

# Voting for Disabled Candidates<sup>1</sup>

Stefanie Reher  
University of Strathclyde  
[stefanie.reher@strath.ac.uk](mailto:stefanie.reher@strath.ac.uk)

16 March 2024

Forthcoming in the *Journal of Politics*

## Abstract

Despite important advances in the rights of disabled people, stigma and prejudice remain widespread. Meanwhile, disabled political representatives are few and far between. This raises the question: do voters discriminate against disabled candidates? This study uses conjoint experiments in the US and the UK to show that candidates with physical or sensory impairments are preferred by voters on the left, whereas voters on the right are more likely to vote for non-disabled candidates. However, these effects are almost entirely due to voters' perceptions of disabled candidates as more left-wing. When perceived ideology is held constant or candidates' party affiliation is known, candidate disability does not affect the vote choice among right-wing voters. Left-wing voters still reward left-wing disabled candidates for representing under-represented groups. The findings expand our understanding of the role of disability in electoral politics and should encourage candidates and parties concerned about discrimination at the ballot box.

**Keywords:** disability; candidate evaluations; belief stereotypes; survey experiment; conjoint experiment

---

<sup>1</sup> Support for this research was provided by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council grant ES/S015469/1 and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland grant RIG007430. The survey received approval from the University of Strathclyde's University Ethics Committee. The replication has been completed and replication files are available in the JOP Dataverse (<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/8TEZ2R>).

Around 1 in 5 people are disabled, meaning they “have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (UNCRPD 2006: 4). Meanwhile, on the political stage they remain the exception: only three percent of current federal representatives at the level in the United States are known to be disabled (NCIL 2022), with estimates even lower in Europe (FRA 2014). Although a heterogeneous group, disabled people share common experiences of marginalization, stigmatization, and discrimination (Nario-Redmond 2020). Disabled candidates face prejudice, too, as the reactions to John Fetterman’s speech difficulties during his 2022 campaign for Senator demonstrated.<sup>2</sup> Yet, we know little about voters’ willingness to support disabled candidates.

Since most voters have limited time, cognitive capacity, and willingness to gather and process information ahead of elections (Lau & Redlawsk 2001), readily accessible stereotypes about social groups can serve as convenient heuristics (Fiske & Neuberg 1990). Candidates’ gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and mental health have all been shown to affect voter evaluations and support (e.g. Dolan 2010; Huddy & and Terkildsen 1993; Loewen & Rheault 2021; Magni & Reynolds 2020; Sigelman et al. 1995). Visible and/or disclosed disabilities are likely to have similar effects, particularly because their ‘contextual novelty’ in politics makes them salient to voters (Koch 2002).

Candidates with marginalized identities, such as women, black, and transgender candidates, tend to be seen as more left-wing and receive greater support from left-wing voters (e.g. Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Jones & Brewer 2019; Koch 2002; Schneider & Bos 2011). Similarly, voters assume that disabled candidates favor policies which promote equality and increase public spending on health care and welfare (Evans & Reher 2024) – policy preferences which are indeed prevalent among both disabled citizens (Gastil 2000;

---

<sup>2</sup> [fivethirtyeight.com/features/john-fettermans-attacks-on-health-disability-and-politics/](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/john-fettermans-attacks-on-health-disability-and-politics/)

Schur & Adya 2013) and candidates (Reher 2022). Thus, I expect that left-wing voters perceive disabled candidates as sharing their political views, whereas right-wing voters assume their preferences to more distant. Consequently, left-wing voters should support disabled over non-disabled candidates, while right-wing voters should prefer non-disabled candidates (*Hypothesis 1*). These effects should be explained by voter perceptions of candidate ideology (*Hypothesis 2*).

Are voters likely to still have a preference for or against disabled candidates once we hold their perceptions of candidate ideology constant? Disabled people are commonly stereotyped as incompetent, dependent, weak, and passive (e.g. Louvet et al. 2009; Nario-Redmond 2020) – clearly undesirable traits for politicians. Voters might also be concerned that political spaces and activities are not accessible to them. At the same time, portrayals of disabled people as resilient, courageous, and inspiring are also common (Nario-Redmond 2020), and voters might read standing as a candidate as evidence for such traits. If these opposing perceptions cancel out, either at the individual or aggregate level, we would expect no remaining net effect of candidate disability on voter support (*Hypothesis 3*).

## **Research design**

The hypotheses are tested through two pre-registered<sup>3</sup> candidate choice experiments embedded in online surveys of representative samples (based on quotas for age, gender, and region) of the population in the US (N=3,000) and the UK (N=3,000), conducted in May-June 2020 and January 202. Importantly, the US and UK both have electoral systems with single-member districts in which citizens are used to voting for individual candidates, who are expected to represent the entire constituency. Both countries have had prominent disabled politicians on both sides of the political spectrum in the past and during the study, including

---

<sup>3</sup> The pre-registered hypotheses and research design can be accessed at <https://osf.io/9ju2s>.

Democratic Senator Tammy Duckworth, Republican Governor of Texas Greg Abbott, and former Republic Senator Madison Cawthorn in the US, and Labour MP Marsha de Cordova and Conservative MP Robert Halfon in the UK. This might decrease the risk of demand effects as well as the risk that respondents' perceptions of candidates' ideology are driven by perceptions of one particular politician.

Respondents were presented with a pair of vignettes (see Figure S1 in the SI) describing two fictional candidates standing for election to the British House of Commons or US House of Representatives in their constituency or district. The descriptions contain information about candidates' gender, minority ethnic status, age, profession, number of children, years of political activity, and experience of elected office (Table S1). They either mention no disability or that the candidate is (a) paralyzed below the waist and uses a wheelchair to get around; (b) blind and reads using text-to-speech software; or (3) deaf and communicates mostly in American/British Sign Language. Most people are familiar with these disabilities and they are stigmatized to comparable degrees (Tringo 1970; Staniland 2011). In the analyses below the categories are summarized into a binary disability indicator, but additional analyses by disability types reveal very similar patterns (Figures S2 and S7).

The values of all attributes are randomly assigned to respondents in a conjoint design, which allows identifying the Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE) of each characteristic over all values of the other attributes (Hainmueller et al. 2014). Disabled and minority ethnic candidates have lower probabilities of appearing (see Table S1). Before the experiment, respondents were asked to indicate their own ideological position (11-point scale from 0='government should cut taxes a lot and spend much less on public services' to 1='government should raise taxes a lot and spend much more on public services'). The key outcome measure is whether a voter chose a candidate over the other (0 or 1).

To test for the mediating effect of perceived candidate ideology I employ two strategies. The first is a mediation analysis using respondents' perceptions of the position of each candidate on a normalized 11-point scale from left (0) to right (1). The second consists of a second experiment conducted among the same sample of respondents (in randomized order with the first), which is identical to the first but randomly assigns political parties to the two candidates (Democratic and Republican in the US; Labour and Conservative in the UK). Manipulating the mediating variable – perceived candidate ideology – in this way allows us to identify whether candidate disability has any remaining effect on the vote choice.

## **Results**

### *Study 1: mediation analysis of voters' belief assumptions*

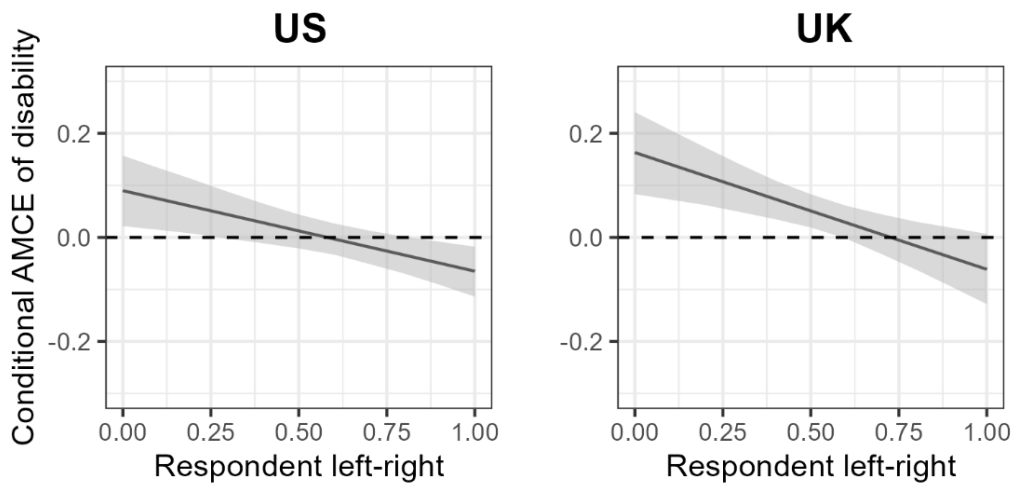
Linear probability models regressing candidate support on candidate disability, interacted with respondent ideology, provide support for H1: voter ideology statistically significantly moderates the effect of candidate disability on voter support (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> In the US, support for disabled candidates is 9 percentage points higher than for non-disabled candidates on the far left, and 7 points lower on the far right. British voters on the far left give disabled candidates 16 points more support than non-disabled candidates; on the right the difference is not statistically significant.

Mediation analyses show that these effects are indeed largely explained by voter perceptions of candidates' ideology, supporting H2. Since the patterns in Figure 1 are similar between the US and the UK, I pool the samples for the sake of clarity and statistical power, and separate voters to the left (0.0–0.4) and to the right (0.6–1.0) of the mid-point of the ideological scale (full results and analyses by country in the Supplementary Information (SI)

---

<sup>4</sup> The interaction is robust to controlling for interactions with respondent age, gender, education, employment, and disability (Table S4). Table S2 shows models without interactions.

4). Among left-wing voters, roughly half of the total positive effect of disability on voter support (0.085,  $p < 0.001$ ) is explained by perceptions of disabled candidates being more left-wing (Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME)= 0.042,  $p < 0.001$ ). Yet, a statistically significant direct positive effect of disability on candidate support remains (Average Direct Effect (ADE)= 0.043,  $p = 0.036$ ).<sup>5</sup> Among right-wing voters, the total effect of candidate disability on electoral support is negative, though not quite statistically significant (-0.032,  $p = 0.053$ ). Perceived ideology mediates this effect (ACME= -0.015,  $p = 0.002$ ), and no direct negative effect candidate disability on voter support remains (ADE= -0.017,  $p = 0.297$ ).



**Figure 1.** Effects of candidate disability on voter support, moderated by voter ideology

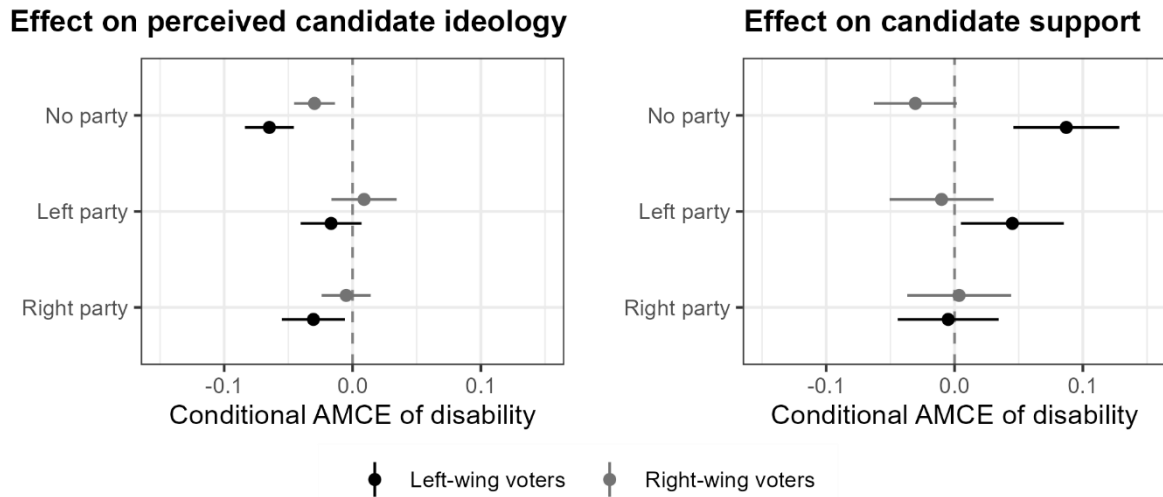
*Notes:* Full estimates in Table S3, Models 2-3. The models include the other manipulated attributes as covariates.

*Study 2: Experiments manipulating candidates' party affiliation*

The second strategy confirms these results (full results and analyses by country and disability in SI 5 and 6). Figure 2 shows that providing respondents with party labels did indeed manipulate their perceptions of candidate ideology: without party labels, left-wing and right-wing respondents place disabled candidates 6 and 3 percentage points, respectively, to the left

<sup>5</sup> The positive effect remains in the merged sample and the UK but not the US, see Table S9.

of non-disabled candidates. When the parties are known, these differences largely disappear – left-wing voters still position disabled candidates of right-wing parties further left, but this gap is statistically significantly smaller than in the no-party experiment.



**Figure 2.** Effect of candidate disability on voter support among left-wing and right-wing voters, moderated by candidates’ party affiliation

*Notes:* Estimates from Models 2 and 3 in Table S10 and Models 1 and 3 in Table S11.

The right-hand panel in Figure 2 shows what happens to the effects of candidate disability on voter support when party labels are provided.<sup>6</sup> Right-wing voters are now equally likely to vote for disabled and non-disabled candidates from the same party. Similarly, disability has no effect on left-wing voters’ support of Republican or Conservative candidates. This is somewhat curious given that they see disabled right-party candidates as slightly more left-wing, and might be explained by ‘expectancy violation theory’ (Jussim et al. 1987; Sigelman et al. 1995): left-wing voters might be negatively surprised by a disabled person representing a right-wing party and, thus, disinclined to support them.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Figures S4 and S5 show the predicted values of candidate ideology and voter support.

<sup>7</sup> This effect is driven by the US sample, see Figure S6.

By contrast, left-wing voters still prefer disabled over non-disabled Democratic or Labour candidates, despite not seeing them as ideologically distinct. One potential reason is a desire to increase diverse representation in politics (pre-registered hypothesis). Indeed, a mediation analysis with candidates' ability to represent groups that are under-represented in politics as the mediating variable confirms this (results in SI 6). Left-wing voters perceive disabled left-wing candidates as more likely to represent under-represented groups than their non-disabled counterparts, and this increases support among these voters. Representation perceptions explain 83 per cent of the total effect (0.046,  $p= 0.03$ ) of disability on left-wing voters' support for left-party candidates (ACME= 0.038,  $p<0.001$ ). Once we account for these perceptions in the model, no direct effect of disability remains (ADE= 0.007,  $p= 0.73$ ).

## **Conclusion**

While parliaments around the world are becoming more inclusive and diverse, politicians who identify as disabled are still few and far between. They face myriad barriers, including inaccessible selection processes, higher costs of campaigning, and prejudice within parties (Evans & Reher 2024). But do voters discriminate against them? This study is the first to pursue this question with respect to physical and sensory impairments and suggests that they do not. In the absence of information about candidates' parties, voters on the right are less inclined to support disabled than non-disabled candidates – but only because they perceive them as more left-wing, and presumably as prioritizing issues such as welfare and minority rights (Petrocik 1996; Evans & Reher 2021). These effects largely disappear once voters know candidates' party affiliation, supporting previous findings that party cues trump identity cues (Hayes 2011; Dolan 2014; but see Jones & Brewer 2019). Voters on the left support disabled candidates more than non-disabled candidates, and part of this effect remains when



candidate ideology is held constant because they value the potential of disabled candidates of parties on the left to improve the representation of under-represented groups.

The findings should encourage disabled people with ambition for elected office, and reassure party selectorates who are hesitant to nominate disabled candidates because they fear of a backlash from voters. Disabled right-wing candidates should emphasize their policy positions and competence on right-wing issues – although their potential for ‘stealing’ issues traditionally owned by the left by signaling credibility through lived experience should also be explored (Holian 2004). Meanwhile, disabled left-wing candidates may benefit from highlighting their ability to represent marginalized groups (Petrocik 1996).

Future research should examine the roles of different disability types and origins (including congenital versus acquired, e.g. during military service) as well as their intersections with other identities. Intellectual disabilities, neurodivergence, and mental health conditions are often associated with stronger stigma than physical disabilities and might have more negative effects on voter support (Loewen & Rheault 2021). Studying disabled voters specifically would provide insights into their preferences for descriptive representation and its potential positive impact on their political engagement (cf. Atkeson 2003). During the coronavirus pandemic, when the study was conducted, higher salience of healthcare policy competence might have contributed to higher voter support for disabled candidates, calling for further research outside this context. Finally, scholars may find different dynamics in different contexts. In electoral systems with multimember districts, which tend to be less personalized and more party-focused, candidate characteristics might matter less. At the same time, they give politicians greater leeway to represent specific social groups (Tremblay 2003), meaning that voters might expect disabled politicians’ behavior to be more strongly driven by their identity, and reward or punish them accordingly.

## References

- Atkeson, Lonna Rae (2003). Not All Cues Are Created Equal: The Conditional Impact of Female Candidates on Political Engagement. *Journal of Politics* 65(4): 1040-1061.
- Dolan, Kathleen (2010). The Impact of Gender Stereotyped Evaluations on Support for Women Candidates. *Political Behavior* 32(1): 69-88.
- Dolan, Kathleen (2014). Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates: What Really Matters? *Political Research Quarterly* 67(1): 96-107.
- Evans, Elizabeth, and Stefanie Reher (2024). *Disability and Political Representation*. Oxford University Press.
- Fiske, Susan T., and Steven L. Neuberg (1990). A Continuum of Impression Formation from Category-based to Individuating Processes: Influence of Information and Motivation on Attention and Interpretation. In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 23, ed. Mark P. Zanna. New York: Academic Press.
- FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) (2014). *The right to political participation for persons with disabilities: human rights indicators*.
- Gastil, John (2000). The Political Beliefs and Orientations of People with Disabilities. *Social Science Quarterly* 81: 588-603.
- Hainmueller, Jens, Daniel J. Hopkins and Teppei Yamamoto (2014). Causal Inference in Conjoint Analysis: Understanding Multidimensional Choices via Stated Preference Experiments. *Political Analysis* 22(1): 1-30.
- Hayes, Danny (2011). When Gender and Party Collide: Stereotyping in Candidate Trait Attribution. *Politics and Gender* 7(2): 133-65.
- Holian, David B. (2004). He's Stealing My Issues! Clinton's Crime Rhetoric and the Dynamics of Issue Ownership. *Political Behavior* 26(2): 95-124.
- Huddy, Leonie, and Nayda Terkildsen (1993). Gender stereotypes and the perception of male candidates. *American Journal of Political Science* 37: 119-147.
- Jones, Philip Edward, and Paul R. Brewer (2019). Gender Identity as a Political Cue: Voter Responses to Transgender Candidates. *Journal of Politics* 81(2): 697-701.
- Jussim, Lee, Lerita M. Coleman, and Lauren Lerch (1987). The Nature of Stereotypes: A Comparison and Integration of Three Theories. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52: 536-46.
- Koch, Jeffrey W. (2002). Gender Stereotypes and Citizens' Impressions of House Candidates' Ideological Orientations. *American Journal of Political Science* 46(2), 453-462.

- Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk (2001). Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making. *American Journal of Political Science* 45(4): 951-971.
- Loewen, Peter, and Ludovic Rheault (2021). Voters punish political leaders with depression. *British Journal of Political Science* 51: 427-436.
- Louvet, Eva, Odile Rohmer and Nicole Dubois (2009). Social Judgment of People with a Disability in the Workplace. *Swiss Journal of Psychology* 68: 153-159.
- Magni, Gabriele, and Andrew Reynolds (2020). Voter Preferences and the Political Underrepresentation of Minority Groups: Lesbian, Gay and Transgender Candidates in Advanced Democracies. *Journal of Politics* 83(4): 1199-1215.
- Nario-Redmond, Michelle R. (2020). *Ableism: The Causes and Consequences of Disability Prejudice*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- NCIL (National Council on Independent Living) (2022). *Current Elected Officials with Disabilities*. Accessed on 11 Feb 2022 at <https://ncil.org/elected-officials/>.
- Petrocik, John R. (1996). Issue ownership in presidential elections, with a 1980 case study. *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 825–850.
- Reher, Stefanie (2022). Do Disabled Candidates Represent Disabled Citizens? *British Journal of Political Science*. 52(2): 520-534.
- Schneider, Monica C., and Angela L. Bos (2011). An Exploration of the Content of Stereotypes of Black Politicians. *Political Psychology* 32(2): 205-233.
- Schur, Lisa, and Meera Adya (2013). Sidelined or Mainstreamed? Political Participation and Attitudes of People with Disabilities in the United States. *Social Science Quarterly* 94(3): 811–839.
- Sigelman, Carol K., Lee Sigelman, Barbara J. Walkosz and Michael Nitz (1995). Black Candidates, White Voters: Understanding Racial Bias in Political Perceptions. *American Journal of Political Science* 39(1): 243-265.
- Staniland, Luke (2011). *Public Perceptions of Disabled People: Evidence from the British Social Attitudes Survey 2009*. UK Government Office for Disability Issues.
- Tremblay, Manon (2003). Women’s representational role in Australia and Canada: the impact of political context. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 38(2), 215–238.
- Tringo, John L. (1970). The Hierarchy of Preference Toward Disability Groups. *The Journal of Special Education* 4(3): 295-306.
- UNCRPD (2006). *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and optional protocol*. New York: UN.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**  
**for**  
**Voting for Disabled Candidates**

1. Experimental vignettes	2
2. Regressing voter support on candidate disability, without and with voter ideology interaction (Figure 1)	4
3. Controlling for interactions with potential pre-treatment confounders of voter ideology	7
4. Mediation analysis: effect of candidate disability on voter support, mediated by perceived candidate ideology (party affiliation not known)	9
5. Effects of information about candidates' party affiliation on voter perceptions and support (Figures 2 and 3)	13
6. Mediation analysis: effect of candidate disability on left-wing voters' support of candidates of left-wing parties, mediated by candidates' perceived ability to represent under-represented groups	21
7. Effects of candidate disability on voter support across all voters in experiment with party information	24

# 1. Experimental vignettes and attributes

## Introduction 1

Ahead of elections, voters often have only limited information about the candidates who are competing. We are interested in how people evaluate candidates in such settings.

On the next page, you will see descriptions of two fictional candidates, Candidate A and Candidate B. Imagine that a general election was coming up and that the two candidates were competing in your [constituency/district] for a seat in the [House of Commons/ U.S. House of Representatives].

We will asked a few questions about each pair of candidates. We are interested in your impressions of the candidates based on the short descriptions. Don't worry if you are unsure - there are no right or wrong answers. Remember that the survey is completely anonymous.

[next page]

## Comparison 1 [NO PARTY AFFILIATION]

Please read the descriptions of these two candidates carefully.

### Candidate A

<NAME> is <AGE> years old and has <CHILDREN>. <PRONOUN> <JOB>. <PRONOUN><DISABILITY>. <NAME> has been politically active in your [constituency/district] for <EXPERIENCE> years. <PRONOUN> <OFFICE>.

### Candidate B

<NAME> is <AGE> years old and has <CHILDREN>. <PRONOUN> <JOB>. <PRONOUN><DISABILITY>. <NAME> grew up in your [constituency/district] and has been involved in politics for <EXPERIENCE> years. <PRONOUN> <OFFICE>.

[survey items measuring outcomes]

## Comparison 2 [PARTY AFFILIATION]

Please read the descriptions of these two candidates carefully.

### Candidate A

<NAME> is the <PARTY> Party candidate in your [constituency/district]. <NAME> is <AGE> years old and has <CHILDREN>. <PRONOUN> <JOB>. <PRONOUN><DISABILITY>. <NAME> has been politically active in your [constituency/district] for <EXPERIENCE> years. <PRONOUN> <OFFICE>.

### Candidate B

<NAME> is the <PARTY> Party candidate in your [constituency/district]. <NAME> is <AGE> years old and has <CHILDREN>. <PRONOUN> <JOB>. <PRONOUN><DISABILITY>. <NAME> grew up in your [constituency/district] and has been involved in politics for <EXPERIENCE> years. <PRONOUN> <OFFICE>.

**Figure S1.** Introduction and vignettes

*Notes:* The order of 'party affiliation' and 'no party affiliation' experiments (i.e., appearing in Comparison 1 or Comparison 2) is randomized.

**Table S1.** Attributes and values

Attribute	Values [probability or restriction]	
	US	UK
Name:	<i>Pair 1: Candidate A:</i> "Paul Smith" [0.35], "Anna Smith" [0.35], "Sofia García" [0.15], "Carlos García" [0.15]	<i>Pair 1: Candidate A:</i> "Paul Smith" [0.35], "Anna Smith" [0.35], "Amita Chowdhury" [0.15], "Rahul Chowdhury" [0.15]
Gender,	<i>Pair 1: Candidate B:</i> "Ian Wright" [0.35], "Jane Wright" [0.35], "Valeria López" [0.15], "Jorge López" [0.15]	<i>Pair 1: Candidate B:</i> "Ian Wright" [0.35], "Jane Wright" [0.35], "Nadia Abadi" [0.15], "Samir Abadi" [0.15]
Immigration background	<i>Pair 2: Candidate A:</i> "David Jones" [0.35], "Mary Jones" [0.35], "Maria Sanchez" [0.15], "Marcos Sanchez" [0.15]	<i>Pair 2: Candidate A:</i> "David Jones" [0.35], "Mary Jones" [0.35], "Meena Jarwar" [0.15], "Dev Jarwar" [0.15]
	<i>Pair 2: Candidate B:</i> "Tom Williams" [0.35], "Kate Williams" [0.35], "Gloria Ramos" [0.15], "Sergio Ramos" [0.15]	<i>Pair 2: Candidate B:</i> "Tom Williams" [0.35], "Kate Williams" [0.35], "Leila Said" [0.15], "Masoud Said" [0.15]
Pronoun	"He", "She", <i>NA</i> [if Disability== <i>NA</i> ]	"He", "She", <i>NA</i> [if Disability== <i>NA</i> ]
Party	"Democratic", "Republican"	"Labour", "Conservative"
Age	35 – 65	35 – 65
Children	"no children", "one child", "two children", "three children"	"no children", "one child", "two children", "three children"
Job	"owns a small business which employs five people", "works as an elementary school teacher", "works in a local factory", "works as a lawyer for a large international firm", "works as a doctor in a local hospital"	"owns a small business which employs five people", "works as a primary school teacher", "works in a local factory", "works as a lawyer for a large international firm", "works as a doctor in a local hospital"
Disability	<i>NA</i> [0.4], "is paralyzed below the waist and uses a wheelchair to get around." [0.2], "is blind and reads using text-to-speech software." [0.2], "is deaf and communicates mostly in American Sign Language. [0.2]"	<i>NA</i> [0.4], "is paralysed below the waist and uses a wheelchair to get around." [0.2], "is blind and reads using text-to-speech software." [0.2], "is deaf and communicates mostly in British Sign Language. [0.2]"
Experience	4 – 17	4 – 17
Office	"has previously served as a state legislator", "has not yet held elected office"	"has previously served as a local councillor", "has not yet held elected office"

## 2. Regressing voter support on candidate disability, without and with voter ideology interaction (Figure 1)

**Table S2.** Effects of candidate disability on voter support (not interacted with voter ideology)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	UK + US	US	UK	UK + US	UK + US
	Linear	Linear	OLS	OLS	Logit
<i>C disability (ref=non-disabled)</i>					
Disabled	0.025*	0.001	0.050***		0.102*
	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.015)		(0.044)
Blind				-0.003	
				(0.015)	
Deaf				0.017	
				(0.014)	
Paraplegic				0.058***	
				(0.014)	
C age	-0.002**	-0.001	-0.002**	-0.002**	-0.007**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
C female	0.023*	0.027	0.017	0.024*	0.096*
	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.010)	(0.043)
C minority	-0.004	0.034*	-0.041*	-0.004	-0.015
	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.012)	(0.047)
<i>C profession (ref=doctor)</i>					
Factory worker	-0.067***	-0.045*	-0.090***	-0.067***	-0.274***
	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.017)	(0.068)
Lawyer	-0.109***	-0.092***	-0.128***	-0.109***	-0.448***
	(0.016)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.016)	(0.068)
Small business owner	-0.028	-0.021	-0.037	-0.027	-0.116
	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.017)	(0.068)
Teacher	-0.040*	-0.045	-0.031	-0.040*	-0.163*
	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.017)	(0.068)
C experience	0.004**	0.002	0.006***	0.004**	0.017***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.005)
C children	0.041***	0.041***	0.040***	0.041***	0.167***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.019)
C office	0.089***	0.106***	0.071***	0.089***	0.363***
	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.043)
Constant	0.476***	0.456***	0.498***	0.474***	-0.096
	(0.038)	(0.052)	(0.054)	(0.038)	(0.157)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓			✓	✓
N	8,868	4,520	4,348	8,868	8,868
R-squared	0.028	0.028	0.036	0.029	
AIC					12,078

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Standard errors are clustered by respondent in OLS models; Cluster Bootstrap p-values in logit model. The sample includes only the no-party experiments.

**Table S3.** Effects of candidate disability on voter support, interacted with voter left-right ideology (Figure 1)

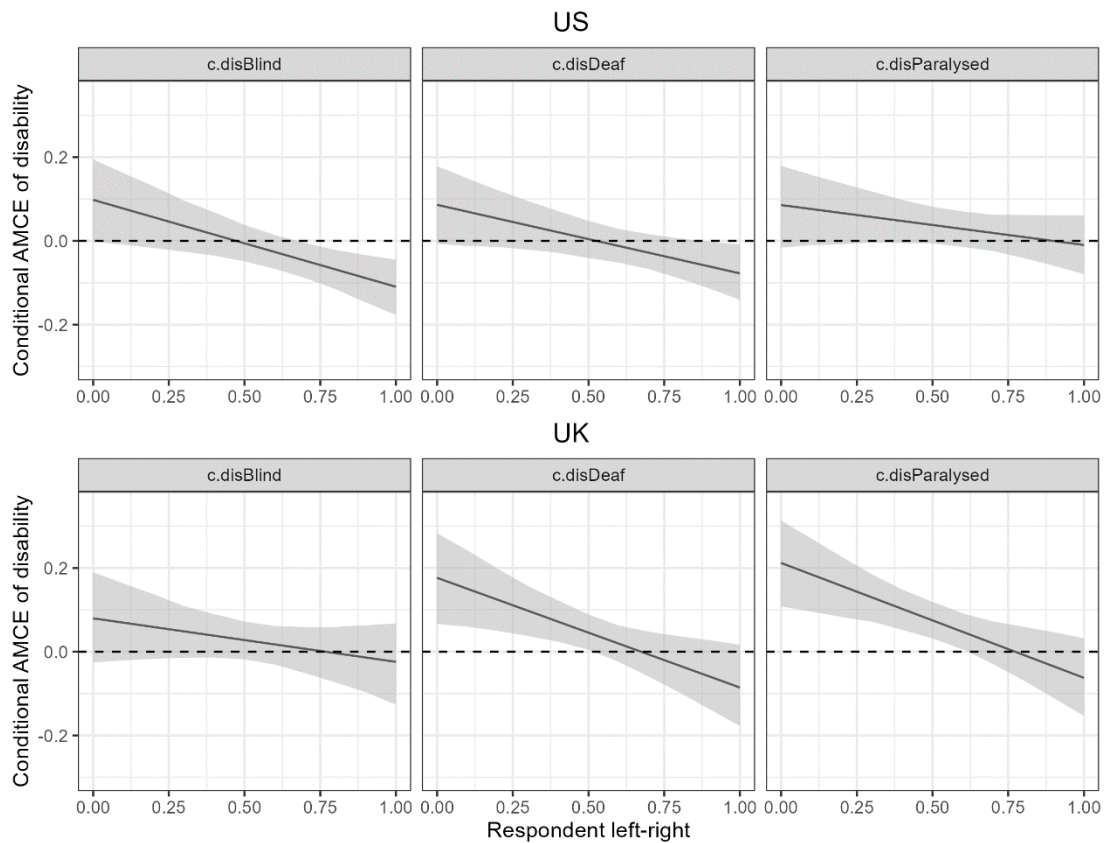
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	UK + US	US	UK	UK + US	US	UK	UK + US
	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	Logit
<i>C disability (ref=non-disabled)</i>							
Disabled	0.124*** (0.026)	0.089* (0.036)	0.163*** (0.040)				0.513*** (0.107)
Blind				0.102** (0.038)	0.097 (0.050)	0.080 (0.061)	
Deaf				0.126*** (0.034)	0.086 (0.046)	0.175** (0.055)	
Paraplegic				0.140*** (0.035)	0.085 (0.048)	0.211*** (0.051)	
V ideology	0.106*** (0.025)	0.085** (0.032)	0.130** (0.040)	0.106*** (0.025)	0.085** (0.032)	0.129** (0.040)	0.438*** (0.130)
<i>C disability (ref=non-disabled) * V ideology</i>							
C disabled * V ideology	-0.185*** (0.042)	-0.155** (0.053)	-0.224** (0.070)				-0.765*** (0.170)
C blind * V ideology				-0.185** (0.059)	-0.204** (0.073)	-0.105 (0.103)	
C deaf * V ideology				-0.202*** (0.055)	-0.163* (0.068)	-0.260** (0.096)	
C paraplegic * V ideology				-0.164** (0.056)	-0.093 (0.072)	-0.274** (0.088)	
C age	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.007** (0.003)
C female	0.013 (0.011)	0.019 (0.015)	0.006 (0.016)	0.014 (0.011)	0.020 (0.015)	0.005 (0.016)	0.055 (0.045)
C minority	-0.008 (0.012)	0.029 (0.017)	-0.046** (0.017)	-0.008 (0.012)	0.030 (0.017)	-0.047** (0.017)	-0.032 (0.049)
<i>C profession (ref=doctor)</i>							
Factory worker	-0.077*** (0.017)	-0.050* (0.024)	-0.104*** (0.025)	-0.077*** (0.017)	-0.051* (0.024)	-0.105*** (0.025)	-0.315*** (0.071)
Lawyer	-0.108*** (0.017)	-0.094*** (0.024)	-0.125*** (0.025)	-0.108*** (0.017)	-0.094*** (0.024)	-0.126*** (0.025)	-0.446*** (0.071)
Small business owner	-0.036* (0.017)	-0.031 (0.024)	-0.042 (0.025)	-0.035* (0.017)	-0.030 (0.024)	-0.041 (0.025)	-0.147 (0.071)



Teacher	-0.043*	-0.049*	-0.033	-0.043*	-0.050*	-0.033	-0.177*
	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.072)
C experience	0.003**	0.001	0.006**	0.004**	0.001	0.006**	0.014**
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.006)
C children	0.041***	0.042***	0.039***	0.041***	0.042***	0.039***	0.169***
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.020)
C office	0.090***	0.108***	0.070***	0.090***	0.109***	0.069***	0.368***
	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.045)
Constant	0.442***	0.454***	0.432***	0.441***	0.452***	0.429***	-0.240
	(0.042)	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.042)	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.179)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓			✓			✓
N	8,098	4,170	3,928	8,098	4,170	3,928	8,098
R-squared	0.030	0.031	0.037	0.031	0.033	0.038	
AIC							11,020

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Standard errors are clustered by respondent in OLS models; Cluster Bootstrap p-values in logit model. The sample includes only the no-party experiments.



**Figure S2.** Effects of three candidate disability types on voter support, moderated by voter ideology, separate for US and UK

Notes: Full estimates in Table S3, Models 5 and 6. The models include the other manipulated attributes as covariates.

### 3. Controlling for interactions with potential pre-treatment confounders of voter ideology

Table S4 shows the results of a linear probability model regressing voter support on candidate disability and its interaction with voter ideology. It controls for interactions of candidate disability with a set of voter characteristics that might be pre-treatment confounders of voter ideology. They include the following measures:

- Age (continuous): 0=1-24, 1=25-34, 2=35-44, 3=45-54, 4=55-64, 5=65+
- Gender (factor): female (=reference category), male, other
- Age finished full-time education (continuous): 0=15 or under, 1=16, 2=17-18, 3=19, 4=20 or over, 5=still at school/full-time student
- Employment (factor): employed (employee or self-employed full-time or part-time) (=reference category), not employed (homemaker, long-term sick or disabled; temporarily sick or injured; retired), student, unemployed (unemployed and actively seeking work)
- Disability (no, yes)

**Table S4.** Effects of candidate disability on voter support, interacted with voter left-right ideology and controlling for interactions with voter-level pre-treatment variables

	UK + US OLS
C disabled	0.109* (0.050)
V ideology	0.096*** (0.026)
C disabled * V ideology	-0.168*** (0.043)
V age	0.0003 (0.005)
C disabled * V age	-0.001 (0.009)
<i>V gender (reference = female)</i>	
V male	0.028* (0.014)
V other	-0.085 (0.121)
C disabled * V male	-0.042 (0.024)
C disabled * V other	0.224 (0.200)
V education	0.0003 (0.006)
C disabled * V education	0.001 (0.010)
V employment (reference = employed)	

V not employed	-0.014 (0.019)
V student	-0.047 (0.036)
V unemployed	-0.035 (0.030)
C disabled * V not employed	0.033 (0.033)
C disabled * V student	0.077 (0.059)
C disabled * V unemployed	0.068 (0.053)
V disabled	-0.019 (0.015)
C disabled * V disabled	0.033 (0.026)
C age	-0.002** (0.001)
C female	0.014 (0.011)
C minority	-0.008 (0.012)
<i>C profession (ref=doctor)</i>	
Factory worker	-0.075*** (0.018)
Lawyer	-0.107*** (0.018)
Small business owner	-0.037* (0.018)
Teacher	-0.041* (0.018)
C experience	0.003* (0.001)
C children	0.040*** (0.005)
C office	0.087*** (0.011)
Constant	0.446*** (0.049)
Candidate FEs	✓
Country FEs	✓
N	7,828
R-squared	0.030

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. The sample includes only the no-party experiments.

#### 4. Mediation analysis: effect of candidate disability on voter support, mediated by perceived candidate ideology (party affiliation not known)

To test whether voter perceptions of candidate ideology explain (parts of) the effect of candidate disability on voter support, I conduct a mediation analysis using the framework by Imai et al. (2010) and the mediation package in R (Tingley et al. 2014). The mediation analysis involves estimating the mediator model, which regresses the mediator (perceived candidate ideology) on the treatment (candidate disability); estimating the outcome model, which regresses the outcome (voter support) on the mediator and the treatment (Table S5); and, finally, estimating the Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME), the Average Direct Effect (ADE), and the Total Effect of the treatment on the outcome (Table S6). I conduct the analysis separately for voters on the left (0.0-0.4 on the left-right scale) and on the right (0.6-1.0). The mediation analysis results reported in the paper are based on OLS models, but I also estimate the outcome models using a logit link function and replicate the mediation analysis based on these models. The results do not substantially differ (Table S6).

**Table S5.** Mediator and outcome models of effect of candidate disability on voter support, mediated by perceived candidate ideology (pooled sample of US and UK)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Left-wing voters			Right-wing voters		
	Mediator model (DV: Perceived candidate ideology)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)	Mediator model (DV: Perceived candidate ideology)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)
	OLS	OLS	Logit	OLS	OLS	Logit
C ideology		-0.636*** (0.043)	-2.967*** (0.221)		0.543*** (0.030)	2.414*** (0.145)
C disabled	-0.065*** (0.011)	0.044* (0.021)	0.206* (0.100)	-0.028** (0.009)	-0.017 (0.016)	-0.075 (0.072)
C age	0.0002 (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.016** (0.006)	0.0003 (0.0005)	-0.0004 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.004)
C female	-0.016 (0.011)	0.043* (0.021)	0.209* (0.098)	-0.016 (0.009)	-0.015 (0.016)	-0.066 (0.071)
C minority	-0.052*** (0.012)	0.067** (0.022)	0.318** (0.107)	-0.038*** (0.010)	-0.052** (0.017)	-0.231** (0.078)
<i>C profession</i> (ref=doctor)						
Factory worker	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.060 (0.033)	-0.277 (0.154)	-0.047*** (0.014)	-0.072** (0.025)	-0.324** (0.113)
Lawyer	0.102*** (0.017)	-0.134*** (0.033)	-0.628*** (0.156)	0.015 (0.014)	-0.080** (0.025)	-0.365** (0.111)
Small business owner	0.037* (0.017)	-0.017 (0.022)	-0.061 (0.107)	-0.004 (0.010)	-0.036 (0.017)	-0.164 (0.078)

	(0.017)	(0.032)	(0.153)	(0.014)	(0.025)	(0.111)
Teacher	-0.026	0.042	0.208	-0.037**	-0.098***	-0.439***
	(0.017)	(0.033)	(0.156)	(0.014)	(0.025)	(0.113)
C experience	-0.002	0.002	0.009	0.001	0.002	0.007
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.012)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.009)
C children	-0.013**	0.035***	0.166***	0.009*	0.028***	0.125***
	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.044)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.032)
C office	-0.003	0.070***	0.340***	0.020*	0.095***	0.424***
	(0.011)	(0.021)	(0.098)	(0.009)	(0.016)	(0.071)
Constant	0.503***	0.854***	1.603***	0.583***	0.208***	-1.295***
	(0.039)	(0.077)	(0.369)	(0.031)	(0.060)	(0.269)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	2,018	2,018	2,018	3,613	3,613	3,613
R-squared	0.079	0.165		0.033	0.112	
AIC			2,472			4,618

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. The sample includes only the no-party experiments.

**Table S6.** Mediation analysis with candidate disability as treatment, perceived candidate ideology as mediator, and voter support as outcome

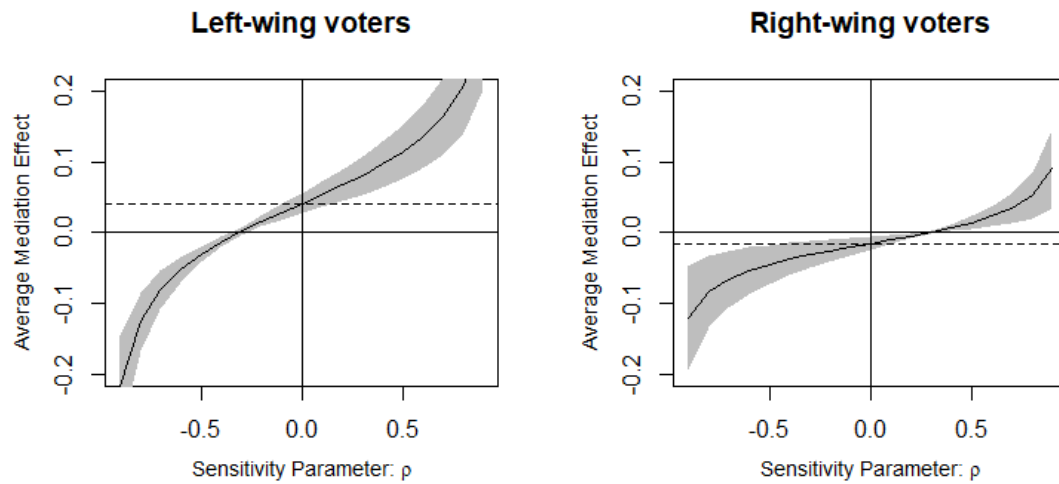
	Left-wing voters		Right-wing voters	
	Linear	Logit	Linear	Logit
Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME)	0.042 [0.027, 0.06]***	0.040 [0.026, 0.06]***	-0.015 [-0.025, -0.01]**	-0.015 [-0.024, -0.01]**
Average Direct Effect (ADE)	0.043 [0.003, 0.08]*	0.043 [0.003, 0.08]*	-0.017 [-0.048, 0.01]	-0.016 [-0.048, 0.02]
Total Effect	0.085 [0.043, 0.13]***	0.084 [0.042, 0.13]***	-0.032 [-0.065, 0.00]†	-0.031 [-0.064, 0.00]†
Proportion mediated	0.488 [0.299, 0.93]***	0.483 [0.292, 0.93]***	0.456 [-0.347, 2.89]†	0.462 [-0.793, 2.84]†

† $p < 0.1$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Notes: Estimates with Quasi-Bayesian Confidence Intervals from 10,000 simulations, with robust standard errors. For the analysis with the binary logit outcome model, the average effects are reported. The sample includes only the no-party experiments.

A key assumption of mediation analysis is sequential ignorability, meaning there are no unobserved pre-treatment confounders which affect both the mediator and the outcome. This assumption cannot be tested with the observed data, but sensitivity analysis allows evaluating the robustness of the results to potential violation of this assumption (Imai and Yamamoto 2013; Tingley et al. 2014). The sensitivity parameter  $\rho$  is the correlation between the residuals of the mediator and the outcome regression. “If there exist unobserved pre-treatment confounders which affect both the mediator and the outcome, we expect that the sequential ignorability assumption is violated and  $\rho$  is no longer zero. The sensitivity analysis is conducted by varying the value of  $\rho$  and examining how the estimated ACME changes” (Tingley et al. 2014: 14). Figure S3 shows that among left-wing voters (for the linear model)

the ACME equals zero if  $\rho$  equals -0.3 and among right-wing voters 0.3, which indicates that it is moderately robust to the possible unobserved pre-treatment mediator–outcome confounding, though slightly less compared to some previous studies (cf. Imai and Yamamoto 2013; Imai et al. 2011).



**Figure S3.** Sensitivity analysis for sequential ignorability assumption

Notes: Based on mediation models using linear probability models as outcome models, Table S7.

### Analysis by country

Tables S7 and S8 show the models from Table S5 separately for the US and the UK, respectively. Table S9 shows the results of the mediation analyses from Table S6 for each of the countries. The results do not differ substantially, but due to lower sample sizes there are issues with statistical power in the mediation analysis.

**Table S7.** Mediator and outcome models of effect of candidate disability on voter support, mediated by perceived candidate ideology, only US

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Left-wing voters		Right-wing voters	
	Mediator model (DV: Perceived candidate ideology)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)	Mediator model (DV: Perceived candidate ideology)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)
C ideology		-0.548*** (0.056)		0.524*** (0.037)
C disabled	-0.070*** (0.018)	0.002 (0.021)	-0.035** (0.012)	-0.032 (0.021)
Constant	0.563*** (0.064)	0.732*** (0.113)	0.632*** (0.044)	0.261*** (0.078)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other candidate	✓	✓	✓	✓

characteristics				
N	945	945	2,088	2,088
R-squared	0.058	0.156	0.016	0.119

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Estimates from OLS regressions. The sample includes only the no-party experiments. All candidate characteristics are included as covariates as in Table S5 but estimates not reported.

**Table S8.** Mediator and outcome models of effect of candidate disability on voter support, mediated by perceived candidate ideology, only UK

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	Left-wing voters				Right-wing voters			
	Mediator model (DV: Perceived candidate ideology)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)	Mediator model (DV: Perceived candidate ideology)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)	Mediator model (DV: Perceived candidate ideology)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)	Mediator model (DV: Perceived candidate ideology)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)
C ideology		-0.765*** (0.068)				0.569*** (0.053)		
C disabled	-0.066*** (0.013)	0.079** (0.028)	-0.021 (0.012)	0.0001 (0.025)				
Constant	0.468*** (0.046)	0.987*** (0.106)	0.610*** (0.043)	0.090 (0.093)				
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Other candidate characteristics	✓	✓	✓	✓				
N	1,073	1,073	1,525	1,525				
R-squared	0.135	0.187	0.055	0.119				

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Estimates from OLS regressions. The sample includes only the no-party experiments. All candidate characteristics are included as covariates as in Table S5 but estimates not reported.

**Table S9.** Mediation analysis with candidate disability as treatment, perceived candidate ideology as mediator, and voter support as outcome, US and UK separately

	US		UK	
	Left-wing voters	Right-wing voters	Left-wing voters	Right-wing voters
Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME)	0.038 [0.018, 0.06]***	-0.018 [-0.032, 0.00]**	0.050 [0.030, 0.07]***	-0.012 [-0.026, 0.00]†
Average Direct Effect (ADE)	0.002 [-0.059, 0.06]	-0.032 [-0.073, 0.01]	0.078 [0.023, 0.14]**	0.000 [-0.049, 0.05]
Total Effect	0.040 [-0.023, 0.10]	-0.050 [-0.093, -0.01]*	0.128 [0.070, 0.19]***	-0.012 [-0.062, 0.04]
Proportion mediated	0.785 [-6.945, 9.10]	0.357 [0.080, 1.46]*	0.390 [0.227, 0.71]***	0.325 [-6.181, 6.91]

† $p < 0.1$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Notes: Estimates from linear regressions with Quasi-Bayesian Confidence Intervals from 10,000 simulations, with robust standard errors. The sample includes only the no-party experiments.

## 5. Effects of information about candidates' party affiliation on perceived ideology and voter support (Figures 2 and 3)

**Table S10.** Effects of candidate disability on perceived candidate ideology, interacted with party affiliation treatment (Models 2 and 3 shown in Figure 2)

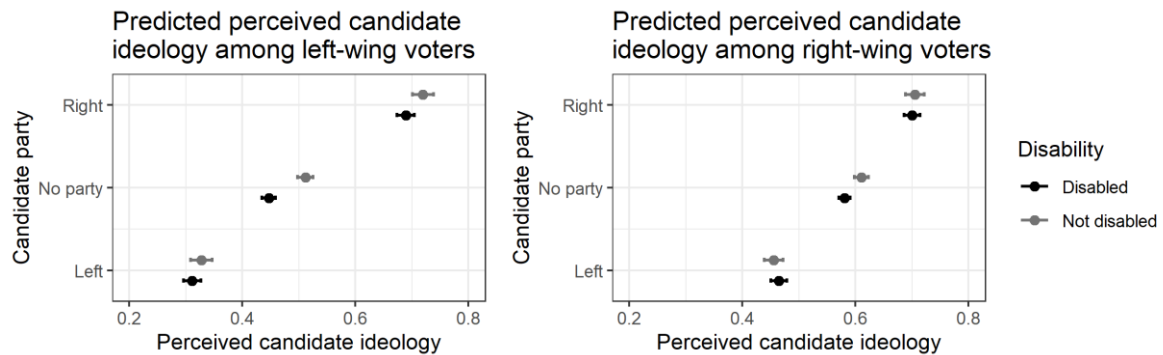
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	All voters	Left-wing voters	Right-wing voters
C disabled	-0.032*** (0.005)	-0.065*** (0.010)	-0.030*** (0.008)
<i>C party (ref = not mentioned)</i>			
C left party	-0.136*** (0.007)	-0.184*** (0.011)	-0.155*** (0.011)
C right party	0.119*** (0.006)	0.208*** (0.012)	0.095*** (0.009)
C disabled * C left party	0.030** (0.009)	0.048** (0.016)	0.039* (0.015)
C disabled * C right party	0.016 (0.008)	0.034* (0.015)	0.025 (0.013)
C age	0.0004* (0.0002)	0.001 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)
C female	-0.008* (0.004)	-0.007 (0.006)	-0.013* (0.006)
C minority	-0.021*** (0.004)	-0.031*** (0.007)	-0.020** (0.006)
<i>C profession (ref=doctor)</i>			
Factory worker	-0.018** (0.006)	-0.001 (0.011)	-0.034*** (0.009)
Lawyer	0.027*** (0.006)	0.067*** (0.010)	0.005 (0.009)
Small business owner	0.008 (0.006)	0.024* (0.010)	0.004 (0.009)
Teacher	-0.018** (0.006)	-0.003 (0.010)	-0.029** (0.009)
C experience	0.0001 (0.0004)	-0.00004 (0.001)	0.0004 (0.001)
C children	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.008** (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)
C office	0.007* (0.004)	0.004 (0.006)	0.008 (0.006)
Constant	0.524*** (0.013)	0.462*** (0.022)	0.572*** (0.021)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓



N	20,369	5,433	8,960
R-squared	0.125	0.291	0.112

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Estimates from OLS regression. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. The sample includes no-party and party experiments.



**Figure S4.** Predicted values of perceived candidate ideology, by candidate party and voter ideology

Notes: Based on Models 2 (left) and 3 (right) in Table S10. Predictions are averaged over the proportions of the categories of nominal covariates in the data.

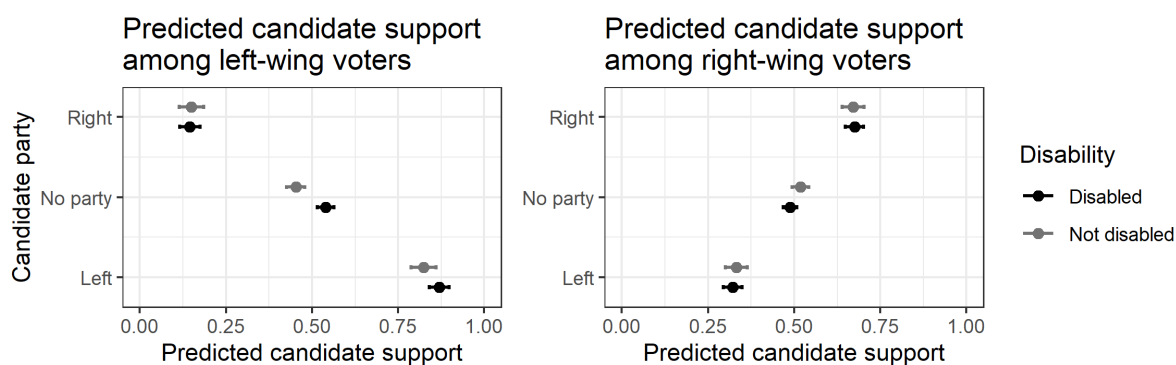
**Table S11.** Effects of candidate disability on voter support, interacted with party affiliation treatment (Models 1 and 3 shown in Figure 2)

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	Left-wing voters				Right-wing voters			
	OLS	Logit	OLS	Logit	OLS	Logit	OLS	Logit
C disabled	0.087*** (0.021)	0.370*** (0.088)	-0.031 (0.016)	-0.124 (0.066)				
<i>C party (ref = not mentioned)</i>								
C left party	0.371*** (0.021)	1.793*** (0.135)	-0.186*** (0.018)	-0.783*** (0.088)				
C right party	-0.303*** (0.019)	-1.601*** (0.140)	0.153*** (0.018)	0.652*** (0.088)				
C disabled * C left party	-0.042 (0.029)	-0.013 (0.181)	0.020 (0.026)	0.078 (0.115)				
C disabled * C right party	-0.092** (0.029)	-0.392* (0.182)	0.034 (0.026)	0.141 (0.116)				
C age	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.008* (0.004)	-0.0004 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.003)				
C female	0.029* (0.012)	0.162* (0.069)	-0.009 (0.011)	-0.040 (0.046)				

C minority	0.055*** (0.013)	0.312*** (0.075)	-0.033** (0.012)	-0.141** (0.051)
<i>C profession (ref=doctor)</i>				
Factory worker	-0.048* (0.020)	-0.278* (0.109)	-0.076*** (0.017)	-0.331*** (0.074)
Lawyer	-0.110*** (0.019)	-0.611*** (0.108)	-0.058** (0.018)	-0.251** (0.073)
Small business owner	-0.035 (0.018)	-0.193 (0.107)	-0.027 (0.017)	-0.117 (0.073)
Teacher	0.019 (0.020)	0.114 (0.108)	-0.056** (0.017)	-0.242** (0.074)
C experience	0.002 (0.001)	0.011 (0.008)	0.003* (0.001)	0.014* (0.006)
C children	0.029*** (0.005)	0.166*** (0.031)	0.023*** (0.005)	0.099*** (0.021)
C office	0.048*** (0.012)	0.270*** (0.069)	0.065*** (0.011)	0.283*** (0.046)
Constant	0.467*** (0.045)	-0.124 (0.253)	0.522*** (0.040)	0.091 (0.172)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	4,850	4,850	8,074	8,074
R-squared	0.295		0.078	
AIC		5,153		10,585

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Standard errors are clustered by respondent in OLS models; Cluster Bootstrap p-values in logit models. The sample includes no-party and party experiments.



**Figure S5.** Predicted values of candidate support, by candidate party and voter ideology

Notes: Based on Models 1 (left) and 3 (right) in Table S11. Predictions are averaged over the proportions of the categories of nominal covariates in the data.

## Analysis by country

Table S12 shows the models from Table S10 separately for the US and the UK; Table S13 shows the models from Table S11 for the US and the UK. Figure S6 replicates Figure 2 separately for each country.

**Table S12.** Effects of candidate disability on perceived candidate ideology, interacted with party affiliation treatment, US and UK separately

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	US	US	UK	UK
	Left-wing voters	Right-wing voters	Left-wing voters	Right-wing voters
C disabled	-0.062*** (0.017)	-0.034** (0.012)	-0.069*** (0.011)	-0.025* (0.011)
<i>C party (ref = not mentioned)</i>				
C left party	-0.192*** (0.019)	-0.149*** (0.015)	-0.179*** (0.013)	-0.163*** (0.014)
C right party	0.229*** (0.019)	0.086*** (0.013)	0.190*** (0.014)	0.106*** (0.012)
C disabled * C left party	0.041 (0.027)	0.030 (0.022)	0.058*** (0.018)	0.050* (0.020)
C disabled * C right party	0.012 (0.025)	0.030 (0.018)	0.055** (0.019)	0.018 (0.017)
Constant	0.478*** (0.037)	0.626*** (0.028)	0.456*** (0.026)	0.575*** (0.028)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other candidate characteristics	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	2,476	5,126	2,957	3,834
R-squared	0.264	0.087	0.337	0.145

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Estimates from OLS regression. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. The sample includes no-party and party experiments. Other candidate characteristics included but not reported.

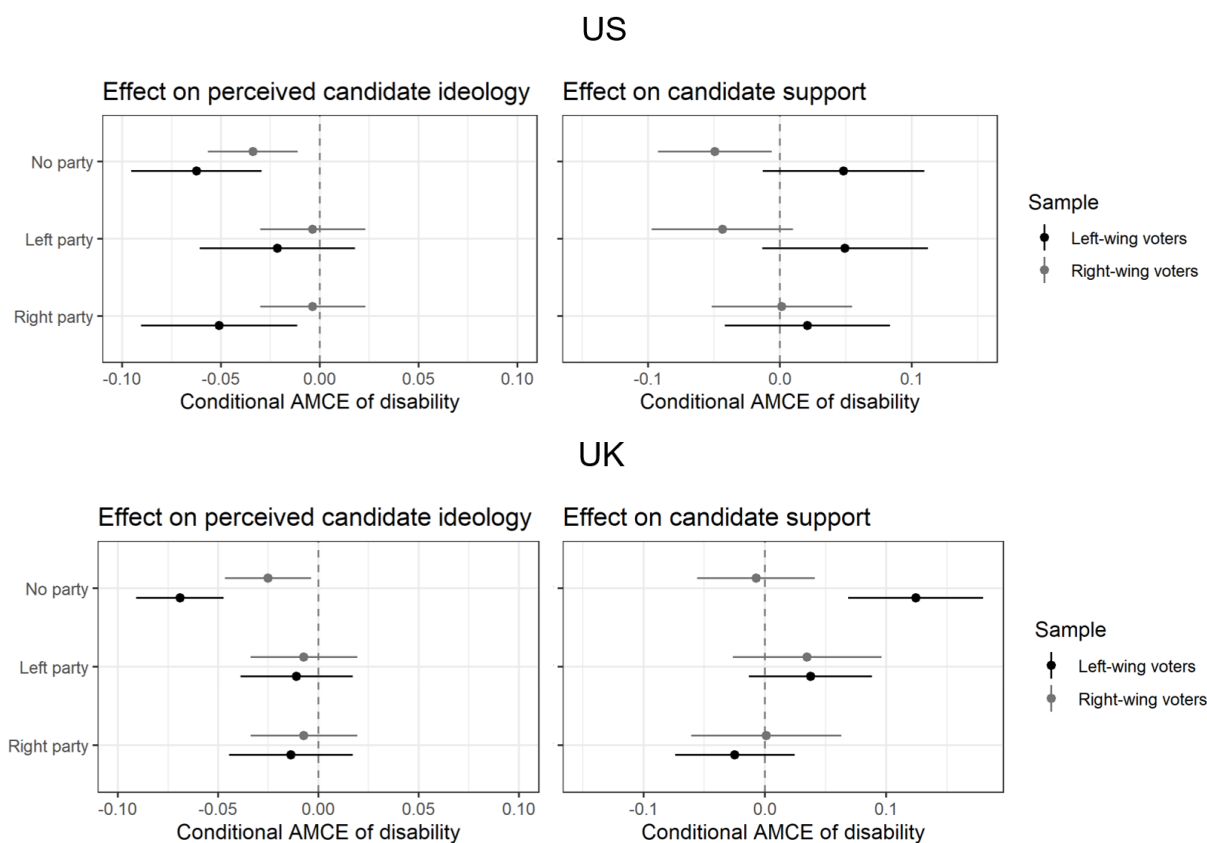
**Table S13.** Effects of candidate disability on voter support, interacted with party affiliation treatment, US and UK separately

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	US	US	UK	UK
	Left-wing voters	Right-wing voters	Left-wing voters	Right-wing voters
C disabled	0.048 (0.031)	-0.049* (0.022)	0.124*** (0.028)	-0.007 (0.025)
<i>C party (ref = not mentioned)</i>				
C left party	0.313*** (0.032)	-0.162*** (0.025)	0.422*** (0.027)	-0.221*** (0.027)

C right party	-0.302*** (0.031)	0.127*** (0.024)	-0.304*** (0.023)	0.192*** (0.027)
C disabled * C left party	0.001 (0.043)	0.006 (0.035)	-0.087* (0.039)	0.042 (0.039)
C disabled * C right party	-0.027 (0.046)	0.051 (0.035)	-0.149*** (0.036)	0.009 (0.039)
Constant	0.422*** (0.068)	0.574*** (0.052)	0.490*** (0.059)	0.448*** (0.062)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other candidate characteristics	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	2,260	4,706	2,590	3,368
R-squared	0.245	0.071	0.351	0.101

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Estimates from OLS regression. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. The sample includes no-party and party experiments. Other candidate characteristics included but not reported.



**Figure S6.** Effect of candidate disability on voter support among left-wing and right-wing voters, moderated by candidates' party affiliation, for US and UK

Notes: Estimates from Tables S12 and S13.

## Analysis by disability type

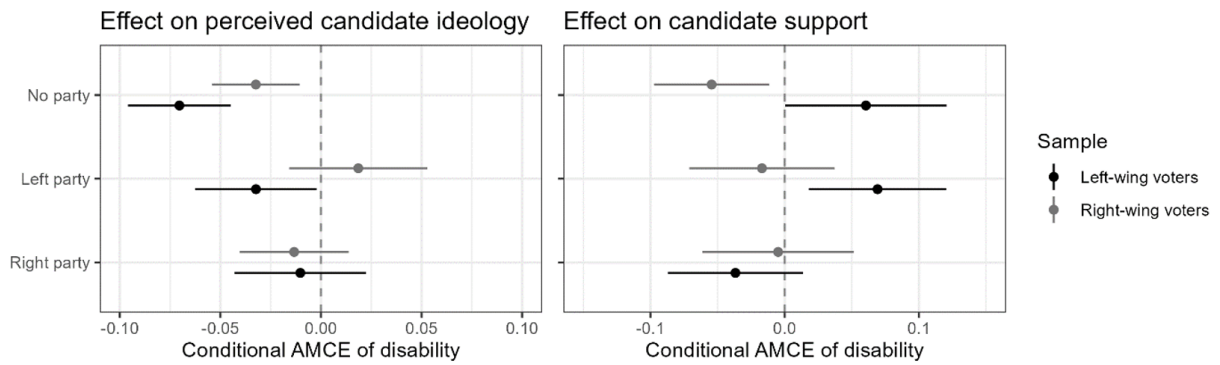
**Table S14.** Effects of three candidate disability types on perceived candidate ideology and voter support, interacted with party affiliation treatment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	DV: perceived ideology		DV: voter support	
	Left-wing voters	Right-wing voters	Left-wing voters	Right-wing voters
<i>C disability (ref=non-disabled)</i>				
Blind	-0.070*** (0.013)	-0.032** (0.011)	0.061* (0.031)	-0.054* (0.022)
Deaf	-0.070*** (0.013)	-0.031** (0.011)	0.098*** (0.028)	-0.035 (0.022)
Paraplegic	-0.055*** (0.013)	-0.025* (0.011)	0.099*** (0.028)	-0.002 (0.022)
<i>C party (ref = not mentioned)</i>				
C left party	-0.184*** (0.011)	-0.155*** (0.011)	0.371*** (0.021)	-0.186*** (0.018)
C right party	0.208*** (0.012)	0.095*** (0.009)	-0.303*** (0.019)	0.154*** (0.018)
C blind * C left party	0.038 (0.021)	0.051* (0.021)	0.009 (0.041)	0.037 (0.034)
C deaf * C left party	0.061** (0.020)	0.051* (0.021)	-0.068 (0.038)	0.010 (0.036)
C paraplegic * C left party	0.045* (0.021)	0.015 (0.020)	-0.060 (0.038)	0.014 (0.035)
C blind * C right party	0.060** (0.021)	0.019 (0.018)	-0.097* (0.039)	0.050 (0.035)
C deaf * C right party	0.016 (0.021)	0.029 (0.017)	-0.086* (0.040)	0.071* (0.035)
C paraplegic * C right party	0.027 (0.020)	0.025 (0.017)	-0.087* (0.040)	-0.020 (0.035)
Constant	0.463*** (0.022)	0.573*** (0.021)	0.467*** (0.045)	0.520*** (0.040)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other candidate characteristics	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	5,433	8,960	4,850	8,074
R-squared	0.292	0.112	0.296	0.079

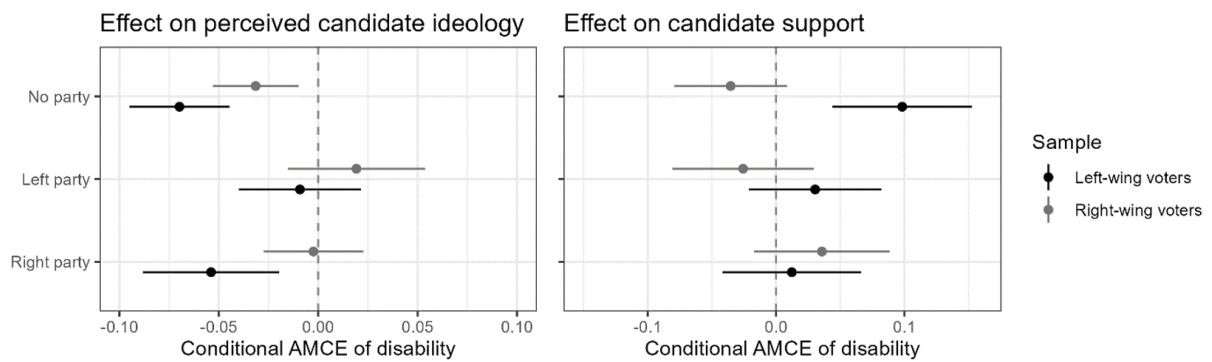
\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Estimates from OLS regression. Standard errors are clustered by respondent. The sample includes no-party and party experiments. Other candidate characteristics included but not reported.

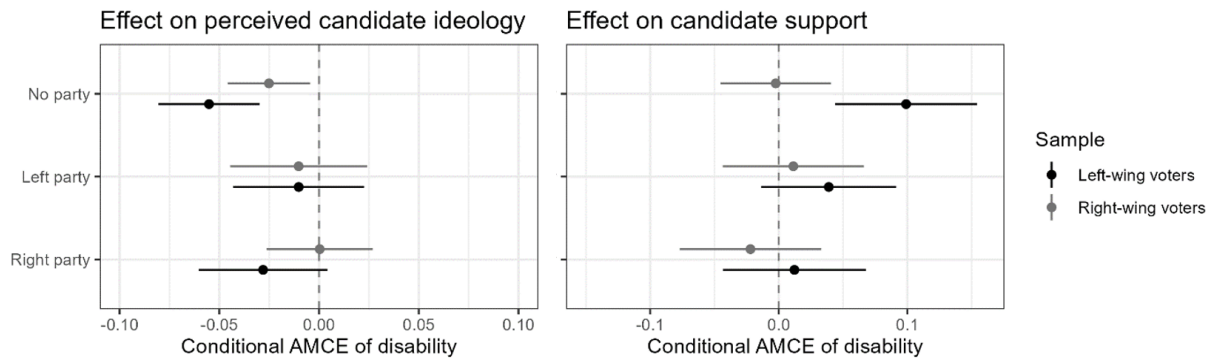
### Blind candidate



### Deaf candidate



### Paraplegic candidate



**Figure S7.** Effect of three candidate disability types on voter support among left-wing and right-wing voters, moderated by candidates' party affiliation

*Notes:* Estimates from Table S14.

Table S14 shows the models from Table S10 and S11 with the four-category disability variable, on the pooled sample from the US and UK. Figure S7 replicates Figure 2 for the three disability types. The results look very similar across the disability types and when compared to the results for disabled candidates in general, illustrated in Figure 2. We observe the following differences: (i) left-wing voters perceive blind, but not Deaf or paraplegic, left-party candidates as more left-wing than non-disabled candidates; (ii) left-wing voters

perceive Deaf and – though not statistically significantly – paraplegic (but not blind) candidates of right-wing parties as more left-wing; (iii) right-wing voters are less likely to vote for a blind and – though not statistically significantly – a Deaf (but not a paraplegic) candidate than a non-disabled candidate if they do not know the party, but these effects disappear once they know the party; (iv) the positive effect of left-party candidates' disability on the support of left-wing voters which Figure 2 shows is positive for all three disability types but only statistically significant for Deaf candidates. While these differences are interesting, the remarkable finding here is how similar the patterns are for the different disability types. This supports the decision to analyse them jointly in this study, although future research should take a closer look at public perceptions of and support for politicians with different disability types, including and beyond the ones studied here.

## 6. Mediation analysis: effect of candidate disability on left-wing voters' support of candidates of left-wing parties, mediated by candidates' perceived ability to represent under-represented groups

In this section I analyse whether left-wing voters perceive disabled candidates of left-wing parties to be better able to represent under-represented groups in society than non-disabled candidates of left-wing parties, and whether this explains the positive effect of candidate disability on voter support despite the lack of a disability effect on perceived ideology among these voters. Respondents' agreement to the statement "Candidate A [B] represents people who are under-represented in politics" is measured on a five-point scale from 0="strongly disagree" to 4="strongly agree".

Like in Sections 3 and 5 above, I conduct a mediation analysis using the framework by Imai et al. (2010) and the mediation package in R (Tingley et al. 2014). The mediation analysis involves estimating the mediator model, which regresses the mediator (perceived ability to represent) on the treatment (candidate disability); estimating the outcome model, which regresses the outcome (voter support) on the mediator and the treatment (Table S15); and, finally, estimating the Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME), the Average Direct Effect (ADE), and the Total Effect of the treatment on the outcome (Table S16). The aim is to find out whether, when accounting for any effects of candidate disability on voter perceptions of their ability to represent under-represented groups and the effect of the latter on voter support, candidate disability has a direct effect on voter support. I conduct the analysis only for voters on the left (0.0-0.4 on the left-right scale) and candidates of the Labour (UK) and Democratic (US) parties.

The mediation analysis results reported in the paper are based on OLS models, but I also estimate the outcome models using a logit link function and replicate the mediation analysis based on these models. The results do not substantially differ (Table S16). The sensitivity analysis shows that the ACME equals zero if the correlation between the errors of the mediator and outcome models  $\rho$  equals 0.2, which means that it is slightly less robust than the mediation analysis in Section 4 (Figure S8).

**Table S15.** Mediator and outcome models of effect of candidate disability on left-wing voters' support of left-party candidates, mediated by perceived candidate ideology (pooled sample of US and UK)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Mediator model (DV: Ability to represent)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)	Outcome model (DV: voter support)
	OLS	OLS	Logit
C ability to represent		0.078*** (0.011)	0.562*** (0.082)
C disabled	0.497*** (0.053)	0.007 (0.021)	0.067 (0.173)
C age	0.002 (0.003)	-0.0002 (0.001)	-0.003 (0.009)



C female	0.049 (0.051)	0.011 (0.019)	0.101 (0.165)
C minority	0.128* (0.058)	0.006 (0.022)	0.067 (0.188)
<i>C profession (ref=doctor)</i>			
Factory worker	0.164* (0.080)	-0.057 (0.030)	-0.486 (0.260)
Lawyer	-0.164* (0.081)	-0.059 (0.031)	-0.470 (0.258)
Small business owner	0.038 (0.078)	-0.015 (0.029)	-0.145 (0.265)
Teacher	0.112 (0.079)	-0.009 (0.030)	-0.075 (0.272)
C experience	0.001 (0.006)	0.001 (0.002)	0.008 (0.020)
C children	0.018 (0.023)	0.021* (0.009)	0.177* (0.074)
C office	-0.029 (0.051)	0.038* (0.019)	0.337* (0.165)
Constant	2.521*** (0.183)	0.609*** (0.074)	0.169 (0.611)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓
N	1,281	1,281	1,281
R-squared	0.021	0.163	
AIC			1,018

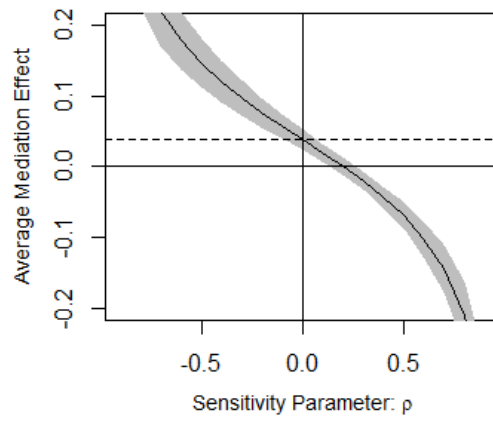
\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. The sample includes only right-party candidates.

**Table S16.** Mediation analysis with candidate disability as treatment, perceived candidate ideology as mediator, and voter support as outcome

	Linear	Logit
Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME)	0.038 [0.025, 0.05]***	0.034 [0.022, 0.05]***
Average Direct Effect (ADE)	0.007 [-0.033, 0.05]	0.008 [-0.034, 0.05]
Total Effect	0.046 [0.004, 0.09]*	0.042 [0.000, 0.08]*
Proportion mediated	0.830 [0.356, 4.05]*	0.784 [0.217, 4.68]*

† $p < 0.1$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Notes: Estimates with Quasi-Bayesian Confidence Intervals from 10,000 simulations, with robust standard errors. For the analysis with the binary logit outcome model, the average effects are reported. The sample includes only left-wing voters and left-party candidates.



**Figure S8.** Sensitivity analysis for sequential ignorability assumption

Notes: Based on mediation models using linear probability model as outcome model, Table S15.

## 7. Effects of candidate disability on voter support across all voters in experiment with party information

**Table S17.** Effects of candidate disability on voter support in experiment with party information

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	UK + US	US	UK	UK + US
	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS
<i>C disability (ref=non-disabled)</i>				
Disabled	0.020*	0.006	0.034*	
	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.014)	
Blind				0.005
				(0.014)
Deaf				0.024
				(0.014)
Paraplegic				0.031*
				(0.014)
C age	-0.001	-0.0001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
C female	0.006	0.005	0.008	0.006
	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.010)
C minority	0.010	0.035*	-0.016	0.010
	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.011)
<i>C profession (ref=doctor)</i>				
Factory worker	-0.052**	-0.058**	-0.042	-0.052**
	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.016)
Lawyer	-0.067***	-0.053*	-0.079***	-0.067***
	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.016)
Small business owner	-0.025	-0.015	-0.035	-0.025
	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.016)
Teacher	-0.017	-0.040	0.008	-0.017
	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.016)
C experience	0.003**	0.002	0.005**	0.003**
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
C children	0.022***	0.020**	0.025***	0.022***
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)
C office	0.035***	0.044**	0.027	0.035***
	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.010)
Constant	0.413***	0.493***	0.412***	0.412***
	(0.038)	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.038)
Candidate FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Party FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	9,912	5,020	4,892	9,912

R-squared	0.017	0.010	0.028	0.017
-----------	-------	-------	-------	-------

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Notes: C=candidate, V=voter. Standard errors are clustered by respondent in OLS models; Cluster Bootstrap p-values in logit model. The sample includes only the party experiments.

The models in Table S17 estimate the average effects of candidate disability across all voters when party information is provided. This provides an insight into the overall difference being disabled makes to a candidate's electoral support. The analyses reveal that candidate disability does not affect the vote in the US, whereas disabled candidates receive 3.4 percentage points more than non-disabled candidates in the UK. The effect size in the UK is comparable to that of seven additional years of experience in politics or having one additional child. Here, disability plays a more important role than candidates' age, gender, or ethnicity, which do not affect voter support in the UK. By contrast, in the US ethnicity affects electoral support as strongly as disability affects it in the UK: US voters prefer a candidate whose name suggest a minority ethnic background.

However, since the previous analyses have shown that there is important variation between left-wing and right-wing voters and that candidates' party affiliation plays an important role, the estimates of the disability effect are likely to vary depending on the distribution of ideological positions across the electorate and candidates' party affiliation. Thus, while we can determine the general influence (or lack thereof) of disability on the vote choice of British and American voters, assessing its impact in specific contexts requires taking further information into account.

## References

- Imai, Kosuke, Luke Keele, and Dustin Tingley (2010). A General Approach to Causal Mediation Analysis. *Psychological Methods* 15(4): 309–334.
- Imai, Kosuke, and Teppei Yamamoto (2013). Identification and Sensitivity Analysis for Multiple Causal Mechanisms: Revisiting Evidence from Framing Experiments. *Political Analysis* 21: 141–171.
- Tingley, Dustin, Teppei Yamamoto, Kentaro Hirose, Luke Keele, and Kosuke Imai (2014). mediation: R Package for Causal Mediation Analysis. *Journal of Statistical Software* 59(5):1–38.