Voting for Law and Order: Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Mexico *

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Abstract

In this article, we examine the demand-and-supply dynamic of security policies. We argue there are two informational shortcuts through which voters process policy alternatives and choose among them: (1) their own personal experiences with violence and (2) candidates' profiles. We test our argument through an original survey experiment conducted in Mexico. We model voters' decisions to support candidates campaigning over a variety of security proposals. Our survey design takes advantage of recent developments in network models to better measure the effects of crime exposure on voters' preferences. We find that higher exposure to crime victimization is associated with an increased support for only some iron-fist policies, therefore highlighting the importance of unpacking security policies instead of generalizing the results of crime exposure. We show null effects of partisan advantages and reveal the role of non-partisan heuristics, such as the candidate's professional experience, in preferences for security policies.

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1 Introduction

As violence and insecurity expand in Latin America, citizens across the region have demanded new and effective approaches to control crime (Holland, 2013a; Krause, 2014a; Visconti, 2019). In particular, there seems to be a growing taste for iron-fist policies, which range from the constriction of due process to the militarization of the police (Holland, 2013a; Krause, 2014a; Visconti, 2019; Flores-Macías and Zarkin, 2019). About eight out of ten Latin Americans support harsher punishment of criminals to reduce crime (Price et al., 2019), and the approval rates for the intervention of the armed forces to combat crime sit above 60% for all countries in the region (Pion-Berlin and Carreras, 2017).

Since, politicians often avoid blame for crime and tap into the public's concerns about security (Flom and Post, 2016), candidates and parties tend to offer punitive and criminal justice policies against crime. The way in which such proposals interact with voters' demand for punitive policies remains unknown, however. Are some security policies electorally more attractive for voters afflicted by violence? Do citizens value all *mano dura* policies[1] in a similar way? Do certain profiles of parties and candidates gain more support when associated with more punitive policies?

In this paper we examine the logic of voters' strategic choices on security policies within the context of violent democracies. Our theory and empirical model emphasize two interactive dimensions for security policies. On the *demand* side, we consider what makes some security policies more attractive to voters, paying special attention to the behavioral effects of crime exposure and partisanship. On the *supply* side, we explore how candidates' backgrounds and

[1]Following Holland (2013a), we define *mano dura* as a "trio of criminal justice reforms that promote discretionary crimes, constrict due process rights, and involve the military in policing." Throughout the paper, we use *mano dura*, iron-fist, or punitive penal policies interchangeably.

party reputation affect the credibility of iron-fist policy proposals. Exploring both dimensions simultaneously allows us not only to delve into the role of victimization experiences on voters' electoral and policy preferences, but also to explore the process through which voters assess the profiles of candidates amid security concerns. Additionally, this bidimensional approximation to the voting decision allows us to contribute to our understanding of two pending research agendas and debates in Latin American politics. First, rising violence in the region has been found to have important effects on political attitudes and behavior, but the analysis of its impact on vote choice is still limited. Second, while comparative works examining the Latin American region have referred to the low levels of party identification (Lupu, 2015), recent research suggests that such measurements may result from survey methodology that systematically underestimates partisanship and that, on the contrary, partisan self-identification is still widespread and is a good predictor of political behavior (Castro Cornejo, 2019).

To evaluate our argument, we combine a candidate-choice conjoint experiment with a survey design that uses information from the respondents' friendship network. The conjoint component allows us to understand citizens' preferences for security policies under different candidate and party profiles. Additionally, we use the information from the respondent's friendship network to estimate exposure to crime victimization as a continuous and repeated process. This approach allows us to collect more reliable, fine-grained information about the exposure of survey respondents to criminal violence.

Our research design addresses two key measurement limitations in the existing literature about preferences for iron-fist policies. First, previous studies often rely on abstract or purely attitudinal measures of support for *mano dura* to identify the extent to which the demand for weak procedural policies is affected by experiences of crime victimization (Visconti, 2019;

Holland, 2013a; Cohen and Smith, 2016; Gerber and Jackson, 2016; Singer et al., 2020; Krause, 2014b; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019). This approach is vulnerable to social desirability bias, limiting its generalization to the settings where policy decisions are made. To mitigate these concerns, our conjoint experiment measures changes in voters' behavior through a candidate-choice task, approximating both voters' preferences for concrete options on security policies, and varying candidates' profiles in multiple dimensions. In doing so, our work unpacks the support for many different policy options in the area of public security. For example, we show that exposure to crime has a strong effect when it comes to pushing voters to support the adoption of the death penalty. However, support for greater police militarization is not driven directly by crime exposure. This difference is unlikely to be captured by more abstract measures of attitudinal support to more punitive approaches by the state, such as the ones used in the previous literature.

Second, relying on modeling strategies from social network analysis, we build a *contextual* measure of exposure to crime victimization (Zheng et al., 2006; Calvo and Murillo, 2019, 2013; McCarty et al., 2001). [2] Our proposed measurement for the study of crime victimization mitigates several challenges existing when using direct survey questions, such as social desirability bias, the rare occurrence and serial correlation of victimization data, and its overdispersion in a few clusters of respondents. Combined with the conjoint estimates, we offer a contextual measure of victimization to deliver more precise and higher externally valid estimates for how citizens update their preferences regarding security policies amid violence.

We present three core results throughout this paper. First, higher exposure to crime victimization significantly increases support for certain iron-fist policies, particularly the adoption of the death penalty. This effect is observable even after controlling for other features such as the candidates' party, gender, and occupation. Second, higher exposure to crime also increases

[2] Results with direct measures of victimization are presented in the appendices.

support for candidates previously employed in local police forces. Finally, we do not find partisan effects among Mexican voters' preferences for security policies. When comparing leftists and more conservative voters, we do not observe statistically significant differences in their respective support for more harsh-on-crime policies or other candidates' profiles.

These findings provide key new insights to the literature on support for *mano dura* policies in Latin America. First, as recently argued by Moncada (2020), experiences with criminal organizations and subsequent victimization are neither a one-time violent act nor an exclusively individual experience, but rather a continuous, interactive, and collective process among victims, criminals, the state, and society at large. Our network approach proposes a novel estimation of exposure to victimization at a more contextual, fine-grained level. Our results corroborate the previous argument by indicating that contextual exposure to crime has a higher predictive effect on support for iron-fist policies than direct victimization experiences, which has been the focus of past works.

In addition, we provide important insights to the literature on partisanship and support for *mano dura* policies in Latin America. A common argument in these works is that conservative parties have a comparative advantage when campaigning on security policies in an environment where violence is on the rise (Kaplan et al., 2006; Petrocik, 1996; Beckett, 1999; Beckett and Western, 2001; Cohen and Smith, 2016; Holland, 2013b). For example, the seminal piece by Holland (2013b) argues that "conservative parties have a comparative advantage in touting their security credentials. Crime can be viewed as a valence issue in which parties advertise their unique competence to achieve shared security," (p. 52). This premise in the literature implies that conservative parties own the issue of security and that they use this valence advantage to win elections in democracies marked by high levels of violence. In contrast, our results

show that non-partisan heuristics, such as the candidates' professional experience, plays a more important role among voters overly exposed to violence. This finding is particularly relevant to our understanding of electoral dynamics in democracies with a fragmented party system or weak party labels, as in most Latin American cases.

Finally, we show the importance of unpacking the box of security policies when researching *mano dura* preferences. For example, we show that policies commonly perceived as iron-fist, such as the death penalty and militarization of the policies, are not perceived as equal by voters. Quite the opposite: while victimization increases support for the death penalty, the effect goes in the opposite direction for candidates proposing more militarization of the police forces. Therefore, by unpacking iron-fist policies, our findings show that support for *mano dura* is not uniform, as assumed in the previous literature (Visconti, 2019; Holland, 2013a; Krause, 2014b; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019).

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we present an overview of the literature on the logic of individual support for punitive security policies. Next, we develop our demand-and-supply argument on individual preferences for iron-fist policies and subsequently present our pre-registered hypotheses.[3] The fourth section introduces the Mexican case in which we evaluate our proposed hypotheses. Then, we describe our empirical strategy in detail, including our network model. In the sixth section, we present the main results of our analysis, including the discussion of interesting features of victimization networks in Mexico. Finally, in our concluding section, we derive the relevant theoretical and empirical implications of our findings.

[3]Pre-registration available at [REDACTED]

2 On Individual Security Policy Preferences

Our work seeks to contribute to a growing literature on the effects of violence on policy preferences, with a focus on security-related policies, which have been largely addressed by criminologists and political scientists alike. In this section, we briefly examine the main findings of these two disciplinary approaches and frame our theoretical contribution, given this research.

Within criminology, various works have assessed public support for punitive *vis-á-vis* rehabilitative policies. This group of works consistently finds that fear of crime and perceptions of insecurity decrease support for rehabilitative policies. However, the evidence regarding the effect of victimization is mixed. For example, while Baker et al. (2016) find that victimization experiences cannot predict crime policy preferences, Cohen et al. (2006) find that prior victimization is associated with higher support for prevention policies.

Political scientists have likewise examined the role of individual encounters and reactions to violence in policy preferences for public security (Krause, 2014b; Visconti, 2019; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019). Overall, these studies have consistently found that victims exhibit a higher support for *mano dura*. Victims are more likely than non-victims to approve the use of state repression (Visconti, 2019) and extrajudicial means (Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019). Beyond the individual victimization status, reactions towards crime, such as fear or anger, can also affect support for authoritarian crime control (Krause, 2014a; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019).

The expansion of *mano dura* approaches to address crime in the Latin American region has led scholars to examine public support for such type of policies. Recent work by Flores-Macías and Zarkin (2021) shows that the appearance of armed forces can serve as a low-information heuristic that people rely on to form opinions about their effectiveness in the control of crime. The authors find that military weapons and uniforms enhance perceptions of effectiveness and

respect for civil liberties, which could ultimately affect the support for militarization—a common example of a punitive policy.

Another set of studies within political science has moved away from the effect of short-term reactions to crime and focused on longer-term political features that also condition voters' preferences for security policies. Such explanatory factors include ideology, partisanship, and political regimes. Two main findings of these studies stand out. First, conservative voters are more likely to support harsh criminal policies (Cohen and Smith, 2016; Gerber and Jackson, 2016). Second, conservative parties who own the issue of security are more likely to win voters' support when a crime issue becomes more salient (Holland, 2013a).

Although criminologists have addressed the role of perceptions of insecurity and victimization on security policy preferences, this group of studies has disregarded the political logic behind such preferences. Within political science, extant research—either considering short- or long-term factors—accounts only for the demand for iron-fist policies as an outcome variable. As a result, these works are unable to consider a more complete picture of the electoral arena, the diverse policy alternatives that parties and candidates may offer, as well as how such options interact with voters' priorities, perceptions, and underlying characteristics. By capturing only a part of the wide variation on policy approaches to crime, these studies are unable to delve into the simultaneous paths that coexist along with victimization and perceptions of insecurity and that also shape policy decisions and voters' behavior. The theoretical argument and the subsequent research design that we propose here account for these multiple dimensions among voters, parties, and candidates. We seek to address the politics of security policy preferences that criminologists have omitted. Furthermore, we expand the analysis beyond voter demand for punitivism and examine its relation with policy supply within the context of an election.

3 Voting for security

Our goal in this paper is to understand the logic of individual support for security policy proposals. We claim that such an analysis must consider the joint effects of voters' preferences and candidates' security policy offers. We further contend that this demand-and-supply dynamic depends largely on the informational shortcuts that voters rely on to process policy alternatives and choose among them. Two dimensions are particularly relevant for voters to make such decisions: (1) their own personal experiences with violence and (2) candidates' profiles.

3.1 Violence and victimization experiences

Our first proposed dimension considers the relationship between crime victimization and citizens' policy preferences. Recent comparative studies have found that victims of violence show lower levels of trust in democratic institutions (Fernandez and Kuenzi, 2010; Carreras, 2013b; Krause, 2014b; Pérez, 2015) and criminal justice agencies (Malone, 2010a; Blanco, 2013). The effects of violence on security policy preferences have also been documented. Victims of urban violence usually become more supportive of tough-on-crime security policies in Latin America (Visconti, 2019; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019; Krause, 2014a).

While previous literature has focused mostly on personal experiences of victimization, we argue in favor of a broader notion of exposure to crime. In contexts permeated by organized crime activity in which criminals and state agents both interact and overlap, violence magnifies even further. Therefore, being a victim of criminal violence is neither a one-time violent act nor an exclusively individual experience, but rather a continuous, interactive, and collective process among victims, criminals, the state, and society at large (Moncada, 2020) [4]

[4]Results with direct measures of victimization are presented in the appendices

We contend, therefore, that considering the social bonds among victims can lead to a more grounded understanding of individual exposure to crime and crime victimization, which subsequently affects perceived policy needs and preferences. As Villarreal and Silva (2006) show, the exchange of information via networks of individuals experiencing and perceiving crime can have profound attitudinal consequences and lead to a heightened sense of insecurity, which recent works have shown greatly affect policy preferences (Visconti, 2019; Altamirano et al., 2020; Flores-Macías and Sánchez-Talanquer, 2020). Therefore, we propose that:

Hypothesis 1. *Respondents who have faced crime victimization within their network are more likely to support punitive policies.*

3.2 Candidate Profiles and Perceptions of Party Competence on Security Policies

Although voters' characteristics and experiences with violence are likely to shape an initial demand for punitive policies, such preferences must ultimately confront the actual proposals offered by candidates and their parties. These policy preferences are, therefore, also influenced by the characteristics of candidates and parties, which inform and shape citizens' strategic decisions. Moreover, it is necessary to consider the supply side of this dynamic game to understand the conditions under which some candidates might benefit when campaigning on security as a policy issue.

A way to explore who gains and who loses when public security policies become salient is to consider the heuristics that voters use to infer about those who make policy offers. Previous studies have shown how these heuristics —or non-policy advantages (Calvo and Murillo, 2019)— can be observed from multiple characteristics, such as a candidate's occupation, their local experience, personal credibility, or reputation and issue advantages from their political parties (Botero et al., 2015; Campbell and Cowley, 2014; McDermott, 2005; Kaplan et al., 2006; Petrocik,

1996). These advantages on the supply side can emerge both at the candidate or party level and are crucial to understand voters' strategic decisions.

At the individual level, some candidates might have attributes that help voters make inferences about their credibility (Ferejohn, 1986; Przeworski et al., 1999; Besley, 2006). Such credibility helps voters to distinguish between an empty promise and a credible policy proposal (Iyen, 2000; Botero et al., 2015; Lupia, 2002). The candidate's professional experience in a given policy area is an important credibility signal (McDermott, 2005). As recent evidence shows, the image of an individual in military uniform increases her perception of effectiveness in law enforcement (Flores-Macías and Zarkin, 2021). Therefore, we expect that police forces and candidates with previous experience in public security agencies use their professional experience as an informational heuristic, signaling to voters their competence, commitment, and credibility to prioritize security when elected. Accordingly, we propose that:

Hypothesis 2. *Candidates whose work experience is unrelated to public security are less likely to be selected.*

At the party level, non-policy advantages are commonly described in the literature as party issue ownership (Calvo and Murillo, 2019; Kaplan et al., 2006; Petrocik, 1996). According to this argument, conservative parties tend to have a stronger association with crime-control policies, therefore "owning" the issue of security (Kaplan et al., 2006; Petrocik, 1996). The valence advantage of conservative parties as more competent and credible to fight against crime allows them to benefit from the the growth of *mano dura* policies in the region. In El Salvador, for example, the increasing demand for punitive policies allows conservative parties to "draw on language, figures, and founding myths from periods of authoritarian control to lend credibility to claims that they will provide security at all costs" (Holland, 2013a, p. 52). Therefore, we

expect that:

Hypothesis 3. *Candidates affiliated with more conservative parties are more likely to be selected.*

Occupational and party heuristics also supply voters with information about a candidate's policy preference, consequently helping voters to choose candidates who are more aligned with their own policy positions (Nicholson, 2012; Lau and Redlawsk, 2001; Arceneaux, 2008). In the specific case of public security in Latin America, candidates who come from security agencies, police forces, and more conservative parties are usually associated with more punitive security policies (Frantz, 2018; Bueno, 2012; Cano, 1997; Magaloni and Rodriguez, 2020). As a result, beyond non-policy (valence) advantages, conservative candidates and those with experience in the criminal-justice system are more likely to be chosen when associated with more punitive policies. We thus expect that:

Hypothesis 4. *Conservative parties and candidates with professional experience in public security will be more likely to be selected when associated with more punitive policy proposals compared to harsher prevention policies.*

To summarize, we argue that voter support for punitive policies is determined through both voters' and candidates' characteristics. Among voters, their shared victimization experiences affect their security policy preferences. Among candidates, we argue that candidate profiles—regarding both their professional backgrounds and party affiliations—are crucial heuristics that help voters make their final decision.

To test the proposed hypotheses, we use data from a conjoint experiment embedded in a nationally representative survey in Mexico. The goal of our experiment is to assess the electoral value of candidates' personal attributes and campaign promises. As noted, we focus on those

features related to public security policy that may shape voters' preferences for candidates in local elections and evaluate their joint effect with voters' experiences with crime. Below we provide a brief description of the context of our case study.

4 Contextual Background: Crime Victimization in Mexico's Local Elections

Violence and crime took over Mexico's national agenda after President Felipe Calderón declared war on drug cartels in late 2006. The confrontation of the army against drug-trafficking organizations intensified inter-cartel conflict, and drug-related violence skyrocketed (Trejo and Ley, 2020). This sudden rise of violence was followed by citizens' concern about safety. The share of Mexicans considering public security as the most important problem in the country went from 21% in March 2004 to 49% in June 2007.[5] By 2019, insecurity was considered Mexico's most important problem by about 67% of the citizens in the country.[6]

The concerns about public security rose not only at the national level, but also at the local level. In 2019, 79% of citizens considered insecurity the most important issue in their state—in fact, it was the the most mentioned proble in 31 of the 32 states in the country.[7] Moreover, 73% of citizens in Mexico's seventy largest urban areas felt unsafe in their community. Only a minority perceived the state police (48%) and municipal police (40%) as effective.[8]

Citizens' growing demand to improve public security provided a correspondingly more solid

[5]See Mancillas, María Antonia and Alejandro Moreno "Destacan alternancia como mayor logro," *Reforma*, September 1, 2004 (p. 9A); Moreno, Alejandro and María Antonia Mancillas "Ven voluntad presidencial," *Reforma*, December 1, 2008 (p. 6).

[6]"Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública (ENVIPE) 2019" Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 2019.

[7]*Ibid*

[8]"Encuesta Nacional de Seguridad Pública Urbana (ENSU), 2020" Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 2020.

ground for tough-on-crime campaign promises in state and municipal elections. In 2006, despite rising violence in Mexico, the electoral campaigns did not emphasize the issue of crime (Sánchez Murillo and Aceves González, 2008). However, as the 'War on Drugs', led by president Calderón (PAN), evolved and violence continued to expand across the country, security became an increasingly relevant topic to discuss during local electoral processes. In the 2009 and 2012 local elections, the main campaign issue revolved around whether or not candidates would align with the militarized security policies implemented by the federal government. As such, mainly PAN candidates mentioned the issue of crime during their local campaigns and emphasized their support for the military (Ley, 2017). In the following subnational elections, as Pocasangre (2022) shows, mentions of security increased steadily, but exhibit a wide variation across Mexican states. Overall, the proportion of security related ads in state-level campaigns ranges between 10 and 20 percent, with a highest concentration in some of the most violent states and with the PAN having the greatest proportion of security ads compared to other parties (Pocasangre, 2022).

At the national level, approaches to public security have also been discussed as a campaign issue among parties. Acknowledging this discussion is relevant because the debates that federal-level candidates set on this issue tend to permeate subnational campaigns. The clearest example is Mexico's Green Party, which endorses life imprisonment and the death penalty.[9] Among the three largest parties in the country, the last presidential campaign marked a clear divide between the public security proposals from the Revolutionary Institutionalized Party (PRI) and National Action Party (PAN), on the one hand, and the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA), on the other. During the first presidential debate, MORENA's Andrés Manuel López Obrador proposed amnesty for those caught up in the illegal drug trade. This proposal was part of his

[9]Tuckman, Jo "Mexico's Greens: pro-death penalty, allegedly corrupt—and not very green" *The Guardian* April 21, 2015. (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/21/mexico-green-partylLópezObradora-corruption-claims-environment)

campaign proposal and was summarized in one of his campaign slogans: "hugs, not bullets." The proposal was severely opposed by the PAN and PRI, which suggested that it would put the state "on the side of criminals."[10]

This brief recount of recent electoral processes in Mexico indicates not only that security is an issue discussed in local elections, but also that 'tough on crime' proposals are common. If we further consider that criminal violence affects the participation of both voters (Carreras, 2013a; Cantú and Ley, 2017; Ley, 2018) and candidates (Ponce, 2019) in municipal elections, there are additional reasons to expect changes in the dynamics of local campaign with the rise of crime in the country. Taken together, the circumstances surrounding contemporary local elections in Mexico—the rise of drug-related violence, citizens' concerns about public insecurity, and local candidates' emphasis on an iron-fist approach to crime—provide a good basis to explore which campaign promises on public security are most relevant in shaping voters' preferences for candidates, as well as whether these preferences vary according to individual exposure to crime and candidates' profiles.

In the next section, we discuss further how we map different policy proposals into our conjoint design. We provide examples of actual security policy proposals in local elections in Mexico, as well as how and which of them resonate with the options in our experiment.

[10] *NBC News* April 23, 2018. Mexico presidential debate: Front-runner Lopez Obrador defends amnesty to fight drug violence (https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/mexico-first-presidential-debate-front-runner-lopez-obrador-defends-amnesty-n868306); NPR July 23, 2020. As Mexico's Dominant Cartel Gains Power, The President Vows 'Hugs, Not Bullets' (https://www.npr.org/2020/07/23/893561899/as-mexicos-dominant-cartel-gains-power-the-president-vows-hugs-not-bullets).

5 Empirical Strategy

5.1 Conjoint Experiment: Measuring Support for Mano Dura in Realistic Settings

Our goal is to explore the trade-offs voters face in real-life settings when security policies across distinct candidates differ. Therefore, we designed a conjoint experiment that exposes respondents to different candidates' profiles and campaign proposals on public security (Hainmueller et al., 2014).[11] In particular, respondents are faced with the profiles of two hypothetical candidates for a municipal election. Given that our argument revolves around the effects of candidates' backgrounds, each candidate's profile is a random selection of characteristics along four dimensions: work experience, policy proposal for public security, gender, and political party (see Table 1). We then asked the respondent: "Imagine that the mayoral election is between these two candidates. Which one would you vote for?" Respondents repeated this exercise for one additional pair of hypothetical candidates.

This experimental design offers several advantages. First, the respondents are exposed to a wide set of policy proposals for public security, which range from rehabilitative policies to more punitive approaches to deal with crime. Our proposal, therefore, stands out in two directions. First, our work measured behavior considering a broad and realistic set of policies that voters can choose from in a given election. Second, we unpack support for many different policy options in the area of public security.[12] The choices of policy proposal considered in our experiment resonate with those that mayoral candidates have actually presented in their campaigns. Crime-

[11] The experiment was included in a national online survey in Mexico with 2.400 respondents. The survey was fielded by Netquest-Vanderbilt, with probabilistic samples drawn by the LAPOP team in Vanderbilt from users registered with Netquest. The experiment received the approval of [REDACTED].

[12] Previous studies on preferences for punitive policies in Latin America rely mostly on abstract or purely attitudinal measures of support for *mano dura* (Visconti, 2019; Holland, 2013a; Krause, 2014b; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019) to identify to which degree the demand for weak procedural policies is affected by experiences of crime victimization.

prevention approaches in local electoral campaigns vary, from community centers[13] to attention to the youth[14] In the most recent 2021 mayoral campaign in Zapopan, Jalisco—a municipality with an active presence of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel—nine candidates proposed to increase the number of police officers and improve their training and equipment.[15] Investment in local police forces is a frequent proposal among mayoral candidates across Mexico.[16] Furthermore, over the last decade, a growing number of mayors have appointed members of the military as heads of their municipal police forces, with a growing political role in local administrations, along with their increasing responsiveness to elected authorities' needs (Zarkin, 2022).[17] Finally, some parties in Mexico have openly supported the death penalty, and such a policy has become a trademark for the Mexican Green Party.

Second, our design pays attention to the extent to which partisan identities and information cues shape and inform voters' preferences for iron-fist policies. Beyond varying policy proposals, our experiment also rotates the candidates' previous professional background, gender, and party affiliation. Among these features, the definition for which levels to include in the professional category features is the most delicate, because a wide range of professions could have been used. Our choices for work experience feature combine two different objectives. First, our theory focuses on modeling general signals a candidate's professional background sends to voters. In this sense, we are interested in profiles of candidates related to the issue of public security,

[13] Among the main initiatives by Sonia Villarreal Pérez, PRI candidate to the municipal presidency in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, in the 2021 election, is the creation of a crime-prevention policy, with a focus on young people. See http://www.candidatotransparentecoahuila.org.mx/vp2/candidatos4.php

[14] Rosales, Paulina. "Enrique Vega propone rescatar a jóvenes de las adicciones." *Diario de Querétaro*. April 21, 2021. https://www.diariodequeretaro.com.mx/local/enrique-vega-propone-rescatar-a-jovenes-de-las-adicciones-6626889.html

[15] Blanco, Sergio. "Seguridad, primer tema que abordaron candidatos a Zapopan en foro de Iteso." *El Informador*, April 15, 2021. (https://bit.ly/2ReOaXm).

[16] Cubero, César. "Inseguridad, reactivación económica y otros retos en Monterrey...Esto dijeron candidatos en ForoMETA21." *Milenio*, April 20, 2021. https://www.milenio.com/politica/elecciones-2021/monterrey-candidatos-alcaldias-propuestas-foro-meta21-envivo

[17] Zarkin (2022) estimates that, between 2000 and 2020, 15.1 percent of municipal police chiefs were members of the Mexican armed forces.

which includes: professional experience in public security agencies, private security, human rights activism, and the provision of security by non-state organizations. The profile of "public employee" is broadly defined to simply signal some degree of experience in the public sector.

We are also interested in translating these broader categories to cases with a strong linkage with local dynamics in Mexico. To do so, our actual choices for work experience feature translate these broader profiles to actual cases in recent Mexican elections. For example, the current Mayor of San Luis Potosí, Enrique Galindo, was the former city capital police chief and general-commissioner of the Federal Police.[18] Tijuana's former police chief, Julián Leyzaola, was a mayoral candidate in the 2019 election.[19] Marcelo Ebrard was in charge of Mexico City's police before being elected as the city mayor in 2006. In the 2021 election cycle, Hipólito Mora, a former self-defense leader, was appointed as a party candidate in the state of Michoacán. Yuriel González Lara, former police chief of Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, was murdered while campaigning for the mayorship.[20] An owner of a private security company in the city of Acapulco, Guerrero was also selected as the mayoral candidate of the Labor Party (PT).[21] Finally, Omar García Harfuch, current police chief in Mexico City, is leading the polls at the time for the Mayoral election in 2024.[22]

Given that all of our policy proposals relate to security, our design allows for simple identification of how heterogeneity on a valence issue interacts with the candidates' profile and partisan

[18] https://sitio.sanluis.gob.mx/SanLuisPotoSi/PresidenteMunicipal

[19] "Elecciones 2019...Conoce a los candidatos." *El Sol de Tijuana.* May 27, 2019. (https://www.elsoldetijuana.com.mx/local/elecciones-2019...conoce-a-los-candidatos-3680956.html)

[20] "Asesinan a Yuriel Armando González Lara, candidato del PRI a presidencia de Nuevo Casas Grandes." *El Financiero.* March 5, 2021. (https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/norte/asesinan-a-yuriel-armando-gonzalez-lara-candidato-del-pri-a-presidencia-de-nuevo-casas-grandes/).

[21] Gómez Baray, Katyana. "¿Quiénes son las candidatas y candidatos a la presidencia municipal de Acapulco de Juárez?" *El Economista.* March 11, 2021. (https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Quienes-son-las-candidatas-y-candidatos-a-la-presidencia-municipal-de-Acapulco-de-Juarez-20210511-0073.html)

[22] "¿Quién es Omar García Harfuch, titular de la SSC-CDMX?" *Expansión.* August 22, 2022 (https://politica.expansion.mx/cdmx/2022/08/22/omar-garcia-harfuch-quien-es).

identification, having an effect on voters' preferences. Consequently, by exposing voters to a multidimensional behavioral choice, our conjoint experiment works as a useful resource for reducing social desirability bias—a concern that is particularly present in such delicate issues as preferences for crime policies and victimization.[23]

Table 1 Candidate Profile Features and Choice Levels

Feature	Choices
Work Experience	
	Chief of police
	Owner of Private Company of Security
	Human Rights Activist
	Leader of Self-Defense Group
	Public Employee
Policy proposal for Public Security	
	Death Penalty for the criminal
	Militarization of the police forces
	Building a welfare center to help victims of violence
	Increase the number of police officers, improve their training, and increase security cameras in the streets.
	Offer more job opportunities for the youth
Gender	
	Male
	Female
Political Party	
	MORENA
	PAN
	PRI
	Independent

[23]By dealing with the challenges of social desirability bias, and simulating a more realistic setting, our conjoint provides more reliable estimates when compared to simple framing designs commonly used in the related literature on attitudinal effects of crime victimization and punitive preferences (Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019; Krause, 2014b).

Our quantity of interest is the marginal effect of each of the candidates' attributes regarding vote choice. We estimate it by quantifying the premium or the penalty that each candidate's attribute has on the voter's choice (Hainmueller et al., 2014).

To estimate each attribute's relative weight, we calculate the marginal effect of each attribute against a baseline, or the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE). AMCE is obtained by regressing the dependent variable—in this case, whether the hypothetical candidate was selected by the respondent—on a battery of dummy variables, each of them representing a specific attribute level. The regression excludes the estimation of one level per attribute, which works as the baseline category. Since each profile's attributes is fully randomized, the AMCE should be interpreted as the average difference in the probability that a profile is chosen when it includes the listed attribute value in comparison with the baseline attribute value.

All of our hypotheses are related to subgroup effects or interactions across the features. We then estimate the models using interactive terms between our moderators and the feature of interest. We present the numerical results in the Appendix and keep the graphical presentation in the paper for the marginal effects for each comparison (Brambor et al., 2006). Finally, we investigate the presence of carryover and profile-order effects (Appendix G). Our graphical analysis and the joint significance F-tests do not indicate a violation to these two key assumptions for a conjoint design.

5.2 The Political Effects of Crime Victimization: A Network Approach

A growing literature in political science relies on survey data to explore the effects of crime victimization on policy preferences (Visconti, 2019; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019; Altamirano et al., 2020). However, the measurement of crime victimization faces several challenges, such as respondents' refusal to share their victimization experience, the rare occurrence, and serial correlation

of victimization experiences, and the high concentration of victimization data in a few clusters of respondents.[24]

Given the methodological challenges in the measurement of crime victimization, we develop a novel measure by using respondents' information from their friendship network (Zheng et al., 2006; McCormick et al., 2010; McCormick and Zheng, 2013; Calvo and Murillo, 2013). We build the network by using information from survey questions framed as: "How many X's do you know, who also know you and whom you have interacted with in person, by phone, or through some other media in the last year?" The X's represent a vector of sixteen indirect items regarding the size and structure of our respondents' friendship network. Respondents answered, for example, how many people they know who are called Silvia, work as physicians, or work as teachers, among others.[25] Within this battery of questions, we inquired about the respondent's exposure to crime and violence by asking how many people she knows who were victims of crime.

This network approach addresses several challenges initially identified in the measurement of crime victimization. First, it reduces challenges related to social-desirability bias in survey responses by not directly asking about personal experiences of victimization. Second, our approach uses the network's information to augment the survey data, mitigating concerns about sampling error and serial correlation of victimization. We do so by relaxing the assumption of exposure to criminal violence as a one-time and individually-experienced event (Moncada, 2020),

[24] See Visconti (2019) for a similar discussion of making causal claims of behavioral effects of crime victimization using survey data. While Visconti's solution is to use panel data and matching algorithms to deal with these challenges, we take a different route by using fine-grained information from the respondents' friendship network to build a more detailed measurement of contextual exposure to crime.

[25] We divide this block in two groups. We first ask participants a battery of questions for groups we believe respondents' recall about their knowledge is higher. Then, in a second battery, we ask about groups we believe recall might be lower. Then, as suggested in Zheng et al. (2006) and Calvo and Murillo (2013), we estimate the models sequentially. We first estimate the parameters using the first set of questions, then we use the parameter α_i from equation 1 as an offset for the estimating the parameters for the second set of groups. In this way, we control for the size of the individual network, and re-weight the data with the set of questions with higher recall. This procedure helps deal with the fact that respondents might have a low recall for some groups by re-weighting their answers for the overall size of their network.

simultaneously capturing the degree of surrounding violence.

5.3 A Network Model for Crime Victimization

Before presenting the statistical estimation of the model, we describe the intuition behind our network measure for crime victimization. Our approach uses information from the respondent's friendship network to measure exposure to crime at a more contextual, fine-grained level. Rather than relying on one-shot survey questions, we ask respondents how many of their friends were recently victims of crime in Mexico. We incorporate the information provided by the survey into a multilevel model that compares respondents' answers with the overall size of their friendship network and the overall prevalence of crime victims in Mexico. The difference between the respondents' answers and the model's predictions provides a contextual measure of victimization. In other words, those respondents who know more crime victims than what is expected by their overall network size and the crime prevalence in the country are more embedded in the context of high violence. This feature is our primary measure for contextual exposure to crime.

We now summarize our modeling strategy to identify the prevalence of victimization in the respondents' network.[26] Our survey asked a battery of eighteen indirect questions about the size and structure of our respondents' friendship network. We model the responses by using the overdispersed negative-binomial multilevel estimation, as follows:

$$y_{ik} \sim \text{Negative-Binomial}(e^{\alpha_i+\beta_k+\epsilon_i k}, \omega_k) \tag{1}$$

The α_i parameter measures the size of the respondent i's network. β_k estimates the relative prevalence of each group k in the population. And the parameter ω_k controls the overdispersion

[26] For a complete exposure of the model, we direct readers to Zheng et al. (2006) and chapter five in Calvo and Murillo (2019) for a political science application.

of the groups k. In this case, higher values of ω_k indicate more variation among the respondents in the prevalence of group k than would be expected under a null model, as well as a more dense network for the group k.[27]

We are interested in the capacity of the model to capture how each respondent is relatively exposed to crime victimization. This substantive parameter is captured by the standardized residuals of the model, as stated below:

$$r_{ik} = \sqrt{y_{ik}} - \sqrt{e\alpha_i + \beta_k} \tag{2}$$

The residual r_{ik} provides critical and intuitive information. For our purposes, this quantity indicates the degree to which individual i deviates from group k's mean prevalence, given the size of her personal network (how many people the respondent knows) as well as the group prevalence (how many friends were victims of crime in our sample of respondents). In other words, a higher(lower) residual value indicates that the respondent is more(less) exposed to criminal violence in their network of friends that expected by our modelling strategy. By estimating the respondent's exposure to criminal violence, we can model which individual-level information explains crime exposure and the correlation across different groups k.

We provide two descriptive analyses regarding the characteristics of crime victimization in the respondents' network. First, a dendogram illustrating the overall association between different social groups (Figure 7 in Appendix A) shows the strong correlation between crime victimization and police violence. The fact that respondents who know more victims of crime also reported to know more victims of police violence confirms previous evidence of specific social groups being

[27]Previous works use β_k to identify the size and network structure of hard-to-reach populations, such as those with HIV/AIDS, injection drug users, or the homeless (Killworth et al., 1998; Salganik et al., 2011; Bernard et al., 2010)

simultaneously under-protected and over-policed (Gelman and Hill, 2007; Edwards et al., 2019; Mummolo, 2018).

Second, Table 2 in the Appendix A presents the results of regressing the residuals for crime victimization on a battery of covariates from our survey. The results show a lower degree of victimization in the networks of wealthier respondents. Moreover, confirming previous evidence on the topic, exposure to crime is positively correlated with fear of crime, considering security as a top policy priority, and support for punitive policies (Visconti, 2019; Cohen and Smith, 2016; Gerber and Jackson, 2016; Singer et al., 2020).[28] Finally, higher exposure in the friendship network to crime victimization is negatively correlated with trust in the police. This finding is substantively important. Lower trust in the police is likely to affect citizens' willingness to report crime and police-abuse cases, eroding accountability and the quality of democracy in Mexico (Gingerich and Oliveros, 2018; Malone and Dammert, 2020; Malone, 2010b).

Overall, the descriptive analysis confirms the robustness of our measure of crime victimization networks and its resonance with prevalent findings on the correlates of crime exposure. The following section presents the results of our experimental design, emphasizing the effects of the friendship network on security policies' preferences and some other relevant features of our conjoint design.

6 Results: Voting for Security in Mexico

We start by presenting the overall average marginal component effects (AMCE) of the conjoint experiment. Figure 1 presents the AMCE for all of the components and sets the reference groups to zero for each of the profile's features. The first relevant outcome is the strongest support in

[28] For fear of crime, we average across three different survey questions, asking about: i) fear of being alone at home, ii) walking on a dark street, iii) driving by oneself at night. For punitive preferences, we use an ordinal scale from the question: "In Mexico, too much importance is given to the rights of criminals."

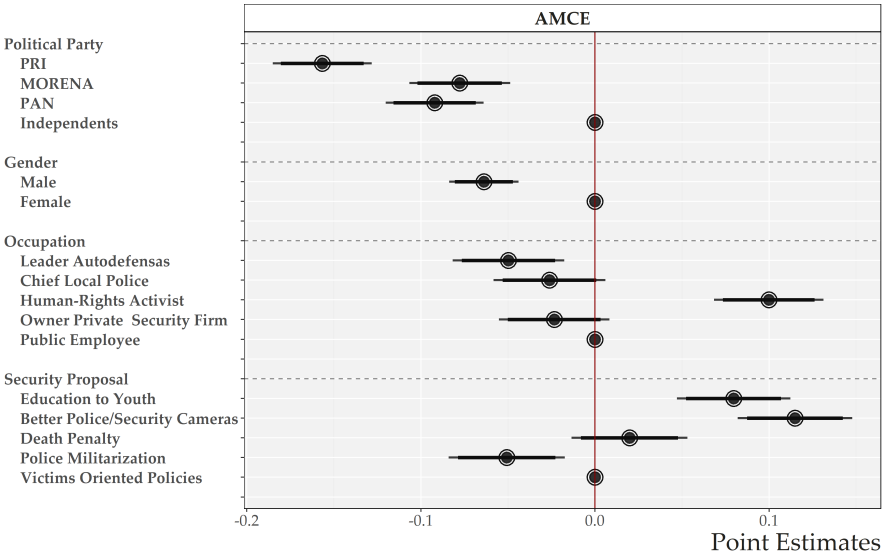
our sample for candidates with experience in human rights activism. In comparison to a public employee, human rights activists are about 10% more likely to be selected by the respondents. By contrast, leaders of *autodefensas* organizations were the least likely to be selected from all of the profiles related to experience with public security. In comparison to the baseline, *autodefensas* leaders are about 5% less likely to be selected by the respodents.

The AMCE results by themselves provide no support for our expectation on the direct effects of candidate profiles on the voter decision. The occupation that more directly indicates that the candidate had previous experience with public security—the chief of local police—does not show a positive statistically significant effect, as we expected, and more conservative parties do not show a positive marginal component effect. Furthermore, against conventional wisdom, there is weak support for iron-fist policies in the general population. In particular, a candidate campaigning on police militarization is about 5% less likely to be preferred over another candidate promoting victim-oriented policies. Our second tough-on-crime policy, the death penalty, shows a weak and non-significant AMCE for the overall population. In contrast, our results show positive and significant values for the prevention policies in the experiment—i.e., youth education and police cameras.

Finally, although the effect of a candidate's gender on vote choice is not a pre-registered hypothesis, the observed positive effect for female candidates is consistent with the observed trend across different world regions and democratization levels (Teele et al., 2018; Schwarz and Coppock, 2022). For this study, male candidates are about 6% less likely to be chosen by respondents when paired against a female candidate who shares all other characteristics.

Together, these findings indicate little support for the increased militarization of security forces in Mexico and Latin America.

Figure 1 Conjoint Estimates: average marginal component effects of attributes on the selection of hypothetical candidates



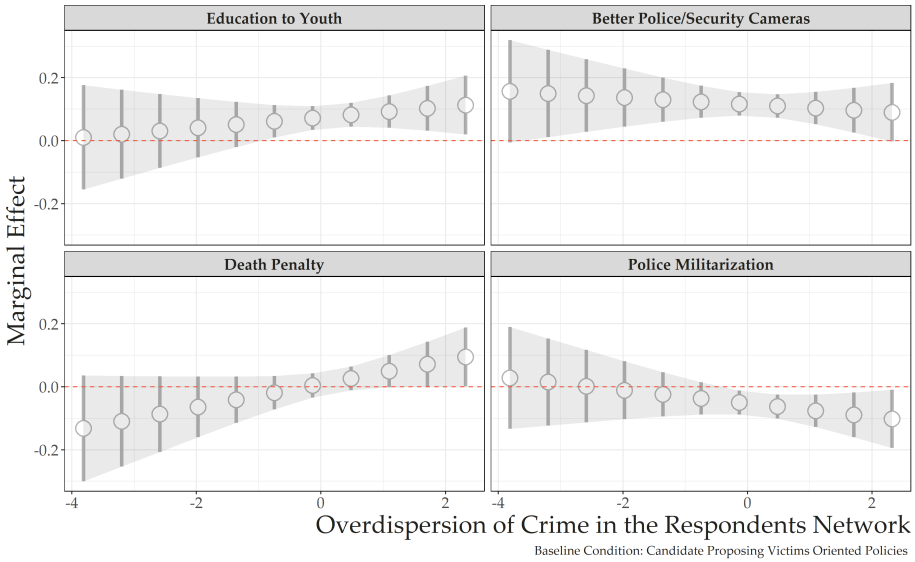
Note: The plot shows estimates of the randomly assigned attributes (Party, Gender, Occupation and Security Policy Proposal) in the subject decision to vote for a hypothetical mayoral candidate. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents; we present point estimates with 95% and 90% confidence intervals. The points without bars represent the reference category for each attribute.

Conditional Effects of Crime Victimization

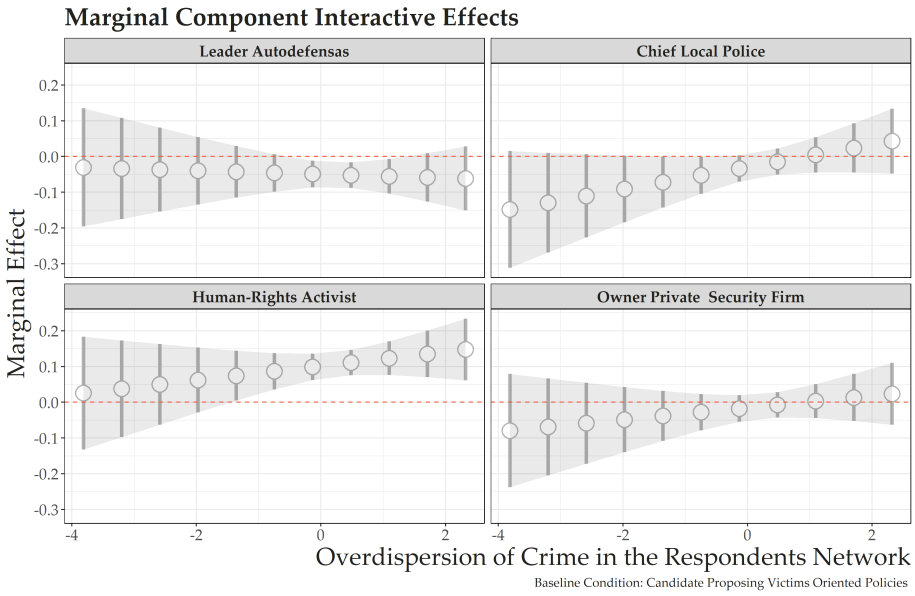
Now, we discuss our hypotheses regarding the effects of crime victimization on selecting candidates who propose more punitive policies. We estimate models by using a linear interaction between the public policy proposals' feature and our network measures for victimization. The numerical results for the models are presented in the Appendix B table 3, and Figure 2 presents the marginal interactive effects.

Confirming our initial expectation, the results in the upper plot on Figure 2 suggest that those respondents with a higher contextual exposure to crime victimization show a higher support for a candidate who campaigns on the death penalty as a security policy. By contrast, we

Figure 2 Conjoint Estimates: average marginal interactive effects



a) Security Policy X Crime Victimization



b) Occupation X Crime Victimization

Note: The plot shows marginal effects from linear interactive models between the residuals from the network models and the Security Policy feature. We present marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from the benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

find a negative relationship between victimization and the support for a candidate promoting police militarization. Following Flores-Macías and Zarkin (2021), this result could be related to perceptions of increased effectiveness and respect for civil liberties by military personnel. The rest of the security policies in the survey show no significant effect. In this sense, while our results confirm the previously noted correlation between victimization and punitive policies, it is important to note that our research design shows that victimization does not have a consistent positive affect across all types of iron-fist policies. By unpacking security policies, we further find that victimization does not affect support for *all* crime-prevention policy approaches.

Given our theoretical argument, we expect that candidates from law enforcement and militarized agencies will receive greater support from respondents more afflicted by violence, due to their association with the implementation and support of tough-on-crime policies (Flores-Macías and Zarkin, 2021; Navajas et al., 2020; Trejo et al., 2018).[29] To assess this hypothesis, the bottom plot on Figure 2 presents the interactive effects of crime victimization with the occupations' feature. This test shows that voters who are exposed to violence increase substantively their support for the chief of police's candidate, while all the other AMCEs remain basically unchanged.

The statistical significance of the differences can be assessed by comparing the effects over the x-axis. Nonetheless, Appendix C properly assesses the statistical differences between these interactive effects by considering different levels of the crime-victimization moderator. In particular, moving from the first to the fifth quantile on crime victimization increases the respondent's likelihood to vote for a candidate who proposes the adoption of the death penalty by 8.5% (*p-value = 0.78)*, while the likelihood of supporting a former police chief increases by 9.5% *(p-value=0.06)*. These results are robust to different quantile choices, as the more transparent continuous model

[29] Although this hypothesis is post-hoc to our pre-registration, we believe that its logic follows from our theory.

on Figure 2 already suggests. It is important to emphasize that our conjoint task had only two repetitions per respondent. Since conjoint designs are based on a high number of possible profile combinations, the statistical differences between and among these subgroup analysis are worth noting.

Conditional Effects of Partisanship and Candidates' Profiles

In Figure 3, we present the average component interactive effects between candidates' political parties and security proposals. Our main goal here is to assess the degree to which the supply of politicians interacts with voters' demands for security policies. From our theory, we expect candidates from more conservative parties and who have professional experience with law enforcement to receive greater support when promoting punitive proposals.

Against our expectation, we find no empirical support of a partisan advantage for conservative parties (PAN) or law and order officials (chiefs of police) when proposing more punitive measures. As Figure 3 shows, no party benefits from proposing police militarization. Also, MORENA and the PRI candidates—instead of those from PAN, the Mexican rightist party—both benefit from proposing death penalty. Our findings, therefore, fail to support an established expectation in the literature regarding issue ownership and crime (Holland, 2013a; Beckett and Western, 2001; Kaplan et al., 2006). We raise an initial explanation for these null results in the conclusion.

When holding the candidates' proposals constant, their occupations appear to be irrelevant in most of the cases. The most important exception is the positive effect for a self-defense leader supporting death penalty. In other words, our respondents are more likely to choose a vigilante leader when the latter proposes the death penalty as a security policy. A possible explanation for this unexpected result is that members of a self-defense group can credibly propose the death

penalty, considering their engagement in extralegal justice, including the killing of criminals.[30]

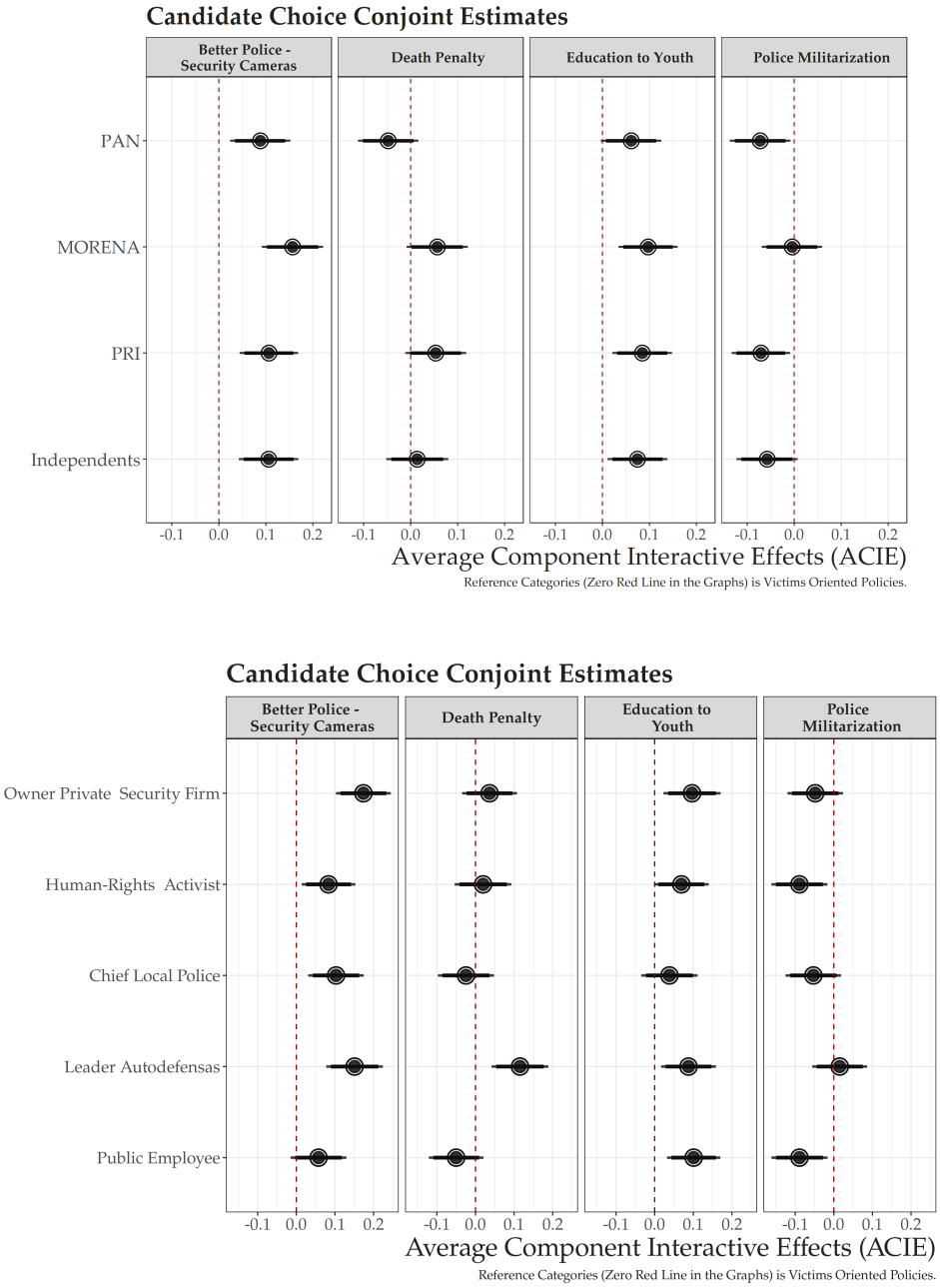
In the supplemental files, we present several additional analysis. First, we consider the interactive effects with the network measure of exposure to police violence (Appendix B). Results are similar to those presented in the paper, with more victimized respondents growing a greater taste for punitive policies. In addition, following previous studies (Rueda and Stegmueller, 2015; Gingerich and Scartascini, 2018; Gingerich and Oliveros, 2018), we also assess the interactive effect with respondents' fear of crime (Appendix F). As in the other models, we find an substantive increase for the death penalty.

Finally, we examine whether the effects are mostly driven by personal direct victimization (Appendix E). The differences are not statistically significant for support of iron-fist policies or the chief of police, as we found when using contextual exposure. This difference is important to highlight, and it converges with recent arguments by Moncada (2020) about the importance of theorizing victimization as a repeated and interactive process, as opposed to a one-shot event. Therefore, this finding lends support to the novel measurement of victimization that we propose here to better capture the relationship between victimization and a support for punitivism.

To summarize, we find evidence that respondents who are more exposed to crime victimization experiences significantly increase the support for *some* iron-fist policies, such as the death penalty, confirming our hypothesis 1, but it simultaneously reduces support for police militarization. By unpacking iron-fist policies, our findings then suggest that support for *mano dura* is not uniform, but may rather depend on the type of policy proposal at hand. In addition, as an extension of hypotheses 1 and 4, we find that higher exposure to crime also increases the support for candidates previously employed in the local police forces. In this sense, exposure

[30]BBC News. "Mexico vigilantes in deadly shoot-out in Michoacán." *BBC News*. December 17, 2014. (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-30512544)

Figure 3 Conjoint Estimates: Average Interactive Component Effects by Parties and Occupation with Security Proposal



Note: The plot shows the average component interactive effects between the features political party and security proposal. We present marginal component effects with 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents; we present point estimates with 95% and 90% confidence intervals.

to violence within the respondents' network does not only have a policy effect, but also shapes which candidates become more attractive to voters. Finally, our other hypotheses about direct partisan and occupational advantages were not confirmed.

7 Conclusion

This paper explores the electoral demand and supply factors for punitive security policies. We argue that the implementation of such policies depends on voters' personal experiences with violence and candidates' platforms on public security, whose credibility depends on their relevant experience. We have drawn insights from the literature on experimental public opinion and social networks to mitigate concerns regarding social desirability, limited generalization, and under-reporting bias. Using original survey data from Mexico, we provided robust evidence showing that the demand for punitive policies in the country is largely conditional with respect to citizens' victimization experience. Despite voters' limitations in assessing security policy proposals, our findings indicate different ways through which policy approaches and candidate profiles are perceived, pointing to the need to capture this interaction between voters and candidates.

To assess the effects of victimization, we propose a novel friendship-network approach that addresses previous measurement challenges to estimate citizens' exposure to victimization. Our findings show strong support for a positive relationship between crime victimization and support for punitive policies. Network victimization seems to be the main driving factor through which voters express higher support for the death penalty as a policy proposal. This is an important result because it lends robustness to the observational evidence provided in the existent literature (Visconti, 2019; Garcia-Ponce et al., 2019), also highlighting the importance of developing fine-grained measures of victimization to adequately assess its effects.

Contrary to our expectations, we find that the demand for punitive policies is inelastic with respect to the party that makes such proposals. Also, this type of policy does not give a direct premium to candidates with professional experience in public security. The lack of empirical support for our partisan hypotheses is likely to respond to the ongoing recomposition of the Mexican party system. The former major parties fell victim to their internal conflicts and lack of solutions to the low economic growth, crime, and rampant corruption in the country (Greene and Sánchez-Talanquer, 2018; Prud'homme, 2020). As a response, López Obrador and his recently formed party, MORENA, ran a personalistic campaign based on valence issues that appeal to a heterogeneous electorate whose support is far from stable (Aguilar, 2019).[31] At the same time, parties have converged to offer very similar security policies. Even López Obrador quickly shifted from a less punitive strategy against crime during his campaign (see section 4) and later created a new security force operated by the military, once in office.[32] The null findings for our partisan hypotheses suggest the ongoing personalization of politics in the country, where supporters of the president are willing to support *mano dura* policies although it represents a radical shift from what his party initially proposed.

Our findings provide a more nuanced view regarding the connections among party labels, the emergence of punitive preferences, and the political effects of crime on democratic elections. Contrary to previous work based on issue-ownership theory (Holland, 2013a; Beckett and Western, 2001; Kaplan et al., 2006), our results indicate that as voters become more exposed to criminal violence, occupational heuristics surpass information extracted by voters from party labels. In other words, traditional conservative parties do not seem to be winning at higher rates

[31] Among those who identify with MORENA, two-thirds of them feel closer to López Obrador than to the party. Moreno, Alejandro. "De minorías y megáfonos. *El Financiero*. February 26, 2021. https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/opinion/alejandro-moreno/de-minorias-y-megafonos

[32] Gaytan, Victoria. "The many messages of AMLO's first address to the nation." *Global Americans*. December 7, 2018. (https://theglobalamericans.org/2018/12/the-many-messages-of-amlos-first-address-to-the-nation/).

in democracies afflicted by violence. A similar dynamic has been discussed for the case of law and order legislative candidates in Brazil (Ventura, 2021), and recent work in Colombia does not find a consistent effect of the adoption of *mano dura* policies with the turnout in favor of right-wing parties (Weintraub and Blair, 2020). Future work should further explore the conditions under which non-partisan heuristics prevail in voters' decisions. It is also critical to examine the political effects of crime in democracies with weak partisan identities and high levels of violence.

Our evidence shows that voters exposed to violence are likely to support on the ballot candidates offering punitive policies. At the same time, voters are not blinded by iron-fist policies and can distinguish between credible and non-credible proposals. Candidates who have a background on human rights or experience in private security are electorally benefited when proposing prevention policies. In contrast, we do not find consistent evidence of the relevance of candidates' past public-security experience and conservative profiles to boost their electoral support.

The lack of evidence for the electoral support on police militarization in Mexico is something worth noting and at odds with both previous research and the overwhelming rates of approval that this policy has in Mexico.[33] When unpacking voters' different informational shortcuts as they evaluate public alternatives, our findings suggest that voters do not necessarily support militarization and would penalize whoever proposes it on the ballot. Instead, we conjecture that the observed support for militarization is likely to be attached to citizens' support of the current administration. Another variable that could explain such apparent contradiction has to do with variations in police trust at the local level. This finding opens up is an interesting avenue of

[33]In early 2019, 80% of the population agreed with the new military force, and 68% of them preferred the army over the police to combat insecurity. Moreno, Alejandro. "El 80% aprueba militarizar el combate contra la inseguridad" *El Financiero*. February 18, 2019. (https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/nacional/el-80-aprueba-militarizar-el-combate-contra-la-inseguridad). By the end of 2021, three of every four Mexicans support the army taking charge of the nation's public security. Alejandro Moreno, "Ejército es 'pueblo uniformado': mexicanos apoyan su trabajo en seguridad y construcción," *El Financiero*, December 8, 2021 (https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/nacional/2021/12/08/apoyan-las-labores-del-ejercito-pero-rechazan-la-militarizacion/)

research to be further explore the current realignment of citizens and parties on the security issue in Mexico.

Finally, our findings suggest important implications in other democracies where candidates offer punitive policies as part of their campaign platform. For example, during the 2016 presidential campaign in Peru, Keiko Fujimori proposed building twenty new jails, five of them at 13,000 feet above the sea level, as part of a policy against public insecurity.[34] In the last presidential campaign in Ecuador, Lucio Gutiérrez, an army colonel and candidate for the Patriotic Society Party, proposed a gun-carry law to protect citizens from crime.[35] A similar law was proposed by José Antonio Kast, during the 2017 and 2021 presidential campaigns in Chile, a country with one of the lowest homicide rates in the region.[36] Candidates campaigning on law and order constitute a rising trend in Latin American democracies. Understanding which factors, on the supply and demand side, make these candidates competitive is a crucial challenge for academic research in the region.

[34] Peruvian Presidential Debate, May 29, 2016 in Cantú and Carreras (2021)

[35] https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2021/01/10/nota/9439915/debate-presidencial-seguridad-ciudadana/

[36] For the 2017 campaign see: Chilean Presidential Debate, November 6, 2017 in Cantú and Carreras (2021). For the 2021 campaign, see: https://www.cnnchile.com/pais/jose-antonio-kast-ley-armas-tenencia-defensa-personal_20190827/. For data of intentional homicides in the region see: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?locations=ZJ.

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Voting for Violence

Supporting Information Files (SIF)

Contents

1 Appendix A: Descriptive Results for Victimization using a Network Approach

In this section, we provide descriptive results from our network model. At first, we examine the correlation between the groups k in the population using information from the network model. This quantity examines the correlation between the individual level residuals, according to equation 2 in the main paper, and compares whether individuals who know more victims of criminal violence, on average, also know more people who are in prison, suffered from police violence, or lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico, etc. Table 1 presents all the groups we asked about. We divided the groups in two. The first represent groups we believe recall is high, and allow us to estimate with more precision the size of individuals' network ($alpha_i$). We use this parameter from the first set as an offset in the model for the second set of groups.

Table 1 Categories for Network Model. "How Many People You Know that ?"

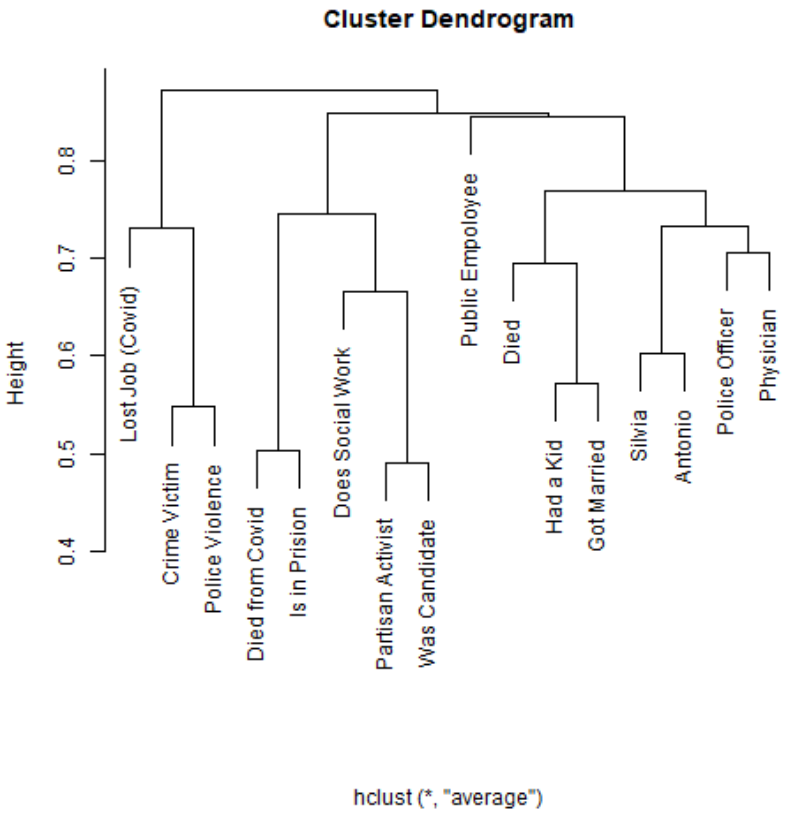
First Set of Questions	**Second Set of Question**
First name is Silvia	Work as Government Employees
First name is Antonio	Carry out social work in poor neighborhoods
Work as Police Officers	Are members of a political party
Work as Physicians	Have been political candidates for your municipality or province
Had a kid last year	Have been victims of a crime, such as assault, robbery, or injury
Had died last year	Have been victims of Police abuse
Got married last year	Who are currently in prison
Have been hospitalized for the coronavirus	Have lost their jobs as a result of the current coronavirus crisis.

The dendrogram presents the clustering algorithms in which more similar groups/units are plotted together. A simple visual inspection from the dendrogram provides empirical evidence from several intuitions about the characteristics of personal networks in Mexico.

Second, we explore further the results from our network model of crime victimization. We provide a set of OLS regression models using the residual for crime victimization in the subjects' network as dependent variables, and a set of relevant covariates from our survey as explanatory factor. Then, our models compare the results with the traditional measure of self-reported survey victimization. Although we do not explore results for police victimization in the paper, we also present the network information and its correlates for this quantity in the table. Results provide some interesting insights about the dynamics of victimization in Mexico that we briefly discuss here.

As a refresh, the residuals are extracted directly from the predictions of the multilevel models estimated using the network questions from our survey. Their interpretation are fairly straightforward; a higher/lower residual indicates that some surveys respondents know more/less people who is a member of a particular group – in our case, who suffered from crime and police violence in the last year. These estimate parse out two crucial information from the respondents' network: the size of the respondent personal network and the size of the group k in the overall Mexican population. In other words, the residuals tell us which respondents have more friends

Figure 1 Dendogram describing the Structure of the Network of Friends in Mexico



on a particular group considering how many people she knows overall and how many people there is to be known in this group. Using the residuals in a regression model, therefore, provide critical information on the social and political determinants of - in our application - crime and police victimization in Mexico. The table 2 presents the results:

Models 1 and 3 present results using the network's residuals as dependent variables, while models 2 and 4 present the same models but using direct survey questions about victimization and police violence. We discuss in the paper the main findings from this table.

Table 2 Regression Estimates: Correlates of Contextual and Individual Victimization

	Dependent variable:			
	Crime Victimization (Network Residuals)	Crime Victimization (Survey Questions)	Police Violence (Network Residuals)	Police Violence (Survey Questions)
Intercept	-0.381^{*}	0.819^{***}	-0.386^{*}	1.170^{***}
	(0.228)	(0.100)	(0.223)	(0.072)
Income (Middle)	-0.135^{**}	0.023	-0.033	-0.021
	(0.059)	(0.026)	(0.059)	(0.019)
Income (Top Quartile)	-0.155^{**}	0.004	-0.005	0.010
	(0.070)	(0.031)	(0.069)	(0.022)
Employed	0.114^{**}	0.013	0.119^{**}	0.005
	(0.049)	(0.022)	(0.049)	(0.016)
Age	-0.009	-0.025^{***}	-0.023	-0.019^{***}
	(0.016)	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.005)
Education	0.013	-0.007	-0.002	-0.006
	(0.026)	(0.011)	(0.026)	(0.008)
Female	0.083	-0.047^{**}	-0.077	-0.083^{***}
	(0.051)	(0.022)	(0.050)	(0.016)
Crime Victim	0.372^{***}		0.044	0.140^{***}
	(0.055)		(0.054)	(0.018)
Police Violence Victim	0.064	0.273^{***}	0.680^{***}	
	(0.077)	(0.034)	(0.072)	
Punitive Preferences	0.025^{**}	0.010^{**}	0.012	0.003
	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.003)
Fear of Crime	0.158^{***}	0.150^{***}	0.148^{***}	0.034^{**}
	(0.045)	(0.019)	(0.043)	(0.014)
Trust in the Police	-0.012	0.006	-0.040^{***}	-0.015^{***}
	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.003)
Security Top Priority	-0.028^{***}	0.001	0.005	-0.003
	(0.011)	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.003)
Observations	1,434	1,598	1,257	1,598
Adjusted R^2	0.073	0.092	0.125	0.092

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

2 Appendix B: Conjoint Interactive Effects with Crime Victimization and Police Violence (Network Models)

Other than the four hypothesis presented and discussed in the main paper, our pre-registration also presented an hypothesis related to the behavioral effects of police violence. In an effort to unpack different processes of victimization, we argued that experiences with violence committed by police forces, however, are likely to have the opposite effect of criminal violence. Because, as comparative evidence shows, from the United States (**?**) to Brazil (**?**), police violence tends to generate distrust in police forces, we expected that such change would result also on lower support for punitive policies. Our pre-registered hypothesis then:

Hypothesis 1. *Respondents that have faced police violence—either personally or in their immediate social network—are less likely to support punitive policies.*

In this appendix, we present the numerical results from figure 9, including the interactive effects of police violence. We then replicate figure 9 considering exposure to police violence on the respondents' network.

Contrary to our expectations, we find no support for Hypothesis 2. Being more exposed to police violence does not decrease support for *mano dura* policies; quite the opposite, respondents with more friends than expected who suffered from police violence also exhibit a higher support for the adoption of the death penalty. As the bottom left plot of Figure 2b shows, the marginal effect for the support of death penalty increases with the overdispersion of police violence in the respondent's network.

As our network model shows – see figure – the correlation between crime and police victimization is substantive. Therefore, our results indicate that this overlap likely makes voters to become more punitive even though some of them suffer from violence directly from the police, and probably as a consequence of the adoption of harsh-on-crime policies.

Our decision not to include these results in the main paper is motivated by two main reasons. First, space limitations on the paper. Second, we expect to work on a second project more focused on police violence in Mexico and Brazil in which we can fully develop an theoretical explanation for our findings.

Table 3 Regression Estimates: Conditional Effects of Crime Victimization and Police Violence on Security Policy Proposal Feature

	Crime Victimization	Police Victimization
Intercept	0.586***	0.590***
	(0.020)	(0.021)
PRI	-0.158***	-0.160***
	(0.016)	(0.017)
MORENA	-0.091***	-0.076***
	(0.016)	(0.017)
PAN	-0.088***	-0.092***
	(0.016)	(0.017)
Male	-0.070***	-0.059***
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Network Residuals (NR)	-0.006	-0.007
	(0.013)	(0.015)
Education to Youth	0.074***	0.064***
	(0.018)	(0.019)
Better Police/Security Cameras	0.115***	0.094***
	(0.018)	(0.020)
Death Penalty	0.009	0.020
	(0.019)	(0.020)
Police Militarization	-0.053***	-0.065***
	(0.019)	(0.020)
Leader Autodefensas	-0.051***	-0.051***
	(0.017)	(0.019)
Chief Local Police	-0.022	-0.041**
	(0.018)	(0.019)
Human-Rights Activist	0.106***	0.102***
	(0.017)	(0.019)
NR x Education to Youth	0.017	0.002
	(0.021)	(0.023)
NR x Better Police/Security Cameras	-0.011	-0.018
	(0.020)	(0.023)
NR x Death Penalty	0.037*	0.042*
	(0.021)	(0.024)
NR x Police Militarization	-0.021	0.011
	(0.020)	(0.024)
Num.Obs.	7876	6820
R2	0.045	0.042
R2 Adj.	0.043	0.039
se_type	CR2	CR2

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

All the models use benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents. The dependent variables comes from the candidate choice conjoint task, and the moderator in each column are the residuals from the network models.

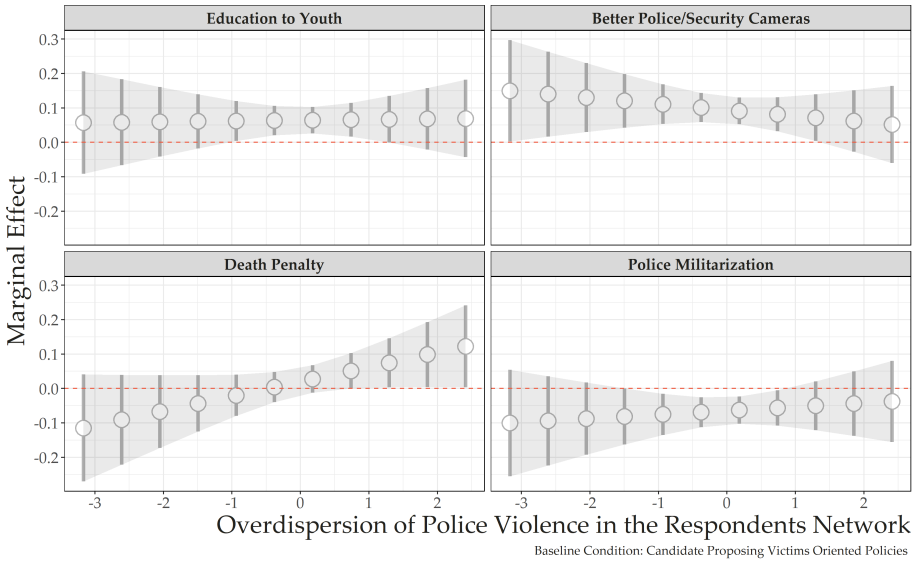
Table 4 Regression Estimates: Conditional Effects of Crime Victimization and Police Violence on Candidates' Occuption Feature

	Crime Victimization	Police Victimization
Intercept	0.586***	0.590***
	(0.020)	(0.021)
PRI	-0.156***	-0.160***
	(0.016)	(0.017)
MORENA	-0.090***	-0.076***
	(0.016)	(0.017)
PAN	-0.087***	-0.092***
	(0.016)	(0.017)
Male	-0.069***	-0.059***
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Network Residuals (NR)	-0.015	0.006
	(0.013)	(0.015)
Education to Youth	0.078***	0.064**
	(0.018)	(0.019)
Better Police/Security Cameras	0.113***	0.093***
	(0.018)	(0.020)
Death Penalty	0.019	0.022
	(0.018)	(0.020)
Police Militarization	-0.057**	-0.065**
	(0.018)	(0.020)
Leader Autodefensas	-0.050**	-0.051**
	(0.018)	(0.019)
Chief Local Police	-0.029	-0.041*
	(0.018)	(0.019)
Human-Rights Activist	0.101***	0.102***
	(0.018)	(0.019)
NR x Leader Autodefensas	-0.005	-0.002
	(0.020)	(0.023)
NR x Chief Local Police	0.031	0.002
	(0.020)	(0.022)
NR x Owner Private Security Firm	0.017	-0.023
	(0.019)	(0.023)
NR x Human-Rights Activist	0.020	-0.008
	(0.019)	(0.022)
Num.Obs.	7876	6820
R2	0.044	0.041
R2 Adj.	0.042	0.039
se_type	CR2	CR2

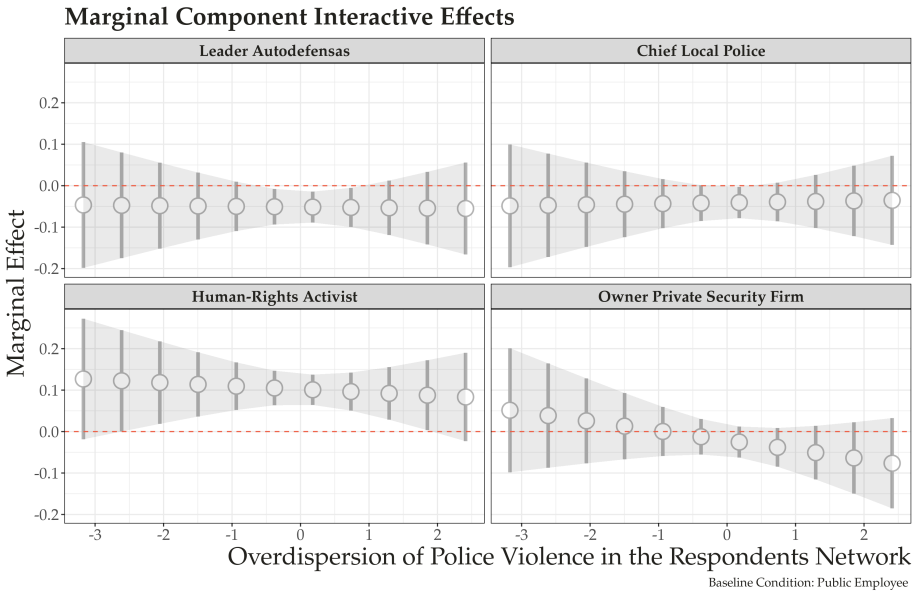
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

All the models use benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents. The dependent variables comes from the candidate choice conjoint task, and the moderator in each column are the residuals from the network models.

Figure 2 Conjoint Estimates: Average Marginal Interactive Effects for Police Violence



a) Security Policy X Police Violence

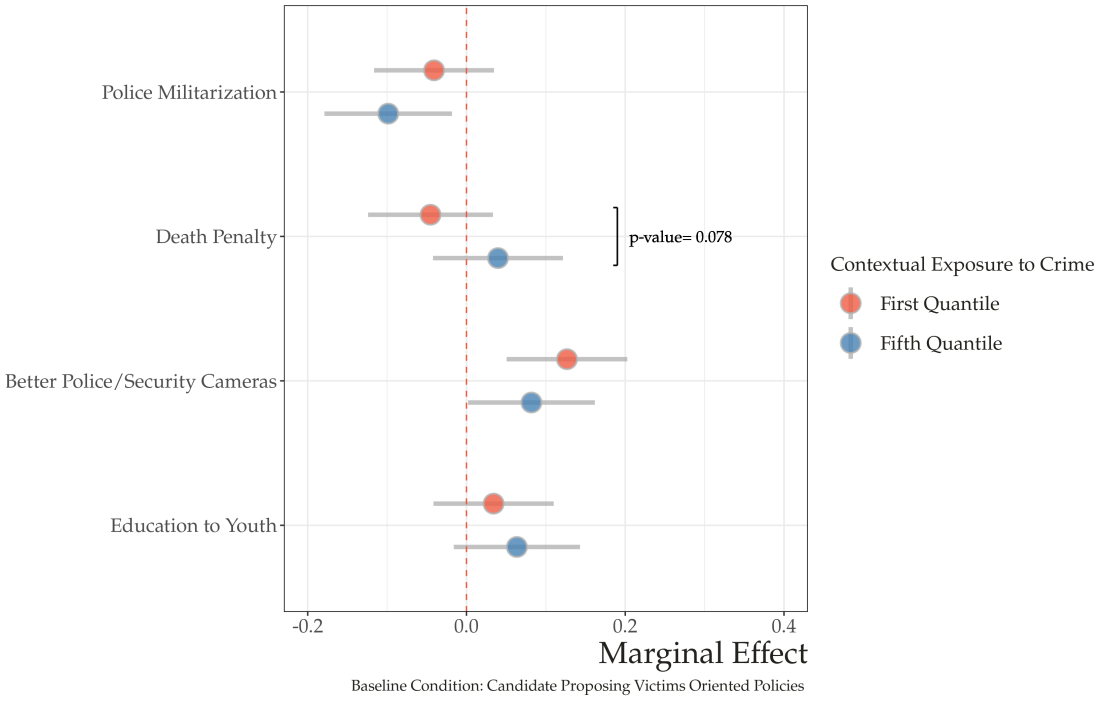


b) Occupation X Police Violence

Note: The plot shows marginal effects from linear interactive models between the residuals from the network models and the Security Policy feature. We present marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

3 Appendix C: Conjoint Interactive Effects: Difference in the Quantiles

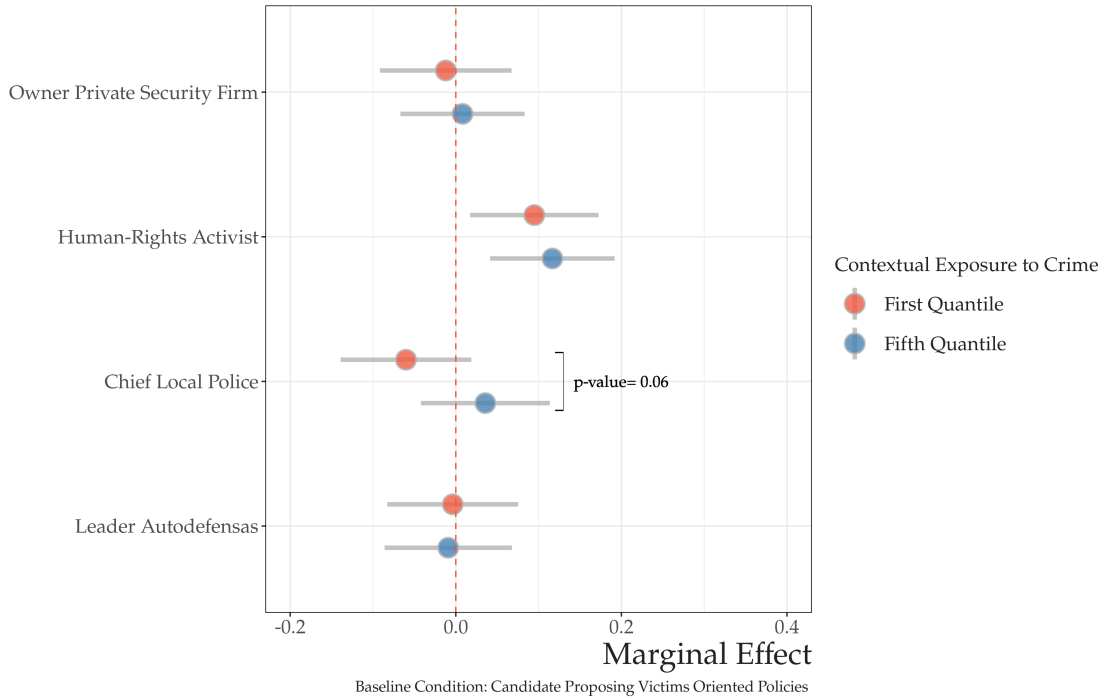
Figure 3 Conjoint Estimates: average marginal interactive effects by quantiles



a) Security Policy X Crime Victimization

Note: The plot shows marginal effects from linear interactive models between the residuals from the network models and the Security Policy feature. To assess statistical differences, we separate the crime data in five quantiles, and compare the differences between the first and last group. We present marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

Figure 4 Conjoint Estimates: average marginal interactive effects by quantiles



a) Occupation X Crime Victimization

Note: The plot shows marginal effects from linear interactive models between the residuals from the network models and the Security Policy feature. To assess statistical differences, we separate the crime data in five quantiles, and compare the differences between the first and last group. We present marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

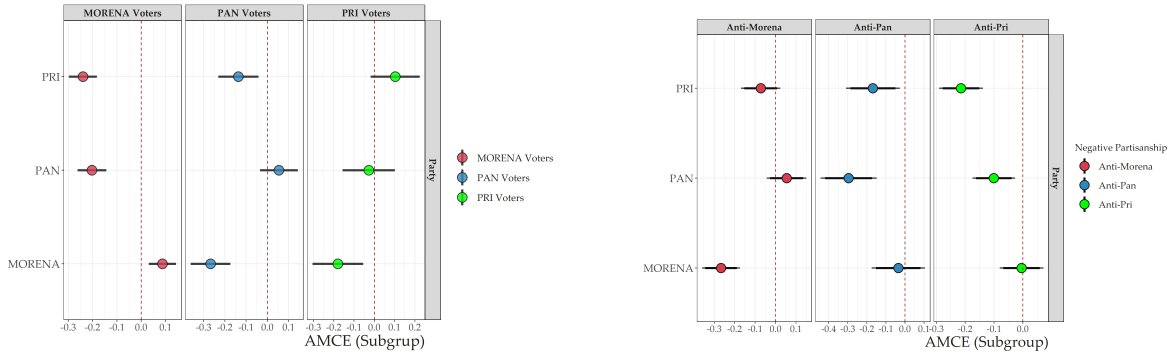
4 Appendix D: Partisanship and Conjoint Results

In this appendix, we present results focused on the effects of partisanship as a path for voters' decisions modelled in our conjoint. We understand this exercise as an validation for our design, and the results show results as expected and discussed in our pre-registration. Our main exam here consists on testing if partisans and anti-partisans behave as expected in the conjoint design, and vote accoring to their partisan preferences, unconditional on the other features of the candidates' choice task.

We use both positive and negative partisanship [1] to measures the effects of partisan identities on the subjects' decision in the conjoint experiment.

Results are consistent with expectations about partisan identities explaining vote choices. Both positive and negative feeling towards the PAN, PRI and MORENA explain voters' decision to support their more favorite and less favorite candidate. The effects stronger for Morena voters among our three options.

Figure 5 Conjoint Estimates: Conditional Effects by Positive and Negative Partisanship



a) Positive Partisanship b) Negative Partisanship

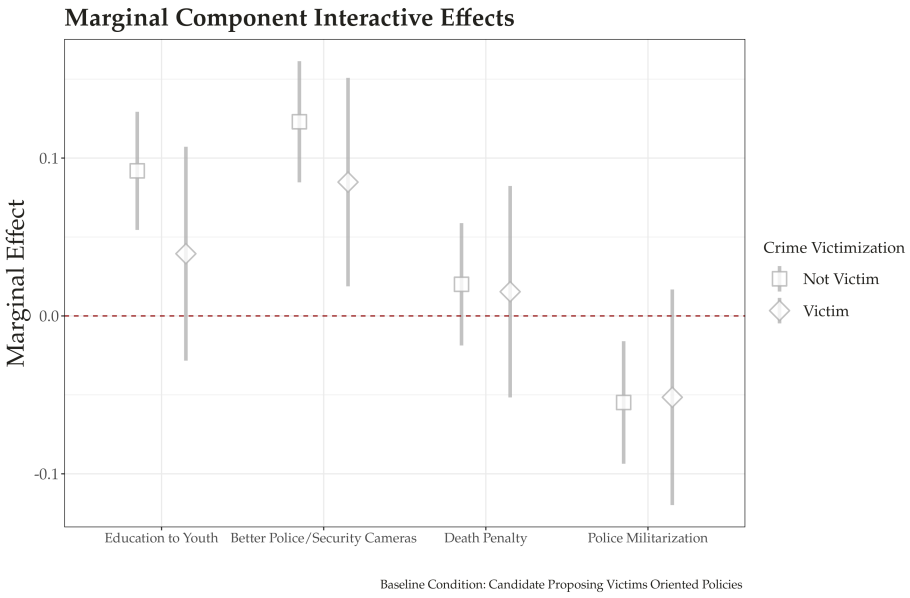
Note: The plot shows marginal component effects using subgroups of respondents according to their positive and negative feelings towards the three parties in our conjoint. We present marginal component effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

[1] We define negative partisanship as voters who expressed negative feelings towards party A, and no positive feelings towards any other party. See (**?**) for a complete discussion about the operationalization of negative partisanship using survey data

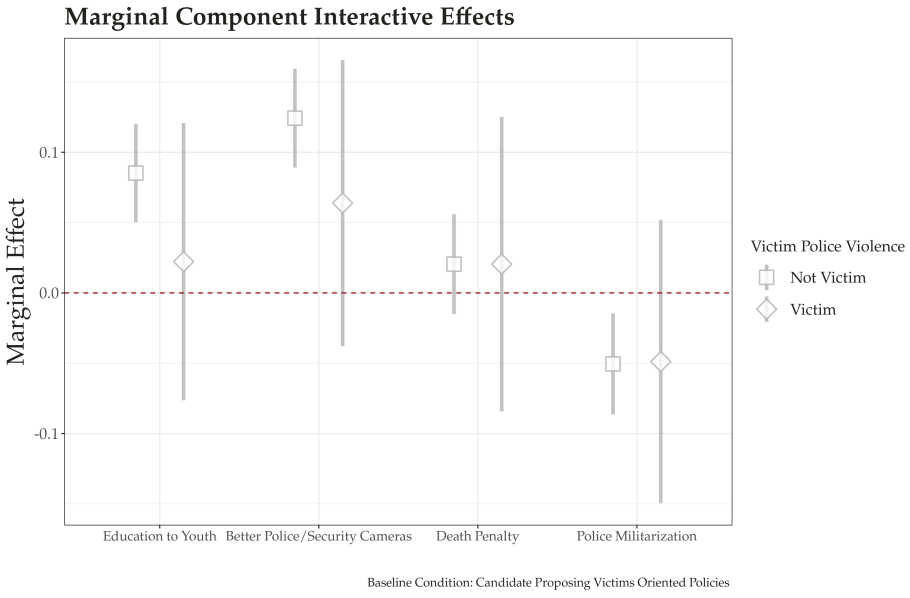
5 Appendix E: Conjoint Results with Direct Victimization Questions

In this section, we present results for the interactive effects of crime victimization and police violence with the policy proposals.

Figure 6 Conjoint Estimates: Average Marginal Interactive effects



a) Security Proposal X Crime Victimization



b) Security Proposal X Police VIolence

Note: The plot shows marginal effects from linear interactive models between the direct survey questions and the Security Policy feature. We present marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

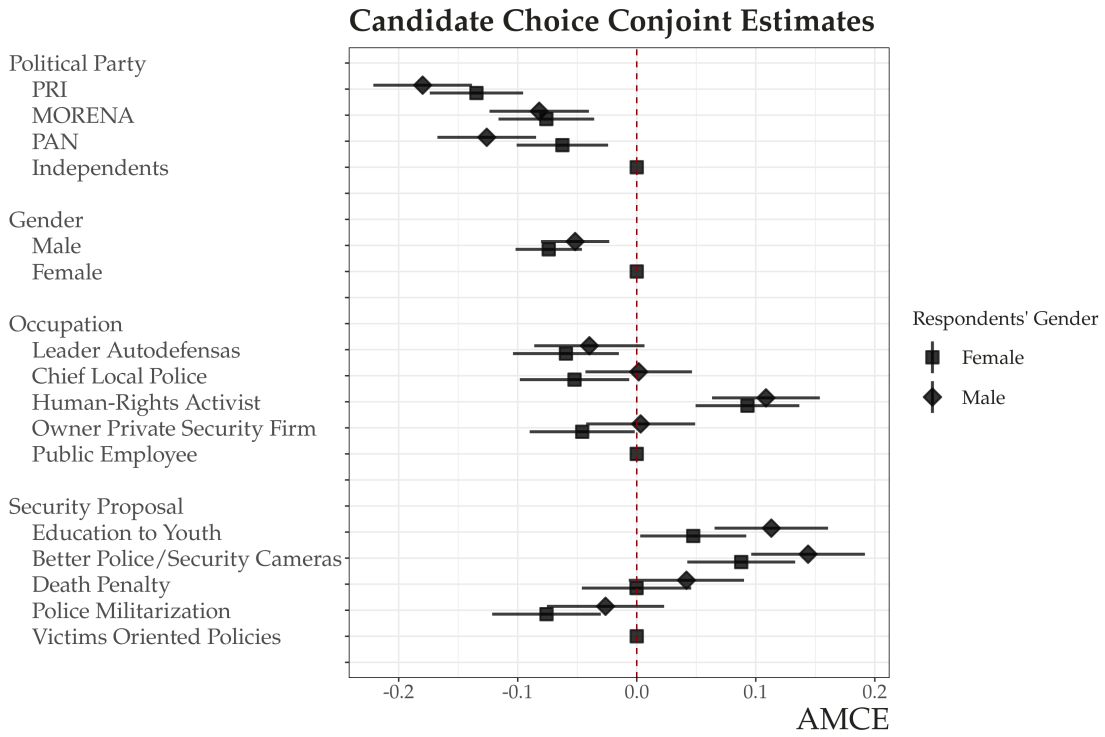
6 Appendix F: Additional Heterogeneous Effects

In this section, we report results for Interactive Effects (using both the AMCE and the Marginal Component Effects) on some additional covariates collected in our survey. We report results for the following covariates:

- Gender: Male and Female.
- Subjective Income [2]
- Trust in the Police.
- Fear of Crime.
- Overt Support for Punitive Policies
- Crime Victimization: Direct Survey Question
- Police Victimization: Direct Survey Question

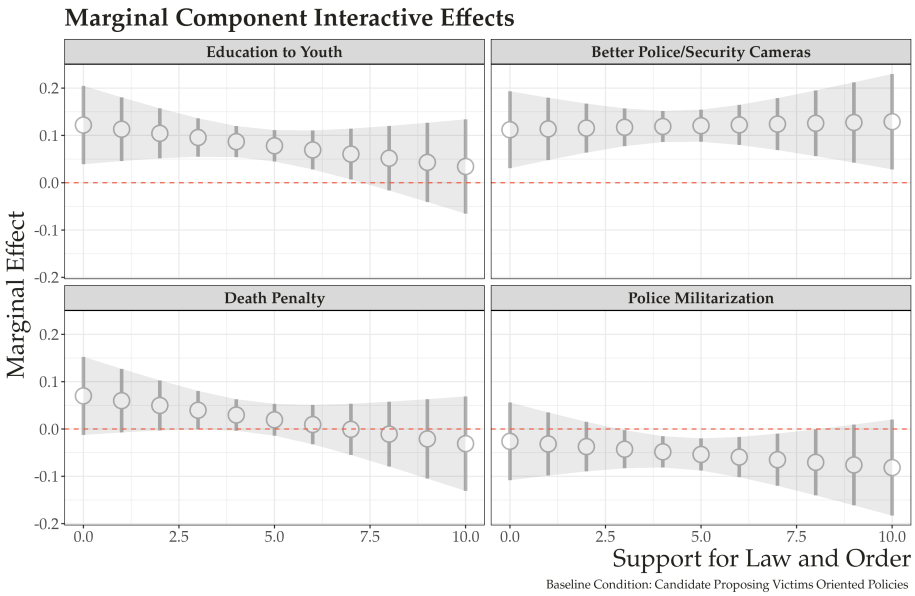
[2]Imagine a staircase with 10 steps. In the first step, people with lower income are located, and in step 10, people with higher income are located. Where would you be located

Figure 7 Conjoint Estimates: Average Component Interactive Effect by Gender)

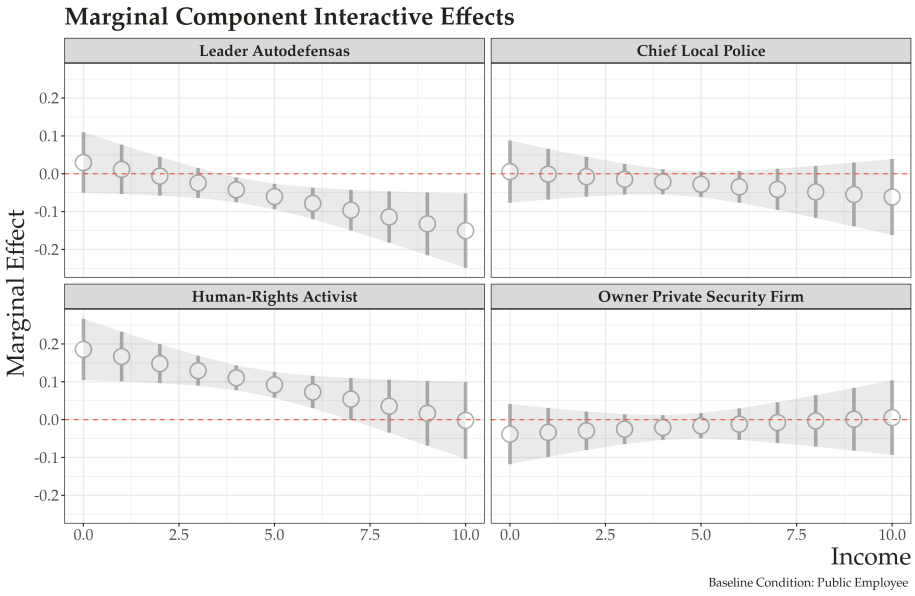


Note: The plot shows estimates of the randomly assigned attributes (Party, Gender, Occupation and Security Policy Proposal) in the subject decision to vote for a hypothetical mayoral candidate. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents; we present point estimate with 95% confidence intervals. The points without bars represent the reference category for each attribute. The estimates are from sub-samples according to the gender variable from the survey.

Figure 8 Conjoint Estimates: Average Marginal Interactive Effects for Subjective Income



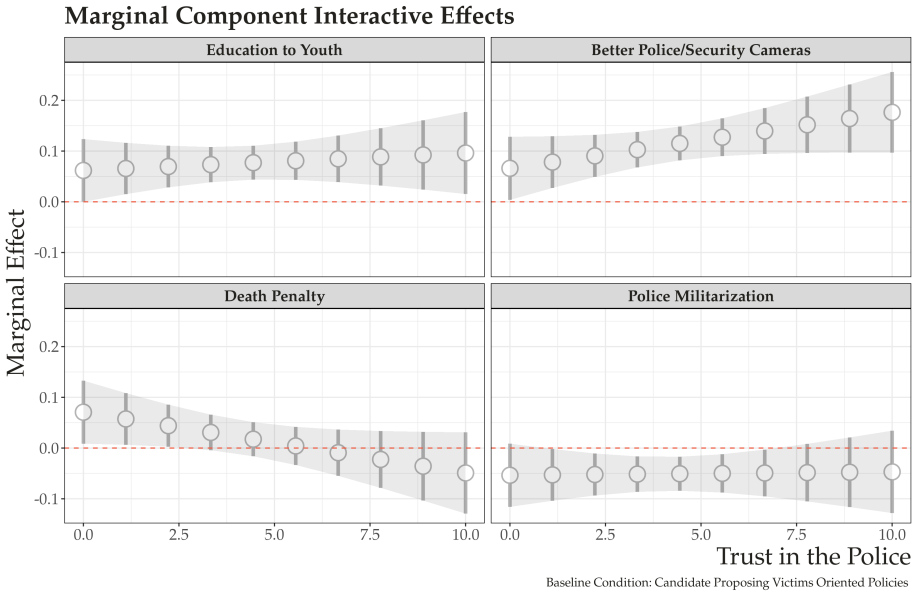
a) Marginal Effects: Income x Policy Proposal



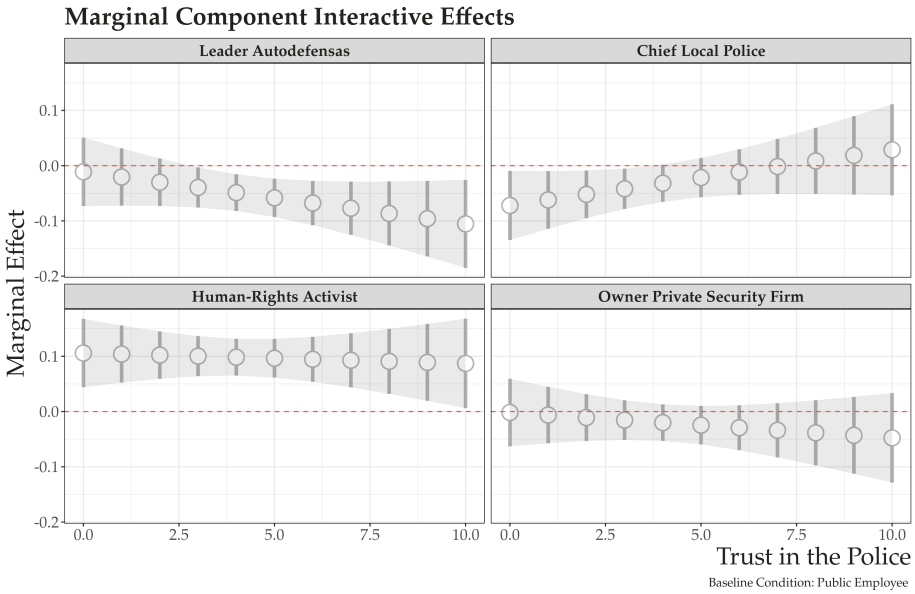
a) Marginal Effects: Income x Occupation

Note: The plot shows marginal effects from linear interactive models between the survey question about subjective income and the conjoint tasks. The questions asks where respondents would place themselves on a stair from 0-10, where 0 are for lower income people and 10 for wealthier classes. We present marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

Figure 9 Conjoint Estimates: Average Marginal Interactive Effects for Trust in the Police



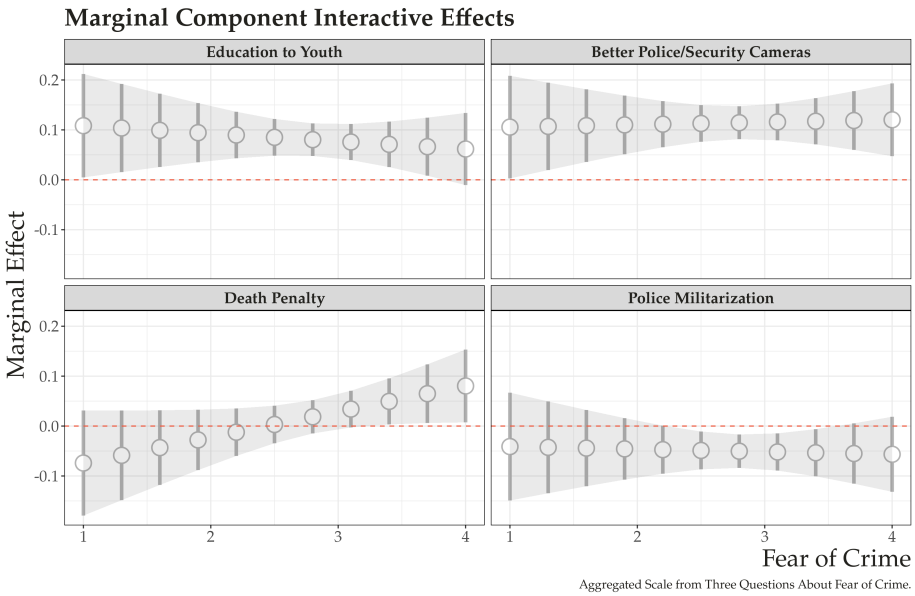
a) Marginal Effects: Trust in the Police x Policy Proposal



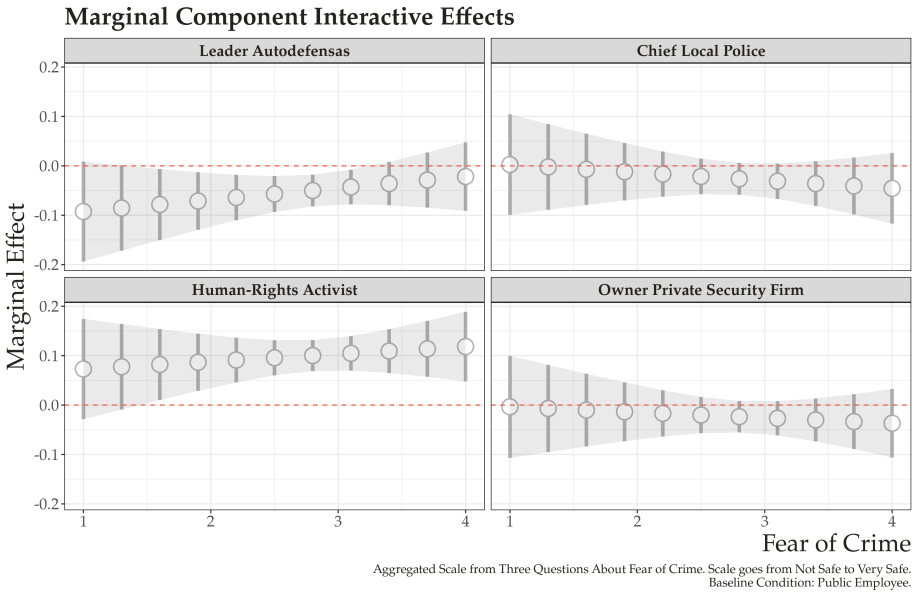
a) Marginal Effects: Trust in the Police x Occupation

Note: The plot shows marginal effects from linear interactive models between the survey question measuring trust in the police and the conjoint tasks. The responses vary from not safe to very safe. We present marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

Figure 10 Conjoint Estimates: Average Marginal Interactive Effects for Fear of Crime



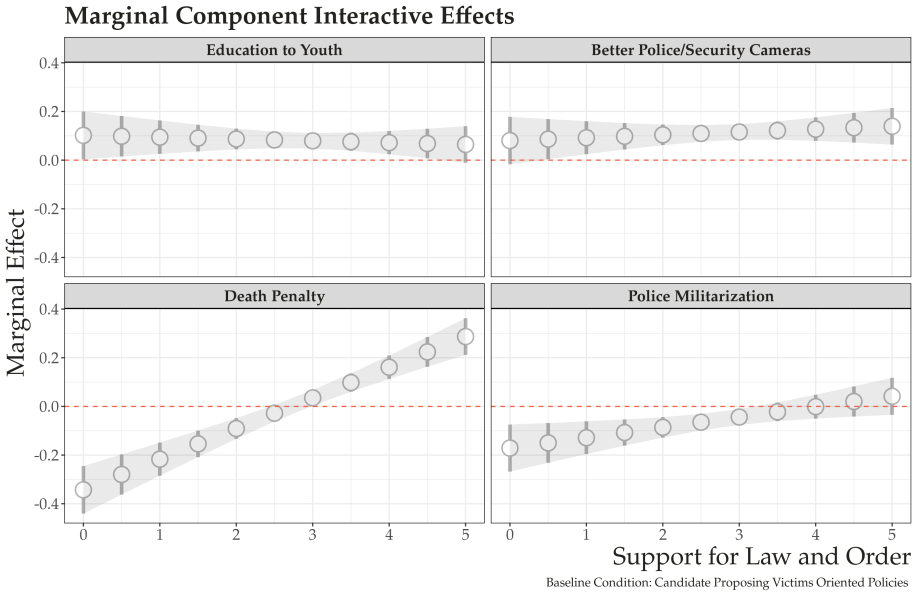
a) Marginal Effects: Fear of Crime x Policy Proposal



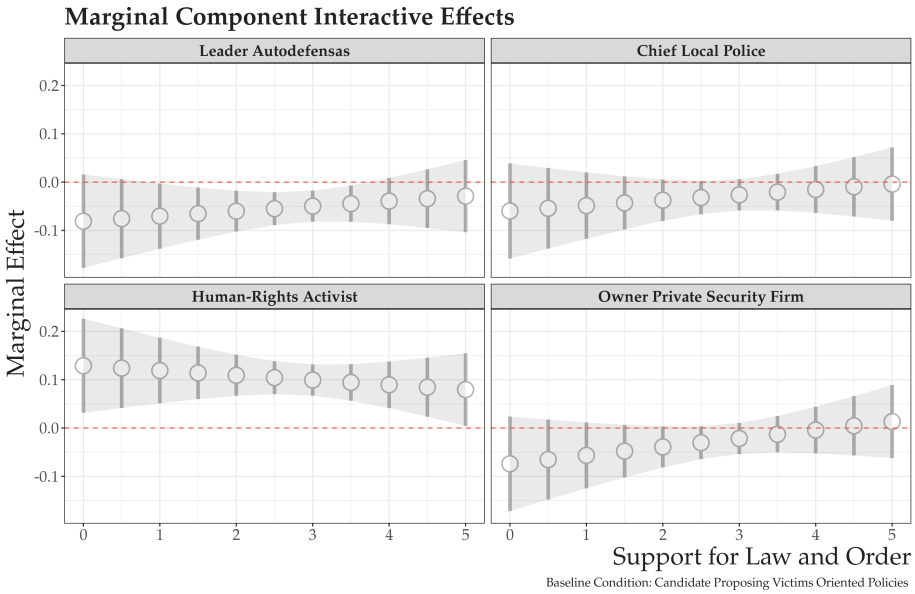
a) Marginal Effects: Fear of Crime x Occupation

Note: The plot shows marginal effects from linear interactive models between the aggregated measure of fear crime extracted from the survey questions and the conjoint tasks. The questions ask respondents about their fear of walking alone on a street, driving at night, and staying alone at home. The responses vary from not safe to very safe. We present marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

Figure 11 Conjoint Estimates: Average Marginal Interactive Effects for Punitive Preferences



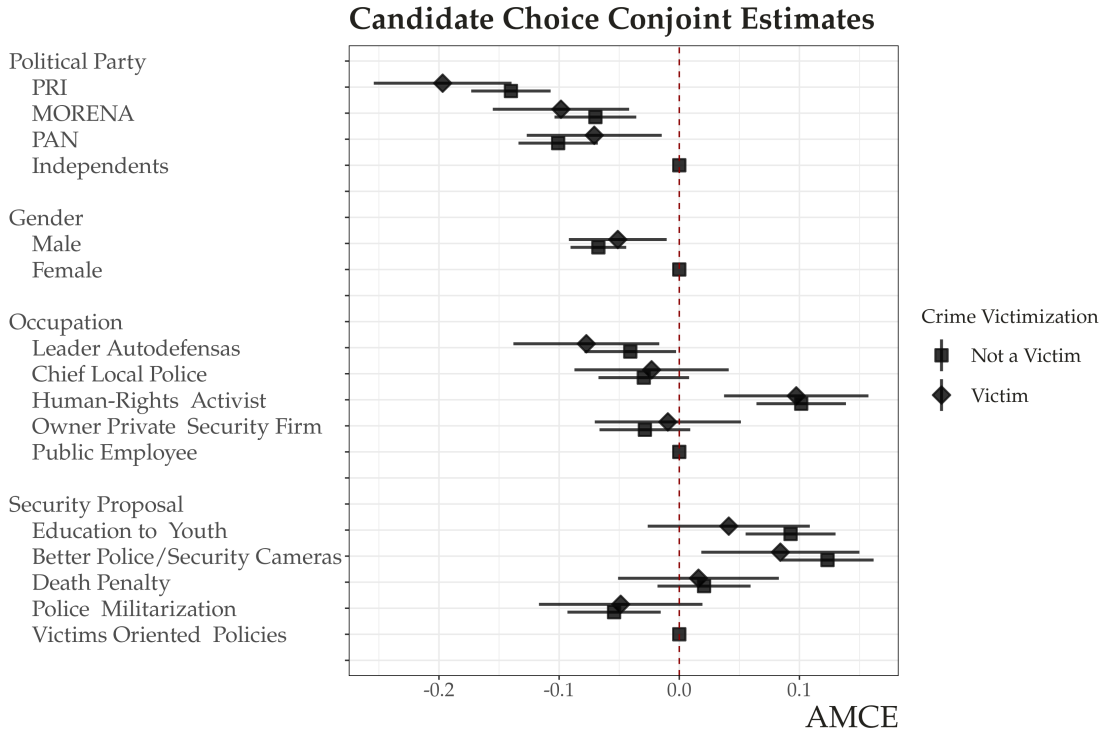
a) Marginal Effects: Punitive Preferences x Policy Proposal



a) Marginal Effects: Punitive Preferences x Occupation

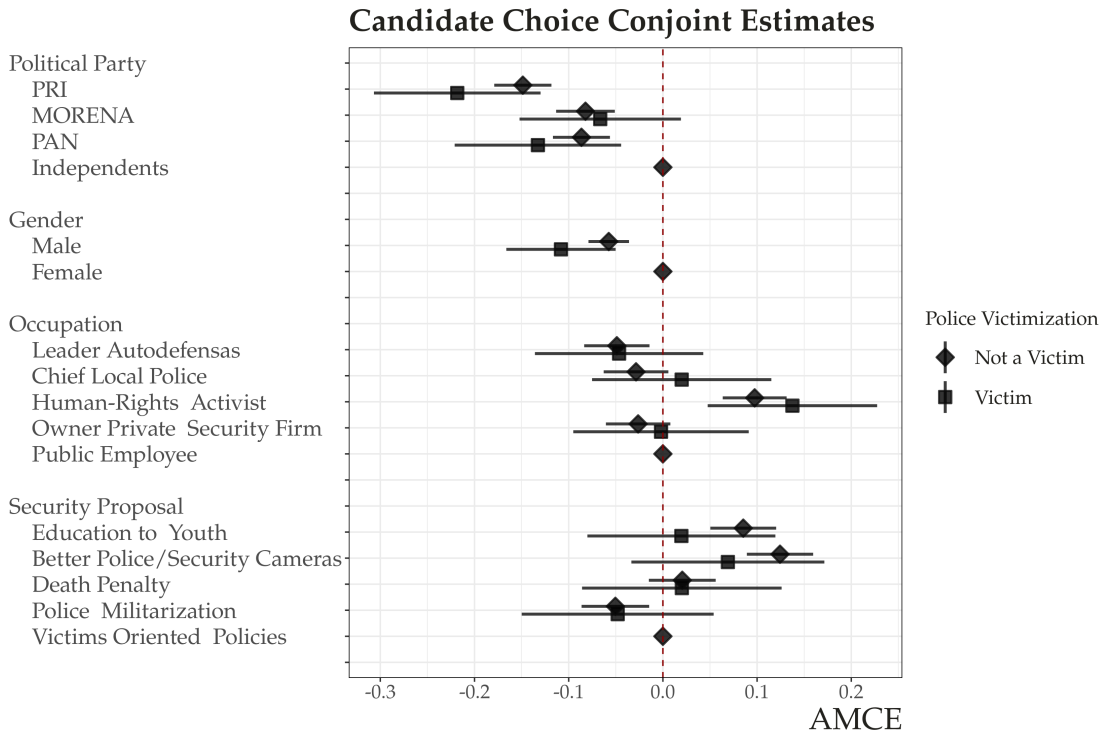
Note: The plot shows marginal effects from linear interactive models between the a aggregated scale from five questions measuring support for punitive penal policies extracted from the survey and the conjoint tasks. We present marginal effects with 95% confidence intervals calculated from benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents.

Figure 12 Conjoint Estimates: Average Component Interactive Effect (Crime Victimization)



Note: The plot shows estimates of the randomly assigned attributes (Party, Gender, Occupation and Security Policy Proposal) in the subject decision to vote for a hypothetical mayoral candidate. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents; we present point estimate with 95% confidence intervals. The points without bars represent the reference category for each attribute. The estimates are from sub-samples according to the variable crime victimization

Figure 13 Conjoint Estimates: Average Component Interactive Effect (Police Victimization)

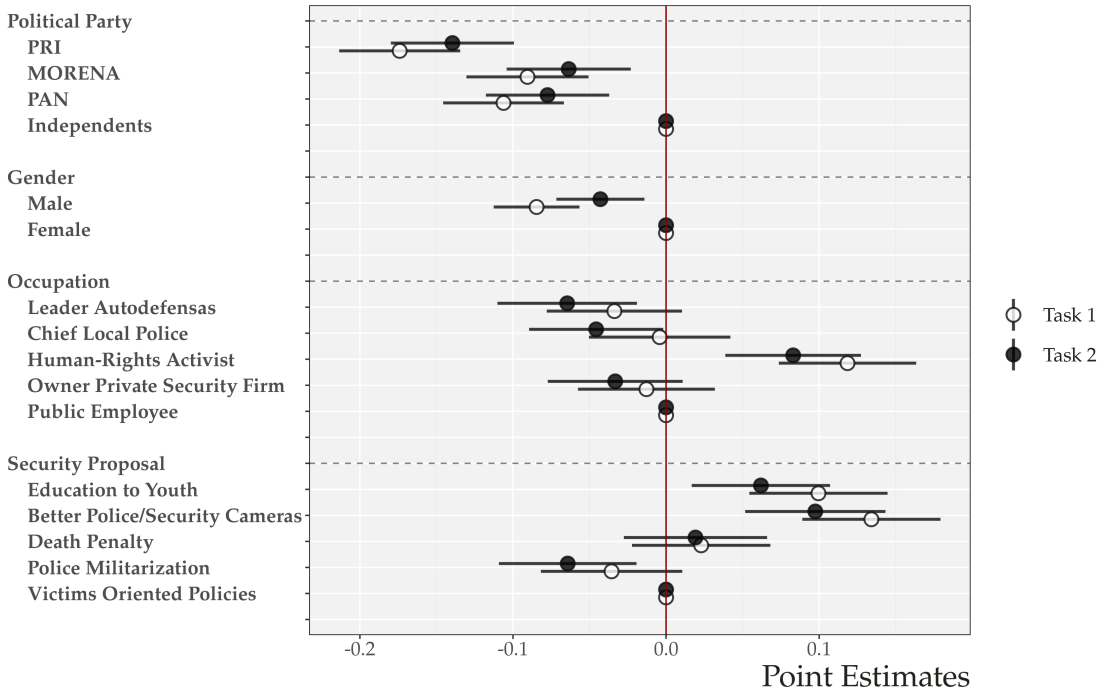


Note: The plot shows estimates of the randomly assigned attributes (Party, Gender, Occupation and Security Policy Proposal) in the subject decision to vote for a hypothetical mayoral candidate. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents; we present point estimate with 95% confidence intervals. The points without bars represent the reference category for each attribute. The estimates are from sub-samples according to the variable police victimization

7 Appendix G: Robustness Checks

As suggested by Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto,(2014), we conduct two distinct robustness checks for our conjoint design. We first investigate validity of the assumption of no carryover effects. This assumption assumes effects are stable across the choice tasks and that treatments on one task has no effect in the following ones. To test for no carryover effects, we examine the Average Marginal Component Effects across the two different repetition of our conjoint. Our results show no evidence of carryover effects between the two tasks. To conduct a proper statistical test, we use an F-test for the joint significance of the interaction terms between the conjoint features and the task number. Here, we find that we cannot reject the null that the interactive effects are equal to zero (p-value = 0.60)

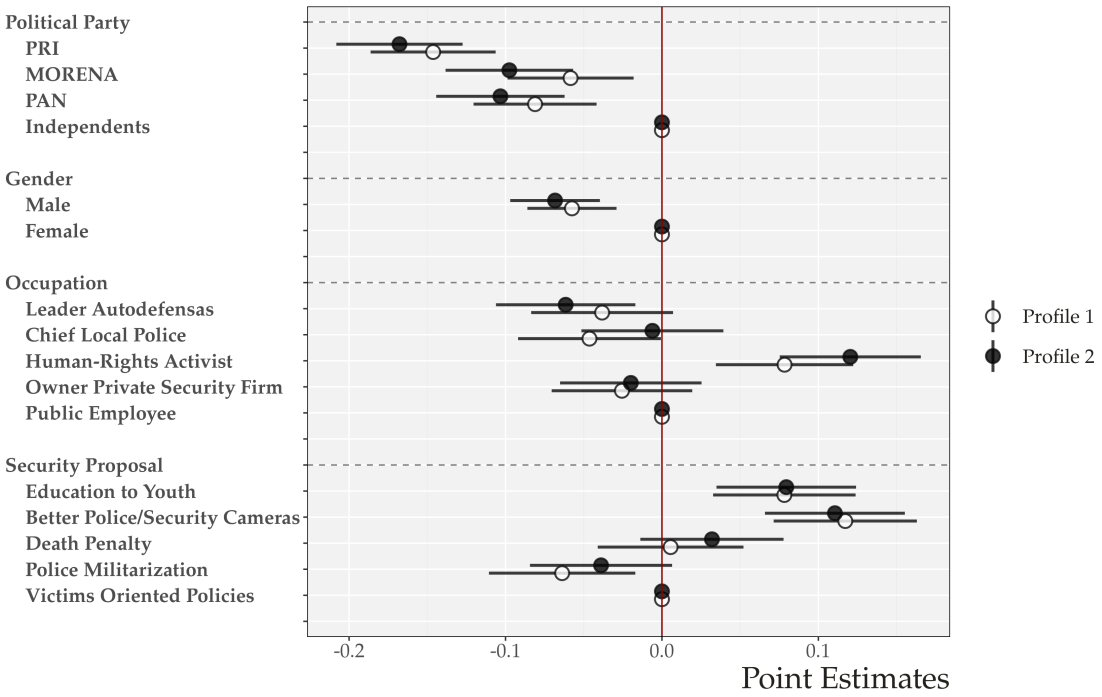
Figure 14 Examining the no carryover effects' assumption.



Note: The plot shows estimates of the randomly assigned attributes (Party, Gender, Occupation and Security Policy Proposal) in the subject decision to vote for a hypothetical mayoral candidate. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents; we present point estimate with 95% confidence intervals. The points without bars represent the reference category for each attribute.

We also replicate the same type of validation but to detect the presence of profile order effects. A key assumption on conjoint designs is that the order in which the profiles are presented do not affect the respondents' decision. In other words, this assumption states that the likelihood of supporting a candidate does not change if one sees this profile in the first or in the second position in each task. Figure 15 presents the interactive effects between the features and the profile order. As before, we use a F-test to evaluate the joint significance. We find no evidence of profile order effects, and the F-test cannot reject the null that the interactive effects are equal to zero (p-value =0.37)

Figure 15 Examining the no profile order effects' assumption.



Note: The plot shows estimates of the randomly assigned attributes (Party, Gender, Occupation and Security Policy Proposal) in the subject decision to vote for a hypothetical mayoral candidate. Estimates are based on the benchmark OLS model with clustered standard errors by respondents; we present point estimate with 95% confidence intervals. The points without bars represent the reference category for each attribute.

8 Appendix H: Conjoint Features in Spanish

We present in the appendix original wording for the conjoint design and the outcome question in Spanish.

- Prompt for the Conjoint: A continuación, le vamos a describir tres pares de perfiles de candidatos a presidente municipal. Por favor, lea con atención las características de cada perfil y seleccione el candidato por el cual usted votaría.
- Outcome question: Imagine que la elección para presidente municipal en su municipio/alcaldía es entre estos dos candidatos. ¿Por cuál de ellos votaría?

Table 5 Candidate Profile Features and Choice Levels in spanish

Feature	Choices
Experiencia previa	
	Jefe de la policía municipal
	Dueño de una empresa de seguridad privada
	Defensor de derechos humanos
	Líder de un grupo de autodefensas
	Empleado público
Propuesta para el problema de inseguridad	
	Pena de muerte a delincuentes
	Militarización de la policía
	Creación de un centro de asesoría y atención a víctimas
	Aumentar el número de policías, mejorar su entrenamiento e instalar más cámaras en las calles
	Dar becas y oportunidades de trabajo a los jóvenes
Género	
	Hombre
	Mujer
Partido Político	
	MORENA
	PAN
	PRI
	Independiente