## Appendix A – Methodological approach to interviews

Of the 35 semi-structured interviews that were conducted, 31 participants were candidates who won the elections. The winning candidates were selected and interviewed at Parliament House in Kampala in April 2022 by one of the co-authors and research assistants. Eleven declined to be interviewed, and three gave appointments but then canceled. Interviewees were selected with the aim to include members of parliament who were directly elected during the campaign[[1]](#footnote-2), and to maintain as much balance as possible between the parties represented in parliament. The interviews were conducted at break time, lunch time and after sessions in the parliament’s canteen. The aim and general topic of the interview was made clear to participants, and informed consent was obtained verbally before conducting interviews. All the MPs spoke and understood English, which was therefore used to conduct interviews. These lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. These interviews were recorded with participants’ permissions and later transcribed.

As these respondents are all winners of the campaign, the co-authors also interviewed 3 candidates who ran for elections, but were not elected, and one candidate who lost during primaries. Identifying losing candidates who were willing to be interviewed was more difficult. Those who were interviewed were purposefully sampled as they ran for city constituencies, or for their primaries. They include three pro-regime candidates and an opposition-leaning independent candidate. These interviews were conducted in English either over the phone, or at the interviewees’ office in Kampala, in late April and early May 2022, and lasted for about an hour. Detailed notes of the interviews were taken.

The same interview guide was used to interview winning and losing candidates – it is provided in appendix B. The authors analyzed all the interview notes with an eye to recurring themes in an iterative process, to identify patterns in candidates’ experiences of social media during the campaign to the 2021 election.

Table A.1 Interviewed candidates per party and type of constituency

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Interviewed | Urban | Rural |
| NRM | 24 | 5 | 19 |
| NUP | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| FDC | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Independent | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 35 | 12 | 23 |

Table A.1 summarizes the number of candidates interviewed by party and type of constituency (urban or rural). Out of 35 interviewees, 13 from urban constituencies, meaning located in one of Uganda’s 8 cities, or in a densely populated municipality, while 22 were from rural constituencies. 24 interviewees ran for the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the party of President Museveni, 5 ran for the National Unity Platform (NUP), founded and led by Ssentamu Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine, the main opposition candidate in the presidential elections. 5 interviewees ran as independent candidates, and 1 ran for FDC, the leading opposition party since the resumption of the multiparty politics in 2005. Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity, and thus cannot thus be described in much detail to limit the risk of reidentification.

While our sample of candidates cannot be said to be representative of all candidates who ran in the 2021 parliamentary elections, our sample includes a breadth of experiences across parties and urban/rural constituencies. Although we tried to interview losing candidates having run for opposition parties, we were only able to interview an opposition-leaning independent candidates (who did not run for an opposition party, as another candidate was selected to represent his party), and three losing pro-regime candidate. This is a clear limitation of our research: losing candidates are very much underrepresented.

Turning to winning candidates, Table A.2 shows that independents and members from the FDC and from other, smaller opposition parties are underrepresented, while members of the two main parties are overrepresented. It is also difficult to be sure that those who declined being interviewed or cancelled appointments do not share characteristics that would bias our findings.

Table A.2 Winning candidates interviewed and directly elected MPs per party

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Winning candidates Interviewed | | Directly elected MPs | |
|  | n | % | n | % |
| NRM | 21 | 67,7 | 319 | 63,9 |
| NUP | 5 | 16,1 | 57 | 11,4 |
| FDC | 1 | 3,2 | 32 | 6,4 |
| Independent | 4 | 12,9 | 71 | 14,2 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 20 | 4 |
| Total | 31 | 100 | 499 | 100 |

However, as many winning candidates reported similar experiences during interviews, we do believe that we have achieved data saturation, in the sense that additional interviews with winning candidates would be unlikely to bring in drastically different insights (Bleich and Pekkanen 2015). Comparing our interviews with winning opposition candidates with our interview with the losing, opposition-leaning candidate also shows similar experiences, which reduces our uncertainty. Additionally, social media data was collected for more losing opposition candidates, which enable us to complement findings from our interviews, including by ensuring the patterns identified during interviews are reflected in the collected social media data.

**References**

Bleich, E. & Pekkanen, R., 2015, ‘Data access, research transparency, and interviews; the interview methods appendix’, *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research*, 13(1), 8–13.

## Appendix B. – Interview guide

### On the campaign in general

* how did the campaign go, in your opinion?
* how was your campaign affected by the covid-19 pandemic?
* did you organize rallies or meetings with voters?
* President Museveni encouraged candidates to rely more on the media. How did you rely on the media?
* how do you feel about using the media to campaign?
* would you say that using media and social media in your campaign was more expensive than rallies?
* how did the party (if relevant) support your campaign?

### Types of social media

* do you normally use social media – outside of politics?
* did you use social media to conduct your campaign?
* which apps or social media did you use?
  + did you use your personal account?
  + did you set up dedicated accounts?
  + did you set up a Facebook page?
  + could I get the link to your Twitter / Facebook page / other account?

### Practices on social media

* how did you use social media during the campaign?
* did you post yourself; did someone help you posting?
* how did you choose what to post?
* Do you feel you could share what you needed to share on social media?
* how did you react when social media were blocked ahead of the elections?
* what was the social media app you used the most? why?

OR

* why didn’t you use social media?
* do you feel that you should have used social media to campaign?
* how did you feel about the social media shut down?

### To conclude,

* do you think of being a candidate for the next parliamentary elections?
* would you campaign differently, next time?
* is there anything you feel is important, but we have not discussed so far?

## Appendix C – Collection strategy for social media data

Taking the list of our 35 interviewees as a starting point, we identified the names and affiliation of each interviewee’s two main opponents, based on number of votes. Our dataset thus covers 91 candidates in 33 constituencies. In two cases, we interviewed both the winner and one of their main opponents, while in three cases, there was a single candidate in the constituency, and in one case, the interviewee only ran for primaries.

Based on this list, we identified the Facebook Page and Twitter account used by the candidates for the electoral campaign using a search engine. We did not collect data for Facebook Pages or Twitter accounts that did not clearly mention the electoral campaign. Indeed, we consider that candidates expect publicity if their Twitter profile or Facebook Page description mentions they are a (former) candidate to or elected member of Parliament. We did not collect data for personal Facebook Profiles. Facebook Pages are a public page, as opposed to Facebook profiles. Users can like and follow Facebook Pages, but cannot become friends with a Page, nor can they post directly on a page.

We found Facebook Pages for 21 of our interviewees, and Twitter accounts for 9 of them. Looking into the Facebook Pages and Twitter profiles used for the campaign by the candidates’ top two opponents, we found 21 more Facebook Pages and 8 more Twitter Profiles. In total, out of the 91 candidates in our datasets, 42 had a Facebook Page during the campaign, while 17 had a Twitter profile during the same period.

We then tried to collect the posts and associated metadata published by the Facebook Pages during the period 16 June 2020 – 18 January 2021 using CrowdTangle (CrowdTangle Team, 2022). Metadata include the date and time of publication of a post, and the number of likes and comments each post received. We were only able to collect posts and associated metadata for 16 pages. Data for 26 more pages was missing due to technical problems at CrowdTangle. We thus collected the metadata from these missing pages manually, visiting each Facebook Page and collecting for each post the date at which it was posted, and the number of “likes” and “comments” it generated. Due to this imbalance in the data we were able to collect, we only analyse the metadata attached to all collected posts. The number of Facebook Pages and posts for which metadata was analysed is summarised in Table C.2.

Table C.1 Facebook pages and posts per party

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Candidates (interviewees  + competitors) | With Facebook page | Number of Facebook posts |
| NRM | 31 | 18 | 431 |
| NUP | 12 | 10 | 727 |
| FDC | 8 | 3 | 45 |
| Other opposition | 3 | 1 | 26 |
| Independent | 37 | 10 | 121 |
| Total | 91 | 42 | 1350 |

Posts published on Twitter during the same period were collected by querying Twitter’s Academic API with the R Package “academictwitteR” (Barrie & Ho, 2021). As discussed in the main analysis, because a single candidates in our sample posted more than half of the tweets collected, we refrain from using Twitter data further.

Data was collected in May 2022, leading to some limitations. In particular, it is possible that some candidates have deleted some or all of their posts related to the campaign, or the social media profiles created for the campaign (Bachl, 2018). And indeed, one interviewee – who was not elected – mentioned having set up a new Twitter account after the elections (interviewee N4), while another interviewee reporting closing their personal Facebook profile early in the campaign and opening a new Facebook Page (winning urban independent MP30).

The authors then analyzed the interview notes with an eye to recurring themes in an iterative process, to identify patterns in candidates’ experiences of social media during the campaign to the 2021 election.

**References**

Bachl, M. (2018). *An Evaluation of Retrospective Facebook Content Collection*. OSF Preprints. https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/6txge

Barrie, C., & Ho, J. (2021). academictwitteR: An R package to access the Twitter Academic Research Product Track v2 API endpoint. *Journal of Open Source Software*, *6*, 3272. https://doi.org/10.21105/joss.03272

CrowdTangle Team. (2022). *CrowdTangle List ID: 1674597*. Facebook, Menlo Park, California, United States.

1. In the Ugandan Parliament, there are 353 seats that are not submitted to quotas, in addition to 146 seats that are reserved for women. These 499 seats are filled through direct elections. Other reserved seats are indirectly elected, including 5 seats are reserved for youth representatives, 5 for representatives of persons with disabilities, 5 for workers’ representatives, 5 for older persons’ representatives, and 10 for representatives of the army. These are not directly elected by all citizens, and were therefore not considered for interviews. Ministers are also members of Parliament, and were not included in our list of potential interviewees. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)