoer") it shows that the government has both the willingness and the capacity to restore social order, allowing it to gain popularity (Tsai, 2021). The perspective of retributive justice implies that punishing corrupt officials *per se* increases government approval even if it does not effectively deter corruption (Tsai, 2021).

Our argument is consistent with the view that authoritarian rulers use corruption prosecutions against rival political elites to consolidate their hold on power (Zhu and Zhang, 2017; Buckley et al., 2022; Carothers, 2022). Even in democratic countries, national executives often retain powerful tools to influence investigations by shaping the funding and autonomy of investigative authorities, including the appointment of prosecutors, as well as have access to bargaining tools with judges that can be used to achieve specific trial outcomes (Bahry and Kim, 2021; Gordon, 2009; Mehmood, 2022; Popova, 2012). Determining whether the rule of law functioned effectively or if there was judicial favoritism, manipulation, or corruption in each of the cases is a challenging task and beyond the scope of this article (Helmke, Jeong and Kim, 2020). Another, perhaps more subtle way of influencing prosecutions is to use political offices to reveal information about corrupt deals committed by their competitors (Balán, 2011; Chen and Hong, 2021).

The extent to which investigations and trials are indeed subject to lawfare varies substantially between convictions involving HOGs in our sample. Even in countries with free and plural media, it is challenging for citizens to differentiate the true objectives of anti-corruption and the procedural legality of investigations and trials (Da Ros and Gehrke, 2022). In addition, incentives for incriminated politicians to claim that they are the result of a political vendetta, unfair prosecution, and illegality are always very high. Notorious examples include the attempt by former Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi,

to portray the Italian judiciary as controlled by “communists” whose intention was to “destroy” him ([Reuters, 2009](#)). This is further complicated by the fact that it is difficult to observe and anticipate the true commitment of governments to combat corruption. Citizens do not know if the incumbent government will not interfere with the prosecution and guarantee judicial independence, especially when it reaches those at its core or important political allies. Moreover, there are many examples from across the world of politicians who campaign on anticorruption platforms and then, once elected, work to undermine the existing controls against corruption. The presidencies of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Jimmy Morales in Guatemala exemplify this logic. After campaigns based on promises to curb corruption, they curtailed the powers of anticorruption authorities, including changing antigrant laws in both countries ([Reuters, 2018; Guardian, 2019](#)).

We test our argument against three main competing hypotheses: (i) citizens are unaware or indifferent to the conviction of a former leader. In this case, convictions would not affect government approval or other attitudes. (ii) Citizens observe and punish the government for its interference in the prosecution of a political rival. Another alternative hypothesis is (iii) that a judicial conviction for corruption against a former leader reminds citizens of the widespread nature of corruption. Similarly to information about corruption, convictions may reveal the extent to which corruption is widespread, which, in turn, might undermine citizens’ support for the government. There is some empirical evidence in this direction, showing that citizens became more dissatisfied with the government after being exposed to increased anticorruption efforts ([Wang and Dickson, 2022](#)), and had less trust in democratic institutions after former presidents were convicted in Argentina and Costa Rica ([Poertner and Zhang, 2022](#)). If the second or third hypothesis is the dominant way through which citizens interpret corruption convictions, we would expect convictions to undermine government popularity. In the case of the latter hypothesis, citizens’ dissatisfaction with the government would be mediated by an increase in the perception of corruption.

Contrary to (iii), we argue that corruption convictions have different effects from corruption revelations and scandals for two main reasons. First, a large proportion of corruption revelations do not become actual indictments due to the challenges of prosecuting powerful politicians (e.g., interference in investigations or threats of political violence against witnesses, whistleblowers, investigative authorities or prosecutors) ([Fisman and Miguel, 2010](#)). Many politicians go unpunished due to a decision by the pertinent court of law or challenges of prosecuting corruption cases, including the difficulty of establishing culpability, particularly when they are against powerful politicians who can hire excellent and well-connected attorneys. Investigations against powerful leaders can be the subject of a political pact or collusion between those who can influence investigative authorities and those being investigated ([Da Ros and Gehrke, 2022](#)). Having an open investigation or a charge against other powerful politicians might be better if one wants to obtain

political favors rather than a final conviction.

Second, corruption convictions are usually less informative about the underlying corruption level than other steps in the anti-corruption ladder, notably corruption investigations. Corruption investigations are often associated with the release of details on politicians' corruption schemes, revealing to citizens details about corruption transactions that indicate a level of corruption that may be more severe than previously thought ([Wang and Dickson, 2022](#)). On the contrary, when convictions occur, corruption details or scandals have often loomed around for a while, leaving the convictions to convey little additional information about the underlying corruption levels. Instead, convictions often release strong signals about the punishment of corruption; therefore, it is more likely that people will see them as reflecting improved anti-corruption enforcement rather than worsening actual corruption ([Tsai, Trinh and Liu, 2022](#)).

In summary, our study allows us to disentangle our main hypothesis, that is, convicting politicians for corruption boosts government popularity from these three competing hypotheses. We argue that convictions increase governments' approval ratings and that citizens do not punish the government for meddling in prosecutions or influencing the judiciary. The divergent effects are crucially dependent on how people interpret corruption convictions. Are they reflective of tightening anti-corruption measures, or do they represent worsening underlying corruption? Whether corruption convictions reduce people's perception of corruption is crucial to adjudicating our story from competing hypotheses. If the former is true, we should expect corruption convictions to reduce corruption perceptions.

3 Data

3.1 Convictions for Corruption

We built on Heads of Government Convicted of Crimes (HGCC), an original data set that contains the details of all convictions received by heads of governments around the world². To be coded as convicted for corruption, the leader must be sentenced by a civil court located in the country they once governed for at least one of the following reasons: (i) embezzlement of state resources, (ii) bribery, (iii) extortion, (iv) money laundering, (v) influence peddling, (vi) illegal campaign financing, and (vii) electoral fraud. Because we aim to examine the effects of domestic processes (i.e., the activities of investigative authorities and decisions by the courts) on public opinion, we do not include the convictions of leaders by courts in other countries, by the International Criminal Court, or in an ad hoc military trial. We focus on former heads of government because,

²This data set is also been used in a parallel project that includes one of the authors of this study ([Da Ros and Gehrke, 2022](#)).

in most countries, those at the top of the executive branch are immune from prosecution until the end of their terms in office, unless they are subject to a parliamentary decision that can lift such immunity ([Reddy, Schularick and Skreta, 2021](#)). Out of 91 convictions for corruption received by former HOG since 1946, the modal number of years for the conviction after leaving office is 3 years and the median is 6 years. Only two convictions occurred in the same year an HOG left office, and two convictions happened 21 years after they left office.

We code country-year observations as treated after a first conviction received by a former HOG contains a charge for corruption³. The treatment state is irreversible after it is turned on. In Subsection 5.5, we examine the dynamic effects. In Subsection 5.6, we relax this assumption and include the possibility that the conviction might be reversed as a result of a subsequent judicial decision, what happened in the case of Lula in 2021, or pardoned by the executive branch.

3.2 Outcomes: Corruption Perceptions and Government Approval

In both authoritarian and democratic countries, maintaining high enough levels of popularity is important for governance. Popular support helps leaders pass legislation, implement reforms, and avoid votes of no confidence, impeachments, revolutions, or threats from rival political elites ([Geddes and Zaller, 1989](#); [Guriev and Treisman, 2020](#)). In democracies and in electoral autocracies, the popularity of the incumbent government is particularly crucial in election years, shaping the reelection chances of the leader or that of a political ally to the highest office. We analyze the effects of convictions on government approval using two distinct questions from the World Gallup Poll: one on leadership approval and another on citizens' confidence in the national government. We interpret these two closely related variables as complementary indicators of the popularity of the government in power. Table 1 presents the original questions for the main outcome variables of interest.

In addition to these straightforward measures of government approval, we also examine the effect of convictions on citizens' confidence in the judicial system and courts. The courts are the main actors in the trial and in the decision to punish malfeasance in the government. The conviction of prominent politicians for corruption requires an important institutional investment in prosecution and judiciary capacities ([Da Ros and Taylor,](#)

³We take into account the date in which a former HOG is convicted vis-a-vis the data collection for the Gallup World Poll in that country. A country is coded as treated in the same year of a corruption conviction if at least a part of the Gallup World Poll was conducted after the month of conviction; otherwise, the treatment starts in the subsequent year. Take Brazil as an example. Former President Lula – who had not been convicted before – was convicted of corruption in July 2017. The interviews in Brazil took place between May and June 2017, before the conviction. Therefore, Brazil is coded as treated starting in 2018, and remains in this treatment state for the duration of the study period.

2022). Corruption cases are complex, and finding proof requires the existence of laws and investigation tools that allow prosecutors to shed light on illegal deals. Judicial cases about important national political figures also bring judicial decisions to the forefront of the news. However, as explained above, courts are often the target of campaigns by those being incriminated, who question the legitimacy of their decisions; sometimes rightly so. The institutional roles of courts constrain their ability to react to campaigns that try to discredit them. In addition to the measure of confidence in the judicial system and courts, we include a measure of corruption perceptions' held by citizens across countries and years. This measure is based on responses to the question of whether citizens believe that corruption in government is widespread.

Table 1: Outcome Variables

Outcome Variable	Original Question	Country-Year Value
Corruption Perception	Is corruption widespread throughout the government in this country, or not?	% of respondents answering Yes
Leadership Approval	Do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of the leadership of this country?	% of respondents answering Approve
Confidence in National Government	In this country, do you have confidence in each of the following, or not – the national government?	% of respondents answering Yes
Confidence in Judicial System and Courts	In this country, do you have confidence in each of the following or not – the judicial system and courts?	% of respondents answering Yes

These four outcomes are country-year measures constructed based on Gallup World Polls, nationally representative surveys conducted every year between 2006 and 2019.⁴ Each year, enumerators working for the Gallup World Poll asks the same questions to approximately 1000 citizens in each country⁵. Therefore, our results are based on answers provided by approximately 2.2 million people worldwide, which are representative of the attitudes of approximately 7 billion people over 14 years.

To ensure data quality, of the 162 countries in the GWP, we excluded 28 from the analyzes for the following reasons: 18 countries do not have repeated measures of leadership approval, our key outcome variable; South Sudan is also excluded from the analyzes because it only became independent in 2011. Finally, nine countries are “always-treated” through the study period (2006 to 2019) either because they already experienced corrup-

⁴For a description of the World Poll, see <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/318875/global-research.aspx>.

⁵In some occasions, the GWP has interviewed a different number of citizens

tion convictions immediately before the study period or because their leadership approval data are only available after corruption convictions.⁶ Our results do not depend on this sample construction. We complement these analyses by showing that the effects are unchanged when we incorporate all countries, including those that are always treated (Online Appendix Figure 4). We also show that a corruption conviction does not explain attrition in specific questions being asked by the Gallup World Poll or in a country’s participation in the survey (Online Appendix Table 2). Among the 134 countries in the main analysis, the 20 countries (around 260 country-year observations) experienced corruption convictions of former HOGs at some point between 2006 and 2019. Among these, in 15 (about 200 observations) countries, HOGs were convicted, and in 5 (about 60 observations) a leader received an additional conviction for corruption.

4 Empirical Strategy

We exploit the timing of convictions across countries. We compare citizens’ attitudes and perceptions in countries after a conviction with citizens’ attitudes and perceptions in countries where no conviction has yet occurred. The latter group includes both countries that later experienced a conviction (“not yet treated”) and countries that did not experience any conviction during the study period (“never treated”). To estimate the effects of corruption convictions, we use two-way fixed-effects regressions and two-way fixed-effects event-study regressions. A major advantage of these frequently used empirical strategies is that they allow us to account for unobserved country-specific characteristics and time-varying confounders.

Our goal is to examine the overall effects of corruption convictions on public opinion, not people’s immediate reactions to corruption convictions. The focus is on how they respond to subsequent strategies adopted by the political elites. In this sense, our investigation differs from existing research on the short-term effects of corruption scandals on public opinion (e.g., [Ares and Hernández, 2017](#)), which has compared changes between weeks before and after scandals. Our framework and data allow us to test whether convictions have a lasting impact on public opinion. The reactions of political elites and their impacts on public opinion are a crucial part of real-world politics. Our two-way fixed-effects regressions are based on the following equation:

⁶Eight countries have former HOGs convicted for corruption between 2003 and 2005: France (Alain Juppé convicted in 2004), Madagascar (Didier Ratsiraka and Tantely Andrianarivo convicted in 2003), Nepal (Sher Bahadur Deuba convicted in 2005), Nicaragua (José Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo convicted in 2003), Paraguay (Luis Ángel Gonzalez Macchi convicted in 2006), and Rwanda (Pasteur Bizimungu convicted in 2004). Three countries do not have data on leadership approval before conviction: Egypt (Ahmed Nazif and Atef Ebeid convicted in 2012), the Philippines (Joseph Estrada convicted in 2007), and Zambia (Frederick Chiluba convicted in 2007).

$$y_{ct} = \beta \text{Corruption conviction}_{c,t} + \theta_c \times t + \delta_t + \gamma_c + \epsilon_{c,t} \quad (1)$$

y_{ct} is the outcome variable for country c in year t . The first convictions for corruption received by former heads of government (*Corruption convictions*) is the treatment of interest. This binary variable is coded as 1 in the country c for the year t if c has any former HOG convicted of corruption in or before t . In other words, if any former HOG from a country – who has not been convicted before – are convicted for corruption in $t - 1$, the variable switches to 1 in t and remains so for the remaining years of the study. δ_t are year fixed-effects that account for global changes over time, and γ_c are country fixed-effects to capture country-specific characteristics.

Recent literature has highlighted the caveats of two-way fixed effects models when dealing with staggered treatment and heterogeneous treatment effects (De Chaisemartin and d'Haultfoeuille, 2020; Callaway and Sant'Anna, 2021; Imai and Kim, 2021; Sun and Abraham, 2021). To ensure that our estimates are not biased, we follow (Callaway and Sant'Anna, 2021) and estimate Equation (1) for each treatment cohort separately, that is, countries in which a former HOG was convicted of corruption in the same year. We then aggregate the cohort-specific estimates using the size of each treatment cohort. Using this different empirical strategy, the estimates remain similar for the four outcomes [Online Appendix Figure 3]. This holds both when including not-yet-treated country-year observations and never-treated countries as the comparison group in the analyses or only including the latter group. Therefore, the results do not appear to be driven by the potential bias associated with staggered treatment.

Because many of our outcomes (for example, government approval and perceptions of corruption) depend on gradual changes in beliefs (Guriev and Treisman, 2020; Hill, 2017), it is possible that pre-existing secular trends in different countries confound the treatment effect estimates. To mitigate this concern, we include linear time trends for each country ($\theta_c \times t$) in the estimation (Wolfers, 2006). To account for the correlation within each country over time, we cluster standard errors at the country level in all regressions.

Some of our regression models include control variables that account for leaders' subsequent convictions for corruption and for when they were convicted for reasons other than corruption. The first considers the corruption convictions received by former HOGs who had already been convicted in the past (*Successive corruption convictions*). Additional convictions of the same leader are unlikely to receive the same degree of public and media attention as a first-time conviction. We also construct a variable to account for convictions by domestic courts that do not include charges of corruption (*Convictions for other reasons*). Examples of such convictions include criminal responsibility for human rights abuses, political violence, and coup attempts. For simplicity, this variable does not differentiate between first and successive convictions.

In some specifications, we account for characteristics of countries that vary over time. These include changes in GDP per capita and in the level of democracy, both of which are lagged by one year to lessen concerns about reverse causality ⁷. Taking these variables into account ensures that the effects of corruption convictions are not driven by changes in important predictors of government popularity, such as economic growth (Carlin, Love and Martínez-Gallardo, 2015). We also account for changes in the openness of the country’s political regime in general (Democracy Index), based on Polity scores, and for an index that encompasses media freedom, including investigative journalism and freedom of expression (media freedom) (Guriev and Treisman, 2020). Moreover, we construct a binary variable that incorporates whether a presidential election takes place in year t . Unlike national elections in parliamentary regimes, most presidential elections follow a regularly scheduled calendar, and, therefore, are less endogenous to changes in government popularity. This variable allows us to ensure that changes in government popularity or perceptions of corruption are not explained by the dynamics of the electoral cycle, including periods of active campaigning and the use of public expenditure to boost the government’s popularity in the short term (Johnson, 2015).

Furthermore, we conducted a series of event-study regressions to estimate the dynamic effects of corruption convictions, as specified in Equation 2.

$$y_{ct} = \sum_{k=-3}^{-2} \beta_k \text{Corruption conviction}_{c,t+k} + \sum_{k=0}^3 \beta_k \text{Corruption conviction}_{c,t+k} + \delta_t + \gamma_c + \theta_c \times t + \epsilon_{c,t} \quad (2)$$

where k is the difference between t and the year of conviction. Following the convention, the year before the conviction for corruption ($k = -1$) is omitted as the reference group. To examine the medium-term effects, we collapse three or more years before and after convictions into categories $k \leq -3$ and $k \geq 3$, respectively. As in equation 1, δ_t , γ_c and $\theta_c \times t$ are year- and country-fixed effects and country-specific linear trends, respectively.

5 Results

5.1 Corruption Perceptions

How do corruption convictions affect people’s perceptions of corruption? As discussed in Section 2, the answer to this question is crucial to understanding how people actually interpret corruption convictions and subsequent responses. If they decrease the percep-

⁷For each variable’s sources and descriptive statistics, please see table in the Online Appendix .

tions of corruption held by citizens, it serves the purpose of the ruling elites trying to claim credit for the conviction and arguing that the current government is more honest than that of the convicted predecessor. This contrasts with scenarios where the dominant consequences of convictions are a lack of confidence in the ability to change corruption levels or an increased suspicion by citizens that corruption in government is widespread.

Table 2 shows the effects of (first-time) corruption convictions. Our measure of corruption perceptions is based on responses from citizens to a simple question that is asked consistently over time and across countries. Is corruption widespread throughout the government in this country? Throughout models (1) to (6), in which we gradually include more controls, the coefficient estimates of corruption convictions are significantly negative and change remarkably little in magnitude. Corruption convictions reduce the proportion of people who perceive corruption in government to be widespread by approximately 3.5 percentage points ($p < 0.01$). As, on average, two-thirds answer the question positively, this estimate is equivalent to a decrease of 6% percent in the sample mean.

In models (4) to (6), we include frequently used measures of corruption, based on expert and elite assessments, as additional controls. We use the Index on Public Corruption of the V-DEM project, the World Bank's Index on Control of Corruption, and Corruption Control from the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG).⁸ Interestingly, the inclusion of these additional controls, which arguably track changes in corruption, does not significantly change the effect of corruption convictions on citizens' perceptions of corruption. Hence, this is suggestive evidence that these convictions reduce the public's perception of corruption regardless of their actual effect on the levels of corruption reported by different measures. The negative effect of corruption convictions on corruption perceptions suggests that citizens interpret them differently from corruption scandals. We argue that this is compatible with strategies deployed by incumbent governments to actively build on these changing attitudes to enhance their own popular support, which will be evaluated next.

⁸We do not include Corruption Perception Index from the Transparency International because it underwent a methodological change in 2012, what does not allow for comparisons across years for a substantial time frame in our period of study.

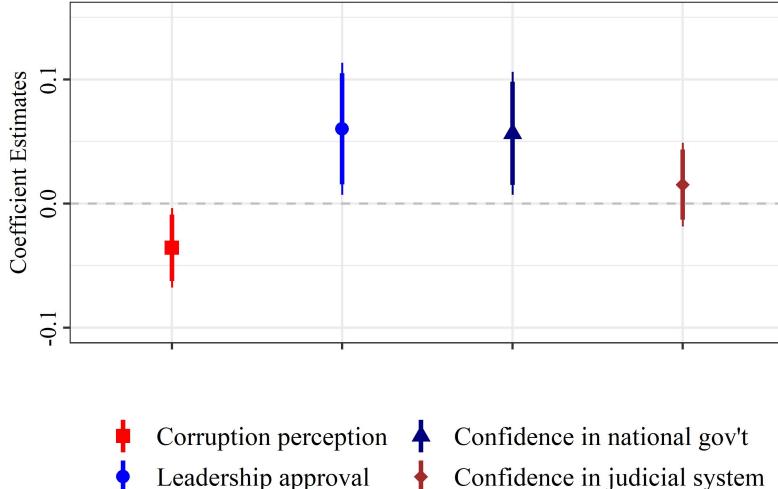
Table 2: Convictions for Corruption and Citizens' Perception of Corruption

	Public Perception of Corruption in Government					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Corruption convictions	-0.034*** (0.012)	-0.036*** (0.012)	-0.036*** (0.016)	-0.041*** (0.017)	-0.038*** (0.016)	-0.040** (0.017)
Successive corruption convictions	-0.037 (0.023)	-0.039* (0.022)	-0.039* (0.022)	-0.039* (0.022)	-0.029 (0.022)	-0.039* (0.022)
Convictions for other reasons	-0.039 (0.030)	-0.041 (0.029)	-0.041 (0.029)	-0.039 (0.026)	-0.043 (0.028)	-0.041 (0.029)
Media Freedom	0.075*** (0.032)	0.107*** (0.034)	0.107*** (0.034)	0.078*** (0.032)	0.067** (0.032)	0.067** (0.032)
Presidential election year	-0.010* (0.006)	-0.011** (0.005)	-0.011** (0.005)	-0.010* (0.006)	-0.008 (0.006)	-0.008 (0.006)
Democracy Index	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)
GDP per capita (logged)	-0.056 (0.054)	-0.066 (0.059)	-0.066 (0.059)	-0.059 (0.054)	-0.052 (0.054)	-0.052 (0.051)
Public corruption (V-Dem)	0.316*** (0.116)	0.316*** (0.116)	0.316*** (0.116)	0.316*** (0.116)	-0.086*** (0.032)	-0.070 (0.078)
Control of corruption (WB)						
Corruption control (ICRG)						
Country & Year Fixed Eff.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country-Specific Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mean Y	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666	0.666
Num.Obs.	1523	1523	1477	1477	1477	1318
R2	0.913	0.914	0.914	0.917	0.916	0.918

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the country level; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

5.2 Government Approval

Figure 1: Visualizing the Effects of Corruption Convictions



Note: Estimates based on Table 2 (model 3), Table 3 (models 3, 6 and 9); bold and thin vertical lines indicate 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively.

In this subsection, we present and discuss tests for our main hypothesis that corruption convictions strengthen the popular support of incumbent governments. Table 3 reports the findings. In Figure 1, we present the effects of corruption convictions on the four outcome variables graphically.

In Models 1 and 4, the effect of corruption convictions on leadership approval and confidence in the national government is approximately 6 and 5.5 percentage points, respectively. Both coefficients are statistically significant. In models 2, 3, 5, and 6, we introduce more controls, including for other types of conviction, and the estimates remain very similar. Models 3 and 6, for example, show that a conviction of a former leader for corruption increases the approval of the national leadership by approximately 6 percentage points and their confidence in the national government by approximately 5.6 percentage points. The baselines for both measures of government popularity are comparable. On average, less than half of the population approves of the country's leadership (46%) and trusts the national government (48%). This means that a conviction leads to an increase in government approval that is slightly greater than 10%, regardless of the model or variable used.

These findings demonstrate that those in power actively capitalize on these important political events to discredit their political opponents and to claim that the current government is more honest than that of the convicted predecessor. Successive convictions for corruption and convictions for reasons other than corruption do not significantly alter leadership approval or confidence in the national government.

Table 3: Effects of Convictions for Corruption on Leadership Approval and Confidence in the National Government

	Leadership Approval			Confidence in National Government			Confidence in Judicial System		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Corruption convictions	0.058** (0.023)	0.060*** (0.023)	0.060** (0.027)	0.054** (0.022)	0.056** (0.022)	0.056** (0.025)	0.014 (0.017)	0.015 (0.017)	0.015 (0.017)
Successive corruption convictions		-0.012 (0.035)	-0.010 (0.032)		0.009 (0.046)	0.009 (0.039)	-0.013 (0.043)	-0.013 (0.042)	-0.013 (0.042)
Convictions for other reasons		0.046 (0.047)	0.045 (0.046)		0.033 (0.044)	0.033 (0.043)	0.017 (0.020)	0.009 (0.020)	0.009 (0.020)
Media Freedom			-0.096** (0.040)		-0.080** (0.039)	-0.080** (0.039)	-0.031 (0.025)		
Presidential election year				0.026*** (0.009)	0.024*** (0.007)	0.024*** (0.007)	0.007 (0.004)	0.007 (0.004)	0.007 (0.004)
Democracy Index					-0.001 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)
GDP per capita (logged)					0.084 (0.086)	0.097 (0.085)	0.097 (0.085)	0.072 (0.053)	0.072 (0.053)
Country & Year Fixed Eff.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country-Specific Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mean Y	0.462	0.462	0.466	0.479	0.477	0.479	0.472	0.472	0.472
Num.Obs.	1461	1461	1416	1508	1508	1465	1515	1515	1472
R2	0.792	0.792	0.793	0.842	0.842	0.848	0.915	0.915	0.916

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the country level; ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

5.3 Confidence in the Judicial System and Courts

Having an independent judiciary is considered one of the preconditions for achieving low levels of corruption. Recent work has found that trust in judicial institutions crucially affects citizens' beliefs on the efficacy of changing corruption levels ([Barbabella, Pellicer and Wegner, 2022; Pavão, 2019](#)). Similarly to the effects on the governments popularity, the extent to which criminal accountability for corruption increases trust in the courts has not received much attention from the current literature.

We show that the effect of convictions on confidence in the judicial system and courts is small, as shown in Table 3, models 7 to 9. Although the judicial system is the main actor in the conviction of a former leader, on average, corruption convictions do not trigger a higher level of confidence in these institutions. Our estimates indicate that their effects are approximately 1.5 percentage points and statistically indistinguishable from zero.

One reason that might explain these findings is that the incriminated often claim that the investigation is conducted by biased and politically motivated prosecutors and decided by unfair judges. They can use party structures, clientele, and personal connections, often created before or during their period in the highest executive office, to react to investigations and delegitimize judges ([Della Porta and Vannucci, 2007](#)). Due to its institutional constraints, the judiciary often does not have the tools to react and conduct public image campaigns.

Additionally, it might be in the interest of political elites in government that the judiciary's legitimacy does not conflict with their own. Incumbent political elites may become concerned that the capacities of investigation and punishment that were used against former leaders can be used against their own interests. In addition, national executives will try to claim credit for the conviction.

5.4 Robustness Checks

We performed two robustness checks on the main findings reported above. First, we further explore whether the effect of corruption convictions varies between subsets of the population. In the Online Appendix Figure 1, we show that the magnitudes of the effects are similar for citizens with different levels of educational attainment and whether they live in rural or urban settings. The magnitudes of the effects on both variables of government support are slightly higher, though not different from the point of view of statistical significance, for citizens who only had access to elementary education and for those living in rural areas. Less educated and rural citizens may be more likely to be influenced by government messages and less receptive to counter messages from elites that are adversely affected by corruption convictions. This holds even though members of these subgroups were already more likely to support the government in the first place,

that is, in country-year observations prior to a conviction or in countries where no HOG was convicted. Another illustrative result is that convictions increase confidence in the judiciary held by citizens who attained elementary education and by those who live in rural areas at standard levels of significance. This differs from the overall effect for the entire population, which is not statistically significant, as reported in Table 3.

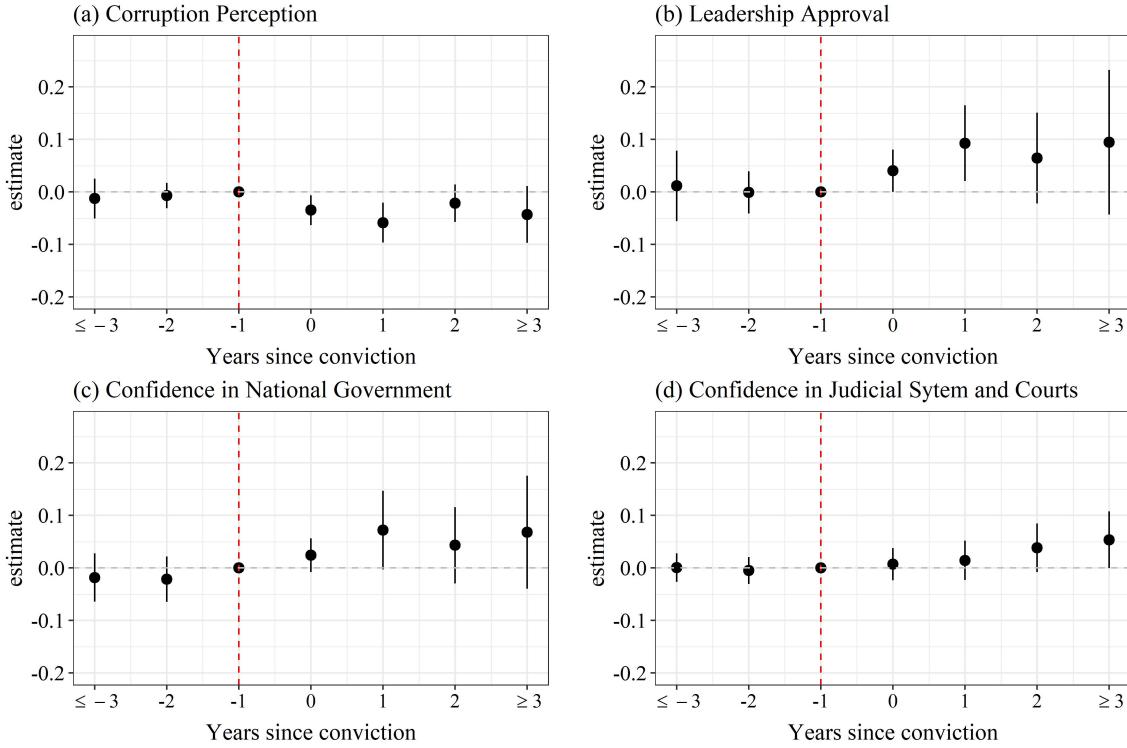
Second, we include country-specific time trends to account for pre-existing trends across countries. However, the parameters included in the estimate can confound the dynamic effect of corruption convictions, biasing the estimated effect of corruption convictions. Following [Wolfers \(2006\)](#), we explicitly model and estimate the dynamic response of corruption convictions, which forces parameters related to country-specific trends to capture pretreatment trends rather than dynamic responses. Specifically, we include dummies for the year of corruption convictions for years one, two, three, and four or above to estimate the flexible dynamic responses. As shown in the Online Appendix Table 1, we find that the effects of corruption convictions turn statistically significant in $k = 1$, two years after convictions. This is true for the three outcomes: corruption perceptions, leadership approval, and confidence in the national government. Again, the dynamic effects on public confidence in the judicial system and courts are consistently indistinguishable from zero for all years.

5.5 Do these effects change over time?

In this section, we analyze the dynamic effects of convictions on public opinion. In Figure 2, we present the coefficients based on the event study for the years before and after convictions using the year before the conviction ($k = -1$) as the reference group. In the years before conviction ($k < 0$), there are no significant differences in the outcomes across countries. The finding provides suggestive evidence for the parallel-trend assumption. After the conviction for corruption ($k = 0$ and $k = 1$), we observe a decrease in people's perceptions of corruption (a), an increase in leadership approval (b), and an increase in confidence in the national government (c). The effect reaches its maximum – approximately -5.6 , 9.3 , and 6.6 percentage points for perceptions of corruption, leadership approval, and confidence in the national government. The magnitudes of the coefficients suggest that convictions do have some persistence over time.

These findings are comparable to those of [Zhang and Kim \(2018\)](#), who find that citizens in the United States *gradually* develop a more positive perception of government performance and more trust in the government after more public employees are prosecuted and punished for corruption. Our findings also complement research on the effects of corruption scandals ([Ares, Breitenstein and Hernández, 2019](#); [Ares and Hernández, 2017](#); [Aassve, Daniele and Le Moglie, 2022](#)) and the short-term effects of convictions ([Poertner and Zhang, 2022](#)) by showing that convictions have an important medium-term effect.

Figure 2: Dynamic Effects on Corruption Perception and Government Approval



Note: Vertical lines indicate 90% confidence intervals.

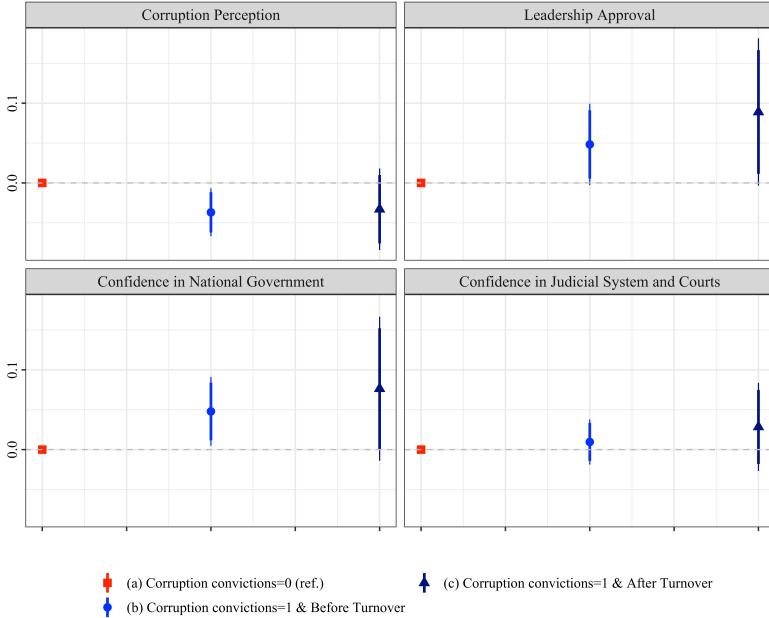
Furthermore, we find that convictions do not significantly alter the public's confidence in the judicial system in the first years after the conviction but seem to gradually increase (d).

We also find suggestive evidence that the gains in popularity achieved by the government are not only captured by those in power at the time of conviction. The effects of convictions on perceptions of corruption and government approval persist even after a change in the leadership of the executive branch [Figure 3]. This means that leaders who are elected or rise to power in the years following a conviction for corruption benefit from a boost in their popularity.

5.6 What Happens if Convictions Get Pardoned or Overturned?

Most presidents and prime ministers have the power to pardon judicial convictions at their will. This is what happened, for instance, in South Korea in 1997. After the election of a new president, two former dictators, Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo were pardoned for their crimes and released from jail. They were pardoned for their responsibility in a military coup and for corruption that amounted to millions of dollars, for which they had been sentenced in 1996 (Pollack, 1997). In certain cases, those convicted can still

Figure 3: Effects of Corruption Convictions Before and After Leadership Turnover

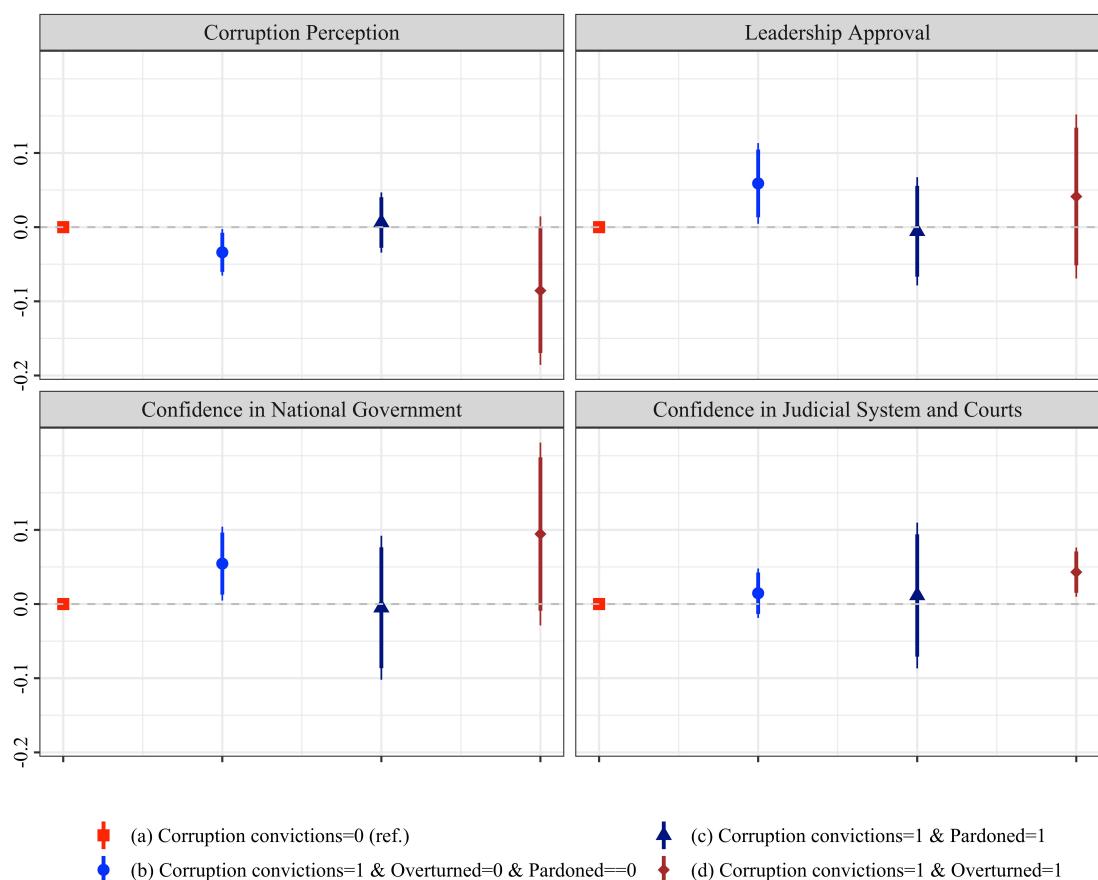


Note: Bold and thin vertical lines indicate 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively.

appeal to the courts (e.g., a superior court) in an effort to revise the judicial decision. In July 2014, Hosni Mubarak was sentenced by a court in Egypt for the embezzlement of state resources, in a sentence that included two of his sons as well. Mubarak was sentenced to three years in prison. After Mubarak’s appeal, a Cairo court in early 2015 decided to invalidate the sentence due to procedural problems (Kirkpatrick, 2015). In this subsection, we investigate whether pardoning or reversing a judicial decision affects citizens’ approval of their governments and perceptions of corruption in government.

We examine the effects of these two important actions that might take place after a head of government is convicted for corruption: (i) the decision of the executive to pardon, and (ii) the decision of the courts to overturn a judicial decision. Similarly to previous empirical strategies and in accordance with their judicial effects in reality, pardons or overturns are considered irreversible and remain for the duration of the study period. Specifically, we consider the timing of these events to construct three binary treatments to indicate: (i) whether there was a conviction of former HOGs, and the convicted leaders have not been pardoned, nor has the conviction been overturned; (ii) whether HOGs convicted for corruption have been pardoned, and (iii) whether their convictions have been overturned. The country-year observations prior to an executive pardon or a judicial overturn are included in (i). We compare public opinion in the years before and after a decision to pardon or a judicial decision to overturn a conviction to understand their influence. In addition to the endogeneity of such decisions, the limited number of cases makes the evidence presented here more suggestive than conclusive.

Figure 4: Effects of Corruption Conviction, Pardoning, and Overturning



Note: Bold and thin vertical lines indicate 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively.

Figure 4 summarizes the regression results for the four main outcomes. Consistent with previous findings, corruption convictions lead to a reduction in corruption perceptions and to an increase in government approval (measured by leadership approval and confidence in the national government). However, after the executive decides to pardon the conviction, the effects of corruption convictions on these effects are significantly attenuated. A comparison of the coefficients between before and after the pardon suggests that the reduction is statistically significant for perceptions of corruption and leadership approval (Online Appendix Figure 4). Thus, the popularity effects that those in power gained after a conviction of a former HOG for corruption disappear after the executive pardons the conviction.

Unlike pardoning, the decision of the judiciary to overturn does not alter the effects of convictions for perceptions of corruption and government approval. This means that those in government can benefit from the point of view of popularity even after the conviction is reversed as the result of a subsequent judicial decision. Differently from the pure effect of corruption convictions, citizens' confidence in the judiciary increases by approximately five percentage points after a conviction is overturned. By reversing the sentence This is suggestive evidence that citizens react differently to the actions used to reverse convictions.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

The political implications of convicting former HOG revealed in this article have consequences for current debates about anti-corruption policies and motivate further work on judicial punishment for corruption, including its effects on autocratization and personalization. On the one hand, the positive effects on government popularity create incentives for incumbent political elites to uncover malfeasance committed by their predecessors, which can potentially reduce the level of corruption over time. By anticipating future denunciations and judicial punishment, leaders might be less likely to resort to corruption.

However, due to their political benefits, convicting former leaders for corruption also opens a window of opportunity for politicians in office to consolidate their hold on power. National executives have incentives to influence prosecutions in unlawful ways and breach the powers of the judiciary, a phenomenon that is often present in contemporary forms of autocratization and personalism (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Frantz et al., 2021). This is consistent with studies that highlight that anticorruption campaigns or “crusades” are recurrently the result of selective target of political adversaries by incumbent elites (Bahry and Kim, 2021; Popova, 2012; Zhu and Zhang, 2017). Similarly to leaders who fear prosecution for human rights abuses during their regimes (Escribà-Folch and Wright, 2015), because they worry about future prosecutions for corruption, leaders can become less likely to accept peaceful transfers of power, including as a result of an electoral loss.

Our article shows that convicting politicians for corruption has different consequences with respect to corruption scandals, investigations, and indictments, suggesting the need for more work to differentiate the different types of punishment against politicians for malfeasance. Therefore, our findings are an important complement to the literature on the negative effects of corruption scandals on the trust of citizens in public institutions (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003; Bauhr and Grimes, 2014).

We also show that corruption convictions received by former heads of government reduce perceptions of widespread corruption. This finding substantiates the interpretation that the public perceives convictions to reflect increased efforts against corruption rather than reminding citizens of widespread corruption. These results also have some implications for how to understand the punishment of corruption from a more theoretical point of view. Theoretical accounts have highlighted that the marginal reward (cost) of engaging in corruption depends on the number of others doing the same (Andvig and Moene, 1990; Mishra, 2006). The interdependence of corruption behavior implies that people who perceive (or misperceive) widespread corruption in their society are more likely to engage in corruption, making corruption a self-inforcing social trap difficult to escape (Fisman and Miguel, 2007; Corbacho et al., 2016; Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013). Consequently, anti-corruption messages that remind citizens of corruption as an ubiquitous social problem can backfire despite their good intentions (Cheeseman and Peiffer, 2021). We find that convictions of political elites for corruption reduce citizens' belief that corruption is widespread, albeit slightly and temporarily. Our findings that the effects of punishment on corruption perceptions last for approximately two years show that it fails at incentivizing the participants of the system to coordinate on a low-corruption equilibrium.

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Online Appendix
Convictions for Corruption and Government
Approval: Global Evidence

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1 Additional Tables

Table 1: Dynamic Responses to Corruption Convictions

	Corruption Perception	Leadership Approval	Confidence in National Gov't	Confidence in Judicial Sys.
Years since corruption convictions:				
(Ref.: $k < 0$)				
$k = 0$	-0.029 (0.018)	0.038 (0.025)	0.037* (0.021)	0.009 (0.017)
$k = 1$	-0.053** (0.022)	0.091** (0.039)	0.084** (0.040)	0.016 (0.023)
$k = 2$	-0.017 (0.021)	0.064 (0.051)	0.054 (0.039)	0.040 (0.027)
$k \geq 3$	-0.041 (0.034)	0.097 (0.085)	0.076 (0.063)	0.056* (0.033)
Successive corruption convictions	-0.039* (0.022)	-0.009 (0.032)	0.009 (0.039)	-0.012 (0.041)
Convictions for other reasons	-0.041 (0.029)	0.048 (0.044)	0.032 (0.041)	0.012 (0.020)
Diagonal accountability	0.075** (0.032)	-0.096** (0.040)	-0.080** (0.039)	-0.030 (0.025)
Presidential election year	-0.009* (0.006)	0.026*** (0.009)	0.024*** (0.007)	0.007 (0.004)
Revised polity score	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.003)
GDP per capita (logged)	-0.056 (0.055)	0.083 (0.086)	0.096 (0.086)	0.070 (0.053)
Country & Year Fixed Eff.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country-Specific Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mean Y	0.666	0.466	0.479	0.472
Num.Obs.	1510	1452	1500	1507
R2	0.914	0.805	0.852	0.917

Note: The omitted reference group ($k < 0$) are years before (first-time) corruption convictions or all years in countries without those corruption convictions; $k = 0$ indicates the year where first-time corruption convictions occur. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the country level; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 2: Patterns of Data Missingness

	Missing in			
	Corruption Perception	Leadership Approval	Confidence in National Gov't	Confidence in Judicial Sys.
Corruption convictions	-0.030 (0.046)	0.002 (0.054)	-0.031 (0.044)	-0.031 (0.043)
Successive corruption convictions	-0.038 (0.039)	-0.096** (0.043)	-0.148 (0.103)	-0.052 (0.140)
Convictions for other reasons	-0.002 (0.027)	0.053 (0.050)	-0.019 (0.027)	-0.032 (0.029)
Diagonal accountability	-0.111 (0.081)	-0.189* (0.109)	-0.082 (0.074)	-0.078 (0.083)
Presidential election year	0.003 (0.019)	-0.003 (0.019)	-0.001 (0.019)	-0.002 (0.019)
Revised polity score	-0.004 (0.009)	0.003 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.009)	-0.005 (0.009)
GDP per capita (logged)	-0.035 (0.118)	0.084 (0.199)	0.146 (0.142)	0.131 (0.120)
Country & Year Fixed Eff.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country-Specific Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mean Y	0.171	0.205	0.177	0.173
Num.Obs.	1781	1781	1781	1781
R2	0.566	0.571	0.564	0.565

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the country level; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

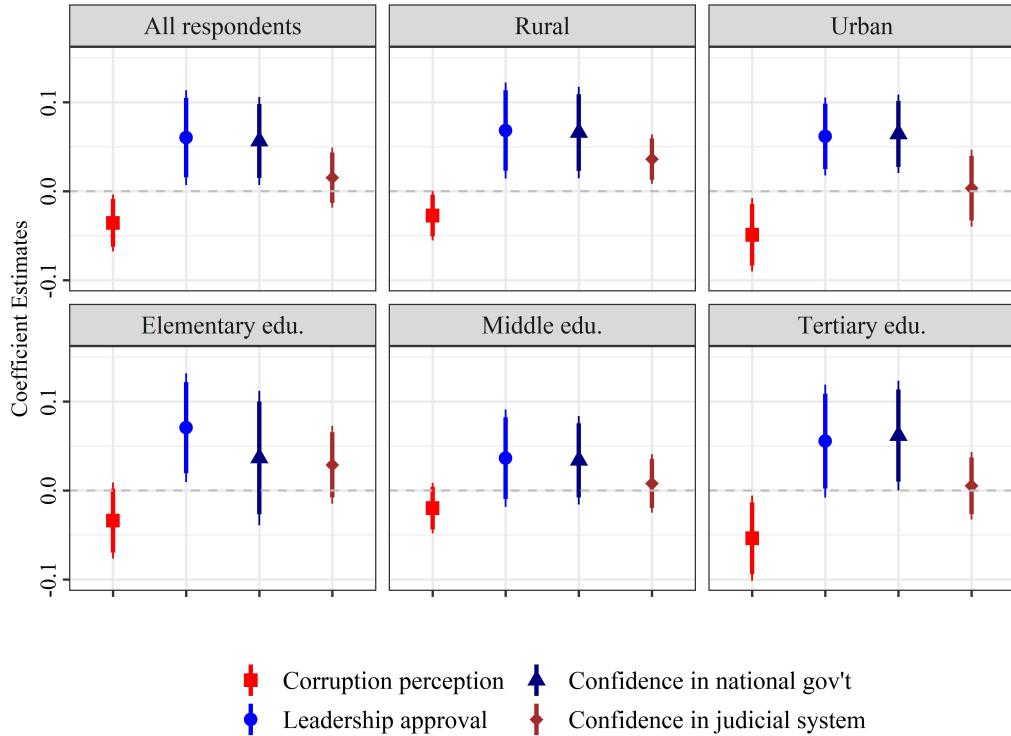
Table 3: Effects of Convictions for Corruption, Conditional on Years of Convictions

	Corruption	Perception	Leadership Approval	Confidence in Nat'l Gov't	Confidence in Judicial Sys.			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: Countries with convictions in earlier than 2013 & All “never-treated” countries								
Corruption convictions	-0.033* (0.018)	-0.034** (0.015)	0.059 (0.047)	0.065 (0.053)	0.048 (0.036)	0.050 (0.042)	-0.014 (0.019)	-0.013 (0.020)
Successive corruption convictions		-0.037* (0.022)		-0.014 (0.032)		0.009 (0.039)		-0.013 (0.042)
Num.Obs.	1402	1356	1345	1300	1390	1347	1397	1354
Panel B: Countries with convictions in earlier than 2013 & All “never-treated” countries & Year≤ 2015								
Corruption convictions	-0.046*** (0.014)	-0.047*** (0.016)	0.070* (0.041)	0.080 (0.051)	0.049* (0.026)	0.048 (0.030)	-0.009 (0.015)	-0.012 (0.016)
Successive corruption convictions		-0.041 (0.036)		0.006 (0.080)		-0.012 (0.051)		0.018 (0.033)
Num.Obs.	972	936	917	882	956	923	963	930
Panel C: Countries with convictions in later than 2013 & All “never-treated” countries								
Corruption convictions	-0.035* (0.019)	-0.037 (0.026)	0.058*** (0.024)	0.055* (0.030)	0.057* (0.030)	0.057* (0.034)	0.032 (0.024)	0.032 (0.025)
Successive corruption convictions		-0.041* (0.021)		-0.013 (0.032)		0.008 (0.037)		-0.014 (0.041)
Num.Obs.	1443	1397	1382	1337	1428	1385	1435	1392
Conviction for other reasons		✓		✓		✓		✓
Other controls		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fixed Eff. & Country-Specific Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: Panel A uses only countries where corruption convictions occurred in 2012 or earlier and those without any corruption convictions (i.e., “never-treated”); Panel B further restricts the sub-sample analysis to between 2006 and 2015; Panel C uses only countries where corruption conviction occurred in 2013 or later and the “never-treated” countries. Robust standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the country level, *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

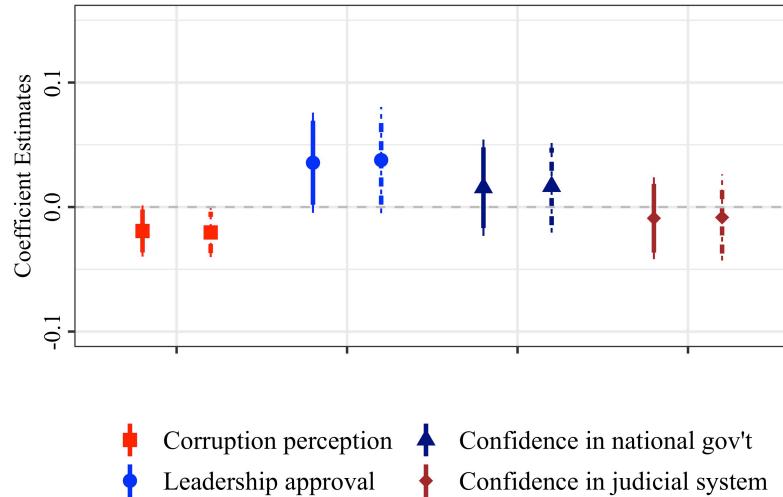
2 Additional Figures

Figure 1: Effects of Corruption Convictions Across Different Sub-Population Groups



Note: Bold and thin vertical lines indicate 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively.

Figure 2: Effects of Corruption Convictions Based on Aggregate Cohort-Time Average Treatment Effects

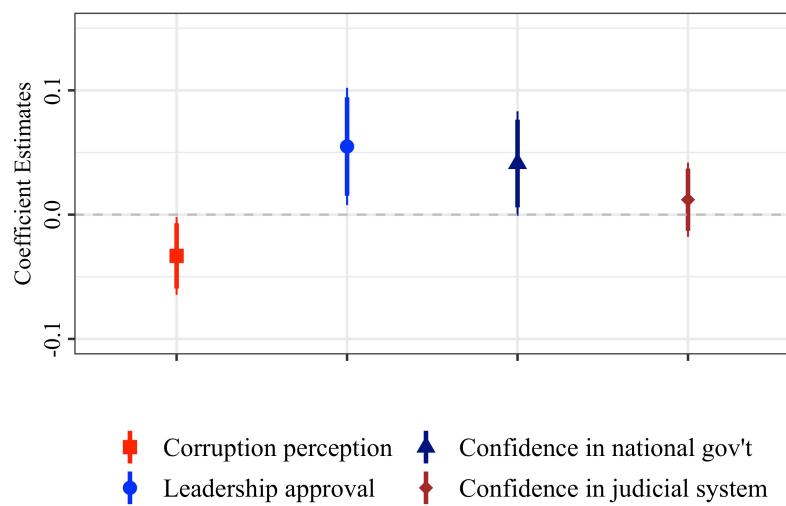


Note: Estimates based on aggregate cohort-time average treatment effects based on ([Callaway and Sant'Anna, 2021](#)). Bold and thin vertical lines indicate 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively. Solid lines indicates estimates for models with never treated country-year observations as control units. Dashed lines includes estimates for both not-yet-treated units and never-treated units as controls.

References

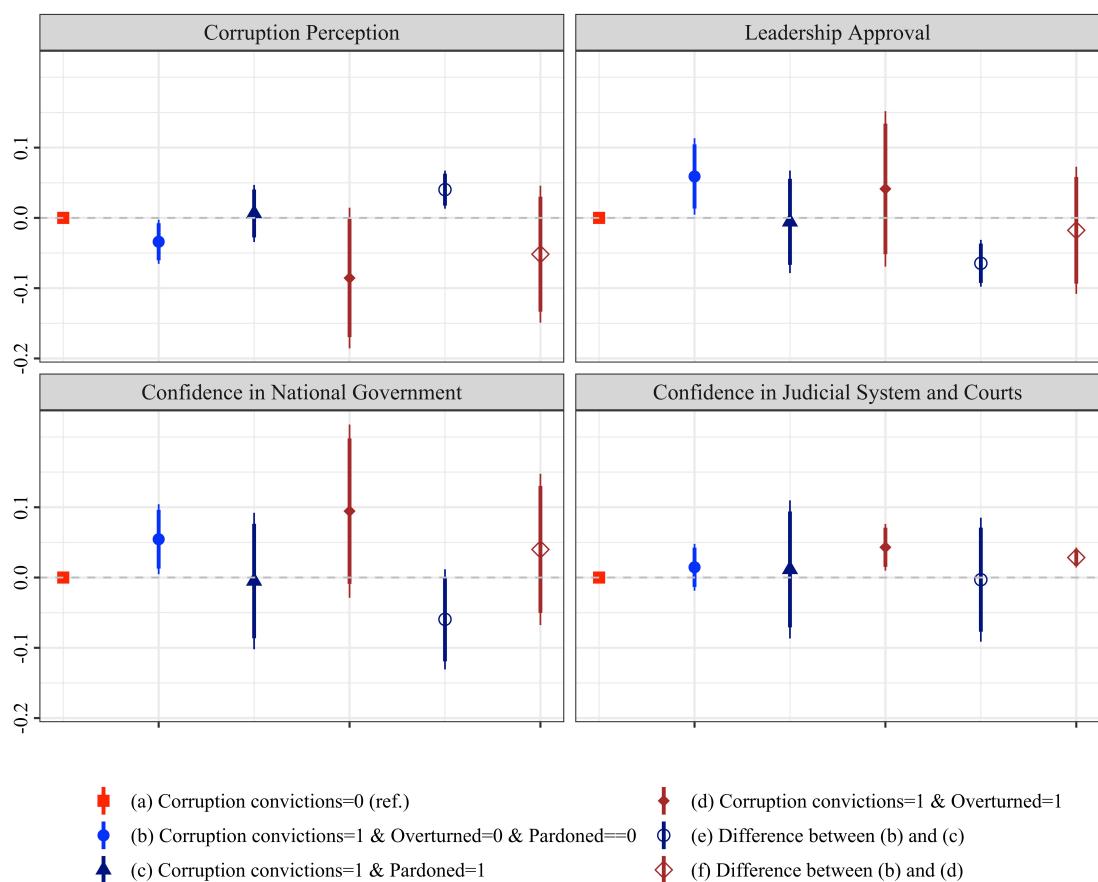
- Callaway, Brantly and Pedro HC Sant'Anna. 2021. “Difference-in-differences with multiple time periods.” *Journal of Econometrics* 225(2):200–230.

Figure 3: Effects of Corruption Convictions, Including Countries with Early Convictions



Note: Estimation without restricting the sample. Estimates based on Table 2 (model 3), and Table 3 (models 3, 6 and 9); bold and thin vertical lines indicate 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively.

Figure 4: Effects of Corruption Conviction, Pardoning, and Overturning



Note: Bold and thin vertical lines indicate 90% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively.